Music Sounds Better With You

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Abstract

Electronic Dance Music (EDM) is a catalyst for creative expression, from the solo dance form known as shuffling, to “Flow Arts” activities (forms of self-expression inducing a flow state) like poi, hula hooping, orbiting, and gloving. Gloving is a subcultural practice and artform that couples LED lights with dexterous finger movements. It is a method of expression for dance music enthusiasts (also known as ravers) and has become an important component of the EDM scene, particularly over the past decade. Glovers engage in “secondary” performances to live music (DJs) using complex techniques such as symbolism, word painting, and what the community refers to as “musicianship.” Performances are comprised mainly of improvisatory gestures and movements drawn from a large lexicon, known collectively as “concepts.” Learning the skill of gloving involves taking part in oral transmission, cyphering, community building activities (both online and in-person), and cultivating a gloving identity with an accompanying pseudonym. This monograph illuminates the lacuna in the discourse regarding the lack of attention given to Canadian rave culture within the field of Electronic Dance Music Culture (EDMC). It elucidates primarily the practices of gloving within the Toronto rave scene. Toronto has played an integral role in the history of gloving from its earliest roots in “liquiding,” a style of dance that originated at raves during the 1990s. Several glovers and liquid dancers active in the Toronto rave scene between 1990 and 2020 are informants for the work. The work’s methodologies draw from existing practices, pulling from several fields including musicology, sociology, and ethnography. The work itself takes the form of an autoethnographic study, rooted in the participatory approaches of journalists Hunter S. Thompson and Simon Reynolds. The format is unconventional, embracing casual language, audio-visual materials, participant observation methodology, fieldnotes and meta-reflections, interviews, and pictures, presented in a mosaic approach à la Marshall McLuhan. The work also lacks a traditional critique, preferring to infer through storytelling and descriptions by informants from within the scene itself. The author of the work offers a robust critique of the theoretical idealization of fieldwork in EDMC scholarship by purposefully utilizing fluid positionality as a defining quality. The overarching arguments are threefold and include advocating for the acknowledgment of Toronto as a city of importance in the global rave scene, Flow Arts as a pathway to self-actualization, and calling to action the implementation of “Fluid Positionality” as an optimal way to negotiate “the vibe” for more nuanced data collection.
Keywords

Self-Expression; Canadian Rave; Electronic Dance Music Culture; Autoethnography; Active Audience; Gloving

Summary for Lay Audience

This work outlines the history and social practices of a dance form called gloving, which developed at Electronic Dance Music (EDM) events (raves). Gloving uses the hands, dressed in white gloves with LED lights inside the fingertips, to create the illusion that the glover is controlling musical sound. Glovers use a performance space of a large square encompassing the head and upper body of one or two people in the audience who face them. Gloving evolved from an earlier dance form, liquiding, which emerged at raves in the 1990s. The aim of the study is not only to explore gloving in an academic setting, but also to cement Canadian rave culture, specifically Toronto, in the historical account of the development of Electronic Dance Music Culture (EDMC). The methods used to collect data for this study included participating in cultural activities (200 + events and festivals) over the course of a five year period, interviewing people from the scene, and learning some of rave’s most popular creative forms including shuffling, DJing, and of course gloving. Personal experience is a focal point of this paper and challenges the claim that “objectivity,” where the researcher attempts to remove themselves from their work, is a best practice. The style of paper, an autoethnography, is essentially in an “auto” biography form where “ethnography” refers to the customs of the culture. The paper purposely uses informal language that should be accessible to the average person. The author has done this to allow room for members of the rave community to access and read the paper. The paper is made up of journal entries (also known as fieldnotes, from the period of research), thoughts about the data during the writing process (known as meta-voice), pictures, music, videos, and descriptions of the events and practices by the author and her informants. The overarching arguments are threefold and include advocating for the acknowledgment of Toronto as a city of importance in the global rave scene, Flow Arts as a pathway to self-actualization, and calling to action the implementation of “Fluid Positionality” as an optimal way to negotiate “the vibe” for more nuanced data collection.
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Dedication

To those who find peace on the dancefloor.
Preface

I took an interest in studying rave music and culture during my Masters degree as a violin performance student in Ottawa (2012-2014), but I had always enjoyed listening to the music and was drawn to it from childhood. I had also always known I would go on to a doctorate in some form of Musicology and began inhaling disciplinary classics by the likes of Bruno Nettl and Susan McClary early on in my student career. What I did not know was that rave culture would occupy the forefront of my academic work, simply because it was not on my radar as a possibility. Up until 2013, I was a classical violinist studying solo Bach sonatas religiously, performing in orchestras, and listening to electronica in my down time over a glass of wine. My two worlds did not connect. During my time in Ottawa, I took an opportunity working with Disc Jockeys (DJs) in a bar called Pier21. My job was to play several 15-minute sets of improvisation over dance music tracks while club-goers mingled and partied in the space. I worked with several local DJs over the course of the two years I worked there, and it opened my eyes to an entirely new perspective on musicality. DJs, people who use sound reproduction technology as musical instruments, develop an incredible finesse for their craft. It requires many of the same skills I use as a classical musician, and I was struck by the similarity — so much so that I wrote a graduate paper on DJ musicianship that eventually took me to a graduate conference, and more importantly, helped me to personally connect the worlds of classical and electronica. Even though I was a student, and a working professional in the music industry, it took me a long time to realize that electronica is worth studying, and that there is value in understanding its community of makers and hearers. Apart from enjoying it as entertainment value, there are other important lessons to learn from its ideologies.
I arrived at Western having read as much background research as I could about rave culture, but without a clear idea of the direction I personally wanted to take in researching it. Rave scholarship had covered concepts from the DJ as Shaman and raving as a spiritual experience to the rave space as its own mini society with distinct social hierarchies. Ultimately, it was my own experiences and feelings that determined the direction of this dissertation. I realized that I wanted to talk about how raving made me feel. I wanted to understand why rave culture is so meaningful to those who participate in it. What does it offer the world? What does it offer me? And still, seven years into the research process, when I’d been told by PhD graduates that I would be so fed up with the topic that I would want to throw my work at the wall and give up, I remain no less enamoured with the music and the culture. Sometimes, yes, I want to throw my work at the wall, but it’s not because the music no longer excites me. Electronic music and the fascinating culture that surrounds it is the reason why I cannot, and will not, give up until I’ve seen this project through. I need to do it the justice I feel it deserves.

It was particularly important to me to cultivate a Canadian perspective on raving. From my research, undertaken both prior to and during my time at Western, a significant amount of existing scholarship on raving in other countries was published prior to the millennium.¹ I was surprised to discover, however, that little has been published the last decade. It is particularly shocking because electronic music has become immensely popular as a

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¹ Some well-known examples include: *Rave Off* (Steve Redhead, 1993); *Altered State* (Matthew Collin, 1997); *Club Cultures* (Sarah Thornton, 1995); *Generation Ecstasy* (Simon Reynolds, 1999); *Energy Flash* (Ed. Simon Reynolds, 1998); and *Technoshamanism* (Scott Hutson, 1999).
commercial genre during this time. I was also perplexed by the lack of Canadian representation in scholarship on rave music and culture in general. Canadian DJs such as Deadmau5, Mark Oliver, Black Tiger Sex Machine, REZZ and so many others, are obviously worth including in any survey of raving, even if only as tastemakers and trendsetters. Their presence has impacted not only Canadian raves but the global rave scene, and should therefore be documented as a separate, important piece of the larger “rave” puzzle.

Until this dissertation, Canadian rave practices have typically been lumped in with American rave practices, if they aren’t ignored completely by scholars. One of my goals in writing this dissertation is to give a voice to the contributions of Ontario-based musicians and industry members who created the scene that exists today through their hard work, dedication, and passion; another goal is to situate Canada as its own entity in the global rave scene. Despite Canada’s similarities with, and proximity to, America each rave scene is distinguished by several factors including historical period, geography, and other intersections. They exist for, and as, brief moments in time. Some of the people, trends and practices that existed during my period of research are now already no longer a part of the community. This dissertation thus also presented a chance to preserve some of these special moments in time that will remind everyone, regardless of their disciplinary backgrounds, that music, self-expression, and community are crucial in the process of finding happiness and fulfilment.

I was irked to discover that no preexisting methodological approach exists that adequately accounts for rave music and culture, which is not surprising given the dearth of scholarship on the subject. Previous methodologies deposed by scholars share some commonalities, however. Most research on raving includes fieldwork of some sort, whether participant-
observation and more traditional ethnology. Two of the primary scholarly works in dance music research are *Club Cultures* by Sarah Thornton (1995), and *Generation Ecstasy* by Simon Reynolds (1998). While both Thornton and Reynolds immersed themselves in rave culture and practice, Thornton kept a “professional’s distance” from her experiences, while Reynolds lost himself to them completely. Neither Thornton nor Reynolds produced a “better” study. Objectivity is impossible to claim, after all. Both were true to their experience, and their processing to it, and thus their work stands as a testament both to their experiences and their work to make sense of it later.

Ethnomusicologists such as Bruno Nettl have acknowledged the importance of understanding a culture from an insider’s (emic) perspective. Conversely, in many ethnomusicological studies one belief remains prevalent, that it is impossible to “understand” the music as a “native” would. The well-intentioned belief often results in scholarship that attempts to be objective and reflexive, though in reality this is often an impossibility for fieldwork. In rave culture, understanding the insider perspective is of crucial importance. As Simon Reynolds (1998) demonstrates, it is possible to become a part of whichever experience you study if you commit to the experience as a practitioner of the culture. Some may ask how a person studying a culture can commit to experiencing it as a practitioner would; they have missed the point. The point is that one must experience the culture *as a scholar* in the culture. Any other point-of-view could only be pretentious.

The “commitment” as described above can lead research into many precarious situations, and no hard-and-fast solution yet exists for these. In fact, before such hard-and-fast solutions can arise, if they are indeed available, the issues scholars are grappling with must first be
acknowledged. In Reynolds’ case, for instance, his "commitment to the experience" prompted him to take ecstasy and report on his experience. He speaks about his “reception” process as an audience member in this passage outlining his thoughts on drugs and music as a partnership:

I finally got it "right" in 1991, as one drop in the demographic deluge that was 1991-92's Second Wave of Rave, carried along by the tide of formerly indie-rock friends who'd turned on, tuned in, and freaked out. It was some revelation to experience this music in its proper context - as a component in a system. It was an entirely different and un-rock way of using music: the anthemic track rather than the album, the total flow of the DJ's mix, the alternative media of pirate radio and specialist record stores, music as a synergistic partner with drugs, and the whole magic/tragic cycle of living for the weekend and paying for it with the midweek comedown. There was a liberating joy in surrendering to the radical anonymity of the music, in not caring about the names of tracks or artists. The "meaning" of the music pertained to the macro level of the entire culture, and it was much larger than the sum of its parts.²

Thornton, on the other hand, also took ecstasy, but she did not report on her experience (she mentions only that she took it, and that she felt pressure to do so). I think, in fact, that scholars in general might look to more radical approaches to the analyst’s subjectivity in research, namely, some forms of “gonzo” journalism. Journalist Hunter S. Thompson, for instance, modeled “gonzo” reportage in his immersive work on the late 1960s drug culture in America. His research avoids any pretensions of objectivity, and even acknowledges that once a scholar enters the world they study, they become an active influence within it and thus are inextricably enmeshed within the story. The only way to analyze that enmeshment is to acknowledge it, and to do this, new methodologies are required.

Newly established electronic dance music journal, Dancecult, has begun to explore some of the more recent fieldwork methodologies emerging out of fieldwork efforts in the 21st-Century. One common theme throughout these recent fieldwork-related articles is a warning to avoid the disruption of something known as “the vibe,” the instinctive aura of the rave experience that is shared among those at a live event. Dancecult scholars emphasize keeping the research process inconspicuous and blending in with the rave experience as it exists in that moment. I will speak more about the “vibe” in the pages below. What the above summary illustrates is that understanding “native” experience is a research conundrum in rave fieldwork. How does one get close enough to the culture they study to report with confidence on its inner workings as a scholar? And without also compromising one’s ethical responsibilities or ruining one’s reputation as a serious academic? In my attempt to answer these questions, I chose a methodological approach that combines the best of current research methodologies. I think it is, in fact, one of the strengths of this dissertation, as it offers a fresh perspective on human interaction and its realities.

The methodology I model in this dissertation has as its keystone an unwavering awareness of fluid positionality. I would say, too, that I feel the way I used “positionality” in my fieldwork was novel, and worth considering at length. In short, I used my learned knowledge of expected social interactions to guide my behaviour in situ. That is, I chose either to expose myself as a researcher or to hide that information. Fluidity was especially useful when it came to interacting with members of the dance music industry who, as a mostly male-dominated demographic, were more responsive to my position as a young, attractive female raver than as an academic studying their culture. Much of this dissertation and my fieldnotes thus explore my position as a female, and other situations, in what I call a transparent “meta-
voice,” which is italicized throughout this dissertation. My experience of rave culture did not end once I had gathered all my field notes. It resonated, reverberated, and grew even as I sought to interpret and write about it. The “meta-voice” you see below is thus my attempt to give voice to that resonance, and in so doing to show how the experience continues to grow long after its academic objectification as “ethnography.”

It was extremely difficult to decide on a focus for the dissertation in terms of topic, because there are so many uncharted areas of discovery in rave music and culture. Ultimately, I connected most with the practice of “gloving,” a form of self-expression in which ravers use gloves with LED lights attached to create colourful patterns in time with rave music. This style of self-expression has yet to even warrant mention in scholarly work on raving, even as it has been a mainstay at raves for decades now. This dissertation will thus provide scholars with a crucial introduction to this style of raving. In fact, gloving is only one aspect of a larger set of practices known as Flow Arts, the umbrella term that encompasses a variety of expressive forms found at raves including poi, hula hooping, and fire throwing. While some of these expressive forms have been studied in the past, gloving is what captivated me most. I connected personally, and professionally, with many of the “glovers” I met in Ontario. Some of these glovers studied for years to gain their expertise and renown, and this resonated with my own personal background in conservatory technique. Nonetheless, several questions about Flow Arts in rave culture arose. I wondered why people engage in this sort of activity. Who are they? How, and why, did this art form continue to develop in North America and in other countries across the world?
Given all the above considerations, it should come as no surprise to read that I concluded a
traditional approach to writing this dissertation simply would not work. There are so many
aspects of raving to share, and I cannot possibly speak for all of them. I can, however, speak
for my own. As a scholarly expert, a fan, and a practitioner I can draw from my own
experience and compare it with those of my fellow ravers. By working to understanding
myself, I therefore also work to understand others. I thus opted to reproduce and interpret my
experience using the format of entries, rather than the more common linear essay form. I
have two important reasons for choosing this format. First, in eschewing what can only be an
aesthetic of “critical distance,” I feel I have allowed readers access to a more immersive
experience of rave culture, one that feels much more carefully attuned with my own
immersion than early drafts set in linear essay form provided. Secondly, and more
importantly, raving is not a “one-size-fits-all” experience; it is filtered through personalities
and subjectivities, and I wanted to at least try to allow readers the opportunity to experience
it themselves when they read this dissertation. No two views of rave practices and the
meaning behind them will align entirely; you will likely have a different interpretation of
numerous things you read here. We are all, after all, but small pieces of a much larger puzzle,
that is, all the various moments, and the lived experiences of those moments, which together
comprise “rave music and culture” comprise a mosaic of meaning(s). Reading this
dissertation will, hopefully, provide a more accurate depiction of this mosaic than anything
set in a different form. In fact, this dissertation is a multi-media experience more so than a
print essay. Below readers will find photographs, videos, and audio samples, all designed to
elucidate the experience I consider. As you move through this dissertation, it is thus crucial
that you follow the audiovisual roadmap and listen to (or watch) the playlist examples as they
appear in text. Raving without the holistic experience is, after all, not raving at all.
As you, the reader, move through this dissertation, I hope that you will sometimes close your eyes and try to see raving, gloving, Flow Arts and all the other components of this amazing cultural world from behind my eyes. I think imagining these practices and experiences will help you see it from yours, too. Draw parallels, make comparisons, and most of all, listen \textit{truthfully}. You may not like electronic music. That is completely fine, and honestly it is not the point. I hope that you leave this experience with some understanding of it. I certainly think you’ll understand why it’s crucial that we include electronic music when we talk about modern popular music in general. For readers who are a part of the Canadian raving community, I hope that you will leave with a better, more accurate understanding of the rich socio-musical narrative you contribute to each time you dance. May this understanding enrich your mind, and your heart, and bring greater meaning to your experiences from here on out. Thank-you for exploring this uncharted territory with me. Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect.

Sincerely,
M Gillian Carrabré
Introduction

So I will break open my heart
And I will show you every part
‘Cause you’re written all over me
A silent melody
I hear in everything
You are the song I sing³

Writing this dissertation was, simply put, writing a piece of myself, putting “my song” down, onto paper. It was a task that required letting go of preconceived notions I had of how one should compose “strong” academic work. Using myself as a research platform to explore meaning in Toronto’s rave culture is only one possible understanding of the experience known as “raving.” Since there are many other perspectives on the multidimensional reality of raves, I have chosen to write using a “mosaic” approach. I will discuss this approach in further detail in the first section of this dissertation.

Raves comprise a polyglot reality, which I elucidate and explore in this dissertation. However, to avoid approaching this topic in an overly reductive manner, I chose to offer a single overarching narrative, namely, my own experience in Toronto and London’s rave cultures. In doing so, I consider it a singular and situated perspective that may nevertheless serve as a useful window into others’ experiences. As the title I have chosen for this dissertation puts it, “music sounds better with you,” and I could not have conducted this work without the support of the Toronto Rave Community (TRC) and my

³ Lyrical content from Arvin Van Buuren’s “Song I Sing” featuring Haliene. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85aYiex6FFo.
rave “crew.” They supported me through this process, and I will be forever grateful for their love and the inspiration they have brought into my life. Raving is about community, and building identities and lifestyles from appreciating music. It’s about family, and learning to express yourself in creative and positive ways. It’s about connecting with real people, and holding their hands in the dark. Music always sounds better with you, and you, and you…

While I do not address all of the methods of self-expression within the sphere of “Flow Arts” in what follows, I do offer a concrete and clearly situated perspective on how meaningful those methods of self-expression can be for ravers themselves and the larger “rave” communities they comprise. My intention in doing this is to give a voice in academic study to part of the unwritten history of raving in Toronto, which has so much to offer the broader story of “raving” that currently pervades research. Through the form I adopt below — a blended mixture of fieldnotes, informant work and interview excerpts, modelled after the “mosaic” form first seen in Marshall McLuhan’s *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) — scholarship in the fields of EDMC (Electronic Dance Music Culture), musicology, and by independent researchers and journalists, as well as supplementary audio-visual material, I clarify the significance of Flow Arts as an expressive art form in-and-of-itself, and its crucial position in “rave” musical culture at large.

EDMC has offered respite to diverse groups of people for decades now. The very nature of rave culture – isolated in time, culture, and geography – witnesses scenes waxing and waning, sometimes disappearing forever. The proposed contribution of this dissertation is
threefold: 1) to concretize the social and historical significance of the Toronto rave scene within the larger mosaic of the global rave scene; 2) to document the artistic practices of Flow Artists, specifically gloving; and 3) to offer a robust critique of the theoretical idealization of fieldwork in EDMC scholarship by purposefully utilizing fluid positionality as a defining quality.

As a result, I argue the following:

1) Canada, in particular Toronto, has independently contributed to the global rave scene both in terms of its urban cultural practices and its artistic representation. The historiography illuminates that much of the documented American trendsetters, tastemakers, and founders, has been occurring simultaneously with Toronto and should therefore be considered as a city of historical importance in the existing literature.

2) Flow Arts, more specifically, the intellectual and complex expressive practices of gloving, are both a pathway to self-actualization and a solution to numerous spiritual, physical, and emotional barriers, including the need for community and escapism in an increasingly virtual and exploitative existence. Electronic Dance Music Culture uses technology to assemble, in the words of Marshall McLuhan, a “global village,” and effectively produce an antithesis to the isolation that technology and increasingly individual ways of experiencing music has the potential to encourage.

3) The implementation of “Fluid Positionality” in the methodological process of urban popular musics, particularly that of rave culture, is an optimal way to negotiate “the vibe” as well as build rapport with informants and legitimacy as a community member within physical and virtual EDMC spaces.

What follows is a series of short, somewhat non-linear sections, rather than longer chapters that are interspersed with meta-voice and personal anecdotes. I chose to use shorter entries as a reflection of the “mosaic” of which global rave culture is comprised. Individual experiences and regional practices among other pieces of the puzzle fit
together to project a more complete understanding of the international rave scene and its inherent meaning in practitioners’ lives. However, I do make use of largescale divisions for the purposes of the nature of this dissertation, as a doctoral thesis in congruence with the requirements of my program. I begin with a literature review that opens with an acknowledgement of my experiences and positionality in the data gathering process, relevant discourse in active audiences, EDMC studies, points of notable intersectionality, and the question of how to write about music cultures that have as an inextricable quality the ingestion of illegal drugs. The second large-scale section “Flowstory: A General History of Flow Arts and Self Expression at Raves” discusses the history of Flow Arts, particularly the predecessors of gloving, the development of self-expression practices in Toronto, and barriers that glovers have faced internationally in the pursuit of their art. The last few entries of section two introduce some of my own theoretical analyses regarding the relationship between glover and community, glover and self, and glover and spirit. Section three details gloving as artistic practice and introduces my implementation of categories and my theory of the Flow Arts Triangle. Section four is a breakdown of the movements that create the larger lexicon of movements in the gloving style as well as the gloving technology, aspects of synaesthesia, and transferring live practices including oral traditions into the online realm. The final section is a self-expression of its own through a mosaic of my own research: a series of fieldnotes, pictures, and audio-visual materials.
A Brief Note About the Audio-Visual Materials

Please see Spotify Playlist #1: Tracks #1 and #2

Throughout this dissertation you will come across segments where I reference Spotify or YouTube playlists. This body of written work is intrinsically connected to the audio-visual material that partners with it. Please take the time to follow the link, and watch/listen to the reference material, when directed to do so within the broader process of reading this dissertation. The material provided in these playlists are related directly to the written text, and it is meant to be considered in relation to what appears directly herein, and precisely when indicated.

Above, for instance, you will see a note to consult “Spotify Playlist #1,” specifically the first two tracks on that playlist. Readers can access this playlist by following the footnote at the bottom of the page. Each playlist will be linked the first time it is introduced.

Please keep the playlists open and available by way of separate tabs on your laptop, ipad, or phone. The first two tracks of Spotify Playlist #1 showcase the namesake of this dissertation. The initial track is the original “Music Sounds Better With You” by Stardust, while the second is the popular Toronto cover by DJ Vanrip.

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4 The following link will take you to Spotify Playlist #1: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2VIHRN42C89pvEMyueS9tO?si=FWL_nY0XRFuLSkLafkQ3Sg.
Literature Review

1 Method and Experience

Electronic “dance” music is a relatively new area of academic interest. There has been a lot of concrete research in the areas of performativity, festival culture as isolated egalitarian spaces, “best practice” fieldwork methodologies, and other concepts such as the DJ as Shaman. So, I knew from the early stages of my research that I needed to absorb as much of the literature as I possibly could and attend as many events as possible. Over the course of my six-year study, I came across several dance music studies that took an experiential approach, and it seemed alien compared to what I might consider a “typical” dissertation project: one that relies heavily on written scholarly documents. I also came across a relatively new field of study known as “autoethnography,” which uses personal experience as a reflexive tool to analyze and interpret meaning from cultural practice. The purpose behind autoethnography, according to Deborah Reed-Danahay (2017), is to “provoke questions about the nature of ethnographic knowledge by troubling the persistent dichotomies of insider versus outsider, distance and familiarity, objective observer versus participant, and individual versus culture.”

The methodology itself is both “reflexive” and “collaborative,” and it situates the researcher as an inherently disruptive presence within the research space.

Canadian rave culture is, notably, absent from this academic conversation, however. It seemed appropriate, then, to draw on my own experiences and compare these to

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6 Reed-Danahay, “Autoethnography.”
scholarly work in both musicological communities and in electronic dance music communities. Following in the footsteps of my EDMC mentors, those with established work in the field of dance music, I chose to experiment with the field of participatory research and write as honestly and accessibly as possible, despite the difficulty this approach posed as a PhD student. Towards the end of my research period in 2018, I began to formulate several research questions as I reflected and prepared for the writing process. How does one reflect on several year’s worth of experiences in a sufficiently “academic” manner? How does one deal with the expectation that they should describe those experiences using what feel sometimes like inadequately framed academic materials? If we agree there is no universal truth and accuracy, why insist on universal methods and form?

The dissertation itself jumps between theoretical discussions and fieldnote excerpts, and will seemingly move around in a non-linear fashion. The academic discourse I draw from is primarily in the areas of reception and audience response. Reception, as Keith Negus defines it, designates the way “people receive, interpret and use music as a cultural form while engaging in specific social activities.” Raving is inherently social, and its cultural practices have materialized from the reception of audio-visual materials. Flow Arts is an “activity” that has resulted from this reception, and therefore, through this dissertation I will examine how people receive, interpret, and use music to explore self-expression. The accompanying fieldnotes depict me as narrator of my own story and in a variety of

situations where descriptions of my own experience of “reception” can be analyzed, and are perhaps familiar to the reader from an empathetic perspective.

In the review following I will first outline a series of methodological lines of inquiry. I open with a discussion of my own limitations as a researcher and comment on the scope of possibility for a study of this nature. The next section introduces and builds upon the work of other female researchers in the EDMC community. To conclude, in sections 1.4-1.6 I weigh the pros and cons of covert versus overt research, as well as detail some of my data gathering procedures, bringing in research from the field of ethnography. It should be noted, however, that topics such as phenomenology, gender, race, and music theory, while deserving of consideration within EDMC studies, will NOT be discussed at any great length in this work. They appear in passing, but are not given much attention beyond acknowledgement. The choice not to allow room for more in-depth analysis was due to a number of factors including narrowing the scope to a reasonable size for a PhD thesis, and was limited by the resources and experience level of graduate work completed by a single academic. There is certainly room and significant opportunity for exploration in the future and I hope to partner with other experts to more completely explore these topics in the future.

July 30th, 2015, House Party, London, ON:

Please see Spotify Playlist #1: Track #3
Mid-conversation with an interesting stranger, the driving synths began to invade my focus. I could see lips moving, but I lost focus and began to sway, closing my eyes involuntarily.

“All of the love we generate, the only thing that carries me on, there’s nothing we need that it can’t create,” Eric Prydz’s “Generate” pulses along with my heartbeat. I have been calling the track my “happy song” all summer long. Something about the track sparks electricity through my veins. I can’t not dance. I can’t not smile. A perpetual dreamer, I feel present in the moment and wow do I feel alive. I excuse myself as politely as possible and skip into the next room, the biggest smile plastered across my face. It’s so difficult to explain joy using words, but it sounds like “Generate” to me.

1.1 Positionality and Researcher Limitations
Conducting fieldwork within the Ontario rave community presented numerous obstacles, some of which took months to overcome. At first, I received backlash from members of the community when I voiced my interest in researching their music and cultural activities. Many potential informants thought I was an undercover detective, a “narc,” while others would agree to interviews at events and then call and cancel the following day.⁸

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⁸ In London, and in some other Canadian cities with prominent rave cultures, there are occasionally undercover police officers attempting to gain intel on drug trafficking circles. Of course, this was not my intention, but it instilled fear in any new person I met within the first year of my time in London, especially because I was an outsider in a place where many people knew one another.
The focus of this dissertation is to reflect on creative artistry and behavioural patterns by analyzing my experience and the experiences of other audience members in Ontario’s rave scene. I have attended over 250 events including fifteen festivals over the course of five years of participant-observation research. In addition to my core research activity — namely, participating in rave events — I reviewed extensive online materials about the Canadian and international rave scenes and curated my own radio show *Elektribe* through the campus station CHRW (94.9 FM). *Elektribe* focused exclusively on Canadian electronic music. I have embodied many roles within the Electronic Dance Music (EDM) scenes in London, Ottawa, Montréal, Calgary and Toronto. EDMC scholars such as Alice O’Grady and Simon Reynolds chose to immerse themselves fully into particular environments as part of their research processes. My methodology is based on a similar level of involvement, which has allowed me to make reasonable generalizations for this musical community in the province of Ontario.

Fieldwork requires substantial reflection and analysis, particularly regarding one’s advantages and limitations. It also engages with the concept of “intersectionality,” that is, the ways in which social stratifications such as race, class and gender intertwine to form one’s experience of marginalization. The term itself originated out of black feminist theory and is in some ways the inspiration for my adoption of fluid positionality as one of

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my methodological approaches. The process of reflecting on identity and power constructs, as this process pertains to relationships with informants, is known as “positionality.”

My “positioning” started with the onset of the PhD research process, when I first entered rave culture as a “researcher” in 2014. Previously, I had been involved in raving as both a dance-club violinist, akin to Lyndsey Stirling, and more simply as a long-time fan of rave music and culture. However, I had not attended events with enough regularity to be invited into any local community of ravers, a process that I soon discovered requires a great deal of time and effort. London, as an offshoot of the much larger and more influential Toronto rave scene, offered an entry point to the diverse, creative, and vibrant rave community in Canada at large.

As a cis-gendered female, Indigenous passing as Caucasian, middle-class researcher in my late twenties, I considered my positionality carefully and thought about how it might affect my research outcomes. Recent notable academic work by female EDMC researchers reflects critically on women’s changing positionality within the rave scene. In “Alone, Asian and Female,” female EDMC researcher Bina Bhardwa explains a

\[\text{References}\]


12 Lyndsey Stirling is an American violinist of commercial popular music who earned fame through her appearance on America’s Got Talent as well as for her medleys and covers on YouTube.

13 “Cis-gendered” is a term from the field of gender studies that refers specifically to the notion that one’s sense of personal identity and gender correspond with their birth sex, and that they feel “comfortable in their skin.” Luis A. Vivanco, “Cisgender,” in *A Dictionary of Cultural Anthropology*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

fieldwork issue that follows many female rave scholars, specifically, “conducting fieldwork in male-dominated settings result[s] in heightened-awareness (at least initially) of my gender and sexual identity.” Considering one’s bias in the research process has become a popular critical element in the work of female scholars. In 2008, Karenza Moore and Fiona Measham criticized Fiona Hutton (2006) for a lack of reflexivity. For example, her failure to explain how she gathered informants for her study was particularly problematic for Moore and Measham. Moreover, since the informants Hutton worked with were primarily white, heterosexual and middle-class women, they arguably represented only a narrow (and definitely not a generally representative) demographic within the broader club culture she studied. As such, while her study may ring true for the experience of the white, heterosexual, middle-class women with whom she spoke, it offers little beyond this particular point-of-view.

Sarah Thornton, perhaps rave culture’s most famous ethnographer to date, was also criticized for failing to consider her positionality vis-a-vis rave culture’s embrace of the drug MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), a psychoactive substance chemically related to ecstasy and taken recreationally by many ravers to stimulate pleasure and energy. In Club Cultures, Thornton’s most cited study, she experiments with MDMA during her fieldwork “in the name of research,” but she fails to provide any

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critical reflection about that experience, a choice that was remarked on most recently by
Bina Bhardwa.\(^ {18}\)

I very clearly positioned myself as “cis-gendered” and “feminine” during my fieldwork. Presenting as “feminine” in the rave space turned out to be beneficial to my research process, in fact, something that has been noted before in other club culture research. As Caitlin Robinson explains, in her study of “night life” in Beirut:

> Personally, I faced the task of securing a position as a relevant social actor in the nightlife scene in order to gain access to an important group of interlocutors. Essentially, I had to develop and display my wasta as an ethnographic method to the fullest extent possible. With no hereditary ties to Lebanon, and having initially only a handful of personal connections, I quickly came to see the importance of manipulating my "foreign" status and appearance as a methodological technique... Attention also shifted to my appearance as a "western" beauty when doing nightlife ethnography, and my physical appearance was a key factor in legitimizing my presence in these settings. This orientation had both positive and negative aspects.\(^ {19}\)

My own experience as a female researcher in the Ontario rave space mirrored Robinson’s, most notably in terms of her manipulation of “appearance as a methodological technique.” As I will explain, I used my physical appearance as a tool for legitimizing my presence as a female participant in the culture, a research tactic only very rarely noted by ethnographers of EDMC.

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\(^ {19}\) Caitlin Robinson, “Wasta Capital: Ethnographic Reflexivity at a Rooftop Nightclub in Beirut,” *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 5, no. 1 (2013), http://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2013.05.01.13. Wasta Capital is a type of social capital gained through one’s connections within the club scene. This is yet another version of the Bourdieu concept of cultural capital.
1.2 Female Representation and Perspective

While there has been an influx of women producers, managers, and DJs in the last decade, there is still an obvious gender gap in the electronic music industry, with males occupying many of the leadership roles and positions of power. In August of 2019, The Baltimore Sun published an article elucidating the male-centric nature of the EDM industry. One female DJ from Baltimore explained that women are not necessarily accepted as content producers or influencers even though some do earn positions in the field.\(^{20}\) Meanwhile, the annual EDM Statistics survey confirmed that the DJ and production community are both predominantly male, despite women representing half of listeners, at forty-nine percent.\(^{21}\) Scholarship in the United States on the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) practices of female DJs concluded that females have taken to supporting one another to promote fair opportunity in the male dominated scene.\(^{22}\)

Early on, I became aware of the power (im)balance in the Ontario electronic dance music scene and designed my methodology to operate strategically within its parameters. I chose to dress to “fit in” with my surroundings, a technique known as “covert” research (research that is not declared or made obvious to other participants within the environment). I did this because my first experiences as a researcher and feminist

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\(^{22}\) Rebekah Farrugia, Beyond The Dance Floor: Female DJs, Technology, and Electronic Dance Music Culture, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).
personality did not inspire trust or respect from my informants. I also noted that event coordinators and staff encourage women to “hang around” for social reasons, perpetuating a misogynistic environment of archaic social interaction. In a proactive response, I exploited my position as a youthful looking female and was often admitted into spaces that were off-limits to the general audience.23

1.3 Brushes with Fame

In 2015, while completing fieldwork at a pre-party for the music festival VELD, I was invited by management scouts to share a booth with The Chainsmokers, a well-known commercial EDM DJ and production duo.24 It was apparent that no men from the audience had been invited to share the booth. I concluded that the invitation was primarily based on my gender and appearance, certainly not on my position as a researcher. To be plain, I was being valued for my potential as a source of entertainment (as an attractive member of the opposite sex). These interactions cemented my “position" that rave culture follows patriarchal forms of human interaction. The imbalance in the inclusion of female industry members (as performers, producers, managers, etc.) is likely the cause, though I personally benefited from these behaviours.
My role as a researcher presented several other opportunities to speak with industry players. The fluid positionality I adopted allowed me to build useful research relationships, gain support for my work amongst people who were usually wary of outside researchers, and it provided access to "inner circles" of informants who would have otherwise been closed to me. The following is an example of a moment where my position as a researcher opened up an opportunity to converse extensively with a well-known DJ’s tour management and crew. On an *Air Canada Jazz* flight, with approximately twenty passengers, in January of 2016, I noticed Don Diablo, a celebrated “up-and-coming” Future House producer, while he was waiting to board. On the flight, I struck up a conversation with his tour crew, who happened to be seated nearby. They were intrigued by the idea that electronic dance music could be studied at the graduate level and noted that they were open to further conversation. Their intrigue told me that using my position as a researcher would sometimes be useful for gaining access to “scene players.” At other times, I felt it more advantageous to downplay my research position, opting to play the role of a “Sharon or Tracy,” a trope from Sarah Thornton’s work referencing a stereotypical club girl. Simply put, my “positionality,” as I both experienced and exploited it, remained fluid and was contingent on my knowledge of the situation and people with whom I was interacting, and a quick in-situ appraisal of that context.

1.4 *Dressing The Part*

For several months, I attended raves in London alone. On Halloween of 2014, DVBBS was scheduled to perform at London Music Hall, and I wanted to look like I belonged in
the crowd. I dusted off my red silk corset and fishnets, something I hadn’t been brave enough to wear in public before, and I tried my hardest to ensure my eyeliner was even.

I was completely new to the scene in London. Another PhD student at Western, who had connections inside the industry, gave me the number of a promoter to call for last-minute tickets. I texted the number around 5 pm and was told to come to the promoter’s hotel room at the Delta Hotel to complete the exchange. I showed up around 8 pm and knocked on the door. Joe De Pace, one half of Loud Luxury, opened the door and invited me to come and join them for the evening. Dressing the part played an important role in my research process, and I used this particular instance as a lesson in participant-observation work. The initial interaction, based on my appearance, led to an ongoing professional relationship.
1.5 Peace, Love, Unity, Respect (PLUR) and Race

Some EDMC scholars have argued that Caucasians are the dominant ethnic group at modern raves. Their conclusion regarding the ethnicity of ravers often goes hand-in-hand with the notion that an egalitarian utopia in the rave’s past has deteriorated.

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25 Photo taken from Premier Life’s Facebook page at the following link: https://www.facebook.com/premierlife/photos/a.1015390131837729/1015391338504275.
26 This section offers an acknowledgement of this important topic in the discourse surrounding rave culture rather than an in-depth discussion. It should also be noted that for the purposes of this study, I did not go into any detail regarding the racial intersectionalities and personal experiences of my informants. In fact, my informants wished to avoid the topic within the context of their art. In order to be reflexive and show awareness, I chose to offer observational comments in lieu of a more thorough discussion and leave it open for another paper.
Carnage echoed this “prelapsarian” narrative of decline, in September of 2018, when he declared the “death of PLUR,” on Twitter after fans publicly condemned one of his performances.29 PLUR is a prevalent ideology within rave culture that encourages peace, love, unity and respect among practitioners. Judy Park explores this narrative in detail in her thesis on raving in California:

As the black and Hispanic gay groups found a sense of belonging within the underground dance scenes in New York City, the British working-class youth also found a sense of belonging within the first raves. Although the rave scene has since been commercialized and popularized around the globe (McCall 2001; Measham et al. 2001; Anderson 2009), the notion that it strives to be a space accepting of all identities remains today through the ethos of PLUR. [I evaluate] the validity of PLUR’s promise through the perspectives and experiences of Asian American participants who invoke the ethos to justify their participation in a white-dominated space.30

Hakim Bey, author of the famous anarchist manifesto “T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism,” is credited as one of the inspirations for the broad embrace of “egalitarianism” seen in raves of the historic past, especially in the British illegal warehouse raves of the early 1990s.31 As anonymous rave spaces have ceded to large commercial venues, scholars have marked a change in the general ideologies that ravers claim to embrace through their creative cultural practice.

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PLUR, which appeared frequently during the so-called “Storm Rave” period in New York City (ca. 1991 – 1992), remains alive and well in some scenes. In London, Ontario, for instance, where I did the majority of my fieldwork, PLUR was a guiding principle for many of the rave events I attended there. Even so, many ravers claim the peace and love aspects of PLUR to be long “over.” In fact, according to Park (2014), those aspects were arguably nothing more than a rationalization for ignoring colour-blind racism from the very first:

Oppression-blind ideologies, such as color-blind racism and postfeminism, allow privileged groups to deny the prevalence of systemic oppressions based on social categories such as race, class, gender and sexuality. The subsequent belief that the U.S. is now “post-racial” and “postfeminist” is further amplified within rave culture based on the ethos of PLUR.

Based on personal observation, I would say that my positionality as a Caucasian female makes me a minority in Toronto’s underground scene. I am also a few years older than the average raver I observed. While the electronic music scene has a great number of participants in their early thirties, the most dominant age range is between 18 and 24, according to the most recent statistical study conducted by Nielsen Holdings in 2014. As a (now) 32-year-old female, I fall outside that dominant age range. That said, as mentioned previously, part of my “positioning” involved concealing my age through fashion, which was modelled after the dominant female styles I observed at the

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32 For more information on the Storm Rave Movement please see the following resources: Rave America: New School Dancescapes by Mireille Silcott (1999), and articles from the revival celebration in 2015 such as https://mixmag.net/read/how-nycs-legendary-illegal-storm-rave-was-revived-for-one-night-only-blog.  
33 Park, Searching For A Cultural Home, 4.  
commercial raves I attended. In fact, I often passed for a much younger age at these events, usually being misidentified as an “early-twenty-something.”

Figure 2: In a typical rave outfit, age 26, 2015.35

35 Picture taken by Chamilleon Photography in Ottawa, ON, 2015.
Figure 3: Photo of an EDC raver wearing a similar costume to my above example, complete with fun coloured hair.36

Figure 4: Sporting body paint and jewels for Ever After Festival, 2017.

1.6 Positioning Myself in the Research Space: Snowballing

Stepping outside my covert exterior and admitting my purpose in the research space often had one of two conflicting outcomes. Informants sometimes displayed extreme discomfort and anger, or intense curiosity and enthusiasm. The latter often resulted in leads to additional informants, a sampling technique called “snowballing.”

Understanding the appropriate time to reveal my research interests to informants required intuition and experience. Some relationships with informants were accompanied by misogynistic attitudes, which although unwelcome, were tolerable "in the name of

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38 Mixing qualitative data gathering methods such as in this case with purposeful sampling as well as snowballing is suggested by recent scholars (Proctor et al. 2009; Landsverk et al., 2012; Palinkas et al., 2011; Aarons et al. 2012).
research.” However, the community members with whom I was most closely involved were much more egalitarian in their activities and attitudes than participants described at commercial events by recent scholarship by Park.

1.7 Theoretical Frame: EDMC Research

EDMC research emerged from a variety of academic disciplines, ranging from cultural studies to journalism. Research findings in the field thus derive from a broad array of methodologies and address multiple interests. Quantitative research, informal interviews, and experimental research methods (i.e. performative studies and audio essays), are all common in the field, though the ethnographic framework tends to dominate.

The “first wave” of EDMC scholarship, published between 1995 and 2000, determined that participants’ experiences cannot be analyzed from an outsider’s perspective alone, and quickly questioned traditional methods of qualitative data collection, specifically, observation-based modalities. The notion that researchers should take a “back seat” in

39 Thornton adopts this phrase as a disclaimer or blanket for her choice to partake in drug consumption as an experiment.

the research process, that is, methods that effectively efface the researcher’s own subjective bias, were quickly jettisoned as “aesthetic” and, more simply, inaccurate. 

Despite these caveats, I found myself embracing the work of ritual studies researcher Tim Olaveson, whose “experientially based” research interprets the Canadian rave scene in the late 1990s from “the bottom up,” as it were, beginning with his own personal experiences within it.\textsuperscript{41} Olaveson’s “experientially based” paradigm applies exceptionally well to the experience of Flow Arts, in fact. While the influx of personalized listening has offered a less communally interactive vision of music reception for future generations, electronic music consumption has continued to thrive on “live” ritual experiences, elucidated through sensory stimulants such as strobe lighting. Sensory stimulation could be enhanced through the conduction of bass heavy sound systems, LED (Light Emitting Diode) light systems and complex visual storylines on stage screens. The effect is amplified with the introduction of certain drugs such as MDMA, so-called “acid” (LSD-25) and psilocybin mushrooms, all of which contain varying hallucinogenic properties. 

Work such as Olaveson’s remains rare, however. EDMC remains in its genesis stage, and it still lacks a comprehensive methodological framework.\textsuperscript{42} That said, commonalities in research clearly exist. For instance, researchers regularly borrow methodologies from


very particular academic fields, usually adopting ethnographic techniques from anthropology, sociology, and ethnomusicology.\textsuperscript{43} The most common combination of these methodologies includes in-depth interviews and prolonged integration into the subculture in question as “participant-observers.”\textsuperscript{44}

I have yet to come across more than a handful of EDMC scholars who opt not to use these two methods as their primary form of data collection. Recently, however, scholars have begun to establish new ways of translating what is known in the rhetoric as “the vibe,” that is, the sensorial experience (the “meat and bones,” as it were) of EDMC, which often evades literary description. Graham St. John argues that the difficulty in translating this experience in print occurs because “text takes a back seat to sonic and body arts . . . dance is an art form irreducible to the written word.”\textsuperscript{45} EDMC scholars such as St. John and Reynolds contend that experience-based research is the only way to understand the music and the culture. Alice O’Grady explains that “to experience . . . ‘the vibe,’ fully, you cannot be located outside of it.”\textsuperscript{46} Luis-Manuel Garcia echoes O’Grady’s sentiments, cautioning “don’t mess with the vibe,” and that “a great deal of the social interactions, gestures and performances in nightlife scenes are actually rather fragile, depending on the mood and atmosphere to be right in order to find expression.”\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{43} For further reading on methodologies in sociological studies please see Howard Becker’s books \textit{Outsiders} (1963) and \textit{Sociological Work} (1970).
\textsuperscript{44} Thornton, \textit{Club Cultures}. Reynolds, \textit{Generation Ecstasy}.
\textsuperscript{46} Alice O’Grady, “Spaces of Play,” 102.
\textsuperscript{47} Garcia, “Doing Nightlife and EDMC Fieldwork,” 9.
Garcia is implying here that to draw attention to oneself as a researcher could contaminate the data collection process. Similarly, Graham St. John has said that “we’ve travelled a long way from the work of Sarah Thornton,” who made it clear that she was an outsider at the onset of the research process.48

1.8 Issues

Please see Spotify Playlist #2: The Vibe

For this segment, see Spotify Playlist #2: The Vibe.49 You may listen to the music while reading this segment or take time away from reading to immerse yourself in the reference material. The playlist consists of music that embodied musical representations of “The Vibe” in-situ between 2014-2019. These were tracks that distracted every conversation, changed the energy in the space, and “got the party going,” as it were. The list of “top” tracks varies over time, so it is a list of specific examples from my period of research. One example that stands out was in the summer of 2017 at VELD Music Festival when Tiesto dropped his track with Sevenn called “Boom.” Reliving the memory, I was sitting against a fence at the back of the main stage. I can still feel the bubble of excitement in my gut when I heard the track play, and I immediately jumped up to dance. All around me hundreds of people had stopped what they were doing and were dancing low to the ground or jumping around radically. You could physically feel the energy amplify a hundred-fold. It’s a vivid memory for me. How can I make that shared feeling, the

48 St. John, “Writing The Vibe.”
49 The following link will take you to Spotify Playlist #2: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/38rYcJuzZqRavud5Ea0Rq1?si=iECnfXC1Q8ejtqfHXKzW8w.
“vibe,” academically meaningful? How do I convey "the vibe" to people who only want to study it, and not necessarily experience it?

1.9 My View

The vibe is a special “pocket” of experience in rave culture. You find this pocket when you surrender to the larger “rave” experience. From my own perspective, it is most eloquently encapsulated by the moment a popular song plays at an underground rave. So-called “summer tracks” are especially potent in “vibe” potential. I define a summer track as any commercial track released at the start of summer (roughly May to June), which contains catchy lyrical content, a heavy drop, and/or a tropical flair. The general mood of the tune is often uplifting, and it finds broad appeal with younger demographics.

In the summer of 2017, “the vibe” manifested in “Boom” by Tiesto. In the summer of 2018, it manifested as “Losing It,” by Fisher. Last year, in 2019, it was “Body” by Western University graduates Loud Luxury that most consistently occupied “vibe” position at nightclubs and raves. To explain in Cartesian terms, the vibe is primarily about the emotional, even primal response a track elicits from a crowd, and the sense of communal energy that transmits across the event infectiously. The music is perhaps dismissed because it’s lyrical content is less than intellectually stimulating. To illustrate, the entirety of the lyrics to “Boom” reads: “bring that ass back like a boom boom boom boom

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50 DJs typically release new music on a seasonal schedule to ensure their success is optimized. In May and June there will be an influx of releases and some will catch on as “summer tracks” that are played in all the sets at major festivals in Canada. The two mentioned above are examples of such tracks.
boom boom…never give a motherfuck.”\footnote{Lyrics to “Boom” by Tiesto & Sevenn (2017).} Fisher’s track simply sings “I’m losing it” repetetively, while the lyrics to “Body,” a song that references dating in Toronto, hardly make any grammatical sense at all: “Body on my, losin’ all my innocence, yeah, body on my, grindin’ on my innocence, yeah.”\footnote{Lyrics to “Losing it” by Fisher (2018), and “Body” by Loud Luxury (2017).} Regardless, as described above in my fieldnotes, the music affects audience members and creates the air energy referred to by researchers as “the vibe.” What is the source of this energy? What aspect of the music is effective in its creation, and how should we judge that in comparison to other music we consider valuable?

Rave music has always been primarily about community and catharsis. The music itself is loud and conductive with human bodies. In particular, the “drop,” the pseudo chorus of a track that presents an impressive, typically louder, bass-heavy line that repeats, is one quality of the soundscape that conducts rhythmic emphasis throughout the body. The drop often acts as the climax of the work and is preceded by some kind of sound and speed increase with subdivisions beginning at 4 and moving through 8, 16, and so on. It is one of many distinct ways of creating emotional and physical affect on a rave audience. Defining how this musical affects its audience is complicated, given the multitude of genres, some vastly different from one another. For example, it is also true that some forms of electronic dance music do have meaningful and thought provoking lyrical content. Trance, for example, is one subgenre that is not only musically pleasing, but contains a “message” so-to-speak. A genre such as Melodic Dubstep, is more likely to
affect its audience with its grand chordal structures and emotionally charged lyrical line. Recently, Bass artists like Canadian group Black Tiger Sex Machine (BTSM) have leaned towards a “heavy metal” guitar riff which is more aggressive. The fusion of these styles has also encouraged audience members to start moshing pits at shows, so clearly the aggression in the musical catharsis moment is of importance to some people. Musically, bass music is fairly aggressive in the drum kit attacks and the synthetic noises included in the track. All of these aspects are perhaps meant to allow for emotional outletting through consumption. Due to the collective energies amassed at live events, ones emotional and physical feelings could reach even greater release than simply listening at home.

As a kid who grew up in the 1990s, I have always imagined the energy that accumulates in these electric “vibe” moments, particularly ones that culminate in a “drop,” as a “Power Up” from the famous Japanese anime Dragon Ball Z. A Power Up amplifies a character’s life-force. Perhaps, then, some readers may instinctively know what I am trying to get at if I say “the vibe” is a musical moment that amplifies your life-force. The “vibe” evades any attempts to pin it down definitively, in words or print. It is a collective energy, a phenomenon, which is immensely challenging to articulate on paper, let alone using the conservative and dispassionate essay forms that tend to dominate in academe. How can I convey the vibe in a primarily written format such as this, though? How can I get people who would consult this sort of writing to understand that sort of energy and care about the disjuncture between experience and analysis?
1.10 Navigating Nightlife and EDMC Communities: Rapport Building on the Inside & Outside

While in London, I utilized two types of anthropological methods for gathering data, including participant-observation and participant action research (“PAR”). My diverse roles as both a participant and performer provided me with a suitable positionality to comment on artistic aspects of the scene that could easily remain beyond the reach of scholars without musical training working in this field.

Urban popular music studies situate the Western-raised researcher as an “insider” by default. However, scholars must treat EDMC as a “foreign” culture. Informants in the

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53 Photo retrieved from Pinterest at https://i.pinimg.com/564x/6b/1d/bd/6b1dbd7e449640205c7244fa5056d51c.jpg.
54 Participant Action Research is a type of community-oriented research. The aim behind this approach is to explore an existing issue and upon reflection, propose and implement a possible solution.
community will, in fact, reject the advances of researchers until they prove their
commitment to understanding the community’s perspective. Luis-Manuel Garcia, an
ethnomusicologist and postdoctoral research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for
Human Development in Berlin, Germany, clearly identifies this common issue in his
editorial introduction to the “Doing Nightlife and EDMC Fieldwork” edition of

*Dancecult*:

If you are doing fieldwork, you need access—to people, to spaces, to information,
to events, to personal archives—and access only comes with trust. You need to
know what is going on in the scene, you need people to open up to you and tell
you their stories, you need to hear about and attend the events that make the scene
what it is. And yet, participants in “underground” scenes have very good reasons
to be wary of inquisitive scholars and journalists: part of underground scenes’
self-ascribed subcultural value is their low visibility, while increased visibility has
historically been associated with some form of harm to the scene. What little
information about underground scenes that does reach the general public—often
through journalists and ethnographers—has a history of being distorted and
damaging. For example, most rave scenes were hit with a “moral panic” (Hier
2002; Thornton 1996) at some point during the 1990s, much of which was
facilitated by outsiders gaining access to the rave scene and then publishing
reports that portrayed raves as teenaged drug-and-sex orgies. This had a very real
and lasting impact on the rave scenes of the 90s, leading to police crackdowns,
legislative bans, and the criminalization of rave promoters. Along with journalists
and social scientists in criminology, epidemiology and drug-use studies,
ethnographers have played a significant role in producing the kind of
institutionally backed knowledge that provided political fodder for anti-rave
measures.55

This conflict is a common issue within the anthropological field, noted in the “rapport
building” sections of several instructional fieldwork manuals such as *Essential

*Ethnographic Methods* and *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research*.56 It has

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also been noted specifically as a common issue among EDMC scholars.\(^{57}\) When I first began my research, I too received backlash from scene members who feared I was a police informant or, at the very least, that I was not a friend to them. Moreover, members of the underground rave scene in Ontario will often publicly chastise newcomers for their poor taste in music. “Proving” oneself as worthy of their time requires a constant presence at local events, and the methodical cultivation of close friendships and political connections, coupled with participation in EDMC cultural arts such as gloving and shuffling, which I examine in greater detail below.

Building relationships, and working towards an “insider” position within the study group, is referred to in anthropology as building an “emic” analytic position.\(^{58}\) It has been suggested by scholars in multiple fields, including ethnomusicology, anthropology, and sociology, that emic perspectives are important to grasp prior to undertaking any reflexive work. If emic perspective is not grasped, the research is at risk of becoming “ethnocentric,” that is, analyzed from the perspective of one’s own biases related to their culture, and therefore compromised data. Emic perspectives are necessary to acquire during the research process for EDMC due to the guarded attitudes of practitioners who choose to “let loose” in EDM environments. As a result, it is not appropriate to remain objective in a traditional sense or take an “etic” (outsiders) perspective towards rave culture.

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Scholars working in a diverse range of disciplines have problematized the concept of “objective” research well enough by now that their arguments do not require rehearsing, especially those that pertain to the study of music and musical cultures. The type of objective research I refer to here assumes researchers do not include themselves as a factor in the process or outcome of their data collection. In qualitative research, this process is often complex, and more specifically, in ethnography, it is often an impossible task. The researcher’s presence is necessary to develop relationships with informants, and the very notion of a “participant-observation” research requires that the researcher takes a position as an agent within the very environment they claim to study. Therefore, researchers have developed self-reflexive methods to help mediate this issue. Issues arise when researchers cannot see past personal biases to deliver a neutral picture of the study group. Reflecting on “the self” is an important aspect of fieldwork as a method of mitigating unconscious bias. Stoeltje, Fox, and Olbrys comment poetically on this methodological issue using a useful metaphor:

Entering a culture to carry out ethnographic research, whether it is familiar or strange to the ethnographer, is much like looking into a pool of water. Depending on the light and the time of day, one may see a reflection of oneself, refracted perhaps because of the ripples on the surface. At sunset the reflection of the surrounding trees and foliage appear, and eventually one sees deeply into the water, simultaneously becoming aware of the underwater world, the forest, the sunlight, and one's own reflection.


Reflections as described in this metaphor can refer to reflexive analysis of data during the writing process, changing positionality within the environment of the study group, and acknowledging the limits of the research project. Our reflections, as such, are our lived experiences, our cultural background, and other aspects of human existence that inform our understanding of the world.

1.11 “Insider” Positionality, MDMA & Limits of the “Research” POV

Over the years, simple observation has become less credible in study of EDMC and other ethnographic fields. Moreover, as noted in the subsection directly above, the notion of “absolute objectivity” in research has been problematized by academics across anthropological fields. Bruno Nettl, in his influential book, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*, devotes an entire chapter to the importance of gaining insider status. Indeed, in his section on field work, an informant unceremoniously proclaims that Nettl (the researcher/outsider) “will never understand” their music. Insider status can be a fluid concept, however. Therefore, interactions will have hierarchal tendencies based on the contextual position of the participants. For instance, if the informant is a male, and the researcher is female, the degree of insider status may alter depending on topics discussed. Park emphasizes just such a discrepancy:

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61 This term is the colloquial academic term for “emic” in anthropology. It implies the researcher has either become a member of the community under study or had some membership prior to the research process. “Etic” is the perspective of the observer if they are not a member of the social group in question. Bruno Nettl, “You Will Never Understand This Music: Insiders and Outsiders,” in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005: 157-168.

I sensed hesitation from some of my male informants when I asked them why they think that there are not as many successful female deejays or producers in the EDM industry. Nevertheless, many still expressed sentiments of male supremacy: men are more ambitious and better with technology, while women are not as serious about the music or driven by fame. These expressions of male supremacy despite my identity as a woman highlight the extent to which oppression-blind ideologies allow dominant groups to justify systemic differences with negative stereotypes of oppressed groups.63

Insider status may also fluctuate throughout the research process. Consequently, the researcher’s interpretation will always be subjective.

1.12 Researching ‘The Self’

When I began my research into the Toronto rave scene I was a complete novice. I had used the summer, following graduation from a Master’s degree in performance, to read all of the research I could find on electronic dance music. I also had a base “classroom” knowledge of ethnography and anthropological methods, which I discovered in undergraduate courses. Despite my efforts to come into this process prepared, though, I felt like a fish out of water. I had fueled my dreams of research with (ethno)musicological fantasies and was determined to follow in the footsteps of greats such as Susan McClary and Bruno Nettl. While the musicology department is strong at my institution, there are few with experience in contemporary methods of ethnomusicological research. Dead-set on making my research dreams come true, and in the graduate student rite of passage informally known as “fake-it-till-you-make-it,” I took it upon myself to self-educate in methods of qualitative data gathering. I finally developed my working methodology over

a five-year period of research, and through a series of small studies in which I
implemented a “trial-and-error” approach to testing these methods, I developed what I
feel is the most effective approach for the purposes of studying Flow Arts and raving in
Toronto. What began as an interest in a complete and thorough analysis of the culture in
Toronto, resulted in my unexpected adoption of the methodology known as
autoethnography.

1.13 What is Autoethnography? Why does it suit this study?

In a summary article for the Parkmore Institute, Dr. Zekaila Clarke broadly surveys
varying viewpoints on the evolving practice of autoethnography.64 Coined initially by
David Hayano, in 1979, to reference anthropologists who study “their own” cultures, the
definition of autoethnography has since expanded to encompass a plethora of
perspectives.65 Scholars find the term difficult to define, and it has multiple meanings.
However, it can be described in general terms as research that values personal lived
experiences of culture as qualitative data.66

64 Zelaika S. Hepworth Clarke, “Autoethnography – Researching the Self as a Method of Socially Critical
Inquiry,” Parkmore Institute, October 2018, accessed September 22, 2019,
http://www.parkmoreinstitute.org/autoethnography-
researching-the-self-as-a-method-of-socially-critical-
inquiry/.
65 David M. Hayano, “Autoethnography: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects,” Human Organization 38,
1979: 113-20. Laura L. Ellingson, and Carolyn Ellis. “Autoethnography As Constructionist Project,” in
Overview,” Qualitative Social Research,12(1), 2011.
Clarke divides the term “autoethnography” into three component parts: “auto” meaning self; “ethno” meaning culture(s) or people(s); and “graphy” meaning a representation, description, or revealing.\(^{67}\) The practice of including the researcher’s “self” in academic study grew from a growing concern amongst researchers that participant-observation methods, while still crucial, should include a reflexive component.\(^ {68}\) Reflecting on my own process of autoethnographic studentship, the research that resonated the most with my own experiences was Goodall’s description of the “new autoethnography”: “creative narratives shaped out of a writer’s personal experiences within a culture and addressed to academic and public audience.”\(^ {69}\) Including personal experience in their work allows scholars to break down barriers, not only between self and other, but also between academic and recreational readerships.

Autoethnography can also be compared to Hunter S. Thompson’s work in so-called “gonzo” journalism, which he began in earnest in the mid-1960s. I do not only reference Thompson because of his infamy, but also because I greatly respect his willingness and commitment to understanding the perspectives of the people he studied, and (as best he could) on their own terms. In EDMC studies, the scholarly community has quickly adopted autoethnography as a definitive method, most analysts agreeing that it remains

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\(^{68}\) Gonzo journalism refers to an approach to reporting on culture from a first-person perspective that refrains from claiming objectivity. In this way, Gonzo journalism positions objectivity as a myth. The list of Gonzo Journalists begins with Hunter S. Thompson, who spent a year of the 1970s living and riding beside the Hells Angels and includes others such as Tom Wolfe and P.J. O’Rourke. Additionally, Thompson’s treatment of drug use in his prose is comparable to some academic work in the field of electronic music culture.

\(^{69}\) H. Lloyd Goodall, *Writing the New Ethnography*, (Lanham, MA: AltaMira Press, 2000).
highly conducive to quality research. Graham St. John, in fact, goes so far as to call the methodology a template for negotiating the personal battle between objective and subjective observation that EDMC scholars must inevitably engage through their work.²⁰

Scholars in the field of EDMC celebrate complete immersion into rave spaces as the most appropriate method for analyzing the culture and its music. The primary rationale for this approach is two-fold. First, I am convinced that rave culture remains an always “experiential” medium. Much the same as learning to ride a bike, I simply cannot fathom how researchers might comprehend, let alone analyze, raves without first experiencing them. Secondly, despite the prevalence of egalitarian ideals, rave communities are both private and exceedingly distrusting of “foreign” actors. Researchers must earn a certain level of trust from informants before they can gain enough “credibility” to act in an inconspicuous manner within the group, which I have only ever seen earned over an extended period. Without trust and understanding, the practitioner’s perspective, and the cultural ideologies to which they subscribe, are less likely to come to the fore. Even worse, they could so easily be misrepresented by an analyst unfamiliar with the cultural texture of the terrain they examine.

Queen Cry Baby, With A Tear In My Eye²¹

Please see Spotify Playlist #1: Track 4 and Track 5

²¹ Figure 7 shows Johnny Depp as the character Cry-Baby in the musical film of the same name from 1990. The character sheds single tears of emotion as his calling card.
Rave music has a way of connecting physical feelings with emotional responses. I think, to reflect on the reasons why rave music has meaning for its audience, we have to let go of traditional analytic modalities and open ourselves to one that makes room for, and even values, primitive human responses such as crying or a need to move your body as intellectual and important. For example, four summers ago at the onset of my fieldwork, I was running at my cabin in Manitoba and listening to DJ duo Tritonal’s podcast, Tritonia. I was by myself, jogging through the forest in the middle of nowhere with skyline stretching out forever on either side of me. One of Tritonal’s songs that I had heard several times, “Now or Never,” began its first few chords. By the time it got to the chorus—I’d rather have one night, than nothing forever, yah that would be alright with me, it’s now or never—I had become intensely emotional and was running with tears streaming down my face. I couldn’t stop sobbing for several minutes after the song was over. The lyrics were rather basic, so I felt almost embarrassed by my reaction. This situation builds on my discussion of “the vibe” earlier in that the lyrical content was basic, and I could not understand my response from an intellectual level. I genuinely believe that our emotions and our bodies have a residual reciprocal effect, and it is reflected in the way that young people are drawn to rave music, a primarily instrumental genre. It is also one of the most important reasons to consider the self and the bodily experience in researching rave culture. In the film Cry Baby, featuring Johnny Depp, the love story between two teenagers from opposing social classes changes the town in which they live. The film challenges taboos by featuring a lead male “bad-boy” (Depp) who can only shed one single tear to show emotion until the end of the film when he is finally able to cry from both eyes. Emotional output is important for health and happiness, and while
raving might be the “bad-boy” of musical genres, falling in love with its charm has healing properties.


**Figure 7: Cry Baby shedding a single tear.**

We can understand my emotional running experience, and the complex notion of catharsis from within the realm of *kinesthesia*. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone explains:

> Self-movement does not show itself in ways other than the way it is. And that way is moreover ephemeral, not enduring. Obviously, something quite different is going on in the perception and constitution of self-movement than in the perception and constitution of objects in the world.

In other words, our own experience of emotions when we move will be subjective. However, it is still real, valuable, and in my case as a researcher, relevant to the study of rave culture as it exists on the dancefloor. To me, it means that offering my perspective when I feel something, such as “the vibe,” is no less important than one of my

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informants. They are all leading towards a more complete understanding of dance music and its place in Western culture.

1.14 Active Audiences and the 21st Century Raver

“Music is life, that’s why our hearts have beats,” is a phrase one of my best friends recently tattooed on her body. Nowhere else do I find this phrase more relevant than with repetitive, beat-driven music like EDM. Perhaps this phrase illuminates why young people are so drawn to its life-stimulating energies. As a society, many of us are drawn to popular music as our primary listening material. However, for a select group of listeners, including many musicians I know, standardized or “simple” musical structures lack a certain je-ne-sais-quoi. Postcolonial scholar Iain Chambers makes a striking point about our conceptualizations of intellectual music in his work Urban Rhythms:

Critics of twentieth-century popular music have consistently castigated the use of such a musical formula [a/a/b/a or a/b/a/b]: surely the clearest sign of standardised, if not automated, commercial production they argued. They conveniently forget that the vast body of known musics, both European and non, have persistently worked with generally agreed musical structures whose skeletal frames have remained relatively fixed.74

What Chambers is illustrating for the reader, is that while society has separated classical and other certain types of “high-brow” musical works as more refined or more complex in some way, there is still a simplicity and structure that is common between the polarized genres of classical and popular music. Especially in an age where the classical symphony and our Canadian musical legacy CBC are struggling to remain current and

maintain financial stability, commonalities such as this should be noted and used to one’s advantage. Sometimes, the complexity is in the meaning that emerges out of the context of the work, rather than in the merit of difficulty in its composition, skill required for its performance, or expected knowledge base during the reception process.

1.15 EDM vs Adorno

Renowned philosopher, sociologist, and composer Theodor Adorno is well-known for expressing his concerns regarding the potentially deleterious effects of listening to mass-produced popular music, during the early- and mid-twentieth century. Adorno’s theories regarding what he termed “de-concentrated listening” were the beginning of academic disdain for pop and the new “teenage” culture blossoming from within its grasp. The offending sounds, Adorno asserted, were recognizable melodies, harmonies and rhythms standardized into a thoroughly repetitive format and incessantly promoted by the industry.\textsuperscript{75} Adorno claimed that popular music induced drowsiness in its listeners, effectively rendering them vulnerable and likely to “regress” into a child-like state.\textsuperscript{76} His fear came from a reasonable place regardless of how it may sound to readers of this dissertation. Adorno was a victim of the fascist regime in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. He watched as Nazi parties used the latest media technologies to dominate and manipulate the masses, and when he escaped to America, he was horrified to discover that music and media in the United States could, he argued, be similarly used against its inhabitants. According to Keith Negus, author of \textit{Popular Music in Theory}, Adorno was


deeply “concerned with how forms of culture could contribute to authoritarian forms of
domination and thwart any prospects for political critique or emancipatory social
change.” He wanted people to think for themselves and have autonomy over their
actions so that the world could be a safer and more equitable place.

Adorno has continually come to mind throughout my research process. His description of
popular music is perhaps most comparable with current electronic music, which is far
more minimalist and repetitive than the popular music of the late 1930s that so disturbed
him. Electronic music has a long history of being criticized for a perceived lack of
intellectual content or meaning. As Jean Baudrillard points out, the discotheque and
dance cultures more broadly have long epitomized what is considered the “worst” of
mass culture. There is a commonly held belief that dance music is “mindless,” and
dancing an endless rhythmic obedience. In Club Cultures, Sarah Thornton notes that
scholars tend to “privilege listening over dancing… visible over behind-the-scenes
performers, and live over recorded,” evoking Descartes’ theories of mind-body dualism.
Cartesian dualism, a perceived separation between the mind and the body where the mind
is intellectual and the body is primal and lacking intellect, persists in much public opinion
even today. Perhaps we should be afraid of the power of media to persuade the masses,
especially given our current political unrest in North America. Perhaps we should be
looking elsewhere for the culprit than in artistic expression and leisure activities. Iain

78 Jean Baudrillard, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, “The Beaubourg-Effect: Implosion and
79 Sarah Thornton, Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan
Chambers argues that while industries might create and market product with intention, they cannot always control the way it is moulded by audiences “for the expression of individual identities, symbolic resistance, leisure pursuits and forms of collective and democratic musical creativity in everyday life.” Adorno feared an increasingly passive audience. Modern concerns center on the leisure lifestyles of youth, and the misuse or abuse of drugs in the rave setting. Drugs are a consistent element of the experience of electronic music, having been a part of the culture from the earliest club and home party events in the late 1960s, and yet, many researchers do not discuss it in their work.

1.16 Drugs and Dance Music History

MDMA was first synthesized in Germany in 1912, and it was originally used by psychiatrists to “break down barriers and to enhance intimacy and communication.” It is also known to erase subjectivity in users by breaking down individual inhibitions and pacifying the ego. Some ravers assert that their use of the drug is strictly therapeutic, insisting it has helped them overcome social anxieties, therefore allowing opportunities to connect with other individuals more freely. The typical combination of drug use, a physical connection to musical characteristics, and visual stimulation can inspire participants not only to be individually moved by the event, but also to bond together in a

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81 Szatmary, Rockin’ in Time, 317.
83 In conversation with the author, 2015.
spiritual and communal way.

The so-called American “counterculture” took shape in the 1950s, with the emergence of the Beats, and an increased interest in Eastern religions and spiritual practices. In the 1960s, the San Francisco neighbourhood of Haight-Ashbury became a gathering point for hordes of young middle-class educated youth who joined a growing movement that protested The Vietnam War, vying instead for peace and love. In a preventative effort to curb social conflict due to overpopulation in the area, the “Council for the Summer of Love” was formed.84 Love was palpable in the California air, infusing the content of artistic endeavours including the most influential musical contributors of the time, The Beatles, in their anthem “All You Need Is Love.” Mind-altering drugs were consumed by musicians and audiences alike. Altered states inspired musical developments, resulting in the creation of Acid Rock and Psychedelic Rock. Jefferson Airplane suggested “feed your head,” while Dr. Timothy Leary encouraged the masses to “Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out.” Mind expansion, a journey to enlightenment, has been a common thread in the formation of alternative communities, including those in EDMC. For instance, Kool-Aid acid tests, a social experiment conducted during the late 1960s were intended to create “magical unity” between participants through the communal experience of illicit substances.85 The San Francisco Oracle advocated for “compassion, awareness, and love, and the revolution of unity for all mankind.”86 Peace, love and unity have been thematic constants throughout the countercultural movement. Woodstock Music and Art Fair in

84 Szatmary, Rockin’ in Time, 145.
Bethel, New York, 1969 was the climax, advertised as “3 days of Peace and Music.” The festival delivered on its promise despite being extremely over-populated and threatened with inclement weather.  

![Woodstock poster](https://www.flickr.com/photos/bootbearwdc/234464601)

**Figure 8**: The poster from August 15-27, 1969, Woodstock Music and Art Fair.

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87 See Figure 1 for advertisement poster.
At around the same time in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, queer community members were fighting homophobia. “Queer” is the modern, preferred term by many individuals who identify under the LGBTQIP2SAA umbrella. The famous police raid on the Stonewall Inn could perhaps be considered the big bang of EDMC. On June 28th in 1969, gay, lesbian, and transgendered patrons of the recognized queer space resisted arrest and put in motion the Gay Liberation Movement. Following this momentous occasion in history, early disco clubs emerged in the underground where mostly black and Hispanic gay men could practice freedom of expression. The community was also dependent on drug use, which was known to induce “communal ecstasy.”

It was during this time that David Mancuso began hosting exclusive parties at his home, The Loft, that began on Valentine’s Day in 1970 that were titled “Love Saves The Day.” While invitation only, the underground parties were made famous for their promotion of racial and sexual equality. In a project I conducted in 2016, I indicated that these parties were “a founding moment in the continuation of egalitarian ideals and development of what would later become the PLUR credo.”

A decade later, around the time that Chicago House was gaining a foothold, white upper-middle class patrons of a well-to-do gay club in New York were still upholding the concept of unity as a main aspect of the underground club environment. Members of The Saint nightclub, which was in business from 1980 – 1988, described the dancefloor

90 M Gillian Carrabre, “The PLUR Genealogy, A Rave Family History,” presented as part of the PhD program, January 13, 2016.
experience as a moment of unity by collective consciousness, “when everything disappeared.”\(^{91}\) But the participants were not feeling this connection abstractly; DJs made it their goal to unite the room through song choices and pacing.\(^{92}\) The eighties also saw the development of Chicago House and Detroit Techno that eventually made their way overseas to the UK. Perhaps it was the long-standing connection to the countercultural movement and the influential formative years in New York, but youth in London and Manchester used a hippie revival to express their generational struggles, laying claim on outdoor spaces in the name of love and peace. These parties became known as raves, the music, Acid House, and the final two summers of the 1980s were known nostalgically as The Second Summer of Love. The British scene shared many similarities to hippie counterculture. For instance, the scene became interdependently connected to drug use, specifically MDMA, or Ecstasy that was imported from Ibiza in the mid-eighties. D-Mob’s famous track “We Call It Acieed” was one stimulus of christening the UK genre “Acid House,” as well as its more direct namesake, the rock n roll genre of the original psychedelic movement: Acid Rock. Some retro aspects of the scene included baggy clothing, peace signs, messages of love and positivity, all ultimately connected to the drug Ecstasy, known as the love drug. Illegal raves garnered international renown for their unique communal spirit. Starting with Margaret Thatcher’s “Acid House Bill” and the subsequent “Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994,” that took place during the Acid House party movement in the UK after the “second summer of love” in 1989, there follows a synopsis of the ways in which the media and concepts such as moral panic


\(^{92}\) Lawrence, “The Forging of a White Gay Aesthetic,” 16.
have affected electronic music communities. Canadian and American histories have followed similar paths as a result of the war against illegal drug use at rave events.

1.17 How Do I Write About Drugs?
I considered several questions, albeit hesitantly, from the very first days of my research process: Should I try rave drugs in order to experience what my informants are experiencing, in order to understand what they have to say about it? Why is drug use such an integral part of raving? What does it contribute to the overall experience?

In fact, most EDMC scholars, at the very least, have made efforts to engage in this cultural practice. As noted above, some of the best-known works are written by authors who acknowledge that their research led them to try “raving on MDMA,” as it were, at least once. Yet many of them did not remark on the experience in terms of its relevance to, and deep historical connection with, raving. Was it worth attempting “in the name of research,” as Sarah Thornton once wrote? I decided to explore this avenue as a researcher, and I found it immensely informative. I found MDMA enhanced the sensorial experience or raves, particularly when it comes to Flow Arts practices. So while many of the artists who practice Flow Arts do not wish to be labelled as drug users, it is still a large part of the rave experience, and is therefore an important aspect of any research program on the rave experience.
Responsible use of narcotics remains an impossibility in mainstream accounts. There is a collective fear among ravers concerning losing social status if their use of MDMA is disclosed to a broader society that condemns it. I now understand their fear with raw clarity. Many of the most important people in my life have had life-altering experiences using drugs. Some ravers explore spirituality through experimentation with particular drugs such as “shrooms” (magic mushrooms) and other hallucinogens, a phenomenon that is well-documented in terms of the modern rave’s connection with Shamanism.

However, due to the societal and institutional views on casual drug use as a road to addiction and hedonism, these are not connections ravers wish to advertise publicly. Some scholars, notably those in the medical field, are attempting to confute this common belief.

As one with a propensity for addiction, I can admit that drugs have a very dark side, one that caused me a lot of pain and suffering between 2017 and 2018. However, they can also change people’s lives in real and valuable ways. They can make simple moments unforgettable. They can change your outlook on the world in new and exciting ways. They can be a source of inspiration and I very much believe in their power to do good (as well as evil). Other EDMC scholars have written about their altered states, as part of the

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94 Examples of this include “Technoshamanism” by Scott R. Hutson (1999), Trance Formation by Robin Sylvan (2005), and Rave Culture and Religion by Graham St. John (2003) to name just a few of the most influential.

overall rave experience, though it is rare to find something that feels honest or complete to me. The academic institution can feel so conservative that even to consider writing about this sort of experience and work feels dangerous and an impediment to being taken seriously as a legitimate researcher. As such, I feel it is doubly important to situate this work in existing research. In the mosaic immediately below, I offer some academic viewpoints that I feel are pertinent to this sort of participant-observation research. Everyone I cite in the next section is a well-known and widely celebrated researcher in their field, and they all claim to have experienced similar obstacles when navigating the prevalence of drug-use during the research process.

**Simon Reynolds, Generation Ecstasy**

This time, fully E’d up, I finally grasped viscerally why the music was made the way it was; how certain tingly textures goosepimpled your skin and particular oscillator riffs triggered the E-rush; the way the gaseous diva vocals mirrored your own gushing emotions. Finally, I understood ecstasy as a *sonic* science. And it became even clearer that the audience was the star: that guy over there doing fishy-finger dancing was as much a part of the entertainment – the tableau – as were the DJs or bands. Dance moves spread through the crowd like superfast viruses. I was instantly entrained in a new kind of dancing – tics and spasms, twitches and jerks, the agitation of bodies broken down into separate components, then reintegrated at the level of the dance floor as a whole. Each subindividual part (a limb, a hand cocked like a pistol) was a cog in a collective “desiring machine,” interlocking with the sound system’s bass throbs and sequencer riffs. Unity and self-expression fused in a force field of pulsating, undulating euphoria.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Reynolds, *Generation Ecstasy*, 05.
Sarah Thorton, Club Cultures

Saturday, 22 September 1990. Wonderworld, London W8, 11 p.m.

...We walk around the club. The venue is early-eighties plush, but it’s transformed for tonight’s club by large unstretched glow-in-the-dark canvases of surreal landscapes with rising suns and psychedelic snakes. A white boy, wired and talking a mile a minute, stops me in my tracks: ‘Want some “E”?’ He’s referring to ‘Ecstasy’ and he’s eating his words. The volume of the music is such that I can only catch bits of his sales pitch: ‘I got burgers and double burgers...fifteen quid.’ He is a poor advertisement for the effects of his wares. From his aggressive and jumpy delivery, I assume that he is really on some speed concoction or perhaps this is his first night on the job...  

...Kate pours me a champagne and takes me aside. A friend has given her an MDMA (the pharmaceutical name for Ecstasy) saved from the days of Shoom (the mythic club ‘where it all began’ in early 1988). We go to the toilets, cram into a cubicle where Kate opens the capsule and divides the contents. I put my share in my glass and drink. I’m not a personal fan of drugs – I worry about my brain cells. But they’re a fact of this youth culture, so I submit myself to the experiment in the name of thorough research (thereby confirming every stereotype of the subcultural sociologist). Notably, there’s ‘Pure MDMA’ for the VIPs and ‘double burgers’ for the punters. The distinctions of Ecstasy use are not unlike the class connotations of McDonald’s and ‘no additives’ health food.

Bina Bhardwa, Alone, Asian and Female

...Writing the self into textual accounts of ethnographic fieldwork has received peripheral attention in the field of club studies. For example, Thornton (1995) admitted to using ecstasy while conducting her club research yet, beyond this disclosure, failed to critically reflect on her experience and the impact of drug use on her subsequent research. Similarly, the work of Hutton (2006) has been criticized for the lack of attention given to her positionality within the Manchester club scene and in relation to those she studied (Moore 2007). Measham and Moore argue that, although club research is often implicitly shaped by partial insider knowledge, club researchers, constrained by ethics and politics are

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97 Thornton, Club Cultures, 139.
98 Ibid., 140-141.
reluctant to produce autobiographical, reflexive narratives, leaving evident gaps in the ethnographic literature (2006: 22).99

The degree to which I participated in the culture of those I was studying may have also influenced the participant reactions I received. While others (i.e., Thornton 1995; Tunnell 1998) have disclosed their use of illegal drugs during fieldwork in the name of “criminal verstehen” (Ferrell 1998: 27), I did not participate in the consumption of illegal drugs during my time in the field. However, as a participant observer, I danced, socialised and consumed a small amount of alcohol (usually a drink or two) as a way of blending in and participating in the social setting. As Palmer noted during fieldwork with an alcohol centred subculture of football fans, “while drinking enabled me to develop good rapport with my respondents, I also needed to position myself as an academic who was there to do a job” (2010: 427). Sobriety added to my professional armour in the field as well as ensuring my safety as a lone researcher. As the sober researcher in the midst of intoxicated dance consumers I occupied an “active,” but never “complete,” membership role (Adler and Adler 1987).100

_Graham St. John, Dancecult_

EDM researchers recognize that in order to successfully mediate the vibe, one has to _be there_. We’ve travelled a long way from the work of Sarah Thornton, who in _Club Cultures_ stated that she was “an outsider to the cultures in which I conducted research,” and who had “intents and purposes alien to the rest of the crowd” (1996: 2). The finest accounts are insiders’ stories which in the case of “House Music 101” (Apollo n.d.), has been available on the net for well over a decade, and is among the most moving of narratives, all the more given the author’s proximity to his subject, and which is unrestricted in relating the pleasures and the pain in the evolution of house music club culture. While the pleasurable aspects of EDMC have moved into research vogue by 2012, given the nature of state-sponsored research, much writing is guarded when it comes to psychoactivating compounds—for instance, psychedelics and other compounds subject to prohibition and control. Most students writing about psychedelic dance culture, for instance, are boxed in and stifled by their obligation to follow “human ethics” protocols possessing debatable applicability to their research projects. The standard procedure is that students must colour within the lines such that

100 Ibid., 51.
innovation is minimised and graduate students, as a matter of survival, simply trot out their deadline dissertations within the guidelines…

Significant progress has been made in the face of an institutionalised taboo, for published research over the past fifteen years or more has added to our knowledge of EDM cultures. Phil Jackson’s (2004) account of underground clubs in the UK impresses since the researcher did not baulk at his own experience with a variety of drugs integral to what he regarded as the reconfiguration of the habitus performed by regular participation in dance clubs. But most ethnographic research on drugs has focused on usage in socially marginal and lower socio-economic environments—research dominated by epidemiological and pathology concerns. Research into EDMCs requires altered methodologies suited to its compounds, populations and locales. Demonstrating in their Comprehending Drug Use how the ethnography of drug use “produces both new areas of knowledge and new areas of inquiry,” Bryan and Singer’s (2010: 2) approach has far reaching implications, for it suggests that drug ethnography has a transformative effect on method as well as the understanding of drug use. That said, it’s rather pointed that their book pays little attention to “dance drugs.” While the latter is an evolving field of research that is beyond the scope of this commentary to assess, it is pertinent to state that in efforts to overcome the limitations of specific methods—i.e. quantitative, epidemiological, phenomenological—and to become sensitive to the practices of risk and pleasure within the consumer settings of EDM events, researchers have begun to seek a distribution of cross-methodological approaches to make sense of their fields of study (e.g. Hunt, Moloney and Evans 2010)….As a global cultural phenomenon, EDM is internally diverse, with a multitude of scenes inflected with class, race, gender, sexual and age variables, impacting the character of experimentation with diverse compounds the adoption of which has shaped music and culture in ways that are only beginning to be understood.

Tabu Nightclub, Fall 2015

Please see Spotify Playlist #1: Track #6 and Track #7

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101 St John, “Writing the Vibe.”
102 Ibid.
Techno pumped out of the speakers in the dark basement space, a derelict afterparty location below Jacks, the popular bar for Western students in London. I have never been a fan of minimalist music despite having been raised in a family that championed contemporary classical music, a category that includes and often touts minimalism. I attended many concerts featuring the music of living composers such as Philip Glass, Arvo Pärt, my own father T. Patrick Carrabré, and others. I tried desperately to find the meaning or the connection emotionally to the most minimalist of contemporary classical music, to no avail. Techno is also incredibly minimalist. It is a such a popular genre, and has amassed a type of elitism that privileges so-called authentic sounds (a social development that can be linked with rock authenticity), that I felt inauthentic when I couldn’t find an appreciation for it. Finally, on the dancefloor of Tabu in the Fall of 2015 I connected viscerally with it. I “got” it.

*Tabu Nightclub 3:00 a.m*

Desperate for something to focus on besides the incessant repetition of techno, I fished dollar store finger lights out of my bag and carefully placed them on each of my digits, turning the lights on one at a time. I closed my eyes, despite the cloud of darkness in the room. I wanted so desperately to connect to the music in that moment. I didn’t want the night to be over just yet. I moved each finger intuitively to the shape of the 32-bar phrase, searching for the sounds that stood out and articulating them. I began to feel an inner
rhythm, a place of comfort and understanding that I didn’t realize I had inside of me. Suddenly, in this moment, moving my body, I felt like I finally understood techno.\textsuperscript{103}

**Collapse 2.0**

*Please see Spotify Playlist #1: Track #8*

I have experienced group inertia and friendship, but also private moments of gratitude. Sitting in the back of my friend’s truck at 4:30 a.m. as he drives through the city of London, windows down, street lights illuminating my face and the night darkening it in a steady rhythm. Zeds Dead’s Collapse 2.0 on the radio, a lullaby in my heart. The lyrics aren’t anything special, I barely notice them really. It’s the soundscape, and the rush of endorphins that transport me to another place. I let my head relax, falling back, my hair spinning around me wildly, eyes closed, and am present in the moment as the song surrounds my body like a great big hug “...But now this room is spinning while I’m trying just to fill in all the gaps...I never listen to what they say...yeah, you’re already gone...”\textsuperscript{104}

Live rave events are often designed to elicit emotional and physical responses to music. Live DJ performances now feature complex lighting schemes and media designs, as well as high quality sound systems. These sound systems, such as PK Sound, focus on bass enhancement and are designed to create an all-encompassing experience for audience

\textsuperscript{103} In support of my earlier explanation regarding “the vibe” of the community, and the effect of drug use on the audiovisual experience of raves, this night offered a holistic rave environment from which I could relate to the genre of techno.

\textsuperscript{104} Lyrics to “Collapse 2.0” by Zeds Dead, 2015.
members by enhancing the natural sound wave vibrations that conduct through the body. Examining sensorial experiences from an autoethnographic perspective provides a more complete analysis of what an audience member might experience than simply observing social or musical aspects of raves alone.

A study completed in 2013, which analyzes the effect of the bass drum on human dance, concluded both that “coordinated rhythmic movement and the shared feelings it evokes have proved their potency in holding groups together…listening to rhythm with a strong beat engages motor areas of the brain that could elicit sensations of pleasure.”105 Raving has often been criticized by the media for its hedonism.106 Sometimes, fans enhance their pleasure through the ingestion of “happy” drugs such as MDMA or Ecstasy, which can heighten emotions and sensory experience. The environment itself is designed for audiences to overload on sensory experiences with exciting visuals such as LED lasers and large-scale videos timed to the music; sound conducting systems as described above; and large groups of people producing a mass energy. How can researchers explore a more subjective vein of inquiry without being discredited for being too emotionally connected to the activity they study? How can one be a part of the community they study, even while they stand apart from it as an analyst? And how does one translate a physical

feeling into print?

A recent study by Solberg explains how physiological responses such as “increases in heart rate and galvanic skin response, experienced as goosebumps, chills, thrills or shivers, can be triggered when perceiving music.”\textsuperscript{107} He goes on to say that EDM tracks that include a “build up” and “drop” are filled with “intensifying features” that cause “pleasurable states such as euphoria and ecstasy.”\textsuperscript{108} Drugs can also play a pivotal role in the experience of EDMC events. In \textit{Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music}, Rupert Till explains that the drug Ecstasy changed his informants’ perspectives on life and allowed for greater levels of emotional intimacy: “Many clubbers told me that this is an experience that cannot be fully understood if one has not tried it, that it is a key part of EDMC, and that the first time taking it was an initiatory experience that change their perception of EDMC.”\textsuperscript{109}


\textsuperscript{108} Solberg, “Waiting for the Bass to Drop,” 64.

Aries Festival 2015

11:00 p.m.

“Hold my hand,” she said as she slipped her hand into mine carefully, “my best friend and I always squeeze one another’s hands to the beat...it feels good I promise.” My MDMA guide, who had offered me her last pill earlier at the pre-party, had been leading me through the experience supportively all evening. It was my first “official” time trying the drug in any serious way, and I had never felt so safe doing something so illegal. I had dabbled with dosing before, but I was personally afraid of drug-use for a very long time. The media, your parents, society… they don’t shine a positive light on altered states, and they certainly don’t consider it experientially valuable. They couldn’t be further from the truth. Before my 26th birthday I had not tried any drugs besides marijuana and I can’t say

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110 See Figure 8.
I was swayed by its effects. For that age, I was an anomaly. Most kids I know go through their drug “phases” in their late teens or early twenties. I could count on my hands the number of times I had indulged in that type of partying prior to 2015. However, I had decided that I needed to have some experience with the rave drug of choice so that I could accurately represent a first-person perspective of its effect on the overall experience. Alcohol is also prevalent at raves, but it’s not considered an integral part of the experience and culture as is MDMA, and ravers who partake in drug use often do not drink. Tonight was the first time I had ever felt safe following through with a drug ingestion experiment.

After ingesting the MDMA pill, I felt nothing for over an hour. I wondered if maybe it was all hype. Suddenly, I felt an intense tingling wave undulate through my head. I later realized that the intense onset of this feeling was not universal, every trip has been slightly different, but it was a convincing start to my experimentation. I felt safe with this group of people, experiencing my first trip in a supportive way. I was pillared by several other experienced ravers, all of whom watched carefully over my well-being. The high was a curious feeling, like how I used to feel when I was in elementary school, talking about my dreams with friends, or playing make believe. You feel hope, and you want to connect with other human beings who are with you in that moment. The music takes on life and washes over you like sunlight on a summer day. You notice things you’ve never considered beautiful before. I remember thinking to myself, why have I been so afraid of this for so long? I squeezed my guide’s hand a little tighter at the drop and gave in to the special moment of community, belonging, and joy.
1.18 Active Audiences Prevail

Keith Negus’s literature review, *Popular Music In Theory*, surveys various scholarly works on audience participation, moving from passivity to a much more active role. Negus covers the earliest active audience research theories. For example, in the 1950s, David Riesman identified “majority” and “minority” groups of teenage listeners.\(^\text{111}\) The “majority” group, he argued, had superficial listening tastes and habits in popular music, while the “minority” group were much more critical and “discriminating.” One of the more obvious characteristics of this minority group is “a profound resentment of the commercialization of radio and musicians.”\(^\text{112}\) He suggests that the resentment stems from a learned understanding of “hip” music, cultivated through peer groups:

> When [a teenager] listens to music, even if no one else is around, [they listen] in a context of imaginary “others” – [their] listening is indeed often an effort to establish connection with them. In general what [they perceive] in the mass media is framed by [their] perception of the peer groups to which [they belong].\(^\text{113}\)

Polarity between music enthusiasts and their self-proclaimed opposition, namely, the proverbial “masses,” is productive in many music genres, though scholarly research has developed moderately from the suggested binary opposition by Riesman. Scholarship seems much less interested in issues of “the mainstream” versus “the indies,” as scholars focus more on isolated groups of listeners, and their collective behaviours, especially those identifiable as “scenes” and “subcultures.”


\(^{113}\) Ibid., 366.
1.19 *Music Makes Meaning*

In contemporary culture music is consumed in a variety of environments, often dictated by factors such as consumer demographic or genre type. Gary Clarke’s work asserts that identifying listeners simply as “active” or “passive” bypasses various musical consumption habits in the current technological and social environment.\(^{114}\) Moreover, Iain Chambers argues that popular music is “polysemic” in that it contains a multitude of meanings. He makes a point in his article “Defending Ski Jumpers” that is particularly relevant to this discussion:

> I would argue that the politics of youth cultural styles is not contained within the semiotic value of particular artifacts. Rather, the very existence of a youth culture, the quest for “good times” and “good clothes,” contains an element of resistance as part of a struggle over the quality of life…Young people now expect a certain standard of living based on good clothes, records, nights out, or whatever. Such relatively high expectations explain the growing feelings of frustration and anger among youth.\(^{115}\)

Sarah Thornton acknowledges that club-goers show both creative and active tendencies though she maintains that these propensities are a product of media influence.\(^{116}\) She claims that “both the publishing and record industries have sectors which specialize in the manufacture and promotion of ‘anti-commercial’ culture.”\(^{117}\) That said, Thornton is at least willing to admit:

> This is not to say that acid house-cum-rave culture was not vibrant, nor that its youth were cultural dupes. On the contrary, business involvement does not make

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\(^{115}\) Clarke, “Defending Ski Jumpers,” 79.

\(^{116}\) Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 11.

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 239.
young people any less active or creative in their leisure. The argument here is that subcultural gestures are less grand and more contingent than subculturalists have argued. When appropriation is an industrial objective, it is whimsical to regard young people’s use of cultural goods as ‘profane’ or ‘subversive’ (cf. Willis 1978; Hebdige 1979).118

While Thornton’s rebuttal has some merit, I support the viewpoint of Lisa Lewis and Iain Chambers who claim that fans are impacted by the media, but ultimately molded by the community of their peers.119 Lewis contends that fans are imaginative and create communities around particular performers while cultivating “reservoirs of knowledge” that provide a basis for cultural meaning.120 Chambers addresses the autonomy of fan activities, claiming that industries may put a product forward with an intention, even if audiences may not use it for that purpose.121 Indeed, audiences “actively transform” commodities. Negus explains that “music has been central to audiences’ and listeners’ lives, frequently having a direct impact on the surrounding society and culture.”122 I argue this statement is especially true when it comes to artistic activities such as the practice of Flow Arts.

1.20 Subculture, Scene, or Something Else?

Minority listeners are known to coalesce into communities with similar taste “cultures.” Theories regarding these communities began with Stuart Hall, who started publishing on

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118 Thornton, Club Cultures, 239.
121 Iain Chambers, Migrancy, Culture, Identity, (London: Routledge, 1994).
122 Negus, Popular Music in Theory, 27.
popular culture in 1964. Hall and his colleague, Paddy Whannel, developed theories concerning minority listening communities, and they argued that teenagers were forming communities around the music they consumed, and as such that music had the power to change their attitudes towards the world and the conventions of the time. Mirroring Adorno’s arguments, Hall and Whannel condemned the manipulative nature of the music industry and its exploitation of youth. However, they acknowledged that youth were also using records in expressive and communicative ways and were not necessarily mindless consumers.

In 1979, Dick Hebdige popularized the word *subculture* as a term for niche musical communities. Hebdige remarks that all aspects of a culture, such as styles of clothing and dancing in addition to music, work together to communicate values and ideologies. Building on Raymond William’s reconceptualization of the term “culture” that encompassed not only the practices of the very wealthy or educated but also practices of “ordinary” people, Hebdige examined “ punks” in Britain and established that their way of life was a response to “a subordinate social class position...rather than as a deviant anti-social behaviour.” The idea that music cultures allow opportunity for minority groups to “contest the dominant system of values” can be applied to the electronic dance music community in Toronto. I assert that among other areas within the industry in

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Ontario’s capital, Flow Artists in positions of authority or who have obtained “subcultural capital” are from ethnic minority groups or were first generation immigrants. Evidence for this assertion will be presented later in the paper. However, it should be noted that mainstream and subcultural activity are not always at odds. David Laing points out that mainstreams and their subcultures frequently influence one another.\textsuperscript{127} This is certainly the case when it comes to the community of electronic dance music fans in Toronto.

1.21 User-Generated Content
The concept known as “user-generated content” is one way that audiences in contemporary culture can take part in the process of actively making meaning from any product. Janice Waldron defines user-generated content as “a term coined by new media researchers to refer to digital artefacts created by ordinary people acting on their own behalf.”\textsuperscript{128} Blurring the line between producer and user (of content), where the user is the audience, is, arguably, a practice that extends to print materials such as zines and fan clubs, particularly out of the early DIY punk scenes.\textsuperscript{129} Fans continue to actively take part in the marketing of music and artist as online content contributors. They comment on YouTube videos, rate applications (apps) and react to statuses on Facebook. They comment on new singles, albums, live shows, merchandise and other aspects of a

musician’s career that impact them directly. In “Does Chatter Matter? The Impact of User-Generated Content on Music Sales,” Elaine Chang and Vasant Dhar claim that “an increasing portion of information on the Internet is user-generated.”

Developments in online activity has entirely changed the way that the industry lives and breathes. We are living in the age of the active audience, no longer a passive entity that eats what they are fed no questions asked.

Flow Arts is the most contemporary and dynamic role to materialize out of active audience development. I theorize that Flow Arts can be connected to the concept of “user-generated content” in that it is form of commenting on the product of origin (the musical sounds). The DJ chooses their musical selection as part of an aural journey, and the Flow Artist makes an expressive commentary (interpretation), which in turn can create either positive or negative experiences for others, ultimately contributing to the meaning of the product.

1.22 Enter the Underground

Please see Spotify Playlist #1: Track 9, Track 10

No one can blame you
for walking away
Too much rejection
No love injection
Life can’t be easy
It's not always swell
Don't tell me truth hurts, little girl
’Cause it hurts like hell

But down in the underground
You'll find someone true
Down in the underground
A land serene
A crystal moon
A-ha
It's only forever
Not long at all
Lost and lonely
That's underground
Underground

For as long as I can remember, Labyrinth has been my favourite movie. Jennifer Connelly over-acts her way to heroine-ism, David Bowie wiggles his eyebrows seductively and walks around in Baryshnikov pants, and fun loving “outcast” characters learn about the power of courage and friendship. Figure nine below displays the whimsical film cover as an example of the dream-like dramaticism the story embodies. The theme song from the soundtrack, written entirely by Bowie, is titled “Underground.” It teaches the listener that life can be difficult, and we do not have much time on earth, but there is a place where we can be free. Some might listen to the lyrics and think that Bowie is referring to the afterlife. Based on the movie’s overarching theme of having the power to choose your own destiny, I view the lyric more as a reference for looking deep inside your soul for meaning and purpose. In the labyrinth of who you are as a person, you will find peace. You only need search for it.

“Through dangers untold and hardships unnumbered, I have found my way here...for my will is as strong as yours, and my kingdom as great – You have no power over me.”

The music industry has referred to the opposite of mainstream activity as “the underground.” My understanding of the underground is the place where lost people go to find themselves. A place where you can feel courage to explore who you are, and to find your purpose. You journey bravely into the darkness and the unknown to find your light.


Figure 10: Marketing Poster for the film Labyrinth, 1986.
1.23 Defining “The Underground” in Toronto

Toronto has various well-defined communities with knowledge bases surrounding subgenres of dance music such as techno, each entered on value systems that generally oppose popular EDM and reject those who listen to anything “radio friendly.” I refer to these minority listening cultures in the Toronto rave scene as “the underground” rather than through the lens of subculture, for the reasons identified in the sections immediately above, but also because of that term’s connection to other work in the field of electronic dance music scholarship. I define “minority” for the purposes of this study as musics with a more limited consumership. Minority genres do not get as much “traction” at the main stage of festivals in Canada. In You Better Work!, Kai Fikentscher frames a working definition of Underground Dance Music (UDM) as “one type of music that in order to have meaning and continuity is kept away, to a large degree, from mainstream society, mass media, and those empowered to enforce prevalent moral and aesthetic codes and values.”133

Sarah Thornton argues that the idea of “the mainstream” is simply a tool through which music enthusiasts can differentiate their own hip tastes from those who have no taste. In many cases, this means “most people.” Thornton also argues that mass-market commercialism has the ultimate control over the people who are drawn to their products and the ways in which the product is consumed. Viewing the underground in this way

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brings us back to Adorno’s argument that mainstream audiences have no autonomy over their experience of consuming products in that they are being manipulated by the system. While I agree that commercialism, as it pertains to products and stylistic trends in the rave scene, plays a significant role in directing trends in both the mainstream and underground cultures of electronic dance music, I argue through the example of Flow Artistry that consumer products can be a catalyst for expression and communication rather than just a controlling mechanism. Fikentscher also interprets underground raves as spaces where opposition to the mainstream is possible and encouraged:

The prefix ‘underground’ often denotes a context in which certain activities take place out of a perceived necessity for a protected, possibly secret arena that facilitates opposition, subversion, or delimitation to a larger, dominant, normative, possibly oppressive environment. These environments may be political, social or cultural in nature, and underground responses to them may emphasize one of these qualities or combine them in various ways.134

1.24 Just Stop It Already Fisher
How do we distinguish underground from mainstream? Does popularity automatically make something commercial? Online consumption habits have changed radio and other forms of music dissemination and consumer practices, allowing for more variety of commercial success than ever before. As Negus wonders in his literature review, is “the concept of an undifferentiated mainstream...a useful way to refer to the majority of the music audience?”135

The “underground” in Toronto has a continuum of communities between what might be considered the “popular” underground, and a less visible underground. Torontonians in these scenes refer to themselves and their musical taste as “underground” or “alternative” or by the specific nicknames attached to polarized genres. For example, fans of bass music refer to themselves as Bass-Heads and are often in opposition to fans of house, techno, or trance. In Toronto, techno culture straddles the world of mainstream popularity despite its efforts to maintain a safe distance. Only a year and a half ago, Australian DJ Fisher’s tracks “Stop It” and “Losing It” were on heavy rotation in self-named underground Toronto hangouts such as Comfort Zone (CZ). I could clearly identify CZ regulars at other venues because they were the first to recognize and gleefully sing-talk along to “moving up and down, side to side, like a rollercoaster.”¹³⁶ In recent months, online memes and commentary have shown disdain and hatred towards Fisher and his music, and a distinct ostracization from the underground community. Fisher had officially become too popular, and technocrats, a term non-techno fans use to refer to elitist techno enthusiasts, wanted a restraining order.

1.25 *Sharon and Tracy Dance Around Their Handbags*

Othering the mainstream audience is a long-standing tradition in the history of dance music binaries. Thornton explores the analogy of “Sharon and Tracy,” which I have already mentioned above in my development of positionality. “Sharon and Tracy” are the names Thornton gives to imaginary “mainstream” club girls in the late 1980s, who

¹³⁶ Lyrics to “Stop It” by Fisher.
wore unhip clothing and carried clumsy handbags that they placed on the floor and danced around. As Thornton explains, the names are pejorative, designating someone as a member of the “mainstream,” which is “considered by ‘authentic’ ravers to be unhip and unsophisticated. They were denigrated for having indiscriminate musical tastes, lacking individuality and being amateurs in the art of clubbing.”

While the mainstream rave sounds were classified as feminine, and even acquired the nickname “handbag house,” they had a masculine alternative in “Acid Ted.” Teds were stereotypical masculine representations of the mainstream described as “mindless ravers,” who:

… travel[ed] in same-sex mobs, support[ed] football teams, [wore] kickers boots and [were] ‘out of their heads’. Like Sharon and Tracy, they were white, heterosexual and working-class. But unlike the girls, the ravers espoused the subterranean values proper to a youth culture (like their laddish namesakes, the Teds or Teddy Boys of the fifties) at least in their predilection for drugs, particularly Ecstasy or ‘E’.

Ironically, all ravers have been in a mainstream perspective at one time or another. The mainstream can be considered a gateway to less standardized music. When I first began raving, I was thrilled to attend sets by mainstream moguls like David Guetta and Dillon Francis, who have both been ridiculed online as lacking “authentic” talent. Debating the “truth” of these accusations is an argument with which I have no interest in engaging.

Now I would rather attend a concert with “darker,” less commercial music, for reasons I struggle to articulate. My tastes have simply changed, developed, and expanded. Human beings have unavoidably subjective tastes, so developments of this sort beg the question,

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137 Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 156.
138 Ibid., 156.
“how do other people’s tastes affect our own hipness”? Perhaps the answer lies in the countless hours of fan trolling and age-old cases of “bad press is still press” for artists?

1.26 Subcultural Capital in Flow Arts

Rave community hierarchy in commercial venues has been explored to some extent by Thornton and others. However, hierarchical delineations also vary between genres and groups within those larger communities. For instance, glovers acquire more subcultural capital or “clout” within the overall rave community than those of other Flow Arts because of the popularization of “lightshows,” and the convenient nature of hands over swinging contraptions that can (and have) injured people. The media has portrayed Flow Arts, particularly gloving, as an activity for “kids” who want to get inebriated and “trip out.” Contrary to that opinion, within the community of Flow Artists anyone can earn a high social position through the acquisition of their art.

For a Flow Artist to be considered “skilled” they have to put in several hundred hours of practice, be proficient in the main categories of the lexicon, which I will describe shortly, have a sense of musicianship and showmanship, and also have developed a personal “style.” Other forms of expression, including the most modern form of rave dance known as shuffling or “cutting shapes,” also earn subcultural capital. Shuffling is regarded by mainstream and underground members alike as a valuable skill.
When I Was Your Age...

A few months ago, I was talking with my Dad in the car about young people learning to DJ and he made an interesting comparison. He said, “when I was young, everyone listened to rock music and wanted to be in a band. They bought electric guitars and borrowed their parents’ garages. Now everyone wants to buy a DJ Deck and become a DJ.” Raving, like Rock, has inspired young people into avenues of participation whether it be dance, music, self-expression, style, or other formats. Audiences like to be directly involved in the music they consume. It is a truism across generations.

1.27 Social Hierarchies Vs. Self-Actualization

Hierarchies within rave culture are not only segregated to the broader community of participants, but also within smaller sects such as the gloving community. Within those communities, one of the highest accomplishments is to place in a competition either online or in-person. Gloving competitions such as the International Gloving Competition is one way for glovers to climb the hierarchical tower by earning “subcultural capital” and “flow capital,” both of which will be covered in more detail later in this paper. Registering for such competitions is voluntary, and the choice does not guarantee an increase in capital. However, it does offer many other opportunities including building relationships within the community, learning new movements and accessing creativity, travelling across the country or outside of it, sponsorship by gloving companies, the possibility of fame, and free merchandise. Within the online gloving community, sponsorships give a glover more visibility because they are representing respected companies such as Futuristic Lights or Emazing Lights. Sponsored glovers are also given
a sage-like status and are called on by the community to post tutorials and share their experiential knowledge with those who are less skilled. How does hierarchy work in a community ideologically based on egalitarianism? I think it is difficult to escape Western culture and its hierarchical structures in a subcultural setting. I think rave culture is more of a platform for self-actualization than a tiered ladder pinning one human against another in terms of success or value. In 1943, Abraham Maslow’s paper “A Theory of Human Motivation” posited a pyramid structure, a hierarchy of needs. The needs included physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.\textsuperscript{139} Gloving is not only the development of a “talent” but it is also a community, so it follows that it could offer its practitioners a path to the top of Maslow’s pyramid. Self-actualization, the top of the pyramid, “also traces on the subject of human existence, such as the expedition for substantial emotional and spiritual fulfillment and an intense hunger to discover and fulfill one’s own hidden potential.”\textsuperscript{140} In their work “A Valuation of Abraham Maslow’s Theory of Self-Actualization for the Enhancement of the Quality of Life” Tripathi and Moakumla stated:

Maslow’s concept of self-actualization, thus, can play an important role in order to bring about a real change for personal growth, development and change by exploring out the hidden potential for improving life by helping the individual to acknowledge one’s yearning for life, one’s needs, and one’s wish to contribute, which lies deep down in every human existence and which is the one and the same for every individual. This hidden meaning of life can be found only if one scrutinizes one’s own life and existence closely enough, to come to know one’s innermost self.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{141} Tripathi and Moakumla, “Abraham Maslow’s Theory of Self-Actualization,” 499.
Notably, my informants The Shaman and Deathmelt both feel a responsibility to give back, so much so that as illustrated above they both devoted aspects of their daily lives to community work in the city of Toronto. When I asked Deathmelt about his feelings regarding community he had this to say:

The feeling of community, to me, is anything that assists the community in general. For example, going on the streets of our city and giving strangers a lightshow experience, or doing some form of charity and donating the proceeds to something that benefits the community.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{142} In conversation with Deathmelt.
Flowstory: A General History of Flow Arts and Self Expression at Raves

When I commenced research for this dissertation in the summer of 2014, I was also entering into a new relationship. The relationship itself did not last longer than a couple of months, but in its wake, it left a mark on my mental health and sense of self-worth for over a year. The person in question was a colleague, a violinist, who also had a passion for gloving. Gloving was a concept I had never come across in all my years as a fan and budding researcher. The relationship is now, many years later, on amicable terms, and I find myself feeling incredibly grateful that this person made such a mark on my life, inclusive of the negative aspects. I feel strongly that it is to him that I owe this body of work, many of the closest friendships of my life, a deep respect and admiration for the bravery in the rave community, and a more complete understanding of my own expressive process. Flow Artists are people who I believe to be what Brené Brown, a shame and vulnerability researcher, terms “wholehearted,” that is, brave in the face of vulnerability and resilient to shame, and therefore a muse to my own struggles. They have overcome great loss or painful experiences in life and are wielding their flow art as a method of rehabilitation and optimism. Like any young political advocate, Flow Artists want to “change the world” in their own small ways, with extreme patience if need be, one person at a time. It is with this inspiration that I write the following segment on Flow Arts, in honour of ravers from days gone by, and in reverence to the power of art and its ability to move mountains, one lightshow at a time.
2 Flow Arts 101

Flowstory is an effort on my part to give a comprehensive history of the methods of self-expression in rave culture’s complex past. Moreover, I provide a context from which to explore my own experiences participating in and observing flow artistry in Toronto. Flow Arts 101 covers the known, albeit relatively uncertain, history and possible influences of Flow Arts. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will emphasize rave-related practices and not touch on Flow Arts that originate outside that sphere. For instance, hula hooping and poi are artistic practices employed by ravers for expressive purposes, although they have been imported from other cultures and have their own isolated histories. Inversely, one could argue that gloving also stems from a variety of outside influences. I argue, however, that it developed directly from within rave culture. It should also be noted that gloving’s most intimate associations come from hip hop culture, rave’s sister scene, whose evolutions have been inextricably connected since the 1980s.

In the sections that follow I outline the cultural influences that led to the artistic form of gloving. Gloving has many influences, particularly in dance forms, but one of its most recent and direct relations is a dance form from the early 1990s called liquid. In this section I detail the history of liquid dance and connect it to its parallel cultural roots in Toronto. This historiography leads me to an exploration of the history of nightlife, particularly that related to dance music, in Toronto and interview sections devoted to three of my key informants, Toronto-based liquid dancers. The remainder of the history is

143 The scope of this dissertation does not allow for the topic to be explored in depth. Interested readers should explore the following works that discuss the connection: Brewster and Broughton, 1999; Webber, 2007; Rose and Ross, 1994.
devoted to outlining the progression of Flow Arts in Toronto up to the time-period of my research. Finally, I explore some of the pros and cons of practicing Flow Arts related to media representation, identity construction, spirituality, rehabilitation, and drug use by applying existing theories and making some academic observations of my own.

2.1 The Development of Gloving in North America and Toronto

Gloving has always intrigued me. I think I respect it because it reminds me of learning to play an instrument. The time and effort it takes to obtain the tools with which one can express themselves appropriately is no small feat. Glovers become fluent in semiotics. It’s hugely complicated and it takes immense dedication. I have so much admiration for people who are going about this process in an informal way through self-teaching and self-discovery. It’s a journey into one’s own soul, unguided, like Orpheus trying to lead Euridice out of the underworld.

Digital Dreams Festival, 2017
1:30 a.m.

Swirling colours saturated my peripherals. Blues, greens, reds. Trailing behind the extended fingers from which they emerged like neon ghosts. My imagination intertwining with the Casperous visuals, spinning through the quantum realm, dreaming of life’s possibilities...\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{144} Fieldnotes, 2016.
2.2 Origins

The general consensus among glovers across North America is that gloving and other Flow Arts (as they exist today) developed from hype over a YouTube video of California raver, Hermes, which he uploaded in 2006.\(^\text{145}\) The video features Hermes performing in DIY white gloves with LED lights inside, likely purchased from an electronic supply store.\(^\text{146}\) Today, Hermes is a gloving celebrity, celebrated as a “grandfather” of the artform.\(^\text{147}\) Prior to 2010 approximately, the gloving scene was largely DIY, and ravers from Hermes’s generation and earlier were forced to create inventive ways to showcase their movements in the dark. White gloves and glowsticks were already a common way to illuminate hands under blacklighting. LED lights are a much more recent addition.

Gloving may have only existed as an isolated artform for the past 13 years or so, but there are a plethora of historical movements and influences that have contributed to its development. In the following section I will describe what I believe to be the direct ancestral influences that led to the inception of gloving in America. I will also discuss the factors that led to the thriving gloving scene in Toronto, including a formative “liquid” dance scene in the early 1990s, and the earliest gloving teams and clubs that made the flourishing of the Toronto scene possible.


2.3 Pass The Flow

In researching the history behind the art of gloving, I was directed to a very recent dissertation on what is known as “liquiding,” a subcultural practice from the 1990s that is central to the history of gloving. David F. Heller’s doctoral work, “Pass The Flow: The Subcultural Practice of Liquid Dance,” published in December of 2018, is the first of its kind to focus on the popular rave dance movement in the 1990s and early 2000s. Heller’s informants, whose experiences make up the majority of the content, admonish that true practitioners should “know their history.” In other words, they should respect those who came before them. Heller collected his data through various methods of personal experience: as a professional dancer and liquid practitioner himself, and through interviews with the style’s originators.

Respecting one’s elders is also a truism of gloving, and is evident in the Hermes. His online presence sparked a new generation of ravers to develop an interest in pursuing Flow Arts. Gloving is only the most recent iteration of self-expression and dance culture within the history of dance music culture. While current practitioners of gloving may be taught certain oral histories like those mentioned above, gloving can be traced back as far as the acid house movement in the UK during the early to mid-1990s. During the second, year-long “summer” of love, in 1989, the drug MDMA was popularized and Acid House culture, including smiley face logos and feel-good DIY attitudes, became fashionable.

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Well-known DJ and political street artist Frankie Bones, famously performed in an airport hangar at one of Europe’s drug-fueled events before importing the practice back in New York. At the time, the American City and cultural hub was suffering through a tense period of racist brutality against people of colour. The scenario was depressingly similar to the current social politics in 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement. Upon returning to America, Frankie Bones spearheaded his event series, Storm Raves, which ran from 1989 until 1993 and changed the attitudes of young people in the community through his implementation of the Peace, Love, and Unity Moment, then known as PLUM. It is reportedly out of this scene in New York that glow-sticking, and eventually liquid, developed. My experiences and conversations with OG (original) ravers from Toronto have led me to the conclusion that there was a simultaneous liquid scene developing in the Toronto underground, very likely due to the proximity of the two cities. Heller does not include information on Canadian liquid dancers in his work, so this is simply conjecture.

2.4 “Pass The Flow”: Liquid Roots in the USA

Please see YouTube Playlist #1 Videos 1-5 (Stacking, Figure Eight, Waving, Tutting, Glow Sticking)¹⁴⁹

March 8, 2016
Prohibition
12:00 a.m.

¹⁴⁹ You will find YouTube Playlist #1 at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLXLRf3CzrHRYKXdq4iOlz73Ech6NEsD3.
I watched Deathmelt and Papa Panda ‘warming up’ in the darkness. Winding up as if pitching a baseball, Papa swung and extended his fingers as if to throw the light in his hands to Deathmelt, the light travelled impossibly through the air and seemed to land in Deathmelt's hands. An illusion, but no less magical.150

In “Pass The Flow,” David F. Heller makes his case that liquid dance emerged from American rave culture. He argues additionally that there are three movements that defined the early development of liquid.151 The first movement was stacking, a dance move derived from being in confined spaces at London acid house parties and NYC raves. Stacking eventually morphed into the fundamental move, “the figure eight.”

Waving and tutting are considered the second grouping because of their similar movements. The Liquid Pop Collective (LPC) popularized the movements by providing video tutorials on the internet that were meant to help new dancers learn the style. The last influential movement was glowsticking.152 Heller describes glowsticks as “a visually stimulating phenomenon (whether sober or inebriated) that became an essential aesthetic to rave subculture. Most notably, glow-sticks were the visual catalyst for liquid dancing’s emergence.”153 Heller claims that improvisation and social gatherings were crucial to the development of the style: “like breakdancing, I argue the foundations of liquid dance stem from long-standing traditions of historically and culturally situated social dance practices rooted in improvisation.”154 Gloving uses all three influences within a practice

150 Fieldnotes, 2016.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid., 82.
154 Ibid., 86.
also deeply rooted in improvisation. The influences described here are also comparable to what I define as contemporary gloving. The most modern version of gloving, inclusive of the movements described in this dissertation and the technological materials needed to achieve the highest level of artistry, has solidified as an international style over the past ten years.

2.5 The “First Generation”

Heller points to a selection of three “first generation” liquid dancers from east coast America as the key practitioners who led to a foundation of the style between 1994 and 2000. The three practitioners were Razvan “Tiny Love” Gorea, Edward “Fu Man Chu” Hickman and “Liquid Pop Eric” (LpE). Gorea had a basis in New York hip-hop culture and styles of popping that included the forms of waving and tutting shown in YouTube playlist #1, videos three and four. When glow sticking emerged as a fundamental rave dance in 1994, practitioners began to display:

their virtuosic abilities...within their kinesphere by creating improvised light pattern sequences that mimicked the rhythms of the EDM tracks spun by the DJ. These patterns often resembled an elaborate connection of geometric shapes, such as squares, rectangles, triangles, circles and ovals...the different positions of the fingers clasping each glow-stick created distinct light tracer patterns while dancing. For example, clutching glow-sticks created light tracers that were smaller and sharper, resembling thin circular and linear patterns within one’s reach space. The method of threading glow-sticks cast a series of light tracer patterns visibly distinct from clutching by separating the glow-sticks’ illumination into three light segments.

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156 Popping is a style of dance originating in California that consists of “jerking” one’s body through muscle contractions and relaxations. The body lands on a “hit” which is where the term “pop” comes from in “popping.”
Gorea also observed ravers incorporating self-expression movements similar to
glowsticking, without the glow-sticks present, “thus creating a new dance aesthetic.”
Arguably the first raver to “formalize” liquid dance as a style, Gorea is said to have
“invented” one of the staple movements of the gloving style: the figure eight pattern.
Gorea started a liquid crew known as the Liquid Lights Crew (LLC) in 1996, the same
year that the first video evidence of liquid (performed by the LLC) was recorded. Gorea
was a central figure to the establishment of liquid dance in America. For example, he
used his popping training as a foundation for experimentation, opening a new realm of
movement types. Through these improvisation experiments with hip hop dance as the
root, he created what is known as “fixed point.” Fixed point is the illusion of “an
imaginary point (or series of points) resting along an imaginary ‘grid’...encompassing
one’s reach space.” Recent studies in Norway have been exploring the realm of human
motion, specifically the untrained gestures of self-expression and have concluded that
tracing grid-like patterns is typical. The concept of the grid is also extremely important
to the effective performance of gloving, which I will give more detail to in the pages
below.

159 Ibid., 90.
160 Ibid., 95.
161 Tejaswinee Kelkar, and Alexander Refsum Jensenius, “Analyzing Free-Hand Sound-Tracings of
Melodic Phrases,” Applied Sciences 8, January 18, 2018, doi. 10.3390/app8010135. Tejaswinee Kelkar,
Udit Roy, and Alexander Refsum Jensenius. Evaluating a Collection of Sound-Tracing Data of Melodic
Phrases, Institut de Recherche et Coordinatino Acoustique/Musique, 2018. Tejaswinee Kelkar, and
Alexander Refsum Jensenius, Exploring Melody and Motion Features in “Sound-Tracings.” Espoo,
Finland: Aatlo University, 2017. Kyrre Glette, Alexander Refsum Jensenius, and Rolf Inge Godoy,
“Extracting Action-Sound Features from a Sound-Tracing Study,” Norwegian Artificial Intelligence
Symposium, November 22, 2010. Kristian Nymoen, Jim Torresen, Rolf Inge Godoy, and Alexander
Another developer of the “grid” concept in liquid was Hickman. Hickman visualized a flow “along and between the perimeters of imaginary grids connected through fixed points.”\textsuperscript{162} His drug consumption was the catalyst for these visualizations, the technical term for the movement became known as “rails,” which is an acronym for “range in a line.”\textsuperscript{163} The third and final key practitioner in the foundation of the American liquid scene was Liquid Pop Eric. He was a key influencer because of the group he founded, Liquid Pop Collective, which sought to bring liquid into the limelight as a legitimate form of art (through the association with popping, mentioned in its title). He also released a video in March 1999 that at the time was the earliest available example of liquiding on the internet. His style influenced many young dancers, and his crew used the internet as a tool for the tutelage of the next generation of liquid practitioners.

2.6 Liquid as Public Performance

The concept of liquid “performance” began with what OG liquid practitioners refer to as “locking the lookers” or “being locked.”\textsuperscript{164} Liquid dancers use techniques to demand audience attention. Dark environments in event spaces make this process a difficult one. However, the dancers are within arms length of other ravers, which allows for their art to be noticed. The process of performance (liquid) within a performance (the DJ) led to the event known now as “lightshows” that we see continued in modern gloving performance practice. Hickman explains the process of early lightshows:

\textsuperscript{162} Heller, “Pass The Flow,” 100.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 106.
if...I’m moving at a steady enough pace and I’m doing complicated enough things where I can make you follow my flow long enough, you suddenly realize you’ve been looking at me for the past ten minutes, and it only felt like a minute went by. As liquid dancers, that was our goal: to dance in our own space and to lock the lookers, to get them to come over and be like ‘woah, what the hell’s going on?’

The interaction between onlookers and liquid dancers became the foundation for the giving and receiving of lightshows that is so characteristic of contemporary rave culture events. Heller describes the relationship as “cyclical and ongoing.”

2.7 Liquid Pop Collective’s “All Access Liquid and Digitz Tutorial”

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video #6*

According to Heller, liquid moved from a “vernacular practice learnt informally at social dance events like raves, clubs and festivals” into an established practice with an encyclopedia of techniques. Terminology was introduced and disseminated through the release of the online tutorial in 2002 by the LPC. The video was entitled “All Access Liquid and Digitz Tutorial.” The concepts introduced in the video are still present in the foundations of gloving, including musicianship, flow, speed control, form, and other more specific terms. In essence, a “digital pedagogy.”

165 Heller, Hickman interview 2016, 106.
167 Ibid., 111.
The All Access Liquids and Digitz Tutorial explains a series of “concepts.” Concepts are categories or definitive styles of movements. Concept remains the umbrella terminology used to describe movement categories in gloving. The tutorial outlines the following concepts in detail: Flow, Rails, Contours, Miming aka Builds, Splits, and Digitz. Digitz has its own separate segment that details the following micromovement types: finger waves, rolls, contours, synchs, contortions, braids, mirrors, axis shifts, remotes, and hides. Going into detail about flow, the video narrator describes the concept of “flow” in liquid as the following: “to move or run smoothly with unbroken continuity, as in the manner characteristic of a fluid...mastering your own personal flow.”

Contours outline the shape of the body or other objects, builds create imaginary objects in space, splits create a break in the fluid line by allowing “limbs to pass overtop or underneath one another,” and digitz are a micromovement of liquid pertaining directly to the fingers and hands (rather than full body).

2.8 Digitz

The history of digitz is also relevant to this discussion. Two liquid dancers from New York City, Mario and Milo, began experimenting with and eventually codified the style between 1995 and 1996 at The Tunnel Nightclub. The reason for the style’s inclusion in the LPC video is because Code Red, a member of LPC, developed the style further between 1998 and 2000. Some of the digitz techniques will be revisited in an upcoming section and broken down into descriptive comparisons. I argue that the All

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170 “Liquid Pop Collective Tutorial.”
Access Liquid and Digitz Tutorial was a catalyst for the development of gloving, primarily because of its ease of public access, and because so many of the styles, created and practiced on the east coast, trickled down into the style of self-expression now known as gloving.

2.9 Back To The Zone

I contacted Colm early this year after a protracted investigation of the extremely limited resources available regarding the history of rave culture in Toronto. Colm is an independent researcher who has devoted much of his adult life to cataloguing the club and dance music culture history in Toronto. He has an online magazine called Digitized Graffiti that spotlights several of the most important clubs for dance music of the past 50 years, including the famed 23 Hop, and has recently completed a documentary on The Twilight Zone, a prominent club for house music and dance music culture in the 1980s.

“They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot,” is a lyric from Joni Mitchell’s famous “Big Yellow Taxi,” and also the way Zoners refer to the demise of the place they called home every Saturday night. In Colm Hogan’s documentary Back To The Zone, former regulars and employees including the club’s former owners, the Assoon brothers, shared nostalgic stories and described the impact the club had on the city of Toronto between 1980 to 1989. Back To The Zone illuminates the importance of the Assoon’s connections to Paradise Garage in New York, pointing out Canada’s role in promoting and developing

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172 Back To The Zone, directed by Colm Hogan, unpublished Documentary, YouTube, 8:00, March 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbabV8Wuoms.
the blossoming house scene in its early years. The club holds many firsts: first ethnically diverse club in Toronto, first Richard Long soundsystem in Canada (and one of the first in the world), and first club to operate on a DJ-specific entertainment, by programming featured DJs and flying in International sensations such as Frankie Knuckles, Derrick May, and David Morales, among many others.\(^{173}\) Morales spoke of spinning records at the time, describing the long-playing records of 10-15 minute tracks as “stories...like a broadway show.”\(^{174}\) The Assoon brothers were frequent attendees at the Paradise Garage, an epicenter of underground dance music and early rave culture. “One day, we looked at each other, we’ve gotta take this back home to Toronto,” claimed Michael Assoon, and this choice proved to be life changing for young people in the city.\(^{175}\) Zoners considered the club “a place to be free,” explaining dreamily that it was the only time in Toronto in the city’s history that a club has been a safe place for all classes, subcultures, and ethnic groups, where young people felt safe to express themselves on the dance floor through fashion, movement, friendship, and music.\(^{176}\) On any given night, you might find lawyers, b-boys, couriers, or Wayne Gretzky.\(^{177}\) There was a unisex bathroom, a napping room, and people in wild fashion choices such as meat suits, foreshadowing Lady Gaga. Toronto was part of the “triangle of house music” partnering with New York and Chicago, a fact often lost to the sands of time.\(^{178}\)

\(^{173}\) Back To The Zone, 59:30.
\(^{174}\) Ibid., 11:12.
\(^{175}\) Ibid., 6:21.
\(^{176}\) Ibid., 17:30.
\(^{177}\) Ibid., 22:50.
\(^{178}\) Ibid., 59:10.
2.10 The Seven and the Toronto Liquid Society

Toronto also had a distinct liquid scene from as far back as 1996, according to my key informants. As with the development of the club scene in Toronto and The Triangle of House Music illustrated above, trends from New York city trickled down into the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) by way of geographical proximity. More research would need to be conducted in order to confirm whether liquid in Toronto developed independently or

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179 Picture taken from https://www.geographicguide.com/north-america-map.htm. The triangle is outlined in black (Chicago on the left, New York on the right, and Toronto at the pinnacle).
through an influencing factor. It is, however, clear that the two scenes (United States and Canadian) existed simultaneously and established distinct styles of what could be considered a “dialect.”

Through my research I was introduced to three liquid-style dancers from Toronto: Cooper, Tigger, and Uncommon. Their first-hand accounts in no way represent the entire scene in Toronto, but they are touted through the online community Liquid Dance Canada as expert witnesses and are considered knowledgeable about that time period in Toronto. In the USA, liquid practitioners are almost exclusively referred to as liquid “heads.” In Canada, liquid practitioners refer to themselves as liquid “kids.” Tigger and Cooper are “second generation” liquid kids, meaning that they were the second group of young people to practice liquid dancing at a high level in Toronto. Their “generation” runs approximately from the late 1990s into the early 2000s.

The earliest practitioners of what can be defined as “liquid” that emerged in Toronto were a group of young dancers known as The Seven, after the Canadian painters The Group of Seven.\(^{180}\) According to Cooper, the first liquid dancer in Canada to define the foundation of the “dialect” in the city was White Glove Jay. Jay was known by this moniker because of his affinity for wearing acid-wash white cotton gloves that illuminated intensely under black light. In the Toronto liquid scene, wearing white gloves became the norm. Glove wearing was a unique aspect of early liquid in Canada that was not noticeably adopted in

\(^{180}\) Cooper, Facebook call, March 2, 2019.
the USA until around 2006, following the popularity of Hermes. White gloves had, however, been seen in early hardcore scenes in Europe by glowstick practitioners. A typical costuming would include white gloves and a white surgical mask, as seen in the photo immediately below:

![Figure 12: Glowsticking practitioner wearing white gloves.](image)

The method of mentorship, or “apprenticeship,” as some liquid kids have named the process, was a simple one. A “master liquid kid,” originally one of The Seven, would pass on their gloves to any person they deemed worthy of their attention and time. The process of passing gloves as an offer of mentorship was a popular practice. Internet Eboards were an important means of communication among the liquid community and

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the rave community at large. However, in terms of posting pictures or videos, there were fewer options available. So passing the torch to new dancers was done in person. In recent years, the internet has become the primary source for instruction in, and dissemination of, Flow Arts.

It was through informal conversation with my key informants in the liquid community that I began to picture Toronto’s early rave scene with more clarity. Through this information, buttressed by reference to David F. Heller’s dissertation, I have pieced together a perspective on this period of time. In the following paragraphs I will share the stories of Tigger, Cooper, and Uncommon as records of the rave experience as a liquid kid in Toronto.

2.11 Tigger

“...under black light [our gloves] glowed so brightly it looked like you had these floating arms. Who needs a glowstick when you have even bigger and brighter things that have dexterity.”

Tigger found the rave scene somewhat by accident in 1995, while out walking in downtown Kingston. He was handed a flyer for a show by a guy blasting unintelligible house music in a convertible. A 13-year-old at the time, Tigger had to convince his parents it would be OK for him to attend a rave. In the 1990s, it was common for teenagers to attend rave events that were often marketed as all-ages, though there was a predominantly negative media view of the scene. A few years later, at a party in Toronto,

182 Tigger, Facebook call, February 2, 2019
he was handed his first pair of gloves by Toronto liquid pioneer, White Glove Jay. He reflects on the period fondly, “I liked it because it was different and it was a challenge. And if it was done right then it looked downright ridiculous.” 183 Back then, he reminisces, it was a lot more like miming. “From there it became more fluid, and then the pop and lock influences came into it,” things like ‘gliding’ for example. 184

A dancer and DJ already immersed in the rave scene, Tigger was an easy fit into the liquid community. He understood the culture of friendly competition and the “elitism” that inevitably manifests. “I got into break dancing before I got into liquiding,” he explains, “I was used to the whole dancer culture and the attitude of ‘I’m better than you’.” Tigger and other members of what was known as The Toronto Liquid Society (TLS), “would sit [in the back corner of the club] under black light and just dance and screw around.” 185 According to Tigger, The Toronto Liquid Society referred only to members of the liquid community who wore gloves. However, they were a “crew” who did not necessarily like one another. The term was chosen by the community itself, “people who had been given baby blue band gloves called themselves [that],” according to Tigger. He admits he was a bit of a scrapper in the group: “I was banned from the Hullabaloo board...and Toronto Raves.......and Toronto Jungle.” 186 “Everyone who had those gloves could throw down and that was the big joining factor between us all.” When asked whether or not LED lights were present among the liquid dance community, Tigger

183 Tigger, Facebook call, February 2, 2019.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
explained: “There weren’t any lights in the gloves...the tech didn’t exist back then...there were finger lights but they were just way too bulky and since everything was black light back then it didn’t matter because your hands would glow brighter than those LEDs...so there was no point.”

According to liquid kids from this generation, the white gardening glove used for the purposes of this performance costuming is no longer available for purchase. Gloves from Home Depot and other garden supply stores are now made from polyester fabric that does not fluoresce. In addition, most raves do not run entirely under blacklight. Tigger’s favourite liquiding stories all revolve around “dance circles...having fun trying to figure shit out, I mean, the weirdest thing you can do, or, ‘how can I make my arm look like it has less bones’”? The dance circles he is describing share similarities with hip hop culture practices like cyphering, a type of freestyle. Cyphers are “informal gathering of rappers, beatboxers, and/or breakdancers in a circle, in order to jam musically together.”

Cyphers are also a common gloving practice.

Tigger also mentioned how hard liquid is on the hands, and that liquid dancers a generation above him had to retire permanently. He explains that liquid involves extreme tension of the joints, “which puts extra wear and tear on the cartilage…. a lot of people stop because they have to.” Tigger’s description is in direct contrast to the

187 Tigger, Facebook call, February 2, 2019.
189 Contemporary Glovers have not reported this type of a response to their art. Further research would be needed to investigate the possible connections to physical ailments that musicians deal with such as carpel tunnel syndrome or other ailments that result from prolonged practice under tense muscular pressure.
physical benefits of gloving that contemporary practitioners describe. It is possible that the evolution of the styles offered the opportunity to find more idiomatic, or at the very least, less painful methods of practice. Tigger eventually left the scene in 2000 to attend university and is currently a fire performer among other things.

2.12 Cooper
Cooper was considered one of “the four” elite liquid kids at the turn of the millenium. His story overlaps with Tigger’s, though the two did not run in the same circles. He was introduced to rave music by his older brother in 1991 when he was around 9 or 10 years old. His brother, a junglist, attended the earliest jungle ‘raves’ in the city of Toronto in the early 1990s. “It wasn’t called rave music back then,” Cooper explains, “it was ‘dance’ and at one point it was ‘electronic’...it was just considered to be odd music. It was almost segregated. There were a small amount of people who knew about certain sounds...and it was all word of mouth.”\(^{190}\) He listened to a wide variety of rave music between 1990 and 1993, without any context for its existence. “I had all of these tapes and to me it didn’t mean anything, I had zero understanding of what was going on outside of my bedroom, because I was so young...”\(^{191}\)

\(^{190}\) Cooper, Facebook call, March 2, 2019.  
\(^{191}\) Ibid.
The Run DMC “rave” party was a monumental event in Toronto’s rave history according to my informants. On the online preservation website for Toronto’s club and rave history, the original advertisement shown in Figure 13 was posted to The Communic8r, with the explanation: “Really nice flyer. This was at one of the CNE buildings I think. For some odd reason the companies did not name this event so it is known as the RUN DMC rave. There were so many people at this.”

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192 Picture taken from The Communic8r website at the following link: http://thecommunic8r.com/thevault/index.php?showtopic=704.
193 The Communic8r, posted April 19, 2004 by group moderator, Charade.
Fast forward to 1999, when he was in his late teens, and Cooper’s brother finally invites him to attend an event. “I said, alright let’s go...the party was May 99’s RUN DMC show, it was a massive party. They had a trance room, they had a breaks room, and they had a big jungle room...we had a blast and that set me on a path to raving...”

Eventually, Cooper got roped into attending an event external to the jungle scene with a girl he met at a party. When they arrived, a group of guys were dancing off in a corner. Cooper recalls the moment with a certain amount of humour: “it’s going to sound really really strange but she was like no no we have to stand over here and watch...and I was like what the fuck have I got myself into...but then I watched these guys dance and they were full blown liquid kids and I was like what the fuck is that! Because I had been going to so many jungle parties that I had bypassed all of these people.” Like other young people in the scene, the illusions of the body that were possible using liquid technique reminded Cooper of magic. “When I was a kid I loved magic, and when I was 7 or 8 years old my parents would buy me magic books...and when I saw these guys I was like wait a minute...they’re literally making their hands disappear and reappear every half second...I couldn’t shut up.”

Cooper quickly made moves to approach the group, but they were resistant to his efforts: “if you talk to any of them, they will tell you, this kid just would not leave.” He would stand 20 yards away, he claims, taking everything in, stealing each move and changing it

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194 Cooper, Facebook call, March 2, 2019.
195 Ibid.
to his own advantage. “After about six months they were like...alright, maybe we gotta talk to this kid. And I started dancing with them...and it got to the point where we were known as ‘the four.’”\textsuperscript{196} The four included Cooper, as well as second generation liquid dancers “muffin,” “felix,” and a third dancer who requested to remain anonymous, even in nickname. Similarly with Tigger’s account, members of the four were inducted into the crew through the bequeathing of gloves. “It was a club essentially,” Cooper remarks, “you could only wear those specific gloves with the blue band on it if you were a legitimate liquid kid, and that meant you’d had to earn it, it was almost like an apprenticeship...you had to be given your bands by another blue band.”\textsuperscript{197}

Cooper was given gloves by three separate blue bands, one of which was part of the OG group The Seven. The original liquid practitioners, who reportedly established their original crew in 1996 in Toronto, were revered by a generation of liquid kids below them who understood that they had “revolutionized and pretty much invented” the white glove style of liquid.\textsuperscript{198} The last member to join The Seven was a dancer named Clockwork who is mythologized among liquid kids for two reasons. First, his battle with the American group the Liquid Pop Collective, and second, his invention of a dance move eponymously titled “clocking.” The motions involved in clocking replicated a ticking clock. Clockwork is also one of the dancers from whom Cooper received a set of gloves, thereby making him his “kid for life.”\textsuperscript{199} Cooper was at the famed battle and shared the

\begin{small}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{196} Cooper, Facebook call, March 2, 2019.
\item \textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{small}
story behind the battle’s legendary outcome. Clockwork was challenged to a battle on his own turf in Toronto against the Liquid Pop Collective including pioneer liquid dancer Liquid Pop Eric. The reason for the battle was to solidify the dancers who were the most highly skilled. The LPC dubbed themselves the winners of the battle, but those who attended the event, Cooper included, claim that the judging panel was “rigged.” Clockwork took on several American liquid dancers on his own, a feat that remains impressive, even today. Clockwork and Cooper have since lost touch, however Cooper emphasizes Clockwork’s talent: “Despite our differences, I can tell you that he is one of the most unbelievable dancers I have ever seen. I have never seen anything like what he can do, and the best part is he has so many tricks he holds to himself...”

Most of liquid dance is improvisatory and playful, as Cooper corroborates: “back then we used to play a thing called ball...you’d hold a fictional ball in your hand and then you’d dance and you’d pass the ball. It sounds kind of dumb, and it probably looked kind of dumb, but that’s what we did, and sometimes the battles themselves were in pass the ball.” During conversation he had an epiphany about the mentorship process, “in all honesty, looking back, I realize now that when you were going to give somebody their gloves you already knew ahead of time. You threw everything you had at them but you were going to give [your gloves] to them anyways.” Another important facet of this process was the actual practice time that went into success in the craft, “you can see the

200 Cooper, Facebook call, March 2, 2019.
people who actually spent time working on [liquid] and they were the ones who were rewarded with gloves not just kids getting high and partying.”

The general consensus in Toronto’s liquid community is that local liquid kids adapted their gloves to suit the hand movements more effectively in the dark: “the Toronto style was adapted for the dark...we created our own illusion with the glow in the dark gloves under black light.” Gloves at that time were not purchased online, as they are today. They were simple gardening gloves from a place called “Aikenheads,” a Canadian chain hardware store located in Ontario. A running joke among liquid kids at the time was, when asked about where someone could get a pair of gloves, they would shrug and say “gotta go see grandma and get some new gloves.” Cooper also explained the blue band phenomenon. They were simple blue elastics that held the gardening gloves in place while dancing. In terms of concepts or names of movements, the liquid style had not yet formalized internationally, and the only “move” that Cooper could recall was one called “the figure 8,” which seems to be a mainstay of both liquid and gloving styles. Beyond that, “it was so playful...it was like a kid with imagination.” Cooper is amazed by the developments seen in 2019. It’s been almost two decades, and “it’s interesting how it evolved and how people interact and are communicating.” Cooper still loves to go dancing with other liquid kids on occasion, but his main focus is his family.

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201 Cooper, Facebook call, March 2, 2019.
202 While black light was in common usage in underground and mainstream rave events at the time, from my understanding, the use of gloves was less common for the practice of liquid at the time.
2.13 *Uncommon*

There was this huge scene like it was a movement you could say, this moment in time where music and movement and this sort of culture existed in Toronto and then it almost completely evaporated. Partly because I consider myself to be part of that, I would like there to be some sort of record of it whether that be, I don’t know if I might see if I can try and create a little documentary on it or something like that…but I would just love for the story not to die with me.²⁰³

Uncommon is the curator of the online Facebook community Liquid Canada. He is a self-taught liquid dancer whose passion over the last decade has been to research the history of liquid in Canada and track down members of the scene. He describes the purpose of the online community as follows: “an attempt to track down some of the liquid dancers of the Canadian rave scene, for the purpose of improving ourselves as dancers as well as to potentially catalyze the documenting of a special scene that was once bigger (and may one day grow again!).”²⁰⁴ Uncommon was part of his own school of dance having discovered liquid through research rather than by joining an existing crew in the Toronto area. He later discovered that liquid was a dying practice, and would spend much of his free time cultivating a preservation group. Uncommon attended his first rave in 2007 at the World Electronic Music Festival, or WEMF, an event that occured annually in Northern Ontario. His introduction to liquiding came two years later when he had an epiphany regarding self-expression one night at *The Guvernment* in Toronto. Uncommon describes how he “unlocked” his first liquid move while innocuously moving to the music. It was his “eureka” moment. He discovered he could “move to this music in interesting ways, and without having a dance background that’s sort of a weird thing to

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just spontaneously arrive at, but that’s [his] understanding of it.”\textsuperscript{205} The move he discovered was the figure eight, one of the foundational moves in liquid. “From there it just lit a fire under me,” he explains, “I just started practicing at home in front of my bathroom mirror.”\textsuperscript{206}

At the time, Uncommon was living in Guelph, and he drove to Toronto to take street dance lessons. He also picked up glowsticks quite early on in his dance journey. He would “link” them through his fingers and use the light to “accent” his movement.\textsuperscript{207} The relationship between glowsticking and liquid is innate, as its historical development in the USA suggests, so it was a natural progression for him to fall into the use of modern gloves as well.

Uncommon got his first pair of gloves, an Emazing glove “set,” in 2010. For Uncommon, YouTube videos were the best place to draw inspiration for dance fundamentals, and to learn new and interesting movements. A particularly memorable moment for him was when he went back to WEMF in 2011, this time a full-fledged dancer, but he had left his gloves at home and felt inspired to dance:

> It was really funny...these guys had a booth there called Friendly Fire...I went into this booth because it was pouring rain and I saw they had these LED lights sitting around for sale. I was like ‘I’ll buy these off you, but I need duct tape’ and they looked at me like...what the fuck do you need duct tape for...and I was like ‘no trust me I’ll show you.’ So I put them on one hand...they helped me put them on the other hand because I was one hand less. Then I began to show them what I could do.

\textsuperscript{205} Uncommon, Facebook call, January 30, 2019.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
The moment was documented with two photographs. The duct tape is clearly visible in the first photo.

Figure 14: Uncommon finger rolling with duct tape LED lights, WEMF, 2011.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Picture provided by Uncommon from his personal collection.
While dancing at Toronto raves, festivals, or private events, Uncommon was often approached by former liquid kids, or people who recognized the art.

I know that liquid used to be huge in Toronto in the early 2000s and late 90s, but I wasn’t old enough or into electronic music then to even know about it. Sometimes when I’m out dancing, older people will come up to me and be like ‘dude, that’s liquid!’ So, I kind of feel like I’ve almost independently rediscovered it up here by myself and have been trying to track down people to learn about the history of it here. ²¹⁰

However, the first time the style was recognized was the most important for Uncommon.

He shared the following sentimental story with me: “I was dancing with my gloves on a rave canoe trip and over my shoulder I heard ‘he’s pretty good...’ and I remember the specific tone in his voice implied ‘but I can do better.’ So, I turned around to figure out

²⁰⁹ Picture provided by Uncommon from his personal collection.
who this person was...and it was Tigger,’” whom he didn’t know at the time. Tigger asked if he could see Uncommon’s gloves: “up until that point everyone who’d ever said ‘can I see your gloves’ had been a drunk person who did ridiculous things, but he proceeded to blow my mind and I was like ‘holy shit! I’ve found another person!’ I hadn’t met anyone that did liquid up until that point. He was my first point of contact. This was in 2014, so a good five years after I had begun dancing in the style.”

Uncommon picked his own pseudonym. The name comes from his independent discovery of liquid and isolated development of his personal style: “I see myself part of two distinct cultures. One is popping culture and one is rave culture. I’m the bridge between two different things. It’s not very common, it’s...uncommon.” Uncommon believes that pseudonym-assigning comes out of hip-hop culture, specifically, gangster culture of the 1970s and 1980s in California. He explains:

I’m of the opinion that it comes from the nature of street dance...that is, from less well-off neighbourhoods, you know disenfranchised populations, places where there might be a lot of gang activity and where people tend to go by nicknames either to differentiate themselves or to take a name that makes them harder to find.

Regarding dance culture specifically, Uncommon shared an apt comparison. “For example, ‘Snoop Dogg’ wasn’t a rapper name that he picked, that’s just what people knew him as on the street...so similarly today you’ve got dancers who, at least in popping, they’ll have names that they either are given (the traditional way is that you’re given it by people that are better and older than you, often called OGs)...in popping

211 Uncommon, Facebook call, January 30, 2019.
212 Ibid.
someone might take the style that they’re best known for and create a name out of it. One of the guys in the liquid pop collective went by Liquid Pop Eric.\cite{Uncommon, Facebook call, January 30, 2019} At age 32, Uncommon continues to advocate for liquid dance awareness, preservation, and community in Canada.

2.14 *Hullabaloo and Trippin on Lights [toL.]*

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 7 – 9*

From 1997 until 2007, Toronto DJ Anabolic Frolic popularized the subgenre of dance music known as happy hardcore by creating an internationally renowned event series called Hullabaloo. Events were attended by over 100,000 people over a total of 44 events, most of which sold out in advance. Hullabaloo gave raving a conduit for reinvention in Toronto. The scene encouraged the principals of PLUR and was consequently represented in the media by imagery of Kandi-clad ravers and Flow Arts methods such as glowsticking. In the wake of happy hardcore in Toronto, Kandi-Kids and Flow Artists permeated Toronto dancefloors, inspiring more young people to join in these artistic endeavours and keeping Flow Arts alive in the city.

In 2008, a year after the finale of the Hullabaloo event series, the technological developments pioneered by Emazing Lights CEO Brian Lim resulted in a new technology for Flow Arts, the LED chip. These technical advancements led to the development of the earliest forms of contemporary gloving. Toronto was involved from the earliest days of...
the subculture despite being geographically far from California, Emazing Lights’ city of origin. Somewhat simultaneously, between 2008 and 2010, a small gloving community formed in Toronto.\textsuperscript{214} Their spaces of activity were primarily at underground DnB or Hardstyle events. In 2011, a gloving “crew” took shape. The team went by the name Trippin on Lights [toL.]. Emazing talent scouts caught wind of toL’s blossoming community via their online presence and offered the team a sponsorship. Sponsorship at that time meant a spotlight on Emazing’s international platform, video features on the Emazing website, “goodies and merch,” as well as the opportunity to be the face of Emazing products through performances and appearances in the local community.\textsuperscript{215} The sponsorship was an important step for Toronto glovers. It fueled their pursuit of clout and respect within the international community. The original members included Mikko, Theanyx, and Shaggy.

\textsuperscript{214} Lycan, Facebook post in \textit{Toronto Gloving Community}, January 21, 2019.  
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
Trippin on Lights team members “specialized” in gloving forms such as liquid, finger rolls, whips and tutting.\textsuperscript{217} In conversation with one of the founding members, Mikko, he explained:

we started a YouTube channel to showcase our member’s lightshow videos...eventually we got a reply! It was a message from Emazing that told us how much they loved our videos, and since we were one of the first fully established gloving teams in Canada, over time they decided to fully sponsor us...which ended up benefiting all of the members of our group.\textsuperscript{218}

\textsuperscript{216} Picture of Mikko, provided by him for this dissertation.
\textsuperscript{217} Mikko, Facebook message, January 24, 2019.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
Through the team’s YouTube channel, members shared their best lightshows and reviewed products. The lightshows posted in 2013 show a strong example of how far gloving techniques had developed since 2008. The lightshows on Trippin On Light’s YouTube channel incorporate basic finger rolls, stacking, liquid rails, and pinching, all of which will be discussed in greater detail below. Videos seven and eight in the YouTube playlist listed above are examples by Trippin on Light’s team members Theanyx and Alien.

2.15 Frozen Face Melters and Toronto Gloving Community

By 2012, the gloving community had begun to congregate primarily at Toronto super-club The Guvernment. Membership expanded drastically in the following three years until the club’s untimely closing, making way for condo development in the area. In 2013, the Frozen Face Melters Facebook group was established in cooperation with the international Emazing crew of the same name. Frozen Face Melters later became the Toronto Gloving Community, merging with another Facebook group I helped curate called Peace and Glove. The Toronto Gloving Community is the primary online space for glovers in Toronto. Their online description boasts that they are “a collective of lightshow artists, bound together by [their] mania for flow, and dedicated to helping each other grow.” Comfort Zone was another safe space for club-based gloving meetups, but it too closed its doors just two years ago. Glovers have struggled finding alternative public spaces to practice and share their craft.

\[\text{219 “About”, Facebook Group, Toronto Gloving Community, https://www.facebook.com/groups/251860811623471/}.\]
Track nine in the YouTube playlist was filmed at the 2019 Ever After Music Festival. The featured glovers are some of Toronto’s finest, sponsored members of Emazing’s Frozen Face Melters. The video depicts a cypher with Toronto glovers Sip, Azure, Maakis, Lycan, and The Shaman all taking turns giving a lightshow to the camera. Cyphers harken back to the hip hop traditions that surround the gloving practice and are common in gatherings of glovers. Recently, in Glover’s Lounge, members posted a 10-minute cypher featuring some of the most well-respected glovers in the American scene at an after party for the BOSS competition. The glovers involved included: Ripples, Ripples + Trump, Ruts Tuts, Darth, Chidori, Shortt, Hibernasty, Whimsey, Eureka, Vex, Juice, R-Dub, Trump, and Sunny.²²⁰

2.16 Drug Use and Gloving

"Ecstasy changed the way music was best experienced...No longer was it about listening to music, it was about feeling it, about merging with the music’s physicality...more than this, ecstasy has a powerful ability to make an individual feel connected to the wider group." \(^{221}\)

Raves will often have timed visual complements to the music in the form of moving screen shots, lasers, smoke, pyrotechnics, professional choreographed dancing, and other

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aids. Using similar visual components, Flow Artistry features LED light and colour movement to the music. The aim is to construct a physical connection to the musical sounds. While it is not always true that ravers use drugs to enhance their experience of the event, it is common. MDMA is one of the more popular drugs at raves. It is ingested shortly before or during the opening act to allow time for the drug to process through the system, which can take up to an hour. The peak of the experience is planned so that it occurs during the most climactic moment of the evening, typically during the headlining DJ’s set.222

Drug use can stimulate and enhance visual abilities as well as make users more sensitive to sound waves.223 As Timothy Leary once described the musical experience on the drug LSD, “you not only hear but see the music, emerging from the speaker system like dancing particles.”224 A study from 2008 conducted by Feduccia and Duvauchelle indicates that “music and MDMA may work on common neural networks involving reward and arousal and most likely influence each other.”225 Many ravers claim that drug use enhances their experience of the music. In the words of one long-time raver, “The music sounds different on it [MDMA]…. I don’t know why it sounds different, but it does…it’s literally about love and connection.”226

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222 Fieldwork, 2015.
223 Szatmary, Rockin’ in Time, 153.
226 In conversation with the author, 2015.
“Love is the most powerful force in the world and is the reason why music has so much power, as it is an extension of love... ‘Sooner or later, love is what it’s all about’. ”

2.17 Banned/Not Banned
Two decades ago, following a series of drug related deaths at rave events in Toronto, politicians and law enforcement cracked down on raves. Prior to the new millenium, raves were open to all ages because they did not sell alcoholic beverages, so they often went unregulated. On June 1st, 2000, following the death of a young raver, Allen Ho, CBC Canada released the following article, “Rave inquest calls for age limit.”

The article read:

People attending raves should be at least 16 years old, a coroner's inquest jury in Toronto recommended Thursday. The jury also suggested drugs should not be mentioned in advertisements for the all-night parties and special permits should be required. The inquest was called into the death of Allen Ho, a 21-year-old who died at a rave in Toronto last summer. Ho had ingested the designer drug ecstasy, then collapsed at the party, held in an underground parking garage. Coroner Dr. Barry McLellan described Ho's death as accidental, though it did involve complications from drug use. The jury issued 21 recommendations, among them a plea for more education about the risks of various drugs used at raves.

The incident caused a media frenzy that quickly led to the ban of raving on city-owned properties, as well as a curfew for all electronic dance music events: they must end before three a.m. In response, the large rave community in Toronto, alongside some of the high profile industry members such as Dr. Trance, formed a protest event called iDance that

229 “Rave Inquest Calls for Age Limit.”
took place at City Hall on August 1st, 2000.\textsuperscript{230} The event drew over 20,000 people. To date, iDance is one of the largest protests in Toronto’s history to have occurred at City Hall. Prominent rave figure Alex D of Tribe Magazine spoke at the event, saying:

“Because you see, Dancing is not a crime. Never was. Never will be. Maybe in the old Footloose movie, but let’s hope not in Toronto. You know, our city is based on music events, we have the Caribana, we have the jazz festival, why not electronic music? Mayor Mel are you listening?\textsuperscript{231}

In America ten years later, the Flow Arts community was deeply affected by a ban on Flow Arts items at events. Due to a media crackdown on drug use, Insomnia, a massive event company in LA that puts on Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC) and other widescale, world renowned events released the following statement:

We have spent considerable time and efforts in Insomniac meetings discussing the pros and cons of attendees giving LED light shows at our events. Although there are many who use these lights as a form of art, the image that it creates when groups of music fans are sitting or lying on the floor gazing at the designs reflects poorly and sends a false message of what the electronic dance music scene is about. This image jeopardizes our ability to produce events, which we love and plan on doing for decades to come. In addition, concerns have been raised about attendees sitting on designated dance floor areas and in walkways.\textsuperscript{232}


\textsuperscript{231} “The Party People Project & idance rally – a documentary – pt 1 of 2,” posted by ioppoi29, video, 2:19, 2000, featuring a group of youth fighting for the right to dance following the ban in Toronto that led to the iDance rally at City Hall. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUqlAUh4_3c&t=559s.

\textsuperscript{232} Taken from a Reddit post online that shared an email response from Insomniac about the rave gear ban. https://www.reddit.com/r/gloving/comments/71fyki/insomniacs_response_to_gloving_ban/.
In 2010, a 15-year-old girl named Sasha Rodriguez who attended EDC, died due to complications that arose from taking the drug MDMA.\(^{233}\) What followed was Insomnia’s effective blacklisting of “rave accessories” in California, specifically LED gloves “in order to present a non-druggie appearance” for the scrutinizing media.\(^{234}\) But why is gloving so connected perceptually to illegal drug-use? In online forums, Flow Artists describe their ability while under the influence to give more creative and relaxed shows free of inhibitions. For example, in a reddit chat, psychedelicpanda420 explains: “I personally feel like I glove my best when I'm mildly stoned. It calms me down and my thought process is slower and more creative, things just flow and come out easier than when I'm sober, I feel I overthink my show and try too hard when I'm sober.”\(^{235}\) This is not an uncommon occurrence. The receiver of the lightshow is also often under the influence of MDMA or Acid. The lightshow is enhanced through “mental stimulation provided by the vision-altering substance.”\(^{236}\) Frequently, lightshow exchanges take place while seated on the floor of a club or venue. Companies are often wary of the practice due to conflicts with fire regulations and potential liability and blame drug-use for the behaviour.\(^{237}\) The aftermath of Rodriguez’s death ultimately resulted in the shocking cancellation of the remaining EDC festivities that year. Other states in the United States began to follow suit, disallowing Flow Arts items at shows. The bans spurred a migration

of the Flow Arts community to spaces outside festivals and mainstream events, steering
participants farther towards an underground community and forcing them to create their
own safe, creative spaces, including those spaces found online. It has also encouraged
“legitimization” movements such as the “Gloving is Not a Crime” campaign (Emazing
Lights) that prompted the start of competitions. Banning gloving and other Flow Arts also
resulted in a broader dissociation with the mainstream scene, and ultimately to a
reimagining of the art for members of the underground community. Many practitioners
no longer wish to be associated with drug culture, and instead to be taken seriously as
artists. Toronto’s gloving community has not felt as much of a strain in the war against
drugs. Clubs in the 1990s and 2000s have typically been fashioned in large warehouse
spaces. This difference lessened the concern by owners for the safety of their patrons and
it encouraged Flow Arts practices to flourish in those spaces.

2.18 Manifestations of PLUR

Flow Arts can be positioned as an extension of the rave ideology PLUR. Members of the
underground community continue to use PLUR to negotiate their identity as “other,” to
separate the underground aesthetically and philosophically from the (arguably less polite)
mainstream audience. PLUR is an effort by underground communities to authenticate
rave practices and preserve the culture. Mainstream audiences have begun to take over
spaces and the underground has a vested interest in separating themselves from those
negative stereotypes.
PLUR manifests in a variety of ways at rave events. One of these ways is through the PLUR handshake and the exchange of tokens, colloquially referred to as Kandi. The PLUR handshake, the symbolic representation of the acronym, is exchanged with new and old friends. Typically, tokens are exchanged following the handshake. They consist of beaded bracelets, cuffs, necklaces, masks, clothing, and other items. Below is the pictorial example of the hand symbols that comprise the handshake.

![Figure 18: Papa Panda showing the four hand signs in the PLUR handshake.](image)

Kandi is made by ravers for specific events or people. One PLUR-based code of conduct is never to purchase or sell Kandi. One must only exchange it or give it as a gift, lest one be branded “UnPLUR.” Prior to summer festivals, Kandi Kids, as they refer to

239 Picture provided by Papa Panda from his personal collection.
themselves, may offer to exchange “PLUR packages” with one another. PLUR packages are created specifically for one person using favourite colours or requested themes. Items within a package often include several large pieces, single row bracelets known as “singles,” and other small accessories such as batteries for LED gear. PLUR packages are sometimes exchanged between online community members who have never met in person. An additional form of Kandi creation is what are known as “perlers,” cylindrical beads placed into a design and ironed. Perlers are flat, unlike other Kandi items, and are frequently fashioned into necklaces or used as accessories for cuffs. Below are examples of a few Kandi items commonly seen at events.

Figure 19: Examples of Kandi singles I created during my fieldwork.

240 An example of a larger piece for a PLUR package would be something known as an “epic” which is a regular beaded cuff with beads layered several times over top to create bulk.
Figure 20: An example of a panda design in a gifted Kandi cuff.

Figure 21: My entire "gifted" Kandi collection, picture taken in 2019.
Another way PLUR integrates into rave cultural practices is in the giving and receiving of “lightshows” in which Flow Artists “perform” or “give a light show” to another audience member. “Trading” lightshows is a common practice where the Flow Artist receives a lightshow, a piece of kandi, a hug, or some other gift in return.

2.19 Rave Career Artists

Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Videos 10-12

Active audience participation has become so interactive that in certain cases, self-expression, as an extension of fandom, becomes monetizable for individuals. A career in the rave community using methods of self-expression has become more common in recent years. The commercialism of the EDM genre over the past ten to fifteen years has allowed certain social-media-savvy individuals to make a career out of their raving lifestyle and talents. Social media is a major platform for Flow Artistry and methods of self-expression more broadly. Artists showcase their talents online as a form of legitimization and monetization. Instagram, Facebook artist pages, and YouTube channels are the most popular ways to publicize yourself and your brand. Some examples of people who have successfully turned a hobby into a career in recent years are Dirty Catz (Kandi artist), Trump (lightshow artist), Tracer (orbiter), and Vanesa Seco (shuffler). Career rave artists receive sponsorships, make appearances at events, compete in international competitions, and often produce their own merchandise such as branded clothing items. Despite rave culture practitioner’s tendency to eschew commerce there is, paradoxically, a market.
Dirty Catz began her career creating custom Instagram orders. She was known internationally for her cheshire cat inspired masks made of Kandi. Orders sometimes waitlisted for months in advance. I was lucky enough to place a custom order with her in 2016. The final fieldnotes segment of this dissertation provides a picture of the mask I received. Dirty Catz Designs later expanded into other markets such as tails, cat ears, unicorn horns, spirit hoods, and furry hats with long sides in the faux pelt of various animal “familiars.” Some of her work has been featured on the prominent gloving website Futuristic Lights.\footnote{The Futuristic Lights website can be found at the following link: https://futuristiclights.com/.} Below is an example of two of her Kandi masks from 2016:

![Dirty Catz masks](image)

**Figure 22: Dirty Catz masks taken from her Instagram page.**\footnote{“Dirty Cat Designs,” Instagram, https://instagram.com/dirty_catz?igshid=1i5is51tw5w5ee.} An interesting contradiction about the work of Dirty Catz is in her monetization of handmade PLUR items. In instances where the artist is sought after, and their work is nearly impossible to replicate, the community appears to let the vendetta go. In the case
of Dirty Catz, she fashions teeth for her masks and often includes special faux fur of an upscale quality. She also installs LED chips from gloves into some of her pieces. All these qualities make her work unique and valuable, so she escapes the PLUR warriors for these reasons.

Trump and Tracer are online lightshow personalities who have received sponsorships from major companies. Trump’s platform of choice is Facebook where he posts public videos on his artist page currently boasting over 3000 fans. His sponsorship debut video is track ten on the YouTube playlist for this dissertation. Tracer is an active member of the online community, contributing often. His primary platform for sharing art is YouTube. One of his videos, track eleven of the playlist, has 17,399 views and growing.

Vanesa Seco, also known by her Instagram handle, Vansecoo, is a shuffling celebrity with 403,000 followers who has created her own complete brand. Her Instagram boasts “Here To Express, Not Impress” with links to upcoming shuffle classes ranging across the USA. She is also sponsored by Bang Energy drinks and frequently represents them across America at major EDM festivals. An example of some of her choreography with her as a central dancer is on track twelve.

2.20 Flow Arts and Identity

Everybody hears music differently. Each person is going to internalize it. Listening to music is an emotional thing and I think dancing is a manifestation of what you’re feeling inside...When you’re listening to this music for hours at a time, it doesn’t come down to the individual beats. It develops an actual flow. If you listen to it enough...it has more to do with the whole environment. It’s the music, it’s the people, it’s where you were at...that adds to it, that adds to
Flow Artists generate subcultural capital, which I term “flow capital” through the practice and notoriety of their art. Flow capital becomes an aspect of glover identity and further defines self-image. The stage names or pseudonyms that glovers choose for themselves are an aspect of the community that adheres to both Thornton’s and Bourdieu’s concept of (sub)cultural capital.

2.21 Glover Names Anonymity and Clout

“Dance is a powerful impulse, but the art of dance is that impulse channeled by skillful performers into something that becomes intensely expressive and that may delight spectators who feel no wish to dance themselves.”

Gloving as an art form offers practitioners a kind of magical power, as the Toronto liquid kids described in the preceding historiography. Glovers earn not only clout and hierarchical advancement, but also a sense of self-worth. However, in order to earn your place in the community of glovers, you must first earn your name. Most often your name is given to you by another glover or raver higher in the social hierarchy. In a rite of passage, names are bestowed upon community members when they become “part of the family” officially.

I earned my name, Phoenix, a year and a half into my studies. In the summer of 2015, I dyed my waist-length hair a variation of fire red, orange and yellow. The change in

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aesthetic was for VELD Festival, which I was attending as part of a project I was conducting for this dissertation. I was nervous about the experience because I had to go through a very formal process of acquiring a media pass and ethics approval. I really wanted to look the part and feel like a genuine, experienced researcher and raver (I was not either of these things, but the hair helped!) Below is a picture of myself and a Toronto glover taken on the first day of VELD 2015:

![Figure 23: Myself with friend, glover, and fellow Rave Together Stay Together (RTST) member, JoJo, at VELD Music Festival in Toronto on Day 1.](image)

I have never been confident that I fit into a role as a “native” or, more formally, “emic” participant at raves. I was a girl from Manitoba with a Classical music background and
a 12-year post-secondary education. However, everyone in the community came to know me for my wild hair and this was part of the reason why I achieved assimilation as a researcher. Due to the fiery colours I had chosen, people began calling me Phoenix at events. I loved the pseudonym! I felt a lot like a Harry Potter character, rising from the ashes of my former life as a young and inexperienced student. Later on, Phoenix became my radio name when I hosted a show on CHRW on Western campus.

Glovers can also choose their own names. One of my informants from London, Keeker, chose his name for a sense of anonymity and to escape into a new persona (persona is the Greek word for stage mask, an apt reference for the dramaticism of rave styles and culture). When we met, Keeker was going through some very serious personal issues with his wife and children. Raving, specifically gloving, became a way for him to release the intense emotional state he was navigating by expressing himself to music. Keeker is a slang term for black eye. He explained to me once, “the black eye sort of portrayed how I felt about my life, why I go out, it’s because I’m wounded, like everyone else really, the black eye is just an expression of hurt.”245 Another informant, Deathmelt, also felt connected to his alternative glover persona, so he created his own name as a way to solidify his artistic personality. His explanation of how he chose his name was indicative of someone who thinks carefully about how he wants to be represented:

I’m the kind of guy who likes to think about my name and not just call myself something simple. So, I looked at the attributes or the things I liked about myself. And I realized I like skulls and death and all that kind of stuff and I also looked up the terminology for gloving and the word face melt came up a lot of the time and I put death and melt together and there you go. I guess the concept was that when I

245 In conversation with Keeker.
give you a show, you’re not literally dead, but you’re in the moment enjoying the lights… 

Deathmelt sees himself in a world outside our realm of understanding. One evening I recall fondly was when the two of us “afterpartied” in my friends’ sunroom on Roncesvalles street in Toronto. We were the only ones up into the early hours of the morning. As the sun rose, Deathmelt took me on a musical journey through the heroic videogame music he had on his phone. I was fascinated by the richness and complexity of the orchestral works composed for videogames. Like the narrator of a great adventure novel, Deathmelt led me through the storylines that accompanied the music. In the process, taught me a lot about himself and what it means to have freedom of expression. Deathmelt, whose family are Trinidadian, confided in me that he often felt ostracized and that his interests did not align with others. Videogame music gave him his first feelings of passionate expression, an escape to a world where anything is possible. Raving was the second style of music to catch his attention in this regard. Given Keeker’s feelings about raving as an escape, Deathmelt is not alone in this conceptualization of raving as an alternative reality. Deathmelt, a highly expressive person, has since become a leader and a hero in the Flow Arts community in Toronto, elevating his sense of identity and purpose.

2.22 Culture or Cult? The Role of Spirituality and Community

The accounts of my informants coalesce with existing research linking spirituality with rave experiences. Though I think rather than structured religion, with the DJ as the

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246 In conversation with Deathmelt.
spiritual leader, I see raving as much more egalitarian in its organization. I see the renaming, rituals, and participant hierarchy as individual self-actualization processes, as with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and almost cult-like in nature. Cult is perhaps a strong word. However, I am viewing it from an academically neutral position in that I am taking the sociological definition. According to John Scott, who defines cult in A Dictionary of Sociology, a cult is “a small group of religious activists, whose beliefs are typically syncretic, esoteric, and individualistic.”

Ancient religious practices like that of the Greeks, who were cult-based, resemble rave conventions. Herodotus, an ancient Greek historian, describes their practices as “having common temples and rituals (as well as common descent, language, and custom).”

Gloving practices also have all of these aspects: temples/event spaces, rituals/passing on of gloves, language/the lexicon, and so on. Recent research has also suggested that engaging in cult membership is common among young people. In fact, often have multiple cult memberships. Perhaps this is because, as Scott posits, “cultic practices appear to satisfy the needs of alienated sections of urban, middle-class youth.”

Outside of some of the customs that are exemplified in the small underground communities like gloving, there are also broader spiritual experiences that build a sense of community among ravers. Graham St. John explains that “the rhythmic soundscapes

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249 Scott, S.V. cult, 2015.
Carrabré 132

of electronic dance music genres are thought to inherit the sensuous ritualism, percussive
techniques and chanting employed by non-Western cultures and throughout history for
spiritual advancement.”250 But this is not the only reasoning behind the spiritual space
that raves offer. Robin Sylvan describes in his work Trance Formation:
For many ravers, [trance dancing] can be incredibly powerful and revelatory.
However, while trance formation is clearly at the core of the rave phenomenon,
this experience does not remain limited to the dance floor, but spills over into the
lives of ravers in a variety of important ways, irrevocably and profoundly
transforming them. The rave experience has been articulated into a spirituality,
philosophy, and worldview that makes sense of it, contextualizes it in a larger
perspective, and translates it into a code for living, a way to actualize its potential
in the concrete details of daily life. Moreover, this transformation is not simply an
individual experience, but one that has spawned a multitude of rave communities
around the world and, indeed, a global rave culture that in turn has had an impact
on mainstream culture.251
Scott R. Hutson describes the space where this spiritual experience occurs as a place to be
invisible or forget about daily troubles:
Rave is also a disappearance in terms of space and time. By holding raves in
secretive, out-of-the-way places at times when the rest of the population is usually
asleep, ravers slip into an existential void where the gaze of authority and the
public do not penetrate. In sum, through music, dance, and drugs, ravers create a
seductive void and experience great joy in erasing their subjectivity.252
In the introduction to his book Rave Culture and Religion, St. John elucidates:
“Electronic dance music culture is a truly heterogeneous global phenomenon,

Routledge, 2004), 4.
251
Robin Sylvan, Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture,
(New York: Routledge, 2005), 129.
252
Scott R. Hutson, “Technoshamanism: Spiritual Healing in the Rave Subculture,” Popular Music and
Society 23, no. 3 (1999): 57. doi. 10.1080/03007769908591745.
250


motivating new spiritualities and indicating the persistence of religiosity amongst contemporary youth.”

2.23 Multiculturalism and Choosing Identity in Toronto

In 1993, Jocelyn Guilbault compared music and cultural identity by examining the importance of re-defining local scenes in relation to what is becoming an outwardly “global culture.” Toronto is a multicultural environment with many different religions and backgrounds living and working together in one city. Parmela Attariwala’s work on Canadians’ “choosing identity” supports my theory that Canadian ravers create their cultural identities differently from those in other countries, a process that generates an interesting platform on which Flow Arts thrive.

According to Attariwala, Canadian culture, specifically Toronto, promotes an explorative type of nationalism, whereby immigrants and children of immigrants carve out their own identities free from cultural stereotypes and expectations. Attariwala uses the example of her own Punjabi ethnicity. As a third generation Canadian, she grew up dancing ballet and playing Celtic fiddle, and had no knowledge of the Punjabi language. She found herself confused about which culture she best fit into as an individual. She was not “authentically” Punjabi, and she was not Canadian. She felt like an outcast. Immigrants,

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256 Attariwala, “Towards a Canadian Music.”
Attariwala points out, tend to lose their identity when separated from their ethnic backgrounds culturally. In Toronto, one of the few places in Canada that can be called a melting pot of cultural identities, what does it mean to be Canadian? What does it mean to be part of the Toronto community as a resident? What do those people look like and what do they do? My informants have been largely representative of minority ethnicities, with familial ties to Trinidad and Tobago, Russia, Portugal, the Middle East and the Phillipines among others. Many of the informants were born Canadian, and as such, have wanted to carve out a place for themselves in the multicultural city. Canadian identity is blurry at best, they are drawn to the rave community because it offers them a space of perceived belonging, thus giving them room to explore their personal identities.

2.24 Intersectionality and “Flow Capital” in Toronto’s Gloving Community

Within the rave environment, one also has opportunity to gain social status through their “subcultural capital.” They can accomplish this through their skill in Flow Arts, Kandi making, or simply their integral presence in the scene. Gaining social status within the rave environment is often very important for young people. Particularly those struggling to find their place and purpose in the world. Lisa Lewis proposed that communities are formed when fan groups share a similar identity structure.\(^{257}\) While some theories suggest that these communities form around artists or particular genres, I posit that Toronto ravers form alliances and relationships based on the clubs they frequent and, in the case

of Flow Arts, a shared interest in creating art together. Raving, and Flow Arts specifically, allowed them to carve out their identity and find a hierarchical position for themselves within Toronto’s underground scene. In the subcultural atmosphere, talent as a Flow Artist and a scene influencer can inflate subcultural capital.

What I noticed during my time in the scene, is that gloving is more frequently practiced by men. There certainly were (and continue to be) female glovers in Toronto and in other gloving hubs in the world. I have listed some of those women in this monograph as examples of excellence in the field. I would say, however, that the representation of women in the gloving scene in general is low. I would approximate a one in ten percentage. There does not appear to be any kind of sexism in the interactions between glovers, but it is my belief that the expressive form itself has become socially gendered as masculine. Perhaps this is because the first glovers to appear in the media were men, or because it has connections to other dance styles that are masculine in nature. Flow Arts are in some ways gendered depending on the sexuality of the movements. For example, more women take part in hula hooping and fibre whipping than men, perhaps because of the sexualization of whips outside of rave or the use of the hips, a traditionally “sexualized” movement. The gloving community in Toronto did not appear to harbour oppression-blind ideologies, but certainly the broader mainstream culture exhibits social biases that align with those of Western culture. Gendering of Flow Arts styles reflects the
patriarchal hierarchy of raves as well as their existence as temporary autonomous zones, aiding in the clout-building of communities members.258

I think it is meaningful to note that the least authentic member of a rave space is the stereotypical “Chad,” the neon-clad twenty-something Caucasian man who fist bumps the air at rapid intervals and irritates so-called serious ravers in his vicinity. In contrast to this, my informants from the contemporary gloving scene represent black, latino, and middle eastern backgrounds and perhaps find their authenticity and validation from a space that allows it when Western Society, and North America in general, does not.

2.25 Origin Storytime: How This Music Helped Me Find Myself

I felt community within the rave scene during a time of identity crisis. When I arrived in London, I had upended my life. I left several jobs as a working musician, a city I had fallen in love with (Ottawa), and some of my closest friends. In many ways, I had lost a sense of purpose in the hopes that my new degree would offer a replacement. I had decided to change my career path entirely, out of performance and into academia, and I was doing it all alone in a new city. I think that is what made the PhD degree so difficult for me. I did not connect as easily with the other students in my program as I had previously with performance majors, and it was a complete culture shock.

258 For more information on dynamics in rave culture please see the following works: “Too Young to Drink, Too Old to Dance: The Influences of Age and Gender on (Non) Rave Participation” an article in Dancecult by Julie Gregory (2009); Youth, Drugs, and Nightlife by Geoffrey Hunt (2010); “Ecstasy, Gender, and Accountability in a Rave Culture,” chapter in Drugs and Culture by Molly Moloney and Geoffrey Hunt (2011); and “Drugs, Gender, Sexuality, and Accountability in the World of Raves,” in Youth, Drugs, and Nightlife by Geoffrey Hunt, Molly Moloney, and Kristin Evans (2010).
I turned to the rave scene, my research field, for connections with other people, for new friends, and I found a community I could rely on. In fact, the rave scene has been helping me find myself for years, even before I moved to London. Throughout my life I struggled with intense performance anxiety issues. During my Bachelor’s degree at McGill I was required to take a third year performance exam and perform the complete Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto and the D Major Bach Partita for a jury. I froze and had to restart the concerto three times. Finally, I broke down and had to use my sheet music for the remainder of the exam. My professor was completely baffled. After that, I contemplated dropping out of performance because I was afraid of being vulnerable again and I was finding it difficult to connect with the music that I was being asked to play. I felt disconnected from the classical music community and many of my colleagues did not understand my perspective. Finally, after some serious thought, I ended up applying to a Masters degree program in performance in Ottawa, hoping that the change of scenery would bring me back to the passion I felt for music. Once there, I ended up getting a call from an old acquaintance who had a job opportunity for me, playing electric violin with DJs in downtown Ottawa. I tried the gig out and it changed my life.

When I got on stage, something clicked inside and the music filled my veins with courage. I performed, walking the bar and collaborating with DJs as an improvisor over electronic music hits such as Avicii’s Levels and Krewella’s Alive. For some reason, performing electronic music as a team with a DJ performer allowed me the freedom to bypass my fear and express myself completely. I learned how to improvise during those
two years in Ottawa, and have since then based much of my performance career on that skill. My parents were shocked when they visited the city a year into my journey as an EDM violinist. They came to see a set at a grungy bar where I walked precariously on top of the bar with hundreds of drunk twenty somethings going wild beneath me. When I got off “stage” my dad said to me, “that’s the Gillian we have been missing.” I have been able to translate that wild Gillian into my classical work over the years, and its been a huge blessing that electronic music gave to me. However, I am hardly the first person to feel this way about the community and the music...

2.26 The Lost Boys and Girls Theory

Why do ravers continue to be involved in the scene past their due date? What’s the appeal in a sea of drunk and, very likely high, kids? Over the course of my writing process I have developed a theory that ravers want to continue to feel the excitement of childhood forever. (I say we here, because I include myself in this conglomerate. If I’m being honest with myself, I turned my passion for raving into a doctoral dissertation so I could legitimize my feelings about it. Who does that?) Like the kids of Never Never Land we never want to grow up. Ravers want to bring the passion we feel for this music and community into our daily lives, and the lives of others.

2.27 Bangarang

When I was 10, I made everyone call me Rufio for over a week. I was no longer “Gillian,” I was Rufio, the leader of the Lost Boys from the popular Hollywood film starring the late Robin Williams, Hook. Rufio’s motto was “Bangarang.” The origins of
the word bangarang are Jamaican, meaning “pandemonium” or “riot.” According to Hollywood moguls, this term was not a random expletive. Evidently, the philosophy behind the term means “team unity...a sense of exploration,” and “a willingness to follow our inner child.” Moreover, “it’s that magical compass that guides all great innovators and that most people lose sight of, at the unfortunate expense of being more ‘sensible.’ It’s a desire to look at problems with no preconceived notion of the possible solutions. That’s the power of Neverland. That’s the power of the lost boys.” Now imagine if you will, it’s 2011, and a million “kids” are celebrating their lives and their futures by jumping in the air as high as they can to dubstep DJ and Producer Skrillex’s powerhouse track “Bangarang.” How do you feel about raving now?

2.28 The Shaman and Deathmelt: Examples of Bangarang

Glovers The Shaman and Deathmelt are powerful examples of how Flow Arts can form identity and purpose for practitioners. Since discovering a talent and passion for gloving, Deathmelt has changed career paths from tech to working as a Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA) and most recently, as a Medical Transfer Attendant. Deathmelt’s pride for his work with senior rehabilitation and physical health maintenance is evident: “I’m a guy who never really cared for yoga but I got my yoga scholarship, passed, got my diploma...and then I got this job as a PTA. I teach seniors 65 and up about the benefits of maintaining your body.” He says he uses gloving within those classes “for hand

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exercises, just so they can get their mobility back in their hands...people who have carpal tunnel and other hand issues say that their hands don’t hurt as much and they have more range of motion.”

The Shaman also made drastic changes in his life to follow his passion for gloving and the power he believes it holds. He experienced his first lightshow in 2013 at the VELD Music Festival’s afterparty. The party was located at the now defunct The Guvernment (Guv) nightclub where gloving in Toronto was flourishing at the time:

I was dancing around the main dancefloor enjoying the space before it got crowded, and then a girl just taps me on the shoulder and I turn around and then she just goes ‘sit down!’ and I trusted her for some reason and I was like ‘alright’, sat down, and that’s when I got my first light show. And it gave me so much joy that I just wanted to do that for other people.\textsuperscript{262}

The Shaman, like his name suggests, is known for his ability to guide people through a spiritual journey with his lightshows. The Shaman decided to quit his job a few years ago and travel the Philippines sharing the gloving experience with strangers on the street. His goal was to offer a fun, positive experience, to spread moments of happiness, and to expose more people to the artform. He travelled for a total of two years, giving lightshows in public spaces. He maintains this practice in Toronto, giving the artform exposure to the masses.

\textsuperscript{262} In conversation with The Shaman.
2.29 Physical Benefits of Gloving

Gloving has a host of benefits outside its value as an art form, or so its practitioners claim. Among the proposed benefits that informants shared with me, several jump out as interesting avenues for further academic research in the fields of kinesthesiology, psychology, and physiotherapy among others. Glovers claim that taking up the artform has led to numerous lifestyle and health-related improvements, including: increased self-confidence and coordination, better problem solving skills, relief from physical pain, rehabilitation of injuries such as fractures and nerve damage, expanded imagination and creativity, focus training to battle ADHD symptoms (similar to using a fidget spinner), clout, and discipline. However, the most common response was that they gained a community of friends and mentors, which seemed of great importance to them. In the Facebook group “Glovers Lounge,” members often share stories regarding how joining the gloving community affected their lives positively. Below I have shared a selection of anonymous comments that illustrate the vast array of benefits offered through the practice of gloving:

*It’s taught me the process of learning...how certain things affect your mind, like substances, stress, being in different environments...and if you pay attention enough it teaches you a lot about yourself. It’s also one of the best ways I’ve found to eliminate stress.*

*It helps with spirituality, I have a reason to meditate with mudras and also it’s helped me be better at communication and being more social.*

*Physical pain from hyper mobility has been drastically reduced in my arms...*

*I cut off my left index finger which caused terrible nerve damage throughout my left hand, making using it very hard. I found gloving right around this time and through months of practice I learned how to use my hand again.*

*I could never learn an instrument, it was nice to finally find something I could learn and perform in a way that made people “wide eyed” and amazed.*
I had a ganglion cyst in my wrist... but thanks to the common stretching and movements I was able to naturally make it subside... but most of all it taught me to be myself... gloving got my mind off the loss of my mother and gave me something to work on from day to day when my mind starts racing and I can’t clear the clouds...

It helps me express myself when I don’t know how to...

It helps me push my cognitive boundaries and honestly helps my ADHD and keep me focused, like a fidget spinner... it also has helped me cope with my depression...

Rehab for a broken hand and tennis elbow...

Healed fractured joints...

...EMDR which stands for Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing. It’s a technique used by therapists where the subject is asked to recall traumatic events while the therapist manipulated lateral eye movements on the patient. This treatment actually helps people process their traumas and has shown to be an effective treatment for PTSD. It is my belief that lightshows are a form of EMDR.

Gloving teaches and exercises imagination and creativity. As we learn new concepts, create new moves and level up, we are constantly creating new neural pathways, which builds grey matter and improves neuro-plasticity. It’s like we have an infinite puzzle at our fingertips (literally). It’s a moving meditation and poetry in motion.

I don’t do any form of dance. So gloving was a good way to express how I interpret music into a physical art form.

2.30 Spirituality and Communication in Gloving

Gloving shares similarities with the practice of mudras in Hindu and Buddhist religions.

Mudras can be described generally as “symbolic hand gestures displayed by deities, dancers, and ritual performers to ‘seal’ or guarantee a particular identity or action.”

There are hundreds of hand symbols in the mudra lexicon and they are used for

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everything from Yoga practice to meditation and dance. A study in the international journal of yoga explains:

the word “mudra” is derived from Sanskrit word Mud + Dhra or bliss dissolving meaning that which dissolves duality and brings the deity and devotee together. Mudras are hand, body, or eye positions that facilitate certain energy flows in the body and by forming a specific mudra one can induce certain states of mind and consciousness.264

The isolation of the individual fingers and the focus and control required for the practice of mudras strongly resembles that of gloving. It is also evident that gloving practices developed from an interest in finding flow state, that is, moving into other states of consciousness. Over the last few years, gloving has developed an advanced language of symbols and movements. The symbols mimic the music gesturally, sometimes through word painting of the lyrical content, but also through other more abstract methods including conveying personal emotions.265 Mudras can express thousands of meanings using the entire upper body including wrist, elbow, shoulders, hand, and fingers.266 It follows that gloving has the potential to be equally as communicative and complex. It is, in essence, a non-verbal language, because it is a form of expression that human beings


265 For the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to expand the use of the term word painting to include the ways in which glovers, or musical-adjacent performers, integrate figurative or pictorial gesture to reflect the lyrical or emotional content of the music. While this terminology often implies aural representation of textual meaning, in other words its prosodic consideration, it also applies to physical gestures of meaning, and in some ways could be compared with “eye music,” described by Thurston Dart as “musical notation with a symbolic meaning that is apparent to the eye but not to the ear.” Thurston Dart, “Eye music (Ger. Augenmusik),” Oxford Music Online, January 20, 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09152.

take to release emotions and to communicate with one another.\textsuperscript{267} Spirituality and communication are vital aspects of human culture, and gloving is providing both of those essential needs as well as serving as an emotional outlet.

Flow Arts In Practice

In the segment below, broadly titled “Flow Arts in Practice,” I describe and analyze the performance practices of Flow Artists within the realm of the live event space as well as online spaces. The first section touches on the complex emotional aura that encompasses live events, “the vibe.” Consequently, the vibe is a challenge for researchers to navigate and reframe effectively. Sections 3 and 3.1 describe a theory I propose that I have called the Flow Arts Triangle. The remaining sections are technical descriptions of some of the movements and the categories that I have proposed as a means of analysis.

3  Writing The Vibe

Scholars in the field of EDMC have attempted to translate into prose a phenomenon known in the rhetoric as “the vibe.” The vibe is the sensorial experience of rave culture that has continued to evade literary efforts. Graham St. John, respected EDMC scholar, elucidates that in this field the difficulty in translation is because “text takes a back seat to sonic and body arts…dance is an art form irreducible to the written word.”

Music for dancing, or that stirs the body in some way, has long been criticized for its lack of intellectual merit. Jazz, disco, early rock n roll, and other popular music genres have all had their cultural value questioned for this reason. As a result, artists within these

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268 St. John, “Writing The Vibe.”
269 The scope of this paper does not allow for a dissection of this issue which stems from the cultural appropriation of black music.
genres have made attempts to acquire so-called “authentic” qualities or monikers. For example, the Belleville three, the first producers of what we known as “Detroit Techno” disassociated from Chicago House, a danceable genre, by encouraging so-called intelligent listening (later to be branded Intelligent Dance Music or IDM by record companies). Carefully constructed associations such as this illustrate the struggle to garner cultural legitimacy.

Efforts to build the cultural importance of dance music aside, many researchers feel that experience-based research is the only way to understand the music and the culture. Alice O’Grady explains that “to experience… ‘the vibe,’ fully, you cannot be located outside of it.” Luis-Manuel Garcia cautions, “don’t mess with the vibe,” that “a great deal of the social interactions, gestures and performances in nightlife scenes are actually rather fragile, depending on the mood and atmosphere to be right in order to find expression.” There are many factors at live events that enhance bodily experiences of the music. For instance, complex lighting and media designs as well as high quality sound systems that create vibrations through the body. A study completed in 2013 on the effect of the bass drum on human dance movement concluded that “coordinated rhythmic movement and the shared feelings it evokes have proved their potency in holding groups together,” and “listening to rhythm with a strong beat engages motor areas of the brain”

270 Information on the process of categorizing IDM by record companies came from an article by Ramzy Alwakeel entitled “IDM as a ‘Minor’ Literature: The Treatment of Cultural and Musical Norms by ‘Intelligent Dance Music.’”
271 Raves used to refer to electronica events that took place outdoors or in illegal spaces. Now it is a more general term used to describe an electronic music event.
that could elicit sensations of pleasure.”

Lisa Diotalevi explains the importance of experiential music consumption when it comes to EDMC:

Trance, like other electronic dance music genres, is designed to be experienced on a dance floor during a festival or a night party. Actually, it is built by the dance floor, during years and decades of parties, as the reactions of the crowds influence the musical creations and inspiration of the artists. This kind of music is hardly accessible outside of this context. It is a collective, sensitive experience, shared with little verbal communication—the music’s volume on the dance floor doesn’t allow for it. People communicate with gestures and facial expressions. They share emotions, euphoria, joy, contemplation, exhaustion...

An audioessay by Tami Gadir shares similar sentiments:

I am at home here, because these rhythms are a part of my own rhythms. I am at home, because the moment I am engulfed by sounds with which my muscles immediately fall into rhythm, I am cocooned in this blanket of floor-shifting sound. I strive to be invisible to anyone outside of myself, in my fantasy of disappearance. I feel at home, because the moment I close my eyes, I can reverse this fantasy to the notion of not my own disappearance, but of everybody else’s. That is, I am attempting to engage almost wholly with my senses, while disengaging from people around me. My goal is disconnection. This fantasy, while it lasts, is the mental place from which I think I must remove myself, in order to learn anything, in order to label what I am doing as research. How wrong I am.

3.1 The Flow Arts Triangle

Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video #13

In the playlist video indicated above, Orbiters Koru and Mallo face-off at the Orbit Styles Grand Finale, part of the International Gloving Competition (IGC) in 2016. Much like the

276 Gadir, “Techno Intersections.”
Cyphers demonstrated earlier, the competitors sit or stand in a circle of support, and show off their abilities within a limited time-frame. Each competitor is allowed a period of a few seconds to demonstrate their skill level, to impress the judges, and to inspire one another. When one competitor finishes, the other switches places with them and the time clock begins again. Competitions like IGC and Boss are yet another facet of Flow Artistry that allow for a legitimization of the art form and the artist. Events such as this take place outside of the event spaces where gloving was conceived, and are thus removed from the dancefloor.

However, gloving, and other Flow Art styles, are most effectively performed and experienced at live events. I refer to this expressive exchange as *The Flow Arts Triangle*. The triangle consists of a DJ or Producer, the Flow Artist, and the Receptor, a term I have chosen for the person receiving the lightshow. The three points of the triangle enter into a cyclical relationship based on emotion, improvisation, and “the vibe” so often mentioned in Electronic Dance Music Culture discourse.

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277 Cypher circles such as the Frozen Face Melter’s Crew at the Ever After Music Festival are common occurrences.
3.2 The DJ as Taste Maker and Triangle Member

The DJ is inextricably tied to the creation of “vibe” moments through their song choices both on and off the dancefloor. Typically, contemporary DJs are also producers of their own music. Winning favour with an audience bass is therefore a complex endeavour. Although the skills of DJ and producer are significantly different, audiences expect strong producers to be excellent DJs (in terms of their mixing skills and set planning). To offer a comparative example, I have been a fan of Alok, a Brazilian Bass DJ and Producer, for some time. I attended a set of his at Uniun in Toronto in 2017 and was deeply disappointed. He talked on the microphone frequently, and at a louder interval than the music, and it was clear that he was not mixing, that the set was pre-programmed. Despite having a clear understanding that these two skills are not mutually exclusive, it ruined my experience and diminished my appreciation for him. The vibe in the room
went from excited bubbling energies to a sullen irritability. I was obviously not the only person to feel this way about the set, and it showed in the vibe. On the other hand, there have been sets I have shown up to spontaneously that held me on bated breath and took me to peaceful internal places. One such set was Jayforce, a Toronto-based DJ who performed one early morning at Vertigo, an after-hours club downtown. I showed up randomly with friends for a birthday celebration and I remember distinctly feeling as though each new song was a revelation. When the set finally ended, two hours had gone by in a flash. Something even more fascinating, however, was that I saved one or two of the tracks from Jayforce’s set using the application Shazam, and while listening later, the music neglected to ignite the same feelings. In fact, I barely recognized the tracks. These two incidents reinforce the role the DJ plays in cultivating and maintaining the vibe. Their presence and influence is relevant, even if the DJ is performing a high profile set at a festival and the set is rigid and pre-planned. The choices they make prior to an event by understanding what that audience might be expecting from them and by their ability to anticipate appropriate ways to surprise that audience are paramount.

There is also significant research linking rave culture with spirituality and pinning The DJ as Shaman. Graham St. John describes the DJ as:

> a transgressor of rules, codes and boundaries, the DJ cuts an ambiguous figure and draws disparate yet extreme emotive responses across the community of transgressors/transgressed; with the ambivalence amplified if the DJ is a figure who, not unlike the shaman or the mystic, is reputedly mobile across transpersonal frontiers. In addition to being an embodiment of transgression, the

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DJ is integral to independent musical cultural movements. DJs are tastemakers, in the sense that they are the ones who get to choose tracks to perform. They hear the new material of other artists before anyone else and begin to insert those tracks into the circulating repertoire of other artists. Yes, to some extent the audience is capable of influencing what is played at events, but in many ways the DJs are the ones who expose the audience members to these tracks in the first place. There is also a dichotomy between DJs who reach mainstream fame in terms of who is authentic and who is not. This authenticity argument has more to do with the audience’s dissatisfaction when artists they respect decide to change their personal style in favour of a pop-flair that is radio-friendly. From the artist’s perspective, they have chosen to be more accessible, and in so doing they have bargained for a potential loss of their underground fans. Nevertheless, the artist gains hundreds of thousands more fans through the process of popularizing their music. Whether or not this transition is successful and messes with “the vibe” at shows really differs. An example of an artist that opposes my earlier story regarding Alok is Tiesto. He has reinvented himself for years, writing simplistic, highly radio-friendly party music. Ten years ago, his trance albums were the epitome of “cool” in the industry, and now he plays fairly predictable festival sets to millions of screaming young people the community refer to unfavourably as “rave babies.” Although I do not feel emotionally connected to Tiesto’s big room house music, his efforts to remain current certainly keep him relevant in the scene. He also knows how to cultivate the vibe with his sets. I have seen him live several times and I have always felt elevated.

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Not only are DJs essential to the experience of raving in general, they are also vital to The Flow Arts Triangle. To illustrate, glovers will usually take their gloves out at events when they are feeling emotionally connected to the vibe. This can only happen if a DJ is in a state of flow themselves, intellectually and emotionally connected to the music they are playing and synced with the audience. Set planning is similar to writing a fiction novel. It should include metaphorical surprises, love stories, tension, cliff hangers, and other concepts. If the DJ is not using the vibe to their advantage in this process then neither the glover, nor the receptor will be able to connect in the flow of the triangle effectively.

3.3 Lightshows

As noted, a “lightshow” is the name of the performance given by glovers. Typically, this occurs at live events. As the DJ performs their set, a glover will either be solicited for a lightshow by an audience member, the “receptor,” or they will offer one. Sometimes the receptor is also a glover hoping to trade lightshows. The triangle is interdependent: the DJ chooses the tracks as part of their creative process, the glover identifies with the music and expresses themselves to it, and the receptor experiences both the DJ performance and the gloving lightshow as dual acts of expressivity. Meaningful experiences occur during this process. To illustrate, I have provided some excerpts of my fieldnotes, as well as comments from practitioners online. The first story, is from one of my key informants, Deathmelt:

One time I gave a lightshow to a gay couple. And...they had a bad history with
[gloving] but for some reason they saw me flowing and they just wanted to take a chance and see what it’s like. So, I gave a lightshow to the first male and then he’s like hold on, this is pretty good can I get my husband? And I’m like, sure, go ahead, so yeah two of these muscular guys now sitting in front of me and I’m giving them both light shows and they told me they don’t like gloving but yours was like art or something? And they loved it so much that they gave me an $120 tip. I told them they don’t have to tip me it’s fine but they’re like no, this is art, you deserve this…gloving to me is a passion and an art, so because of that it’s like I give you a show and it’s how I feel at the moment that’s what you get. But I guess, the best parts I remember is either people who’ve never had a show before or they had a bad show and I see their face light up after I’m done or you know that was so magical holy thank you for my first experience or you know I’ll get kandi or a hug or something like that. And just seeing their faces all happy and stuff makes it rewarding…

I traded [shows] with [a friend] right after I split with my ex…I remember at FNL we had some future bass playing and it was just the right mood and setting. Def had a few tears come down my face in that. I appreciate our friendship a lot, and I’ll always remember that show.

During a silent disco boogie T set at like 4 am, I made a dude cry his eyes out and after the show he was still crying and we hugged for a long time.

3.4 The Grid

Gloving performance takes place within a designated area of space in front of the performer’s body. Recent studies in Norway have shown that human beings move instinctively to music in relatively predictable and similar ways. Scholars are currently studying gestural improvisations to music on non-rave-related groups of people. The studies have resulted in the naming of the “style” of movement. The gestural expression of melody has thus been given the moniker: “Sound Tracing” by scholars. Typical

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280 In conversation with Deathmelt, Facebook message.
281 Comment on Glovers Lounge Forum, Facebook, July 30, 2019.
282 Ibid.
movements outline a square-like space around oneself, called the “social box.” A representation of movements conducted in the study are shown below in Figure 25:

![Figure 25: The representation of movement from the study by Kelkar and Jensenius, 2018.](image)

What is so relatable about this study is that the same range of space is respected and taught in the practice of gloving, a space referred to as “the grid.” The study opens new avenues for the study of bodies in space and how human beings conceptualize gestural meaning and expression.

The study was conducted by Tejaswinee Kelkar and Alexander Refsum Jensenius who

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283 This picture was taken from Kelkar and Jensenius (2018). While the publication does not have official page numbers, this can be found on page 12 of 21 in the pdf document.
analyzed a group of people as they moved to various sounds using expressive freestyle gestures. The question at hand was “how do spatiotemporal elements influence the cognition of music”? According to Kelkar and Jensenius, shape and melody are “interwoven ideas.” Their work illuminated the realization that hands guide the music in a way similar to something called “co-speech” gestures, which are the ways we move while communicating through verbal language with one another. Results of the study revealed that lower pitches were shown with left or bottom hand gesturing while higher pitches were indicated to the top or right of the participant’s body. Participants also outlined shapes or objects in the air, a shockingly similar practice to liquid’s “play ball” and gloving’s movement types in general. They came to the conclusion that music and body movement “share a common structure that affords equivalent and universal emotional expression.” More importantly, however, the study indicates an intrinsic connection between the cognition of musical ideas and the communication of this understanding. The study categorized six most dominant freehand movements that subjects used during the study: 1) one outstretched hand, changing the height of the palm; 2) two hands outstretches or compressing an “object”; 3) two hands symmetrically moving away from the center of the body in the horizontal plane; 4) two hands moving together to represent holding and manipulating an object; 5) two hands drawing arcs along an imaginary circle; And 6) two hands following each other in a percussive pattern. The following picture illustrates these motions as they were mapped out during the study:

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Figure 26: The six most common patterns of instinctual movement within the grid.\(^{286}\)

The study, completed in 2018, established patterns of common instinctual movements. Whether a “social box” or “the grid,” human beings move within reach of their personal spacial area, which encompasses an imaginary 3D box shape. For the remainder of the paper I will refer to this spacial area as “the grid” in keeping with established terminology of glovers and other Flow Artists.

\(^{286}\) This picture was taken from Kelkar and Jensenius (2018). While the publication does not have official page numbers, this can be found on page 14 of 21 in the pdf document.
3.5  Gestural Categories

The boundaries of the Flow Arts movement universe are controlled by “the grid.” Within the grid, broad categories of macro and micro movements can be established. A micro movement for instance, would be isolated to the fingers, while a macro movement would be gestural or use a larger body part such as the entire arm. The movements can also be grouped under stylistic categories such as Liquid or Popping/Locking. These broad and fluid categorizations make it challenging to lock down specifics on paper, especially when Flow Artists themselves loosely describe their own artistic work. Only recently has the gloving artform begun to establish consistency among practitioners thanks to the efforts by the Emazing group, their outreach programs and online tutorials.

3.6  Gloving Concepts

Glovers have established working categories of movements they call “concepts.” For the sake of some formal organizational structure, I have reformatted these into categories that overlap. The four major “types” of movement: 1) concepts, including word painting and metaphors;287 2) staccato, sharply executed movements; 3) legato, a fluid, smooth execution; and 4) impact, used for an abrupt change of pace or for shock value. I have used Italian musical terminology for the sharp and smooth categories because it best suits the quality of the gesture. Staccato is defined as consisting of “a series of short, quick

287 For further reading on the conceptualization of pitch in tangible terms, please see Dr. Dillon Parmer’s recent article “Defying the Conventional: Musical Performance, Embodied Cognition, and the Reconfiguration of Institutional Discourse.”
sounds.” As a gesture, I will define it as a series of short, quick, movements punctuated by limbic energy. Legato, on the other hand, implies “in a smooth flowing manner, without breaks between notes.” In this case, I will define legato as movement in a smooth and flowing manner with fluid transitions. I have chosen to combine musicality with movement because Flow Artists are rearticulating musical phrasing in new and exciting ways through their improvisations. I think the connection to musical phrasing is innate and it should be considered as such. I have organized the four categories into a Euler Diagram, indicating the possible overlaps that are the most relevant, though others are possible:  

289 A Euler Diagram, rather than a Venn Diagram, does not indicate all possible intersections of the circles. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is not necessary to indicate more than what is shown in the text.
Impact relies on using unpredictable or distraction method movements to create illusions or to affect the emotions of the receptor, the receiving party of the lightshow. Concept uses visual manifestations to illustrate an idea similar to “word painting” in musical works, it often makes use of visual imagery. Staccato or Sharp movements are quick, strong, and
clear movements. I use the term Staccato alongside it because it is the most comparable concept from musical jargon that applies both in a visual and auditory sense. Legato or Smooth movements are the opposite of Staccato in that they require fluidity and calmness. The comparison to a legato sound and gesture in music is also applicable in this case. Due to the creative and improvisational nature of the art form, I have found that many of these categories overlap and could feasibly belong in two or three categories equally.

3.7 The Four Categories

*Impact*

The concept “impact” is an illusion technique used by glovers. In this technique, the glover uses a red or blue colour in their thumb lights while the remaining fingers have a separate colour set. The show is geared towards the thumb lights as a focus point.\(^{290}\) Impact in the context of this dissertation will therefore refer to two separate ideas. First, as the specific gloving technique that practitioners call impact; and second, as an umbrella concept under which many other movements fall. The umbrella concept of “impact” adheres more closely to the definition “the force of impression of one thing on another: a significant or major effect.”\(^{291}\) This category will be comprised of any movements used by the glover for the express purpose of having a significant effect on

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\(^{290}\) Heather Huang, a leader in the Toronto Gloving Community provided this “Beginner Glovers Concept List” at the author’s request.

the receptor. For example, whips, flails, and conjuring, all concepts that will be discussed later in the chapter.

**Concept**

As with Impact, glovers refer to all types of movements under the umbrella caption of “concepts.” For the sake of clarity, I narrow the field of use to contain ideas that are imaginative or descriptive in some way; they tell a story. There are several ways glovers use imagination in their lightshows. One way is as a gestural style of word painting. Tim Carter describes word-painting in music as “the use of musical gesture(s) in a work with an actual or implied text to reflect, often pictorially, the literal or figurative meaning of a word or phrase.” The example he gives is a falling line in the melody for the words “he came down from heaven.” In gloving for example, the lyric “it’s the sound of walking away” in the popular song of the same name by Illenium could be interpreted by the glover walking their fingers along in midair. If the melody were to go up a scale, the hands of the glover could move upwards or in a direction that fits with the musical indications. Another example of concept as a category is in the technique called “creatures” where the lights in the fingertips are contorted and squished together to create lifelike “creature” shapes in the darkness. Yet another example is miming techniques. This category is very imaginative and can include many different types of movements.

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**Legato**

In musical performance, legato means a series of successive notes, “connected without any intervening silence of articulation” with exception of certain emphases or attacks. Successive in this definition means words that are slurred together, or in layman’s terms, they sound smooth. I chose this word because the description fits the polymorphous nature of the artform. It would be inadequate to refer to smooth movements as one-dimensional in possibility in this case. The fascinating thing about gesture as an interpretive tool is that smooth movements can be partnered with bold emphasis to create multi-dimensional meanings. Legato movements include liquid, finger rolls, and finger tracing, all of which are basic concepts that will be discussed in greater detail below.

**Staccato**

Staccato, as a musical term, refers specifically to individual notes punctuated by spaces. There is continuity in the phrase, but it contains much more emphasis in the spaces between the notes than with legato. It has a more energetic feeling. C.P.E. Bach, in his treatise *Versuch*, 1753 claims that a staccato indication implied that the performer should play with “fire.” Staccato, in this way, can be applied to gloving similarly to its 18th century meaning of performing “melodies with life.” Examples of staccato movements include various tutting styles, digits and remoting.

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3.8 The Basic Concepts

Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Videos 14-21

All glovers begin their training by mastering a set of basic concepts and movements. Some of the most common beginning movements are finger rolls, stacking, liquid, finger tracing, isolations, and tech. The following segment will provide descriptions of the breakdown of each movement and then a video of that movement in action will follow for your reference.

3.9 Finger Rolls [Category: Legato, Impact]

Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Videos 14 and 15

The student begins learning finger rolls by holding their hands flatly upturned and closing the fingers into the palms, thumbs held closely to the sides of the hands. From this point, they begin by uncurling the pointer finger of their left hand, which is followed smoothly by the middle finger, the ring finger, the pinky finger, and continues to the right hand. While they are uncurling the pinky of the right hand to follow the wave they are creating, they must also begin to curl the fingers back in on the left hand. A “wave” is produced by this action. It takes a lot of practice to get the movement smooth and even. The next step in the process, once you have mastered this movement, is to begin rolling the arms in a rotational “u-shaped” pattern moving away from the body and returning to it. The u-shape emphasizes the rolling of the fingers. A further movement is to extend the arms and add speed control into the mix so that the roll is slowest when it is closer to the receptor’s face and faster when it is closer to the glover. Finger rolls can be learned palms up or down and can be transitioned between one another in a kind of figure eight motion. They
are a gateway move to more intermediate and advanced movements such as whips and flails. As a violinist, I found this beginner move the most straightforward to pick up. I have good finger isolation and the motion in many ways mimics the violin left hand. However, many find it to be a challenging introductory move. Finger rolls can also be implemented into other, more complex movements. In the video examples, Deathmelt shows a basic and extended variation of the finger roll. The movement is similar to a whip. Deathmelt’s specialty is called “liquid gloving style,” which include a variety of finger roll movements as the basis.

3.10 **Stacking** [Category: Staccato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 16*

Stacking begins with flat hands, palms facing down, one lying on top of the other. Pull the bottom hand backwards in a direct line and slide it on top of the hand that was on the top previously. Continue in this fashion. The movement, while smooth in terms of its fluidity, is meant to be used in conjunction with a stronger musical soundscape as opposed to a sweet, melodic one. In the sixteenth video of the playlist, I demonstrate a stack.

3.11 **Liquid** [Category: Concept/Legato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 17*

Liquid, in the context of gloving, is more condensed and consists mainly of hand leading and following. In the earlier segment about Liquid dance style, this movement was
described as “Rails: Range In A Line.” One hand moves in a snake-like or wave-like motion and the other follows it at a close distance, mimicking its every move exactly. Liquid in its original form extended more into the arms and legs and utilized the entire body, whereas gloving maintains a smaller space of activity. In the seventeenth video, Deathmelt gives an example of a liquid motion that beginners often practice.

3.12 **Finger Tracing** [Category: Legato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 18*

Finger Tracing is a small-scale form of the liquid movement known as contours, where the performer follows the lines of their body with their hands. In finger tracing, exemplified in video number eighteen, the performer uses their index finger to outline the shape of their hand or various fingers. This movement, partnered with the isolations explained below, are the basis of finger tutting and other micro movements that will be discussed in the segment, Intro To The Gloving Lexicon.

3.13 **Isolations** [Category: Staccato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 19*

Isolations are the first step towards having independence of all your fingers, an essential skill in the mastery of gloving. The breakdown of this movement is to hold your palms flat and vertical as if saying “stop” and then bending individual fingers or groups of fingers at the second knuckle. It is also important to practice matching this as a mirror image of your opposing hand, or in completely different configurations to your opposing
hand. By learning to move the fingers independently from one another and in different groupings such as the video below, glovers begin to develop the ability to improvise as well as expand their digit variation abilities. Deathmelt demonstrates a few isolation possibilities in video nineteen.

3.14 Tech [Category: Concept, Staccato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 20*

This movement has the space to be either complex or simple, depending on the level of the glover. It is the process of creating lines along the grid, or box shapes with the hands and fingers. The main idea is to create a set of consecutive ninety-degree angles that morph into one another with ease. The movement is called “tech” mainly for its tendency to look technical and “robotic” in affect. Video number twenty is a YouTube Tutorial on Tech that gives both an explanation and a demonstration of how the style could look at a beginner level. The glover explains that there are two main types of shapes that one should be comfortable with before “digitizing,” which is to add finger rolls into the box shapes, effectively creating flow rather than stagnancy.

3.15 Musicality

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 21*

Tutorials in The Glovers Lounge, a private online Facebook group for a growing international community of glovers also touch on concepts such as Showmanship and Musicality. Both showmanship and musicality are separate skill-sets from the practice of technical mastery and are encouraged from the onset of a beginner’s journey. Musicality
in particular is valued in the community as the mark of a true artist and in competitions it
is very difficult to attain a perfect musicality score from judges.

Musicality has three main components: 1) the ability to hear and emphasize the subtleties
of a track; 2) the transitions between these emphases; and 3) individualism and
personality in the delivery. There are several tutorials on musicality available online.
Glover Havoc describes musicality as “the interpretation of the many different layers of a
song...and how glovers throw moves that help exemplify those beats.” In Materia’s
tutorial, he asserts that musicality is not innate, that it can be trained. The concept of
musicality as a skill one is born with is an age-old myth that musicians and artists are
forced to navigate in their training and careers. It is interesting that it is also a myth in the
gloving community. Materia claims that the official definition of musicality as agreed
upon by the community is “a glover’s ability to display individualism and expression by
precisely synchronizing his/her movements to the individual sounds of a song, thereby
creating the illusion as if the performer is controlling the sounds of the music.”

He goes on to explain the theory behind this definition:

Any judge or spectator is always looking for that pop that strike that hit of the
note that gives that little extra personification. In order to get those moments of
stellar musicality, skill and a lot of predictability play a huge factor. Not only do
you have to plan to hit a particular sound or segment of a song in a particular way,
you also have to integrate this hit with the rest of the show you’re giving,
planning and coordination...but it’s important to keep in mind that musicality is
also about you, primarily about you, how you want to hit a word, beat or sound,
you know you can pop your shoulder on that down beat during a tut, liquid out of

that held note from the vocalist in the song and even make a distinct whip during a bass hit...it doesn’t matter it’s about you baby...”

Materia gives an example of a lightshow with edited visual labels indicating what aspects of the music he is focusing his movements on as the song progresses. Please see the link in the footnotes for reference, it begins at 4:21. Havoc emphasizes ear training as an important aspect to achieving better musicality. By isolating your attention on one particular instrument and its rhythm or pitch, you can create more finesse in your delivery of the track. Another glover, Blitzen, also describes instrument isolation as a form of ear training. To facilitate a practical exercise for beginners, she makes a four track loop that includes the following instruments: kick drum, clap, closed high hat and then a vocal line. She then assigns a movement (in this case, different types of finger rolls: simple finger roll, box finger roll, infinite finger roll, and then back and forth finger roll) to each track and isolates that sound by muting the other three instruments on her computer. Blitzen suggests that you practice each sound and movement isolated, and then you play the loop itself and practice changing your movements to emphasize different layers of the loop.

Musicality is also notable in the transitions between the hits that a glover chooses as their focal point. For example, Havok describes:

You can start your show by hitting the first eight count, and all of a sudden you hit the vocals as it’s introduced in the song, and then from there maybe you go into the high hats, and then from there maybe you go back to the vocals or back to the eight count, it doesn’t matter, it’s all about the transitions between those notes,

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296 Materia Lightshows, “Musicality (definition and theory).”
297 Ibid.
and once you start getting really good at musicality, you’re going to be able to listen to those little beats that only come up so rarely in the entire song and they’re very subtle and they’re very hard to hear, but when you start listening to these songs you’ll begin to hear them, and when you throw the show and you’re able to hit that subtle beat, the viewers going to be like ‘OMG I did not expect them to hit that…it blows my mind.’

Musicality is not about hitting every note, it is about subtlety. It is about listening to the music more closely, having a more trained ear. When people get too technical with their movements they forget about the music itself. Students of musical instruments have similar issues. One can focus too much on technique, getting wrapped up in impersonal particularism and perfectionisms. True musicality has technical prowess, but it also inserts personality and energy into the interpretation of the pitch and rhythms. Without personality, the performance will not have the same emotional effect. As an example of an effective musical performance, Jojo, a glover sponsored by Futuristic Lights, demonstrates the effect of a perfect score (five points out of five) musicality lightshow in video twenty-one.

3.16 Showmanship

Another aspect of a good lightshow is showmanship. It seems self explanatory, but there is some specificity to the skill as a glover. Flow, a glover sponsored by Emazing lights explains the concept as “adding a show-like feel to your lightshow...being able to draw

your viewer in and trance them without having to do the most difficult shit ever.”

Once again, with showmanship, the emphasis is on finesse. Technicality does not necessarily make a lightshow more impressive. Clarity is one of the important ways to demonstrate showmanship. In other words, be a clean performer. Be sharp and execute movements with grace and style. Flow describes four pillars of showmanship that he calls the MEDA theory. MEDA is an acronym for the following: Musicality, Entertainment/Having Fun, Depth Perception, and Animation. Musicality, as we established above, is more about creating the illusion that, as Flow puts it, “music is coming from your hands...basically creating the song with your movements.”

The entertainment aspect of the theory is there to remind glovers to enjoy themselves because that will make the experience more fun for the receptor as well. Depth perception is simply the utilization of space between yourself and the receptor. One must make use of various depth levels that include the following: directly in front of the receptor’s face, in the peripherals of the eyes, far away from the face of the receptor, and close to the glover’s body. There are also rules regarding speed and size of movements. Often, farther away movements have the space to be larger and more grandiose. Closer to the receptor, movements should be micro, and slow down in speed. And finally, animation is yet another concept of creating illusions. Conjuring is one way to create illusions during a lightshow, making light appear and disappear as if by magic. Video twenty-two shows an example of conjuring.

Well-known glover Puppet explains that showmanship is all in the delivery of the

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301 “[UV] [MOB] Flow || Showmanship Tutorial || [EmazingLights.com].”
movements. He says, “showmanship is all about the body. It’s how you present the move, not the actual move itself. If your body is in one place, chances are, you’re not going in. Swing left and right, twist and turn your body to add extra momentum to your moves, especially whips.” Peeps, a glover with Futuristic Lights, describes the concept in his tutorial through metaphor: “have you ever been in an argument with someone and the whole argument started cause ‘it’s not what you said, it’s how you said it’? Well, showmanship is not what you do, but how you do it.” In all of these explanations, the point to take home is that showmanship is the intention and creativity behind the delivery of the movements. The more effective you can make a simple movement, the better your showmanship.

3.17 Glovers Block

A common occurrence during the creative process of learning to become a high level glover is known as Glovers Block, that is, a creative stagnation. There are many forum style conversations devoted to the topic online. As with any art, there are points of disappointment or frustration. All artists experience this issue. Some of the suggestions online for glovers from glovers included:

Without inspiration you have no motivation.

...Take a break and listen to different music and take off my gloves...oddly enough too, gloving without gloves might help you develop/learn a new concept.

302 Post in Glover’s Lounge, Facebook, January 23, 2016.
Listen to your hands, do what you wanna see, look inwards to what you know you wanna do. It’s all mentality.\textsuperscript{304}

These types of comments indicate that glovers feel a real sense of artistic ability akin to practitioners of any respected art form. Gloving, as an extension of rave culture, is often represented as a culture of excess and self-indulgence, drugs and partying and escaping reality. However, glovers have found an artistic calling and a form of self expression far beyond the commercialism of the culture.

\textsuperscript{304} Post in Glovers Lounge, Facebook, June 25, 2019.
Intro to the Gloving Lexicon

“Those who flow as life flows know they need no other force.” - Lao Tze

Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 23 featuring Toronto-based glover, The Shaman, as he transitions through several gloving movements, clearly labelled by their titles. The movements are conjuring, whips, wave tuts, morphing, king tuts, liquid, and finally creatures. It is part of a collection of audio-visual examples that I requested from the Flow Arts community.

In this section I provide a snapshot of the movements currently in common practice within the gloving community. I am not an expert glover, so my knowledge of the extended repertoire of gloving is incomplete. Moreover, new movements are being invented and popularized at a steady growth rate, so as a result, this list may be outdated at its publication. However, I will elucidate the practices to which I was exposed between the years 2014 and 2019 within an easily comprehensible framework. Once a glover has been introduced to the basics, they will slowly become aware of the hierarchical structure of movement types. I have come across the following large-scale “styles.” In other words, a broad stylistic approach to movement within gloving. These styles are Tutting, Liquid, Tech, and Popping/Locking. Within these styles I have divided the movements or concepts into three categories: 1) Macro, large-scale movements; 2) Micro, small-scale movements; and 3) Independent, movements that are abstract.
4 Macro Movements

Macro movements include wave tutting, king tutting, flail tutting, whips, flails, whails, miming, remoting, wongtons, and puppetry among others. For the purposes of this dissertation I will explain only a selection of each category of movements.

4.1 King Tutting [Category: Staccato]

A king tut is the creation of 90 degree angles in the air, usually into box-like shapes. The performer utilizes the entire arm for this movement. It is difficult to contort into clean 90-degree angles, so often tutorials will touch on the aspect of stretching and building muscle control. The below image exemplifies the king tut box shape and the possible areas around the body it can be implemented. Please see the introductory video at the beginning of this lexicon for a demonstration of the movement. The glover demonstrates this style between 0.38 and 0.44 seconds and 0.50 to 0.55 seconds into the video.
4.2 *Whips* [Category: Impact]

A whip is a hand circle with movement only from the wrist. The palms of the hands are outstretched and facing away from the glover. At the same time as the hand is circling, the fingers move from closed into a fist to being outstretched as wide as they can manage. The movement could be considered a grander version of the finger roll. Usually, the hands alternate to give a feeling of constant movement. The fundamentals of a “good” whip, according to glover, Hobbes, are to hyperextend the fingers, use your elbows to give momentum to the movement, and have a strong mastery of the finger roll.\(^{306}\)

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\(^{305}\) Picture taken from emazinglights.com.
see the introductory video at the beginning of this lexicon for a demonstration of whips between 0.09 seconds and 0.21 seconds.

4.3 Remoting [Category: Concept, Staccato]
This movement relies on one hand or finger to give the illusion that it is controlling the other hand’s movements. One way of executing the movement is by holding both arms directly in front of your body, with the right hand approximately one foot directly above the left. With the pointer finger of your right hand, lift the finger up and then down as if to say “go that way.” Then with the left hand outstretched as if holding a ball, wrist high, move the entire arm in that position downward. The effect here is that the dominant hand is controlling the more passive left hand. There are many variations, but all movements should have one hand or digit in control of a part of the upper body.

4.4 Wongtons [Category: Impact]
This style relies on the concept of impact that revolves around the use of blue and red thumb lights to draw the focus of the viewer. Wongtons are the action of a figure eight, from the liquid style of dancing in the 1990s, with blue and red thumb lights held directly beneath the index fingers. Sometimes it is easier to remove them from the gloves and clutch them between the pad of the palm and the thumb.
4.5 Puppetry [Category: Concept]

I was unfamiliar with the instructional elements of this movement, so I requested a description from an informant, a Glover who goes by the pseudonym KaiByStyle. He explained:

_Puppetry, as the name suggests, is a gloving motion that imitates the use of puppets. Some use it as making it seem like one is using a marionette, where one hand is the puppet, and the other is the handle. The idea is that the hands are ‘connected’ using invisible strings. This illusion can be created by stopping one hand above the other at a distance, then slowly curling and moving the top hand, then milliseconds after following the same motions, or creating new motions. Other uses can be using the hand as a finger puppet, such as walking the forefinger and middle finger of one hand along the other._

4.6 Micro Movements

Micro movements include pinching, creatures, morphing, dials, stacking, platforming, clocking, clusters, digits, finger rolls, finger tuts, and tracing among others. Some micro movements not previously discussed in the basics section, but that are used frequently include:

4.7 Morphing [Category: Concept, Legato]

_Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 24_

This style involves pinching and curling the fingers into shapes that resemble transformers and then slowly changing into another shape with imperceptible movements of the hands. The movements begin to look like a spaceship or alien life-form from a science fiction film.

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307 In conversation with KaiByStyle, August 2020.
308 I describe a selection of these movements in the lexicon, but not platforming. To briefly explain, platforming resembles stacking.
4.8  *Dials* [Category: Concept, Legato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 25*

To complete a dial movement, the glover holds their hand out flat in front of them with the palm facing inward. The only fingers to move in a dial are the index and pinky, which complete small circular movements, wrapping themselves outside the middle fingers and then back in a finger crossing motion. The idea is to use finger dexterity to create these isolations.

4.9  *Clocking* [Category: Concept, Legato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 26*

Clocking is a fluid concept that broadly means to create a moving clock face using both hands. One hand is positioned as the clock numbers. The hand is held out vertically in front of the body, fingertips up towards the sky with the palm facing away. The glover spreads their fingers apart to create the illusion of the clock numbers, specifically nine to twelve. The remaining hand forms the movements of the clock hand by separating the index finger from the remaining fingers, which extend in a pinching motion. Using jerking movements, the clock hand moves across the clock face as if “ticking.”

4.10  *Finger Tuts* [Category: Staccato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 27*

Finger tutting is the smallest iteration of tutting in gloving. The glover follows a small invisible grid formed by moving the hands and fingers in right angles, transitioned
through finger tracing and other methods. The fingers mimic the look of wooden puzzle boxes.

4.11 Creatures [Category: Concept]
Creatures is yet another movement with which I am less familiar, so I once again draw on KaiByStyle’s expertise in this matter:

*When one wants to create the illusion of the hands being ‘alive’ they use isolated movements and non movements to create what looks like a little creature. The idea is that some fingers move, and some remain still. This makes it seem like the movements are limbs, and then the still parts are the face or eyes of a creature. Then this creature is manipulated and moved to the music. One of the simplest creatures is what I call the jellyfish. By curling the pointer, middle, and ring finger into the palm, leaving the thumb and pinky outstretched, then moving the outstretched pink and thumb into the palm as well, then back out, and repeating this motion, it begins to take shape as a ‘jellyfish.’ Then using an undulating up and down motion of the whole hand, along with the initial curling of the pinky and thumb, you can mimic the motions of a jellyfish. Moving up, then slightly down, with each swoosh of the fingers. A creature can be done in any form.*

4.12 Independent Movements
Independent movements based on abstract concepts include, but not limited to, conjuring, strobe cages, petals, tracers, impact, and splicing.

\[309 \text{In conversation with KaiByStyle, August 2020.}\]
4.13 *Conjuring* [Category: Impact, Concept, Staccato]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 28*

Conjuring is a technique that makes use of “close up magic” illusions. The glover switches their lights on and off as they appear to pass the light between their thumbs and other fingers.

4.14 *Strobe Cages* [Category: Impact]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 29*

Using a strobe effect lighting pattern in the thumb of one hand, the glover curves the remaining fingers over top as if to contain the light within a cage. The glover moves the cage in half circles, horizontally, so that the strobe appears and disappears behind the fingers.

4.15 *Tracers* [Category: Impact]

*Please see YouTube Playlist #1: Video 30*

Tracers are a type of light pattern that allow the eyes to see colour as if trailing through the air. The lights remain where they started and carve long lines in the air as the movements occur.
Figure 29: A visual representation of the described movements in the lexicon and their corresponding categories.\textsuperscript{310}

\textsuperscript{310} This diagram is not a complete representation of all the movements into categories. It only includes those described in the body of the paper as examples.
4.16 Glove Sets, Colour Programming, and Strobes
Gloves are part of the interpretation of the performance in that they can be customized in almost every way to suit the style, abilities, and preferences of the glover. Customizable aspects include glove colours in white or black (with white tips), slim or regular cotton fits, light combinations for the LEDs, strobe settings, movement and speed activated colour change options, and various diffusers. In fact, the technology for gloving is so advanced Emazing recently released a gloving set that has infinite programming abilities attached to a bluetooth, rather than a manual, colour changing system. Choosing colours and strobes are equally as important to the effectiveness of a lightshow as movement choices. Gloving replicates the effects of synaesthesia, bringing the worlds of colour and sound together in unity. I will discuss this concept further below. There are currently three major gloving accessory companies: Emazing Lights, Futuristic Lights, and LED Gloves, with more on the rise. The following segment will detail some of the possible customizations and explore their effect for the performer and the receptor.

4.17 Basic Glove Components
Glovers can choose between Magic Stretch, Slim Fit, or black with white tips. I began my journey on magic stretch gloves because they are the gloves that most often come with complete sets unless you purchase separately. However, for my small hands, the small sized slim fits were better, especially once the cotton had stretched because the lights would move around far too much inside the glove making it difficult to throw a clean show.
Lithium batteries come in a few voltage options but 1620 is the most common type.

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311 The top left photo example is of cotton white gloves, the top right is the slim fit white gloves, and the bottom are the black cotton gloves. Pictures taken from www.emazinglights.com.
Finally, chips and diffusors will vary based on preference and glove set.

Figure 31: A group of 1620 Emazing-brand batteries.\textsuperscript{312}

Figure 32: Examples of pre-programmed LED chips that are meant to accompany the gloving "sets."\textsuperscript{313}

\textsuperscript{312} Picture taken from www.emazinglights.com.
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid.
4.18 Glove Sets

Glove sets are essentially a starter kit including white regular cotton fit gloves, ten finger light cases, a full set of twenty 1620 batteries (two for each light), a set of regular diffusors, and LED chips with pre-programmed light sets. Companies will create a continuum of cheap to expensive glove sets for various levels of glovers. Beginner gloves at Emazing Lights online store cost $24.95 USD while their most expensive set costs $139.95 USD. Each gloving set and programming has a name and a set of qualities that make it unique. Glovers develop preferences for certain aspects of each set. For example, the ELite Chroma CTRL Glove Set ($69.95 USD) comes programmed with 11 flashing

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patterns, 30 programmable colours, and 5 default modes. You can also pre-program your own default modes before the gloves are mailed to you, a new function on the website. In a basic gloving mode, three different colours flash in succession with a particular flashing pattern. The Chroma CTRL, however, have up to seven possible colours with a flash pattern. Figure 34 is a pictoral example of the five default modes including colours and flashing patterns as well as the mode “names.”

Figure 34: Five default colour and strobe "modes" from the CTRL Glove Set.  

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Futuristic Lights has a variety of kinetic, motion activated glove sets. For example, their first glove set to have motion activation abilities, claiming to be the “world’s first” was Kinetic Motion Reactive LED Glove Set, is priced at $124.95 USD. An incredibly complex programming system, features include various movement activated modes such as: Kinetic Mode, which blends the colours in the mode based on your speed; Geo Mode, which blends the chosen colours in the mode based on the angle of your hand; and Multi Mode, which adds colours you have prechosen based on speed, among others. The pictoral representation in Figure 35 shows the three modes in order.

Figure 35: Three "kinetic" modes that change with movement and angle of the hand.³¹⁶

Emazing Lights also has a speed function called “Flux Motion” for their glove set ELite

Element V2. Many glovers want the freedom to program their own colour sets so while default “sets” are assigned, there is always the option to reset and manually program colour combinations. Programming takes time and concentration. Available colours in the Emazing Lights glove sets include a plethora of fun names such as Snarf and Cosmic Owl. To re-program lights, press and hold down the chip until the light flashes and then glows a deep red. At this point the glover can cycle through the available colours to decide on their first choice for the set. Once that has been chosen by holding down that colour, the light will return to red so that the glover can continue to filter through the available colours. They must also choose a strobing pattern from the available options, which are between three and twelve patterns. Once one light is complete and the glover is happy with it, this process must be repeated on all of the remaining nine chips. That process would conclude the programming of one possible mode available. Most gloving sets have several mode settings available, so it is a complex process and takes a lot of time and consideration. Some glovers also use a palm light that may need to be programmed as well. Another form of customization is possible with the casing on the end of the lightbulb called a diffusor. The purpose behind this option is to alter the way the light is displayed in the air. Emazing has what they call universal (bullet shaped or open ended) casings in clear, pink, blue, orange, green, red and yellow. Other types of diffusors such as the dome, cube, popcorn, or shield, create different shapes in the air such as squares or ovals as seen below:
4.19 Synaesthesia and Programming For Mood and Musical Choice

The power of colour can be seen in paintings and photography, but also in music. Musical “colour” can be found in instrumental tones or in melody lines. Musical notes are sometimes seen as physical colours such as blue or red by a group of people who claim to sense them, a phenomenon known as synaesthesia. Synaesthesia is “a general name for a related set of cognitive states...sets of things which our individual cultures teach us to put together and categorize in a specific way – like letters, numbers, or

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people's names – also get sensory addition, such as a smell, colour, or flavour.”

Great musical artists such as Brian Eno, Duke Ellington, Billy Joel, and Pharrell Williams have all professed some form of synaesthesia. Some artists claim that seeing colour affects the composition of their music. For example, Alessia Cara, who explained in an interview for Umusic:

Everything audible was visual to me, and it still is. And so I think when I write, it’s kind of cool to listen back and say, ‘Well, this song feels kind of purple’ — if a certain drum sound sounds purple and the song feels purple, then I know that they kind of match. It just really helps me figure out the whole package of a song. And also, even with videos — it helps me figure out what I want to do music video-wise. So it’s definitely a strong aspect of my writing.

Glovers bring the concept of synaesthesia into the experience of musical expression in an inextricable fashion, and often to great effect. The combination of feigned sound control with expertly chosen colour pallettes creates a meaningful partnership. Colour and music as a pairing have always had a complex relationship. Composers throughout the classical canon have written music based on paintings; similarly, abstract painters have created their work using musical compositions as their muse. Back as far as the ancient Greeks, “the first to construct a scale of colours divided into seven parts, on the analogy of the seven musical notes and the seven known planets.”

Composers and intellectuals spanning the extensive discourse on the arts have commented on the coordination of sound and colour, including Diderot, Mairan, Rousseau, and Voltaire. Included in this
group is Telemann, who in 1739 said that “a fugue in sounds will make up a fugue in colours.” It makes perfect sense that the two should be brought together in the contemporary art of gloving.

As a receptor of many lightshows over the course of my research, I can say that what drew me so intimately towards the art was the combination of sound and light. Throughout my life I have deeply treasured such movies as Fantasia (1940) and Marie Antoinette (2006), both visual masterpieces that expertly pair musical choices with appropriate visual representations meant to draw the audience into the experience more completely. The immersive experience ultimately provides opportunity for further layers of meaning to sound. My key informants, The Shaman and Deathmelt, shared very different explanations of their colour programming preferences. Given societal inclination for personal preference in the experience of leisure activity, this is no surprise. For example, The Shaman, who is colour blind, often has his friends program his sets on his behalf. However, he does still feel connected to certain types of colour despite an inability to distinguish them in finite ways. For one of his favourite music artists, REZZ, a Toronto-based female DJ and Producer, he prefers low reds. In terms of his strobing patterns however, he is very specific. During slow movements, he prefers a high frequency strobe, while for a faster movement he prefers a trail often known as a dop pattern. Especially during a whip move, he adds. The Shaman calls himself a “connoisseur” when it comes to strobe patterns.\(^{321}\) Deathmelt, on the other hand, prefers

\(^{321}\) In Conversation with The Shaman, Facebook call, April 11, 2019.
to use the modes that come with the glove sets. He has several glove sets from which to choose and will do so based on his overall feeling that day. Sort of like when one chooses an outfit based on their mood. Deathmelt goes on, “so I guess what I’m saying is that I have more flexibility in terms of creativity, in terms of picking colour and lighting patterns and strobe patterns and all that kind of stuff...I would pick my sets before the show, save them, and then I just cycle through them based on what song and what colours the person might like and whatnot.”

Deathmelt is referring to his ability to set modes in an order and respond to the receptor’s emotional and physical reactions, which is an essential part of the communicative and expressive process. Some of the most well-known contemporary glovers such as Blitzen and Starlight have synaethseia, and no doubt some receptors do as well. When asked “how does your brain interpret lightshows, how do you imagine your canvas” members of Glovers Lounge had some interesting commentary:

*Colours and flow are what I look at the most in the show, don’t get me wrong tech is cool but I tend to pick up on flow and how the lights move to the music.*

*My lightshows play out in my head as I’m trying to translate what the music ‘looks like’ in my mind, and translating it to motions and patterns. I’ve always thought I may have synaesthesia or something similar. My shows feel like the translation of music and emotion through my hands.*

*I see paintbrushes, which is why I like whips so much. It looks like they’re creating strokes of color and painting a picture. Probably why I can do flow better than tech.*

*Back when I didn’t glove it all just used to be witchcraft and I could sit back and just get overtaken by colors. Now that I actually know what I’m doing I can’t help but pay attention to all the intricacy that goes into the show. Are shows ruined for*

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322 In Conversation with Deathmelt, Facebook message.
me? No, I just see them differently now...

When I throw shows, I try my best to portray my shows as like a story, like a world full of colors and spirals that magically turn into different creatures that just expand and float around you, like a whole new universe. I like to make my creatures interactive with the viewer as if it’s trying to lead or guide the viewer to somewhere new or sending a message. When I receive shows, I see myself in like a cube kinda, like I’m in a color block grid, and the gloves are connecting the lines around my body and face, and bursts of colors shoot from different parts of the grid...

Glovers and receptors stand to feel emotionally fulfilled from the combination of movement and coloured lights.

4.20 DIY Ethics

Glovers in Toronto find common ground on the dance floor, but that is not the only place they meet in person. While Flow Arts are permitted to be practised in most clubs in Toronto, events are not always the most productive places to hone skills. The Toronto Gloving Community organizes “meetups” where Flow Artists of all levels can gather to encourage one another in their creative growth. Flow Arts in Toronto operates under DIY ethics, a term that infiltrated popular music culture via Dick Hebdige, in terms of working to develop the community against the pushback from many mainstream rave companies. Glovers also exhibit a hierarchy of participants akin to the subcultural capital identified by Club Culture expert Sarah Thornton. The more experienced Flow Artists mentor the less experienced. I myself learned some of the movements through the tutorial process, which I compared to a classic teacher-student relationship in the classical conservatory. Experienced Flow Artists hold a significant amount of respect from those with less experience. I have been a member of the Toronto Gloving Community since 2016.
Before that I was a founding member of the Peace and Glove Facebook Group before the two groups merged together. Both of these groups are meant as a point of communication so that glovers within the city of Toronto can learn from one another and create mentorship opportunities. The Flow Arts community in Toronto host community meetings at public spaces or one another’s homes.

4.21 Online Vs. In Person

Flow Artists perform and interact with the community in two venues: online and in person. The internet is used by performers to share their art with the global community, as well as to pay-it-forward by creating tutorials for young glovers. There are also online competitions that allow glovers to compete for clout and monetary prizes without travelling across the world. While online interactions are vital to the development of the community and awareness of the art, there are important aspects of the “in-person” performance that cannot be translated through video or written commentary such as peripheral understanding and the 3D experience of the lightshow. The Shaman and Deathmelt offer some insight as to the differences between a lightshow in person or online.

When you’re at a live event...everyone around you is happy so by default you have this energy of happiness all around you and for me I kind of feed off that. When you’re in the moment and you hear that perfect song you like and then you just start gloving based on how you feel. That’s how I prefer to do it. I’m not really one of those guys who likes to set up a camera and then do things in front of a video camera it’s like to me it’s not my thing. My shows are always live. So therefore whatever you get is more customized to you and how I feel at that given time and when I gave that lightshow...the shows will be different because at the
live event I’m into it versus online I’m not really into it. So you’re getting half effort in my opinion.\footnote{323}{In conversation with Deathmelt.}

The most important thing, the difference between in person and with a camera is the connection that you form with the person you’re giving a lightshow to. There’s something about just giving 100 percent of your attention to them and they’re giving 100 percent of their attention to you. And then that just forms an instant connection and them giving you their full attention gives you so much power over what’s happening to them. But also how Spiderman said “and responsibility.” So if you have all that power that’s why I take gloving really seriously. Because I want to give them during those short two to three minutes I want to give them the best lightshow that they can have because they’re giving me their time and attention. And also you get to play with their perception, peripherals, which is missing from the camera.\footnote{324}{Interview with The Shaman, Facebook Call, April 2019, 14:36.}

Both glovers identified that the in-person relationship with the receptor was more meaningful for them than performing online for a camera. They believed that in-situ was the circumstance in which they were able to complete some of their best work. Lightshows are a unique way to make meaningful connections face to face with other human beings. In our current society social media allow people to remain impersonal and removed. Raving, particularly “lightshows,” allows people intimate moments of connection. When asked about the relationship between their performance and the receptor, members of Glovers Lounge had this to say:

*I know this is weird but gloving has taught me alot about humanity. Everyone has different reactions towards the show, some people find different things more appealing than others, some can get immersed by lights and some you have to try just a bit harder to make happy. With anything, you can give 100% but not everyone may view it as 100%, not everyone may have the same perception of you and ultimately you can apply that to all things. We humans are still quite pure,*

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\footnote{323}{In conversation with Deathmelt.}
\footnote{324}{Interview with The Shaman, Facebook Call, April 2019, 14:36.}
being able to be entertained by blinking lights, but in 500 years perhaps this artform of some of the simplest expressions may be...non existent.

Outside of expressing interpretations of music, it’s a fairly social phenomena. Having gloves is a nice invitation to interact with strangers...

I remember giving a show to someone and he must have had some anxiety from being at the show and he was relatively new to the rave scene. Anyways as soon as I started throwing a show I could see it in his body language that he began to become relaxed and calm, he even said to his buddy that he didn’t know why, but all of a sudden he was not feeling anxious anymore. I thought it was pretty spectacular...

My first light show blew my mind! It sucked me in and threw me out with the the most positive vibes! I knew I wanted to give that experience to other people more than anything! And since, gloving has taught me so much! It’s taught me passion, patience, expression and how to clear my mind, be myself, it got me out of my comfort zone. It’s brought so much happiness to my life it’s unreal. I have a new understanding and appreciation for art in general. It’s expression of emotions, the good, the bad, and the weird lol. It’s made me realize that we have the power to be better, to change what you don’t like about yourself and know that with practice you can literally accomplish anything! Gloving has also made me aware of vibes to the point where I can sense them better, manipulate my own, practice being in the best vibe I can be in at all times. It’s sharing the light within you, it’s contagious...Being open and yourself makes people admire your confidence, I like to think it inspires others to be themselves too. It can turn someone from being judgemental into appreciation if they have the right mindset.325

Gloving is not always appreciated by audience members. In an inquiry to the Toronto Rave Community Facebook page, some audience members had negative commentary about the art:

I appreciate the artform but also please get out of my face.

It depends. If the show was forced in front of me, then I’m walking away. That’s straight up rude. When I ask for them, they’re great (well, I mean, for the most part unless they’re just waving their fingers around).

I like it, sometimes lights just look REALLY COOL, ya know? Definitely no correlation to doing/not doing drugs. Nope, none whatsoever.

I always felt like others were looking and laughing when someone was getting one, but whatevs. Some people really know what they’re doing. That’s cool. Some random kid, not so much.

It was weird, but whatever. I thin kyou need too be interplanetary to enjoy it most. I wasn’t into staring at gloves with lights, I just want to dance but to each their own.

It annoyed me incredibly tbh. It was like a toddler showing me their shitty crayon stick figure dog.

This response ultimately reflects three distinct things: 1) The practice itself is not well-known in terms of its artistic possibilities, instead being stereotyped as an activity favoured by ravers with little actual skill who are not interested in being “present” in the musical moment; and 2) Drug-use is intrinsically tied to the artform at live events in a negative way. There is an “inauthenticity” about a glover who does not yet have any technical skill as a glover and who intrudes in another person’s experience of the rave; and 3) It is a subjective experience. It should be chosen and not forced upon anyone. Everyone has the right to choose their rave environment. However, there are certainly negative connotations about the artform permeating the online community.
4.22 Inside the Flow Triangle

Fieldnotes
VELD Music Festival
Summer 2015

The sweet melody from the stage was morphing, a recognizable rhythm breaking through and disrupting the rising vocal line. This is always the most exciting part of a set, trying to figure out the upcoming song as it transitions. Sometimes it’s immediate, while other times it’s slow, almost imperceptible, one part of the texture coming in at a time and one part of the previous song silencing. I was kneeling on the cold grass, the air chilling gradually around me, my stomach in excited knots, as the glover in front of me turned his lights on one at a time, cracking his knuckles. As the new song became more clear, I could feel the glover’s energy. Suddenly, blue light had surrounded my head like a halo, it was his gloves, they had enveloped my head and created an aura that lit up behind my eyes. As his fingers flew through the air, greens and whites flitted across my vision, melting together. The music filled my insides with a comforting beat, and a lilting melody, and the colours painted my sky with emotion.

Deathmelt explains the Flow Arts Triangle as a careful dance of emotions.

…If the DJ’s playing stuff that I know stuff that I love…I will have a better performance, versus my relationship with the person getting the show…I see the reactions and based on the reaction determines my next moves. You know, if they’re really liking it then I get a little fancier…if I can sense negativity then I’ll slow it down, not put something so strobey, I kind of feel it out… For me, I just go with my feelings and I trust my instincts…You don’t just rush in there and just start flailing your arms you start off slow and you kind of build-up and as the music keeps rising and rising, building up to that drop when that drop is unleashed that’s when you kind of throw your fire at them. You know what I
mean? But for me I just basically go off feelings. So how I feel and how the music is playing and if all those are synchronised correctly then hey you get a good show.326

Regarding the types of movements that glovers choose for their music, there are many variables. The musicality and showmanship sections describe some of the techniques for breaking down the track into its individual qualities and assignment movements for them. Glovers Shaman and Deathmelt described their individual experiences in choosing how a show will play out:

In terms of movements, a glover, or your average glover, should have more than a couple moves and more than one flow style in my opinion. So, depending on how many styles that particular glover has determines the possibility of moves and combinations he or she can contribute to the show. There will be times when you don’t know the music and you know you gotta kinda just freestyle it right? You go based on feeling, but there’s always that – you can count the beat – you know what I mean? Do the 8 count you know how DJs will do, you go 1, 2, 3, 4, 1,2, 3, 4, OR 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 – yeah. You can do that and calculate when to transition your moves if that make sense. I guess it’s easier to show you than explain but when you’re freestyling that’s where I would in my opinion, I would count, especially if the music’s not good I would count in my head and just wait for that drop and then when the drop comes you kind of just throw your fire into it.327

Shaman has a similar perspective on improvising to music with which he is not familiar.

He describes that his movements are a conduit for his soul, that the music travels from his chest, into his arms, hands and fingers:

All my shows are improvised. But especially when I don’t know the music that’s what I love the best when I’m not familiar with the music because then it’s all in the moment and I can’t really predict, well you can predict, but I’m more in tune with the music I’m listening to it more so I’m listening for the little sound effects, the rhythms, trying to find a pattern. I get almost at one with the music when I’m giving a light show especially when it’s live.328

326 In conversation with Deathmelt.
327 Ibid.
328 Interview with The Shaman, Facebook Call, April 2019, 20:36.
The Shaman shared a common inside joke that reminds me of how musicians feel about performing something new live for the first time:

Glovers do have the thing, it’s kind of a joke, when the drop comes everyone does whips because when you’re giving light shows, like live light shows, everything you’ve been practicing kind of goes out the window. When the moment comes, when the drop comes everyone just ends up doing whips. It just happens it’s like a really common thing. Say you’ve been practicing, “labbing,” and then when you go out you forget everything because it’s not really programmed into the muscle memory yet.329

4.23 Online Gloving Practices

The internet has nurtured a global rave community. Online chatrooms have long been considered important spaces, particularly for female DJs, as Rebekah Farrugia recently claimed in her work Beyond the Dancefloor.330 Two online communities in Toronto that I am familiar with include the “Toronto Gloving Community,” and the “Toronto Rave Community.” The Toronto Gloving Community (TGC) merged with Peace and Glove to form one large group of 687 members. One of the most relevant online communities for gloving, Glover’s Lounge, consists of 26,676 members. Glover’s Lounge is a Facebook group that includes members from around the world. Within Glover’s Lounge, there are talent scouts who tally community involvement, how much you post and comment, among other things. From there, glovers are chosen to be sponsored by major companies such as Futuristic Lights or Emazing Lights, and receive sponsorship packages every month that include batteries, lights, new glove sets, and features on the company

329 Interview with The Shaman, Facebook Call, April 2019, 31:00.
330 Farrugia, Beyond the Dancefloor.
websites. Glovers who are sponsored must, in turn, post Tutorials or other HD videos using the company products at least once a month. In these online spaces, glovers and other Flow Artists share videos, tips and tricks, explain the breakdown of techniques, and provide feedback for one another, along with other community benefits like forming friendships and earning clout through knowledge production. There is also clearly a vested interest by the companies in building a larger community and encouraging use of their products, but the overall result is that the Flow Arts community and the individuals within it have creative license and the community grows daily.

4.24 Making a Video
Creating a video can be beneficial to the community and the glover for numerous reasons including to teach, learn, receive feedback, win packages of swag, or simply to get encouragement. On Glover’s Lounge, competitions are announced where members of the community must post a video of themselves “throwing” a lightshow under certain stipulations to win items such as merch or new gloves. Stipulations for these informal competitions are usually intended to encourage participation that improves skill sets. For example, in one competition recently, competitors were asked to aim for a 5 out of 5 on their Musicality, while others were asked not to repeat any movements twice or that all videos must be performed to the same song. The interest in avoiding repetition is notably different from jazz improvisation styles, where repetitive is a mainstay of “riffing.” In gloving, specifically in the Lights On competition, judges are always looking for that “something new” rather than to see the same types of movements from each competitor.
One question I wanted to uncover is how do glovers choose the music for these videos? Do they have certain qualities? Deathmelt tries to reproduce performances from live events by choosing music that inspires him:

I would pick one of the best techno tracks I could think of... I would remember being at a festival and hearing that track and remembering how I felt...I can kind of replicate that moment when I was really into the beat and giving some of my most epic shows...

The Shaman considers it healthy to practice, in glover terminology “labbing,” to any genre of music, although his favourite genre personally is Trap (Bass Music). He talks about how the syncopated rhythms of Bass Music influence his performance, “I get really into it. It pulls out a persona in me that can be more expressive...trap and also melodic dubstep...anything emotional.”

4.25 Oral Traditions: Why Tutorials?

Oral tradition are observed in Flow Artistry in terms of tutelage. Learning practices are primarily informal, though in California there are some formal spaces for the dissemination of the art, set up by Emazing Lights and its official gloving teams. However, for those not in cities where gloving meetups are available, online communications are the only way to learn the craft. Mentorship has recently become an option online for glovers in the Toronto Gloving Community, outside their scheduled in-person meetups. They can join the mentorship program for further help in honing their craft. Additionally, there are hundreds of tutorials available in private groups such as

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331 In conversation with Deathmelt.
332 Interview with The Shaman, Facebook Call, April 2019, 26:20.
Glover’s Lounge and on YouTube. These isolate concepts and break them down for both beginners and more intermediate or advanced glovers. There are also international gloving competitions that are held online and in-person every season, and are prompted by both the major gloving companies and the International Gloving League (IGL). The main competitions that you can take part in are the Lights On competition, an online competition currently in Season 5; the BOSS competition, an in-person competition; as well as the International Gloving Competition held in California every year, also in-person.

4.26 Closing Thoughts

Please see YouTube Playlist #2 for examples of Flow Arts Performances

Throughout this dissertation, I have both explored the relatively undocumented story of Toronto’s rave scene and introduced the artistic practice of gloving to the academic community. I utilized a unique reflexive technique during the research process, “fluid positionality,” that ultimately offered a multi-faceted perspective to the data I collected. This dissertation is primarily a collection of my own experiences in the Ontario rave community at large. Though I also drew from conversations and interviews with my informants, including Cooper, Tigger, Uncommon, Colm Hogan, Deathmelt, Keeker, Papa Panda, Hammer, Jaize, and The Shaman among others. Through their mentorship and guidance, I have come to an understanding of some of the key concepts and

333 Please follow this link for access to the playlist: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLXLRf3CzrHR8uX05E-mdExzuQrRjyRbj.
ideologies of modern raving in North America: the meaning of PLUR and the connection between raving and identity formation, the importance of anonymity and the temporary autonomous zone, and most pertinent to this dissertation, the history and art of gloving.

This work is a departure from existing research efforts in various ways. First, there is very little existing research that focuses on Canadian rave culture, particularly in the past decade there has been almost no scholarly attention given to the country. Some of the few significant works include: *Chasing Dragons: Security, Identity, and Illicit Drugs in Canada* by Kyle Grayson, a chapter in *Rave America* by Mireille Silcott called “Toronto, Canada: Hardcore Anglophilia and Jungle’s Northern Exposure,” and embedded within several chapters of *Fight, Flight, or Chill*, by Brian Wilson specifically Chapter Two, “From New York to Ibiza to Britain to Toronto: Rave Histories, Contexts, and Panics.” The most academic work to give credit to Toronto as a scene of importance in rave culture took place around the millenium. According to cultural preservers like Colm Hogan and Denise Benson, the city has a rich nightlife history. I implore researchers to take a closer look at the Canadian rave scene, both historical and contemporary. Give more attention to the West on the coastal regions where massive Canadian festival Shambhala takes place.

Secondly, this is the first time, to my knowledge, that gloving has been discussed in an academic context. Heller’s work on liquid was recently published, and perhaps that will draw more attention to these interesting expressive styles. I would like to extend my own research on this subject and complete a documentary with the help of the global gloving community. Now living in Western Canada, I notice differences in the two scenes. Vancouver is close to California and likely has some connections to the gloving epicentre in California, also a coast city. I feel that further research into the practices, communities, and lifestyles of these individuals would offer an entirely new perspective to rave culture that extends to performative and artistic perspectives. One EDMC scholar who comes to mind in regards to performativity, and who may offer more insight to this topic, is Alice O’Grady.336

Finally, in my use of fluid positionality. EDMC researchers have certainly experimented with ways of existing and varying positionalities in rave spaces. Graham St. John writes about not messing with the vibe, and others like Garcia echo his sentiments.337 The rave space is a fragile place that can easily be shattered, as I saw immediately when my efforts to gain informants as “the researcher” was branded as a possible undercover police operation. Researchers across the field of EDMC have consumed drugs, and participated in rave rituals and customs. During the research process for her graduate work in Europe, Sarah Thornton felt the need to try MDMA so that she might better understand her informants.338 Thornton’s response to this experiment were vague, but her interest in

337 Thornton, Club Cultures, 1996.
engaging on the level of a participant are important to note. Nightlife researcher Caitlin Robinson used her position as a, young, attractive female in her work “Wasta Capital: Ethnographic Reflexivity at a Rooftop Nightclub in Beirut.”^{339} It was a combination of her work, and my desire to “understand this music” the way Bruno Nettl’s informants had insisted he would not, the way music journalist Simon Reynolds “got it” on an E trip at a sweaty rave event, and the way journalist and author Hunter S. Thompson went “native” while living and riding with the Hell’s Angels.^{340} Typically, objective research is important for unbiased data collection. Unfortunately, it is impossible to remove yourself as a factor when you engage in participant observation methods. You are a part of the experience, and you interact with others in the space almost constantly. You are in the smile you share with a stranger at your elbow when a good song comes on, in the dance moves that intertwine limbs accidentally, as everyone screams and raise your hands to the sky at the DJ’s request. You are part of the experience, so you should acknowledge that accordingly and value it. My experience during research was that I had to learn when I could be a researcher, and when I should be a raver, a young woman, a glover, a musician, a student, a kandi-kid. All of these identities that are self-identifying are ways to navigate the space so that the vibe remains in tact. It was paramount to gathering the information that I did. I had to go to incredible lengths, over several years, to gain the respect and trust of ravers in Toronto and London. I developed friendships and professional relationships in a multitude of areas. I believe this to be my ultimate offering

to the academic community in terms of methodology. Making use of fluid positionality could be considered biased, but I think in the case of rave culture and other urban popular music cultures, this is how one “gets it,” and goes “native.” How else can you comment on a culture unless you have truly lived inside it and felt its power?

In the process of studying Flow Arts and gloving in particular, I concluded that the art is a form of semiotics, and indeed comparable to instrumental mastery and prowess, not just in terms of dexterity and training, but artistic and cultural terms as well. Gloving seems to have developed out of several widespread influences including hip hop culture (i.e. cyphering, tutting, and locking), European 1980’s-90’s hardcore style (i.e. white gloves, MDMA influence), and New-York-based liquid dancing. The first chrononological timeline for the history of gloving in Toronto was outlined from the first gen liquid dancers through The Liquid Pop Collective, The Seven, The Toronto Liquid Society, Trippin on Lights (ToL), the Toronto Gloving Community, and the Frozen Face Melters. Further work should be conducted to determine how interactive the Toronto and New York scenes were during the 1990’s to establish if there is more to the historiography than is currently known. Were white gloves truly exclusive to Toronto? Was that one contribution that White Glove Jay should be more well-known for in dance culture research?

In the pages above, I established a clear link between the developments in New York and the developments in Toronto during a similar time period including establishing relationships between the two communities and hosting live “battles.” Heller’s work is an
excellent starting point for more research in the history of rave dance styles. Dance styles to develop from within house music have included jacking (house music 1990s), cutting shapes (house music 2010s), and melbourne shuffle (hardstyle 2000s). Studies in the field of dance should explore some of these rave dance styles as methods of catharsis given the context of raving more generally. I would also like to see more research in the connection elucidated for example by Brewster and Broughton regarding hip hop, punk, and rave culture to establish developments among the three styles that have continued through to contemporary practices.\textsuperscript{341}

I also defined contemporary gloving practices and introduced the lexicon and artistic behaviours and practices. I also drew attention to what I call The Flow Arts Triangle, which is an interactive play on Csikszentmihalyi flow theory. As evidenced by a survey of Flow Artists, there are a number of physical, mental, and emotional benefits to these practices and future research should establish these results more firmly. Research into these benefits in the fields of physiology, kinesiology, and psychology could prove fundamental. Gloving is form of intimate gestural communication, and it provides communicator and receptor with additional layers of meaning through light, sound, colour, emotional expression, and shared experience. The rave community is buttressed by a collective spirituality that academics such as St. John, Hutson, and Sylvan have described, and the gloving community as a smaller, more isolated community have historically taken part in neo-cultic behaviours that stem from hip hop culture (such as

\textsuperscript{341} Brewster and Broughton, \textit{Last Night A DJ Saved My Life}, 1999.
cyphers, pseudonym giving, and social hierarchies centred in earning “subcultural capital.”\textsuperscript{342} Glover’s also engage in what I believe to be a form of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, more so than engaging in spiritual DJ as Shaman practices.\textsuperscript{343} Glover’s wish to find a sense of purpose outside of what they are capable of achieving in regular society. Therefore, gloving and raving is a form of “self-actualization.”

Gloving is still an art in its infancy. The rave scene has been in a long-winded transition from immense mainstream popularity in 2010 to a new phase of its existence. Glovers in Toronto have managed to maintain growth and development by operating in the underground. Ultimately, musical cultures occupy a very brief period in time and space. Lost boys and girls of each new generation will eventually “grow up” and the scenes in which they participated will fade into memories alone. Many of the Liquid Kids from Toronto still have their gloves and rubber bands; while they miss the scene, most of them have since “retired” from liquid and moved on with their lives. Liquid Canada, an online FB community, is a growing group of former or current Liquid Kids who are trying to preserve and document the art because it has begun to face so-called extinction. Will gloving soon face the same fate? Or will it transition from a rave practice to a legitimate form of self-expression that carries through generations? Only time will tell.

Following this publication, I plan to establish a more substantial collection of data on Toronto rave history and concretize the city as part of an interconnected system of

\textsuperscript{342} Thornton, \textit{Club Cultures}, 1996.
\textsuperscript{343} Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 1943.
influence between New York, Chicago and Detroit, and to some extent Los Angeles and London, UK. The lack of written work on Toronto has perpetuated it’s continued misrepresentation as solely a mirror of new developments in American (and global) rave culture. I also propose further studies to be conducted using qualitative interviews with glovers across Canada, the United States, and the Phillipines where gloving practices have the most concentrated activity. A comparison with Flow Arts practices and style across Canada might also provide further insight. British Columbia while similar from a mainstream perspective, is a geographical area that invites a different stylistic interpretation of raving and of artistic expression. Finally, understanding the intimate relationships between the points of the Flow Arts Triangle could lead to interesting discoveries about the power of music, interpersonal connections, and cathartic release. Indeed, it could also increase our understanding of the human experience more broadly.

The segment of the dissertation that follows is a mosaic of my research. I included it as a means of drawing the reader into my personal experience. Each reflection, picture, video, or quote are just some of the myriad of “small moments” that make up the broader, shared rave experience. Please take your own experiences and become, at least by osmosis, part of this vibrant music and culture as you watch my inside knowledge of the culture grow from start to finish.
Epilogue: A Mosaic of Research

“Life is made of small moments like these...” – Above and Beyond

The following is a snapshot of the experiences I had as a researcher over a span of several years and across various cities in Eastern Canada. These experiences shaped me not only as a researcher, but also as a person. As one of my favourite researchers and authors Brené Brown said: “Connection is why we’re here. We are hardwired to connect with others, it’s what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering.” Raving has taught me more about self expression and finding my truth than I had managed to garner across three performance-based degree programs combined. It is with this in mind that I decided to focus my research efforts on Flow Artistry and creative self-expression within the rave scene in Ontario. Within this mosaic, I present the scene, the people, and the art form through my personal lens, my own experiences and self-discovery journey. Throughout this segment there will be videos and musical examples that correspond to the timeline outlined here. Please follow along as suggested.

344 Famous trance DJ trio, Above and Beyond, have a track called Small Moments, it is lyric-less, though they often type out inspiring phrases during their sets on a visual backdrop, and for this track, they will often type this phrase.
346 You will find the musical examples for this section under “Dissertation Playlist #3: Mosaic” on Spotify at the following link: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3H9rqvDQTDnhRIAL4SfnrY. You will find the video examples for this section under YouTube Playlist #3 at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPgc12L34 bQ&list=PLLXLrRf3CzrHR-eRzoKIzeuQDpVaG_A2iL.
5 The Neon Road To Rave Researcher

The Whiskey Nightclub
David Guetta
Calgary, AB
March 19th, 2008

*Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video #1; And Spotify Playlist #3: Track #2*

Dragged to an unknown European DJ by a recent University friend, I was shocked by the musicianship that went into Guetta’s performance. The unexpected evening sparked an interest that would span a decade and counting.

![Figure 37: DJ Tom Thanks and me having a bit of fun at Pier 21.](Image)

“Feeling my way through the darkness.
Guided by a beating heart.
I can't tell where the journey will end…
But I know where to start.”

*Wake Me Up - Avicii*

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347 Picture taken from Barshots Facebook page at the following link: https://www.facebook.com/barshots/photos/a.629710953709997/62971150376644. A photo of myself with DJ Tom Thanks “switching instruments” in 2013. It was one of the first nights that I performed at Pier 21 as a live EDM violinist working with several local DJs twice weekly. Tom Thanks was my most frequent partner, working together every Wednesday for almost two years.
Figure 38: Nicky Romero “Nothing Toulouse Tour,” Ottawa, ON, 2013.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #3

“You know what it feels like when you're dancing blind…. All alone, just the beat inside my soul…

Take me home, where my dreams are made of gold

In the zone where the beat is uncontrolled.”

Figure 39: Performing alongside DJ BZRK, Red Door Party, Ottawa, ON, 2013
Figure 40: Steve Angello, Main Stage Headliner, Escapade Music Festival, Ottawa, ON, 2013.

Figure 41: Performing at Pier 21, Ottawa, ON, 2014.\textsuperscript{348}

“Music has always been a matter of energy to me, a question of fuel. Sentimental people call it inspiration, but what they really mean is fuel. I have always needed fuel. I am a serious consumer. On some nights I still believe that a car with the gas needle on empty can run about fifty more miles if you have the right music very loud on the radio.”

– Hunter S. Thompson

Music Video for “M Entertainment”
Concept and Videography: Aba Atlas
DJ Mix: Tom Thanks
Recording Engineer: Johnny Hall Productions
Cover Composition Line and Violin Performance: M Gillian Carrabre
Location: Ottawa, ON

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video #2
5.1 London Life Begins

London Block Party
London, ON
September 6, 2014
6:00 p.m.

In the wake of the darkening sky and the buzzing energy of the young ravers around us, Jaize, a violinist friend of mine, pulled his white gloves out and pressed the tips to illuminate them. Before moving to London I had never seen LED gloves before and they fascinated me entirely. The simple action caused a few people close by to turn their attention towards us with obvious intrigue. Jaize waved his fingers through the air in a wave pattern and a circle formed around us. The melody seemed to come out of his finger tips while the heavy beat pulsed through our bodies, emotion swirling in the air like a cool breeze.

Kaskade’s Set
11:00 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #4

“Remember turning on the night...and moving through the morning light...” 350
Haley’s voice soared above the crowd as the Kaskade and Deadmau5 track “I Remember” turned the Block Party audience into a screaming, dancing throng. By this time, Jaize had picked up the pace, conjuring light out of thin air and dazzling the surrounding area with his interpretations. I could feel goosebumps forming on my arms and up my spine. The pace of the beat picked up, edging towards a drop. Jaize curled his hands inwards as if drawing inside himself, recharging, and as the tripling dubplates wobbled, so too did his lights, floating in front of my eyes. I could feel myself yelling, but I wasn’t sure what I was saying at that point. I was lost in the moment with everyone.

350 Lyrics from “I Remember” by Deadmau5 ft. Kaskade, from Deadmau5’s 2008 album Random Album Title.
Tent Party
London, ON
September 20, 2014
10:00 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #5

The rain pounded on the tent, competing with the progressive riffs of Laidback Luke’s “Flashing Lights.” Hues of orange, pink, blue, and green lept into my peripheral view. An orbiter to my left had begun a lightshow. The colours elevated my experience in that moment as I watched the orbiter perform, adding his perspective to the music.

London Music Hall
Porter Robinson Worlds Tour
London, ON
September 29, 2014

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #6

I arrived with high expectations. The Worlds tour has been touted as, arguably, one of the most highly developed visual sets in recent years. The background imagery during the performance is based on a mixture of anime and video game influences, perfectly timed to the digital synthesizers and samples that reference and pay homage to Gen X culture. The Worlds symbol, two triangular eyes with an upwards asterisk for a mouth, harkens back to the days in many of our childhoods where we created makeshift emojis in our MSN or ICQ names online. All around me, the digital generation, drawn inevitably into a trip down memory lane, feeling like family before we had even really begun the journey. I was not disappointed.351

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351 “Hear The Bells” from the Worlds Album by Porter Robinson is a remix of a track by Winnipeg band Imaginary Cities, so as a native Manitoban, it reminded me of home.
Figure 43: A painting of mine featuring an electric violin, the Worlds album symbol, and gloves with light trails.\textsuperscript{352}

\textbf{Practice Makes Progress...}

\textit{Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Videos 3 and 4}

\textit{Learning to shuffle, a style of solo dancing seen at events and online, was the first expressive element I tackled for participant-research. I had a significant dance background and felt like this may be a comfortable entry into the arena of performative participation in the culture.}

DV BBS and Loud Luxury  
London Music Hall  
London, ON  
October 30, 2014  
9:00 p.m.

\textit{I arrived at the Delta in downtown London. I was there to meet a friend of a friend who}

\textsuperscript{352} The following was inspired by the Porter Robinson \textit{Worlds} Tour.
had tickets available for the halloween show this evening. I took the elevator and knocked on the door. To my surprise, there was a small party in the hotel room and Joe from Loud Luxury was standing at the door smiling at me. He sold me the ticket and invited me to stay. I introduced myself to a few of the people in the room, one of whom was a major player at INK Entertainment in Toronto.

Gorgon City and Kidnap Kid
London Music Hall
London, ON
March 24, 2015

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 5

I decided to go out on a whim, following an invite from a few school friends. I hadn’t heard of either of the headlining acts on the bill for the evening, but I was optimistic. I was also anxious to try out my new shuffling moves.

Kidnap Kid’s Set
9:35 p.m.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 6

Hand in hand, we swayed to the unexpectedly moving melody. Something about the vocal sample was taking me on an out-of-body experience. The soothing blue lighting and soft beat washed through us like waves. We danced and danced, smiling from ear to ear.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #7

The moment remained a vivid memory. Kidnap Kid’s “Survive” would later become the intro music to my radio show on CHRW.
We arrived early to the venue and already the areas of the dancefloor were marked out in the usual fashion for London. Young, new ravers chatted excitedly and danced close to the stage, eager to touch fingers with famous DJs. I had made note that the Flow Artists and dancers often looked for more space to move and express themselves. They often congregated on the perimeter of the event, specifically the side near the door and the stage entrance, or at the back of the hall. Occasionally, some would take the stairs to the second floor and dance or observe, waiting for an inspiring moment musically.

12:00 a.m.

I pulled my gaze from the stage to scan the room for friends. A glover at the back of the room caught my eye. It was clear he was not an amateur because he had garnered a small audience. I approached the group with excitement. A great light show had become one of my favourite rave experiences.

I pulled finger lights out of my shoulder bag and attached them carefully to my fingertips. Techno wasn’t my favourite music, I had trouble feeling emotionally attached to the minimalism of it. Yet somehow in this moment, in the dark I understood how to move. It was an organic feeling. With the small lights tracing my movements in the humid darkness I traced the nuances of the music emanating from the speakers, moulding it into
a pattern that made sense to me. Finally, I thought to myself, I get it.

Madeon
Tabu Nightclub
London, ON
May 7th, 2015
1:00 a.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #9

“Come with me”! He yelled into my ear, pulling me towards the back of the room. He spoke to the security on stage and they nodded the OK. Shocked, I took his outstretched hand and hopped up. I was only a few feet from Madeon, one of the great prodigy DJ-Producers of this generation. He seemed so young, a child really. Was he even allowed to be in here? But it was clear he took his music very seriously. I watched in awe as he poked buttons and turned nob. I wished I knew more about the technique involved. What I could see as a musician was that it was much more complex than I expected up close.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 7
Figure 44: At Uniun Nightclub in Toronto wearing a custom rave mask by Instagram Kandi artist Dirty Catz Designs, Spring 2015.353

Tujamo
Uniun Nightclub
Toronto, ON
June 16, 2015

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #10
While in Toronto laying violin tracks on an album for a childhood friend of mine. I heard that Tujamo was performing at Uniun, a venue I had been meaning to try out. Most events had been moved to that venue following the close of The Guvernment in January. I convinced my friend, singer Olive B to attend a show with me that evening.

10:35 p.m.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 8
Naturally, I found myself visually drawn to any Flow Arts in the room. In the left hand corner of the room there was a striking man dressed all in black, black hoodie, black sweats, black sunglasses. The room, though still early in the night, was quite warm so I

353 Picture taken by Tobias Wang of Visualbass Photography.
wondered how he was surviving in the heat. His wrists were adorned with a couple of kandi pieces, and he was alone in his own zone, moving his hands to the music in repetitive fluid motions. I thought his flow was natural and musical, though it was also clear that he considered himself a student of the art. He focused almost meditatively on each wave, working towards his mental image of perfection. I approached him and asked for his name, Deathmelt, he replied. He was to become one of my dear friends, part of my nucleus rave family, and an important influence in my life.

Figure 45: In preparation for VELD Music Festival 2015, I used online video tutorials to design tradeable Kandi cuffs known as “3D X-Based Cuff.”
Figure 46: Cuff I made for Deathmelt.

Figure 47: My officemate at Western drew this for me on the chalkboard in our room in early 2015.
VELD Pre-Party
Union Nightclub
Toronto, ON
July 31, 2015
11:00 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #11 for an example of a favourite Chainsmokers track from 2015, “Until You Were Gone.”

Dolled up in my friend’s borrowed Toronto nightlife gear, and sandwiched between two beautiful women, Eli and Lynn, we entered the party like stilletoed rockstars, closely followed by Deathmelt and his crew who had accompanied us to the event. I was practically shivering with anticipation of the VELD experience. I had applied for a Media pass for the festival to do research on the grounds, and that amplified my excitement for

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I analyzed Deadmau5’s Strobe, one of my favourite electronic tracks of the last decade, as an effort to begin understanding this music from a theoretical perspective.
the weekend to come.

Suddenly, a well-coifed man in a slimming suit approached us. “Ladies, follow me.” I was perplexed, were we in some kind of trouble? Did Lynn know him? She seemed unperturbed. We followed the man towards the left side-stage booth. When I realized who was sitting there I nearly fainted. The booth was occupied by several women, and Alex and Drew of The Chainsmokers. My friends didn’t seem to recognize the duo. I whispered to Eli “It’s the Chainsmokers”! She furrowed her brow, “who”? Determined not to embarrass myself, I introduced myself to Alex. “Hi, I’m a huge fan of your music. I listen to Nice Hair Radio all the time”! Alex glanced at me out of the corner of his eye with a distracted glaze, “uh, thanks.” I felt like an idiot. I was a researcher, and I had been presented with a perfect opportunity that I was obviously failing. Luckily, Eli chatted with Drew all night and they eventually included me in the conversation, which was an incredible moment. Nevertheless, feeling like the evening was a bust, I came back to Eli’s and cried myself to sleep wondering if this was really the right path for me, if I was cut out for the researching game.

“I FEEL LIKE THE MUSIC SOUNDS BETTER WITH YOU”
- VANRIP REMIX
VELD Festival Day 1  
Downsview Park  
Toronto, ON  
August 1, 2015

Figure 49: Posing for the camera at VELD on Day 1, 2015.

Decked out in my homemade outfit, my Nice Hair Radio leg Kandi, 3D cuffs and tons of tradeable kandi, I entered the VELD grounds for the first time on day one with a renewed optimism.

10:45 p.m.

*Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #12 for the version of this track that he played that evening.*

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355 Picture taken by Back To Basics Photography, posted in the VELD 2015 albums online.
Deadmau5’s set had been somewhat of a disaster, and my feet, shoved into chunky platform sandals since 11:00 a.m. were really beginning to hurt. Then, as if on cue, a familiar melody began to drift up the hill where I was dancing alone. “Blood For The Bloodgoat (Let Go),” a version of “Silent Picture” originally altered by Grabbitz was closing his set! I couldn’t believe it. I got out my finger lights, closed my eyes, and savoured what felt like a personally tailored end to a productive day of interviews and discovering the music of new and old artists.

August 2, 2019
12:00 p.m.

It was a beautiful day, the sweet smell of summer in the air, and I had already made a new friend at the bus stop, DJ Pandatronic, probably the tallest Asian man I’d ever met at 6’4, with a sweet disposition and an obvious passion for EDM in the way he spoke about the artists on the bill for that afternoon. We had promised to meet up for the DVBBS set later that afternoon at main stage. I got to work interviewing attendees relaxing on the grass, and anyone who was swinging Flow Artistry on the sidelines.

6:00 p.m.

A massive raincloud chased us as we ran from the impending water wall. It was truly frightening. I hid under the ledge of a cement shed with thirty other people, wondering when it would let up.

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356 I have also linked my preferred version of this track which is only available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbiXNWG1w4M. In 2014, Deadmau5 released “Silent Picture” as track 16 on his seventh studio album While (1<2). Up and coming producer, Grabbitz, released an alteration of the track with his voice and lyrics which was a huge online success. Later in 2015, Deadmau5 tried to do his own version of the track including the Grabbitz vocals, “Blood for the Bloodgoat,” was met with some mixed reviews. He tried again in 2016 for his CUBE 2.1 tour and rebranded the track “Let Go,” but it was also met with mixed reviews.
Deathmelt had arrived at Downsview after the rainfall, in the nick of time to save me because I had no cell battery left and was on the verge of becoming stranded. We journeyed in his car to a downtown apartment building to meet members of the Toronto Rave Community “Rave Together Stay Together (RTST).” I spent the rest of the evening surrounded by new people, watching light shows in a small Toronto studio apartment and learning about Toronto musical tastes. In some ways, it was a better experience than being alone on festival grounds. I got the chance to really talk in depth with Flow Artists and members of Toronto’s underground electronic scene. It was a memorable night indeed.

London Block Party
Lot 301 York Street
London, ON
September 11, 2015

Figure 50: Shoulder rides from Pandatronic at main stage on night one
EDX Show
Prohibition Club
London, ON
September 25, 2015

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #13 as an example of a famous EDX track called “Breathin’” released in 2014.

Tonight I met a London-based glover who calls himself Keeker. He told me he’s a bit of a lone wolf. He likes to wear a mask at shows to shield his face, a form of anonymity that I’ve seen frequently at EDM events. Keeker doesn’t role with a crew, preferring to attend shows on his own terms. He raves to unleash some of his suppressed emotions, and has found a real expressive connection to gloving. It has apparently helped him get through a lot of painful moments recently in his life. His story intrigues me.

I also received my pseudonym tonight from a fellow raver, as is tradition. I am now Phoenix, on account of my firey coloured hair.

“All of the love we generate
The only thing that carries me on
There’s nothing we need that it can’t create”
- Eric Prydz

#HOCO On The Hill
Western Campus Grounds
London, ON
September 26, 2015
9:00 a.m.
Exhausted from the morning, I had been one of the oldest people there (between ten and fourteen years older), which became a bit of an annoyance towards the onset of the headliner set. The vibe in the audience was one of immaturity and security was on edge, disallowing any kind of shoulder rides or shenanigans. I spent most of my time in the bar area that was less populated since many of the student-audience were not yet legal. DVBBS was a disappointment to me. Their hype man had spent a lot of time yelling at the audience to “raise their hands” and not enough time was spent sharing the music. It wasn’t my kind of a good time. I was pleasantly surprised by the opening set however, a local duo called KINGZMN who really set a spectacular tone as the crowd was arriving.
Featured Interview for Western Gazette on Raves
October 6, 2015

“It’s always been about minority groups coming together and feeling a sense of belonging and respect for one another, especially for people in university," she adds. "It may be their first time away from home, it’s a place where they can get together with other people their age and feel a sense of belonging.”

The idea that raves may create this sort of collective energy implies that they are in fact important to maintain balance between school-work and social fulfillment.

“I think it really is about time management,” Carrabre continues. “You shouldn’t put the blame on leisure activities as a reason for not being capable of doing the things you need to do for your degree.”

Electric For Life Tour 2015
Gareth Emery 6-Hour Set
Uniun Nightclub
Toronto, ON
October 16, 2015
9:00 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #15 for an example of a Gareth Emery track released in 2016 called “Reckless” featuring Wayward Daughter.

The four of us agreed to meet up in the basement if ever we got lost tonight, at what we had dubbed “friendship mirror.”

357 The full article can be found at the following link: https://westerngazette.ca/culture/what-s-all-the-rave-about/article_6a629a47-43ec-5c97-af9f-6315b7b3e6a7.html
2:00 a.m.

*Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 9*

*Captured dancing in the basement hallway...*

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Family Home
Brandon, Manitoba
Christmas, 2016

*Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 10 for a video of me shuffling in the snow.*

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Home, Key Hill Road
London, ON
February 16, 2016

*I just purchased my first set of gloves from Emazing Lights!!! Hopefully they come in before the Oliver Heldens show in March!*

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Home, Key Hill Road
London, ON
February 25, 2016

*Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Videos 11, 12, and 13*

*My gloves arrived in the mail today! I’ve spent the past three hours practicing using tutorials online, but I still feel like my fingers won’t move the way I want! I’m somewhat surprised because through my violin training I have decent finger independence and dexterity. I expected this to be easier to pick up. My forearms are also quite sore, which I wasn’t expecting.*
Adventure Club
London Music Hall
London, ON
January 9, 2016
11:00 p.m.

Pushing through the crowd I ran into Tay and gave her a quick hug. I noticed she had a soother around her neck attached to a beautiful glass bead necklace. She saw me admiring it and told me I could take it if I wanted. Soothers were a staple of female rave attire, functioning as both fashion and as an alternative to gum for stiff jaw from drug use. I hadn’t been gifted much kandi, and this qualified as an addition to my collection. I was thrilled to be plurred such a “quintessential” rave kandi gift.

12:30 p.m.

Bee and I climbed onto the crouched down shoulders of friends and as the pace of the song picked up, we rose high above the crowd. We stayed there for the remainder of the set, holding hands and smiling at one another, feeling grateful for friendship, music, and life.
Figure 52: Bee on the left and myself on the right. We are sitting on the shoulders of our rave crew during Adventure Club's set.

Igloo Fest
Montreal, QC
January 14, 2016
8:30 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #17

Bee and I played our London team outro, “Sussudio,” and jumped around the living room in our winter gear. We had on our snow pants, parka, hats, gloves, boots, several pairs of socks and layers, and warming gel packs in various places. I was so excited to share my birthday weekend with her in a place that has always given me good vibes.

11:45 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #18

Bonobo’s set had been incredible so far, but he pulled at my heart strings aggressively when he spun his final track, David Bowie’s “Let’s Dance.” Bowie had recently passed
away and as an artist whom I have always greatly admired, I was still grieving the loss. This was a truly special moment in the freezing cold air of Old Montreal that I was sharing with my best friend in the world.

Figure 53: Myself and Bee with some of my friends from music school and a couple we met at Igloo Fest, Montreal QC, January 15, 2016.

Rue St. Denis
Montreal, QC
January 16, 2016
4:00 p.m.

Bee and I walked into a tattoo parlor on a whim, hoping to commemorate this trip in a more permanent way. I now have a fresh rib tattoo! It was much more painful than I remember last time I got a tattoo in that area, but it was worth it. The matching tattoos are of a lotus flower with today’s date in roman numerals. Now I will never forget!
Borgeous
London Music Hall
London, ON
February 4, 2016

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #19 for the Borgeous track “Going Under” with London locals Loud Luxury.

Something very wrong happened tonight. I blacked out most of the show and became aware sometime near the end of Borgeous’s set. Prior to this I had been with a friend of mine who works for one of the major event companies in Toronto, we shared a shot at the bar. I seemed to come back into my right mind mid-crying session. I was with Keeker who was very concerned about my well-being. He said I had come out of the darkness in tears. My other friends were nowhere to be found...I called my boyfriend to come get me and take me home. Feeling thankful for Keeker tonight. He may have saved my life.

Oliver Heldens
London Music Hall
London, ON
March 3, 2016

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #20 for an example of Oliver Helden’s popular track from 2016, “Waiting.”

Deathmelt travelled to London for Heldens and I offered to house him and his two friends, both Toronto-based glovers, at my home for the weekend. There would be a gathering of glovers and Flow Artists at this event, which was a fairly invigorating prospect.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 14 for an example of Papa Panda gloving during a shoulder ride at Oliver Heldens.
After Party for Heldens
London, ON
March 4, 2016
3:00 a.m.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 15 for Papa Panda gloving to classical music at the Oliver Heldens afterparty.

System Saturdays
Prohibition Nightclub
London, ON
March 4th, 2016

11:00 p.m.

The crew (myself, Deathmelt, Jman, and Papa Panda) arrived at Prohibition early and took over the dance floor. The boys were very encouraging of my amateur skills in the art and spent much of the evening sharing their knowledge and expertise with me as well as including me in multiple-glover light shows for the crowd. They were my teachers, and I soaked up every minute of it.
Figure 54: From left: Jman, Myself, and Deathmelt gloving together at Prohibition in March of 2016.358

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 16 for an example of Papa Panda and Deathmelt passing light in Prohibition Bar, London, ON.

Monstercat Show
ft. Haywyre, San Holo, Grabbitz
The Hoxton Club
Toronto, ON
March 18, 2016
11:35 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #21 for an example of a Haywyre track from the album Two Fold Pt. 2 released in 2016, “Do You Don’t You.”

I met a female glover tonight at the Hoxton and we exchanged shows. I tried to warn her

I wasn’t particularly skilled, but she didn’t seem to care about that. She, on the other hand, was wildly talented. I was in awe of her style and finesse. She shared with me that she makes her living as a glass blower, which is also a creative art so that interested me.

1:30 a.m.

I ran into the VIP area to meet Grabbitz after his show tonight, not realizing it was off-limits. It was all worth it, got a great shot with him.

Figure 55: Me with Grabbitz after his show with Haywyre in Toronto in the summer of 2016.

The Mansion
London, ON
March 27, 2016
5:00 a.m.

The Mansion, a massive home on Wellington owned by some nightlife regulars in London, was a bit on the sketchy side but I liked the couple who lived there and many a wild party had occurred there over the course of my research. More often than not, DJs from events elsewhere in the city would end up at the mansion, either performing a set for fun or mixing with the crowd. It was always a cool dynamic. The main party room was a
former indoor pool and hot tub area, now paved and carpeted over with a swing rope, a high stage loft, and a fireplace where the hot tub would have been. There was never any indoor heat so it was either freezing or boiling depending on what was going on. One of the couple has a daughter who lives there with them on and off, and tonight I gave her the first 3D cuff I ever made. I had been holding onto it out of sentimentality and she had commented on it a number of times. It felt strange to be giving a pre-teen a kandi cuff in the wee hours of the morning while a party of haggard adults rages downstairs. It was obviously time to go home to bed.

April 2016

This month I launched an online “zine” that I dubbed Elektribe. I paired it up with a sudden opportunity at CHRW radio station on campus to start a radio show. I’m going to devote the content to music, events, and information regarding primarily Canadian DJs and Producers, and the scene here in Eastern Canada.

HEADLINE: “Gloving Community Bands Together”

April 9, 2016

“Early this month saw a unique gathering of rave LED artists and fans in Scarborough. The initial idea stemmed from one of Toronto rave scene's well-known ravers, Deathmelt. Last year, on a night out with friends, I ran into DM at Uniun. He's difficult to miss in his layers on layers of black and grey with white gloves. His positive attitude drew me in immediately. Raves have been host to some of the most wonderful people I've had the pleasure to meet, and a major reason why I have been a fan of the scene for years. Over the months I witnessed Deathmelt build a community of rave artists from the ground up: glovers, shufflers, and other LED manipulators. They are currently manifest

359 Please see the following link for access to the fan zine: https://mgilliancarrabre.wixsite.com/elektribe.
online by membership in the Peace and Glove Facebook community page.”

Gareth Emery  
100 Reasons to Live Tour  
CODA Nightclub  
Toronto, ON  
April 21, 2016  

10:45 p.m.

*Olive B and I arrived at CODA and waited in line for it to open. Trance, and Gareth Emery in particular, never fails to light my insides up and fill me with joy. Unfortunately, I realized after the security almost removed my expensive LED gloves from my possession that CODA is not nearly as lenient regarding Flow Arts. Interesting, because I quite enjoy the venue and the lighting scheme. It’s intimate and you feel more connected to the strangers in the room.  

We also realized a bit late that shoulder rides were also not allowed...*
1:30 a.m.

I stood shoulder to shoulder with some strangers I had been connecting deeply with for the past hour. Not particularly through words, but through gestures and facial expressions. There’s something truly meaningful about realizing someone beside you is as moved by a piece of music as you are. You can see it in one another’s body language and feel their positive energy mixing with yours. I’m beginning to think this is what human connection is all about.\(^{361}\)

\(^{361}\) Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #22 for an example of a track from the *100 Reasons To Live* Album, “We Were Young.”
Panda Fam Meetup
Electric Elements Festival
Wasaga Beach, ON
May 22, 2016

Figure 57: Papa Panda and I posing with Panda Fam at Electric Elements Festival in 2016.
Figure 58: Papa Panda receiving a shoulder ride from Pandatronic at Electric Elements 2016.\footnote{\textsuperscript{362}}

Figure 59: Papa Panda gloving to my violin riffs at Key Hill Road in London, ON in 2016.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{362} In the photo he appears to direct light from the sunset with his gloves.}
I arrived back in London in the wee hours of this morning after three days in Calgary where I presented my paper “Do You Even PLUR Bro? A Comparative Analysis of Underground and Mainstream Perspectives in Canadian Rave Culture” at this year’s MUSCAN Conference. I had already missed the full first day of Ever After Festival, where I’d heard rumours that Skrillex arrived for his surprise set via helicopter, so I was a tad disappointed, but still feeling validated for the work I’ve been doing academically. You win some, you lose some. Papa Panda and his new friend Husky were waiting for me at the airport, it was going to be another long weekend ahead of us. We had planned to drive back and forth from Kitchener each day to sleep in my home in London, and I wasn’t sure how that plan would play out. It’s not like we had a place to sleep in Kitchener and it’s over an hour away. I quickly dropped my suitcase off, fed my cat, and prepped my costume for the festival. I was so ready to get my gloves out with Papa and Husky and offload some of my lingering anxiety.

4:00 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #23 for the Luca Lush Remix of Panda that was played frequently that summer.

Resting on a hill that looked down on the mainstage, food trucks, and fun lounging and activity areas that littered the grounds, I paused to breathe and try to be present in the moment. Some of Papa’s friends approached our group and introduced themselves. Everyone seemed to really love the Panda paraphernalia that we were all sporting. It made us look more like a “crew” of hardcore ravers than some of the matching t-shirts that you see people wearing around festival season in order to find one another in the masses, develop a group morale or to share some kind of a funny shtick. It might have also had something to do with the popularity of the song “Panda” by Desiigner, that was in practically every set of the evening. We had once again brought our flag with us, the
one that I designed. It boldly announced our intentions for Peace, Love, Unity and Respect.

![Figure 60: Papa Panda and I pictured with the Panda Fam flag at Ever After Music Festival on Day 2, 2016.](https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10157084018010641&set=a.10157084016700641)

9:00 p.m.

The glovers and Flow Artists always need the space to move and to interact with audience members, it seems no different here where they are clumped in groups surrounding the perimeter of the mainstage audience. Papa always attracts a large following. As one of the more experienced glovers from the days of The Guvernment, his lightshows always impress. He has a signature move that I love, “remoting” he calls it,

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where one hand motions a direction and the other hand follows as if in some kind of a mechanical submission. It’s perfect for the bass-y music here at this festival. I’ve noticed that glovers develop personal styles and come to identify most strongly with particular types of movements. Some, in the course of discovering their style, invent new movements. But no two glovers appear to throw shows similarly, despite a growing adherence to “technical basics” that Emazing Lights and other Flow Arts promotion companies put forward.

Escapade Music Festival
Rideau Carleton Raceway
Ottawa, ON
June 25, 2016
1:00 p.m.

Figure 61: Waiting in line to enter the grounds at Escapade 2016 wearing tradeable Kandi I created.
5:00 p.m.

Our matching panda spirit hoods and our new Babes & Gents Canada Day weekend shirts attracted a lot of attention. I think especially because Papa was wearing several heavy Epic Cuffs, 3D X-based cuffs that had been expanded wider to create a head-sized piece of jewelry that were usually worn around the upper or lower arms.

Figure 62: Making the "love" symbol from the PLUR handshake. Day 1 of Escapade Music Festival, 2016.
10:30 p.m.

*Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 17*

We were still basking in the afterglow of that evening’s perfect sunset, setting directly behind the mainstage and casting the entire raceway in a fiery haze, when I noticed gloves appearing across the grounds. I could tell from the firefly quality they mimicked in the bits of darkness that weren’t illuminated by stage lighting. Lights floating in space...the familiars of unknown ravers...

...Papa Panda and I stood facing one another. The energy in the air was palpable. I could feel the music vibrating through my chest and creeping into my finger tips as we...
danced together in the crisp air. Four hands defining emotions with light, colour, movement...we carved our souls into the air that night.

Figure 64: Wearing a gifted Epic Cuff, Spirit Hoodie, and an expression of pure joy at Escapade Music Festival 2016.  

Figure 65: Rebranded marketing photo for Elektribe Radio, Summer 2016.

“For ravers, night life photography is a way to legitimize their art forms - the dazzling light trails that cut through crowds of club goers. But the individuals responsible for capturing these great shots are rarely celebrated, hiding behind the lens of their subject's glory. Ashley, founder of the Photography company Smash Tha Snap is one of London's most respected rave photographers. Glovers from all across Ontario have expressed their praise of her work: ‘I would like to say a big thank to (Tha Snap) for some of the best trails shots I have ever had taken gloving, which made my small (stock) diffusers on my gloves look huge’!n

366 Full article can be found at the following link: https://mgilliancarrabre.wixsite.com/elektribe/single-post/2016/06/07/Meet-Smashley-Up-and-Coming-Rave-Photographer.
Set of Apollo Music Video
The Barking Frog Nightclub
London, ON
September 23, 2016
10:00 p.m.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 20 for Apollo music video “Don’t Stop”

Myself and a handful of local London rave dancers were asked to freestyle in a music video for local DJ-Producer Apollo. It was a fun evening. I got to see some of the results on the camera playback and realized how far I’ve come in this style.

“Having a bad day? That’s about to change”!

- Tritonia Podcast Mantra (Tritonal)

Figure 66: Papa Panda and I pictured with DJ duo Tritonal at Uniun Nightclub, October 14, 2016.
Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 21 for an example of me riffing on violin to Drum and Bass in my living room.

Elektrive Radio
CHRW Campus Station
London, ON
March 2017

“Meet Phoenix, host of “Elektrive” --- “I really love the creativity that is allowed volunteers at CHRW. We are given the tools and resources and encouraged to ‘go for it’ which is such an important opportunity to take advantage of in this institution. I’ve learned to trust in my abilities – some tasks may seem daunting when first faced with them, and the station works in such a way that you are given some major responsibilities at the onset. They put trust in you and you have to learn to believe in yourself and let instinct guide you! It’s a life lesson that I feel is invaluable. Sometimes life doesn’t come with detailed instructions. Learn to improvise and be OK with it.”

---

367 Instagram caption on post introducing me as a radio host from CHRW Radio’s Instagram page.
Figure 67: Feature Instagram post for CHRW showcasing me as a radio show host and my show Elektribe.368

Home
Key Hill Road
London, ON
April 3, 2017

Please see the Spotify Playlist #3: Track #24 for an example of a track by Adam Jasim called “Love Song.”

Please also see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 22 and 23. Mixing Canadian artists Anomalie with AWAL (and a little of Tchaikovsky on the side); Playing with sound filters using SNRBN, Shaun Frank, and Dr. Fresch’s “The New Order.”

Adam Jasim, a DJ whose music I often spin on Elektribe has offered to help me learn how to use my recently purchased Denon DJ decks. Once again, I overestimated my ability to

368 Picture taken from Radio Western 94.9’s Instagram page at the following link: https://www.instagram.com/radiowestern949/.
mix tracks together using only my aural skills knowledge. It's far more complicated than that and it would appear that there are several different ways to mix a track or to change directions in a set. Additionally, you have to prepare starting points ahead of time if you want to be precise in your mixes and these are programmed into your computer. I’ve heard a number of times that the best way to mix is to “really know the music.” This apparently does not necessarily mean that listening to it hundreds of times counts as “knowing” it. I still feel confused about basic timing to mix one track into another. What a disaster! This is going to take more effort than I initially thought! Luckily, Adam has agreed to drive from Kitchener to London for the afternoon, a drive of over an hour! I’m grateful for the help of generous friends.

Alok
Uniun Nightclub
Toronto, ON
May 26, 2017
9:00 p.m.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 24

Alok, the catalyst for a new hip EDM genre known as Brazilian Bass, and one of my favourite new artists of this year, happens to be rolling through Toronto the same day that I present my paper “The Musicality of Gloving” at the annual International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) conference. I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to see him live, and at one of my favourite clubs in Toronto no less!

Ever After Music Festival
Bingemans Grounds
Kitchener, ON
June 2, 2017
5:00 p.m.

I drove solo down to the festival early on the first day, planning to meet up with friends.
as they were able to arrive in Kitchener. Much to my surprise, Adam Jasim showed up and we spent most of the first night headbanging together.

Figure 68: Me and Adam Jasim in the pit at Ever After Music Festival on day 1, 2017.

Ever After Music Festival
Bingemans Grounds
Kitchener, ON
June 3, 2017
10:45 p.m.

Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #25 for an Excision track called “Her” featuring Dion Timmer.

As Excision’s brilliant visuals came to a climax, Poizonus Kiss, Hammer, and I threw the last of our energy into lighting up the night sky with our Flow Art. Not for anyone in particular, but for ourselves as a means of absorbing the last bit of juice from the juice box, so to speak. We were on an energy high, like little kids at a sleepover, and we didn’t want to go to bed just yet. When it was over I burst into tears, feeling like this was the end of so much more than just a concert. It wasn’t something I could ever rewind, or put on repeat. I could never get it back.
Escapade Music Festival  
Lansdowne Park  
Ottawa, ON  
June 24, 2017  
10:30 p.m.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 25.
Please also see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #26 for an example of Above and Beyond’s “Save Me” from their 2016 acoustic album.

Poizonus Kiss gave me her second orbit, a transparent sphere with four LED diodes arranged in a circular pattern and strung together with two strings. Orbits are spun and thrown to create colour patterns in the air. I experimented with the Flow Arts toy during Above and Beyond’s set. I have begun to realize that orbit sits more comfortable with me as an extension of my body than gloving. I am contemplating purchasing one of my own.

Dreams Festival  
Echo Beach  
Toronto, ON  
July 7, 2017  
10:30 p.m.

Above and Beyond were meant to close the mainstage out that evening, and even though I’d seen them already this summer, and plenty of times in the past, I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to experience their music in this atmosphere. They give life to my soul. I asked Jman to join me at the front since none of our group cared to push forward for the set. The energy was intense even from the back of the crowd, and as we pushed through it seemed to grow to a tangible force. I found a pocket of space and began to twirl around and dance, Jman was in his own little world, enthralled by the performance.

3:00 a.m.

A friend invited Deathmelt, Jman, Momma Hurrikane and a few others to an after party on his boat in the docking area just outside the festival grounds. It was crowded, but
relaxing under the nightsky with the black water deflecting starlight, feeling the euphoria of the night dissapating slowly, the night became all-the-more memorable.

Dreams Festival
Echo Beach
Toronto, ON
July 8, 2017
3:00 p.m

None of us had slept the night before, but the day was warm and bright, and I was lulled by the techno beats from the alcove we were laying in. Deathmelt and I lay in the grass, resting our bodies, nourishing our minds and hearts. We called it “Technapping.”

Deathmelt and myself "technapping" at Dreams Festival on day 2, 2017.
Temporary Comfort Zone Location
King Street
Toronto, ON
July 8, 2017
4:30 a.m.

I almost never ask directly for lightshows, mostly because I don’t want to give off the wrong impression to strangers. Tonight, however, Maakis, one of the leaders of the Toronto Gloving Community, was throwing shows in the lounge seating area of the room and I couldn’t resist. I asked him for an orbit show in particular, though he slings all different sorts of Flow Arts at a level of mastery. It was the most incredible show I’ve ever received. It looked as if the lights were dancing. The darkness enveloped the colours as if to swallow them entirely, but their ferocity persevered, one second to my right, then to my left, and then swirling ominously in front of my nose. Some light shows are fun and interesting, but the level of musicianship and technical ability that this show required floored me.
VELD Music Festival
Downsview Park
Toronto, ON
August 5, 2017

Figure 69: Receiving a shoulder ride from Cowboy on Veld Day 1, 2017.

VELD Afterparty
Comfort Zonee Original Location
480 Spadina Ave
August 6, 2017
4:35 a.m.

The back of CZ was always lit up, a place to dance or give lightshows, to connect with fellow Flow Artists. The benches are safe places to catch your breath and to enjoy the performances of your peers. Deathmelt and other members of the Toronto Gloving Community performed two and three way lightshows for one another, where one glover takes the peripherals, the other takes the front grid that surrounds the face, and the third may stand behind the light show receiver or may find a spot to throw light in other areas.
that might be available. It’s a “surround sound” type of experience, rather disorienting in the best way.

London Block Party
Harris Park
London, ON
September 16, 2017

The only act I was truly looking forward to during this year’s London Block Party was Shaun Frank b2b Grandtheft. Two Toronto-based DJ-Producers who were putting Toronto on the map once again. I was also so grateful for the opportunity to interview Shaun Frank a few days earlier in advance of the event. It had been my first effort to interview artists in my field and while there was much to be improved in my delivery and line of inquiries, I anticipated many more in the future.369

Shiba San
Seventy Seven Nightclub
Hamilton, ON
September 30, 2017
10:00 p.m.

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 26

Nuit Blanche “Wiggly Street Rave”
Between Hamilton St and Broadview Ave
Toronto, ON
September 31, 2017
4:30 a.m.

369 Full interview available at the following link: https://www.mixcloud.com/Elektribe/elektribe-052-ft-castnowski-shaun-frank/.
We had caught a few of the installations for Nuit Blanche after Shiba San and a half hour drive back into the city, but we were astounded that so many people were still hanging out in the middle of a backlane between Hamilton and Broadview, huddled together for warmth in the chill of the night air. It was already starting to cool off for the winter and no one was pleased about it. Some performance artists intermittently shared a very odd skit that appeared to have zero continuity. People were dressed in a variety of outfits as well, it appeared that several communities had come together for this outdoor rave. There was a couple who had on some type of faun royalty outfits, a pastoral fantasy type of look, while others were simply in toques and jeans.

Comfort Zonee Original Location
480 Spadina Ave
Toronto, ON
September 31, 2017
10:00 a.m.

I realized at 9 a.m. that I had never stayed at CZ until close, so instead of freaking out and leaving, I stayed. Why not. Deathmelt has been using the phrase “honour yourself” a lot more recently as a way to scan your emotional and physical well being and make choices not because of a group but because of yourself. I am trying to adopt this perspective as well for my own life.

“HONOUR YOURSELF”
- DEATHMELT
Hunter Siegel (No Neon Tour)
Rum Runners
London, ON
Jan 13, 2018

Raving Autobiographically Gradcast
CHRW Station
London, ON
January 31, 2018

“From disco to techno, Musicology PhD student M. Gillian Carrabré takes us through a musical (and personal) history of rave culture. Join hosts Navaneeth and Yimin as we learn about the principles of PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect) and about conducting field research as a participant-observer.

You can find Gillian on Radio Western (CHRW 94.9) Tuesday nights from 8:30 - 10pm, or streaming online at radiowestern.ca/stream.

You can also follow Gillian's music choices on Soundcloud at mixcloud.com/elektribe

And here we have a link for Gillian's Autobiographical Mixtape: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6e3R-aA2LA&list=PLLXLr3CzrHShdY6H1I2NCA7-7qQNeXm9”

371 Listen to the interview here at the following link, https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-bp5dx-857908.
Vertigo was an entirely new kind of after hours club. A far cry from the dank and dingy basement of the now defunct Comfort Zone, the space was expansive and swanky, with a blue tinged lighting scheme and upscale appliances. I had always associated great techno and beats you feel inside your gut with filth and grime. Tonight I learned that the two are not mutually exclusive. My long pants still ended up muddy on the bottoms when I exited the venue at dawn, a residual memory of times left behind.

Joee Cons Interview
Feb 10, 2018372
Elektribe TV
Interview with Siconic
March 16, 2018

Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 27

Grandtheft Interview373
March 17, 2018

372 Follow the following link for my Joee Cons Interview, https://www.mixcloud.com/Elektribe/elektribe-065-ft-ausso-and-joee-cons/.
373 The interview with Grandtheft is available at the following link, https://www.mixcloud.com/Elektribe/elektribe-069-ft-awal-and-grandtheft/.
Kawaii Bass: Low Key Party
March 30, 2018

![Image of three people posing for the camera at the Low Key Party in Toronto, ON (2018).]

**Figure 70**: Poisonous Kiss on the far left and myself on the far right, posing for the camera at the Low Key Party in Toronto, ON (2018).

Autograf and Ramzoid
Velvet Underground
Toronto, ON
April 12, 2018

*Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 28*

Bingemans Campground
Kitchener, ON
Ever After Festival
June 10th, 2018
4:00 a.m.

*I pulled out my orbit to show a few strangers on the campsite. They had never heard of orbiting before and were curious what it looked like in action. I let one of the guys in the group try, explaining carefully how to keep the orbit spinning (a careful loosening and tightening of the string tension in a constant motion), and he was a natural! Within a few*
minutes he was already experimenting with new types of movements, emboldened by his initial success. I’m not entirely sure what possessed me to do it but I told him he could keep my orbit. A gift. I hope he feels inspired to let his creativity out. Now I suppose I’ll have to buy a new orbit...good thing they’re not as expensive as gloves!

5:00 a.m.

*Please see Spotify Playlist #3: Track #27 for an example of Rüfüs Du Sol’s emotional track “Innerbloom.”*

I found myself packed into a heated car with five strangers. An attempt to escape the chill of the morning air on our formerly sweaty bodies. It felt comforting to know that although I had been evicted from my campground, and abandoned by the friends with whom I attended the festival, I had found solace and a safe place to sleep for the night. Momma Hurrikane, my saviour, who had answered my early morning call and was allowing me to stay in her tent for the evening, approached the car window. “Could I make a request”?

The intro to Innerbloom began to flow from the car speakers, and huddled together, we watched as Hurrikane walked with her fiber whips into an open space under the stars. Swinging her lights into the sky, heaven and earth merged with her body and the world disappeared...

*Please see YouTube Playlist #3: Video 29. Practicing orbit in my family home in Manitoba.*

*To Be Continued…*
5.2 Final Commentary

At the end of July in 2018 I moved back to my family home Brandon and began writing this dissertation. It has taken two years and the help of those around me to finally put everything together. I am thankful (and frankly indebted) to my key informants, particularly Deathmelt, The Shaman, Papa Panda, Keeker, Jaize, Hammer, KaByStyle, Cooper, Tigger, and Uncommon, and my colleague-in-arms Colm Hogan for their endless enthusiasm and willingness to speak with me about their experiences and share their knowledge. Without them, this dissertation would be half a work. Thanks to the Toronto Rave Community, the London Rave Community, The Toronto Gloving Community, Glover’s Lounge, Starlight – A Space For Orbiter’s, and the communities not online for their support and encouragement of my work. A huge thanks to my advisor Jay Hodgson for his devotion to my ideas and for believing in me. Thanks also to Jim Grier for all his wisdom solid advice during this process, and for the detailed editing that makes my work a weapon of knowledge. Finally, I want to thank my parents, Mary Jo and Patrick, and my brother Ariel for holding me up through all the tough stuff, and never letting me give up on myself. And to my friends, especially the people I raved with into the wee-hours and have learned so much about myself from: I love you. Thank-you, thank-you, I’ll never be able to repay you for leading me to that piece of myself I was missing, my song.
Glossary of Acronyms

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
B2B – Back to Back
BOSS (Competition) – Battle of Supreme Swag
BTSM – Black Tiger Sex Machine
CBC – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CEO – Chief Executive Officer
CN (Tower) – Canadian National
CNE – Canadian National Exhibition
(Chroma) CTRL - Control
CZ – Comfort Zone
DIY - Do-It-Yourself
DJ - Disc Jockey
(Run) DMC – Devastating Mic Controller
E – Ecstasy
EAMF – Ever After Music Festival
EDC – Electric Daisy Carnival
EDM - Electronic Dance Music
EDMC - Electronic Dance Music Culture
EL – Emazing Lights
EMDR – Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing
FB - Facebook
FFM – Frozen Face Melters
FL – Futuristic Lights
GL – Glover’s Lounge
GTA – Greater Toronto Area
HD – High Definition
HOCO – Homecoming
ICQ – I Seek You (Messenger)
IDM – Intelligent Dance Music
IGC – International Gloving Competition
IGL – International Gloving League
LC – Liquid Canada
LED – Light Emitting Diode
LGBTQQIP2SAA – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Questioning, Queer, Intersex, Pansexual, Two-Spirit (2S), Androgynous, and Asexual.
LLC – Liquid Lights Crew
LO (Competition) – Lights On
LPC – Liquid Pop Collective
LPE – Liquid Pop Eric
LSD - Lysergic Acid Diethylamide
MC – Master of Ceremonies
MDMA - 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine
MEDA – Musicality, Entertainment/Having Fun, Depth Perception, Animation (Four Pillars of Showmanship)
MSN – Microsoft Network (Messenger)
MUSCAN – Canadian University Music Society

OG - Original

OMG – Oh My God

OP - Original Poster

PAR – Participant Action Research

PG – Peace and Glove

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

PLUM – Peace, Love, and Unity Movement

PLUR – Peace, Love, Unity, Respect

POV – Point of View

PTA – Physical Therapy Assistant

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

RAIL(S) – Range In A Line

RTST – Rave Together Stay Together

TAZ – Temporary Autonomous Zone

TLS – Toronto Liquid Society

TGC – Toronto Gloving Community

TRC - Toronto Rave Community

V2 – Version 2

VIP – Very Important Person

UDM - Underground Dance Music

USA – United States of America

UK – United Kingdom
WEMF – World Electronic Music Festival

YMCA – Young Men’s Christian Association
Discography


“We Were Young.” Performed by Gareth Emery and Alex & Sierra. Spotify. Track 5 on *100 Reasons To Live*. Garuda, Cloud 9 Music. 2016.

Bibliography


Moore, Karenza, and Fiona Measham. “It’s The Most Fun You Can Have For Twenty Quid’: Motivations, Consequences and Meanings of British Ketamine Use.”


Park, Judy Soojin. “Searching for a Cultural Home: Asian American Youth in the EDM Festival Scene.” In Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and


“Sick Ass Lightshow (Hermes) (gloving).” Posted by Sean Lum. Video. 0:59. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsA4ZRLGn1g.


Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Date: 2 February 2021

To: Jay Hodgson

Project ID: 118018

Study Title: "Music Sounds Better With You":
Methods of Self-Expression in the Toronto Rave Scene

Short Title: MSBWY

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Full Board

Meeting Date: 18/Dec/2020 14:30

Date Approval Issued: 02/Feb/2021 15:39

REB Approval Expiry Date: 02/Feb/2022

Dear Jay Hodgson

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:
No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.
The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Katelyn Harris, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair
Curriculum Vitae

Education and Training:

**Ph.D. Musicology (Candidate)**  
Projected Fall 2021  
University of Western Ontario, Don Wright Faculty of Music  
First Reader: Dr. Jay Hodgson; Second Reader: Dr. James Grier

**M.Mus. Violin Performance**  
University of Ottawa  
2014

**B.Mus. Violin Performance**  
McGill University  
2012

**Diploma Violin Performance**  
Mount Royal University  
2009

Professional Experience:

Sessional Faculty, WRDS 150 UBC  
Winter 2021

Sessional Faculty, WRDS 150 UBC  
Fall 2020

Sessional Faculty, WRDS 150 UBC  
Summer “Virtual” Term 1 2020

Sessional Faculty, WRDS 150 UBC  
Winter “Semi-Virtual” 2020

Sessional Faculty, WRDS 150 (Music Sections) UBC  
Fall 2019

Sessional Instructor, Music History Survey II, Brandon University  
Winter 2019

Sessional Instructor, Music History Survey I, Brandon University  
Fall 2018

Teaching Assistantship, Music History Medieval-21st Century, UWO  
2016-2018

Teaching Assistantship, Intro to Jazz, UWO  
Winter 2015

Presentations & Conferences:

“Music Sounds Better With You’: Methods of Self-Expression in the Toronto Rave Scene”  
Cape Breton University, IASPM  
2021
“Throwing Light: Understanding Apprenticeship and Artistry in Gloving Practices”
University of Western Ontario, WUGSOM 2020

“The Musicality of Gloving”
University of Toronto, IASPM 2017

“Do You Even PLUR Bro?”
University of Calgary, MUSCAN Conference & Stonybrook University, Resounding Ritual Graduate Conference 2016

“PLUR Ideology”
UWO, Western Research Forum 2015

“PLUR at Toronto Festivals”
UWO, Nuit Violette: Night Art Exhibition 2015

“The DJ: A Modern Take On Musicianship”
Ncounters, University of Alberta 2014

Accepted Pre-Covid for 2020

"The Flow Arts Triangle: Improvisation and Musicianship in the Toronto Rave Scene”
(to the) Carleton Music and Culture Graduate Student Society’s Symposium, Ottawa, ON

“‘Music Sounds Better With You’: Methods of Self-Expression in the Toronto Rave Scene”
(to the) University of Calgary Graduate Conference, Calgary, AB

Honours and Awards:

SOCAN Foundation/MusCan English-language Award for Writings on Canadian Music
Award value: $2500 2021

SSHRC Finalist (Waitlisted) 2018

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) 2017-2018
Award value: $15,000 (per annum)

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) 2016-2017
Award value: $15,000 (per annum)
Norway Exchange (1 of 4 music students chosen)  
Music & Labour Project  
Norwegian Academy & Western University  

Ph.D. Admissions Scholarship  
University of Western Ontario  
Award value: $30,000 (per annum)  

Graduate Admissions Scholarship  
University of Ottawa  
Award value: $17,000 (per annum)  

Manitoba Arts Council Grant  
Award value: $2000  

Manitoba Arts Council Grant  
Award value: $2000  

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Mount Royal University  

Marion F. Cole and Kate L. Fast Memorial Scholarship  
Mount Royal University  

**Professional Development:**

Remote Teaching Institute UBC  
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Fall Institute on University Teaching UBC  
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Certificate in University Teaching and Learning UWO  
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The Theory and Practice of University Teaching (SGPS 9500) UWO  
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