

**EDM AND ECSTASY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ELECTRONIC  
MUSIC FESTIVAL ATTENDEES**

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Master's Thesis

Music, Mind, and Technology

Department of Music

15 September 2016

University of Jyväskylä

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanities	Laitos – Department Music Department
Tekijä – Author Noah Little	
Työn nimi – Title EDM and Ecstasy: The lived experiences of electronic dance music festival attendees	
Oppiaine – Subject Music, Mind & Technology	Työn laji – Level Master’s Thesis
Aika – Month and year May 2016	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 71 + 2 Appendix
<p><b>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</b></p> <p>Recently, there has been a growing global phenomenon of electronic dance music festivals. This musical scene is largely fueled by the social media entrenched, novelty seeking, millennial generation. World-renowned electronic dance music festivals including Belgium’s Tomorrowland, U.K’s Creamfields, and Miami’s Ultra Music Festival, are newly experiencing a drastic influx of festival attendance, societal acceptance, and media coverage.</p> <p>Previously, music festival investigations have primarily focused on motivational factors of attendance, drug incidence, and event management techniques. However, contemporary research has determined attendees are obtaining both psychological and social benefits from these music festivals, including identity creation, greater life satisfaction, a sense of belonging, and improved interpersonal relationships. This study aimed to provide a comprehensive exploration of the lived experiences of individuals who attended a multi-day electronic dance music festival.</p> <p>The present study was primarily interested in the perceived beneficial changes within the individual, following their festival experience. As well, we investigated if first time festival attendees perceived changes differed to those of returning individuals. A semi-structured qualitative interview was used to collect data from 12 individuals who attended the 2015 Electronic Daisy Carnival in Las Vegas. Six participants were first-time attendees while the remaining 6 were individuals returning to the festival once again. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Within the data emerged the following central themes: 1) escape 2) communitas, and 3) self-reported changes; there were 11 subthemes. These findings add to the existing body of music festival literature, further contextualizing how music festivals are both experienced, and reflected upon by</p>	

individuals. Three central themes from festival attendees were narrated: the ability to escape from everyday routines and surroundings, opportunities for social interaction and acceptance, and exploration of values alternative outlooks on life. Further, this study highlights the potential lasting changes individuals' experience from attending electronic dance music festivals.	
Asiasanat – Keywords music festivals, electronic dance music, social interaction, social acceptance	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository	University of Jyväskylä
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

## JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Marc Thompson the program director and leader of the incoming pupils. Almost two years ago, he provided myself with a detailed description of Finland, the University, and what I could expect during my time here. Ultimately, his words led to encouragement of applying for Music, Mind, and Technology program at the University of Jyväskylä, which was an amazing experience to my life, and has aided my career goals. Next, to my first advisor Dr. Birgitta Burger, who has remained by my side during the past year through the development and alteration of my thesis; constant office visits and assisting in all areas of progression; I truly appreciate the time you have granted to this project and I am grateful for your help in completing this thesis. Third, to Dr. Stephen Croucher for his valuable advice, guidance, and conversations that have taken place over the last two years; your time and willingness to assist me, and acceptance of office visits was instrumental to the success of this thesis. Fourth, to my classmates that I have met around the world, which I learned a great deal from, and have shown me a wide range of lifestyles. From being on time, to being hours late, from the quiet, to the gregarious; I enjoyed our time here in this small town together. The

struggle was real. Fifth, to the individuals back at home I was in constant communication with in order to keep myself grounded, and remember where I am from: the nammers, my mentors, my two siblings, and of course, my extremely supportive parents.

Lastly, I feel extremely fortunate and privileged to have the opportunity to carry out a project that I had wanted to complete for several years, in a foreign country that allowed my presence. My final acknowledgement is to the country of Finland and its people, whom have been welcoming, respectful, and great company the past two years.

Live. Love. Moi

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans and music have upheld a ubiquitous relationship throughout history. The presence of musical instruments, music festivals, and performances are evidenced within historical civilizations and that of present ones. The first known evidence of a musical festival was the Pythian Ancient Games, depicted in history to have occurred in Rome between 500 and 600 BC (Armstrong, 2008). In present day, modern musical events have emerged as live musical performances, independent listening opportunities, and mass festivals. Recently, a greater focus has been put on the relationship between individuals and music, specifically that of music and emotion (Saarikallio, Nieminen, & Brattico, 2013), music and movement (Burger, Thompson, Saarikallio, Luck, & Toiviainen, 2013), and the benefits of music therapy (Järvinen-Lepistö, Burger, & Ala-Ruona, 2014). Individuals typically use music as a mood changer, enhancer, and spiritual functions (Sloboda, O'Neill, & Ivaldy, 2001). An increasingly popularized way of music listening, music festivals, are being investigated by scholars to understand the impacts of attending these events (Packer, & Ballantyne, 2010; Ballantyne, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2013). Packer and Ballantyne (2010), found those who attended a music festival reported feeling more positive about life, had higher self-acceptance, and greater social acceptance, as a result of their experience. Following this, Ballantyne, Ballantyne, and Packer (2013) participants reported improved subjective well-being (i.e., happiness, life satisfaction), along with social acceptance; to be the most perceived benefit they attributed to their festival attendance. Electronic dance music is popular globally and these massive festivals are multi-day spectacles that attract upwards of 150,000 people per day with the majority being of adolescent or young adult age.

This work will explore what people are experiencing at these events, and the impacts of these affairs. In addition, what does this event contain that allures

individuals to attend initially, and re-attend annually henceforth. The present article focuses on the lived experiences of electronic dance music festival attendees and intends to understand the interactions and events that lead to specific outcomes.

The aims of this study were: (1) to investigate lived experience of attending a music festival, (2) explore the perceived benefits attained from this experience, (3) gain a retrospective understanding of personal event significance.

This work intends to add additional knowledge to previous investigations that have found attending music festivals to be beneficial for attendees social and psychological well-being. Also, because electronic dance music festivals are noted for their accepting and respectful environment, it is perceivable that individuals could attain some form of benefit from being immersed in these positive environments.

This portion of the thesis will be a review of literature that discusses the current empirical evidence on music festivals and its patrons.

## 1.1 SPECIAL EVENTS AND MUSIC FESTIVALS

A wealth of knowledge has been uncovered by scholars who have investigated why humans are interested in attending special events (i.e., concerts, vacation, sportive competitions). Firstly, Abreu-Novais and Acordia (2013) compiled 29 empirical investigations on event attendance, and what motivators led individuals to the event. They uncovered seven dimensions of motivation. Firstly, socialization, the desire to interact with known and unknown individuals (Crompton & McKay, 1997), appeared most often in the existing literature. Commonly, these events will often cause the individual to be immersed with people, and being among others is a socially innate and healthy behavior; perhaps adding to the allure. Next, family togetherness was the second most

commonly reported dimension wherein individuals viewed this duration as a time to spend with their loved ones. Thirdly, event novelty was a dimension of motivation that attendees were excited about. The anticipation and to have new experiences, and the event's attractions, curate a sense discovery and of adventure. Fourth, is the theme of escape and relaxation. Empirical evidence strongly depicts our desire to escape from our everyday circumstances, such as work or school responsibilities, and to temporarily leave our familiar surroundings (Crompton & McKay, 1997). Fifth and sixth most common motivations to attend special events were excitement and enjoyment, and cultural exploration, respectively. Lastly, a final motivator was event specific characteristics; an airshow, dog show, or sporting event, would be a demographic specific event, and would draw those individuals because of its unique niche being targeted. For example, at an air show event, 38.7% of attendees stated a "general interest aviation" or "see the planes" accounted for the dominant reason to attend (Nicholson & Pierce, 2001). Also, A Wildfoods festival noted patrons' motivation for attending was because of the events "unusual food variety" (23.5%). This depicts how a festival unique feature, food, will attribute to its demographic attendance and interest for being present. This meta-analysis by Abreu-Novais and Acordia (2013) provided a framework for my thesis understanding, and aided in the understanding of individual motivations to special events.

## 1.2 STRONG EXPERIENCES WITH MUSIC

Strong experiences with music (SEM) are an additional area of research that has explored the effects of music and human interaction. Gabrielsson and Lindstrom (1995) were interested in if music could have therapeutic implications when persons interacted with music. They asked approximately 900 participants to



describe a strong experience with music they had, and to understand the circumstances to which this occurred: witnessing live performance, listened to a recording, or the performance of music. They also included probing questions of subject musical preference, and the physical and mental states they encountered during their SEM. The authors described a strong experience with music (SEM) to be associated with, among various attributes: physical responses (shivers, tears), emotional responses (joy, sadness), perceptual aspects related to the music (timbre, rhythm), and existential aspects (cosmos, presence of god, reflection on the meaning of reality). 75% of participants had their strong musical experience listening to music. Also, 82% of participants stated it was a memorable experience. This understanding of different ways individuals can have intense musical experiences, specifically performing it or while listening is important to understand the reactions humans have to this structured stimulus. A more recent investigation by Schaefer, Smukalla, and Oelker (2013) explored the lasting effect of these intense musical experiences. Thirteen German participants with varying involvement in musical performances were interviewed. Firstly, the intense musical experience led people to enter an altered state of consciousness, where they reported letting go of one's self; and worry and negative thoughts were replaced by an overwhelming feelings of positivity. Individuals reported this was the first time their true personality emerged and were able to recognize and accept it for themselves. The authors depict these feelings as a state of harmony, in which the individual has the feeling of being one with themselves, and one with the world. The authors propose that this intense harmonistic feeling is crucial for this experience being impactful for the individual. Furthermore, they believe the individuals henceforth attempt to maintain this sense of harmony in their everyday lives. Also, following the intense musical experience, participants reported a change in values, meaning of life, and intensified social relationships. Lastly, after this

event, personal values were aligned with social relationships, intangible values, and personal morale.

## 2. MUSIC FESTIVALS

### 2.1 MOTIVATION TO ATTEND MUSIC FESTIVALS

Next, the specific motivations to attend music festivals is examined. Faulkner, Fredline, Larson, and Tomljenovic (1999) investigated a Swedish music festival and uncovered two main motives for attendees. First, those who were local were motivated to attend because of event novelty and excitement. Comparatively, individuals located outside the region, who were visiting the area, viewed the music event as an opportunity to party. Bowen and Daniels (2005) investigated an American music festival and concluded four dimensions for festival attendee's motivation. First, "just being social" as in enjoying the social opportunities of the music event, next, "enrichment over the music", third, "the music matters", and fourth, "love it all", where the entire experience was enjoyable. Next, Nicholson and Pierce (2001) evaluated four different special events (airshow, wine and cheese music festival, wildfoods festival, guitar awards festival) to determine their specific motivators. 23.5% of attendees at the Gold Guitar Awards stated an "enjoyment or love for country music" (pp. 452) motivated them to attend, and another 21.9% stated an interest in line dancing contributed to their participation. Only 16.2% of the Wine and Cheese participants reported fun, partying and good times to be their main motivator of the event. Gelder and Robinson (2009) found further differences in attendee motivation based on the event itself. V Festival, a music festival in the England, was found to be attended by fans because watching an artist was of the most importance. Comparatively, festival goers to Glastonbury Festival were

motivated to attend because of the festival atmosphere and opportunities for socialization. Finally, Li and Wood (2014) explored the motivations of Chinese individuals whom attended music festivals. While similar motivations of novel experience and social togetherness emerged, cultural dissonance was a unique finding. In China, upholding social norms, living up to the expectation of others, and fitting into society is imperative (Gao, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Interestingly, the participants state that these behavioural expectations are abandoned while at the festival, enabling attendees a sense of freedom. This was defined as spiritual pursuit and spiritual escape. Spiritual pursuit was defined as seeking a better way of being, or innate hopes and dreams, whereas spiritual escape, is the desire for a freer environment and an escape from societal pressures. This literature was used to understand the alluring attributes of music festivals, and what in particular individuals are seeking. Also, it enabled a greater understanding of potential motives for my perspective participants.

## 2.2 BENEFITS OF ATTENDING MUSIC FESTIVALS

Recent investigations by Packer, Ballantyne, Ballantyne (2011) and Ballantyne, Ballantyne, and Packer (2013), uncovered the positive benefits individuals are attaining from attending music festivals, and was a starting point for this thesis. First, Packer et al. (2011), interviewed recent festival attendees aged 18-23 to attain a sense of understanding about the music festival experience. Specifically, they wanted to determine if the experience could positively contribute to personal and social well-being. Similar to previous research Packer et al. (2011), (Abreu-Novais & Acordia, 2013), attendees reported the musical experience, social opportunities, the festival atmosphere, and chance to disengage and escape from the everyday routine to be the integral attributes of the experience. The reported benefits from their participants who attended a music festival

included: greater self-acceptance, feeling more positive about one's life, feeling a sense of growth from the experience, and a desire to enhance social relationships. Using the findings from their previous work, Ballantyne et al. (2013) continued their investigation into the psychological and social benefits of music festival attendees. Their results convey the festival atmosphere (43.2%) to be the most personally satisfying aspect of the festival to attendees. This was followed by the musical experience, social experience (being with family and friends), and the escape experience. Specific to subjective well being, 91% of participants reported "I feel more positive about my life" (pp.73) and 95% stated "I feel a sense of happiness or elation" (pp.73) following the festival. Particular to social-wellbeing, attendees reported "I feel more positive about other people" (pp.74), 91%, and "I feel I have more things in common with others" (pp.74) at 91%. Given these positive feelings and experiences that individuals attribute to their festival experience, it encourages further research to be conducted to achieve a greater understanding of these unique experience.

### 2.3 MUSIC AND SOCIAL COHESION

A wealth of knowledge has explored the power of music to unite individuals. Knobloch, Vorderer, and Zillmann, (2000) have found music to be a social facilitator among humans which can encourage social behaviour among individuals and groups (North & Hargreaves, 1999; Tarant, North & Hargreaves, 2001). Koelsch (2014) depicts seven social functions of music. First, individual's who create and perform music together create relationships based on their shared interest, leading to social interaction with music as the focal point. Second, music creates social cognition, which is how people understand social information, in this sense, processing musical information from sound and of the performer behaviour. Third, musical interaction can lead

to co-pathy, the social function of empathy, which results in decreased conflict and enhanced group cohesions (Huron, 2001). Notably, during music making or music listening, co-pathy can increase well-being of individuals (Koelsch, Offermanns, & Franzke, 2010). Fourth, neurological investigations have revealed an overlap in language and musical perception and production processes (Koelsch, 2005). Fifth, musical movement involves the coordination of bodily movements, and neurological processing. For instance, clapping or tapping to a beat, and synchronizing one's movement with a song can lead to a pleasurable brain response (Overy, & Molnar-Szakacs, 2009; Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009). Further, the synchronization of movement while playing a beat creates social trust and enhanced group behaviour in both children and adults (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010; Launay, Dean, & Bailes, 2013). Sixth, cooperation between individuals is imperative during music ensemble performances; and cooperation leads to pleasure and trust among people (Nowak, 2006; Rilling et al., 2002; Van Veelen, Garca, Rand, & Nowak, 2012). Seventh, music can lead to increased social cohesion, a known example in religious gatherings who use song during these meetings. Schnable (2012) investigated how musical practices in the African-American Church Gospel choir aided in building religious and racial communities. Participants exclaimed that the church choir brought them together and created a sense of social bonding and ties to each other, and that of the church. Further, it teaches solidarity and uses music as its tool to bond its members. As one participant stated:

“Music, besides being the international language, music in the black church has been the source of inspiration to keep us focused, steady, grounded through the most horrendous of life experiences. That if a man robs you of your soul, then they really have robbed you of who you are. And I think the music, the worship, the ability to praise God has anchored us even before we were able to read. It

anchored slaves in the fields. It kept them going. It connected them to something greater even in the midst of horrific, you know, experiences from man. You know, and so the spirituals of American blacks, it's a powerful force that just can't be denied" (Schnable, pp.23)

The power of individual's singing together can also create large forms of solidarity; consider countrymen when singing their national anthems, they become temporarily united in song unison. As depicted in the gospel church example, religious congregations often include song to be incorporated into their worship. For example, including Judaism prayer's or the daily Muslim Salah prayers.

## 2.4 MUSIC AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Finally, North and Hargreaves (2008) proposed music creates a social badge of identity to others, wherein your values, attitudes and opinions are able to be expressed. For instance, punk music fans hold oppositional views towards authority and heavy metal fans display a higher amount of masculine tendencies (Hansen & Hansen, 1991). Further, Boer (2009) depicted how music preference and value orientations are linked. Such as, Rock and punk listeners reject conservative values and show high amounts of openness to change; whereas people who listen to pop and hip hop possess self-enhancing and openness values (Boer, 2009). In terms of social bonding, Boer et al. (2011) proposed a model of social attraction based on the perceived values held by others who share the same listening preferences. Here is an example to clarify: an individual who has a specific musical preference (i.e., rap music) is depicting their values they hold to others simply by their musical listening choice. Then, when another individual who enjoys the same music sees this first individual at a concert for example, this leads to a perceived value similarity, and higher social attraction

and evaluation. This perceived value similarity is vital for social relationships, as note by Lee et al. (2009) “Values are an important part of people’s social relationships” because people “tend to develop relationships with those whose values are similar to their own (p.469). As well, shared values are important since the individuals agree of what is important in life, and value agreement is mutually rewarding to each party (Coombs, 1996; Edwards & Cable, 2009). Thus, individuals who share musical preferences display their chosen values and this similarity between leads to social attractiveness. Lastly, because of the agreement of values between the individuals, this leads to higher social attraction between the people solely based on musical listening preferences, an interesting finding.

From a theoretical standpoint, Maslow’s hierarchy of human introduced as a possible explanation as to why individuals attends these music festivals. According to Maslow (1954), individuals have an innate need to feel belonging and love from others. Previous research shows that festivals can produce an environment that enables individuals to experience these types of feelings (i.e., unity, belonging). Thus, perhaps if individuals attending these festivals become psychologically fulfilled; it more understandable as to why people return annually to these events. Also, Maslow (1964) promoted the idea of individuals attaining peak experiences through music; and that these emotionally strong and significant moments can have permanent affect on one’s life henceforth. This work investigated if these events could have lasting impacts on people and could affect individuals that strongly. Anecdotally, an added positive and depiction of this festival, EDC, as an enjoyable and significant life event is the prominent Netflix documentary, *Under The Electric Sky*. The films follow various groups of festival attendees prior, during and after their EDC festival experience. Their anticipation, joyful experiences, and festival extravaganza extras are all shown as a special moment in these individuals lives, an important event.

In this paper we used an electronic dance music festival as our collection site, a genre of music widely popular with millennial individuals. Of importance, the majority of individuals attending these types of festivals are of millennial age, which is of interest as to understand the behaviors of this malleable demographic and what environments they are being exposed to. Further, there exists positive outcomes to attending music festivals for individuals (i.e., enhanced social-wellbeing, escape, and activity discovery) (Packer et al. (2011; Abreu-Novais & Acordia, 2013). Though also, there are also the potential to social drug use pressures and banned substance exposure (Dilkes-Frayne, 2015), and dangers in massive crowds such a mob behavior, like overcrowding (Parker, Capra & Earl, 2005). Thus, this work will explore the overall experience of attending these events to understand what potential outcomes are faced by attendees, both positive and negative.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the lived experiences of individuals who are attending this type of intense musical event. We wish to explore their lived experience of this festival to attain an understanding of what it is they encounter throughout their festival journey. Also, because previous research has uncovered positive benefits to attending music festivals, we sought out to determine if any benefit was perceived by our attendees, and what, if any, lasting changes were reported. Contained in this paper includes a monograph, a personal reflection, and an article.

Overall, the goal of the thesis is to gain a detailed rich exploration of an individual's narration of their electronic dance music festival.

### 3. REFLECTIONS

I first became interested in the idea of conducting an investigation on the effect of electronic dance music festivals after a few personal experiences. In 2011 I attended my first electronic dance music festival in Ottawa, Canada, called Escapade Music Festival. It was there with a group of 5 friends that I



experienced the festival atmosphere, the social interaction, and the various activities that you could. The festival took place in a small baseball field, with arts and crafts, and 10,000 music fans on the same wavelength. I recall a particular moment of my first festival experience. I was able to make it to the front of the stage, albeit by pushing myself towards there; I turned around and saw the entire crowd jumping in unison, it was a picturesque moment. I can still remember thinking to myself, this experience is beyond words, it is just a pure spectacle of people and music synergizing. Also, throughout my first festival experience, I noticed the tone and behavior of individuals to be overly positive, helpful and accepting. Individuals were dressed in, what I thought at the time, as bizarre costumes, people were sharing water and food; and just an overall enjoyable atmosphere was present. Also, I felt a stronger connection with the friends that I attended the festival with and my interest in this musical genre grew. Following this festival, I would attend several other smaller scale festivals throughout Canada, which only reinforced my notions that individuals at these events were particularly friendly, positive and accepting. Also, my close friends attending these large scale events throughout Europe and the United States and reported similar feelings of positivity, harmony, and enjoyable experience with the individuals at these events. I was unsure as to why people were acting in this manner, and I wanted to understand it on a deep level. To add to this, there has been a global change in the notoriety and acceptance of this electronic dance scene. For instance, Tomorrowland Belgium, has been successfully expanded in countries including Brazil and the US. Further, Ultra Miami electronic music festival, has been replicated in various countries around the world including Croatia, South Korea, and South Africa. As well, the exponential increase in attendance to these events has made headlines around the world; with some festival being sold out under an hour, others in minutes. For instance, the inaugural Tomorrowworld in the US had 160,000 attendees (djmag.com,2015).

As well, there is a massive influx of attendees, notably that of the adolescent demographic.

When setting out to complete this thesis, I knew I needed to contact individuals who attended large scale events. There seemed to be a more spectacular and magical experience at these multi-day events, compared to that of a single day event. My initial idea was to travel to a festival, ideally Belgium's Tomorrowland and observe and interview festival participants. However, this had its own problems. First, how would I observe specific individuals over the course of several days, and how could I interview them throughout their festival experience without being bothersome? Thus, I decided I would contact people who had attended these large scale dance events in order to gain insight into their specific experiences, without the possibility of disturbing their festival event. I decided on the largest electronic dance music festival in North America, Electronic Daisy Carnival.

Now that I decided the event I would investigate, I had to find participants who had been there. I determined that it would be an interesting contrast to get narrations of the experience from first time attendees and those who have attended the festival before. I began by posting on Facebook groups, for example the Toronto Rave Community and groups of that nature, though I was not successful in the slightest. I then turned to Reddit, where people were posting pictures of their experience, and discussing their favourite DJ sets. I was able to connect with a number of individuals through this method, some were willing to be part of my study, while others gave their own insight into the topic. For instance, an individual not part of the study, contacted myself and exclaimed how she felt her electronic daisy carnival experience led them out of a deep depression and into a happier state of mind. With a few individuals confirmed, I needed a few more; which came from unofficial Electronic Daisy Carnival Facebook groups. Additionally, I was in constant contact with my main

supervisor, throughout this process which enabled myself to gain a more practical understanding of the research approach and how to best attain what I was seeking.

Next, the method of data collection should be elaborated upon. Because of the nature of this project, I was required to gain a detailed understanding and narration of the lived experience of these festival attendees. While grounded theory may have been, and originally was my first plan of action for the thesis. I had later decided to change my method because I discovered Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis. This type of analysis is a relatively new way of interpreting complex data, which provides flexibility and pattern identification. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is beneficial when exploring under-researched areas, such as music festival attendee experiences. We used an inductive approach for analysis, which allowed codes and themes to develop from the data set itself

During my interviews with the participants, I used a semi-structured interview guide provided by Schaefer (2013), which was kindly translated from German via a native speaker. I did include some of my own questions, as I was curious to address certain topic areas including drug use, typical persona, and event significance. As it was my first time completing practical research interviews, I noticed that with time, my skills and specifically my communication and ability to examine participants improved along the way. I found it interesting that most of the interviewees were in the young adult or collegiate age group, while only one participant would be considered a full adult. Also, it was a task in itself to navigate individuals through the semi-structured interview process. Often times, they would go off on tangents and I would have to remind myself to slowly bring them back to the topics of discussion in order to address all the questions I had prepared. Likewise, some participants gave very elaborate and descriptive narrations, while others were

very simple and too vague, even when probed for elaboration, although this could be due to my inexperience. In retrospect, there are a few areas that I would like to have changed or improved. First, while skype is a great tool, nothing compares to being in the presence of the individuals, though, this would be difficult to coordinate and require a great deal of resources. Also, I would have liked to have different festivals be included in my data collection, although it was great that I was able to get 12 individuals from one festival. However, the majority of these participants were from North America and thus have similar cultural upbringings. It would be interesting for future investigations to address different large scale musical events that took place in different parts of the world. Also, it could be the possibility that music festivals of different genres could be explored to determine the lived experiences of individuals at these events. Lastly, I am interested in exploring the lived festival experience of adults who attend these events, as they are less malleable than the majority of adolescents who are in attendance.

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## EDM and Ecstasy: The lived experiences of electronic dance music festival attendees

Noah Little

## Abstract

This study aimed to provide a comprehensive exploration of the lived experiences of individuals who attended a multi-day electronic dance music festival. The present study was primarily interested in the perceived beneficial changes within the individual, following their festival experience. As well, we investigated if first time festival attendees perceived changes differed to those of returning individuals. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were used to collect data from 12 individuals who attended the 2015 Electronic Daisy Carnival in Las Vegas. Six participants were first-time attendees while the remaining 6 were individuals returning to the festival. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Within the data emerged the following central themes: 1) escape 2) communitas, and 3) self-reported changes; there were 11 subthemes. These findings add to the existing body of music festival literature, further contextualizing how music festivals are both experienced, and reflected upon by individuals. Three central themes from festival attendees were narrated: the ability to escape from everyday routines and surroundings, opportunities for social interaction and acceptance, and exploration of values alternative outlooks on life. Further, this study highlights the potential lasting changes individuals' experience from attending electronic dance music festivals.

**Keywords:** music festival, electronic dance music, social cohesion, social acceptance, music.

## INTRODUCTION

Music festivals are a ubiquitous spectacle existing throughout human history, and present day (Armstrong, 2008). The previous decades have witnessed the creation of famous music festivals including the famed 11-day Rock and Roll mayhem of Woodstock, England's Glastonbury art and music festival, and Germany's popular Rock festival, Rock Am Ring. Each of these multi-day musical celebrations host over 100,000 attendees nightly and are world-renowned. In present day, Electronic Daisy Carnival (EDC) has become a freshly popularized music festival, hosting 134,000 electronic dance music patrons for three days, in Las Vegas, Nevada, US. EDC Las Vegas is amongst other electronic dance music festivals experiencing a drastic increase in global mainstream recognition, and record high attendance. To highlight this electronic dance music trend: Tomorrowland music festival in Belgium observed a growth from 50,000 fans in 2008, to 180,000 in 2013, and eventually 400,000 in 2014 ([tomorrowland.com](http://tomorrowland.com)). Ultra Miami Music Festival had 100,000 attendees in 2010; this festival has now become a two-weekend show hosting 330,000 people ([ultramusicfestival.com](http://ultramusicfestival.com)). Further, Ultra Miami has become extremely popular around the world. A brand of "Ultra" music festivals is successfully replicated in Ultra Japan, Ultra Croatia, Ultra South Korea, Ultra South Africa, and Ultra Brazil. This rapid rise in festival attendance and the global interest of these events has garnered the interest of academics, who are attempting to understand the driving force behind this phenomenon.

Previous research suggests individuals attend music festivals for various motives. From a broad perspective, individuals attend special events because of: socialization, family togetherness, event novelty, escape and relaxation, excitement and enjoyment, and cultural exploration (Abreu-Novais & Arcodia, 2013). As proposed by Dann (1981), individuals are driven to seek out experiences based on push and pull forces. Push factors originate from our internal psychological needs

(e.g., socialization) and pull factors contained by the destination specific features (e.g., enjoyable event, novelty). Likewise, Iso-Ahola's (1982) motivation theory suggests humans are driven by the desire to fulfil intrinsic rewards and the desire to escape their everyday environment.

Specific to music festivals, Faulkner, Fredline, Larson, and Tomljenovic (1999) determined festival visitors were motivated to attend because of: event excitement, novelty, and socialization. Bowens and Daniels (2005) identified three dimensions of motivation for music festival attendees: socialization, music, and overall enjoyment. Additionally, Australian attendees reported the engagement with a festival atmosphere and the participation in diverse activities and workshops at the festival, to be their main attendance motivator (Nicholson & Pierce, 2001). Further, Gelder and Robinson (2009) compared two UK music festivals, V Festival and Glastonbury Festival. Listening to music or watching an artist was most important for V festival attendees, while the atmosphere and opportunities for socialization was the main motivation for attending Glastonbury Festival. Lastly, a recent investigation of Chinese music festivals attendees found togetherness, musical enjoyment, and event novelty to be motivators of attendance (Li & Wood, 2014). Overall, the motivational themes of music festival attendees gravitate towards socialization, musical enjoyment, and engagement with the festival atmosphere. Current empirical investigations have determined individuals are attaining benefits from attending these music festivals. First, Packer and Ballantyne (2011) discovered festival participants gained an alternative life outlook and became more open minded. Specifically, they believed the festival allowed opportunities of self-expression and a strengthening of social relationships with those they attended with. Furthermore, 91% of participants reported improved life satisfaction following the music festival, and 89% believed they grew from the experience. Following their previous investigation, Ballantyne, Ballantyne, and Packer (2013)

discovered additional benefits to festival attendance. Namely, improvements in subjective well-being, including feelings of happiness and feeling more positive about life. As well, patrons reported a greater sense of social well being in terms of social acceptance and social integration.

According to Lamont (2011), when individuals have a strong experience with music that was perceived as valuable and positive, they reflect on those times to create happiness in their own lives. For example, an individual remembering a past musical experience that was very uplifting and inspiring could create a positive mind-set within the person. Further, strong experiences with music can also enable people to understand alternative ways of living their lives, lead to more spiritual or religious practices (Gabrielsson & Lindstrom, 1995), and can produce lasting benefits for individuals (Schäfer, Smukalla, & Oelker, 2013). Interestingly, Schäfer, Smukalla, and Oelker (2013) found following intense musical experiences, individuals had experienced a strong sense of harmony and wanted to achieve this state once again. In attempt to relive this harmony, individuals altered their value system, engaged in more meaningful activities, and intensified social relationships.

Finally, the investigation into the outcomes of these events are becoming evermore necessary because of the primary young adult demographic attending these festivals. Young adults and collegiate aged will be used synonymously hereafter, which refer to individuals aged 19-25. Young adults are an extremely malleable population that are influenced by their surroundings, experiences, and that of their social circle. Given that festivals provide opportunities to establish self-identity, meaning, and social integration, both the behaviours and experiences young adults are subject to at these immersive festivals can potentially impact them (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Furthermore, recent investigations of festivals by Dilke-Frayne (2015) explored drug and alcohol use at festival campsites to determine the social

interaction of behaviours. In a similar vein, Park (2015) attempted to understand Asian attendees' social acceptance, and cultural belonging within the electronic dance music community.

Throughout the world exists a few notorious electronic dance music festivals: Tomorrowland in Belgium, Summerburst in Sweden, and Exit Festival in Serbia. In the current study, we wanted to explore the lived experience of individuals attending Electronic Daisy Carnival. Electronic Daisy Carnival (EDC) boasts to be among the best electronic dance music festival in the world. Additionally, two EDC documentaries currently exist, which explored different traveller's journeys prior to the festival, their experience during the event, and post festival follow up. These cinematography depictions of EDC display the enjoyable social environment attendees are immersed in, and the various unique spectacles that exist at this festival. Furthermore, the festival contains exclusive productions and attractions that are additive to the event's experience. Firstly, the festival contains numerous highly detailed stages for individuals to enjoy various types of music. The stage funkHouse hosts old school electronic music, neonGarden (see Figure 1) for techno music, and the wasteLand stage for hardstyle lovers (see Figure 2).



FIGURE 1. neonGarden Stage ([lasvegas.electricdaisycarnival.com/experience/](http://lasvegas.electricdaisycarnival.com/experience/))



FIGURE 2. wasteLand Stage ([lasvegas.electricdaisycarnival.com/experience/](http://lasvegas.electricdaisycarnival.com/experience/))

Additionally, circus style performers such as clowns, jugglers, and acrobats are scattered throughout the festival grounds to engage the festival attendees (see Figure 3).



FIGURE 3. circus clown performers (lasvegas.electricdaisycarnival.com/experience/)

Also, contained at EDC is a unique culture of PLUR, or peace, love, unity and respect; a prescribed set of values and expected behaviours at electronic dance festivals. Also, individuals often dress us in colourful apparel and bracelets called “Kandi” (Figure 4). These added features and attractions are what make EDC a unique experience and environment.



FIGURE 4. PLUR Crew (Travits Photograph)

In the current study, we wanted to explore the lived experience of individuals attending Electronic Daisy Carnival. Since the research exploring the lived experience and reflective accounts of festival attendees is sparse, we felt using a qualitative approach would offer the most comprehensive narrative. We

interviewed first time attendees and returning individuals to gain differing viewpoints based on their experiences. Furthermore, we anticipate this study will contribute to the existing literature on music festival experiences and its impact on attendees' psychological and social well-being. Specifically, topics explored how the music festival affected their behaviour, thoughts, feelings, and thinking. Finally, our participant accounts will aid festival management practices to enact potential changes that can enhance patron experience.

## **METHOD**

### Data Collection

This study used semi-structured, exploratory, in-depth interviews to enable a detailed exploration of participants' experience of their music festival. Schäfer et al. (2013) kindly shared their interview guide for strong musical experiences and it was translated from German using a native speaker. The interview guide was slightly altered to address the aims of this study. Interviews were carried out by the first author with close cooperation from the second author during the summer of 2015. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The mean duration for interviews was 24 minutes (range 14-50 minutes). All participants agreed to be recorded and were informed that their responses would be anonymous.

Pseudonyms were used to uphold this. Interviews were recorded using Call Recorder (Ecam, 2015). All interviews were transcribed using F5 Transcription software (NCH Software, 2015).

### Participants

Participants were recruited from two social networking sites, Facebook and Reddit. On both websites, we targeted Electronic Daisy Carnival specific forums (Reddit)



and dedicated fan pages (Facebook). Advertisements were posted on both websites in search for participants for our study. We successfully recruited 12 individuals, 6 who attended EDC 2015 for the first time, and 6 others who had attended the festival before and returned once again. 2 participants were female, the remained 10 male. We wanted both newcomers (rookies) and experienced attendees (veterans), so contrasts of their experiences could potentially emerge in analysis. Participants were aged 20 to 60 ( $M = 27$ ,  $SD = 10.78$ ) and predominantly male ( $n = 10$ ). Our sample was comprised of various occupations including university students, hospitality workers, and civil servants. The participants were Canadian ( $n = 4$ ), American ( $n = 7$ ), and Japanese ( $n = 1$ ).

### Thematic Analysis

The interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis, a relatively new way of interpreting complex data which provides flexibility and pattern identification (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is beneficial when exploring under-researched areas, as is the case in the present study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We used an inductive approach for analysis, which allowed codes and themes to develop from the data set itself. Our direction of analysis uses a contextualist method, which addresses the ways individuals make sense of their experience, and the broader social context of those meanings. The first author conducted the data analysis. The six-step process by Braun and Clarke (2006) guided our thematic analysis. The process was as follows: first, the data was collected, transcribed, read and re-read. Second, we systematically generated initial codes from the data set. Third, the first author discussed their codes with the second author and then began sorting the initial codes into themes. Fourth, a thematic map was created to ensure understanding, validity of themes, and subthemes from the data. Fifth, themes and

subthemes were further refined, rechecked and given a definitive definition. Sixth, the first author selected illustrative quotes that relate to the research question and add validity to the analysis. The analysis was carried out with technical assistance of NVivo 11 software (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2015).

#### Ethical Considerations

The University of Jyväskylä ethical guidelines for human subjects were strictly abided by. All participants were sent a study information sheet prior to the interview. This was completed online and indicated their agreed upon role in this study and that their anonymity would be upheld.

## **FINDINGS**

When analysing participants' experiences of their Electronic Daisy Festival encounter we found the following three themes to be of central importance: (a) the opportunity to escape, (b) *communitas*, and (c) self reported changes. Among these themes are various sub-themes that address the research questions concerning the lived experience of this specific music festival.

### Theme 1: Opportunity to escape

The theme "Opportunity to escape" describes the removal from ones' mundane lifestyle while attending EDC. We present three subthemes from the data. First, the psychological escape one achieves from everyday life stressors and responsibilities, such as employment or school. Second, the physical removal from everyday environment by means of travelling to the festival location. Third, the retreat from societal norms and pressures, which is upheaved at EDC. The three themes are: psychological escape, physical escape, and societal escape.

#### 1.1.1 Psychological Escape

First, the chance to escape from everyday life was present across the data set.

Participants stated EDC was an opportunity to escape from the world; a temporary way to forget their worries, obligations, and present life circumstances.

"It's almost like, they give you a place to escape to, especially in Vegas, but with insomniac events, especially in EDC, it's like, you feel like it's a place to escape to, you know everyone has their issues and so does everyone else, but your going there. I want to say it's almost like you're in heaven, fuck everything else, everything is going on the back burner, I'm going to enjoy myself for these three days" (Brad, Rookie).

"The moment you walk into EDC, and you see everyone, just little black dots, and your like wow is this really happening? Like to me I walk in, I see it, the music turns on, I'm like I'm ready to rage, ready to dance. Just, forget everything that's outside, like I just got fired, I don't give a fuck, my ex-girlfriend just broke up with me, like fuck it. You leave it outside because you come to festival, and you just want to take it all in because you want to forget" (Blake, Veteran).

### 1.1.2 Physical Escape

The next theme that originated from the data was the escape from one's physical environment. Iso-Ahola's (1982) motivation theory suggests humans are driven by the desire to fulfil intrinsic rewards and the desire to escape their everyday environment. Given that all attendees must travel to the event site, some locally, others internationally, the act of travelling was another means of escape that participants commented on. This travel experience enables removal from one's monotony. The exposure to new experiences including new cuisine, novelty events, and different cultures are likely to occur while in travel. Importantly, Las Vegas, where EDC is held, is a world-renowned festive destination with endless amounts of entertainment including large-scale nightclubs, 24-hour casinos, and an array of fine dining eateries. Therefore, individuals attending EDC will have access to an array of activities, atop of their EDC event, leading to more opportunities of leisure, fun, and potentially greater overall enjoyment. According to Leask (2014), Generation Y individuals, persons born between 1982 and 2002, are frequent travellers, spend considerable amounts on travel, and desire new experiences to a greater degree in comparison to other generations. Except for one participant, all the interviewed were among this generation. Additionally, Jennings, Cater, Lee, Ollenburg, Ayling, and Lunny (2010) noted that Generation Y individuals are willing to pay above average rates for a guaranteed memorable experience, for instance, music performances, and remote holiday vacations. Thus, this demographic pattern observed supports the literature as to why the majority of individuals who attend these events are among the adolescent age range.

"EDC is not just the event, it's literally, you're in Vegas you're going to have a good time in Vegas. So people show up before the event, it's also a really hype place, like shit happens in Vegas, because your going somewhere you're not used to. Like for me, I want to get turnt and get crazy in Vegas" (Blake, Veteran)

"Everything about it was good for me. But I like to travel, especially to places like that. They're party destinations and as a single guy, those are fucking sweet places to go to. But I mean everything about Vegas is great. I don't gamble either" (Jake, Veteran)

“Well, I’ve never been to Vegas before, so it was nice to see that part of the US. You see it all the time in films and then wonder what would it be like if I was actually there” (Kayla, Rookie)

### **1.1.3 Societal Escape**

The final theme of escape that EDC offers is the ability to deviate from social norms and expectations. Participants reported the feeling of not being judged by others, and having no fear of being their true selves while at EDC. This included behaving and dressing in attire that is typically seen as out of place or unacceptable in most societies. Individuals at EDC frequently commented on the diverse tolerance of individuals. It appears that people are unconcerned with how others are dressing, or acting; and there is a seemingly widespread level of respect and acceptance. Albeit, returning individuals are familiar to the irregular dress styles and behaviours that is often associated with electronic dance music festivals. For example, “Kandi”, which are colourful beads typically made in the form bracelets are often traded and worn by many attendees. As well, participants noted patrons often dress up in costumes and neon attire. Interestingly, individuals who were new to EDC seem to adopt the understanding that there is no judgment, and people can be who they are; it is a safe space, where all are welcome. These reports emulate findings by Li and Wood (2014) who reported attendees of an Asian electronic dance festival (MIDI festival) were motivated to attend because of the opportunity for spiritual escape. Spiritual escape is removing oneself from the societal constraints and the yearning for a freer environment. Whilst the participants in the present study are mainly from western countries, as opposed to China, a more authoritarian country, there is still an expected degree of decorum among their home societies. There exists a collectively imposed way of how to behave and act. As such, any deviation from this is often viewed as inappropriate, bizarre, or

unacceptable. This is the opposite of what occurs at EDC and may contribute to its allure.

“But who am I to judge, EDC is supposed to be a place where you express yourself. If you want to show up in a pair of boots and a fuzzy hat, I don’t understand it, but hey go for it. Like you’re here to be yourself and to you know, fit in the way that you feel the way that you can, and if that’s the way you feel that you fit in then by all means go for it” (Katy, Veteran)

“There was nobody judging you, I don’t care what you look like, I don’t care what your doing, I don’t care what it’s, people don’t mess with you at all. You could be the most insane fool; I mean unless your actually being stupid. I see people just doing their own thing and tripping out on just being themselves, not with drugs, just on themselves. They are doing their own thing and nobody is judging them, and I love that about EDC” (Eric, Veteran)

“You’re free to wear whatever you want, dress up and do whatever you want...obviously the first time going you don’t expect everyone to be dressed like that, but after the third year, like it’s just normal that during EDC week people will be in a tutu and candy covering their arm and neon everything” (Becca, Veteran).

“Everybody just has good vibes, there’s no hate, you can be gay, lesbian it doesn’t matter whoever you are were still going to love you. I think it’s the culture, like nobody judges you, everyone is there to be themselves” (Andy, Rookie)

## Theme 2: Communitas

This theme will discuss the type of interactions that was experienced at the music festival: PLUR, the role of music on groups, and positive social interaction. The theme title “Communitas” was coined by Victor Turner (1969), which describes the deep feelings of community that was expressed by our participants at EDC. Turner (1969) described festivals as spontaneous communitas; gatherings that possess the ability to unite strangers, remove social inequalities such as class or ethnicity, and are outside the constraints of typical society. This is strikingly similar to what occurs at Electronic Daisy Carnival. As defined by Stone (2008) these gatherings possess “an intense community spirit, resulting from a shared experience associated with an atmosphere of social equality, sharing, intimacy and togetherness” (p. 215). Participants reported that EDC contained an intense sense of unity, and all participants upheld a mutual respect for each other, with a strong

desire to interact. This second theme contains three subthemes: PLUR, Positive Social Interactions, and Musical Importance.

#### 1.1.4 PLUR

A frequent topic discussed by the participants was the ideals of Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect (PLUR) at the festival. Frankie Bones, a UK DJ during the 1990's, shaped PLUR. When producing his massive warehouse parties, he wanted to ensure a conflict-free environment where everyone could enjoy the music. In a recent article, Bones stated, “Everything else changed, but the ideals of PLUR have remained true. It’s about looking out for people, and if somebody was in trouble, you helped them out” (Insomniac, 2016). The ethos of PLUR attempts to pursue an environment of harmony or a far-fetched utopia among festival-goers. Participants had various anecdotes and opinions on the topic of PLUR.

“So I do 100 percent support what it means in that peace, love unity and respect. Like that’s what you hope for everyone, you hope that everyone will respect everyone and to love everyone and umm, make peace and love. And I mean I’m a huge supporter of that. I think it brings people closer together for sure at festivals, your sharing umm kandi those little bracelets, so people make bracelets and you walk into these festivals and your like “oh what’s your name, and you exchange bracelets” and so then you have a piece of that person with you for the remainder of the festival or however many festivals you go to” (Katy, Veteran)

“I’m from California so we take one day at a time, very chill. Just because your having a shitty day doesn’t mean you have to put it on someone else. That’s a whole bit of PLUR, these people are here to have a good time, and so are you, so respect them. You know come in peace, your all united, your all in love, you love each other, you love the music, and who they are and what they stand for” (Brad, Rookie)

“No matter race, no matter from where you’re from, social standing, everyone has that common I guess denominator or core value. Where we all can respect each other, we can right off the bat start talking to each other. Like, there’s no preconceived ideas about the other person and you can automatically relate to them like you’ve known this guy, you feel like you’ve known them forever, this understanding, of each other” (Danny, Rookie)

The interviewees’ descriptions appear to reveal a sense of genuine respect and appreciation for their fellow man. Their adoption of the PLUR values while at this event had led them to a specific type of interaction and behaviour that is expected or perhaps organically occurring at EDC. There is some amount of encouragement

from the event organizers to behave in this manner. As stated in an interview, the EDC organizer said

*“The concept of P.L.U.R held people together then. In a very REAL way. It still holds the same Gravity for me now. I’m not sure when it became popular or “Cool” to clown on “PLURRRRRR Bro”. But I just laugh and give those people a Big Hug, because they don’t get it. PLUR is O.G...PLUR is why I keep doing Events, and The spirit of PLUR saved my Life a few times when things got sticky back in the Day”*  
(youredm.com,2015)

Additionally, the social conformity effect of living out the ways of PLUR, especially in this setting, becomes alive when new attendees follow the lead of returning and experienced ones. Coombs (1966), along with Edwards and Cable (2009) note that to achieve social harmony, individuals must have a mutual sense of what is important in life, or personal values. This is viewed as more important than having reciprocal traits. An interesting statement by one individual commented on the behavioural changes observed by typically violent and hostile groups.

“I have met gang members from L.A and you know, I talk to them and they say, you know what, were not here were not here to do that, were here to be a family, and they actually chill, you know” (Eric, Veteran)

In addition, two individuals commented on how they felt this type of behaviour and interaction was unlike anything they have experienced in comparison to other music festivals.

“I notice a big difference between EDC and Veld and Osheaga. Everybody is one, everybody is united at EDC and I didn’t even get the same feeling at Veld or any other festival that I have been to” (Katy, Veteran)

“If you bump into someone at say a metal concert, its all “fuck you buddy” and you push the guy. If you bump into some there, “ah man, so sorry, where are you from” all of a sudden it starts a conversation, its kind of mind blowing” (Jake, Veteran)

### **1.1.5 Positive Social Interaction**

Another theme discussed by all participants was the enjoyable social interactions incurred while at the festival. Existing literature (Abreu-Novais, & Arcodia, 2013) has discovered the socialization aspect of music festivals to be the most compelling motivational factor for attending music festivals. Throughout the interviews,



participants constantly exclaimed the joy of being with others, including friends, family members, and meeting new people.

“When you walk in there, its almost as if, everybody’s mentality changes and everybody’s super kind and umm, willing to get to know you, and willing to help you out. When your trying to shove through a crowd to get to the front, no one is giving you dirty looks, they are actually helping you move forward, and I think that’s really awesome” (Katy, Veteran)

“Everyone says hi to each other, waves at each other, its like as if you all knew each other, but in reality like no one really does, but it doesn’t even matter. People will randomly feel open and come talk to you about different things about what your wearing or where you’re from, so like its really cool” (Becca, Veteran)

“I met a lot of people especially going alone. You know I could be sitting on the bleachers just hanging out, turn to the guy beside me and then we’re best friends. Just hanging out talking, being friends, where are you from, that kind of thing” (Brad, Rookie)

When probing Brad if he felt this was a genuine connection he continued with

“Yes of course, you know that you will probably never meet again, but at that point you really don’t care, its the experience that your making some kind of connection, but everyone has their own life” (Brad, Rookie)

Given the proximity of individuals to each other, and the number of people present, interacting with others is almost an obligation. These positive social interactions appear to be fuelled by the PLUR mentality that is present at EDC. Whilst it may contribute to these social connections, even without PLUR, these interactions would likely still occur. Albeit, perhaps the level of authenticity and frequency may not be as explicit when compared to other music events. These spectator narrations are in line with previous research by Gelder and Robinson (2009) who reported the atmosphere and opportunities for socialization as the main motivation for individuals attending Glastonbury Music Festival. Lastly, this type of group behaviour is extremely uncommon in most present day societies. Being able to easily interact with countless strangers, who are enthusiastically engaging with you, is almost unheard of. We would argue that this sense of social understanding, bonding, and enjoyment from these interactions at EDC are due to innate human

social behaviours being fulfilled. This has been described as the human tribal inclination.

The tribal instinct hypothesis asserts an evolutionary adaptation occurred to handle difficult situations faced by early humans including mating, food gathering, safety and security (Stürmer & Snyder, 2009). While at EDC, for a limited amount of time, you are part of a group, or tribe, as we will hereafter synonymously refer to it. At the festival, you have to determine who is friend or foe, how will you ensure resources (i.e., water, food), and can you trust others around you. Further, being in a new environment can be difficult, and banding together as one can ensure the sense of security and belonging. Further, being part of a group leads to various psychological benefits because of the typical behaviours that take place within a group. For example, individuals will commit helping acts to others within the group (van Vugt, Snyder, Tyler, & Biel, 2000), as was observed heavily at EDC.

“We saw this other guy, he was looking really messed up, but I was with him, and he was hanging on me for water, but its all good, I kept asking if he’s okay or if I needed to call someone, and I said if you feel you need medical attention I’ll help you out” (Blake, Veteran)

“So we would meet people that were tripping way, way out of control. So I would grab onto their shoulder to make sure they were okay. We all had Camelbacks<sup>1</sup>, me and my buddy the first time, and the second time also we had it, and we find these people and were like hey man what’s wrong and they say they haven’t drunk water in forever, and then we’re like “hey man, have some of this” so they’re drinking your water and they start to calm down a bit, it makes you feel really good that you helped these people” (Jake, Veteran)

Even if temporary, it appears that individuals at EDC experience this tribal connection and attained a deep sense of pleasure from it. This tribal instinct theory will be revisited at the conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> A Camelback is a wearable water carrying pouch typically in the form of a backpack.

### 1.1.6 Role of Music

The majority of the participants stated the importance of music while at the festival. They attended their favourite DJ sets and were able to explore their preferred musical genre, and discover new artists. Notably, there were often emotional and social connections with music depicted throughout their experience.

“If you love the music and you know this is you, and if it saved you in any other way, or if you found it on your own, and you listen to it day and night, you know, you know when you turn that music on you feel something. There’s some that hit you, and if you’ve ever been to EDC, nocturnal, electric forest, you get flashbacks, and you remember the nights you had, and its just joy, because you, either with your friends, or alone. But when your alone with your music, it brings something out in you” (Vince, Veteran)

“Me personally, my favourite genre is trance, like I love me some trance, for me trance is an emotional genre, you connect to, so when your connecting to the music and everybody is connecting to it, then your gonna connect to other people, like I don’t know if that makes sense or not.” (Gary, Rookie)

“I really do feel that electronic music, depending on the producer your listening to, they really do have the ability to change your mind-set. So if your depressed you can listen to something, and it lifts your spirit a little bit. And I feel that being able to reset my headspace, so you know. If I had a shitty day, I listen to something and I’ll be in a better mood” (Jake, Veteran)

Participants report being engrossed in the music and experiencing a sense of emotional connection. They also mention that with their own connection to music, there is also the involvement of others, including friends, family, or strangers. Importantly, an abundance of scholarly investigation has determined music to facilitate pro-social behaviour (Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006) and can create a sense of group identity among individuals (Laiho, 2004). Additionally, individuals who share musical preferences have more positive evaluations of each other (Lonsdale & North, 2009; North & Hargreaves, 1999). Thus, given the role of social facilitation by music, the positive evaluation of others with similar musical taste, and the bonding potential of music, it is fathomable that individuals will have a strong sense of community and social cohesiveness at EDC. Thus, the pro-social behaviours observed at the festival and the positive interactions exerted from individuals will further contribute to the enjoyable festival experience. Finally, numerous participants reported an intense emotional experience while at EDC that had a musical origin with a personal connection.

“My father passed away in umm, May of 2014. And so actually, Above and Beyond played a tribute to fathers, on Fathers Day during their set and if you have the time to go watch it, I would go watch it. It’s like, I start to cry in the middle of the stage, it was like crazy, umm, that was definitely a highlight. And all my friends were there and hugging me, and it was like, I can’t even say it in words, it was just like a magical experience” (Katy, Veteran)

“You see other people crying to the same song you are, even though, they have different experiences for crying. You turn to them and your like, what the fuck are you crying about? And they say its that song. So like, they had a more, emotional connection. Maybe its someone passing away, or things like that and you coped with it with the song and, I feel like when you see it live, you can see the emotional connection, because I finally saw the DJ that produced it, and I don’t feel alone. Because if that dude is crying over there, and like, even though you don’t feel the bond, I’m not the only one going through this.” (Blake, Veteran)

### Blake continued

“Like I wanted to see DJ Snake because of one song, because it helped me get over my girlfriend. Kind of like closure to me, not that I cared about his set” (Blake, Veteran)

These intense bodily responses to the musical experience are of particular interest. The individuals in the noted examples became emotionally overwhelmed in their experience in the form of crying. According to Gabrielsson (1991) and Waterman (1996), crying is a strong emotional response that can be caused by music. From an evolutionary function, crying is believed to signal others the need for help, and can create social bonds with others (Bekker & Vingerhoets, 2001; Zeifman, 2001). Crying is also a form of relief, a catharsis to relieve built up stress or emotional suppression. However, insignificant research has explored the role of crying for joy. Frey (1985) suggested crying out of happiness is due to a pre-existing worry, and the crying is the relief from this (Lund, 1930). What is interesting about these emotional narratives is the impact that particular music has had on these individuals’ lives, and the deep personal connection that is displayed. The emotional response in the form of tears is a raw indicator of the power of these event spectacles and how internalized the experience became.

### Theme 3: Self-reported Changes

In this theme, we discuss the retrospective narrative aspects of the music festival. How the participants reflected on their experience, what changes they perceived after the event, changes in value systems, and how it affected levels of worry and anxiety. A primary goal of this investigation was to explore the beneficial outcomes of attending EDC. A final theme of these festival reports are the changes brought on following the music festival. Maslow claimed that individuals could attain peak experiences by using music. As defined by Leach (1962) a peak experience is

“that highly valued experience which is characterized by such intensity of perception, depth of feeling, or sense of profound significance as to cause it to stand out, in the subject’s mind, in more or less permanent contrast to the experiences that surround it in time and space” (p.11).

Maslow (1962,1964,1968) believed peak experiences could add meaning to our life, and alter how we view our own lives. Importantly, peak experiences are thought to be associated to achieving self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). As previously mentioned, self-actualization is the highest level of Maslow’s hierarchy. This is when the individual realizes their potential and is associated with deep emotional experiences, and time disassociation (Maslow, 1962; Maslow, 1971). In regard to music, Gabrielsson and Lindström (1995) propose strong experiences with music (SEM) possess the potential to alleviate grief and provide consolation, overcome temporary depression, provide feelings of openness and freedom, and allow insight into alternative lifestyle behaviours. More recently, Schäfer et al. (2013) investigated intense musical experiences and found following this event, individuals had the desire to adopt new values, and strengthen or create social relationships. Aspects of the reported changes by Schäfer et al. (2013) were paralleled in the present study with participants exclaiming their adoption of new values, specifically those of PLUR, reduced stress, a restored belief in humanity, experiencing intense euphoria, and spiritual experiences.

### 1.1.7 ADOPTION of PLUR Values

Following their immersion in this festival atmosphere, it appeared the individuals had taken up new values, following their exposure. The first subtheme, the adoption of PLUR values, was a common statement from individuals when they reflected on their music festival experience.

“Well the PLUR lifestyle kind of stuck to me. I’m more like, just nice to everybody. I’m not like hating on people anymore. I just try to know them and then judge by their character, if that’s how they are that’s how they are. I don’t tell them off or anything like that” (Andy, Rookie)

“It’s more of a lifestyle than anything, it’s a way of life and I have taken it to heart big time. I’ve always been a really relaxed and cool person, but you know, I’ve had my issues where I’ve gotten frustrated and been an asshole. Especially after EDC and looking back on it, these issues don’t really matter. I mean it’s like, why sweat the small stuff, so you kind of take the experience from EDC in Vegas and you apply it to the rest of your life, you let it influence you in a positive way, because if you forget about it all when you go home what’s the point. I mean I feel like I’m a different person now” (Brad, Rookie)

“Part of my job is customer service so, you get some people who are nasty to you and, with the whole PLUR mentality, you try to respect them, even though you feel like they don’t deserve it at the moment. That’s a big one to me, because I go through it every single day, I always encounter a nasty person and trying to keep my thoughts in check. Knowing that even though they’re being nasty, they still need that, need to show them that love and that respect. That I would want if I was having a rough day you know” (Gary, Rookie)

“I’ve learned to communicate and what I mean by that, to communicate, I’ve learned to be helpful, and the ways of PLUR and stuff like that. I apply to my everyday life” (Vince, Veteran)

As defined by Schwartz (1994, p. 20) “A value is a belief pertaining to desirable end states or modes of conduct, that transcends specific situations, guides selection or evaluation of behaviour, people, and events, and is ordered by importance relative to other values to form a system of value priorities”. The data suggests that individuals are motivated to uphold this type of conduct in their lives because of the enjoyment and harmonistic outcomes when implementing this type of behaviour and value system at EDC. Hypothetically, the EDC event must contain unique significance and importance if the individual is willing to challenge or change ones’ outlook on life and that of their current value system. What is contained in the essence of EDC that is causing these positive changes? As noted by Schäfer et al. (2013) “the establishment of new values requires people to reject

social norms”, this was frequently observed at EDC. He continues, “people leave their former self-image behind and create a new one that comes from their inner self, this process of disengagement”; being at a music festival in our case, “enables them to recognize and establish their real values and goals” (pp. 539). EDC might therefore provide individuals an opportunity to step back from their normal lives, and that of typical social constraints. Thus, leading to a reassessment of oneself on how they conduct their behaviour in day-to-day life. This re-appraisal was exclaimed by an individual.

“Step back and reset mentality is umm, step back and look at the things that you do, that your used to doing, don’t even think about it, and reset your mentality. Just like trying to be, trying to smile at everybody that you see, like you would do at EDC, everybody you see you high five, you smile at them, you say just good things to them and the real world, people don’t do that. You walk by somebody on the street or whatever and you don’t even look at them or acknowledge them or anything like that. So changing your mentality like just smiling at somebody can, can make their day, and it might even help you” (Gary, Rookie)

### **1.1.8 Reduced Stress and Worry**

A second subtheme reported by participants was how they now evaluated life issues less trivial and showed how all individuals had their own struggles. Also, some used EDC as a resource for coping with the difficulties they faced.

“Not to take anything so seriously, basically at the end of the day, before that I was always stressed out taking everything seriously with work and you know with this festival, it’s just it gives me something to look forward to and I bought their community. I don’t know if you’ve ever watched the documentary “Under the electric sky”, but each person has a story and each one is going through something. You don’t have to really focus on the negatives, you’re not the only one, don’t take it too seriously, don’t take it too hard, umm, eventually everything passes” (Danny, Rookie)

“You have the freedom to let your problems go, its like even now, it’s like fuck I wish I could go back. I have stress just like everyone else, I really wish I could just escape from this, I want to just forget about it all, and when you think about it like that, what is there? EDC. EDC is just the best for giving off good vibes and people go back because it’s a once a year thing” (Brad, Rookie)

In these cases, individuals appear to have evaluated their previous selves and decided to enact changes. EDC may have acted as a catalyst to changes in behaviours including: being more accepting of others, not judging those who are perceived as different, and having a more positive outlook on life. Additionally, it

provided individuals a chance to completely forget about their worries and responsibilities and gain a different viewpoint on the vitality of these issues. It may also be the case that EDC is looked at as an annual resource of release for individuals, especially those who were returnees. Using the festival as a resource for psychological well-being was also found by Schäfer et al. (2013) wherein participants recalled their intense musical experience and feelings to be used as a motivating tool to enact change in their life.

### **1.1.9 Altered Faith in Humanity**

The third subtheme within the theme “self-reported changes” was the restored faith in humanity and a greater respect for their fellow man. The observed behaviour and positive interaction was exclaimed by many during EDC and was seemingly held onto and changed the outlook on life by our participants following the festival.

“When I left for like the next month, I was almost re-energized. You know what I mean, my faith in humanity had kind of been restored. ...it’s going to sound pretty fucking stupid but, I do feel like I have tried to be a better person, after seeing people being nice to each other. It’s kind of weird I know. Seeing people be nice to each other, and in a job like mine where you used to see people who are assholes or just like, really evil fucking people. You really do have that faith, that people can legitimately, be better to each other and I think that after my first time there. I really tried to you know, be a better person, if that makes any sense” (Jake, Veteran)

“It made me respect people that I wasn’t cool with, it made me get out of my comfort zone. I mean, I have a group of friends right here, but this one random kid over here likes the same kind of music, so we have something in common. So, instead of seeing that kid as he’s different from me, I could relate. So it made me feel more open, to be his friend. Because not many people, like I’m a super social person, but it made me want to get out of my group of friends” (Blake, Veteran)

“I’m on the downward side of my life, if I didn’t see this, or experience this, I would be like there’s not hope for this world. There’s a lot of Donald Trumps walking around. But when I see people coming together for music, I mean I think that’s what it is. You got music in your life and your passionate about it and your positive” (Eric, Veteran)

This restored faith in humanity, and improved respect for individuals is seemingly a result of the observed behaviour and interactions at EDC. Once again, it appears individuals gained an alternative view on life following their enjoyable experience; and aspects of these positive interactions led to these changed outlooks.



### 1.1.10 Mystical Like Experience

The next subtheme is the resemblance of a mystical like experiences and the inexplicability of attending EDC. William James defined a mystical experience as being:

1. Ineffable or too great for words.
2. Noetic in which they achieve a revelation (noetic: Greek word meaning inner wisdom).
3. Transient or temporary states lasting short duration.
4. Passive, which means the individual cannot control the experience but is rather part of it.

Individuals were continually unable to describe their experience adequately, a term called ineffability. Also, they appeared to reach certain realities and understanding of the gravity of their situation, and how they were apart of something greater than themselves. Furthermore, others drew parallels between EDC and that of a religious experience.

“Honestly it’s not even, you can’t even explain how it feels because you have to like, be there to experience it. You walk in and it’s like, nothing, like it feels like nothing I have felt before... but it’s not like overwhelming you like want to go down, and like want to like explore and be a part of everything.” (Becca, Veteran)

“I don’t know I can’t explain it, sorry I keep saying that but it’s really hard to put into words” (Katy, Veteran)

“Man it’s one of those things, you wouldn’t ask if you went type thing, it’s really really hard to explain and a lot of people would chalk that up to, well I taken a fistful of molly that night (Sarcasm), no it’s not like that, it’s your in a, fuck, really hard to explain” (Jake, Veteran)

“It’s also a religious experience, I’m not like very religious whatsoever, but you know how people go to church or to get rid of their worries, to not think about anything else it’s just, their in the moment, going to the concert was kind of like that where, there was nothing else in my mind just being there you know, enjoying the atmosphere begin with other people, the same way, it’s just you know, I have a lot of friends that are religious and that’s exactly how they describe going to church or a congregation, so to me it’s like they go for that, this is how I felt at the festival” (Danny, Rookie)

The descriptors of the EDC event, and participant’s inability to depict their experience displays its magnitude and overwhelming nature to the individual. Mystical like experiences, which can have sustained and substantial personal

meaning as well as spiritual significance (Griffiths, Richards, Johnson, McCann, & Jesse, 2008), are arguably present in these music festival experiences.

### 1.1.11 Significant Life Experience

The final subtheme of reported changes was the reflection of this event being a significant life event, which in part shares resemblance with a mystical experience. Notably, when comparing the significance appraisal of rookies and veterans, a few differences emerge. When asked, “would you consider this a significant life experience”, it was the rookies more than the returning veterans, that were adamant about their festival attendance being a significant life event. Some of our rookie participants believed this festival to be in their top five most significant experiences in their lives, while others believed it was among the top three.

“Top 3 experiences in my life, for sure” (Brad, Rookie)

“yeah for sure, top 5” (Andy, Rookie)

“oh absolutely, so far its top 3 in my life so far” (Gary, Rookie)

It appeared that the festival had a stronger impact on their lives because of the new stimuli and behaviour that they were faced with. It was an entirely new experience for them, although this unfamiliarity does not explain its perceived life significance. Comparatively, some veterans did concur that EDC was a significant life event, though this was not always the case.

“It’s not, you know, it’s not something that takes my life, I look forward to it, I work in a concert venue so I’m around it a lot, and a lot of people that I know are into that, so I’m not going to say that” (Eric, Veteran)

However, it is likely that because of their previous experience with EDC, it did not have such a blatant impact on veterans, as they have already been exposed to the EDC festival experience. Importantly, these reports depict how this festival is viewed as a significant life event to festival attendees. Thus, it is plausible that the

experience of EDC is an overwhelmingly positive and enjoyable experience that carries personal meaning and significance. This is an interesting finding, as this short festival experience of only three days can have such a large impact on individuals.

“you’re only there for two or three days but, they say memories last a lifetime and all the memories you made, the people that you meet, you don’t get that everyday, even if it’s just three very very short days, you know, you meet a lot of people, make a lot of great memories you experience a lot of things that you wouldn’t otherwise experience and in the scene that you absolutely love, I don’t know man, it’s just, I don’t know it’s just one of those things that you have to experience”

### **The lived experienced of festival attendees.**

The narrative themes presented here depicted the 12 experiences of individuals attending EDC in June 2015. People reported attending the festival because it allowed them to escape from their everyday environment, forget their life responsibilities, and remove themselves from undesired societal pressures. Additionally, attendees discussed the strong sense of community that created an environment for positive social interaction, a unique harmonistic setting with other patrons, and a place for musical enjoyment and experience. Further, participants exclaimed their desire to adopt new and altruistic behaviors after continuously witnessing this positive conduct at EDC. Also, individuals believed their EDC experience to be of personal significance to themselves, and can be compared to a mystical or religious experience. Overall, the experience of EDC appears to psychologically appease individuals, especially in social domains (i.e., social interaction, social acceptance, shared musical experience). Thus, we believe this festival experience and the activities and interactions within, can be beneficial to attendees well-being and social health.



## DISCUSSION

To summarize, the evidence from this article depicts how individuals attending music festivals are attaining various benefits and are viewing their experience as a significant event that has transferable effect into daily life. The research investigating music festivals and the impact it has on attendee psychological and social well-being has been increasing in recent years. To our knowledge, this is the first scholarly work that has explored the adoption of PLUR values on attendees and gained their insight into this topic. The majority of music festival investigations have focused on drug incidence (Dilkes-Frayne, 2015), and social inclusion (Park, 2015). This study is among others (Ballantne, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2013; St John, 2015), which are exploring the benefits individuals are attaining from attending these musical events. The aim of the present study was to understand the lived experience of an individual attending Electronic Daisy Carnival, and to address the existing gaps in the present literature on music festival experiences. Following the festival, it appears individuals have a desire to adopt new values, gain an altered outlook on life, and are less stressed.

In agreement with previous music festival investigation (Abreu-Novais & Arcodia, 2013), participants noted that being able to escape from their responsibilities and everyday routines was a strong motivator to attend, and that their temporary vacation from society was met with stress relief and relaxation. The occurrence of this escape theme points to the ideas of Iso-Ahola's (1982) innate desire for humans to escape their everyday environment. Further, participants particularly enjoyed being able to be whom they wanted, without the fear of being judged by others. Additionally, these narrations portray a distaste of a highly judgmental society that exists outside the music festival environment. These conformity stressors may be a daily cause of concern for individuals, which consequently adds to the desire of attending this kind of festival to escape these societal constraints.

According to our results, our participants were boisterous regarding their definitions of PLUR and the ethos associated. PLUR as a festival theme has been loosely covered in recent investigations, such as in Park (2015) and St John (2015). The principles that lead individuals to behave in a harmonistic manner was exclaimed, enjoyed, and experienced by all. This harmony, which is defined as the feeling of being one with oneself and the world (Schäfer et al., 2013), was verbalized in our participants in the form of intense unity, belonging, and community. Based on the intricate descriptions by our participants, we believe PLUR is a novel social atmosphere that temporarily fulfils fundamental human needs, and is perhaps an awakening and connection to the human core. As described by Schäfer et al. (2013), following the intense musical experience (IME), the sense of harmony stemmed from listener's sense of freedom, clarity, inner balance, and deep relaxation. In our study, these outcomes were presumably influenced by the festival atmosphere. As well, this research demonstrates how the ethos of PLUR is a governance of expected behaviour while at EDC. The PLUR philosophy appeared as the driving force of the positive energy felt by attendees, and is likely the root cause of the intensely positive social interactions.

Next, the theme of music being a social facilitator and creating a commonality among attendees was exclaimed in our study, and echoes the findings of previous investigations (Boer et al., 2011). Boer also found that one's musical preference is associated with their values (2009). As such, Boer et al. (2011) proposed a model in which shared musical preference creates the idea that others sharing this music listening experience possess the same values, which consequently leads to enhanced social attraction. Moreover, our participants, who are deeply interested in electronic dance music, a genre associated with extroversive personality traits (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003), could contribute to the high incidence of social interaction and positive appraisal of fellow attendees. This is because an

extroverted individual is likely to engage in social activities, and be more open to new experiences. Their personalities alone may contribute the incidence of interaction among attendees.

Finally, we were surprised by the lasting effects and changes that participants attributed to their EDC festival experience. The adopting of PLUR values showed how impactful these observed behaviours at the festival were to the individual, and the resulting desire to incorporate it into their own lives. What could be viewed as behaviour modelling (i.e., social conformity to PLUR ideals and actions), was essentially transferred outside the festival environment and corresponds to previous work. As previously mentioned, Schäfer (2013) noted following an intense musical experience (IME), people were motivated to improve harmony within their own lives including their social relationships and values. This was also present in our study. Next, the claims of wanting to improve oneself, and the increased faith in humanity was also intriguing given the event only lasted three days in totality. Parallel to previous work, Ballantyne, Ballantyne, and Packer (2013) noted that attending a festival for multiple days, compared to only one day, led to a stronger and more positive experience for attendees. Thus, a stronger impression was formed, likely because of the extended duration of festival atmosphere exposure. Lastly, the inability for individuals to describe their feelings when discussing the entirety of their EDC experience, and the similarity between their experience and that of mystical like event is a momentous outcome. Griffiths et al. (2008) used psilocybin, a powerful hallucinogenic to achieve these mystical experience in his subjects, which produced long term changes in personality, specifically openness. Also, Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), an endogenous hallucinogen has also shown to produce meaningful experiences by its users and positively alter their outlook on life (Cakic, Potkonyak, & Marshall, 2010). Another common way individuals attempt to achieve significant and meaningful experiences are through religious

practices. Various scholars have noted the benefits of an individual's involvement with religious practices including greater coping strategies, positive emotions, and healthier lifestyle (Seybold, & Hill, 2001). Additionally, a meta-analysis by Koenig and Larson (2001) found a positive relationship among individuals with religious beliefs and their reported life satisfaction. Large musical gatherings share similarities of religious ones. For example, the members typically adhere to specific dress styles, there is a communal understanding of expected behavioural practices, a sense of unity, and being socially involved in a belonging and accepting environment.

Therefore, if EDC is viewed as a religious like experience, or a significant event by its patrons, these similar beneficial outcomes (i.e., greater mental health, changed outlook on life, behavioural modification) may be associated with attending these types of musical events



## IMPLICATIONS

This study provides the first comprehensive investigation of the lived experiences of music festival attendees at Electronic Daisy Carnival by examining both first time attendees, and returning ones. The research successfully supported previous scholarly work (Packer, & Ballantyne, 2010; Ballantyne, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2013) depicting music festivals to be a socially enhancing environment that can contribute to one's social-wellbeing and other benefits for its attendees (i.e., escape, relaxation, adventure). We believe that these events are potentially a method to maintaining social health; as the festival acts as a social entity that allows the individual to easily identify with others through music; and exists as a social outlet, which consequently fulfill intrinsic human needs (i.e., social acceptance, belonging, love) as previously outlined by Maslow (1954). Further, this work illustrates the spiritual significance and personal meaningfulness attached to these musical experiences by its visitors; as evidenced by its overwhelmingly positive appraisal, annual return, and its attendees' belief of their EDC experience to be a significant life event. Lastly, of significance, the festival and its behavioral code of PLUR appears to be commonly internalized and acted out, throughout the festival, but also following it. Interestingly, PLUR, which possess attributes of altruism (i.e., helping others) and positive social decorum (i.e., harmony, respect, acceptance), is a behavior that seems to sporadically occur once the festival begins, and after seeing and experiencing its benefits, individuals adopt this behavior and mindset into their own lives. Potentially, in an effort to recreate the feelings attained at the event. Thus, this study depicted the potentially positive social benefits of attending these electronic music events, and also, its possible long term

and lasting effects that individuals attain from these personally significant positive experiences.

Furthermore, the study explores a current worldwide phenomenon of individuals increasingly attending electronic dance music festivals. These electronic music festivals have garnered a global stranglehold on the music market and its fans. The EDM industry is estimated to be worth approximately 6.2 billion (cnn, 2015), with earnings coming from live shows and club events. As well, these events are increasing in size and quantity throughout the world. For example, during the past 6 years in the United States, 25 new electronic dance music festivals, many of which are multi-day, and host over 100,000 attendees per day (Festicket, 2015). In Finland, a small country of 5.5 million, electronic music festival *Weekend Festival* fest attract upwards of 60,000 people or 1% of the entire population (hs.fi,2015). At EDC Las Vegas in 2015, they reported an attendance of 134,000 visitors each day, and a local economic boost of 322 million (Book, 2014). Our investigation may shed light onto why individuals are increasingly attracted to these types of events, what factors are supporting this recreational trend, and what motivating factors lead participants to attend and re-attend.

The rich data expressed has led us to several implications of attending electronic dance music festivals. First, the desire of individuals to be part of and identify with a group. Second, the increased knowledge of the festival experience to those who are curious to potentially explore and participate in this event. Third, the seeking of significant spiritual experiences by Generation Y individuals.

First, as previously mentioned, the tribal instinct hypothesis proposes a human adaptation occurred to overcome the difficulties faced by our ancient ancestors such as food gathering, ensuring of safety and security, and enhancing offspring survival (Stürmer & Snyder, 2009). Humans are meant to live among others, we are social creatures; “it is commitment to a group and the set of norms that bind it

together” Kelly, 2014. p.518). Our participants often noted how they felt they were part of something greater than themselves with a strong sense of unity. As well, participants believed EDC was an openhearted environment, which granted belonging to “outsiders”, those who had difficulty fitting into society, or who were often rejected by peers. Social integration, as defined by Keyes (1998), is the extent to which people feel a shared commonality with the individuals in their immediate surrounding. Additionally, Maslow (1954) put forth in his hierarchy the need for humans to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance; this is especially important for adolescents. Adolescents require in-depth social development, including positive social contacts, feeling of social integration, involvement in pro-social organizations or activities (sports, clubs), and the ability to navigate through various social situations (Lerner, Phelps, Forman & Bowers, 2009). Thus, given this intense sense of unity and belonging, and using PLUR as a positive ethos value system, a strong group mentality is formed at EDC. Notably, there is seemingly overall feeling of altruism from individuals at EDC in the form of care and assistance of others (i.e., water sharing). Thus, given these outcomes there is potential psychological benefit to these social integration behaviours while at this event and an observed change in behaviour.

In modern times, the ideas of community and tribalism are largely dismissed for individualistic endeavours. Humans have become self-centred on their own achievements. Grossmann and Varnum (2015) examined United States cultural patterns and discovered an emergence of individualism during the past century. Specifically, the changes in socioeconomic status, secularism (state and church separation), and disaster prevalence were associated with individualism.

Furthermore, according to Konrath, O’Brien, and Hsing (2010), a substantial decrease from 1979-2009 in college students’ levels of empathetic concern, feelings of sympathy for others, and imagining other people’s points of view,

called perspective taking, was discovered. Interestingly, a large decrease was noted between 2000 and 2010. Additionally, since we are able to interact with each other from far distances using various means (i.e., Skype, FaceTime, Snapchat) we have lost our necessity for face to face interaction. Interestingly, face-to-face communication is associated with feelings of social success, normalcy, and sleep patterns (Pea et al., 2012) and possesses unique attributes, such as human touch and brief facial expressions. Overall, the literature depicts a growing individualist lifestyle and a focus on one's self and not of others. Further, with face-to-face interaction decreasing because of present communication habits, the lack of social group connection, and our modern self-pursuant lifestyles, we believe EDC fulfils these primitive needs for normalized communication, an achieved sense of community, and personal belonging. Following this fulfilment, an allure is created to re-attend hereafter. This may be a contributing factor as to why festival attendances are achieving record high numbers and are responding to an increased global demand for shows by creating new ones each year.

Secondly, it empowers curious young adults with the necessary information about these experiences and what they can expect when attending. This includes the anticipated behaviour, the enjoyment and benefits that can be attained, and the general nature of this intense musical experience. Also, this research informs festival organizers of ideal management techniques to ensure patron enjoyment, such as an encouraging positive social interaction, and promoting harmonistic values. Previous research on festival drug usage was conducted by Dilkes-Frayne (2015) reported that drug use at music festivals provided a circumstance for mutual socialization, by participating in these activities. With regard to our own participants, only three out of the 12 participants reported to partake in illegal substance consumption. Thus, perhaps this research is a tool to combat the

negative connotation often attached to electronic music festivals by mainstream media.

Next, young adults, or Generation Y individuals are the most popular demographic at EDC, and at most electronic music festivals. They are the least religious generation possessing the lowest affiliation with religion, poorest attendance records for places of worship, and view religious organization negatively (PEW, 2010; PEW, 2014). Thus we believe there could be a need to fulfil that spiritual vacancy. The desire for individuals to pursue spirituality are indisputably present, and is innate human nature (Maslow, 1971). Spirituality is from the Latin meaning “breath of life”. Humans are known to seek spirituality by means of chemical substances (i.e., psychedelics) and group rituals (i.e., religious gatherings). As elaborated by Vaughan (2005) “authentic spirituality implies awareness of who we are as whole human beings-including body, emotions, mind, soul and spirit...I think of spirituality as a subjective experience of the sacred...that exists both within and outside of religious traditions" Vaughan, p. 3. Importantly, individuals who undertake spiritual behaviours are identified to have greater physical and psychological health measures, for example lower rates of depression and anxiety (Sperry, 2001; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). Also, as noted by festival attendees, they believed EDC was an extremely significant life event, with undertones of spirituality. Therefore, this significant life event of attending EDC can be monumental in a person’s life and may influence their wellbeing and spirituality. Thus, because the majority of individuals attending this festival are part of Generation Y, we propose that attending EDC is a way people are attaining a spiritual experience, and simultaneously, attaining both short and long term psychological and social benefits when fulfilling this primitive desire. Furthermore, this may be an additional factor as to why there has been such a rise in festival attendance and demand for these events in recent years.

It should be noted, that our initial intention to recruit rookie and veteran festival attendees revealed insignificant differences to their reported experiences. While the first time individuals did seem to adopt the PLUR mentality more intensely, and take in the EDC experience fondly, this is partly expected due to the unfamiliarity of the festival itself. Also, at the time of the interview, first time attendees may still be processing and integrating their significant experience into their life. This may explain their greater exclaimed excitement and fondness of EDC, compared to the returning veterans. A simple comparison would be a soldier's first tour of war, compared to a veteran who has completed several tours. While still a significant experience upon returning to the battlefield, it is the first tour that is likely the most impactful and full of novelty. Thus, the initial exposure is likely the most memorable and transformative, even if new experiences emerge in subsequent instances.

To conclude, we have chosen a passage that we believe summarizes the EDC experience exquisitely.

"I think, the vibe of the people in general, made it like, forget the amazing music, the amazing visuals, the huge production, it was the people that made it memorable man, just everyone being nice to each other, you know what I mean, having some respect for each other. It was really bizarre at first, but when I look back at it, it makes sense, because they are trying to live out that PLUR lifestyle, and I think that's what totally made it, the people." (Jake, Veteran)

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This article has several limitations and future directions. First, it is limited by the relatively small number of participants interviewed, and the primarily young adult demographic recruited. Future investigations should involve a greater number of participants from various age groups, not primarily young adults, college-aged individuals. However, given that most individuals attending this specific event and electronic dance music festivals in general are collegiate aged individuals, this might be difficult to achieve.

Another limitation of this study was that the interviews did not take place before the event, which may have provided insight into the anticipation, expectations, and previous knowledge about the event. However, interviews taken prior to the event may have influenced participant's expectations, and only rookie reporting's could be taken, since veterans would have prior experience with the festival. Future studies could interview first time attendees (rookies), which may provide a more inexperienced account compared to returning festival-goers. The rookies could discuss their experience of anticipation about this enormous event, what they enjoyed the most, what memories they had, and so fourth. However, it should be said that being able to compare first timers and veterans was helpful during analysis.

Since the interviews were conducted between two and three months following the festival, and thus some details of the experience could have been forgotten or overlooked due to passage of time. Future investigations could administer several instances of various measurements on attendees. Including the personality inventory scale, perceived level of spirituality, and mysticism tests. Participants would be reassessed on these scales at short term 7 days and 2 months, followed by long term 14 months). To determine potential changes within the individuals on a

quantifiable level after their music festival experience. As well, follow up at one year could provide greater insight into long term sustained effects.

Lastly, further research is required to compare the lived experiences and the reported subjective changes from different festival locations. If comparing festival experiences in different countries, (i.e., Brazil, Belgium, South Korea) we could gain a better understanding on the impact of music festivals on individuals from different parts of the world. It is possible that these reported changes in our population could be observed in other places as well, or perhaps their outcomes would be different from ours. Lastly, it would be valuable to gain a perspective from both festival organizers and artists who are involved in these gigantic musical events, and to understand the impact it has on their own lives.

### Conclusion

Electronic Daisy Carnival provides individuals an opportunity to escape from one's everyday routines, surroundings, and societal pressures. The temporary festival environment fueled by the PLUR code of behavior which fulfills primitive human needs including intensely positive and accepting social interactions, attaining a source of spirituality and, and curating feelings of unity. From this enjoyable experience, attendees are implementing positive changes to their value systems, behavior, and are viewing life more optimistically. These favorable changes may be a result of attending EDC, and could prove beneficial for long-term psychological and social well-being.



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## APPENDIX A: SCHÄEFER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Adapted Schafer Interview Guide (Translated from German)

### **1. General Information**

Name

Location

Age

Music Interest

### **2. Interview Introduction**

1. “I want to know about your festival experience”

“During the interview I will take notes as you speak, think aloud don't filter what comes to your mind. Everything is important, there isn't anything that is too small or unimportant. You can take your time and have a break if you wish, this is not a race. Do you have any questions, are you clear of how the interview will go?”

### **3. Priming**

1. Please think about the festival situation, and tell me when it was?
2. Where was it?
3. If there were special surroundings or atmosphere, what was the context?
4. Match the intensity with other activities or events?
5. How does it compare to the other events of intensity (sports, amusement park, walking in park)?

### **4. Deeper Questions**

1. Now we are going to dive into different emotions and thoughts that you had at that point during the festival experience?
2. How would you describe your emotional state during your time at the festival?
3. How would you describe the people around you, were they friendly, angry, what was the mood of people in general?
4. Please describe a specific memory you had on the individuals at the festival perhaps ?
5. What did you take out of the experience, what did you take out of it for yourself?
6. How did this experience affect or change your behaviour or thoughts, thinking, feelings, emotions?

### **Substance Questions**



1. Were people drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco?
2. Were people on drugs as well?
3. What types of drugs?
4. Did you use drugs?
5. What kind did you use and how much?
6. How do you think it effected your festival experience?
7. How would you imagine the festival with/without drugs?
8. Why do you think other use the drug?

### **5. Effect on Others**

1. How can what you experienced, impact others, or is it transferable onto others?
2. How can this affect others around you?
3. How did you feel in the interview?

### **6. Festival Experience Causing Changes**

1. How can I imagine it, please explain the festival scene to. How could one imagine it?
2. Why do you think there are such specific experiences or memories, why do these things happen what is causing them or it?
3. In your opinion what is the value of attending a festival?
4. When this experience did not lead to a change or difference in yourself, why do you think this was or why did this happen?
5. What do you think that such, or such experiences can be used in your daily life?
6. How often have you had these intense music experiences?  
1-5 times, 5-10, more than 10
7. Do you use your experiences to get to your goals/achieve your goals?  
Do you use these experiences to achieve something, or get to the next level?
8. Would you say for yourself that you grew though this experience or situation?

### **7. Interviewer post follow up notes**

**Interview Reflection** (After the interview took place you can look at it afterwards)

1. What was noticeable or disturbing, or unique, something that it is special. Something that is noticeable
2. Describe the person, how did she look, describe her body language, what were they like
3. What did I think about during the interview, what did I perceive
4. Additional stuff
5. How did the interview itself go, good bad
6. Others, additional things

APPENDIX B: STUDY INFORMATION LETTER

## THE OUTCOME OF ATTENDING ELECTRIC DAISY CARNIVAL: A MUSIC FESTIVAL INVESTIGATION

You have been selected to participate in a research project, investigating the experience of attending an electronic music festival, specifically Electric Daisy Carnival. The research will be conducted by Noah Little, as part of the requirements for the Masters of Music Psychology at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

### WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

Recently, there have been a number of new music electronic festivals successfully introduced worldwide. With the mainstream integration of electronic music in North American and UK music industries, an influx of both attendees and general interest in electronic music festivals has subsequently emerged in various countries. Currently; there has been little empirical investigation into the individual experience of attending a music festival. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the experience of attending a multi-day electronic music festival.

### WHAT DOES THE STUDY INVOLVE?

Participants will be asked to take part in an online interview that will be completed over Skype. Throughout the interview procedure individuals will be asked various questions and will need to reflect on their festival experience. This section will be recorded for further analysis. Following the experiment, participants will be debriefed and informed of the study's full details.

### HOW MUCH TIME WILL THE STUDY TAKE?

The interview will last approximately 20-30 minutes.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Several measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality of all your responses pertaining to the study. Due to the nature of the Internet, we are unable to completely ensure confidentiality. All individual interviews will be kept anonymous and participants will be assigned aliases to ensure confidentiality. Only Noah Little will have access to the data. The Electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer in a password-protected folder. No information collected from participants will be disclosed to any parties outside of the researcher and supervisor. All identifying information (i.e., contact information, aliases) will be deleted upon completion of the study.

### PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time

without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study, every attempt will be made to remove your data from the study, and have it destroyed. You have the right to omit any question(s)/procedure(s) you choose.

#### FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

The results of this study will be used within the lead researchers' written masters thesis. In addition, the results are anticipated to be communicated at academic conferences and within written publications. If you would like a summary of the results or publications, please feel free to contact the lead researcher, Noah Little, at [noahlittle@hotmail.com](mailto:noahlittle@hotmail.com).

By entering your name here, you acknowledge that you have read the letter of information and give permission to the researcher to collect your data.