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**“WELL, DON’T WALK AROUND NAKED... UNLESS YOU’RE A GIRL”:  
GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND RISK IN JAMTRONICA FESTIVAL  
SUBCULTURAL SCENES**

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“WELL, DON’T WALK AROUND NAKED... UNLESS YOU’RE A GIRL”:  
GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND RISK IN JAMTRONICA  
FESTIVAL SUBCULTURAL SCENES

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Kentucky

By  
Kaitlyne A. Motl (kxmotl)

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Edward Morris, Associate Professor of Sociology  
and Dr. Claire Renzetti, Professor of Sociology

Lexington, Kentucky

2018

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### “WELL, DON’T WALK AROUND NAKED... UNLESS YOU’RE A GIRL”: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND RISK IN JAMTRONICA FESTIVAL SUBCULTURAL SCENES

The purpose of this study was to explore emerging issues surrounding gendered fear, threat, and violence perpetration at music festivals – particularly events that feature a synthesis of jam band and electronic dance music acts – a genre termed jamtronica by its fans. Though gendered violence perpetration and prevention have been widely studied within other party-oriented settings (i.e., sexual violence perpetration on college campuses), very little research exists to address how wider disparities of gender and sexuality permeate a community whose members frequently claim the scene’s immunity from external inequalities.

In this three-year multi-sited ethnography, I incorporate participant observations, group and individual interviews, and textual analyses to progressively layer investigations into: 1) festival-goers’ gender-bifurcated perceptions of the problems they face within the event arena; 2) how institutional and interactional inequalities fuel gender-sexual expectations that exacerbate the risks with which festival-going women’s contend; and, 3) how jamtronica’s “libertarian and libertine” codes complicate women’s negotiations of (sub)cultural agency, expression, and safety. Findings derived across fourteen sites, interviews with 179 festival participants, and countless material texts suggest that men and women do perceive festival “problems” in very different ways – subsequently leading women to calculatedly navigate festival terrains, interactions, and self-presentations in ways that festival-going men seldom must. Protected by scene norms that paradoxically elevate personal autonomy and group integration, festival-going men’s homosocial displays of masculinity (through pranks, drinking and drug use, and even sexual predation) often goes unchallenged – or, is seemingly even encouraged.

In an environment that both scholars and study participants claim to eclipse mainstream inequalities of gender and sexuality, a closer look reveals the multiplex ways that festival-going women risk their physical, social, and sexual well-beings in order to pursue the emancipatory promises that jamtronica music festival community discourses purport. For this understudied, yet rapidly growing, subcultural scene, this study offers conceptual and analytical foundations to event-specific violence prevention

programming, as well as gender and sexuality-centric initiatives paramount to ever-diversifying jamtronica music festival communities.

KEYWORDS: Music Festivals, Jam Bands, Electronic Dance Music (EDM), Gender, Sexuality, Risk

Kaitlyne A. Motl (kxmotl)

June 2018

“WELL, DON’T WALK AROUND NAKED... UNLESS YOU’RE A GIRL”:  
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June 2018

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the self-proclaimed wooks, weirdos, wildings, and wanderers who breathed life and sustenance into this project – and to each festival-going woman who leaned in to whisper, “Yeah, me too.”

In memory of Mr. Jason W. Steward (1978 – 2015),  
whose tales and tenacity insisted the importance of personal experience  
as a form of knowledge, and offered the nudge needed  
to begin the journey whence I would collect my own.

[...]

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

~ From T.S. Eliot's  
*Little Gidding*, Part V

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Next, I must express immense gratitude to the veritable army of informal mentors who lent their insights and support throughout this professional and personal odyssey, including Dr. Robyn Lewis Brown, Dr. Ana Liberato, Dr. David Brunnsma, Drs. John and Shelly Johnson, and, most of all, Dr. Lyn Huxford. Although in different sub-disciplines



and, in the case of the four latter, at different institutions, their external encouragement, honesty, and endorsement instilled faith in myself and this project during the (too-frequent) times when I could not source it from within.

I am ever-indebted to my family (my mother, my sister, and my hateful-yet-beloved feline companion in particular), graduate student colleagues (the denizens of the wasteland formerly known as Siberia and their annexed outlying regions), and friends (namely, Lillian Krutsinger) for their seemingly unending patience. In acting as sounding boards as I knit findings together, home bases that stabilized my summers spent in data collection, cheerleaders, therapists, emergency meme providers, and performers of countless other roles, they kept this project afloat throughout its inception, undertaking, and resolution – earning them each a respective nomination to sainthood, at minimum. Further, many affections go toward my students over the years for their patience and their pushes; their compassion and curiosity continually acts as a reminder of why I pursued this degree in the first place. Additionally, boundless appreciation is due to the numerous study participants who willingly gave of time they could have spent elsewhere in recreation, rather than sitting for in-field interviews. Moreover, my gratitude and affections go out to the various festival families who took me under their rainbow tie-dye feathered wings during the studied event sites – namely, the Connecticut Crew, Florida Family, Chicago Faction, and of course, my first and ever fondest festival family: The Tribe. Every festival-going woman has their reasons as to why they continue attending these events, despite the risks they often pose. You are my reasons.

Lastly, I must offer gratitude to two men without whom this dissertation would not have commenced or been completed, respectively: Andrew W. Brunson and David E.

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To all those named here (as well as the many whom that calls for brevity require me to omit at this moment\*), I cannot express my appreciation enough. This dissertation is as much of your blood, sweat, and (many, many) tears as it is mine.

\* I cannot bear to allow the following entities to remain unlisted, as their behind-the-scenes support (either realized or not) kept the day-to-day efforts of this project in its most elemental motion: the kindhearted and unquestioning employees of the JET's Pizza on Broadway; the visionaries who gifted us Jock Jams; Missy Elliot; Kacey Musgraves; the makers of Excedrin Migraine; Dr. Beth and all at Complete Chiropractic; and, above all, Harry Belafonte.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....iii

Chapter One – Contextualizing the Consequences of the Carnavalesque: Why Gender, Sexuality, and Risk in Jamtronica Matter ..... 1

    CONTEXTUALIZING THE ISSUE .....1

    RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS .....5

    RESEARCH APPROACH .....5

    PERSONAL STATEMENT .....7

    SIGNIFICANCE .....9

    EXPLANATORY DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS .....12

    CONCLUSION .....16

Chapter Two – Situating the Study: Theoretical Orientation, Literature Review, and Conceptual Frameworks .....18

    THEORETICAL ORIENTATION .....18

    Literature Review .....21

*PART ONE: THEORIZING GENDER, PONDERING THE PARADOXES OF SEXUALITY*

    GENDER AND SEXUALITY AS INTERSECTIONAL SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS .....21

        Theorizing Masculinity .....25

        Theorizing Femininity .....28

    PARADOXES OF WOMEN’S SEXUALITY .....31

        The Pleasure-Danger Binary .....34

        Dissecting Sexual Danger .....35

        The Transformative Potential of (Sexual) Pleasure .....39

*PART TWO: JAMTRONICA – (SUB)CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS AND RISK*

    JAMTRONICA: SUBCULTURE, SCENE, OR SOCIETY? .....41

    A TALE OF TWO GENRES .....43

    AN INSIDE LOOK AT “FESTIVAL CULTURE” .....46

    FESTIVAL CULTURE: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES? .....48

        Gendered Risk in the Festival Arena .....50

        The Transformational Potential of Festivals .....54

    CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....56

Chapter Three – Research Design .....59

    METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....60

    METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION .....62

        Ethnography .....62

            Representing the “Crisis of Representation” .....62

            Ethnographies and Narrative .....64

            Advancing Ethnography through Textual Analyses .....64

        Grounded Theory .....65

SITES AND SAMPLES .....	68
Research Sites .....	68
Population Studied .....	70
Sampling Strategies .....	71
Obtaining Access, Trust, Support, and Reciprocity .....	75
DATA COLLECTION .....	79
Focused Ethnography .....	80
Multi-Sited Ethnography .....	80
Synthesizing Approaches .....	81
RESEARCH METHODS .....	82
Participant Observation .....	82
Individual and Focus Group Interviews .....	83
Textual Analyses .....	86
Autoethnography .....	87
DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES .....	89
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	93
Naming the Problem .....	93
Naming Each Other .....	95
Rubbing Names in the “Dirt” .....	96
ROLE OF REFLEXIVITY .....	97
VALIDITY .....	100
Ethical Validity .....	101
Substantive Validation .....	103
CONCLUSION .....	107
Chapter Four – Problems-Solving Paradise or Problems in Paradise? .....	108
WHY FESTIVALS? .....	110
DISCERNING THE DAILY FROM THE DIVINE .....	111
Self-Expression .....	111
Conscious Community-Building .....	113
Equalization of Outside Inequalities .....	114
LINKING DISTINCTIONS, MAINSTREAM DIFFICULTIES, AND LEGITIMATIONS .....	117
PROBLEMS THAT FESTIVAL-GOING MEN IDENTIFY .....	118
The “N00bz”: Inexperienced Festival-Goers as Irritating “Others” .....	118
“Festie” Representation and Event Corporatization .....	119
PROBLEMS THAT FESTIVAL-GOING WOMEN IDENTIFY .....	122
<i>Vignette: Finding Fear within Fieldnotes</i> .....	122
Gendered Threat: A Rift in Egalitarian Festival Utopias? .....	124
<i>Vignette: “There Are Going to Be Assholes at Every Festival”</i> .....	127
DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM HERE? DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN FESTIVAL MEN AND WOMEN .....	128
MINIMIZATION OF (WOMEN’S) EXPERIENCES OF THREAT .....	130
“Missing” and Mocking Gendered Threat .....	132
Danger as Representative of Outside Contexts .....	134
Just Like Any Other Party Scene .....	135

“Roll with It”: Festival Dangers as Inevitable .....	137
But, Addressing Festival Risk Makes It Worse .....	138
Individualizing Incidences, Individualizing Solutions .....	143
THE CONSEQUENCES OF INCONSEQUENCE: EMBEDDING	
INEQUALITIES .....	147
CONCLUSIONS .....	150
 Chapter Five – Mapping Gender and Sexuality in the Jamtronica Scene .....	152
GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND SUBCULTURE .....	154
Gendering Jam Rock and Electronic Dance Music .....	156
DESIGNING DIFFERENCE: GENDERING SOCIO-LABOR ROLES	
WITHIN THE FESTIVAL COMMUNITY .....	157
Men: The Movers and Shakers of the Jamtronica Festival Scene .....	159
Within Fan Ranks .....	159
Within Professional Positions .....	161
Maintaining Men’s Centrality .....	164
Healers and Helpmates: Women’s Facilitative Roles at Festivals .....	167
SUBCULTURE, STYLE, AND PERFORMATIVE ASYMMETRY .....	170
The Utilitarian Code of Festival Masculinities .....	172
Femininity and Festival Flair: Observing Women’s Dress-Driven	
Ornamentality.....	177
“Pretty Things!”: Women’s Expected Adornment .....	179
THE INVISIBLE OMNIPRESENT VERSUS GO-GO GIRLS:	
ENCOURAGING MEN’S VOYEURISM AND WOMEN’S	
EXHIBITIONISM .....	186
<i>Vignette: Party with Whom? Party in THAT?</i> .....	186
Masculinized Voyeurism, Feminized Exhibitionism .....	187
“It’s Like I’m Entertainment”: Participants Acknowledge	
Gender-Disparate Sexualized Monitor .....	192
“Don’t Walk Around Naked, Unless You’re a Girl”: Double Standards	
in Voyeurism/Exhibitionism .....	194
Normalizing the Nude Nymph, Nixing Nude Dudes .....	195
“They Are Very Visual Creatures”: Discursive Defense of	
Men’s Voyeurism .....	195
It Is What It Is: Subcultural Entrenchment of Voyeurism/Exhibitionism	
.....	198
CONCLUSIONS .....	203
 Chapter Six – Menacing Masculinities, Minimal Reprimand .....	208
HOMOSOCIAL FESETIVALS, HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES? .....	208
Hegemonic Masculinity, Competition, and Subculture .....	210
<i>Vignette: “We’ve Got Boners and We’re Not Afraid to Use Them!”</i> .....	211
“Proving” Masculinity through Objectification, Sexualization, and	
Predation .....	212
“BE THE THREAT”: A MENACING MASCULINITY EMERGES .....	218

On the Prowl? Participants Attribute Threat as Inherently Masculine .....	222
<i>Vignette: “We’re Raping the Forest!” A (Pantsless) Showdown with ‘The Threat’</i> .....	223
Adversity from Above: Threat Posed by Powerful Event Actors .....	227
No One Is Immune from Experiencing Threat .....	228
<i>Vignette: A Different Kind of Rapport</i> .....	230
Threat-Posing Directives’ Implications .....	231
Men Are Immunized from Consequences of Posing Threat .....	233
<i>Vignette: Roofies and Duct Tape</i> .....	236
“BOYS WILL BE BOYS” – AS IN THE MAINSTREAM, SO IN SUBCULTURE .....	240
#NOT-ALL-[FESTIVAL-GOING]-MEN: ALTERNATIVES TO THREAT-POSING MASCULINITIES .....	242
CONCLUSIONS .....	248

Chapter Seven – Festival Femininities: Arbitrations of Peril and Prospects of Pleasure .....	252
INTERNALIZED MAINSTREAM MANDATES, INCITED (SELF-) SURVEILLANCE .....	253
THE KEEPERS OF TWO KINGDOMS .....	255
DO AS I DESIRE, NOT AS I SAY: CONFLICTING PRESCRIPTIONS OF IDEAL FEMININITY .....	257
Paradoxes of Femininity, Amplified .....	258
PURSUING PLEASURES OF JAMTRONICA EVENT PARTICIPATION AND SCENE INVOLVEMENT .....	260
<i>Vignette: Crouching Tigress, Hidden Pleasures</i> .....	261
Peer Acceptance and Encouragement .....	262
Personal Expression and Autonomy .....	264
Personal and Professional Growth .....	267
Skills Development .....	267
Building Networks .....	268
Identities .....	270
Rejection of Mainstream (and Subcultural) Gender-Sexual Expectations and Hierarchies .....	272
Challenging the Sexualization and Objectification of Women .....	273
Challenging Heterosexuality and Heteronormativity .....	274
Rejecting Respectability, Advocating Women’s Sexual Autonomy and Agency .....	275
Rejecting the Fixity of Women’s Responsibility and Fear .....	278
DESPITE DANGERS, WOMEN KEEP COMING .....	279
Safety Rituals .....	280
Gender Maneuvering .....	282
<i>Vignette: The Tigress Shows Her Teeth</i> .....	284

THE EXTENT AND CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL (NON-) ADDRESS .....	285
(FRAGMENTED) FLEDGLING FESTIVAL FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESSES .....	288
CONCLUSIONS .....	291
Chapter Eight – Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations of the Study .....	297
FINDINGS .....	300
Finding 1 – Festival Experiences and “Problems” Are Not the Same for Men and Women .....	300
Finding 2 – Jamtronica’s Gender-Sexual Prescriptions Mimic the Mainstream’s .....	301
Finding 3 – Festivals Help Manifest, Magnify, and Sometimes Mitigate Mainstream Gender-Sexual Power Dynamics .....	302
EXPLORING RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	305
How Are Subcultural Norms of Masculinity, Femininity, and Sexuality Constructed Within Music Festival Subcultures? .....	305
How do prescriptions of gender and sexuality impact expectations for subcultural participation? .....	306
How do larger phenomena of gender inequality permeate subcultural communities? How do these issues contribute to the prominence of risk within festival of arenas? .....	307
How May Participation in Jamtronica Events and Communities Prove Paradoxically Empowering and Endangering for Festival-Going Women, Both within the Scene and in their Everyday Lives? .....	309
What are the mainstream constraints of gender and sexuality festival-going women seek to overcome or overturn in their participation? (How) do they accomplish this? .....	310
How do festival participants conceptualize the balance between their pursuits of (sexual and social) pleasure and the gendered risks that these scenes hold? .....	311
How do festival stakeholders (not) work to address these concerns/risks? .....	312
THEORY OF PHENOMENON .....	313
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY .....	315
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	318
Recommendation 1 – Recognize the Issue .....	318
Recommendation 2 – Coordinate Efforts .....	319
Recommendation 3 – Produce and Consume Wisely .....	320
Recommendation 4 – Get Educated and Act on It .....	320
Recommendation 5 – Take It to the Next Level .....	321
PROJECT LIMITATIONS .....	321
FUTURE RESEARCH .....	323

Appendices

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULES .....	324
APPENDIX B: RESEARCHED FESTIVALS AND FIELD SITE DESCRIPTIONS.....	330
REFERENCES .....	333
VITA .....	371



## **Chapter One – Contextualizing the Consequences of the Carnavalesque: Why Gender, Sexuality, and Risk in Jamtronica Matter**

### **CONTEXTUALIZING THE ISSUE**

Music festivals are increasingly popular within the United States, attracting more than 32 million attendees in 2014 alone (Nielson 2014).<sup>1</sup> Music festivals sustain a subcultural following, where members identify themselves in relationship to their event participation, often organizing work, family, financial, and other responsibilities around festival attendance (Connors 2013; Hunt 2008). Music festivals are carnivalesque arenas, which act to purposefully (and temporarily) subvert hegemonic norms, especially those concerning propriety and sobriety (Bahktin [1944] 1968; Gee and Bales 2012). Within these spaces, participants may also seek to overturn mainstream norms of gender and sexuality (McBee 2000; St John 2009). Like other subcultures, music festivals offer alternative norms and value systems to renegotiate mainstream codes and structures of gender and sexuality (Wilkins 2008). These unconventional prescriptions may be useful in avoiding, resisting, or providing unique responses to contentious issues of gender and sexual inequality, such as objectification, sexual double standards, and rape culture. These subcultural innovations may institute alternatives to institutional, interactional, and discursive processes that subjugate women in broader political and sociocultural contexts.

Paradoxically, the subcultural norms that grant liberation from wider constraints of gender and sexuality also disproportionately pose physical, emotional, social and sexual risks to festival-going women. Jamtronica festival subculture is similar to other

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<sup>1</sup> This count reflects attendance across a wide variety of music festival genres, not just those included within the “jamtronica” genre studied here.

previously-examined party cultures such as bars or Greek life on college campuses (Foubert, Garner, and Thaxter 2006; Graham et al. 2014; Kimmel 2008). Similar to other party cultures, music festivals foster conditions where sexual violence may occur: normalized substance use, anonymity within interactions, male peer support for perpetration, silencing of victims, and unequal gender-sexual dynamics (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013; Kimmel 2008; Pascoe 2007). Non-profit (sexual) violence centers report a staggering association: the increase in music festival attendance and events' cultural prominence corresponds with the growth of requests for on-site crisis counseling and increasing participant reports of sexual violence perpetration (Lloyd 2015).

Within other party cultures (such as those found on college campuses), externally-imposed programming and policy reforms attempt to disrupt (and at times, overtly challenge) the conditions that enable sexual violence perpetration (Banyard et al. 2007; Banyard and Moynihan 2011; Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014). Current sexual violence prevention work aims to address both generalized and specific audiences, seeking to dismantle rape-supportive attitudes and community-specific norms that enable sexual violence perpetration (Borges, Banyard, and Moynihan 2008; McMahon, Postmus, and Koenick 2011). In this, prevention efforts address "rape culture": sociocultural conditions that tolerate, normalize, minimize, or even justify acts of sexual violence (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 2005; Carmody 2014; Fletcher 2014; Gavey 2005; Lam and Roman 2009). Unfortunately, jamtronica music festival events and communities have yet to embrace similar efforts, as scene members often characterize these events as utopian interludes to their mainstream lives, refusing to acknowledge or address circumstances or standpoints that challenge this view.

Jamtronica scene members' omission or minimization of in-event (and intra-community) violence perpetration heightens the historical marginalization women have experienced within subcultures, particularly ones that organize around music consumption (Bradby 1993; McRobbie and Garber [1977] 2012; Thornton 1996). Popular and participant assumptions purport that subcultures foster egalitarianism among scene members through ideological and behavioral solidarity (Malbon 1999). However, these presuppositions frequently obscure how gender and sexual inequalities manifest within subcultural contexts, privileging men's subcultural experiences as central, natural, and axiomatic (Bradby 1993). Jamtronica festival subcultural norms elevate impulsivity, voyeurism, gratification, and hedonism – subjectivities that festival-going men may enjoy freely, yet often exclude (Campbell 2006; Kimmel 2008; Valenti 2014), imperil (Armstrong, Watling, Davey, and Darvell 2014), objectify (Bartky 1990; Dworkin 2000; MacKinnon 1987; Wolf [1991] 2002), and invoke the policing and reprimand of women (Vance 1984). Thus, despite music festivals' capacity to facilitate participants' renegotiation of mainstream hierarchies and conventions of gender and sexuality, they may act to buttress the very discourses and structures they attempt to disrupt.

In this, jamtronica festival subculture offers insight to long-standing paradoxes of modern femininity: how do women articulate social and sexual autonomy, given the genuine physical, emotional, social, and sexual threats that bound women's agency within a patriarchal society? "Rape myths" are widespread discursive misinformation about sexual violence and its perpetration (Lam and Roman 2009). These myths bolster mainstream social norms that expect women to defend themselves against gendered threats from men through performing a type of femininity that is chaste, yet still

heterosexually appealing (Bordo 1989, 1993; Brumberg 1997; Murnen and Smolak 2000; Vance 1984; Wolf [1991] 2002). This idealization contradicts subcultural prescriptions that encourage displays of wanton and sexualized festival womanhood. Some scholars argue that women's sexualities may act as powerful tools to challenge discourses that naturalize women's sexual and social passivity (Butler 2013; Cahill 2011; McRobbie 2009); disrupt interactional and institutional hierarchies of gender (Schippers 2002); and, promote women's pursuit of sexual safety, respect, and choice (Adriaens 2009; Queen 1997; Tolman 2002). Regardless of these potential benefits, festival-going women still veritably experience a variety of consequences for exhibiting sexual and social agency (i.e., slut-shaming and victim-blaming), de-centering these offenses from those who perpetrate sexual violence.

These negotiations of gender and sexuality do not only impact festival-going women; they also serve to magnify how inequalities of gender and sexuality interweave as they transcend (sub)cultural contexts. Further, these paradoxes lend insight into how tensions within hegemonic (sub)cultural constructions of femininity idealize contradictory and unachievable prescriptions of gender and sexuality, which distances women from sexual and social autonomy. Lastly, they provide a unique context to examine how shifting discursive, interactional, and institutional contexts reinforce and challenge (sub)cultural conditions that encourage sexual violence perpetration.

## **RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS**

This study aims to explore how subculturally dominant norms of gender and sexuality complicate women's negotiations of agency and perceived threat within jamtronica party culture and scene-sponsored festival events. I pose the following research questions:

RQ1: How are subcultural norms of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality constructed within music festival subcultures?

- How do prescriptions of gender and sexuality impact expectations for subcultural participation?
- How do larger phenomena of gender inequality (i.e., objectification, sexual double standards) permeate subcultural communities? How do these issues contribute to the prominence of gendered risk within festival arenas?

RQ2: How may participation in jamtronica events and communities prove paradoxically empowering and endangering for festival-going women – both within the scene and in their everyday lives?

- What are the mainstream constraints of gender and sexuality that festival-going women seek to overcome or overturn in their subcultural participation? (How) do they accomplish this?
- How do festival participants negotiate tensions between their empowering pursuits of (sexual and social) pleasure and the gendered risks that these scenes and arenas pose? Additionally, how do festival stakeholders (not) work to address these concerns/risks?

## **RESEARCH APPROACH**

In this three-year, multi-sited ethnographic project, I synthesize participant observations, individual and focus group interviews, digital and material texts (in the form of online blog and news posts, event flyers and programs, and other collected

artifacts), and autoethnographic vignettes. The project used modified grounded theory to dialectically integrate deductive and inductive data collection and analyses, an approach termed “abduction” by Natasi (2013). Using this approach allowed me to pursue evolving themes and theorizations as my ethnographic experiences continued. This project draws its data from 14 jamtronica festival events (10 of which were unique sampling sites; 4 of which repeated participation in events attended in the previous years).

I conducted immersive participant observations to familiarize myself with the norms of jamtronica festival subculture, to observe in-group interactions, and to contextualize my own experiences within these events. These observations were detailed in field notes and reflective debriefs, both recorded on a tablet device. I additionally collected, transcribed, and analyzed 179 interviews with festival participants. These interviews were guided by an evolving interview schedule, consistently evolving to incorporate suggestions made by research participants, as well as inquiries generated from my own event-based observations. Interview participants were able to choose pseudonyms to de-identify their involvement in the project and were recorded on a tablet device. Recorded interviews were manually transcribed. I collected digital texts through online searches for websites, news sources, and blogs that addressed gender, sexuality, risk, and sexual violence perpetration in music festival scenes. Material texts were collected through event participation and observation. All field notes, interview transcripts, digital texts, and material artifacts (scanned for digital storage) were uploaded to NVIVO qualitative data management software. All data were coded to dialogically seek patterns in the materials, building upon previous literature within the fields of gender-sexual inequality, threat/fear, and (sexual) violence prevention.

By sampling data across multiple formats and event sites, actively incorporating the feedback of research participants in the project, and candidly disclosing the emotional, conceptual, and procedural labor that the project required, I attempted to build greater ethical validity and substantive validation (Angen 2000). The University of Kentucky's Office of Research Integrity ("IRB") approved this project.

## **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

I initiated this dissertation project out of my own participation in jamtronica music festivals. Since childhood, my family encouraged voracious consumption of live music - at times pushing me to attend classic rock and reggae performances, in others, hesitatingly accompanying me to day-long punk rock events. I began attending jamtronica festivals in the summer of 2011, well before my dissertation dreams had materialized. Even within the first few hours of participating in this festival event, I knew that "festie-folk" – so diverse, yet unified by their love of music – were my confederates. Through my graduate education at the University of Kentucky, I was given the tools to interrogate my surroundings, particularly in the fields of stratification, gender, and sexuality. As I attended music festivals throughout my graduate education, I began to increasingly observe tensions within the subculture – ones that I previously let go unnoticed or unchallenged. During my pilot observations of Midwestern jamtronica music festivals in 2013, I was finally able to contextualize personal observations that I earlier felt were anecdotal, through the sociological knowledge that I had since cultivated.

As sociology is frequently labeled the "science of common sense," I aimed to inquire just what about jamtronica festival culture is "common sense," when the main objective of these events is to disrupt the "taken for granted." The project evolved as I

spent more time in the field, traveling across the nation to collect data and pursuing the emerging landscapes of jamtronica festival culture. Unfortunately, during this time, I endured a few appalling interactions with fellow event participants, some of which I detail through autoethnographic vignettes included in the following chapters. These interactions introduced the threat of sexual violence into how I perceived festivals and their attendees – how I navigated the terrain, how I presented myself, and how I interacted with others.

Jamtronica music festivals are environments that display much potential for more extensive cultural transformation, especially for resisting mainstream norms that perpetuate inequalities of gender and sexuality. Regrettably, it also can perpetuate the same offenses that it may be able to dismantle. It is not my intention to expose or indict those who graciously shared their lives and ideas; nor is it my objective to condemn the overall jamtronica scene as it currently stands. Instead, I aim to communicate the lived experiences of its subcultural community members – how they view each other, what their hopes and fears are, and how they identify and solve the issues within festival culture that they perceive as pertinent. The experiences, interactions, and reflections that I gained through this dissertation research have genuinely transformed who I am. I hope that this project may serve to enhance awareness of this particular subculture's transformative potential, the critical consideration of gender and sexuality's impacts upon one's identities and experiences, and the widespread promotion of violence prevention and intervention work – in jamtronica scenes, events, and beyond.



## **SIGNIFICANCE**

Though this project focuses on the interactions, norms, and hierarchies within a particular subculture, its significance extends far beyond the group studied. It works to examine critical ties between inequalities of gender and sexuality, interrogate paradoxes of women's social and sexual autonomy, and connect existing work within sexual violence prevention fields to an understudied subcultural arena.

First, this research seeks to further current understandings of how inequalities of gender and sexuality contribute to each other. In Anglo-Western societies, “successful” gender performances hinge upon the performance of (or inference to) culturally-approved sexual practices, desires, and identifications (Mahay, Laumann, and Michaels 2005; West and Fenstermaker 1995). Those who perform gender “unsuccessfully” endure a range of physical, emotional, and social consequences; at times, even inferring “deviant” sexualities. Though gender and sexuality are social constructs, with idealized performances varying from context to context, they work together to police and maintain boundaries of access, prestige, and resources (Connell 1987; Pascoe 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995; West and Zimmerman 1987). Failure to comply with (sub-)culturally situated norms of sexuality and gender (e.g., taking on expected roles within systems that perpetuate objectification, gendered threat, sexual double standards, and sexual violence) can result in a loss of “certifiable mental health, respectability, legality, social and physical mobility, institutional support, and material benefits” (Rubin 1984: 279). The interrelations of gender and sexuality support the “heterosexual matrix,” a “public ordering of masculinity and femininity through meanings and practices of heterosexuality” (Butler 1995: 27). This arrangement posits men in contrast to women

and masculinity as a foil to femininity, prescribing hierarchical roles and sexual norms to uphold systemic inequalities between men and women (Connell 1995; Pascoe 2007).

Subcultures offer alternative norms that may dispute these dominant arrangements (Wilkins 2008). This project, thus, examines how the interconnected mainstream inequalities of gender and sexuality may be reinforced or interrogated within jamtronica subcultural scenes. Further, it seeks to understand how scene members use these various subcultural gender-sexual norms to identify and create solutions to the mainstream exclusions, marginalization, and other consequences that they face.

Next, my project aims to interrogate the complicated directive for women to pursue sexual and social freedom, in light of the restrictions that entail living within a patriarchal society. Within jamtronica festivals, women utilize alternative norms of gender and sexuality (such as exposing their breasts and buttocks through subculturally-sanctioned dress) to escape mainstream prescriptions of femininity, as well as the consequences of sexual double standards, objectification, and other gender-sexual inequalities. This research seeks to identify why women stray from mainstream prescriptions of femininity through their event involvement, given the unique gendered threats that they face within festival participation. I identify how festival-goers articulate their experiences of both subcultural and mainstream life, their conceptualizations and performances of gender and sexuality, the problems that they endure through abiding by or abstaining from these respective conventions, and how scene members work to resolve conflicts of meaning and merit across (sub)cultural contexts.

By exploring how festival-goers offer meaning and value to certain performances and problems of gender and sexuality, I embrace the transformative potential of women's

social and sexual autonomy, promoting women's pursuit of pleasure and resistance to the limitations that gendered threat poses. In effect, this approach:

does not erase or negate our quest for social justice, equity, economic rights, political access and participation; nor does it put an end to domination and oppression in all its guises [...] Rather, [it] return[s] us to the erotic embodied agency that is a central part of women's lived experience [...] and] allows us to imagine a new way of constituting female sexuality that does not take victimhood and violation as foundational. Instead, the primacy of women's quest for erotic fulfillment and joy becomes the springboard for demanding and creating a safer space and modes of relating across gender difference where violation is not always already inscribed on the body or scripted into how we relate with and navigate the world. (Bakare-Yusef 2013: 35-36)

Accordingly, I synthesize participants' observations and recommendations to look forward and promote praxis that demand a new envisioning of gender and sexuality both within and beyond jamtronica subcultural scenes.

Lastly, my work builds upon both academic literature and on-ground programming as to better understand and eradicate gendered violence perpetration within party cultures. Though sexual violence (perpetration and prevention programming) has been widely studied, there is significant potential in applying this literature to new subcultural contexts. Though several scholars have approached the topic of gender and sexuality within music festivals (particularly events featuring electronic dance music), very few scholarly works exist detailing how norms of gender and sexuality within these subcultures contribute to (or attempt to disrupt) sexual violence perpetration.

Additionally, works that do exist on this topic tend to focus on music festivals outside of the United States (Evans 2014; Gupta 2015; Lloyd 2015; Sanghani 2015; St John 2009), leaving an academic review of domestic events nearly absent.

Further, U.S. music festivals have yet to widely employ sexual violence prevention programming, unlike their European counterparts. This dearth has given rise to informal peer-to-peer education through online forums and blogs, many of which recommend rape-avoidance techniques that perpetuate rape myths. Since 2004, government entities, such as the Centers for Disease Control, have recommended the employment of primary prevention and education techniques within similar party cultures, like college campuses (Borges et al. 2008; CDC 2004). As music festivals proliferate, they foster possibilities of using influential (subcultural) media to amend rape-supportive attitudes that mainstream culture normalizes.

By addressing the underlying sociocultural components that transcend party cultures, scholars and activists may look toward the connecting, systemic issues that foster sexual violence perpetration. Doing so envisions a future where the pursuit of sexual and social autonomy by people of any gender does not: 1) penalize, exclude, or prescribe disparate norms; 2) foster gendered threat as a naturalized condition of social (and/or subcultural) life; and, 3) exacerbate the consequences faced, which held in place by interactional and institutional inequalities.

## **EXPLANATORY DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS**

**Music festivals** originate from the countercultural movements and rock music acts of the 1960s. During this era, live performance events grew in popularity, yielding dedicated fan-bases that traveled to watch their favorite acts perform (Connors 2013; Issitt 2009). These events expanded to feature multiple artists, increasingly bridging genre divides that sustained unique subcultural fanbases. **Jamtronica** music synthesizes improvisational rock music with electronic production elements. Jamtronica music

festivals draw from geographically and demographically diffuse audiences and “scenes” (Dowd, Liddle, and Nelson 2004), to blend “rave” and “hippie” subcultures. Despite stark differences in these scenes’ dress, language, means of participation, and interactional norms, these two fanbases unite through their transgression of mainstream norms, particularly those of substance use, propriety, and moderation (Gee and Bales 2012; St John 2009).

Jamtronica music festivals foster **liminality**, a purposeful state of ambiguity that temporarily breaks down boundaries of status and power (Turner 1964). Festival participants embrace this ambiguity through augmenting, fragmenting, parodying, and experimenting with identities, interactions, and hierarchies. They may do so by ornamenting themselves through out-of-the-ordinary cosmetics, donning costumes, wearing clothing that is sexually provocative or considered to be of poor taste, and interacting in purposefully exhibitionist fashions (Crane 2000; Melechi 1993; St John 2009). In effect, the **carnavalesque** atmosphere disrupts mainstream behavioral and ideological codes (Bakhtin [1944] 1968; McBee 2000; St John 1997) but does not permanently abolish them. To enable participants’ involvement, festival production staffs intentionally manufacture environments where these transgressions may take place, providing immersive art, film, advocacy, and audiovisual experiences (Gee and Bales 2012). Within the festival sphere, participants are encouraged to interrogate mainstream norms, often resulting in innovative renegotiations of gender and sexual hierarchies. Regrettably, Carnival is a temporary state; the purposeful disruption of norms returns to previous states, reinforcing the power structures this short, coordinated interval dismantles.

This dissertation focuses on a significant tension brought forth by the carnivalesque atmosphere of jamtronica music festivals. The **sexual pleasure-danger binary** describes the dualistic relationship between women's experiences of sex and sexuality, as they are framed by patriarchal structures that oppress, objectify, and impress threats to women, but simultaneously serve as tools to cope with these systemic issues. Sexuality is "simultaneously a domain of restriction, repression and danger, as well as a domain of exploration, pleasure, and agency" (Vance 1982: 38). Within festivals, participants are encouraged to pursue pleasure, engaging in whatever types of exploration they choose, hoping that their actions facilitate a deeper understanding of self and society. However, festival events can also present considerable physical, psychological, social, and sexual **threats** to their participants, particularly women.

Threats refer to any form of **danger** a festival-goer perceives; additionally, threats include the (un-) intentionally constructed and carried-out offenses of festival participants toward their peers, their surroundings, or the subcultural community at large. These two terms may be used interchangeably with **risks**: prospective dangers that may or may not directly pose a recognized threat. **Problems** refer primarily to difficulties or inequalities that subcultural scene members face within their everyday, mainstream lives, including exclusions, stigma, and other forms of disprivilege (Wilkins 2008). However, the term serves to describe the same phenomena as they appear within subcultural contexts.

**Solutions** (alternatively, seeking or pursuing **pleasures**) are the means by which scene members overcome mainstream and subcultural "problems" through the use of new expectations, meanings, or hierarchies created or deployed through their subcultural involvement to gain status and resources – as well as other benefits that these triumphs

confer. What may act as a viable solution for one jamtronica community member's problems may not adequately address the subcultural and mainstream marginalizations of another. While festival-going problems (risks, dangers, threats) inevitably vary from participant to participant, gendered patterns arise to reveal disparate subcultural experiences and expectations held by and for men and women.

As subcultures tend not to be wholly detached from mainstream influence (Schippers 2002), they are still susceptible to perpetuating the inequalities that their members seek to evade. Although jamtronica music festival followings and events constitute a subcultural scene, like other party cultures, hegemonic gender and sexual codes often inform community-revered ideals of interaction, navigation, inclusion, and behavior between its memberships and within its event arenas (Carroll 2015; Kimmel 2008; Valenti 2014; Valentine 1996). These norms (many times, invisibly) propagate mainstream problems of gender and sexuality, such as the **sexual double standard**, **objectification**, and **sexual violence**. Mainstream discourses of sexuality naturalize men's desire, sexual aggression, and irresponsibility, which do not hold men accountable for the damages done by treating women as objects, more so those incurred by social and sexual predation (Page, Pina, and Giner-Sorolla 2016; Zaikman and Marks 2014). The same discourses encourage women to suppress sexual (and sociopolitical) desires, deflecting the sexual attention of men. Sexual violence spans a wide array of behaviors that include (non-) verbal, sexist harassment (Banyard, Plante, and Moynihan 2004), unwanted sexual contact, and forced sexual activity (McMahon et al. 2011).

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have outlined the disciplinary and social contexts in which this research exists. I have presented a brief overview of how the dissertation research was carried out, articulated the project's significance in both scholarly and lay applications, and provided definitions for key terms that frame this work.

In the following chapters, I expand upon these initial foundations. In Chapter Two, I present a more thorough review of the literature to help contextualize this research and propose conceptual models that structure the project further. In Chapter Three, I expound upon the methods of data collection and analyses described here and position my research perspectives within existing methodological frameworks. In Chapter Four, I evidence the disparate concerns of men and women as they navigate jamtronica festival event arenas, exposing a critical cleft in scene-idealized utopian claims. These divergences lend additional insight to the dangers that festival-going women perceive and face during their event participation.

Chapter Five dissects common gender and sexual prescriptions within jamtronica music festival scenes, tracing their links to wider (sub)cultural inequalities, such as objectification and sexual double standards. I investigate common displays of festival-going masculinity in Chapter Six, and how these performances impact scene dynamics that enhance existing dimensions of gender-sexual domination. In light of the threats that festival-going women face (as described in Chapters Four and Six), I review the reasons as to why women continue their participation in these risk-laden subcultural scenes, and how these negotiations may prove transformative for both subcultural and mainstream contexts of gender and sexuality in Chapter Seven.



I conclude the work by overviewing the project's key findings and implications in Chapter Eight. Then, I briefly recommend courses of action for various jamtronica community stakeholders as to better integrate gender-conscious and violence prevention and intervention programming into jamtronica festival scene activities, discourses, and expectations moving into the future.

## **Chapter Two – Situating the Study: Theoretical Orientation, Literature Review, and Conceptual Frameworks**

The purpose of this study is to explore issues surrounding sexual violence perpetration at jamtronica music festivals. More specifically, I seek to understand how the norms of gender and sexuality in this seemingly transformative subcultural arena complicate mainstream paradoxes of womanhood. In this chapter, I first present a theoretical orientation to contextualize my interpretive frameworks. Next, I provide a two-part literature review that unites several bodies of work. These range from general gender theorizations to more specific research about paradoxes of women's sexuality, later spanning subcultural definitions and forms, as well as the unique conditions that make jamtronica music festivals both transformative and treacherous.

### **THEORETICAL ORIENTATION**

As a sociologist, I orient my work toward an understanding of complex and interrelated realities, which frame individuals' subjective meanings and experiences. In this outlook, ideas, symbols, objects, and relationships take on multiple, variable meanings. These meanings situate within social, political, and historical contexts. As meanings develop through social interactions with others, they dialectically guide individual and institutional values and processes: social structure and social action. In this project, I dissect these social interactions to better understand how personal, individual realities and meanings simultaneously diverge and converge, cause social cohesion, and conflict, and contribute to the construction of larger sites of institutionalized power. I identify both as a social constructivist and a symbolic interactionist.

I posit that the meanings, processes, and prescriptions (here, those of gender and sexuality) that people derive from their cultural experiences are social constructions. Further, these social constructions situate within and contribute to several overlapping frameworks of identity and power. To frame how people organize and act upon structural forces, I draw from three premises that Blumer (1969) suggests. First, people ascribe meaning to things and act in response to the meanings that they offer those items, interpersonal relations, and values. Meaning may source from introspection and reflexive practice; however, meaning itself does not originate within a vacuum. Instead, individuals learn, situate, and develop means to convey their intended ideas, assumptions, and expectations within communicative exchanges. Rather than reacting to another's use of these tools ("actions") as mere stimuli, interactions become sites where people express themselves and interpret each other, seeking information that allows them to adapt their behavior and understanding based on what they believe to be communicated. This process is mediated by "symbols"- tools that individuals use to define, analyze, and evaluate the social world around them. Symbols offer prescriptions of (re)action and meaning-making, constituting the second premise. When people interact, each participant engages in an internal interpretative process which requires them to use their existing knowledge of language, meanings, and symbols to project themselves into the positions of others. During these exchanges, participants use verbal, symbolic, and behavioral actions to represent themselves and express their worldviews, as they concurrently imbue hierarchy, status, belonging, and fixity to social categories and individuals. These ever-negotiated symbols and (inter-)actions offer scholars insight into

how everyday life and interaction contribute to personal identity, social action, and social organization – an extension of Blumer’s third premise.

To connect these multiple meanings and realities to larger structural analyses, I draw from intersectional feminist perspectives. These perspectives posit that the culturally-situated social construction of gender acts as both an identity and a social location. In this, gender is a critical axis of categorizing both self and others, prompting behavior, and structuring power, resources, symbols, and meaning. In this perspective, gender is not only a means of social structure (organizing hierarchies) but an identity that prompts social action. Because gender cannot be analyzed as separate from other sites of social location, other identities such as race, sexuality, and class intertwine with experiences of gender (Crenshaw 1991; West and Fenstermaker 1995). These categories co-construct each other, through a variety of means: personal interaction, diffuse discourses that shape larger ideologies, and institutionalized policies and programs that naturalize inequality. It is within these categories that we may (or may not) hold unifying social understandings, based upon gender, sexual orientation, class, race-ethnicity, and other social locations ascribing difference. Experiences of power, privilege, and marginalization organize the impacts that these categories hold. Thus, subjective experiences and social categories result in objective consequences. Within this intersectional feminist perspective, I acknowledge the dialectical relationship where larger social categories shape one’s personal identities and experiences of the world. Such a position acknowledges diverse standpoints and interpretations of reality and considers how frameworks of social categories impact social action and organization around these groupings.

This project's analyses are a result of the co-construction of my own realities and meaning-making as they respond to (and converse with) those of research participants. I interpret these interactions with intentional sensitivity toward larger, overlapping systems of privilege. By offering academic review and space where research participants may voice their potentially marginalized or unheard concerns, I integrate interpretivist and transformative paradigms. I intend to use the data and results from this research to inform future gender-conscious, anti-violence policy and programming suggestions within wide-ranging communities of praxis, in addition to festival stakeholders, through the subsequent projects this dissertation yields.

## **Literature Review**

### ***PART ONE: THEORIZING GENDER, PONDERING THE PARADOXES OF SEXUALITY***

#### **GENDER AND SEXUALITY AS INTERSECTIONAL SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS**

Many symbolic interactionist and social constructivist scholars contend that gender is a contextually-situated, interactional process; that is, it is a “routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction” (West and Zimmerman 1987: 125). Although the “normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” inform social categorization and expectations of gender, gender is not something that one may “have” or simply “is.” Instead, these scholars argue that gender is “done” by mimicking previous codes and prescribed interactions which prove socially “successful.” The ritualization and institutionalization of these interactions contribute to common gender conventions (Goffman 1963). These collective interactions shape the

gendered attribution of tasks, discourses, and power; thus, society presumes these orders and expectations to result from naturalized gender and sexual difference (Goffman 1976).

Yet, gender is anything but natural. It is a framework of behavior and understandings learned through socialization, that held in place by systems of “accountability” and “allocation” (West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender accountability involves the external and internal policing of interactions, when one may assess and give feedback on the “success” of the gender performance of others or oneself. Culturally-informed networks of meanings, norms, ideals, and symbols frame these interactions. These networks provide a “toolbox” of “acceptable” attitudes and behaviors that people use to “pass” as a member of a gender (Goffman 1963; Schippers 2002; Schudson 1989). Successful gender performances allow individuals to capitalize on relationally-distributed privileges; the gender allocation process distributes these rewards. Gender allocation also regulates gender performance as it relates to people’s presumed biological sex, assigning resources, tasks, power, and agency with respect to the sex category they are presumed to best “fit.” Thus, gender allocation processes help structure interactional and individualized accountability rituals within broader systems of inequality.

The presumption of naturalized, binarized gender difference legitimizes the exclusions, imbalances, and hierarchies that underpin contemporary gender orders. Both interactional and discursive processes naturalize gender inequality (Butler 1990). These processes and discourses can be diffuse, as the presence of gender hierarchies (as well as the forces that construct them) are not always identifiable or purposeful. As such, sociologists cannot view gender inequality simply as the outcome of deliberate interactions to serve patriarchal interests. Instead, a variety of symbols, expectations,

“practices, institutions, and technologies that sustain positions of dominance and subordination in a particular domain” guide these interactional systems (Bordo 1993: 167).

Experiences and institutions of sexuality, gender, race, and class are inseparable; they give meaning and structure to everyday life as they are experienced simultaneously (Andersen and Collins 1992; Combahee River Collective [1977] 2007; Crenshaw 1991). Though each of these social locations is a unique element of one’s identity and larger social structure, they are also mutually-constitutive in producing inequality through interactional and institutional processes (Schwalbe et al. 2000; West and Fenstermaker 1995). Like gender, performative and discursive mechanisms hold race, class, and sexuality in place, naturalizing inequality as the assumed outcome of embodied or cultural traits (Glenn 1999). The presumed innateness of these networks, discourses, and interactions lead to differential access to resources, power, and representation.

Bettie (2003) admonishes that failing to use intersectional perspectives in one’s analyses may inadvertently reinforce problematic claims of essentialized difference. Further, one may overlook conceptual links between axes of social location, potentially misrepresenting critical features of empirical data. A majority of the festival participants that I interview in this project are demographically homogenous: claiming white, middle-class, heterosexual identities and belongings. Despite this homogeneity, intersectionality loses no potential application within this project. The concept and consideration of intersectionality has received criticism as an “empty” phrase or “buzzword” (Davis 2008). However, I specifically consider gender’s intimate co-construction with the meanings, prescriptions, and hierarchies that attend sexuality, as discursive and

interactional accountabilities of gender are highly dependent on contextually-situated meanings of sexuality (Denzin 1993; Pascoe 2007).<sup>1</sup> Whereas “successful” gender performances hinge upon the performative and relational demonstration of (or inference to) culturally-approved sexual practices, desires, and identifications (Mahay, Laumann, and Michaels 2005; West and Fenstermaker 1995), “unsuccessful” gender interactions or displays receive stigma, usually through denigrating, homophobic slurs of sexuality. These slurs frequently have little to do with addressing the “deviant’s” presumed sexuality, but instead, work to police and maintain boundaries of “appropriate” gender performance (Butler 1995; Connell 1987; Kimmel 2012; Pascoe 2007). Sexuality’s deeply-engrained cultural “attachment” with gender suggests a selection (albeit narrow) of symbols, meanings, and performances that demonstrate adherence to gender “accountability.”<sup>2</sup> Individuals’ (lack of) sexual activities contribute toward interactional norms of heterosexuality. No less, formal, yet contradictorily diffuse, institutional regulation of families, work, education, and media underpin sexuality’s systems of “accountability” and “allocation.” Failure to comply with culturally-situated norms of sexuality can result in penalties that impact one’s physical, social, financial, emotional,

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<sup>1</sup> Despite this primarily homogenous sample (primarily white, middle-class, and heterosexually-identifying), I incorporate considerations of how racial and class privileges and/or exclusions impact the phenomena I observe within my analyses, as to not obscure the role that whiteness and middle-classness has in shaping the gender-sexual (dis)privileges that underpin jamtronica music festival event participation and scene memberships.

<sup>2</sup> Though gender helps to frame experiences and theorizations of sexuality (just as sexuality frames experiences and theorization of gender), the “implicitness” of this connection does not encompass the vast and variable existing configurations of gender identities and expressions, sexualities, and combinations therein (Vance 1984). To reflect respondents’ identifications, I primarily use, albeit reluctantly, binarized, “sex = gender” models of gender (focusing on men and women) throughout this study.



and other forms of well-being (Rubin 1984). These entrenched systems of privilege and consequence affirm existing co-constructions of gender and sexuality through interactional and institutional practices (Butler 1990). The formal and informal discourses and practices of gender ensure hierarchical, heteronormative “allocations” to sexual identities and performances. Similarly, the “accountability” attending sexualities reinforce privileges that reward “normative” performances of gender.

### *Theorizing Masculinity*

Anglo-Western gender binaries are observably hierarchical and exclusive, as they place females in opposition to males, men in contrast to women, and masculinity as a foil to femininity (Connell 1995; Kimmel 1994). Within many mainstream contexts, masculine attributes include: not being viewed as effeminate, weak, or gay; not expressing emotion save for culturally-sanctioned events, like sports; holding positions of power, wealth, and status; and, taking risks to demonstrate rebellion and resistance to domination by others (Brannon and David 1976). Though quite contextually- and culturally-dependent, almost forty years later, these four qualities still overwhelmingly inform and direct men’s pursuit of this idealized yet unattainable set of characteristics: “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 1987).

Mainstream sociocultural discourses demand that men act as sexual subjects: to be aggressive, dominant, and unconstrained in their sexual activity and desire. “Proper” gender displays require to men intertwine performances of masculinity with (hetero)sexuality: viewing sexual voracity as a form of intra-gender competition (Messner 2002); suppressing emotional attachments in sex and with sexual partners; and, openly communicating their sexual objectification of women to other men (Bird 1996).

Learning to treat women as passive recipients of sexual desire, observation, and action is critical to asserting one's masculinity; relatives, peers, and media socialize boys into the "proper" power dynamics and interactional rituals for the "consumption of women" (Kimmel 2005, 2008). Pascoe terms this co-construction of masculinity through the control and command of women's sexuality as "compulsive heterosexuality" (2007). Men's positioning as sexual subjects gives them a powerful tool – "the gaze" – a type of institutionalized permission to authoritatively and voyeuristically consume sexual objects (women or "the feminized") as a means to perform masculinity.

Across differences in sexual orientation, class, and race-ethnicity, women frequently report non-elicited, sexualized physical assessment from men. Men's surveillance of women is naturalized and valued as masculine. Femininity, in turn, is characterized by non-consensual, objectifying review (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Calogero, Tanteleff-Dunn, and Thompson 2011). Catharine MacKinnon argues that the widespread and normalized sexual objectification of women contributes to naturalizing men's sexual subjectivity over women's objectified (and therefore subordinated) sexual and social roles (1987, 1989). Further, Dworkin (1997) claims that this broader power imbalance inherently extracts women's consent, concreting a fundamentally exploitative sexual relationship regardless of any interactional consent of heterosexual partners. This exchange reinforces the power of Butler's "heterosexual matrix" (1995): tying men's culturally-valued performances of masculinity to their heterosexual consumption of

women and celebrating women's idealized performances of femininity that contradictorily deflect yet entice men's sexualized review.<sup>3</sup>

Although men may reject the sexual objectification of women by refusing to personally participate in interactions that contribute to such conditions, they must also avoid being subjected to the review or "gaze" of others. Interactionally, use of the "gaze" demonstrates men's ability to command hegemonic performances of masculinity (Bordo 1999; Queen 1997). Institutionally, this "gaze" reifies masculine dominance and sexual subjectivity within gender and sexuality, as women are frequently the objects of sexualized review in mainstream media, commercial, and cultural spheres. Hegemonic forms of masculinity demonstrate the centrality of masculine dominance in sexuality, as well as in many other realms of social life (i.e., politics, work, and education).

By performing symbolic boundary maintenance within interpersonal interactions – a practice that Schwalbe (2005) terms "manhood acts" – men earn peer esteem for their homosocial subjugation of women and other "feminized" masculinities, such as those of gay men (Cahill 1989; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Grazian 2007; Pascoe 2007; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Relying heavily on the objectifying "gaze," men gain masculine prestige through emphasizing their sexual consumption of women and degrading other men. These small, everyday, interactional practices reinforce larger manifestations of gender inequality: homophobia, the subjugation of women, and the normalization of sexual violence (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013; Kimmel 1994).

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<sup>3</sup> The heterosexual matrix also impacts non-heterosexual couplings and configurations through the imposition of heterosexual gender hierarchies and expectations onto gay, lesbian, and other queer relationships. Rich (1980) terms this phenomenon "compulsory heterosexuality."

Additionally, these subjugations impact other hierarchies of social location: race, class, and sexuality (Crenshaw 1991; Pascoe 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

### *Theorizing Femininity*

Contemporary conceptions of femininity are diverse and fragmented. Some scholars characterize femininity as a literal “no-man’s land”: encompassing all that masculinity is not (Kimmel 2012). Others suggest that femininity is a construct that maintains contextually-situated and power-laden boundaries of gender and sexuality (Kane 2006; Pascoe 2007). In any case, theorizations of femininity are frequently relational, conceptualized in comparison to masculinity. This dynamic explains how institutional and interactional processes subjugate women (Bartky 2010; Bordo 1989, 1993), encouraging them to take on roles of sexual objects: the passive targets of sexual desire and the recipients of sex acts.

Sexual objectification is the process of becoming a sex object. Women are disproportionately reduced to their bodies or physical appearances, or evaluated through their success and complicity in fulfilling the sexual desires of others (Bartky 1990; Frederickson and Roberts 1997). MacKinnon (1987) extends this definition, noting the centrality of “the gaze” in objectification processes: “A sex object is defined on the basis of its looks, in terms of its usability for sexual pleasure, such as both the looking – the quality of the gaze, including its points of view – and the definition according to use becomes eroticised as a part of the sex itself” (173).

Women experience several manifestations of this objectification: the coercion to augment or minimize parts of their body, fragmenting these parts from a larger whole; the encouragement to engage in beautification and adornment practices to which men are not

equivalently pressured; and, the perception that they are alienated from their bodies through seeing oneself solely as a body or feeling separated from personhood altogether (Aubrey, Henson, Hopper, and Smith 2009; Bartky 1990; Calogero, Tanteleff-Dunn, and Thompson 2011).

An economic incentive exists for women to cede to sexual objectification processes. In many social contexts, bodies are a form of social and economic currency which allow women to trade sexual acts, access, or inference to the prior to gain power, in an attempt to overcome their marginalization in political and economic fields (Engle 2010; Ronai and Ellis 1989; Tolman, Anderson, and Belmonte 2015; Wesely 2002). Subsequently, women's sexual desirability transforms into a "commodity" that can be metaphorically or quite literally bought and sold. Throughout sexual objectification processes, women's bodies endure a type of Marxian commodity fetishism (MacKinnon 1982): ascribing value to their sexuality as a product generated and exchanged independently from women's labor. This not only serves to obscure exploitative gender dynamics within the heterosexual matrix, but also to naturalize women's alienation from their bodies, from their selves, and from others.

As women control, beautify, commodify, and fragment their bodies, they attune and defer their behaviors to the patriarchal "gaze." In return, they receive social or sexual rewards, sometimes in the form of provisional immunity from violence or threats thereof. This process requires women to exhibit a form of hyper-reflexivity, as they take on the viewpoints of both the (assumedly hetero-masculine) consumer and the consumed. Women's sexuality and desires shift from experiencing personal pleasure to prioritizing the approval of the masculine Other through "docility" (Bartky 2010) – eroticizing

women's "disciplined" compliance with culturally-specific, yet unrealistic, beauty norms and concession to sexualized surveillance as markers of "proper" feminine gender performance (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Lee 2003; Saul 2003; Wolf [1991] 2002).

Consequently, women's sexual pleasure no longer comes from their participation in sex acts but instead generates from their ability to be consumed. This perspective normalizes heterosexual exhibitionist/voyeur dynamics, masculinizing social and sexual subjectivity.

Just as the performative "becoming" of an object to be consumed articulates femininity, masculinity and manhood are articulated through the "use" and control of objects – here, women and women's sexuality (Dworkin 1989). Men do not have to physically dominate women to articulate their gender-sexual power. Instead, women endure a diffuse system of sociocultural pressures to control, modify, accentuate, display, deprive, and exchange their bodies, serving to sustain this dynamic. These interactional, discursive, symbolic, and institutional practices and processes: socialize and naturalize gender inequalities; help to punish those who deviate from hegemonic ideals, and, further intertwine larger hierarchies and conventions of gender and sexuality.

As sexual objects, women are critical components of men's ability to assert masculinity; they are the target of the consuming "gaze" on both interpersonal and structural levels. Advertising and media industries commonly depict sexualized women as part of their marketing strategies, thus economizing the consumption of women's fragmented representations. Men, though also eligible to be targets of sexualized objectification, do not experience this type of economization or sexualization in the same

ways or at the same rates as women (Wolf [1991] 2002).<sup>4</sup> Thus, sociocultural discourses frame women (and more so, representations of women) as social, political, and cultural “currency:” items or ideas to be traded and benefited from (Dellinger and Williams 1997; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijan, and Longo 1991).

Connell (1987) attributes this idealized, “emphasized femininity” to be “oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (183). In this conceptualization of femininity, women do not exist in and for themselves, but for men and to establish men’s heterosexuality. Thus, “proper” gender performance for women does not take place for the sake of women but instead serves as a tool for men to use to resist domination by other men (Kimmel 2008). Yet, only focusing on women’s partial, subordinate role as a token in articulating masculinity glosses over the rich and multiple aspects of women’s lived realities or the complex constellations of gender and sexuality they create. By delving further into the dimensions of women’s agency and their experiences of sexual and social “danger,” researchers may better imagine emancipatory alternative futures of femininity.

## **PARADOXES OF WOMEN’S SEXUALITY**

Although many theorists rightfully recognize the interconnected ways that systems of gender and sexuality frequently disadvantage women, an absolutist abidance to these dynamics overlooks the variety of ways that women do exercise agency within (and in resistance to) asymmetrical gender-sexual orders. As women navigate the world, they encounter opportunities to enhance their goals and sense of self. Concurrently, they

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<sup>4</sup> Although popular cultural representations of men and women are both increasingly sexualized in nature, women experience an unmatched escalation in this phenomenon; so much so that it has been termed “hypersexualization” (Hatton and Trautner 2011).

face a myriad of threats to their physical, social, emotional and sexual well-being. In identifying the potential threats that women face (and the opportunities they seek in the face of this adversity), researchers may gain insight as to how women negotiate the paradoxical demands of gender and sexuality that simultaneously serve to endanger and emancipate them.

Contemporary discussions of gender and sexuality are highly fragmented (Butler 2013; Rubin 1984), giving rise to bodies of thought in which women are able to reject prescriptions of emphasized, sexually-chaste femininity in favor of a more “empowered,” sexually-savvy presentation. As the beneficiaries of their feminist predecessors’ activism, increasingly popular gender discourses frame women as having achieved labor, social, and sexual parity with men, though stark gender inequalities prevail (Gill and Scharff 2011; McRobbie 2009). This era characterizes women as assumedly “equal” and “empowered” subjects, who are motivated by their own personal needs and ambitions and are unhindered by the oppressions that their forerunners faced. In this “post-feminist” era, women’s sexualities become the products of “individualized choices that they [women] make knowingly, over which they can and should exert control and thus for which they are held individually accountable” (Tolman, Anderson, and Belmonte 2015: 301). This new system of “choice as empowerment” enhances women’s personal claims to sex and sexuality, broadening prescriptive norms of femininity as well as the discourses that women use to understand and frame their sexualities (Bay-Cheng 2015). However, modeling new forms of femininity and sexuality in respect to the surmise of individual “choice” may falsely presume equal access and consequences of deploying one’s sexuality. Historical tropes of race-ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation evoke



troublesome, even consequential, relationships between womanhood and sexuality; this seemingly limits the benefactors of this “gender revolution” to those privileged across other social locations (Anderson 2006; Butler 2013; Davy 1995).

Historically, women’s sexual paradoxes negotiated a “slut-virgin” dichotomy (Tanenbaum 1999), where manifesting either “extreme” garnered reprimand. As women’s sexual agency is increasingly celebrated, new demands overturn and complicate this previous prescription: promoting the celebrated “appearance of sexiness” (Levy 2006: 30) but avoiding the display of real sexual desire and agency which may still penalize them (Bay-Cheng 2015; Lamb 2010; Tolman 2002). Even as wider support women’s sexual subjectivity gains momentum, women and girls are disproportionately less likely to expect pleasure or empowerment from their sexual experiences (Maxwell and Aggleton 2010; Tolman 2002). Elevating women’s performances of sexual desirability as virtuous while denying women the lived pleasures and agencies attending sexuality maintains systems of objectification and gender-sexual inequalities, disguising them within manifestations of “augmented choice.”

Sexual subjectivity is highly contextual, as definitions and allocations of agency shift across time and culture (Tolman et al. 2015). It is also highly situational, changing over types of interactions and moving between perceptions of one’s power and vulnerability (Wesely 2002). When hegemonic prescriptions of femininity hinge upon one’s sexualized appeal to others, articulating personal sexual desire or agency (“choice”) violates prescribed object statuses. In disrupting this system of gender and sexual “accountabilities,” women may be subject to criticism and sanction, losing allocational privileges and “justifying” the physical, social, and sexual dangers “proper” (inagentic,

emphasized) femininity aims to deter. Despite the “post-feminist” claim that women possess more choice in gender and sexual performances, emerging expectations of femininity add new layers to the sexual paradoxes women negotiate. While likely intended to broaden opportunities for women, this choice-driven cultural turn fosters “a narrowing of the culturally acceptable ways for women to ‘do’ femininity in mainstream popular culture” (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013: 120). Though current scholarship theoretically maps the contextual shifts women face in negotiating sexuality, more work is needed to illuminate what processes women undertake in considering the benefits and consequences of these sexual paradoxes, especially those who participate in subcultural scenes.

### *The Pleasure-Danger Binary*

Women’s sexuality exists as a site of “pleasure, choice, and autonomy,” but also “simultaneously a domain of restriction, repression, and danger” (Vance 1982: 38). Vance labels this tension the “sexual pleasure-danger binary,” as it describes the dualistic nature of women’s experiences of sex and sexuality as they are framed by patriarchal structures and interactions that threaten women’s well-being. Importantly, this theoretical model also considers that these experiences of sex and sexuality concurrently serve as tools to cope with this oppression. In the negotiation of these threats and opportunities, women attempt to maximize personal pleasure and fulfillment which offer them tools of resilience and for resistance. However, consistent physical, social, and sexual risks frame these interactional and embodied negotiations. As Wesely (2002) concisely states, “the very body that gives women power also represents the loss of this power” (1191).

*Dissecting Sexual Danger*

Experiences of gendered threat discourage women's sexual expression and encourage women's adoption of self-surveilling practices. Girls as young as elementary- and middle-school age learn to self-control and monitor their behaviors and their bodies in an attempt to repel the disproportionate sexual harassment they experience compared to their male peers (Murnen and Smolak 2000; Murnen, Smolak, Mills, and Good 2003). Women learn that "managed" sexualities are critical tools of avoiding physical and emotional threats, particularly those of sexual violence and social defamation (i.e., slut-shaming, victim-blaming) upholding sexually and socially "proper" femininities (Brownmiller [1975] 2007; Tolman, Anderson, and Belmonte 2015; Vance 1984; Weitz 2010). In Anglo-Western societies, pervasive discourses about men's sexuality naturalize and "justify" masculine aggression, violence, and lust. These messages not only render men unaccountable for their acts of social subordination and sexual predation, but also coerce women into acting as monitors and gatekeepers of men's sexuality – suppressing women's own desires while concurrently holding them accountable to manage men's societally-unchecked lust.

Kelly (1988) defines violence as a non-hierarchical spectrum of abuse ranging from verbal threat to physical abuse. However, common understandings of the term tend to focus selectively on particular types of violence such as visible physical abuse or penetrative sexual assault. These narrow conceptions deeply gender dimensions of violence; more insidiously, they obscure and diminish opportunities to address the myriad forms in which violence manifests. As a result, popular consensus tends to identify lesser-acknowledged forms of violence as symptomatic of larger offenses, instead of

offenses in and of themselves (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013). Yet, many women who have experienced victimization report that the impacts of psychological, verbal, and spiritual abuse are just as, if not more severe and longer-lasting than physical violence (DeKeseredy 2011; Renzetti 2008). Creating “hierarchies of violence” may contribute to already low reporting rates and detract from the broader systemic address of the myriad ways in which gendered violence takes form (DeKeseredy and Schwarz 2013).

What results is a gendered experience and expectation of fear, with many women and girls behaving (or preparing to behave) in response to dangers they perceive (Koskela 1999; Valentine 1992), as “the experience of violent intrusion – or the threat of such intrusion – is a common threat in the fabric of women’s everyday lives” (Renzetti 1995: 3). Experiences of threat are identifiably gender-disparate; boys and men do not experience similar types or frequencies of physical or sexual review (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, and Thompson 2011). Adolescent girls are five times more likely to fear victimization at school, and are three times more likely to sustain long-term social and/or psychological harm than boys after incidents of sexual harassment (Bryant 1993). College-aged women endure normalized physical and verbal harassment that is unmatched in their male peers (Landry and Mercurio 2009). Moreover, adult women report more frequent and explicit forms of sexual violence than men in the forms of unwanted sexual advances, verbal harassment, non-consensual touch, and coerced sexual activity (Morardi, Dirks, and Matteson 2005; MacMillan, Nierobiez, and Welsh 2000; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, and Ferguson 2001). One in five women reports being raped in their lifetimes. Nearly one in two women experience sexual violence other than rape (Black et al. 2011). Although women’s victimization is appallingly commonplace,

women are still routinely blamed for the violence they endure, particularly in scenarios when they are perceived to have committed some form of gender or sexual transgression (Johnson and Dawson 2011; Marcus 1992).

“Victim-blaming” feeds into discourses of misinformation about sexual violence perpetration, termed “rape myths” by Gavey (2005). Rape myths are “any prejudices, stereotypes, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists” (Lam and Roman 2009: 20). These myths inform institutional policies and practices, acting as the discursive building blocks that maintain widespread tolerance for sexual violence, particularly incidences victimizing women (Gavey 2005). Anglo-Western societies trivialize, glamorize, or even eroticize sexual violence through popular media representations of, or reference to, these images and discourses (Powell and Henry 2014). Distorted public opinions and discourses sustain rape cultures and obscure the prevalence, brutality, and impacts of sexual violence. A “rape culture” is a culture where social, cultural, and structural discourses minimize and trivialize sexual violence to the point where it is not only tolerated but in some cases is acceptable or justified (Buchwald et al. 2005; New York Feminists [1971] 1974). Victim-blaming also contributes to the dearth of incident reporting, severely impacting how women access post-trauma services (Campbell and Townsend 2011) and the extent to which sexual violence is prosecuted, even in instances of severe or obvious abuse (DeKeseredy and Flack 2007; Powell and Henry 2014). Widespread suppression of reporting makes the perpetration of sexual violence difficult to “deter, detect, police, or punish” (Powell and Henry 2014: 2) and impedes the ability to provide effective survivor care, much less, needed cultural and legislative changes.

Many existing works on gendered risk seem to focus on women's victimization, rendering those who perpetrate it absent from review. Insofar as men compete against each other to avoid emasculation and subordination from their peers, these homosocial interactions may take the form of collective sexual harassment (Quinn 2002). Within the model of "male peer support" (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013), men provide other members of their groups with narrative justifications and situational encouragement for committing (sexual) violence against women. Here, homosocial competition augments heterosexual predation, positioning other men as "the intended audience of competitive games of sexual reputation and peer status, public displays of situational dominance and rule transgression, and in-group rituals of solidarity and loyalty" (Grazian 2007: 224). In this, women become a tool for demonstrating one's masculinity – not to the victim, but toward other men in an effort to build cohesion and peer confidence. Men who do not actively participate in abusive activities are not exempt from blame. They are similarly complicit within sustaining norms and narratives of heteropatriarchal oppression; as they remain silent and safe from masculine peer review, they normalize these practices and benefit from the general subordination of women (Connell 1995; DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013; Demetriou 2001; Kimmel 2008; Messner 2002).

Gendered risk interlinks with sexuality, as women are more likely to be victimized in ways that damage and detract from their security to freely pursue their sexual desires and satisfaction. Women's recurring experiences of gendered threat (specifically those of sexual violence) begin at an early age and continue throughout their lives. Both women's perceptions of risk and subjugating discourses that blame women for their victimization suppress and stigmatize women's sexuality in an "absence of

deterrence”: “a lack of punishment or the absence of negative consequences is partially responsible for the amount of violence against women today” (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013: 61), ensuring men’s dominance both within the bedroom and in broader society.

### *The Transformative Potential of (Sexual) Pleasure*

The normalization of danger within women’s lives and sexualities “has the unwitting effect of repeating the patriarchal script, which attempts to present women as passive victims,” notes Bakare-Yusef (2013: 30). She continues, “Positioning women as weak or damaged subjects gives renewed legitimacy to patriarchally-motivated discourses of control and protection. What this does is to set artificial limits in experiential, political, social, and symbolic terms” (30). In this, Bakare-Yusef echoes a growing literature that inquires as to how women’s sexuality can subvert the re-institutionalization of patriarchal interactions and institutions by using sexuality as a tool to pursue women’s personal and collective interests.

In light of the many physical, social, emotional and sexual threats that women face, voluntarily seeking sexual pleasure can serve to augment women’s sense of esteem, identity (Adriaens 2009) and subjectivity (Cahill 2011; Nussbaum 1995). As this pursuit reframes women’s sexualities to act as tools to identify and modify oppressive gender-sexual arrangements, women may eschew masculine “control” over sexuality as to exact choice within sexual interactions and materialize entitlements to sexual safety and respect (Adriaens 2009; Butler 2013; Queen 1997; Tolman 2002). Women may use their sexuality to collect social and financial rewards, allowing them greater status, privilege, and power (Tolman, Anderson, and Belmonte 2015; Wesely 2002). Additionally, women’s sovereign command of their sexuality may prospectively foster interpersonal

bonds and intimate gratifications that aid in the daily sustenance of women, despite the gendered threats they perceive and encounter (Vance 1982).

Emergent literature promoting a “sex-positive” approach to women’s experiences of sexuality seeks to “reclaim” and re-imagine a previously-circuitous system of gender, victimization, and risk. Instead of seeing sexuality, femininity, and women’s bodies solely as sites of incurred and inevitable danger, women’s pursuits of sexual and social pleasure convey a type of “sexual and embodied agency [that is] potentially more threatening and disruptive to a hetero-patriarchal controlling logic than focus on danger and violation” (Bakare-Yusef 2013: 29). Women’s bodies are sites where gender and sexual inequality manifest through variform threats; however, these same bodies, identities, and discourses have immense potential to act as tools to resist hierarchies and conventions that naturalize women’s subjugation, perceptions of risk, and experiences of violence.

Women negotiate conflicting expectations of idealized womanhood within their everyday lives; yet, jamtronica music festival events present women with additional dilemmas. The carnivalesque atmosphere of these arenas claims to offer opportunities for women to escape the mainstream constraints and inequalities of gender they face. Concurrently, festival-going women also contend with an enhanced likelihood of experiencing dangers (often posed by festival-going men) that accompany the libertine and libertarian subcultural arena. In this, jamtronica festival events act as sites of heightened negotiations of the paradoxical demands of femininity and its interlinkage with both mainstream and subcultural expectations of gender and sexuality.



## ***PART TWO: JAMTRONICA– (SUB)CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS AND RISK***

### **JAMTRONICA: SUBCULTURE, SCENE, OR SOCIETY?**

Music festivals are a diverse pop cultural phenomenon (McKay 2015), ranging in genre, scope, demographics, extent of immersion, fan cohesion, and nature of attendees' values, behaviors, and group identification. Despite a recent boom in jamtronica festival popularity, labeling these festivals as a component of larger mainstream trends overlooks the nuanced claims to membership that festival-goers make. Contradictorily, prominent scholars within popular music and music culture studies would likely hesitate to identify festival-goers' shared behaviors and perspectives as a true "subculture." The term, to some scholars, evokes an attribution of classed dimensions to its participants (Bennett 1999). To others, describing fan cultures as subcultures implies a less-powerful, deviant position within larger social hierarchies; further, it infers that group members actively acknowledge and articulate this lesser position as a productive component of their identities (Farrugia 2004). Instead, the demographic, ideological, and behavioral patterns of jamtronica music fan and event cultures are deeply contextual, as member participation is episodic, contextual, and ever-evolving.

Alternatively, some scholars endorse the use of "scene" to define the nature of jamtronica festival culture, as it reflects the "diffuse, temporal, and continually shifting dynamics of these cultural groups" (Kavanaugh and Anderson 2008: 202). Scenes foster varying levels of cultural engagement, addressing the episodic participation, diverse and impermanent memberships, and strategically-employed member identification that characterize music festival demographics. Describing festival culture as a scene

acknowledges the overall lack of group cohesion that jamtronica fans demonstrate. Further, labeling festival culture as the process and product of a scene accounts for the multiplicity and overlap of fan bases within geographic areas, particularly as members of festival culture may not interact with each other. Many definitions of music scenes center on fan cultures that are localized or place-based, even as they take diasporic forms over virtual fields (Bennett and Peterson 2004). While smaller, place-based festival fan cultures do exist, the phenomena that jamtronica festivals produce are not inherently tied to a singular place or place-based participation, revealing a shortcoming in current conceptual classifications.

In light of these critiques and limitations, I use the term “subcultural scene” and its iterations to describe the demographic, ideological, and behavioral patterns found in jamtronica music festival communities and cultures. This is not to frame these separate terms as interchangeable, nor to add to the lack of conceptual clarity that this substitution generates (Kavanaugh and Anderson 2008). Instead, I employ “subcultural scene” to highlight the temporal and contextual dimensions of a multi-sited, episodic, and ever-evolving festival culture. Further, I use this term to denote the member-articulated difference between festival and mainstream cultures, frequently marked by event-participants’ engagement in behaviors that would be legally or socially sanctioned within everyday contexts. Lastly, I use this classification to recognize the overarching phenomena within festival cultures that transcend location, time, and their dynamic memberships.

## A TALE OF TWO GENRES

Music festivals evolve from long-standing traditions of ritual gathering and community-building. They are primarily event-based, attract geographically and demographically diffuse audiences, and draw from a wide variety of locally oriented “scenes” (Dowd, Liddle, and Nelson 2004; Dowd 2014; St John 2015).<sup>5</sup> Contemporary jamtronica festivals derive from the countercultural movements of the 1960s, particularly those associated with the Monterey International Pop Festival of 1967 and the Woodstock Music and Art Fair of 1969. Modern day music festivals, especially those that fit within “jamtronica” genres appropriate and translate the values of the post-war hippie subculture into contemporary contexts (Issitt 2009).

The 1990s revival of folk and blues music revitalized improvisational music genres, during a time where media outlets actively stigmatized band-based followings, i.e., the Grateful Dead (Hunt 2008). The “new wave” of music festivals was promoted by localized music scenes, the expansion of the internet, and participants’ “tape trade.”<sup>6</sup> Contemporary jam artists blend genres of funk, techno, bluegrass, all types of rock, and jazz into improvisational compositions available to fans all over the world (Connors 2013). In the early days of jam band revival, artists banded together to form multi-day concert events, drawing from performance legacies of rock bands from the 1960s. Over time, these performances introduced overnight camping and vending opportunities for

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<sup>5</sup> Despite the scene’s geographic diffusion and its ever-evolving state, music festivals’ performer genres frequently impact the events’ fan demographics. The demographics of jamtronica festival participants are increasingly diverse; however, they primarily draw participants from white, middle-class backgrounds.

<sup>6</sup> The “tape trade” is a practice of recording live music performances with the intent to duplicate and distribute copies for wider consumption, often without pay to the recorder or royalties paid to the recorded performers.

participants to immerse themselves fully within events, creating subcultural networks and incentivizing event participation that extends beyond the passive consumption of music (Conners 2013; Hunt 2008).

As several decades have passed since their contemporary revival, the musical forms that these festivals take are increasingly diverse; yet, they frequently merge “traditional” improvisational performances with electronic dance music stylings. Electronic dance music (termed “EDM”) emerges out of the disco and dancehall genres of the 1970s (Gelder 2007). Disco declined in popularity after its brief boom as it was stigmatized as inauthentic or “processed” in comparison to popular live rock performances of the era. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, disco was refashioned into an emergent subcultural genre. EDM performances (or “raves”) were heavily policed as they came into mainstream view, as law enforcement and policymakers associated the events with drug use, hedonism, and health risks (Anderson 2009; Kavanaugh and Anderson 2008). In the early 2000s, rampant legal and financial crackdowns on rave communities drove the subculture even further underground, creating a need for intensely monitored symbolic and spatial boundaries to protect its members from legal and social persecution.

Historically, subcultural members policed these boundaries by creating a tight-knit “scene” maintained through fashion, linguistic, and behavioral codes. Yet, the incorporation of EDM stylings into jam band compositions opens these borders to increasingly feature EDM artists in jam band festival rosters, tying EDM genres to the festival experience (Feinstein and Ramsay 2012). The integration of improvisational jam rock and electronic dance beats breeds a new hybrid genre: “jamtronica.”

The Nielson Music Reports note that 32 million people in the United States attended at least one music festival in 2014 (2014). As people spend less on recorded music (due to the wide accessibility of free, shared media online), music industry professionals increasingly look toward live performances to generate revenue (Wynn 2015). Despite their previous stigmatization and association with migrant fan communities (Hunt 2008), music festivals grow as a staple in summertime entertainment, particularly as EDM experiences a contemporary boom in mainstream popularity (Brunsma, Chapman, and Lellock 2016).<sup>7</sup> The mainstream popularity of music festivals attracts increased corporate presence, as multibillion-dollar brands offer needed production funding in exchange for extensive advertising opportunities (Brunsma, Chapman, and Lellock 2016; Gee and Bales 2012; Rowley and Williams 2008). Though this trend began in the early days of EDM and jam band events, its pervasiveness has grown significantly since the 1990s. Similarly, increased mainstream media coverage of festival events serves to simultaneously sensationalize and normalize festival participation. This subsequently provides significant social benefits for attendees and offers even more ample economic incentives for rural townships to host these events (Bennett, Taylor, and Woodward 2014; Gee and Bales 2012).

Scholars of popular culture and music frequently attribute jam rock to be the subcultural domain of middle-class white men. Dance music, on the other hand, has

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<sup>7</sup> While festivals primarily take place during the summer months between Memorial Day and Labor Day, “festival season” now expands into the fall and winter months to accommodate fans’ increasing demands for year-round multi-act live music performances. Some festival production companies are even moving away from the camping events they previously hosted in the rural Midwest – now exchanging them for performances on festival-themed Caribbean cruises and other tropical travel excursions.

experienced extensive marginalization through its association with racial and sexual minorities (Anderson 2009; Conners 2013; Dyer [1979] 2012; Lawrence [2003] 2012). The fusion of these two genres serves not only to blend musical styles but also to integrate genre-based demographics (Anderson 2009; Davis 2017; Hunt 2008). This merger creates tensions in meaning, interaction, and power; the increasing mainstream popularity of jamtronica and festival events additionally exacerbate this instability.

### **AN INSIDE LOOK AT “FESTIVAL CULTURE”**

Jamtronica festivals vary in size, ranging from a few hundred attendees to hundreds of thousands of participants. Although some festival productions take place in city centers and require hotel accommodations, the majority of jamtronica events are multi-day weekend events that feature jam band and EDM artists on multiple stages. Despite the strong influence of contemporary European pop music festivals on their general structure and layout, most jamtronica festivals take place in the rural, Midwest United States as these areas are spacious enough to accommodate the influx of overnight campers. Jamtronica music festivals frequently incorporate a variety of art and film exhibits, workshops, clothing and food vendors, social advocacy outreach booths, and live music performances. In this, these events feature attractions and experiences that move away from traditional concert performances, wholly immersing their participants in a type of environmental “improvisation” (Conners 2013). Festivals pursue an atmosphere that aims to captivate its participants both physically and emotionally. Within this context, festival producers encourage event participants to partake to the fullest, in (almost) any way they choose to do so. Though increasingly co-opted by mainstream media and corporations, festivals seek to distort and transmute conventional norms,

offering opportunities where hegemonic behavioral and ideological codes can be disrupted (St John 1997).

Similar to their EDM genre origins, jamtronica music festivals foster “a world of make-believe, that thrive[s] on spontaneity, embrace[s] flirtation, and ha[s] potential to upset certain gender norms” (McBee 2000: 114). Within the festival event, norms regarding clothing, substance use, sexuality, and even common interactional codes alter and become ambiguous, marking a state that Turner terms “liminality” (1964). It is as if security fences and the hours available in a weekend are the only real barriers within this event; as such, festivals take on an atmosphere “where social borders and individual differences such as class and gender are destroyed and reconstructed in the ‘world upside down’ logic ideally and symbolically” (Gunduz 2003: iv). The gated and security-monitored perimeters of music festivals promote a sense of “safe danger” similar to that of college party cultures (Kimmel 2008), where participants may engage in identity play, introspection, experimentation, exhibitionism, ornamentation, putative voyeurism and ethnomethodological breaches without fear of sanction (Gee and Bales 2012; St John 2009). Though some scholars laud the rave-based roots and improvisational codes of jamtronica as a “conscious rejection of traditional cultural expressions” (Gunduz 2003: 2), I interrogate this transformative potential. While the carnivalesque nature of music festivals may act to dismantle norms of social locations (such as gender and sexuality), scholars and festival staff must identify reifications of gender and sexuality boundaries, as well as the dangers that may generate from these overly-optimistic oversights.

## **FESTIVAL CULTURE: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES?**

Subcultural participation can act as a means to individually and collectively negotiate mainstream inequalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Whereas their members may experience marginalization or exclusion within their mainstream lives, subcultures establish alternative norms and values to larger, hegemonic ones. These alternative norms allow their members to construct personal and collective identities of difference that create new venues for them to obtain similar privileges to those that their mainstream lives deny (Wilkins 2008). As festival participants manipulate and assign new meanings and expectations to race, class, gender, and sexuality, they may do so to reduce the disadvantages of their social locations or even re-work them to personal and/or community advantage. Subcultural memberships offer a sense of protection, social prominence, and authenticity to their members, as they value performances of social location that diverge from mainstream norms and closely monitor the boundaries of membership that often hinge upon mainstream hierarchies of identity and social location, regardless of the subculture's intended evasion and/or innovation (Tanenbaum 1999).

Despite offering power, community, and prescriptive performances to address contentions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, subcultures also rely on performative and discursive techniques to maintain boundaries of membership and authenticity (Tanenbaum 1999). These displays reflect the unique cultural resources and social locations that each participant hold. No less, subcultures frequently (albeit, often inadvertently) promote guidelines that elevate particular manifestations of race, class, gender, and sexuality during their construction and representation of ideal – or normative memberships. These tactics and boundaries illuminate larger mainstream identities and



order within everyday hierarchies, even as subcultural scene members work to escape them. Just as subcultures provide broader “answers” to the problems of social location, subcultural prescriptions and expectations may also reify boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexuality, augmenting the impacts of mainstream social inequalities (Gelder 2007; Pini 2001). For example, genre norms of jamtronica’s EDM roots frequently relegate women’s participation to peripheral or consumptive roles: consuming markers of subcultural membership, such as clothing or cosmetics, entertaining other participants, and serving facilitative roles within EDM events. In the words of Thornton (1996), women in EDM are cast as “consumers, fans, and dancers, as opposed to being performers, producers, or managers” (336). On the other hand, “men have been in important positions at the artistic, production and promotion levels, all of which are important in controlling the discourse and classifications systems that structure these scenes” (McLeod 2001: 73). Similar to its rave origins, jamtronica festival subcultural scenes consign women to lesser roles in the genre’s cultural production (McRobbie 1999; Thornton 1996), frequently omitting their narratives or potential for fulfilling public and powerful subcultural roles (Farrugia 2009; Olszanowski 2012). As festival-going women seek out and attune their identity-driven self-presentations toward alternatives of mainstream femininity, they broaden extant meanings and prescriptions of gender and sexuality; however, their marginalized role within jamtronica communities may exacerbate the mainstream risks and constraints they sought to evade through their scene engagement.

### *Gendered Risk in the Festival Arena*

Contemporary health discourses frame raves (and associatively, jamtronica music festivals) as fraught with public health risks (Kavanaugh and Anderson 2008). Academic review of raves primarily admonishes the scene's normative use of drugs and alcohol. Along with the legal issues it presents, the practice may augment participants' likelihood of experiencing adverse drug reactions, including allergic reactions, overdose, or polysubstance conflicts – the use and incompatibility of multiple types or strengths of drugs (Miller, Furr-Holden, Voas, and Bright 2005). Additionally, scene participants, either from heat, exhaustion, or as a result of drug use, may experience (sometimes fatal) forms of dehydration (Parrott et al. 2006). Although all of the music festivals in this study were “residential” (providing overnight camping for participants), attendees of other non-residential festivals must arrange transportation to and from the event. Participants sometimes resolve this issue by walking or driving under the influence, increasing dangers both to oneself and to the broader community (Furr-Holden, Voas, Kelley-Baker, and Miller 2006). Further, the libertine and highly social atmosphere of these events may blur participants' perceptions of sexual risk. Festival-goers may engage in sexual behaviors with mere acquaintances and with multiple people over the course of the event. This may result in augmented risks of contracting sexually-transmitted diseases, such as HIV (McElrath 2005; Theall, Elifson, and Sterk 2006). As festivals draw large crowds who collectively engage in risky behaviors, locales hosting these events face consequential burdens on community resources: general infrastructure and services (such as groceries, gas, roadways, and land); police/security services (event monitor, holding cells for arrests made); sexual violence response teams (rape kit testing

and counseling both on- and off-site), among others (Department of Health and Human Services 2003; Gee and Bales 2012; Lloyd 2015).

On the one hand, festival culture frames risk-taking as a normal part of one's learning and participating in subcultural scene membership (Spring 2006). In fact, significant efforts by festival production staff work to control sanctions that are associated with risk-taking activities. Jamtronica music festivals intentionally produce environments where participants may "safely break away for a day or two and fulfill their thrill seeking" (Spring 2006: 102). It must be emphasized that, although threats to person and property are controlled, they are not altogether eliminated.

Festivals bear significant elements of physical, psychological, social, and sexual risk. Walkways, lighting displays, art installations, stage orientations, and other event participants facilitate uncertain and unpredictable environments. Festival-goers walk en masse in varying directions on dim, or even dark pathways. Lighting designs visibly alter physical landscapes in unpredictable intervals. Performance and visual art installations frequently change locations during the span of an evening, interrupting established spatial orientations. Further, festival participants immerse themselves within massive, anonymous audiences that are subject only to "its own internal logic, rather than to the state" (Rietveld 1998: 258).

Jamtronica events foster a carnivalesque atmosphere through "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (Bakhtin [1944]1968: 10). As festival participants act to convey intimate selves and behaviorally-improvise to negotiate uncertain circumstances, they temporarily resist mainstream norms and power structures. Though times of Carnival (like those facilitated by jamtronica music festival events)

serve to upend social hierarchies, these events are temporary. While interactions within carnivalesque arenas may act to critique social orders of gender and sexuality, the performative transgressions that take place may also concurrently reinforce meanings and boundaries of these social locations. Like in Carnival, subcultural scene norms offer flexible license to festival participants to enhance existing identities or experiment with entirely new ones. However, these arena-based performances are ideologically and behaviorally segregated from the everyday identities and behaviors of festival participants – temporarily transforming power dimensions, but not overturning them altogether (Barnes 2000).

Festival grounds are public spaces. They are subjective, constructed and social in nature, and act as sites to articulate personal and community identities (Bell and Valentine 1995; Rose 1993; Ruddick 1996). Despite their public nature, these spaces are also imbued with symbolic exclusions, based on race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and so forth (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013; Renzetti 2011; Valentine 1996). These exclusions infer differential prescriptions for engaging with or interacting in that space, frequently shaped by fear (Gardner [1994] 1995) or intense behavioral review and scrutiny (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013; Renzetti 2011). Historically, jamtronica's rave and jam origins centered upon men's performance and narrative control (Pini 2001), presenting men and masculinity as normative entities within these event spheres. Acknowledging this disparity contrasts with the idealism of Gunduz (2003) and similarly optimistic authors who argue that rave, and associatively, jamtronica, participation is wholly accessible, similarly navigated, and equally advantageous to all. (Sub)cultural gender disparities frame spaces, where inequalities may be signified by feelings of

vulnerability, unfamiliarity, uncertainty, and ambiguity (Merry 1981) – in other words, the conditions that festival liminalities purposefully invoke. Places are not simply sites of social action but evolve as products of social interaction mediated by personal and collective experience both within and outside of the interrogated space (Koskela 1999).

Furthermore, jamtronica festival values (much like their EDM genre origins) uphold:

a theme of ‘positivity’, which is simultaneously a ‘policing’ of negativity. This ‘ethics of pleasure’ is heightened by [participants who] stress the importance of the right attitude, which includes avoiding the power of ‘negative vibes’ to ‘bring you down’ (and which seems, at times, to mean refusing to acknowledge ‘difference’ or tensions). (Pini 1997: 162)

Whereas festival participants hold each other accountable to foster senses of belonging, oneness, and egalitarianism, this directive fundamentally conflicts with prospects of identifying and addressing present gender-sexual exclusions, inequalities, and disparate perceptions and experiences of risk within the subcultural scene.

Jamtronica music festivals take the shape of broader discursive terrains, propagating problematic mainstream norms surrounding gender, sexuality, substance use, consent, and violence. These norms are not exclusive to the festival arena, as gendered considerations of risk are evident in many mainstream social contexts. As Hanna ([1991] 1992) notes, “Dance, music and song often encode messages from such patterns of social relations as hierarchy, inclusion-exclusion, and exchanges across social boundaries” (179). Thus, the adoption of stigmatized identities and practices may further disempower subcultural members who experience gender and sexual marginalization in mainstream society. This contributes to the unique perceptions and negotiations festival-going

women have and undertake, as they navigate spatial and social ambiguities that may prove transformational – or incredibly perilous.

### *The Transformational Potential of Festivals*

In festivals' burlesque and fantastical atmosphere, ideological and behavioral norms encourage participant diversion and immersion. In this zone “without rules,” festivals grant the opportunity to transgress mainstream norms, including those of gender and sexuality. Many festival participants, particularly women, use festival spaces to re-negotiate gender expectations and hierarchies, and to “queer” dominant (sub)cultural discourses through vivid gender transgressions (Crane 2000; St John 2009).

The disruption of hegemonic norms within the festival sphere interrogates mainstream codes of behavior and power, including those of gender and sexuality. As festivals are “[...] a socially acceptable means of pursuing certain ‘approved’ subterranean values” (Gee and Bales 2012: 73), this license for deviance manifests in a variety of forms, often with (unspoken, yet inferred) espousal of festival stakeholders themselves. Participants of all genders are encouraged to adopt “freakiness,” an ambiguous, parodic interpretation of their everyday selves, which acts as a tool to “exceed” or deconstruct dominant ideological and behavioral codes, on individual and collective levels (St John 2009). “Freakiness” may take place through adopting hypersexualized apparel, participating in interactional breaches and practical jokes, or even intense personal introspection. The ambiguity brought on by “freakiness” can demonstrate the arbitrary and performative nature of gender and sexuality, promoting senses of unity and egalitarianism, and re-negotiating interactional and institutional hierarchies (Gunduz 2003; Rietveld 1998) – providing participants with innovative

alternatives to dominant mainstream codes of gender and sexuality. At the same time, this ambiguity and transgression may hold significantly different risks and consequences for men and women (particularly sexual and social danger), thus upholding hegemonic norms and power structures.

Women's transgressions of gender sexuality within festival arenas may aid in evading social and sexual risk, as women deploy a hyper-reflexivity learned through mainstream prescriptions of objectified femininity. As women monitor their bodies, their audiences, and their ambiguous surroundings, the objectification and alienation that women experience does not necessarily reinscribe powerlessness but instead can be used as a tool to negotiate social and sexual threats, enhancing opportunities for self-articulation (Pini 1997).

Historically, women have been excluded from spaces of consumption and recreation, missing out on critical opportunities to enhance social resources and personal pleasure (Campbell 2006; Valenti 2014). By preserving zones of liminality, substance use, and subcultural transgression as impervious to women, festival stakeholders and scholars alike overlook available transformational prospects: 1) promoting women's sensuality, self-articulation, and sovereignty; and, 2) re-negotiating discursive, interactional, and institutional allocations of gender and sexuality within subcultural and mainstream contexts. In this, hegemonic discourses and subcultural norms permit women to destabilize women's connotations as passive, sexual objects and masculinity's centrality to music festival culture (Pini 1997). Instead, jamtronica music festivals may offer opportunities for women to embrace sexuality with mutuality, safety, enthusiasm,

and sexual subjectivity. Thus, the ambiguities that music festivals present may enhance women's access to sexual pleasure, as well as social agency.

Jamtronica music festivals bring together a variety of genres, demographics, and ideological-behavioral codes. Further, the improvisational and carnivalesque atmosphere of these events seeks to break down mainstream sociocultural boundaries, thus facilitating opportunities for altering gender-sexual hierarchies and enhancing women's entitlements to social and sexual pleasure. However, the nature of contemporary jamtronica festival culture paradoxically reinforces mainstream inequalities of gender and sexuality, encouraging conditions of gendered physical, social, and sexual risk. This contradiction complicates women's negotiations of the pleasure-danger binary, as well as wider paradoxes of women's sexuality.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Gender and sexuality, though experienced through "corpo-realities," are intersecting and co-dependent social constructs. Meanings and behaviors attached to gender and sexuality shift over time and culture through small-scale interactions, being framed by and informing larger sociocultural institutions (i.e., media, family, and politics). Although definitions and expectations of gender and sexuality are inherently subjective, this does not deny the very real, lived experiences that these social locations offer, and the disparate access to power and resources that they establish. In this study, I connect the lived, gendered experiences of jamtronica festival participants with theoretical inquiries of how women conceptualize and cope with ever-present physical, social, and sexual threats. Vance's pleasure-danger binary (1984) offers terminology to describe the women's paradoxical pursuits of sexual and social subjectivity as they are



weighed against everyday gendered perceptions/experiences of fear, threat, and risk.

Though perceptions of risk may constrain women's actions, ignoring the transformative potential of women's sexuality perpetuates a myth of "irreparability" of gender-sexual inequalities within subcultural and mainstream contexts.

Diffuse cultural discourses produce and perpetuate systems of power, particularly those of gender and sexuality (Foucault [1978]1990). However, these same prescriptive discourses are fragile under the weight of the abundant challenges they receive. Though discursive diffusion may render systems of power invisible and unassessed, purposeful subversion of these systems may work to disrupt prescriptions of gender and sexual performance, disturb hierarchies congealed through the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1995) and interrogate larger sites of institutional gender-sexual inequality. In brief, jamtronica's interactional and discursive modifications challenge the everyday normativity of women's fear and victimization, upending mainstream interactional and institutional conditions that normalize or even celebrate men's physical, social, and sexual violence against women.

Jamtronica festival arenas purposefully produce ambiguous and carnivalesque spaces, where participants may break away from mainstream norms of substance use, gender-sexuality, and proper interactional conduct. The ambiguity and temporary relaxation of hegemonic norms within temporary subcultural contexts may offer previously-unstudied opportunities for women to upend expectations and hierarchies of gender and sexuality, enabling their unimpeded pursuit of sexual and social agency. Unfortunately, the liminal and carnivalesque conditions may magnify perceptions of gendered risk. Even worse, it may render the perpetration of violence against women

within these spaces an ordinary and expected element of event participation and scene involvement.

By identifying festival participants' idealizations and subcultural prescriptions for men and women, I seek to understand the meanings and values that festival-goers attribute to gender and sexuality. Further, by examining festival-goers' perceptions of gendered threat within subcultural participation, what they offer as existing means to address these risks, and what they suggest as long-term solutions, I aim to lend insight to how real women conceptualize and address the paradoxical demands of contemporary womanhood in spaces that may present immense transformational potential, yet is simultaneously underpinned by perceptions of peril.

### **Chapter Three – Research Design**

Qualitative inquiry is a research approach where researchers are the key instruments of data collection and analysis. To capture the variety of phenomena they study within a field, many qualitative researchers use multiple data collections methods to aggregate data over extensive periods of time, usually within a designated research site (Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte 1999). Researchers frequently use interviews, observations, deconstruction of symbols or objects, and personal reflections to detail their study and guide their analyses. These data are often analyzed through a combination of inductive and deductive processes. Narrative, descriptive reports highlight the multiplicity, variation, and emergent patterns with research participant perspectives, and are the foundations of the project's analytical results (Creswell 2013; Geertz 1973). As qualitative researchers often focus upon dissecting meanings or taken-for-granted social processes, they compose emergent, exploratory research designs to develop and expound upon these nascent concepts (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Within this exploratory study of jamtronica music festival subcultures and gendered threat, I utilized several tenets of qualitative research approaches to inform how I undertook data collection, analyses, and communication.

In this chapter, I detail the research design of this project. I first articulate the methodological frameworks which theoretically inform my study. I continue by discussing the two broad methodological approaches that structure this project's development. Next, I describe the sites, populations, and samples involved within this work, as well the strategies I employed to draw appropriate samples within a subculture noted for its dynamic membership and episodic participation. I then share the project's

methods of data collection and analyses. This chapter concludes through a discussion of ethical considerations, the role of reflexivity, and measures to improve validity within this study, followed by a summary reviewing the chapter's key points.

## **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

As a social constructivist, I recognize the importance of the multiple, complex experiences that guide social understandings of reality. I cannot separate my own experiences from my interpretation of the phenomena I study, due to the intimate history that I share with the studied subcultural scene, the events I have experienced during the course of this research, as well as my own personal biases involving gender, sexuality, and threat within jamtronica music festival scenes. Thus, in this project, I explicitly disclose my own cultural, political, and personal background to better communicate how my subjective experience of reality impacts my interpretations. However, simply because experiences and definitions of phenomena are subjective does not mean that they do not hold real and objective consequences (Thomas and Thomas 1928). For example, despite variation in how politicians and scholars define sexual violence, these ranges do not preclude the lasting trauma of a catcall, unwanted exposure, or coerced/forced sexual activity.

Within intersectional feminist approaches, researchers similarly sensitize themselves to instances of power within experience and meaning construction. This power is not simply gendered, but includes many other facets of identity and privilege (sexuality, class, and race, for example). Researcher-participant dynamics come under careful scrutiny, as this relationship draws from sociohistorical and immediate contexts of exploitation (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). To avoid replicating these power

dynamics, many feminist researchers use collaborative techniques to involve the viewpoints and suggestions of research participants within data analysis, as well as considering them for their overall research design. This methodological position requires both intense review and disclosure of researchers' personal and political backgrounds – to both academic audiences, as well as research participants. This process seeks to build rapport and reciprocity with participants (even if participant benefits are non-tangible). Additionally, collaborative techniques feature the voices and priorities of marginalized groups, synthesizing their knowledge sets with scholarly and advocacy resources.

Researchers must also consider the roles of authorial voice and interpretative authority. Borland (1998) offers an essential deliberation for feminist researchers: how do we advance the narratives and meanings that research participants offer, yet appropriately analyze them for academic review? Though this project is primarily interpretivist, it also briefly proposes transformative suggestions that are shared from the subjective, lived experiences of festival participants and their insights into gender, sexuality, and threat. By speaking to festival participants of all genders, I sought to obtain a broader understanding of how participants pair “problems” of gender and sexuality they (do not) experience as a part of their jamtronica event participation and scene involvement with proposed “solutions” they could offer to these issues. The conclusion of this work proposes the institution or expansion of policies and programs (thus, fulfilling the methodological request for reciprocity), in ways that address issues of gendered threat that extend far past the subcultural arena, and into mainstream society.

## **METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION**

Aside from these orientations above, I employed two additional research approaches to frame this project. As this study sought to be: (1) responsive to participants' contributions; (2) engagingly descriptive, as to detail the multiplex experiences of reality that contribute to shared subcultural identities and memberships; (3) analytically-rigorous, as to draw meaning from lived subcultural experience; and (4) an interpretive exploration into a field ripe with emancipatory potential, I incorporated tenets of Ethnography and Modified Grounded Theory to pursue these goals.

### *Ethnography*

Ethnography transforms collected data into immersive, descriptive, impressionistic stories (Goodall 2000; Van Maanen 1988). This methodological approach engages readers and research participants in dialogically and dialectically, interweaving personal narratives, observations, participant responses, and scholarly review. With their use of conceptually-organized dramatic narratives and incorporation of “thick description,”<sup>1</sup> ethnographies are both engaging and scholarly, attempting to negotiate the qualitative “crisis of representation.”

### *Representing the “crisis of representation”*

The “crisis of representation” debates several key tensions within ethnographic orientations: (1) the role of authorial voice and interpretation; (2) researcher-participant power dynamics; (3) the purposeful retelling of field experience through language and

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<sup>1</sup> See also Denzin (1989) and Geertz (1973) for additional definitions and recommendations regarding “thick description”.

analysis which highlights limited dimensions of the phenomena's subjective realities; (4) interrogation of the historical privilege of certain viewpoints or analyses (often, the author's) over local, emic understandings; and, (5) for sociologists, the role of the researchers as an "outsider" when they are simultaneously immersed in the researched social contexts and larger sociocultural systems (Denzin 1996; Van Maanen 1995). Ethnographies attempt to resolve these tensions through problematizing previous methodological approaches, particularly ones that reify the "researcher vs. native" dichotomy (Geertz 1974). This methodological framework resists the institutionalized and naturalized exploitative power dynamics between researchers and their studied communities. Instead, ethnographers now seek to understand the multiple, situational, hybridized identities and socio-categorical experiences that all possess (Abu-Lughod 1991; Narayan 1993).

Additionally, many contemporary ethnographies incorporate feminist, social constructionist, and interactionist perspectives to acknowledge the personal, professional, and political implications of their research (Bruner 1993). Researchers frequently accomplish this through their use of personal experiences and narratives (both within and external to the field) as purposeful and declared analytical lenses. As many contemporary ethnographies recognize the need for reflexive attention to the roles, identities, and relationships to/of the researcher, it is thus critical to accept all ethnographic representations as partial and problematic (Eisenberg and Goodall 1997), with political repercussions within authorial claims to "who speaks" on behalf of research participants (Hall 1997). Acknowledging these tensions has prompted many ethnographers to employ

research as a means to cooperatively and collaboratively resist oppressions and marginalization of (and within) studied communities.

### *Ethnographies and narrative*

Ethnographies utilize a variety of sources to develop “the story,” using personal and participant narratives as a primary source of data. These narratives offer insights into experience and identity, deriving from interviews, textual analyses, and autoethnographic vignettes. As narratives co-construct between researcher and participant interactions (Riessman 2008), they are highly collaborative, dependent upon built rapport, study environment, the presence of other research participants, and research topic. Researchers should be cognizant of these potential factors, as well as how variation in these areas impact their own descriptive accounts and analyses. When appropriate, researchers should reflexively disclose these contexts and tensions as they contextualize the research (Creswell 2013). Within this study, the narratives I include derive from autoethnographic accounts developed during participant observations, as well as individual and group interviews with festival stakeholders – merchandise vendors, production staff, event volunteers, and (primarily) paying music festival participants.

### *Advancing ethnography through textual analyses*

Ethnographies frequently focus on relationships, meaning-making, and processes of identity, all of which are primarily expressed through dialogical exchange (Goodall 2000). In many ethnographies, spoken communications are the central focus of analysis. However, this approach overlooks the powerful potential that text- and image-based communications play in constructing cultural ideals and their associated hierarchies.



Discourse-focused textual analyses can be used in tandem within ethnographic studies to understand the role of written and visual symbols within meaning-making, power, and culture.

Texts, according to Fairclough (2003), are written, printed, or imaged representations of discourse, which serve as ideological messages that help to communicate aspects of power, identity, meaning, or culture. Fairclough (2003) elaborates, stating, “Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (9). Though consequential, these messages are often taken-for-granted, as they are situated within everyday modes of interaction (i.e., advertisements, school curricula). These everyday interactions introduce physical, digital, or symbolic “texts” that represent social structures and practices as they situate within cultural contexts (Luhmann 2000; Silverstone 1999).

Discourse-based textual analysis, as integrated into ethnographic methods, helps to dissect the production, distribution, and impacts of cultural ideologies and meanings. Ethnographers must be able to interpret discursive texts as they are critical to understanding cultural and sociohistorical assumptions that sustain systems of inequality. Bringing light to these discourses promotes a more comprehensive (albeit imperfect) address of marginalization, identity, and meaning-making.

### *Grounded Theory*

In addition to the ethnographic nature of this study, I integrated a method of analysis (grounded theory) to the project, to respond to the exploratory, collaborative, dynamic, and contextually-situated characteristics of this research topic, its episodic

events, and ever-shifting memberships. Though “pure” grounded theory has frequently been critiqued as too rigid and impractical for use within many qualitative research studies, modifications prescribed by Charmaz (2005, 2006) make the incorporation of an iterative, abductive methodological approach more feasible.

“Traditional” grounded theory aims to develop mid-level theories to explain social processes, interactions, meanings, or actions (Corbin and Strauss 2007). These theories derive from data collected from several individuals (preferably, a homogenous sample), often in the form of interviews, observations, or texts. Researchers then analyze this material through careful, frequent, and iterative comparisons with other data. These comparisons are used to build categories (and associated subcategories) to better parse out the nuanced relationships between ideas, meanings, and social processes (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Researchers use memos to carefully detail observations, flag emergent relationships between analytical categories, and note ideas for further directions in data collection and analysis. These memos are methodically completed, filed, and reintegrated into more refined analyses (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Researchers collect additional data, based on these reflective memos to support evolving theorizations. This is usually performed through sampling heterogeneous groups, as a way to contrast experiences and meanings of the studied process in comparison to core, ideal-typified groups. This process is repeated until new meanings and categories no longer emerge from the data.

Grounded theory, under this “formal” approach, can be quite challenging, as it takes a significant amount of time and effort to follow its highly-structured data collection and analytical rubrics (Glaser 1992). This approach, too, demands the constant development of new, emergent processual theories as an outcome of “successful”

research (Creswell 2013). Additionally, it relies upon the notion that researchers can abandon preconceived theoretical and sociohistorical contexts, to allow the “true” nature of the data to emerge unfettered by subjectivities. However, setting aside biases, as well as research findings and directions prescribed by previous literature, can be quite difficult. In fact, “pure” grounded theory embeds positivist assumptions – that personal, political, and professional identities and orientations can be shirked in the pursuit of “untainted” documentations of a unified reality – despite its iterative and empirical appearances. Within feminist, interactionist, and social constructivist theoretical and methodological frameworks, identity, reflexivity, and subjectivity are primary considerations – ones that cannot be removed from the research process. Therefore, “pure” grounded theory is complicated by the collaborative, narrative-based approach undertaken in this project.

Identifying the impracticalities of “pure” grounded theory, Charmaz (2005) rejects the rubrics, rigidity, and purported objectivity of this methodological approach. Instead, she develops a modification to grounded theory that integrates constructivist, interpretivist frameworks (Creswell 2013), allowing further inquiry into hierarchies, meaning, agency, and ideologies. In this modified approach, researchers emphasize the role of beliefs, values, assumptions, feelings, and standpoints of individual research participants, using theoretically-informed categories (and sampling) to frame the studied phenomena. Individual meanings and understandings are then amalgamated into flexible, implicit, and emergent categories, which detail social patterns and organization (Charmaz 2006).

Additionally, this modified methodological approach questions the positivistic assumptions purported by “pure” grounded theory, which tends to render the researcher an invisible “documenter” of naturalistic social processes. Charmaz (2005) notes that researcher biases are ever present within qualitative research, even grounded theory. These biases manifest across many stages: from how analytical categories are selected, to the experiences that impact researcher interpretations, to how relationships between project focus, researcher role, participants, and ethnographic field interlace over the span of the study. Charmaz additionally addresses a core tension of the ethnographic “crisis of representation”: the partial, situated, dialogically-driven interpretation and representation of meanings. Under grounded theory, she argues, representation, documentation, and full dimensionality of studied phenomena are ultimately, though not tragically, incomplete, promoting further research development and analysis (2005).

In this project, I synthesize ethnographic tenets with those of Charmaz in an effort to contribute to several existing bodies of literature involving intersections of gender and sexuality, subcultural scenes of jamtronica and festivals, and experiences/considerations of gendered threat. Though exploratory and interdisciplinary in its nature, this project maintains a strong theoretical and program-oriented focus, looking toward both scholarly and practical applications in a critically understudied subcultural scene.

## **SITES AND SAMPLES**

### *Research Sites*

Jamtronica blends elements of improvisational rock and electronic dance music. As this is an increasingly popular genre of music, there has been a recent proliferation of

events that feature jamtronica performances (Conners 2013; St John 2015). Frequently, these multi-day camping events feature folk and bluegrass groups during the daytime, and a variety of improvisational electronic dance music acts at night. Due to their outdoor location, most jamtronica festivals take place from mid-April until late October, depending on their location's climate. Some festivals are annual events, hosted by prominent members of the jamtronica community, such as bands, artists, and producers. Others are more episodic and are heavily impacted by inconsistent fan bases, shifting relations with local mainstream communities, and tenuous financial support. Jamtronica festivals vary in size, as some draw from local genre-based music scenes;<sup>2</sup> others attract several thousand attendants from both local and international fan bases. Jamtronica festivals vary in their integration of immersive production elements beyond musical acts, as some brand themselves as "music and arts festivals" – sponsoring visual and interactive art installations to enhance participants' "holistic" experience of the event. Conversely, some festivals maintain low-budget production overheads by promoting the combination of camping, music, and community gathering as a sufficient experience in itself.

Due to the inability to participate in all relevant jamtronica festival events (because of time, financial, geographic, and professional restraints), I used strategic, non-random sampling of research sites. Jamtronica music festivals within thirteen hours of Lexington, Kentucky were considered eligible for sampling. However, additional considerations framed my selection of sampled sites. These considerations included

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<sup>2</sup> See also Negus (1999) and Wynn (2015) for additional readings on how music events can draw from geographically-based fan groupings.

professional, academic, and personal obligations; affordability of event access (ticket price); opportunities to reduce the cost of participation, such as volunteer programs exchanging work for admission waivers; repute of festival; and (selfishly), artists scheduled to perform. Festivals sampled in this study encompass a broad range of contemporary festival dimensions, varying in size of festival attendance, event longevity, immersive carnivalesque characteristics, and extent of event production. As the emergent nature of the study required flexibility in sampling, as well as analysis, the number of festivals included within this study increased over the duration of data collection. In total, this project included data collected from fourteen jamtronica festival events. These events include: Empieza (2014, 2015, and 2016); Fall Ball (2015); FreezeOut (2014); Glow Worm (2014, 2015, and 2016); Hilly Hike (2014); Mudslide (2014); Nocturne (2015); Summer Swelter (2015); Thumbs Up (2015); and, Tree Ridge (2014). Four of these field sites were annual re-visits to previously-attended events (Empieza and Glow Worm). I renamed each festival field site to ensure event and participant rapport and confidentiality. However, some characteristics and descriptions of these sampled sites are used (or generalized across events) to contextualize observations, textual analyses, participant interviews, or autoethnographic vignettes in this study.

### *Population Studied*

The studied population of this project includes adult participants of fourteen multi-day, camping-based jamtronica music festivals, occurring within the late spring, summer, and early fall months. Jamtronica festivals attract anywhere from a few hundred attendants to several tens of thousands of participants. Historically, jamtronica festivals have attracted middle-class, White young adults (aged 18-30). This may be due to the

racial-ethnic typification of music genres (Negus 1999), as well as a historic white homogeneity and lack of people of color within jam band subcultures (Conners 2013; Rowley and Williams 2008). However, as jamtronica garners media and popular attention, racially-, economically-, and sexually-diverse fan bases rapidly increase (Anderson 2009; Brunnsma, Chapman, and Lellock 2016). Additionally, increased internet access and music distribution over widespread geographic regions seemingly contribute to integrating homophilous networks of race, class, gender, and sexuality, increasing the demographic diversity of jamtronica fan bases. As there are few (if any) mechanisms in place that gather demographic data of jamtronica music festival participants, the extent and characteristics of this population (and its demographic shifts) remain largely undefined. This dearth offers ripe opportunity for academic and organizational study.

### *Sampling Strategies*

Due to the large number of people who attend jamtronica music festivals (and a limited time span for researcher engagement), I used a nonrandom sampling of on-site interview participants, guided by convenience within this study. This sampling strategy, however, was complicated by the normativity of drug and alcohol use within the festival arena. Following feminist methodological and ethical considerations, I employed visual, verbal, and behavioral assessments (in this order) to decide which festival participants would be best able to offer informed, uninhibited, and non-coerced consent for their interviews. The nature of these evaluations was highly subjective; however, consistent criteria for assessing the ability of individuals to consent to research participation while under the influence of drugs and alcohol remains a contested and underdeveloped field of inquiry.

I used intercept methods as a form of recruiting informal interviews, through casual approach and assessment for consent-inhibiting inebriation. Research participants who demonstrated an appropriate ability to consent and meaningfully converse were asked to participate in a study regarding festivals, identity, and gendered threat. I did not promote or advertise the study; however, word of mouth informally spread through participants' informal conversation with others. Upon the acquisition of verbal assent as approved by the University of Kentucky's Office of Research Integrity (IRB), research participants were interviewed, individually or in a group setting, using a flexible semi-structured format that loosely followed the interview schedule provided in Appendix A. Research participants had the opportunity to make up a pseudonym to confidentialize their responses. These interviews were documented through an audio-recording application on a tablet computer. In the case where participants indicated an increasing inebriation-based inability to complete the interview, or if participants mentioned their substance use before or during the interview, I quickly and politely ended the interview and deleted the interview recording immediately. This was done to prevent incrimination of the affected research participant, but also to uphold institutional (IRB) ethical prescriptions.

This study drew from over 200 interviews I collected during these fourteen jamtronica events, involving festival-going men, women, and non-gender identifying individuals, aged 18-65+. Vulnerable populations (such as children, pregnant women, and prisoners) were purposefully excluded from the study, as to minimize risk to participants and to uphold institutional ethical standards. Due to the emergent and iterative nature of the study (as well as ethical considerations of consent which eliminates several



interviews), I primarily drew from 50 of these interviews to analyze the meanings, problems, and solutions that attend gender, sexuality, and threats faced at festivals. This sampling was consistent with methodological suggestions of grounded theory; however, Charmaz (2006) suggests that grounded theory-based sample sizes can be significantly larger than other qualitative or ethnographic studies.

These 50 sampled interviews derive from the viewpoints and experiences shared during 9 one-on-one interviews and 41 interviews with various sizes of participant groups. In total, this project included 179 interview participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 56. Although the mean age of these participants was approximately 24, the median (21) and mode (22) reflected a much more accurate representation of music festivals' significant young adult participant base. These sampled interviewees were predominantly White (60.3%), reflecting historical racial disparities within jam and EDM subcultural scenes (Anderson 2009; Connors 2013). Other interview participants identified as Latinx (5.0%), "mixed" racial-ethnic background (2.8%), Black or African-American (1.7%), Asian-American (1.7%), and Middle-Eastern (0.6%). Several respondents did not mention a racial-ethnic identity or identification during their interviews (10.1%). Similar to the demographic divisions proposed by a 2014 Nielsen Report on festival participation, this sample was predominantly male/man-identifying (40.8%). Females/woman-identifying festival-goers comprised another 38.6% of the sample. These participant-claimed sex/gender binaries were interrupted by a few participants who identified as gender non-binary (1.7%), as "crossdresser" (0.6%), or those who did not offer their gender identity or identification at all (0.6%).

To better situate the conversations held during event participant interviews, I also conducted nearly 500 hours of immersive participant observations across these sampled festival sites. I non-randomly selected the time, event, and participants to be included as a part of data collection. Several factors bound these opportunities for observations: volunteer and work obligations, prioritization of on-site interviews, boundaries of access (inability to observe in VIP, production, on-stage, and backstage areas), and temporal norms of drug and alcohol consumption.<sup>3</sup> My participant observations followed the “big net approach,” collecting as much and as wide a span of data as possible (Fetterman 2010). However, due to limited time and ethical considerations, I frequently sampled these events intentionally and opportunistically, following the emergence new and unique events, differentiating this approach from convenience sampling.

To understand how these observations and participant narratives constructed or conflicted with dominant subcultural discourses of this scene, I performed discourse-based textual analysis on over 125 publicly-displayed festival advertisements, artifacts, brochures, vendor business cards, and on-site marketing. These items were either descriptively recorded in field notes or collected for further off-site analysis when event participants and staff so permitted. Similarly, I used approximately 35 publicly-available personal and event blogs, websites, and news articles regarding gender, sexuality, threat, and potential sites of gender-sexual power (re)negotiation within jamtronica event participation. I selected these texts through non-random, theoretically-informed critical

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<sup>3</sup> As I observed at many festivals, daytime hours were frequently used for “recovering” from the long and sapping activities of the previous night. Through continued event participations, I learned that the number of interview participants who were using or had recently used drugs or alcohol lessened during observations conducted in the mid-morning to late-afternoon, diminishing the ethics-based restrictions I upheld.

case sampling both during field site participation and from online repositories. This sampling approach helped me to identify data-rich texts, increasing my ability to detail and generalize ideas found across multiple textual and discursive platforms (Creswell 2013).

As the site, subject, and textual samples within this study were non-random and cross-sectional, it is important to note that these strategies do limit the generalizability and reliability of the data. However, qualitative research is renowned for its small, non-random samples. To accommodate this limitation, I undertook extensive measures to build validity. These measures sought to justify a multi-faceted and theoretically-informed exploration of attitudes, beliefs, and meanings that some festival-goers use to construct, attribute meaning, and act upon subcultural gender, sexuality, and its gendered threats. Unfortunately, the undertaken sampling strategies are not useful for measuring the proportion of festival participants who hold such attitudes, how widespread these meanings are, or how salient these beliefs are across space or time.

#### *Obtaining Access, Trust, Support, and Reciprocity*

I obtained access to each research site through one of two ways: entering the field as a paying event customer, or by earning field access through programs that exchange volunteered on-site services (such as helping to guide traffic and assisting with workshops) for fee-waived event admission. Though these routes did not ensure access to all festival locations and actors (i.e., VIP, backstage, on-stage, and production areas frequented by artists, producers, relatives, and festival participants who pay additional fees for enhanced amenities, exclusive performances, and priority seating), this access

offered ample opportunities for observation, interviews, and developing rapport within shifting subcultural scene memberships.

Geographies, classed affordability, symbolic representations of membership, and personal style contextualize festival subcultures and subcultural participation. Festivals are unique, as many people claim subcultural festival identities and draw from subcultural capital to solve problems of race, gender, and sexuality within their personal lives (Thornton 1996; Wilkins 2008). Actual subcultural participation is transient, episodic, and contingent. Jamtronica event participants who attend one festival may not choose to attend another for a myriad of reasons, limited by (but not exclusive to) factors mentioned above. In a subculture where memberships are loosely based on music consumption and event participation, there was little potential or use in identifying gatekeepers or key informants, as one would within a traditional ethnography. Despite this idiosyncrasy, the development of trust and rapport with research participants within this project was no less critical to its success.

Prior to delving into semi-structured interviews, I mindfully disclosed my own key identifiers and affiliations by introducing myself and my university affiliation, as well as relevant personal information: what brought me to this research area, what artists I was excited to see, and similar small talk that worked to both position me as a trustworthy individual and to assert my belonging through deploying festival-specific subcultural capital (Thornton 1996). I encouraged research participants to do the same, reflecting on their own tastes, identities, and experiences within the festival arena. This process helped to build personal, albeit temporary, connections with research participants. Through identifying myself through the varied, hybridized, and

intersectional identities that I possess – researcher, woman, music fan, queer, dancer, and aspiring educator – I worked to break down the power dynamics which frequently guide interactions between researcher and participants (Abu-Lughod 1991; Narayan 1993). It is also in this practice that I was better able to identify my own positioning within social contexts and events, sensitizing myself to the emergent (self-) narratives that developed through interactions and event immersion (Adams, Jones, and Ellis 2015).

At times, the interviews I conducted included in-depth theoretical discussions, emotional catharses, or intense debates among research participants. Though these interactions were meaningful, both for participants and for the research, these associations were often transient. Many participants that were interviewed as a part of this project were not seen again for the remainder of the festival, nor at other subsequent events. As jamtronica festival attendance is often vast, intercept-sampling, unfortunately, did not seem to effectively construct relationships that sustained throughout the event, much less over the span of several festival sites. However, without these valued participant insights, this project would have been impossible.

Because I find extractive data collection exploitative, I aimed to offer something in return to the community of study and its members. Due to funding limitations of the project, it was infeasible to offer individual or group gifts to those who participated in the research study. Additionally, episodic event participation, as well as the size and diversity of those who attended and produced these events limited my capacity for community-directed gifting. Despite these two shortcomings, I sought to build reciprocity with festival participants and larger subcultural communities in other creative ways.

I offered personal contact information to individuals who participated in interviews not only as a means to build rapport but as a way to sustain communications, if so desired and if driven by the participant. Though business cards were offered to every interview participant (even those whose interviews were deleted due to interviewee inebriation – estimated to total attrition of 150+ study participants across the sampled field sites), very few participants continued communications beyond on-site interviews. Of the communications that I did receive, interview participants initiated them to request additional information about the project, to inquire about research findings, to converse about topics unrelated to the project, and even to encourage the project's progress. For example, one research participant and I briefly continued e-mail communications regarding his desire to pursue a career in the festival production industry. As this project has offered me several opportunities to volunteer within festival production positions, meet with production staff, and garner insight into the backstage elements of these events, I was able to lend my experience, advice, and personal network contacts to him. At our last contact, he noted that he was looking further into professional festival production opportunities. Although communications beyond on-site interactions lent interesting paradata to this project, many participants used personal identifiers and e-mail accounts that used their real names. Thus, I excluded these continued communications from larger analyses, as I assessed them to interfere with sustaining similar forms of confidentiality granted within participant interviews.

On a much broader level, this project aims to offer reciprocity to the wider jamtronica community, as it lends data, interpretive frameworks, and introductory suggestions to address issues identified by event participants. Though some negative

aspects and experiences of the festival subculture are voiced and analyzed within this project, I argue that it is of utmost importance to examine the real-life, on-ground problems of gender and sexuality that festival participants face. These are essential voices to magnify, as festivals become more widespread, diverse, and mainstreamed, which, therefore, present more perceptions and experiences of risk to festival participants. Therefore, at the conclusion of this study, I synthesized participant suggestions and scholarly findings which may be incorporated by festival stakeholders to make the jamtronica festival community a more safe, enjoyable, and egalitarian space for all.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

Integrating the traditions of modified grounded theory and the demands of interpretive practicality, I collected data through a “constant inter-weaving of inductive and deductive logic.” Wainwright (1997: online) notes of this technique:

the researcher does not set out to test a pre-conceived hypothesis, nor is an entirely open-ended approach adopted [...] Instead the researcher begins by observing the field of study, both as participant observer and as a reviewer of academic literature. From the synthesis of these sources a research agenda emerges that can be pursued, again, by a mixture of observation and theoretical work.

This process, termed “abductive” by Natasi (2013), combines induction and deduction to explore and refine empirically-based data.

As festivals take place over short periods of time, in various locations, and host irregular participation from subcultural members, it is unfeasible to construct immersive, longitudinal data collection that conventional ethnographies entail. By integrating the ideological and methodological tenets of ethnography and grounded theory, I performed a multi-site, focused ethnographic inquiry into jamtronica music festival subcultural

scenes, their events and communities, and the gender-sexual practices and discourses these contexts sustain.

### *Focused Ethnography*

Focused ethnographic methods incorporate visiting field sites episodically, as these sites tend only to be available within event-based intervals (Knoblauch 2005). Thus, researchers frequently conduct focused ethnographies through short-term field visits. During these visits, researchers utilize flexible research instruments and methods to maximize the amount and quality of data collected during the studied event(s). Within this approach, data collection occurs through multiple methods, incorporating multiple modes of documentation such as audio-visual recording devices, written field notes, site mapping, and intensive in-field analytical debriefing. As jamtronica festival events are temporary, taking place within the span of a few days, I performed iterative, field-based analyses which guided the collection of further data. This practice alludes to the tenets of grounded theory.

### *Multi-Sited Ethnography*

Jamtronica music festivals, though temporally-bounded and unique, share characteristics which may foster similarities or patterns within studied phenomena. Likewise, these events frequently draw from comparably membership populations. Multi-sited ethnographies extend the utility of focused ethnographies, as they acknowledge that social phenomena and institutions tend not to be constrained to specific communities or geographies. Instead, multi-sited ethnographies “trace [...] inherently fragmented and multiply situated research object[s] across social worlds” (Nadai and Maeder 2005: 1).



This technique uses data-driven thematic analyses to compare and contrast phenomena across a variety of field sites. This generative, iterative, and categorizing approach of multi-sited ethnography differs from traditional ethnographies as data collection transcends place-based processes and meanings. Alternatively, this approach situates (and possibly offers generalizability to) event-based phenomena as they pertain to broader social and institutional frameworks.

### *Synthesizing Approaches*

Focused and multi-sited ethnographies accommodate the shortcomings of each approach, and are easily integrated to address their respective issues. They feature aspects of modified grounded theory as they are responsive, concentrated, and data-driven. However, a recommended precaution was taken when I incorporated these methods, as scholars note that the intense combination of limited time and multiple spaces may cause the researcher to miss significant findings both within events and across them. Knoblauch (2005) recommends that extensive pilot studies (possibly across multiple events or sites) should be used to help contextualize and focus the study. As tenets of modified grounded theory heavily structured this study, I performed several hundred hours of observations and over 200 interviews, across a variety of field sites, participant demographics, and event contexts. This aided my examination of a vast range of phenomena identified during my analytical in-field personal debriefings. The diverse research directions and patterns that derived from these research debriefings lent to an assortment of anticipated projects.<sup>4</sup> Previous literature and committee suggestions served to hone the analytical and

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<sup>4</sup> Though the “wide net” approach to this project may be perceived as problematic and unfocused, it is reflective of the inductive, empirically-driven nature of grounded theory.

theoretical directions of this project and collected data. Repeated entry into unique, yet comparable field sites permitted further analytical deduction and data collection driven by previous findings. This iterative approach allowed me to more carefully examine emergent themes surrounding gender, sexuality, and risk within jamtronica music festival subcultural scenes.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study, I employed several methods to collect data: participant observations, interviews, textual analyses, and autoethnographic vignettes. The choice to include these techniques was informed by both theoretical and methodological orientations which included Social Constructivism/Interactionism, Intersectional Feminism, Ethnography, and Modified Grounded Theory. By combining these data collection methods, I was better able to document and represent the jamtronica festival arena, its participants, and their experiences within the subcultural scene. Additionally, I was better able to report how my own experiences, both within and external to the field, shaped the direction and interpretation of these data.

### *Participant Observation*

Participant observation uses researcher interpretations of observed behaviors, interactions, environments, and artifacts within an ethnographic field. In this study, I conducted several immersive, interactive participant observations to clarify subcultural norms of language, self-presentation, activity, and identity. These preliminary

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-An unpredicted benefit of this assortment and abundance of data was the numerous potential research projects to be drawn from these data.

observations served several functions: (1) to situate my own personal understanding of and participation within the festival subculture; (2) to negotiate and explore my own hybrid role of subcultural scene member and academic researcher; (3) to accumulate subcultural capital, such as language patterns, artist and festival event knowledge, and previous festival experiences, which could be drawn upon to build rapport with research participants; and, (4) to inform and sensitize other forms of data collection to be more focused, meaningful, and ethical. I conducted purposeful observations in episodic intervals, bound by volunteer and event obligations and guided by opportunistic sampling. I also conducted informal, experientially-based observations. I documented my observations and personal reflections in both written and typed field notes, through the use of a tablet device. As the project continued, I increasingly relied upon a tablet device to more effectively and efficiently document these personal debriefings used in iterative analyses. Per recommendations of Charmaz (2005, 2006), I discontinued these observations as thematic saturation occurred, only documenting events that were not previously recorded, or discussing emergent themes that had yet to be analyzed.

#### *Individual and Focus Group Interviews*

Participant interviews examine formal and informal verbal exchanges that structure everyday (or here, event- or subculturally-based) experience or meaning. Though intently focused on interactions between researcher and participant, these interview conversations reveal aspects of identity, culture, hierarchies, privilege, conflict, and prospective means to resolution, as they are constructed through dialogue and the mutual exchange of personal narratives.

In this study, I primarily drew from a combination of individual (9) and group-based (41) interviewing, yet did not wholly exclude the data outside the bounds of this set. These 50 sampled interviews varied in style from unstructured casual conversations taking place during immersive participant observations, to semi-structured, collaborative interviews guided by festival participants. As “there is no single interview style that fits every occasion or all respondents” (Converse and Schuman 1974: 53), I adapted interview structures and questions to fit the demands of the surrounding environment, size of the group, time offered, and perceived engagement of the respondent(s). Participant interviews ranged in time, with some lasting little more than five minutes; other interviews lasted several hours. I collected and organized these interviews through an audio-recording application downloaded on a portable tablet device. I developed interview questions through a generative, iterative process informed by grounded theory, with each preliminary field site bringing forth new inquiries and research directions. As the project became more focused, the formal interview schedule increasingly centered upon themes of gender, sexuality, and threats faced within festival arenas.

During my observations, I noticed that festival participants tended to congregate in small, informal groups, making my collection of individual participant interviews quite rare. Individual interviews offered one-on-one dialogues and frequently presented more depth and interpersonal exchange than group interviews. With this in mind, I frequently conducted extensive unrecorded conversations before and following after the recorded interview to build rapport and a sense of reciprocity with each interview participant. Within this project, recorded individual interviews were often less structured in nature, as participants’ observations and experiences primarily drove them. These narratives

frequently drew from several themes: the characteristics of the attended festival; their experiences of and identification within broader festival subcultural communities; their plans for the future, often discussing upcoming festival events; and, the issues that they found salient or problematic within both subcultural and larger social fields.

Although participant-focused, the sampled nine one-on-one conversations provided robust dialogical, collaborative discussion about festival arenas and their phenomena. Additionally, these interviews presented opportunities for personal and participant reflexivity, interpretation, and mutual exchange. Based upon these interviews, I explored further research directions and analytical themes, guided by the recommendations of festival participants. Most significantly, these participants proposed experience-based suggestions for transforming festival events and subcultures to be more suited to their ideals and needs.

Group interviews were a considerably more prominent form of data collection within this project. The sampled 41 group interviews were notably more data-rich, as numerous individuals discussed and debated interview prompts between themselves, rather than engaging in one-on-one interactions with the researcher. As described in methodological scholarship, these intra-group conversations provided insight to their construction of identities and meaning, in addition to sites of ideological or practical conflict, group dynamics, and techniques of conflict resolution (Fontana and Frey 1994). Group interviews were significantly more structured than the conversational nature of individuals, to marshal the fast-paced, often overlapping exchanges between group members. The chaotic and concurrent nature of these dialogues encouraged me to closely follow my dynamic interview schedule (included in Appendix A), reminding participants

(and myself) of the inquiries to be made. Upon finalizing the direction of the project, I developed more specific and structured questions in group interviews. This practice offered a deductive and interpretive turn to the study, which ceased when thematic saturation had been reached.

### *Textual Analyses*

Textual analyses dissect visual and text-based representations of ideas, actions, values, and behaviors. Texts are potent disseminators of hegemonic discourses, both with mainstream and subcultural communities (Glenn 1999). Given the advent of the internet and its associated social media platforms, individuals increasingly produce and distribute texts (Fairclough 2003). This practice contributes to the vastness, diffusion, and dialogical nature of discourse and intensified interdiscursivity – the ways that ideologies are constructed and communicated in relation to each other (Foucault 1984).

Within this study, I collected several jamtronica festival-related texts (approximately 125) through my participation within field sites, such as posted advertisements, vendor business cards, brochures, field note descriptions of relevant artifacts (i.e., t-shirts displaying misogynistic messages) and event programs. Additionally, I collected several online texts (over 35), including news releases, blog postings, and event web pages, to examine dominant and emergent discourses surrounding gender, sexuality, gendered threat experienced within this subcultural scene. Online texts were derived from internet searches driven parameters relevant to the project: “music festival women/girls”; “music festival men/boys”; “music festival advice”; “music festival advice for women/girls”; “music festival advice for men/boys”; “music festival sexual/harassment”; “music festival sexual/assault”; “music festival

sexual/violence”; “music festival rape”; “music festival rape culture”; “music festival problems”; “music festival problems for women/girls”; and, “music festival problems for men/boys.” These search terms, informed by preliminary observations and interview, frequently returned texts whose scope extended past jamtronica music festivals (for example, gendered threat that occurs at country and popular music festivals).

Though these online texts discussed a wide variety of festival experiences, as jamtronica music festivals grow in popularity and mainstream impact, these texts proved useful for articulating subcultural boundaries, as well as the further implications, of genre-based discursive frameworks. I iteratively collected these texts, repeating searches for new developments and news items through the 2014, 2015, and 2016 “festival seasons.” The search terms I outlined built from progressive analyses suggested by modified grounded theories of Charmaz (2005, 2006). I incrementally ceased collecting on-site and online texts upon attaining thematic saturation, particularly after surpassing 150 material and digital resources.

### *Autoethnography*

Qualitative inquiry posits the researcher in a unique, hyper-subjective role within research, given their responsibility for collecting, interpreting, and reporting data and its findings (Denzin 1989). Informed by Social Constructivism/Interactionism, Intersectional Feminism, and Ethnography, I found it critical to use my own voice to reflexively and descriptively portray my personal experiences within and observations of the field. I did this not only through incorporating the expected reflexivity that “good” qualitative research possesses, but also through employing autoethnographic elements which intentionally expose and reflect upon the ways that data collection and fieldwork

impacted my findings, and vice versa (Knoblauch 2005). Autoethnography builds the narrative, dialogical interpretation, and delivery advocated by contemporary ethnography (Goodall 2000), alleviating the tensions of the ethnographic “crisis of representation” (Reed-Danahay 2009). Within this approach, the researcher becomes the researched; autoethnography opens up opportunities for dismantling power relations between researchers and respondents (Anderson 2009; Bruner 1993).

Through incorporating autoethnographic methods, researchers scrutinize and dissect their taken-for-granted assumptions in a very public way. This is frequently accomplished through researchers’ inclusion of autoethnographic vignettes or short observational texts that exceed descriptive reporting, using them as an additional site of data collection and analysis. Researchers must explicate taken-for-granted (or worse, altogether suppressed) sociological- and cultural familiarities, as audiences who are unfamiliar with research fields or subjects may not understand the physical, ideological, and cultural contexts which underpinning ethnographic analyses. By utilizing autoethnography, researchers “pull back the curtain” to demonstrate the personal and analytical processes on which the study is built. This provides a critical opportunity for beginning dialogues within and between academic and lay audiences. Autoethnography combines “internal textual accuracy with external cultural accuracy” (Tedlock 2000:468), depicting the relationship between on-ground experiences and sociological documentation therein. To this end, I include nine descriptive narratives to contextualize field site characteristics, landscapes, interpersonal exchanges, and conceptual applications that may be foreign to readers. These disclosures reflexively illuminate my complicated relationship with the project’s subject matter, festival arenas and



memberships, and interactions with/between event participants. It is important to note that I included these autoethnographic narratives not merely to pander to qualitative demands for reflexivity, but as essential sources of collected data, used as a part of data analysis and interpretation. Through “storying” my own experiences within the field beyond the “objective” collection and description of phenomena, I seek to frame abstract sociological concepts with my lived experiences and emotions throughout this project, situating my standpoints and struggles through lay language and prose. I use these narratives throughout the following analytical chapters of this project as signifiers of thematic transition and as opportunities to reflect my personal encounters, emotions, and observations of gender, sexuality, and gendered threat within the studied jamtronica music festival sites.

## **DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES**

My data collection and analytical processes integrated aspects of modified grounded theory and ethnographic frameworks. Thus, this project incorporated both inductive and deductive approaches to developing research questions, collecting data, and performing analyses. Natasi (2013) dubs this research process “abductive. Additionally, this study was dualistically informed by iterative and participant-driven data collection and conceptual refinement, which was guided by a synthesis of previous area scholarship and on-site theoretical sampling (Charmaz 2006; Glaser 1978). In this project, I used event-based data collection over fourteen jamtronica festival sites, performing focused, generative analyses. These procedures were conducted both as a part of my immersion within field sites and during the intervals between research sites.

My findings reflect a synthesis of existing scholarly frameworks and in-field observations and analyses, serving to hone the direction of research and procedures for data collection. Within this study, I used reflective debriefing to establish patterns of behavior and discourse within festival arenas, identify gaps within existing and emergent conceptual frameworks, and map the increasing interconnections between generative themes as they offered empirical support to existing literature. I incorporated a small aspect of “traditional” forms of grounded theory<sup>5</sup> and built my central analyses around a set of recurrent themes that emerged from data collection: gender, sexuality, and threat faced within festival arenas. This decision prompted further deductive data collection and analyses which explored this initially inductive theme. As I reached thematic and theoretical saturation – deriving few to no new ideas from data collection per Glaser and Strauss (1967) – I interlinked these approaches to better integrate and organize collected data together in meaningful ways.

Before formal analyses, I organized the collected data into more analyzable forms. This process included the written transcription of on-site interviews and observational field notes, the formatting of physical and digital texts for coding, and the consolidation of audio-recorded personal debriefings into separately written transcripts. These data were uploaded to a qualitative data management software program (NVIVO). This program featured in-program coding, as well as visualization and modeling applications. This program additionally offered the critical capacity to upload and code visual, audio, and webpage-based texts. These software functions were essential during

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<sup>5</sup> See also Strauss and Corbin (1998) for further instruction on how to undertake “pure” grounded theory.

the first few steps of formal analyses, where I reviewed these data in their entirety to better acknowledge the holistic aspects of the data, before their more specific thematic dissections (Agar 1980).

As I more thoroughly examined project data, I formed initial codes in relation and application to existing conceptual and theoretical frameworks, such as mainstream gender norms, sexual pleasure-danger binaries, rape culture, and programming suggestions to eradicate violence against women both within the scene and in mainstream society. I analyzed data through line-by-line and unit-by-unit formats (Charmaz 2006) by coding and documenting emergent themes through NVIVO's memo feature. When I came across a particularly poignant quote or item, I used the program's in-vivo coding feature to emphasize the exact phrases used by research participants, the researcher herself, or texts, structuring these statements as standalone codes. These codes designated noteworthy elements of personal and participant narratives, in addition to on-site or online texts (Creswell 2013), and therefore were used to further direct and organize data analyses. These in-vivo codes were critical not only because they emphasized the methodological strengths of ethnography and textual analyses; more so, they elevated important themes and contradictions with subcultural narratives.

I combined prescriptions of theoretical coding (Glaser 1978) and "lean coding" (Creswell 2013) to integrate inductive and deductive analyses. Theoretical coding specifies relationships between empirically-derived themes and previous literature (Charmaz 2006; Glaser 1978). This coding approach sought to synthesize collected data with existing sociological literature. By performing theoretically-informed "lean coding,"

I established six primary thematic categories which I frequently revisited to conduct further dissection, subcategorization, and analytical application.

These selected themes evaluated statements and thematic relationships regarding: subcultural landscapes and values; expectations of festival women and/or femininity; expectations of festival men and/or masculinity; prescriptions for expressing and acting upon sexuality, for both genders; problems perceived within the festival arena/community; and, suggestions for coping with (gendered) threat within event participation. Despite their significant derivation from previous field-based observations, interviews, and scholarly literature, these themes were ultimately flexible as to accommodate new and emergent phenomena as they developed through additional analytical iterations. I used in-vivo codes detail personal and participant on-ground experiences, primarily through narrative elaborations on the themes above. Additionally, I analyzed coded data and broader themes in relation to each other, to construct a conceptual framework which effectively integrated field-based empirical data with larger theoretical conversations.

I refashioned this conceptual framework to craft a descriptive, narrative-based (auto-) ethnographic composition. This decision was made to translate abstract sociological concepts and empirically-sourced phenomena into an accessible, engaging, and dialogical account of this study's findings. My analysis primarily takes the form of a non-linear collective narrative, situating participants' discussions and meaning-making of gender, sexuality, and threats perceived within the jamtronica subcultural scene in relation to each other, as well as to scholarship across several disciplinary fields. I supplemented participants' accounts through incorporating online and on-site texts,

which served as variable sites of discursive conflict or congruence within the subcultural scene. Finally, I interlinked these observations, claims, and discourses through inserting my own narrative re-telling of these phenomena. This inclusion was decisively informed by my personal experiences and observations of gendered threat within the jamtronica arena. These upsetting yet invaluable experiences deeply informed my research, and serve to reassert the personal impacts of subcultural scene participation, memberships, and the disparate considerations women undertake within festival participation.

Within qualitative sociology, analyses are inherently subjective. As they are “[f]ar from being exhausting and objective, they are inherently selective and interpretive. The researcher chooses what types of information to preserve, which descriptive categories to use, and how to display the information” (Edwards 2005: 321). By utilizing this subjectivity to an academic advantage, I fuse the realms of scholarly review with the on-ground subcultural realities, giving rise to mid-range sociological scholarship.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### *Naming the Problem*

In addition to aforementioned ethical limitations (i.e., issues of participant consent in an environment where substance use is normative; power dynamics between researcher and participant; cultural and conceptual barriers of communication and understanding; and, the hybrid identities that I claim as both subcultural member and academic researcher), my role as a small-framed, young, White, queer but straight-passing, femme-presenting woman in a historically young White men’s subcultural space critically and uniquely shaped my interactions within project field sites. Fortunately, I experienced minimal barriers due to these identity markers, even as they observably impacted

participant perceptions of my legitimacy – as a researcher, as subcultural scene member and event participant, or as both. No less, external and embodied identity markers frequently shaped interpersonal interactions outside of project observations and interviews. As the carnivalesque atmosphere (and normative substance use) of festival arenas seemingly removes sanctions for those who engage in sexualizing or other predatory behaviors which disproportionately target women, my status as a researcher did not immunize me from these victimizing interactions.<sup>6</sup>

During this study, adult men also participating in these events initiated inappropriate physical contact, intentionally and non-consensually grabbing and rubbing against me. I experienced instances where festival-going men did not think twice about commenting on my body and its appearance, directly to my face. These interactions frustrated and confounded my hybrid roles as subcultural member and researcher, making me wary to observe too late into the evening (at the peak of normative substance use) or event to attend festivals alone. As I explored this field-oriented phenomenon of gendered threat, I drew upon my own experiences and concerns as a festival-going woman. However, I found that divulging my own experiences of physical, social, and sexual threat and victimization did not necessarily encourage research participants to share their own perceptions or experiences of gendered threat. Although this project argues that subcultural scene members may incur severe sanctions in response to expressing narratives which may challenge dominant subcultural axioms of community and equality, discussing these topics within the contexts of an interview posed minimal participant risk.

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<sup>6</sup> Bhardwa (2013) and Perrone (2010) similarly observe this gendered researcher vulnerability within their studies of EDM and nightclub subcultural arenas.

Within these hosted interviews, I attempted to minimize participant risk through fostering rapport and reciprocity, aided by comfortable, confidential, and mutually-vulnerable interactions where these studied issues could be discussed safely and without consequence.

### *Naming Each Other*

Despite my best efforts to confidentialize collected data through removing overtly incriminating remarks (i.e., engagement in illegal substance use or activities, work absence fraud), research participants within this project experienced this additional form of minimal study risk. Within this study, participants frequently expressed unpopular or uncouth viewpoints regarding gender, sexuality, and subcultural experiences of threat. Some research participants openly reported negative aspects of the festival event or subcultural community. At times, interviewees accidentally referenced other people participating in the interview through use of their real names, which broke established codes of confidentiality. Similarly, some members of the jamtronica festival community vehemently resisted academic or media coverage regarding their “scene.” Research participants also prospectively experienced in-group stigma or other informal sanctions for their divergent or conflicting responses to interview prompts.

In light of these challenges, I insisted that interview participants and research sites maintain pseudonyms to better obscure their study participation. During transcription and analyses of these interviews, I elected to re-name many of those who chose to offer their real names during the interview, to better protect their identities. To further uphold this standard of confidentiality, I attentively reviewed participant interviews to remove references to the real names of other group members. In severe breaches of

confidentiality, I combined aspects and statements of the named person into other participants' comments within interview transcripts. This particular practice sought to effectively preserve the "outed" participants' voices within these conversations, but more so to minimize incrimination of the named participants.

### *Rubbing Names in the "Dirt"*

As festivals grow in number, frequency, and popularity, mainstream media coverage and policy concern also increases. Unfortunately, as this study observed the gendered nature of perceived problems (and their corresponding solutions) within the jamtronica festival subculture, this subcultural scene may be impacted by the unintended consequences of this project's findings. Media outlets and politicians may sensationalize the extent and prevalence of project-identified problems. This hyper-dramatization may construct and reify damaging discourses regarding festival events and their subcultural communities and scenes. Additionally, media and political stakeholders may prospectively ignore a critical element of this project: a conclusion that briefly posits prospective interviewee-generated solutions to event-based risks associated with gender and sexuality. More devastatingly, cursory review or misuse of these project findings may diminish the transformative potential of jamtronica music festival events to spark attitudinal, interactional, and discursive changes regarding gender and sexuality on micro- and macro-levels. It was my explicit intent for this project not to be an exposé of music festivals' or their experienced "horrors." Instead, this project seeks to carefully construct a descriptive, collaborative, theoretically-informed study which engaged the voices of subcultural community members to envision scene-based social change, in light of larger sociological scholarship.



## **ROLE OF REFLEXIVITY**

Due to the flexible and iterative nature of my data collection and analyses (as well as the complicated relationship that I hold as a researcher and a subcultural scene member), it was critical to identify the role that reflexivity took within this project.

Creswell (2013: 215) notes:

How we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to research. All writing is ‘positioned’ and within a stance. All researchers shape the writing that emerges, and qualitative researchers need to accept this interpretation and be open about it in their writings.

My project (as it is designed and delivered) indeed acts to represent my situated observations and experiences. Qualitative research frequently situates the researcher as its primary tool of data collection and interpretation; how, then, could my “mark” not be evident within the data collection, analyses, and documentation of this project?

Richardson (1994) posits that all writing has “subtexts” that ground within particular spatial, social, and historical contexts (518). Authorial voice drives these “subtexts” as they represent and co-construct the interactions held between researcher and research participants. I labored to make this interactive and analytical workload visible, not simply because my claimed theoretical and methodological orientations prescribe it, but because I felt (and still feel) that research processes and products should be accessible and contributive to all readers. I wrote descriptively, narratively, and reflexively because this approach best conveyed my interpretation and experience of the field, the research processes I undertook, and the phenomena I studied. This stylistic choice sought to produce an engaging “story” for its readers while staying faithful to its practical and analytical purposes.

My use of autoethnographic vignettes, participant observations, interviews, and textual analyses detailed personal accounts and negotiations of field-based conflicts. I purposefully integrated audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded personal debriefings within this report, frequently incorporating “re-storied” narrative vignettes to mark conceptual transitions. As a part of this practice, I described the distressing personal experience of observing, and at times, disrupting instances of gendered threat, such as my confrontation of an antagonizing group of neighbors who were howling rape jokes. I include these vignettes to illuminate the practical (though possibly irrational) considerations that I, and other festival participants, used to manage these tensions. I structured this project as a “story” to organize and chronicle a notably non-linear research process: how an unexpected experience within the field altered the direction of the project as a whole. This tale seeks to highlight the generative, iterative, and sometimes difficult nature of modified grounded theory and ethnography. Within my writing, I offer vivid accounts of what festival participants learn and adopt as “appropriate” subcultural performances of gender and sexuality, what meaning is given to these, and what implications gender-sexual inequalities have for subcultural and mainstream communities. I intentionally did not arrange these data-based “scenes” in chronological order. Instead, I contoured them through “re-storying.” This process analyzed and (thematically) organized my experiences to illustrate the nature of the field, the undertaken research, and the concepts that emerged from and apply to it (Ollerenshaw and Creswell 2002).

As a part of this project, I consider the mostly unspoken ways that researchers prioritize their observations and documentation. I briefly discuss how my presence as a

researcher may have impacted the interactions I observed, mainly as a fully immersed participant in the studied setting. I also display how my own research direction and methods shifted, in response to participant suggestions. Additionally, I convey the personal importance of participants' inquiries to this research project, especially how these shaped my exploration and assessment of self-as-researcher and self-as-subcultural-member. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) suggest that collaborative interviewing breaks down power dynamics between researcher and participants. These power dynamics manifested in several forms: participant self-censure during discussions of subculture experiences and expectations; avoidance of difficult interview prompts, indicating participants' emotional discomfort or lack of empirical and conceptual familiarity with the studied topics; and, interactive subtleties. True to previous scholarship, power dynamics manifested within this project at times, through researcher interruption during participant reply, researcher- or peer-coerced responses, and extractive "one-way" interviewing (Weis and Fine 2000). When observed, I attempted to undo these power dynamics through apologizing to participants and offering them ample time between responses. Additionally, I encouraged group members to speak in turn, giving each member the respect they were due.

Observation and interviews are not the only sites of subjectivity and power tensions. Text-based discourses arise from personal (often semiotic) interpretations, situated within researcher assumptions and socioculturally-situated standpoints. These assumptions and standpoints are highly mutable and subjective. As discourse offers structure and actionability to organize boundaries, identities, actions, and hierarchies, so too may textual interpretations fluctuate, based on researchers' contexts and identities

(Fairclough 2013). By descriptively reflecting on the studied texts and illuminating the analyses they underwent, I was better able to illustrate not only the research process, but the relationships sustained between discursive, interactional, analytical, and physical fields.

To undertake this study, I repositioned myself as an “acknowledged participant” within the research field (Clarke 2005: xxvii). I manifest this identity orientation and approach through purposefully disrupting conventional, power-laden researcher-participant relationships, and by mindfully detailing my research and analytical processes in how I communicated these narratives of self and others. Through this, I position my biases and situated knowledge as not only inevitable, but a critical element of research design, data collection, conceptual analyses, and documentation of findings. Through telling my own stories and articulating the stories of research participants as carefully as I would my own, I endeavor to construct a detailed, reflexive synthesis of interpretivist sociology and emancipatory praxis.

## **VALIDITY**

Small sample size (both in terms of participants as well as the number of sites observed) and the uniqueness of each studied event tend to plague qualitative research. Thus, it is difficult to establish generalizability and reliability (Wainwright 1997). Alternatively, many qualitative researchers offer intense consideration to measures of validity, as these measures offer credibility to the observations and conclusions made by the author. Validation, here, is “a judgment of the trustworthiness or goodness of a piece of research” (Angen 2000: 387). Yet, within qualitative research, metrics of assessing these characteristics are often vague, varying from study to study (Creswell 2013).

Within this study, I use the prescriptions Angen (2000) proposes to establish qualitative validity. In this, I endeavor to accurately describe and interpret the investigated social phenomena (substantive validity) and to locate my role (and the research) within underlying personal, cultural, and theoretical assumptions (ethical validity).

### *Ethical Validity*

Angen (2000) suggests that researchers demonstrate ethical validity when they actively work to identify their personal, political, and theoretical presuppositions in relation to their research. Additionally, ethically valid projects incorporate transformative action into their analyses and findings, offering solutions-based approaches to identified social and theoretical problems. To establish ethical validity, I used three strategies: (1) clarifying researcher biases; (2) member-checking data and findings; and, (3) identifying preliminary solutions to social problems within interpretive analyses.

First, to establish ethical validity, I continuously assessed my positioning and relationship to the field (in addition to its subcultural occupants) throughout the project's duration. Using autoethnographic vignettes to report my experiences of, observations within, and reflections upon the field, I clarified my interpretive and personal backgrounds within this report. More so, I purposefully exposed events and experiences (both within and external to the field) that shaped my study's analytical procedures and lenses. These biases were imperative to note because this work communicates my (inherently partial) interpretation of social phenomena, deeply framed by my standpoints and understandings. As I identify as a member of the jamtronica festival subcultural community, these biases were even more critical to disclose and "unpack." In my "claimed" membership within the studied community, I possess a personal investment in

the dynamics of gender and sexuality within this field, more so, discussing proposed solutions to festival problems with other event participants. This hybrid identity informed my analytical perspectives and shaped the brief suggestions for transformative praxis with which I concluded this document.

To establish ethical validity, I used member-checking strategies to solicit research participants' feedback on the accuracy and credibility of the research findings (Merriam 1988). This validation technique returned raw data, research analyses, and study conclusions back to the community of study. This procedure offered research participants an opportunity to review, revise, and reframe the findings of the study to more accurately represent their viewpoints and voices. This strategy was also used to establish substantive validity (mentioned below) through my purposeful incorporation of participant perspectives. This practice contributes interpretive strength beyond individualized researcher analyses. Incorporating participant narrative further encouraged accurate my documentation of the studied phenomena. At the same time, these member-checking procedures stressed my duty as a researcher to foster reciprocity and rapport with study participants. In this project, I invited research participants who extended post-interview contact to partake in individual and focus group member-checks. These took place over confidentialized e-mail communications to share both preliminary findings and finalizing editions of the project, seeking the feedback of those who are already familiar with the project but may be impacted by its findings or implications. Member-checks evaluated for the accuracy of event and participant descriptions, located tensions between authorial voice and respondent representation, and interrogated my authorial "re-storying" of participants' collective, yet often conflicting narratives. However, as not all

study participants extended further communication after their interviews, not all interviewees participated in member-checking exercises. Instead, during the two events I attended in 2016 (Empieza and Glow Worm), I offered my preliminary analyses and project reports to several individuals and focus group members for review. I then used their feedback to fine-tune my analyses, to more accurately represent the viewpoints of the scene community and event participants.

Lastly, to establish ethical validity, I briefly concluded my theoretical analyses with empirical prospects for social change within this field. Qualitative data analysis has the propensity to be data-extractive, leaving the communities researchers study with little voice within a project which would not have happened without their contributions. Despite my illumination and critique of the observed gender-sexual dynamics that pose disparate risk to festival-going women, it was (and still is) not my intention to demonize the subculture. Instead, I bring together subcultural community perspectives with academic analyses, looking to foster continued momentum within the scene's honest self-study and to offer preliminary scholarly and organizational suggestions which may better address the problems that project participants identified.

### *Substantive Validation*

Substantive validation, according to Creswell (2013) subsists through researcher comprehension of empirical and theoretical findings, incorporation of participant perspectives, and in the thorough documentation of the research and analytical process. Researchers demonstrate this characteristic through their approach to structuring and disseminating project findings. In this pursuit, the researcher acts “as a sociohistorical interpreter” (248) to amalgamate participant viewpoints and pose them in conversation

with personal observations and scholarly literature. Researchers, then, translate their findings into tangible, participant-driven resolutions for use within marginalized communities. In this context, researcher reflexivity constructs a recursive relationship between pre-existing and emergent theory, empirical observations, and personal interpretation (Wainwright 1997). This engagement seeks to build accurate and poignant accounts of the field and its phenomena. In turn, this strategy embraces the dialogical and descriptive attributes of contemporary ethnographies and elucidates the empirical, on-ground occurrences of grounded theory approaches. To establish substantive validation, I used three techniques: (1) prolonged, persistent, and immersive fieldwork; (2) thick description; and, (3) triangulation.

First, to establish substantive validation, I engaged in prolonged engagement with/within and persistent observation of the selected field and its subcultural participants. As this project was multi-sited and focused in nature, my data collection (and in-field, generative coding and analyses) spanned multiple events, countless hours of immersive observations, and hundreds of preliminary interviews which not included in this study's data collection or analyses. During my fieldwork, I familiarized myself with subcultural norms and values, not only to understand in-field phenomena but also build trust and rapport with interview participants, as short as these individual or group engagements frequently were. Even though qualitative inquiry utilizes the researcher as the primary tool of data collection and interpretation, my sampling and analytical strategies was informed by extensive accumulation of subcultural capital (Thornton 1996). As I conducted immersive fieldwork over several events and festival sites, I



labored to situate these experiences and observations within sociological frameworks that possess both (sub)cultural and theoretical salience.

Next, to establish substantive validation within this study, I incorporated aspects of “thick description” – detailed and in-depth documentation that conveys an astute and investigative description of physical characteristics, movements, and activities within the studied field and its research participants (Geertz 1973). Denzin (1989) deepens this approach, noting:

A thick description [...] does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, contexts, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (83)

Thick description details the progressions of data collection and analyses, bringing to light often-obscured interpretive processes, offering opportunities for audiences to “experience” the field as a “co-researcher.” This “verisimilitude” immerses readers into intricate, descriptive and dialogical accounts of the phenomena in review and their associated contexts and structures (Richardson 1994: 521; Wainwright 1997). However, the offer of robust detail does not always impart Geertz’s ideation of thick description. Researchers must go beyond these cursory levels and strive to represent emic understandings and perspectives of studied phenomena and fields. In thick description, researchers carefully craft their language to convey processes, meanings, and events as an “insider” may understand them. Researchers serve as a bridge, translating between subcultural knowledge, norms, and phenomena to a mainstream audience, and vice versa. Here, an ethnographer’s scholastic depth and requisite to provide appropriate community

representation highlight one of the researcher's most difficult tasks: speaking a tongue that all audiences may grasp. In this study, I employ several ethnographically-informed frameworks to guide the "thick" documentation and delivery of my findings. I include detailed, emic-oriented descriptions of this field, its events, and its participants.

Additionally, I use a similar care within communicating more conceptual and theoretical applications, as I convey the "lived" interactions, considerations, and emotions of jamtronica scene members' event participation and meaning-making. Additionally, my use of autoethnographic vignettes illuminates the complex, iterative analyses and the directions that the study took. Without these elements, the research project may lose credibility or resonance, impacting research participants, scholarly communities, and broader lay audiences (Ponterotto 2006).

Lastly, to establish substantive validation, I employed triangulation strategies through my use of multiple research methods and data sources which informed research directions and findings (Creswell 2013). By finding thematic patterns within several different types of data sources – here, immersive observations, one-on-one and group interviews, autoethnographic vignettes, and textual analyses – I demonstrate that these findings are not merely anecdotal, but illustrate larger subcultural and mainstream social patterns. As I used several modes of data collection, analyses, and documentation within this project, I seek to reinforce the theoretical and empirical relevance of this study and its findings.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed the various theoretical and methodological frameworks that informed my approach to this project. Additionally, I reviewed the sites, populations, and samples whence I collected data and the sampling strategies I used to identify and delineate eligible participants, observations, and texts. By undertaking approaches informed by focused, multi-sited ethnography and modified grounded theory, I engaged in a dually inductive and deductive process of iterative data collection and analyses. At its conclusion, this project synthesized the exchanges of 179 jamtronica music festival participants through the primary use of 50 sampled individual and group interviews, my personal experiences sourced from nearly 500 hours of on-site participant observations, and the discursive prescriptions and tensions found across the textual analyses of over 150 on-site artifacts and online resources. Additionally, my incorporation of nine autoethnographic vignettes within this report reflected the project's purposeful role of reflexivity. This chapter further included a discussion of the ethical considerations I faced while approaching the field, collecting data, and establishing study findings, as well as the measures I undertook to increase the project's validity. Through "re-storying" collected and analyzed data into a non-linear descriptive and conceptual chronicle, I synthesize these various sources of data, but also situate this collaborative narrative and call for transformation within wider discursive and theoretical contexts – both subcultural and mainstream.

## Chapter Four – Problem-Solving Paradise or Problems in Paradise?

In her 2008 book, *Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status*, Amy Wilkins contends that youths' subcultural participation acts as a means to negotiate personal identities in response to mainstream inequalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality. As such, subcultural members can evade mainstream expectations and claim a sense of uniqueness. By following modified norms and values, subcultural members claim privileges that they may not have been able to in their everyday lives. While belonging in a subculture may act as a means to "stand out," memberships within these groups are often temporary and dependent upon low barriers to entry. These already fragile subcultural identities and community participation frequently evaporate in response to encroaching demands of adult life. These memberships do not usually incur long-term consequences for involvement, particularly for people privileged by race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Similar to the emergent norms, meanings, and memberships that Wilkins' goths, Christians, and wannabes embrace through their subcultural involvement, jamtronica music festival participants also use "subcultural projects" to define themselves in relation (and, at times, in opposition to) the mainstream, and the expectations it prescribes. Yet, the majority of jamtronica music festival participants are not youth members of a subcultural scene. Instead, jamtronica event participants are frequently young adults (under 30). However, some jamtronica festival participants continue their participation in festival events and communities well into their later life (60+). Jamtronica festival participants' normatively older audiences present an interesting inquisition to the work of Wilkins. Youth participation in subcultures offer temporary reprieves from the

mainstream, “adult” expectations and the hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality that members often resolve within eventual adoption of adult roles. What, then, is to be made of adults’ deployment of “subcultural projects” to legitimize their deviance from mainstream roles and expectations? If youth subcultural participation may be interpreted as a micro-level response to perceived large-scale inequalities, can adult participation in these scenes offer comparative means to, albeit temporarily, construct and negotiate identities that are valued, meaningful, and empowering, in response to the mainstream constraints and inequities they face?

In this chapter, I examine the reasons why people attend festivals, and how they discern their participation in these events from their everyday lives and constraints. Then, I extend this investigation into the problems that festival-goers’ perceive within jamtronica events and communities themselves. Observing that the gendered differences that arise from these reports are a site of contention within these communities, I identify the many ways that festival participants minimize or deny the existence of gender-disparate concerns or experiences within the festival arena. Interviewees’ suggested solutions to problems festival-goers face uphold central yet paradoxical tenets of the subcultural scene, preserving dominant subcultural claims of festival events’ immunity from outside issues and inequalities. Jamtronica music festivals may prove to be escapes from real-world problems for many of its participants. Yet, a closer look reveals that these utopian events may cause unique problems for some participants, replicating mainstream inequalities and constraints within this supposedly-egalitarian scene.

## WHY FESTIVALS?

To many interviewees, their participation in jamtronica music festivals is a purposeful escape from their everyday lives. Leslie, a 20-year-old woman participating in Glow Worm (2015), explained, “I feel like [festival participation] is stepping outside of reality just to give yourself a vacation.” Jared, a 27-year-old man interviewed at Empieza (2014) expanded upon this claim, noting:

[The festival experience] is an escape from normalcy and regular life. They're a mini-vacation. You walk through the gates of a festival, and you are no longer in the United States. You're in that festival land, and you are with those people. Even with the larger events, you find whole communities you can connect to.

However, what were these festival participants trying to escape? Interviewees primarily identified problems and constraints, including: tensions with family and friends; school/work obligations and lack of professional fulfillment; stresses of broader political and economic climates; insecurities about their own identity, purpose, and belonging; marginalizations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other social identities/locations; feelings of little control over their present conditions; and, pessimistic outlooks for the future – for themselves, and for broader society. An exchange between two participants of Nocturne (2015) concisely summarized these laments. Sparrow, a 21-year-old woman, sighed, “[...] the society we that we live in has grown to be this thing that is just making us tired. Like, I'm done with it all.” Her companion, G-Money (24, no gender given), counterclaimed, “[But] this place and these people make you feel valued and hopeful; that [feeling]'s always there.” While participants feel isolated, alienated, hopeless, suppressed, and oppressed in their everyday lives, jamtronica music festivals present an emancipatory alternative from a mainstream fraught with obligations, sociopolitical tensions, identity politics, and regulation. Spring,

a woman (no age given), interviewed at Empieza (2014), stated, “[Festivals are to] just to let go. [To] not care about what society wants me to be and just be me. [...] [To] do stuff for yourself and not have to achieve anything for anyone else.” Gabby, a 19-year-old woman attending Fall Ball (2015), appended, “That’s why I like going to these things. The vibe is so different than the real world. Like, if this could be [daily] life, everything would be great.”

## **DISCERNING THE DAILY FROM THE DIVINE**

As they detailed the reasons as to why they attend music festivals, participants often compared these events as utopias, foiling the daily lives that they found so problematic and constraining. In doing so, festival-goers’ illuminated three significant distinctions between these two worlds: opportunities for self-expression, conscious community-building, and equalization of outside inequalities.

### *Self-Expression*

For many participants, jamtronica music festivals provide an opportunity to express themselves in ways that they would not, or could not, in their everyday lives.

Carmen, a 22-year old man interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), reasoned:

Growing up, you’re taught to put on your guard, but here, you shut your inhibitions down. You can just be the person that you actually are. [...] To be considered a professional in today’s society, you have to put on this disguise. You get to shed that disguise when you come to places like this and just be the person that you absolutely are... to see who you are, to see what you like, and to see what makes you happy.

Caroline, a 31-year-old woman participating in *Empieza* (2014), echoed:

Festivals are different from everyday [life] because people wear whatever they want. You can express yourself any way you want and no one thinks anything of it because you're at a festival. But if you're at the mall, people would be like, 'Oh, my God!' [...] Festivals are about doing what you want. So, I personally don't care what anyone else thinks.

To Reese, an 18-year-old woman interviewed at *Empieza* (2014), the opportunities festivals present for self-expression is not only a place of escaping the invalidation of others but for those who may not fit in in the mainstream to find self-validation and community. She remarked:

[...] People would judge you outside of a festival if you were wearing the same things you would here. I feel like everyone gets crazy at festivals and lets their freak out. Literally... I feel like I can be myself more at a festival. I've always felt kind of weird, so here I can just do whatever I want. It's more accepting.

Tanenbaum (1999) argues that subcultures value performances of social location that diverge from mainstream norms: subcultural members identify and articulate themselves as different from mainstream society, and subcultural groups celebrate this difference, offering prescriptions for how this difference is to be done and privileges for fulfilling them. Jamtronica music festivals encourage difference through goading their participants to adopt innovative, parodic interpretations of themselves, what St John (2009) labels "freakiness." For them, festival-endorsed "freakiness" enabled scene members to truly be themselves – unfettered by outside roles, responsibility, ranks, or regulations, even if their festival actions proved deviant, even criminal, in outside contexts. In contrast to their mainstream lives, interviewees characterized jamtronica events as judgment-free, wholly accepting of whoever or whatever participants were or wanted to be.



### *Conscious Community-Building*

Jamtronica music festival events increasingly draw their participants from geographically and demographically diverse audiences and “scenes” (Dowd, Liddle, and Nelson 2004). Many festival-goers, like Patrick, a 29-year-old man interviewed at Mudslide (2014), consider this expansion a boon for the scene and its members, offering broadened opportunities for exchange between diverse communities and event participants. He lauded, “It’s nice that people are coming out and being exposed to the mix that these festivals offer. Every time I come here... I experience growth when I leave, just from being exposed to so many different cultures and people, sometimes from around the world.” In addition to acting as a place where diverse groups may congregate and “be exposed” to each other, other festival-goers’ frame jamtronica events as unique sites of creating meaningful, collectively-driven relationships between people who would likely be divided in their mainstream lives.

[Festivals are] a universal language. It’s an ability to connect people who have so many contrasting ideas and opinions, and festivals just about the ability to bring them together. [...] People set aside their pre-existing ideas aside and come to this communal society... We live in a society where people are very closed-minded.  
(Carmen, 22-year-old man, Fall Ball 2015)

That’s all this [festival] is. It’s just a big melting pot. Everyone has the same thing in common that they’re here for, but not too many of us outside of [these events will know about it] unless we start talking and finding out what we have in common. [Festivals are] a great way to meet new people.  
(Deetz, 22-year-old man, Mudslide 2014)

We’re all here for a common goal and that is to have a good time. No matter how you get there, you just want to have a good time. There is [sic] not too many places in the world where everyone in one spot has a common goal.  
(Morton, 49-year-old man, Empieza 2015)

Jamtronica festival events themselves sponsor messages that emphasize the importance of seeking and building community as a part of event participation. In two event programs distributed to festival participants, festival producers and spokespeople encouraged event participants to consciously foster bonds that challenged outside boundaries and memberships. They requested:

We would ask all of you to help us build a unique community. A community that comes together to celebrate. A community that comes together to express itself. A community that reflects all of the good going on within it. A community that puts aside negativity during our time together. A community that respects all who choose to be a part of it. A community that lives and breathes as one over the next four days. And when it's over, a community that carries some of that beauty back into our individual lives to share with the rest of the world.

(FreezeOut 2014 printed program)

[Radical inclusion] means we want to leave this [event] a tribe. A family connected forever. For this to happen we believe everyone should take every opportunity they have to reach out to those they don't already know and invite them in[to] what they are doing. Relinquish all judgments we normally hold, for at least this one weekend.

(Nocturne 2015 printed program)

While increasingly diverse, jamtronica festival participants and production teams emphasize the similarities between festival-goers and the unified pursuit of a “common goal.” Though seemingly-contradictory to previous statements that laud festivals’ permission of unfettered personal expression and individual autonomy, festivals’ conscious cultivation of inclusive communities acts as another way that scene members distinguish their subcultural lives from their mainstream ones.

### *Equalization of Outside Inequalities*

Bonded by their participation in a subcultural scene that permits, if not endorses, acts considered deviant in “real life,” jamtronica festival participants frequently describe feelings of solidarity (community) with other festival-goers and a sense of equality

among scene members, regardless of differences of social identities and locations (Kavanaugh and Anderson 2008). Protected by subcultural values and behavioral codes that insulate participants from sanction, they are free to immerse themselves in a land of “make-believe.” In this carnivalesque realm, mainstream norms and categories break down, resulting in “the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions” (Bahktin [1944] 1968: 10). Here, many interviewees argue, previous everyday factors such as time, place, and personal identity markers no longer contextualize one’s participation (Rietveld 1993; Thornton 1996), as members maintain an unyielding sense of positivity within the arena.

As Pumpkin, a 23-year-old woman interviewed at Glow Worm (2015), asserted, “I think there’s no pressure here. You’re accepted for who you are, and in mainstream society, everything is very regimented.” Jedi, her friend (19-year-old man), interjected, “It’s very diverse here.” Another member of the group, Beaver (an 18-year-old man) added, “You won’t find any kind of hate here. But, out there [in the mainstream] you always hear how people hate their job or their car or their family... but here, everyone loves everything.”

Some festival participants extend this belief even further, explaining that conflicts and constraints related to social categories like gender and sexuality are not only diminished but discouraged within the subcultural scene and arena. When asked about the presence of gender norms or expectations within jamtronica festival scenes, David, a man interviewed at Empieza 2014 (no age given), responded, “There are no standards here at all. Whatever you want to wear, just wear. Peace and love.” Kristen, his woman-identifying companion (no age given), affirmed this notion: “I feel it would be against the

norm to see it at first, but then you're like, 'Oh, that guy is wearing a dress. That's so cool.'" David continued, "Right. It would be like judging yourself, because he's doing what he wants, but then you realize you're doing what YOU want. [Here], everyone is on the same level doing the same thing at the same time."

In comparison to the inequality-ridden mainstream, scene members characterize jamtronica music festival events as conflict-free, or at least conflict-discouraging, especially in navigating participants' mainstream social locations. As festival-goers foster a deeply connected community where all can do as they please, the paradoxical mass individualization and integration permit a mass "disappearance" (Redhead 1993) that diminishes participants' identification with social locations of gender and sexuality, as well as the marginalizing impacts accompanying them. The ability to escape external labels and inequalities presents an appealing opportunity for festival-goers. Maggie, a 26-year-old woman participating in Glow Worm (2015) rationalized, "It's, like, an equalizing environment. Everyone knows that they can come here and be accepted for who they are. That's very attractive."

Collectively-endorsed but individually-performed "freakiness" directs participants to destabilize their identities and positions within broader social structures, facilitating a liminal festival arena. Festival-goers' acquiescence to and engagement in these liminal atmospheres further catalyzes a more profound and more widespread uproot and alteration of mainstream norms and hierarchies, particularly those regarding substance use, propriety, and moderation (Gee and Bales 2012; Turner 1964). Though their individual and collective rejection, innovation and re-negotiation of hegemonic ideological and behavioral codes and hierarchies, scene members further distinguish their

festival participation from everyday life – opportunities that they are granted, in part, due to privileges of race, class, ability, and other social locations.

### **LINKING DISTINCTIONS, MAINSTREAM DIFFICULTIES, AND LEGITIMATIONS**

As interviewees offer reasons why they attend jamtronica music festival events, they distinguish these arenas and communities as inherently different than the mainstream lives they “escape” during their participation. These events provide temporary reprieves and self-sustaining “solutions” to the problems that festival-goers face in their everyday lives. In seeking opportunities for personal expression and community, adult members of the jamtronica music festival subcultural scene, like the youth subcultural participants studied by Wilkins, use these events as strategies to manage that overcome the constraints and marginalizations they endure daily. While Wilkins argues that the problems that young members of subcultural scenes endowed with racial, class, and gender-sexual privileges often resolve themselves throughout adulthood, continued participation in subcultural scenes (though often episodic) may act to mediate the mainstream problems that continue throughout or are even introduced by, adulthood. Alternatively, jamtronica music festival subculture may provide a means to solve (here, evade) the constraints that adulthood solves for many, but not all.

While jamtronica festival-goers use their event participation as means to address the difficulties and dilemmas that everyday life presents, it is also critical to study the problems that they face within how they attempt to “escape.” Though festival participants lauded festivals’ ability to foster egalitarian spaces and communities in distinction to the hierarchy-laded mainstream, divergences in the event-based concerns and inconveniences

that men and women identify expose interesting, yet incriminating, gendered dimensions of the subcultural scene.

### **PROBLEMS THAT FESTIVAL-GOING MEN IDENTIFY-**

When asked about the problems they encountered at music festivals, interview participants who identified as men frequently mentioned issues inconveniencing their time, health, membership claims within the subcultural scene, and their differentiation from mainstream appropriations of jamtronica music festival culture. These complaints articulated unique perspectives about the nature of scene membership, how boundary maintenance should be done, and by whom.

#### *The “N00bz”: Inexperienced Festival-Goers as Irritating “Others”*

Given the mainstream boom of EDM events (Brunsma, Chapman, and Lellock 2016), it is no surprise that jamtronica festivals have experienced similar popular acclaim. Increasing participant attendance (Nielson 2014) and the proliferation of new EDM events (St John 2015) magnify festival participants’ perceived incursion by newcomers. To some men, this presented a subcultural issue requiring address. Merrick, a 22-year-old man interviewed at Empieza (2014), situated this problem, stating, “[Newcomers] might not be prepared or physically ready to take on an entire weekend of stuff. There should be something out there that gives them a heads-up on what to expect.” Newcomers’ lack of experience and preparation can have devastating impacts; Bruce, a 21-year-old man interviewed at Fall Ball (2015) explained:

You get a lot of 18-19-year-olds that are coming out for the very first time and are just breaking into the world – and maybe they’ve been secluded and come from a very sheltered life – then they’re in this. They just go too hard or get too messed up or meet the wrong people, ‘cause they don’t know any better. That probably happens more times than not.

While inexperience in subcultural scenes may present health risks, physical danger, or social repercussions, very few men were willing to discuss strategies or informational tools to reduce this risk, noting their hesitancy to give prescriptions to an environment they perceived as discouraging of definition. While the rise of festival popularity has generated ample external media coverage of the behavioral, stylistic, and ideological codes of these events (Rief 2009), many interview participants decried this coverage as inaccurate and inappropriate, as it established specific participatory parameters within a purposefully ambiguous arena. An obvious tension arises within newcomers’ experiences: by preparing oneself for festival events through prescriptive media, one affirms an “outsider” status. However, lacking effective preparation for festival events may imperil the newcomer, leaving this subcultural paradox resolved through trial and error – one that may not come without personal consequence.

#### *“Festie” Representation and Event Corporatization*

Several men lamented how “festies” (participants in jamtronica festival events) experienced stigma within mainstream contexts. David, an Empieza 2014 participant, criticized the stereotypes that people outside the subcultural festival scene held of its participants, alleging, “The people on the other side [mainstream] don’t come here. They don’t like the music. They think we’re douche-baggy and that we’re just a bunch of hippies, and that we don’t care about anything.”

Another festival-going man, Billy Ray, a 30-year-old man interviewed at Mudslide (2014) empathized with David's claims, noting the how stigmas penalizing festival-goers manifested within his own life:

Where I work, where I'm an HR [Human Resources] manager, I'm somewhat part of the executive staff. I did not feel comfortable telling them that I'm taking a couple days to come to a music festival. I have no problem telling them – like, normally, I take time off to go camping or floating – but, you know, coming back from a music festival, I would get a hard time about it when I got back. They wouldn't drug test me, but in the back of their minds they would want to. In my position, it would be negative toward my reputation – toward my work and my professionalism [to be associated with music festival culture].

Although many festival participants did not identify with subcultural labels like “hippie,” “festie,” or “raver,” jamtronica festivals stem from post-war hippie cultures (Issitt 2009), synthesizing the stigmas of transient jam band communities (Hunt 2008) with the perceived hedonism and health risks that law enforcement and policymakers attribute to rave events (Anderson 2009; Kavanaugh and Anderson 2008). Despite the increasing mainstream popularity of jamtronica music festival events, some interviewees bemoaned the negative stereotypes and stigmas associated with both jam band and EDM communities.

Jamtronica events' amplified popularity is due in part to an increased corporate presence within the festival production and performance. As fewer young adults participate in formal music purchases, the music industry increasingly relies on live performances as sources of revenue (Wall 2013; Wynn 2015). Subcultural claims to “independence” and outspoken critiques of corporate presence at festival events further the ability for musicians to influence subcultural values (Lee 1995); sometimes, while simultaneously benefiting from the transnational distribution of their work facilitated by their affiliation with major record labels (Negus 1999).



Jared, an Empieza 2014 participant, lamented the normalization of corporate presence at festival events, declaring:

[Festivals] are also being made into one by mass media. And, I mean, part of me wishes that in five years they will die down and they won't be as financially successful because that's part of [the problem.] Why is the media picking up on it? It's because it's generating cash flow whether it's through corporate sponsorship or advertising. So, whatever it may be, I just hope the trend changes in five years and that festivals go back to being festivals, and not being something that's just there to be consumed. Previously they were an experience and a rite of passage for a lot of groups, and now, they are just another thing to be consumed.

Jared exhibited frustration in festival events' perceived loss of integrity due to corporate influence. He identified media sensationalization of jamtronica subcultural scenes and corporate sponsorship as a threat to festival community identity and authenticity. In effect, Jared demonstrates subcultural monitor the boundaries of subcultural belonging in response to the increased cultural prominence that mainstream media review offers, as well as the economic shifts that buttress sources of festival production funding.<sup>7</sup> Pasquale, another Empieza 2014 participant, took on a different position within this debate, justifying corporate involvement within festival events as a potential site of improvement – resolving other problems he identified within the event arena. He defended, “Maybe they're getting a better lineup and more money from that [corporate] sponsor, but who cares? If it makes the show better, then you're going to get better artists, and a better light show, and better speakers.” To some participants, fragmented claims to subcultural authenticity may be justified through the cultivation of

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<sup>1</sup> Scholarship on the effects of corporatization on music festivals have exponentially grown in the last decade. For further reading on this topic, please refer to the works of Bennett, Taylor, and Woodward (2014), Brunsmas, Lellock, and Chapman (2016), Gee and Bales (2012), Rowley and Williams (2008), and Wynn (2015).

events that appropriately address issues (that festival-going men identify) within festival event arenas.

## **PROBLEMS THAT FESTIVAL-GOING WOMEN IDENTIFY**

When asked to discuss the problems that they experienced at jamtronica music festivals, interview participants that identified as women tended to bring up similar issues as men, including logistical concerns, increased corporatization of events and festival subcultures, and a growing need address the environmental impacts of festival events. However, many women brought up a unique concern that men never identified without dedicated interviewer probing: their concerns for their personal safety within a festival arena, and how barriers to reporting and sanctioning participants that pose threat to women: a problem that even I, as a researcher, faced.

*Vignette: Finding Fear within Fieldnotes*

*Transcript of Audio-Recorded Debriefing Session  
Field Site: Fall Ball 2015  
Date: 10/30/2015 (Friday p.m.)  
Duration: 8 minutes, 35 seconds*

*“[...] I have just now walked around the perimeter [of the festival site], trying to gain my bearings. As this is a new festival, I feel a little bit insecure about my bearings – about trying to get where I need to go, simply because I’ve never been here before, and mostly because it’s SO far away from home. I really don’t have a home base here, as I did at the other festival I interviewed at in 2015. Seeing that the problems of [Mudslide 2014] – and a lot of other insecurities – that were brought up by some of the gendered threats [I have experienced during this research] has kept me car camping – that is, camping in my car. Being so far away from home makes me feel nervous – especially at this type of festival. [...] People are allowed to camp more or less wherever there is space, which makes things a bit chaotic, a bit loopy – and, I’m nervous as to how that’s going to work out for me, being the [spatially-defunct] person who I am, in getting back [...]”*

*I paused the debrief session I had been transcribing, internally chiding myself for a moment. “You’ve got to get a thesaurus, girlfriend,” I chuckled aloud. After a moment of self-deprecating amusement, the now-painfully-obvious repetition suddenly ceased to be funny. With a bit of trepidation, I resumed my transcription, wary as to what the rest of this recording would entail. Considering the number of interviews I had collected at Fall Ball and the numerous new sights and sounds to take in, I had honestly forgotten what I had rambled about during the debriefings I recorded at this event.*

*Within the transcript of this eight-minute, thirty-five-second interview, I identified eight occurrences of “discomfort words” – words such as “nervous” and “insecure.” For whatever reason, I hadn’t noticed this emerging pattern while giving this monologue. This apprehension I felt was apparently so severe that I found it necessary to speak of my event-related anxieties nearly once every minute. Scrambling to review the transcripts of previous field sites’ debriefs, the dispiriting theme I suspected became increasingly apparent across several events’ memos – especially those recorded at festival sites I was attending for the first time.*

*Although I felt very confident in my research directions, navigation of festival arenas, and membership within jamtronica communities, these fieldnote reflections told a very different story. This story exposed my underlying and unrecognized uncertainties and vulnerabilities about these spaces – anxieties that seemingly did not abate, even with extensive experience within these places. Later, I would discover that these perceptions were not a product of my already hyper-vigilant nature, but a widely shared phenomenon among festival-going women. In that disquieting moment of reflection, however, I had to ask myself, “What, exactly, were you... are you... so afraid of?”*

Fear is a gendered experience and expectation, as women across all contexts (both subcultural and mainstream) navigate the world in response to their perceptions of danger (Koskela 1999; Valentine 1992). This is not a result of women’s paranoia; instead, it is a response to the ubiquity of the gendered threats that women face daily and the systemic silencing of these experiences. Several studies find that adult women report more frequent and explicit forms of sexual violence than men, varying from verbal, sexist harassment (Banyard et al. 2004), to unwanted sexual advances, non-consensual touch, and coerced/forced sexual activity (McMahon et al. 2011; MacMillan et al. 2000; Morardi, Dirks, and Matteson 2005; Swim et al. 2001).

Though many festival-goers laud the safety and egalitarianism of these events, numerous festival participants and scene-oriented texts demonstrate that gender and sexuality are certainly issues within this subcultural scene. Several online texts penned by women-identifying festival-goers reflected the unfortunate mirroring of women's mainstream concerns regarding personal safety. In one analyzed blog post, Miller (2015) deplored the persistence of this problem, stating, "Unwanted groping/touching, sexual harassment, & [sic] sexual assault have been an unfortunately unspoken and unchallenged problem at concerts, shows, festivals, nightclubs, and anything of the sort for a while now" (online). Women's experiences of gendered threat are not new, as Lees (1993) describes the inequity of women's considerations of safety within rave events nearly twenty-five years ago. The frequency and scope of women's involvement within EDM events have since expanded (Pini 2001); however, this growth in women's participation in EDM and associated jamtronica festival events has not been matched with a decrease in women's experiences of victimization within this subcultural scene. In fact, reports of and trends in reporting incidents of sexual violence at music festivals has significantly increased in recent years (Lloyd 2015).

#### *Gendered Threat: A Rift in Egalitarian Festival Utopias?*

Many women were able to immediately recall a time when they did not feel safe from physical, social, emotional, or sexual threat within the festival arena. One prominent example is that of Kelly, a 22-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne (2015), who spoke of an experience at a festival event where she feared that she would be somehow victimized. She described her concerns and considerations as she reacted to this situation:

There was a time at [festival – name redacted] when I had gone back to my campsite with my vendor friends and it was, like, 2 a.m., and they wanted to go to bed. I was actually pretty awake still, but I laid down and here a lot of music, and wanted to get back up. So, I get up around 3:30 [a.m.] and walked back to the center area, which was pretty far. It was dark and I had to go on a gravel road, and I was by myself. It made me a little uneasy ‘cause it was such a big venue. But, I felt I was okay. So, I keep walking and I noticed that there was a man about twenty yards behind me, walking in the same direction I’m going – and he gets closer and closer. Then, a [female] security guard yells out to him, and asks if he’s with me. I go, ‘He’s not with me!’ The guard called me over and kept [this guy] from creeping on me a little bit. [...] If she hadn’t been there, then who knows [what would have happened]. Maybe, I would have started running. The bigger fests definitely have more opportunity for things like that to happen.

Kelly’s experience is a harrowing one, but it is not unusual. Kimberly, a 23-year-old woman participating in Fall Ball (2015) admitted, “Personally, I’ve been walking by and someone would grab my butt or slap my butt, so things like that [have occurred to me].” Lillian, a 27-year-old woman interviewed at Thumbs Up (2015) echoed similar concerns, noting the gendered nature of these concerns:

Just walking around [the event] by myself, I’ve been eyed or followed... at least once or twice over the weekend. I know where to go and where to be safe and where to spot security, but on the off chance [someone tries to harm me], I’m constantly watching my back. Guys don’t have to deal with that as much. It’s different. [...] I just have to be careful all the time. Even just walking down the road, you get guys who will cat-call you randomly. And, I’m just like, “Really?”

Even women who have not directly experienced explicit examples of gendered threat within festival arenas described their pre-emption and preparation in response to this issue. Hannah, a 23-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), confided:

I’ve never even been harassed, but just because something has never happened doesn’t mean I’m not going to be cautious towards it. I’m not hindered by the fact that something may happen – it’s just in my nature to be cautious. I carry a knife around with me.

Hannah described her vigilance and self-protection as a part of her cautious “nature,” emphasizing that the threat of sexual violence did not impact her engagement or navigation of festival events. In ways, Hannah’s acknowledgment of concurrent arena risk and emancipatory opportunity marks her lived considerations of Vance’s “sexual pleasure danger binary” (1984), discussed in Chapter Two. Yet, the cautiousness that Hannah indicated was a reflection of her personality was echoed in several women’s narratives, sometimes to the extent that it impeded women’s desire to participate in subcultural events altogether. One online blog author conveyed her disappointment in club, rave, and associated festival cultures, testifying: “A constant among my female friends is the lack of desire to go to [events] because of the likely hassle from members of the opposite sex. Unwanted sexual advances are very much the norm” (Fiddy 2015: online). Even women-identifying researchers within rave, dance, club, and festival spaces have detailed how their perceptions of threat impacted their involvement, interactions, and feelings of security and belonging within these event spaces (Bhardwa 2013; Perrone 2010). Feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, and ambiguity frequently signify manifested inequalities of place and space (Merry 1981). The insinuation of difference within festival participation and arenas presents a gendered counterclaim to the inequalities that many participants claimed not to exist – or claimed that the festival diminished. Some women-identifying participants attempted to reconcile the contrariety of their own experiences of gendered threat with subculturally-valued discourses which promote solidarity and egalitarianism. Another 2015 Fall Ball participant, Valerie (19, woman), defended jamtronica festivals as sites of equality by characterizing gendered threat as a widespread, mainstream issue:

I feel like as a woman, in general, [consideration of safety] kind of always has to go through your mind – no matter where you are. You always have to keep your guard up. There are always people out there with bad intentions.

Valerie's justificatory acrobatics absolve jamtronica subcultural scenes of its gendered issues through comparing it to mainstream contexts, conflicting with dominant subcultural claims which suggest insulation from external inequalities. Other narratives of women indict scene communities' and festival stakeholders' complicity in sustaining gendered threat. One online blog summarizes the state of affairs well: "A quick Google search will yield countless stories of sexual violence and advice for how to minimize your chances of becoming a victim. There are no articles advising perpetrators on how NOT to rape at music festivals" (Carroll 2015: online).

*Vignette: "There Are Going to Be Assholes at Every Festival"*

*I was surprised at how easily I was able to disclose my story, especially as the lone woman within this all men's group at Glow Worm 2014. Unlike the men who, two weeks prior at another field site, threatened to rape me when I assertively, but no less amicably asked them to stop screaming racist epithets at four in the morning, these men were warm and convivial. The rapport we had built over the course of friendly banter and one of the longest interviews I had collected to date provided a welcome insulation from these slowly healing wounds. We easily conversed about a variety of subjects, as the men within the group took it upon themselves to facilitate their own conversations, asking poignant questions about subcultural norms and communities, and challenging each other to 'dig deeper.' If anything, I thought, they'd be able to reassure me that this wasn't going to happen again; they'd serve as allies in addressing this vulnerability and others' experiences where fellow event participants purposefully posed threat to them – or worse, victimized them.*

*I divulged my experience to debrief on this situation above, as well as to turn the conversation toward one of the emerging themes that recurred within participant observations and interviews: intersecting inequalities of gender and sexuality within the scene, despite claims of egalitarianism. The topical transition and community support I had hoped to derive from sharing this since-suppressed experience audibly evaporated. Gilligan, a 27-year-old man, thought for a moment about what I had said, then remarked, "That [experience] kind of goes against everything I just said... but there are going to be assholes at every festival."*

*His statement likely intended to provide supportive consolation; instead, I interpreted this remark as redirection and mollification. There weren't supposed to be assholes in these "happy places," especially "assholes" who eagerly communicated their intent to hurt you. Even so, my previous encounters with "assholes" required a witty retort or a stern look of disapproval. They never entailed me going out of my way to sleep in a locked car, fearing that taking up less-secure accommodations would jeopardize my well-being. What I had experienced as an event that deeply shook my trust in the "goodwill" of festival participants and nearly convinced me to discontinue this research, Gilligan and his quietly complicit camp-mates shrugged off as both an aberration and inevitability of festival participation.*

*How didn't he see what I saw? How did he make peace with this paradox – "it doesn't happen, but it does"? Most importantly, why did his attempt to comfort seemingly communicate that he didn't really care?*

## **DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM HERE? DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN FESTIVAL MEN AND WOMEN**

In participant interviews, both men and women asserted their observation of and belief in the power of jamtronica music festivals to promote egalitarianism, unity, and collective identity within event arenas. However, a notable difference in the problems that men and women observe suggests far less uniformity and equality in subcultural experiences and expectations than dominant subcultural discourses purport. Evidence of gendered difference in perceptions of threat may even be found within peer exchanges within focus group interviews. During on-site interviews at Fall Ball (2015), I observed an interesting tension that arose between respondents. When I asked the group members if they noticed a difference between how men and women act or dress within the festival arena, Mike (26, man) concluded, "I personally haven't noticed any weird double standards [to which men and women might be held.]. Another member of the group who identified as a man, Bruce, advanced this sentiment, proclaiming, "Everyone just dresses however they want. And, they do whatever they want." In response to these statements,



the only woman within their group of four, Jade (aged 20) rebuked her peers, testifying to her own experiences and considerations as a woman within the festival subcultural scene.

She revealed:

See, I totally disagree [with those statements], as a girl. I think that girls do have a very different standard [of expected behavior at festivals], and again, it's a reflection of society as a whole. Guys don't realize that girls have to be a lot more careful. [...] In normal society, girls are told that they shouldn't dress [too sexily] and shouldn't get too messed up, because you should be in fear of an attacker, or something like that. And, everyone sees the girl in the crowd who is too fucked up with three dudes around her, being inappropriate. I think that every girl is afraid to get to that point. If a guy gets too messed up, he's just going to be Joe Smith on the ground. If a girl gets messed up, she could be in a lot more dangerous of a situation. Not to say that guys can't get attacked, but it's just the reality that girls are much more liked to be attacked or be in danger.

Jade disclosed the inequities of experience and risk that women may face within festival arenas, articulating the ways that mainstream norms of gender and sexuality permeate an arena that allegedly eliminates them, posing significant – and unequal – consequence. Jade's comment suggests that gender disparities within jamtronica subcultural scenes entrench men's positions within festival arenas (Bradby 1993) – as competent, self-evident, privileged subjects, even if they are intoxicated or incapacitated. Women, on the other hand, contend with double standards that complicate carrying out central scene practices. Andromeda, a 28-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015) offered an example regarding scene-normative drug and alcohol use, stating, “[...] a guy is just drunk, but if a girl is, then she's seen as a hot mess.” Suzanne (aged 23) another festival-going woman attending Fall Ball (2015), explained another tension, using a hypothetical scenario: “[In a typical festival scenario] there's a naked man at this festival, and everyone knows him. If a girl goes topless, suddenly, she's a slut. That's

just how society has pinned it. And then, they say, ‘Oh, she wanted it [gendered threat/sexual victimization].’

Festivals’ centrality and celebration of men as assumed social and sexual subjects mirror larger mainstream inequalities of gender and sexuality, illuminating the limitations of Bakhtin’s Carnival. While times of Carnival disrupt mainstream ideological and behavioral codes, these events are a temporary subversion to present hierarchies, not a comprehensive abolition of them (Bakhtin [1944] 1968). Further, the liminal states that Carnival sustains through playfully pursuing “what is not” acceptable in mainstream contexts may augment the fixity, experiences, and consequences of existing categories and hierarchies, reaffirming the justness of “what is” appropriate or normative. While women’s participation within carnivalesque festival arenas may enhance senses of belonging, equality, and emancipation, they are not wholly immunized from “the experience of violent intrusion – or the threat of such intrusion” that inform and constrain their everyday lives (Renzetti 1995: 3).

### **MINIMIZATION OF (WOMEN’S) EXPERIENCES OF THREAT**

Participant interviews and analyzed texts exhibit notable differences between the problems that men and women encounter within their festival participation. Yet, when asked about the gendered nature of festival experiences and problems, both men and women festival participants used a litany of strategies to minimize the extent and implication of this disparity. Many participant interviews purported the festival field as a wholly egalitarian subcultural escape from mainstream problems, enabled by participants’ commitments to ideological and behavioral solidarity. Unfortunately, these assumptions tend to ignore the historical marginalization of women within subculture

memberships and spaces, especially those organized around music consumption (Bradby 1993; McRobbie and Garber [1977] 2012; Thornton 1996).

Subcultural marginalization distributes unequal accesses to power, status, and belonging among members within communities and scenes, establishing boundaries not only in respect to “external” mainstream Others, but within groups, as well. Internal boundaries may be drawn through distinguishing member access to and roles within “the production, regulation, mediation, or consumption” of subcultural spaces (Rief 2009: 10), as well as through what subcultural experiences are considered to be valid, authentic, and normative of membership – primarily serving to reflect dominant subcultural norms and values. Members who have experiences that diverge from idealized subcultural narratives are disparaged as invalid or incredible. Cast as “internal others” (Morris 2012), these “divergent” subcultural participants risk demotion in status within scene communities. Worse, they may risk their claims to subcultural capital, or belonging altogether. When women speak out about patterned experiences of gendered threat, violence, and marginalization within the scene, they puncture subcultural discourses that privilege equality, community, and unity as dominant subcultural discourses. In turn, scene members often minimize these problems as aberrations, reproaching victims’ allegiance to and membership within “unified” subcultural communities. More broadly, the discursive strategies scene members use maintain the status quo, discrediting women’s experiences throughout larger intra-group dynamics. This (re-) affirms the marginalization and peripheral membership status that many women endure within subculture scenes.

*“Missing” and Mocking Gendered Threat*

When presented with emerging findings reflecting gender-disparate threats of physical, social and sexual violence within festival fields, some interview participants were observably incredulous of these patterns. Raphael, a 26-year-old man interviewed at Glow Worm (2014), quickly retorted, “What, are women preying on men? Should I watch out? It could happen. It can go either way, gender-wise?” In his response, Raphael drew from common victimization narratives, yet parodies them by reversing the actors typically associated with predation and feigning concern that he may be targeted for victimization. Shielded by gender privilege, men like Raphael may view these expressed concerns as frivolous or paranoid simply because they do not frequently contend with these issues within their subcultural or mainstream experience. Sebastian, a 2015 Nocturne participant, expressed a similar skepticism, stressing, “I’ve never, in my time going to festivals, recognized any [evidence of threat]. But, it could be so hidden that I’m not seeing it.”

Men’s obliviousness to these concerns is additionally illustrated through textual analyses of online resources regarding the dangers festival-goers face within event arenas: every analyzed blog, media review, or think-piece was penned by a woman. The absence of texts that address festival threat and victimization created by men infers the lack of centrality these issues may have in shaping their perceptions of and participation in festival fields. Whereas subcultural and mainstream privileges insulate some festival participants from gendered threat, these same privileges permit them to couch their invalidation of inaction toward these issues as a result of their own unfamiliarity with these experiences and concern; yet, few concern themselves with self or peer education to

counter this dearth. Further, they may fault this lack of awareness to their (perceive) insusceptibility to these risks and their consequences. Through this, privileged scene participants can affirm dominant subcultural idealizations of a unified, egalitarian community and discount incidents and narratives that challenge this optimism as being anomalous.

Characterizing women's asymmetrical perceptions and considerations of sexual threat within festival participation as atypical poses several consequences. First, it codifies these experiences as isolated, detaching them from larger patterns and contexts of perpetration and privilege. Second, it diminishes members' perceptions of the extents, impacts, and implications of physical, social, and sexual threat within festival arenas. This may sustain the mockery and marginalization of these issues and those who experience them, challenging their in-group statuses and belonging, as well as their claims to membership within jamtronica subcultural scenes at large. As women disproportionately identify their concerns of personal safety within festival arenas, the consequences of framing these considerations as invented, irrational, or as evidence of individual subcultural ineptitude reverberate throughout jamtronica communities: estranging festival-going women en masse from subcultural belonging. Additionally, it exposes the inconsistencies between popular festival discourses proclaiming equality, agency, libertinism, and collectivity in light of the consequential inequalities sustained through stigmatizing and suppressing those whose experiences diverge from sanguine subcultural idealizations.

*Danger as Representative of Outside Contexts*

On the occasion that festival participants did recognize the disparate nature of threats that women face within jamtronica subcultural scenes, they characterized these risks as comparable, albeit mitigated, in relation to mainstream contexts. Jimmy, a participant at Fall Ball (2015), suggested:

I would say that – if you took a sample size from here, compared to the general public – like, twenty thousand [festival participants] versus twenty thousand [people outside of festivals], I would think that it's substantially more peaceful with a lot less crime... I would think.

Jimmy's friend, Mack (25, man), agreed, noting, "That's what I was thinking too. I don't know the statistics of crime rates on murder or rape or anything, but out of the twenty thousand people here, how many of those are actually murdered or raped?" Though these two festival-goers disclosed that they are unfamiliar with the extent of reported crime, they optimistically maintained that the prevalence of perpetration was similar to the wider public, if not diminished. Interestingly, their statements centered upon formal measures of victimization, overlooking the many cases where survivors do not report their victimization. Further, in Mack's addendum, he insinuated a discrepancy between what incidences are reported and those that "actually" qualify concern and address. Hannah, another 2015 Fall Ball participant, deepened this inquiry, speculating:

I wonder, statistically – um, the people who are harmed at festivals versus the regular world. Would it even out and be around the same? Like, if you're going to harm a woman or a man at a festival, would you not have done that anyway?

Hannah depicts subcultural threat as comparable to that of external contexts, but her position bolsters dominant subcultural claims - the perpetration of threat that does occur at festivals is somehow isolated and irrespective of its arena. Here, Hannah casts

perpetration as a result of deviant and anonymous individuals who present physical, social, and sexual threat across all contexts. This position ignores the unique subcultural characteristics and hierarchies that augment threat and discourage its sanction (self-policing, non-intervention). In effect, she articulates a perplexing claim: both victims and perpetrators are somehow deviant, in a purposefully deviant jamtronica landscape.

*Just like any other party scene*

Whereas some interview participants compared the extent of the danger posed within the subculture as comparable to wider, mainstream contexts, others analogized jamtronica festival risks as similar to other party cultures outside the scene. Carmen, a 22-year-old man interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), reasoned, “It’s no different than the club scene. You go out and you have the same risk of getting roofied [drugged]. And, there’s no one at those clubs that’s specifically there to keep an eye on that shit.” His friend Turkey (21, man) affirmed, “I’ve seen more people get roofied out at a bar than I have at a festival.” Suzanne, a 23-year-old woman also interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), argued that the risks posed at jamtronica music festivals were quite mundane, given the various other contexts that its participants would encounter these types of threats. She concluded:

I would say it’s no more worse than everyday life. Look at sororities and college parties. It happens everywhere, and they don’t want that negative light put on [festivals]. That’s not what people are about when they come here. I can see why [it’s important], but it happens inside and outside of festivals, and probably less so at these festivals.

According to interview participants, jamtronica music festivals foster familiar forms of “safe danger” found not only in college party cultures (Kimmel 2008), but nightclub, rave, and barroom cultures as well (Foubert, Garner and Thaxter 2006;

Graham et al. 2014; Grazian 2007). Participants characterized these mainstream party cultures as facilitated by alcohol and drugs, crowded, and anonymous; traits shared by the jamtronica music festival event. Although festivals share these characteristics, many interview participants were quick to differentiate them from the mainstream party cultures with which they were familiar, claiming that the threats that plagued these party cultures (i.e., dangerous intoxications, physical altercations, rumor-mongering, social isolation, sexual harassment, sexual violence) “wouldn’t happen here”. Festivals were considered unique due to the intense perception of community integration, in addition to the individual characteristics of their participants. These traits served to foster risk-abolishing goodwill, minimizing the threats posed and experienced, in comparison to other, “more predatory” party cultures.

Interestingly, many of the party cultures that interviewees decried as more dangerous have increasingly adopted explicit policy and program reforms to disrupt conditions that enable sexual violence, among other threats (Banyard et al. 2007; Banyard and Moynihan 2011; Brown et al. 2014). Moreover, additional address of the threats party cultures pose increasingly moves away from advocating tenets of rape-avoidance. Instead, many party cultures have turned toward primary prevention and education to address gendered physical, social, and sexual threat, particularly those involving college students (Borges et al. 2008; CDC 2004). A contradiction arises: despite increased regulation and education, interviewees still depicted mainstream party cultures as sites of comparative danger in relation to an unregulated, carnivalesque subcultural arena.

In light of the concerted collective efforts expected of participants to promote integration and positivity within the arena, festival-goers’ comparisons to other



mainstream party cultures could act to alleviate their personal perception (and responsibility) of risk. Alternatively, the claims contrasting jamtronica music festival subcultures from other similar scenes may merely act to suppress the narratives of those who experience gendered threat, impeding the introduction of the policy and programming work adopted by “Othered” party cultures that “need it more.”

*“Roll with It”: Festival Dangers as Inevitable*

Several interview participants acknowledged gendered risk but discussed these threats as an inevitable affliction of the jamtronica festival. Ashley, a Nocturne (2015) participant insisted, “People are coming here and getting exposed to different elements and drugs and there are those few people that bring negative vibes [...] When you’re buying tickets, you can’t prevent people like that from coming to festivals.” During his interview at Fall Ball (2015), Jimmy expounded:

There’s always going to be bad people here. Your stuff can still get taken, but if you want to have a good experience, you have to just roll with whatever happens. It doesn’t matter if there is bad rain or something gets stolen, or your favorite [artist] you wanted to see doesn’t show up. You just gotta roll with it.

Jimmy’s friend Moira (29, woman) added, “Look how many thousands of people you’re combining in such a small area, you know? You’re going to get a combination of everyone. And, when you have substances involved...” Here, each festival participant disclosed that festivals not only have the same risks as mainstream contexts (including other mainstream party cultures), subcultural norms and characteristics pose augmented risk to festival-goers. Despite the perilous combinations that these interview participants described, they seemingly shrugged off these issues as unable to be avoided. In their proposals of what (little) action may be taken, these festival-goers abide by *laissez-faire*

dominant subcultural codes. Overt reprimand of gendered threat disrupts narratives of subcultural libertinism, possibly disputing other participants' claims to "personal expression." In one analyzed online text, a woman-identifying blog author lamented this friction, noting, "We [members of the EDM community] have our own brand of victim blaming; if you react too strongly to unwanted groping at the hands of high kids, you are causing drama AKA being un-PLUR" (Westburg 2011: online). Even in cases where members of merging jam band and EDM communities endanger the physical, social, and sexual safety of others, it seems as if addressing these "inevitable" offenses are sometimes considered a severe offense to the subcultural codes of these events themselves.

*But, addressing risks and threats makes them worse*

In discussing ways to mitigate the risks that festival-going women increasingly disclosed, several interviewees disputed the value of imposing policies and programs that other mainstream party cultures have adopted, despite the acknowledged "inevitability" of gender-disparate physical, social, and sexual threat within this subcultural scene. Early in his interview at Nocturne (2015), Sebastian was quick to claim that he did not "see" the several forms of risk jamtronica music festivals may pose. Yet, he was equally as eager to describe his own harrowing experience of threat at another festival he had attended, elaborating:

If someone were to tell me that at [festival – name redacted] this year there would be an array of overdoses and sexual assaults, I would not for a second be surprised. It's fucked up, but that's what happens. At my first [festival – name redacted], nine people died the first day, because someone gave them rat poison instead of LSD. The bigger things get, the risk assessment gets insane, because you're dealing with so many different people. With [another festival – name redacted], they didn't want a festival with an overhaul of control, but they got to a

point where they had to – ‘cause then it becomes what we didn’t want it to become. It becomes an unsafe space where the people we wanted to come don’t come anymore, and it’s attracting a different type of crowd.

Sebastian contradicted himself within his interview, at first asserting that he was not aware of any forms of (gendered) threat at festival events. As the conversation unfolded, he appeared to interrogate his experiences a little deeper, moving away from dominant subcultural scripts that serve to omit or diminish participants’ acknowledgement or discussion of risks. Even though jamtronica music festivals may pose lethal consequences (LSD tainted with rat poison), the disturbing threats that festival-goers face are heavily discounted as part of subcultural participation – normalized through claims of “that is what happens.”

Spring (2006) remarks that music festivals purposefully incorporate aspects of risk within controlled boundaries; these carnivalesque arenas promote liminal states, which foster uncertainty and unsafety within designated boundaries and activities. However, liminal risk is temporary and heavily regulated through in/formal rituals (Turner 1964). The consequences that Sebastian described are long-lasting if not life-threatening, yet he claimed them to be worsened by extrinsic structure and monitor. By formally regulating events with policies and programs that seek to reduce the risks that festival participants encounter, Sebastian suggested that the events lose their appeal – by bringing in newcomers that pose “true” threat to event participants, as they have yet to learn the (unspoken) norms, values, and “vibes” that sustain festival-goers’ safety. Regulation, it seems, is not only perceived by interviewees as mainstream limitations which impede the pursuit of “freakiness,” but as an alien imposition that encroaches on jamtronica scene members’ organismic yet individualistic internal governance. Festival

participants largely depend upon informal means of regulation such as subcultural boundary maintenance, “psychic” integration, personal autonomy, and non-intervention, even in light of instances where festival activities, attendees, or interactions may prove fatal.

Festival participants may be loath to address event-based risks for fear of further stigmatizing the communities or events in which they are involved. Both jam band and EDM fan bases have experienced mainstream denigration, ranging from social disparagement of their community members and norms to widespread event intervention and suppression by police, to sensationalized media coverage and moral panics (Connors 2013; Hunt 2008; Kavanaugh and Anderson 2008). Some jamtronica music festival participants may fear incriminating themselves – as participants in events stigmatized by the mainstream who are still anchored to mainstream lives – and as members within subcultural communities. When festival-goers do acknowledge physical, social, and sexual threats that these events pose, they may experience a range of intra-group sanctions from other event participants similar to those faced by “whistleblowers” in other mainstream party cultures, including social exclusion and even physical violence (Kimmel 2008).

Identifying gendered threat within festival events and developing means to address it beyond individualized self-monitor indicts jamtronica music festival scenes and stakeholders for the problems that they pose, and pressures them to make amends for these ills. Some interview participants characterized the outcomes of acknowledging gendered threat as a critical breach in subcultural claims of unity, insularity, escapism, and freedom.

Rain, an 18-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne (2015), justified this negligence, arguing:

[...] to address the problem [of gendered threat] inappropriately will shatter what people are trying to build here. The message that you get is that everyone is safe here. They just want to hang out and be your friend. It gets so friendly so fast – if you're telling everyone to be worried and cautious of other people, then it completely ruins that. It takes everything we're trying to build and teaches people not to trust everybody.

Rain insinuated that even diverging from dominant subcultural claims of equality, autonomy, and non-intervention within social contexts dismantles festivals' protective and permissive "magic." Event participants must wager a hefty emotional "buy-in": trust in other event participants, trust in the shielding power of personal and community "vibes," and trust in one's own subcultural knowledge and belonging. This multi-faceted faith seemingly cushions community members as they pursue festival "freakiness" in ways that may pose risk to themselves or others. Thus, pointing out problems that festival-goers experience (or working to address them) may be considered detrimental to the "positivity" that participants are pressured to promote. This non-interventionist stance infers that scene-based advocacy is oppositional to festival subculture, and casts its supporters as alienated killjoys and inadequate participants who fail to "buy in enough" to garner protection.

Even if larger, organizational bodies within jamtronica festival scenes were to develop and implement means to abate (gender-disparate) physical, social, and sexual risks within their events, some interviewees were pessimistic about their transformative potential. Sebastian, in his interview, considered event-based threat minimization an impossible feat, proclaiming:

Honestly, I don't think there's a way. These people can come out here because they don't want to be regulated by other people. Some people come out here to do fucked up shit, and some people come out so they aren't told that they can't sit in a certain section of grass. They can just do what they want. We can educate people as much as we want, but if they aren't open to it... You can't force a regulation down someone's throat. Some people just don't want to learn.

Mack, a 2015 Fall Ball participant, shared this cynicism, stating: "From an administrative point of view, I don't know how the festival would prevent anything from happening. It's all on people, I think." Both interviewees indicated a sense of administrative powerlessness in addressing threats that festival participants face. Festival production staff and stakeholders purposefully organize jamtronica events to generate liminality, thus, risk. Some festival participants may overlook the constructed nature of this carnivalesque scene and subsequently ignore the ways that risk is produced, more so, how event-based risks may be mitigated. No less, Sebastian and Mack concurred in their statements that festival-goers hold personal responsibility for their safety within festival arenas. Coping with these "un-addressable inevitabilities" is again individualized, guided by the assumption that participant will be (or should be) personally able to deflect the threats they face – more so, that other event participants will not purposefully physically, socially, or sexual endanger them.

One study participant posited a distressing claim as she concluded her interview. Paige, a 26-year old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), recognized the existence and severity of the threats that festival participants face. Further, she expressed how these risks are not perceived or experienced equality across genders. Regardless of these acknowledgements, she stated, "I don't think it's fair to say that [gendered threat] is not an important issue, because stuff like that is always important. But, I see why it's getting

the attention it does. It just gets blown out of proportion.” Although many men employed strategies to minimize the importance and actionability of the unique problems that women identified within festival arenas, Paige admitted the prevalence and significance of gendered threat. No less, she considered the issue as wholly exaggerated.

Overlooking or stigmatizing victims’ experiences of physical, social, and sexual threat proves immensely consequential. Yet, this interviewee contradictorily validates these issues’ existence but expresses complicity with subcultural tenets that, based on her gender identification and presentation, may well disproportionately harm her. Even as women increasingly gain access, knowledge, and status within jamtronica music festival communities, some participants adopt a tacit acquiescence to a subcultural status quo, (un)conscious of the many consequences that challenging such a schema presents.

#### *Individualizing Incidences, Individualizing Solutions*

Despite participants’ claims that jamtronica music festivals are insulated from mainstream gendered threats, these same individuals presented their own (contradictory) solutions for navigating subcultural risks within the event arena – risks that they inferred not to exist, or exist at the margins of festival participation. Even so, interviewees offered ample advice for avoiding or de-escalating situations which posed threat to event participants.

Bruce, a 2015 Fall Ball participant, remarked, “[...] I can usually tell when someone is sketchy, or trying to run me for something. I don’t associate myself with those people or put myself in those situations where I think I might get robbed or hurt.” Bruce infers that assessing danger within festival arenas is an individualistic act: personally identified, negotiated, and escaped. Statements such as this are commonplace

within participant interviews of all genders, as Lee, a 22-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne (2015), echoed similar sentiments:

I've never personally felt threatened ever, as far as [festivals] go. I've never had that problem at all. Honestly, I feel more safe in a place like this. I think it's the personal boundaries that you set with people. Like, if you're going to be grinding all over them and giving them something to go on, then maybe something might happen that you don't want to.

Lee situated her navigation of threat within her lack of experience of it, indicting perceptions or experiences of victimization as an indication of an inability to properly manage oneself within subcultural contexts. In each of these statements, the interviewee presented that the risks that one faces within the jamtronica festival arena are best evaded by drawing from subcultural knowledge (of who and what is normative within these spaces) to recognize and maintain boundaries (by dissociating from and avoiding non-normative people, places, and interactions) that may present risk of victimization. Unfortunately, this strategy erroneously assumes that all participants: have access to, the need for, and means of accumulating the same subcultural resources; will similarly hold and capitalize on subcultural knowledge; will uniformly offer meaning to and deploy these forms of subcultural capital (Thornton 1996); and, will homogenously cope with the consequences that attend these actions.

One interview participant proposed a solution that exemplified the individualistic means by which festival-goers manage the gendered risks that many claimed as absent from these arenas. Andrew, a 2015 Nocturne participant, emphasized the importance of “vibes” (one’s psychic link to other jamtronica community members), stating:



Protecting yourself and radiating a shield of positivity is like a shield that that also influences people consciously and unconsciously. If they see that you're doing that, then it's kind of like that [sentiment] translates. Maybe they'll reconsider a bad thought they might have had.

Eric, a man interviewed at Empieza 2014 (no age given), utilized tenets of Andrew's conceptualized psychic shield in his prescriptions for safely navigating festival arena. He concluded his interview, "I love you, and so does everyone at most music festivals. Most people do, at least. So, be nice and everyone will be nice to you." Ashley, a 21-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne (2015), echoed the importance of these "vibes," insisting, "You gotta have that mindset that everything is okay because you're protected by those around you. The majority of everyone here has so much love, but there will always be a few who will ruin it." Protection, therefore, requires more than associating with the right people and doing the right things. It seemingly requires an additional layer of socio-emotional labor: psychically monitoring oneself to maintain individual and community "vibes" which promote intragroup positivity and deflect personal harm posed by the occasional, yet seemingly inevitable offenders.

Each of these prescriptions presents problematic repercussions for those who do experience unsafety and victimization in the festival arena. Primarily, scene members may interpret those who experience gendered threat as naïve or inexperienced "internal others" who are unable (worse, unwilling) to undertake measures of self-protection or exude the right type of influence on fellow community members. In all of these scenarios, individuals bear the responsibility for managing subcultural risk; subsequently, they also bear the blame for their victimization. In mainstream society, people tend to be less sympathetic and less willing to help those they consider "responsible" for their

victimization (Sperry and Siegel 2013); this tendency is seemingly mirrored within jamtronica subcultural scenes.

Within jamtronica music festival scenes, those who experience gendered threat bear stigma, labeling them as peripheral community members who are unfamiliar with norms or inept at navigating the festival arena and its interactions. Worse, they may be excluded from subcultural membership and participation altogether, expelled as an “outsider.” It is important to note that the means festival-goers prescribed for managing subcultural risks rely on tactics learned from inference, and strategies that do not explicitly confront other participants for their behavior. These prescriptions suggest that festival-going women maintain responsibility for setting interactional boundaries that are pronounced enough for others to understand and respect. Individuals’ command of subcultural knowledge and boundaries shields them socially, physically, and even psychically; however, use of these techniques never directly reproaches or sanctions the behavior of others. This dynamic sustains a code of self-monitoring and non-intervention, buttressing the libertarian characteristic of music festivals.

Interviewees’ risk avoidance strategies mimic mainstream rape-avoidance techniques, which stem from popular “rape myths.” Rape myths reinforce false information about sexual violence: here, how sexual violence is perpetrated by deviant strangers who may be fended off through properly-developed techniques that individuals practice (Quadara 2014). The risks that festival participants face are similarly framed as avoidable, given use of the proper social circles, physical orientation, interactional cues, psychic investment, and emotional state. However, in the mainstream, people who are well-trained in self-defense and adhere to avoidance-prescriptions still experience

victimization (Keel 2005; Powell and Henry 2014). Unfortunately, festival participants who undertake individualized avoidance prescriptions still experience victimization.

The individualization of address gendered threat receives within jamtronica music festival areas characterizes the perception and experience of risk as anomalous, prescribing the management of this risk through a series of avoidance strategies. These techniques require the command of subcultural knowledge, a multi-faceted undertaking of self-monitor, and purposive non-intervention in the conduct of others. As such, this individualization disconnects the systemic perpetration of and prevention of/responses to violence from broader patterns of victimization in the subculture and of the mainstream. Additionally, this detachment from sociocultural contexts removes gendered threat from their place within larger structures and conventions of gender and sexuality, obscuring how mainstream inequalities permeate even “impermeable” subcultural communities.

### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF INCONSEQUENCE: EMBEDDING INEQUALITIES**

Albeit interviewees’ varying acknowledgement of the gender-disparate risks within jamtronica music festival arenas, their collective voice contests the narratives of festival-going women who shared their own experiences and perceptions of these unique threats. Interviewees clashed in how they framed music festival arenas: as libertine and libertarian utopias where mainstream problems could be escaped, or as party cultures not too unlike those found in and tainted by the mainstream. Recognizing the emancipatory potential of licensed deviance, personal autonomy, and liminal spaces, jamtronica music festivals observably promote social, cultural, and structural discourses that minimize physical, social, and sexual violence to the point where it is not only tolerated, but at times, is also “justified” (Buchwald et al 2005; Gavey 2005), implying an embedding of

mainstream “rape culture.” Participants of all genders used a variety of discursive strategies to convey the absence, insignificance, inconsequentiality, inevitability, and “un-addressability” of threats posed in the festival field, particularly those uniquely or disproportionately faced by women.

Marcus (1992) suggests that rape culture persists due to widespread assumptions that sexual violence is inevitable and may only be resisted through preventative measures undertaken by individuals. This sentiment is amply evidenced by conversations held with festival participants, as well as analyzed online and on-site texts. For example, one well-meaning festival consultant quoted in an online resource quipped, “Sexual assault is unavoidable wherever you get an excessively large crowd with a lot of alcohol in one place for the course of a weekend” (Sanghani 2015: online). This perceived inevitability indicts arena characteristics such as anonymity and intoxication as factors that promote victimization. In fact, Crosset (1999) reports that victims’ alcohol consumption detracts from their likelihood of reporting and prosecuting their assailant. Unfortunately, this interpretation is still problematic, as it re-establishes event-based risk as normative. Though this quoted consultant inches toward a more systemic view of gendered threat at festivals, they still approached this problem as removed from larger systems of gender and sexual inequality, in addition to the individuals who perpetrate and are victimized by these issues.

Valerie, a woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), illustrated the consequences that this minimization yield:

I definitely feel like people think that he/she was too fucked up and that [the rape] was their own fault, you know? And, whatever happen just happens. They blame it on whatever substance they were on versus the other person taking advantage of them. **I feel like that is a problem that we don't even recognize. It's like we don't want to even think about it because we're here to have a good time. [...] It's definitely brushed under the table.**

Participants' and producers' inattention to these threats impress mainstream tendencies to individualize experiences of physical, social, and sexual threat, blaming substance use or the (in)actions of festival-goers themselves to justify subcultural negligence of these problems. Just as mainstream victim-blaming presents significant ramifications for survivors, jamtronica's individualization and inattention to gendered threat augment these consequences - threatening additional loss of access, status, and belonging within a subculture that may offer solutions to mainstream problems that its members face.

In light of these prospective losses, many festival participants who experience gendered threat do not report these issues. Similar to wider contexts, women tend to selectively report their victimization – primarily to close friends, if they even choose to share these experiences at all (Kimmel 2008). This tendency magnifies in scope as inconsistency in and absences of incident reporting impact how survivors access post-trauma services (Campbell and Townsend 2011), how survivors label themselves in relation to their victimization (Cares, Moynihan, and Banyard 2014), and the extent of redress/prosecution that survivors seek (DeKeseredy and Flack 2007).

Many mainstream cases of gendered threat and violence do not go to trial (Quadara 2014). Given the unique forms of victim-blaming, suppressed discussion and address of risk, calls for self-monitoring, and dynamics that render victimization as

“anomalous” within jamtronica music festival arenas, it is reasonable to infer that most incidences of victimization within these events go unreported, much less prosecuted. The suppression of women’s narratives of sexual threat by men within festival arenas promotes a “culture of silence” and “culture of protection” similar to those of mainstream party cultures (Kimmel 2008). As festival codes of non-intervention ensure that perpetrators of gendered threats evade interpersonal reprimand, more so formal sanction, their actions are insulated – normalized by claims to personal autonomy, the “inevitability” of event-based risk, and a subcultural silence which penalizes those who dare break it.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Threats and experiences of victimization dramatically impact how participants of all genders navigate festival arenas. Alarmingly, jamtronica music festival participants collectively uphold dominant scene discourses that purport subcultural unity, impeding their acknowledgement and address of these concerns. In turn, the continued suppression of women’s experiences of threat exacerbates long-standing marginalizations of women, women’s experiences, and women’s narrative voice within merging EDM and jam band subcultural scenes (Connors 2013; Farrugia 2009; Olszanowski 2012) – further silencing and endangering the tens of thousands of women who participate in these communities and events, among others.

Jamtronica music festivals may present immense transformative potential through offering temporary reprieves from mainstream problems and constraints. However, the same codes and conditions that allow this escape may also embed everyday inequalities (here, of gender and sexuality), or even augment within arenas claimed by participants to

be immune from these issues. Women's recognition and negotiation of gendered threats within festival arenas diverge from the concerns men identify, disrupting these utopian imaginaries. Participants' concerted discursive efforts to suppress these narratives and invalidate those who have experienced gender threat and violence suggest that all is neither well nor equal within these "dream worlds." *Laissez-faire* subcultural codes that privilege personal autonomy and community-building permit participants opportunities to transgress mainstream norms, hierarchies, and identities. However, these prescriptions of non-intervention and allegiance to

the subcultural community generate conditions that insulate perpetrators of gendered threat (even when threatening or causing harm to other participants) and silence their victims. The observed disparities and discourses of this chapter compel additional inquiries into the scene's gender-sexual norms and processes from which these inequalities arise (Chapter Five). Moreover, these findings prompt further investigation into unique condition through which gendered threat and violence are both enacted (Chapter Six) and resisted (Chapter Seven).

## **Chapter Five – Mapping Gender and Sexuality in the Jamtronica Scene**

Members of jamtronica subcultural scenes characterize festival events as places where participants transcend or even evade the markers and impacts of mainstream inequalities, particularly those of gender and sexuality. Despite some similarities in the problems that festival-going men and women reported (i.e., the consequences of festivals' rise in popularity and their attending logistical and health concerns), several women identified their additional concerns about maintaining their well-being during their festival participation. Men rarely mentioned this concern. Women's disproportionate perceptions of risk within the festival arena dispute subcultural discourses that claim festivals' immunity from external inequalities and egalitarianism within scene membership and participation.

As festival participants reveal the gendered considerations they make regarding personal safety, scene membership, and event participation, it is essential to:

- understand what gender and sexual expectations and ideals exist within jamtronica festival arenas and communities;
- investigate how these subcultural norms contribute to the unique perceptions of threat festival-going women face; and,
- demonstrate how and why these dynamics suggest an ongoing denial of these inequalities and experiences, and the scene's lack of action to identify and remedy these issues.



Within this chapter, I explore the ways that jamtronica music festival participants conceptualize and perform subculturally-valued forms of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality. Specifically, I examine the gender differences in the roles men and women frequently take within festival communities and participants' dress norms within jamtronica arenas. Additionally, I consider how differences in scene-driven gender roles and prescriptions encourage men to be subjective "voyeurs" within festival events and women to act as "exhibitionist" objectified helpmates of the scene. I conclude the chapter by explaining how these subcultural dynamics mirror and magnify mainstream inequalities of gender and sexuality.

Subcultural scenes frequently depart from – if not purposefully defy – the norms of mainstream society. Yet, "subcultures may be non-normative, but they are not 'normless'" (Gelder 2007: 6). Subcultural norms establish expectations for individual self-presentation as well as interpersonal interactions, giving actionability to dominant subcultural discourses and ideologies. These norms shape members' identities and relationships to others, guide members' behaviors, and embed status hierarchies within the community. By creating meanings, expectations, and power dynamics of gender and sexuality that differ or challenge those of the mainstream, subcultural participants can insulate and exempt themselves from everyday expectations. Sometimes, they may even temporarily avoid the mainstream consequences that divergent performances of race, class, gender, and sexuality incur (Wilkins 2008). However, as I mention in Chapter Four, these subcultural communities are not wholly immunized from mainstream influence, as evidenced by the broader expectations of behavior and attending inequalities that permeate jamtronica subcultural scenes.

## **GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND SUBCULTURE**

Many scholars argue that subcultural participation is inherently gendered. Several authors within the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies characterize subcultures as a masculine, working-class phenomenon (Clarke et al. [1975] 2002; Cohen [1972] 1997). This conceptualization ignores the multitude of women who participate in various subcultures, and obscures the critical and diverse roles women play within these groups. This perspective discourages examination of subcultural expectations of women's attitudes, ideologies, and behaviors, and overlooks how gender and sexuality inform the distribution of in-group power and prestige among members. In response to this critical absence, numerous authors have since explored the many ways that subcultures, particularly ones organized around music consumption and genre fan identity, marginalize women (Bradby 1993; McRobbie 1980, 1984; McRobbie and Garber [1977] 2012; Thornton 1996).

According to these authors, gender differentiation and inequality are foundational to establishing subcultural group identity and authenticity. For example, Coates (1997) theorizes that both intragroup and mainstream discourses binarize and gender music genres, casting popular music as feminine, compliant, artificial, and characterizing rock music as masculine, rebellious, and authentic. This underlying division informs ideological frameworks about music-based subcultural membership and consumption across several genres, naturalizing men and masculinity within rock performance and communities. Across music subcultures, these binarizations characterize women as low-status, expendable consumers of music and subcultural ephemera. Men, on the other hand, take on high-status roles of producers and performers, without which no subculture

would exist. There is increased flexibility within these generalizations, as women prolifically adopt high-status performance and production roles. Unfortunately, other gender divisions within rock performance linger. Rock bands infrequently feature women as performers. When women do appear onstage, they primarily perform within folk or acoustic genres, as keyboardists or vocalists, reinforcing gender divides within genre and performance (Bayton 1997).

Off-stage, women increasingly participate in music subcultures; however, men still predominantly reign as “gatekeepers” of scene memberships. Through diffuse and multi-local processes, men individually and collectively determine whether community membership is extended to “outsiders;” additionally, they decide the membership conditions to be followed by those who are admitted. Assumed as capricious and contrived, women who are active within music subcultures exist as exceptions to the “rule,” frequently estranged as contingent constituents of scenes that are spatially-, discursively-, and demographically-dominated by men. Interactional gatekeeping critically impedes women’s scene participation; yet, gender divisions embed even more deeply in the spatial orientations of subcultural scenes. In many music subcultures, performances often take place late at night, off main roads, and within barroom landscapes – sites that women’s mainstream socializations identify as threatening (Cohen 1997). Women who brave these landscapes contend with additional obligations: to participate - at minimum, to tolerate - sexist joking and “competitive fraternization” among scene members (Sargent 2009: 673). This practice requires women to appropriate practices of masculine bravado and one-upmanship, in effort to demonstrate subcultural

competence and solidarity within these masculinized arenas. Deviations from or critiques of these practices endanger women's already-contingent memberships.

In music subcultures, women must not only “be one of the boys” (or, be “better than the boys”) to legitimate their scene participation, but actively reinforce behaviors and discourses that perpetuate their marginalization and conditionality within these groups. Unfortunately, women's triumph over these barriers and the concessions they make to belong may not confer them sufficient rewards. Though men's predominance in high-status positions in music scenes (as performers, promoters, record company and venue owners, and band management) offer sources of power and prestige apart from the mainstream (Cohen 1997), these positions often mirror mainstream positions and performances of masculinity, eliciting additional benefit to subcultural men. Contrastingly, women within music subcultures are doubly penalized, as their engagement in masculinized subcultural practices situates them as deviant foils to idealized mainstream femininities. In turn, they are unable to claim full membership within subcultural scenes due to the “inauthenticity” subcultural discourses associate with femininity. Yet, the practices that women must undertake to legitimate their subcultural belonging penalize them in the mainstream, distancing them from the privileges that “upright, normal” femininities endow.

#### *Gendering Jam Rock and Electronic Dance Music*

Although electronic dance music (EDM) modernizes disco stylings of yesteryears, EDM does not seemingly experience disco's historical derision as inauthentic, materialistic, or feminine, compared to “authentic,” masculinized rock (Dyer [1979] 2012; Pini 2001). This may be a result of the discursive and demographic re-branding of

EDM toward a predominantly-male jam band fan base, building on historically gender-disparate subcultural claims to membership. Further, jamtronica's incorporation of various music styles promotes a diversity of inspiration and grounds for innovation, integrates subcultural hierarchies that attend these genres.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, men's prominence within stakeholding positions embeds the larger gender-sexual inequalities present in other music- and rock subcultures within this emergent music genre.

Similar to their rock music counterparts, women have historically been excluded from claiming influential positions of music production, performance management, and distribution within rave, club, and festival communities (McRobbie 1994; Pini 2001), primarily filling the role of fans or side-stage entertainers. In contrast, DJs, producers, label owners, and venue managers within dance music communities are predominantly men (Fikentscher 2000; Reynolds 1999). These high-status roles posit men as central actors within the scene: offering them significant influence in shaping dominant subcultural discourses regarding meaning, membership, and value within jamtronica arenas; and, establishing subcultural expectations of idealized or normative inter/action around these (men's) claims.

### **DESIGNING DIFFERENCE: GENDERING SOCIO-LABOR ROLES WITHIN THE FESTIVAL COMMUNITY**

While gendered divisions of labor are increasingly atypical within contemporary society, they still guide lay assumptions that bifurcate occupational sectors and jobs

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<sup>1</sup> Women's subcultural marginalization is not isolate to rock music, but is evident in other popular music genres that jamtronica integrates into its stylings, such as punk (Reddington 2003), indie (Kruse 2003; Leonard 2006), and hip-hop (Rose 1994; Pough 2004).

within them. Noting that gender categories such as masculinity and femininity have no real biological or embodied provenance, these constructs are highly contextual and subjective, as are the attending performative practices labeled as deviant or those met with stigma and (dis)privilege.

No less, mainstream gender orders still classify “men’s work” as more action-oriented, manual, product and competition driven, and technologically specialized. These fields demand physical strength, endurance, and specialized competence: characteristics commonly associated with masculinity. Even as women increasingly participate in formal, public sphere labor, “women’s work” in these fields frequently mirror private sphere expectations: caretaking, providing emotional support and services, and nurturing the internal well-being of their organizations (Eagly 1987; Parsons and Bales [1959] 2002). Action-oriented public sphere work associated with men frequently garners more social esteem, power, the perception of competence, and tangible resources, as compared to the caretaking and emotional labor required of “women’s work” (Webster and Rashotte 2009). This disparate social and economic valuation deeply impacts how people view and interact with each other across social fields. Further, it reflects a larger, sustained inequity between the valuation of behaviors and traits deemed “masculine” and “feminine.” Across observed festival sites, men and women tend to reproduce these mainstream gender divisions of labor within the formal and informal roles they take in festival production and participation. These patterns suggest not only an institutionalization of disparate behavioral and attitudinal expectations for men and women within the scene, but also magnify how these positions confer disparate levels of prestige, access, and community influence to its members.

*Men: The Movers and Shakers of the Jamtronica Festival Scene*

Although scene demographics increasingly reflect the growing geographic and genre reach of these events, there is still a noticeable dearth in women's participation as fans, performers, and production personnel within festival arenas; men still comprise the majority of jamtronica's fanbase and its professionalized positions. Through frequently obvious gender distinctions and segregations, men within jamtronica festival communities (un)consciously entrench homosocial "boys' clubs" that dictate dominant configurations of masculinity within the scene.

*Within fan ranks*

Like other music subcultures, men in jamtronica act as community gatekeepers of the scene and monitors of members' belonging within it. Though an unpaid and informal fan role, gatekeepers are critical actors within the scene, as they ensure the well-being of the community, monitor group boundaries and affiliations, and act as models of subcultural practice and as idealized members. This position is also an opportunity to deploy one's attained subcultural capital (Thornton 1996). Gatekeeping men informal, yet no less influential, means to determine legitimacies of scene memberships and to design membership standards that reflect their own actions, interests, and images. Yet, men's predominance in gatekeeping is not the only barrier to women's occupation of these positions; the means by which subcultural knowledge and status required of these informal leaders is also gender-biased.

One of the primary ways festival-goers build subcultural capital is through conspicuous and continuous participation within and across festival events: an endeavor

that precludes many festival-going women from participation. Kelly, a 22-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne (2015), lamented this asymmetry, “I don’t know many girls who tour [with festivals] a lot. It’s mainly guys I know that go from festival to festival. I know some girls that do it. [...] Usually, it the men doing that more than the women.” Historically, women have been discouraged from being present and participating in places associated with recreational substance use, particularly public settings (Campbell 2000; Valenti 2014). This exclusion not only limits women’s opportunities to gain personal pleasure from participating in these settings but excludes them from the many social and professional opportunities these primarily-homosocial environments generate (Campbell 2006). Additional outside obligations such as work and family frequently pressure women to stay close to home and provide domestic stability, limiting their long-term immersion (and its attending benefits) in the scene, either as fans or as event staff. Wider norms of gender and work legitimize men’s sojourning labor and public sphere participation, circumventing the snares that discourage equitable women’s scene and event involvement. As such, men are able to curate personal experiences, subcultural knowledge, and interpersonal networks that designate them as authoritative “insiders” to this homosocially-oriented setting – reflecting “masculine” behaviors and attitudes through their independence, specialized competence of scene expectations and arena navigation, and prioritization of “public” engagement (traveling, event participation) over “private” obligations that would require them to stay close to home.

Men earn subcultural prestige and resources through their sustained involvement, which positions them as experienced and allegiant experts within the scene. In turn, their



use of subcultural capital enables them access to community governance, even if informal, peer-based, and highly contextual, legitimizing men's creation of and contribution to subcultural discourses. Further, these claims: permit gatekeepers to impart subcultural norms and values to scene newcomers they deem eligible; buttress their authority in assessing the legitimacy of others' scene membership; and, bestow the power to sanction, ostracize, and even expel fellow scene members. Though their leadership may be informal, prominent members of jamtronica fan communities rely on mainstream aspects of hegemonic masculinity to earn and maintain their positions: competing with others for these esteemed positions; reproducing existing community hierarchies; and, exacting their dominance other members by controlling community belonging, access, and resources.

#### *Within professional positions*

In addition to their predominance within informal leadership positions, men also hold the majority of paid professional positions within jamtronica subcultures, such as performers, producers, venue and record label owners, technical and venue staff, and security (Cohen 1997; Fikentscher 2000; Reynolds 1999). These positions are exceptionally powerful within the music festival industry, granting them significant influence over the design, production, and management of jamtronica arenas – as well as the subcultural texts and discourses that inform them. Just as women are often precluded from informal fan-based sites of power, women are also underrepresented within the high-status, professionalized positions that oversee festival production, performance, and scene governance. Across the several participant observations I gathered while volunteering with festival production staff, men took center stage in their professional

positions – quite literally, as performers, and in behind-the-scenes event production. Men populated and governed the lighting, sound, and stage crews, and the security forces that policed the event and its participants. Even in their lack of immediate presence, men’s names were urgently whispered during business exchanges. Alternatively, these names and titles were used as passwords to limited-access areas or amenities by festival participants leveraging their connections to subcultural celebrities. Though the positions men took were highly diverse, I observed several commonalities. First, their highly-specialized, often technical skill set made them essential to event organization and production. Second, they indifferently migrated from site to site for work, seemingly without concern for matters “at home.” Lastly, they conveyed observable agency and authority as they navigated the festival arena: wielding keys, technical equipment, phones, access passes, document folios, and golf carts. Although I did observe a few women acting within these positions, as in many other music subcultures, their presence was very much the “exception to the rule” (Cohen 1997).

Women’s underrepresentation in high-status, influential positions within jamtronica communities is also evident within the visual and written texts that inform dominant subcultural discourses. In a five-page spread of the official Summer Swelter (2015) program, forty music artists were featured a photographic retrospective which celebrated their collaborative efforts with other artists, in addition to the “memorable moments” they offered during covers of other artists’ songs. These images were collected and curated across the many years the festival had taken place, from many different photographers. Despite the diverse pool from which these images were drawn, only two of the forty artists featured in this text selection were women. Further, the

captions that accompanied these two very famous women (household names in classic rock and hip-hop) framed these performers as “friends” or “guests” of other artists, who were men. Another official program (Mudslide 2014) contained a promotion for a magazine popular within the jamtronica community for its artist news and festival event reviews. This advertisement featured eight images of previously-released issue covers. Men were highlighted as performers on six issue covers but were included in seven of the eight featured images. Conversely, only one woman was featured as a performer on these curated covers, as a part of a musical duo. Women were included in the cover images of two additional issues: first, as members of a large co-ed group of festival participants, and then as an individually-appearing illustrated fairy, sleepily rising to a cartoonish night sky. The five other cover images excluded women altogether.

The underrepresentation and minimization of powerful positioned women in high-profile subcultural texts is unfortunately common across music genres. In rock music trade magazines, men overwhelmingly occupy the focus of photos, articles, and advertisements, from cover to cover (Baylor 1997). Women’s presence in these studied texts is very sparse, save for the few representations situating women as scantily-clad groupies or sexually-available fellow band members. Written by men – for men – about men, these subcultural texts buttress men’s roles (and men) as newsworthy, central, and celebrated within jamtronica communities. Further, men’s dominance over the creation of these texts naturalizes men’s voices as representative of subcultural identity and experience, as they document, narrate, remember, and envision futures of jamtronica and its music festival community. The structured absence (Althusser [1970] 2001) of women’s visual and narrative representation in these texts depicts them as anomalous in

and accessory to festival performance and production. Characterized as “guests,” “friends,” or “exceptions to the rule,” scene texts and discourses peripheralize women’s belonging and influence within the community. Men’s ascendancy within jamtronica communities offers them significant influence in the composition of subcultural discourses, often omitting women’s insights and contributions from these narratives altogether (Farrugia 2009; Olszanowski 2012).

### *Maintaining men’s centrality*

Jamtronica subcultural scenes reinforce men’s formal and informal centrality through maintaining a demographically and ideologically homosocial space. Men constitute a numerical majority of the genre’s professional ranks and fan base, growing as participants encourage their friends to get involved. In a less wholesome way, men also maintain their roles as privileged subcultural positions through the purposeful exclusion of women. Men discourage women from taking on high-status positions within subcultural scenes in many ways: ignoring or condescending to women performers in instrument retail settings (Sargent 2009); withholding mentoring, networking, and professional opportunities (Sandstrom 2000); communicating in highly technical or aggressive ways (Porcello 1991); underrepresenting or disparaging women who take on professional positions within the scene (Bayton 1997); and, even participating in overt sexist harassment and verbal abuse. In effect, men’s use of specific traits (specialized technical competence and intra- and inter-organization competition between staff) within sectors, occupations, and tasks assumed as “men’s work” help to reproduce these fields as “masculine.”

These boundaries do not only exist through apparent discrimination of women by men but also reproduce through what is communicated between men. Men's performances of culturally-valued masculine traits often serve as a key to power-granting homosocial organizations. Thus, men curate their behaviors and attitudes to appeal to other men, capitalizing on the rewards of such membership. The "boys' club" of jamtronica situates men who hold influential subcultural roles to share these positions and privileges with men who articulate interests, networks, or behaviors similar to theirs. Supported by their numerical and ideological majority, men exhibit patterns where they foster opportunities that nurture subcultural capital (Thornton 1996) with and for other men: equipment sharing and tutoring; word of mouth promotion and referral; emotional and financial support; and, mentoring. Men seldom share these opportunities with women, regardless of the mentee's skill or status (Farrugia and Swiss 2008). Seemingly-innocuous interpersonal relationships veil this disparity, diffusing culpability over countless everyday interactions and inconspicuously co-producing subcultural gender inequalities over varied time and space. Comparatively, women's limited representation in high-status positions (both formal and informal) stifles the development of similar group-driven mentoring networks, as well as the leverage these collectives possess within subcultural communities. Left without access to training, equipment, professional opportunities, and support, women soon find that jamtronica's homosocial dividends are not simply results of what men know, but equally stem from that which women infrequently have the chance to learn.

Homosocial environments normalize gendered attitudinal and behavioral codes. Accordingly, women who pursue high-status roles within jamtronica communities must

adopt (or, at least, tolerate) masculinist interactional styles and behavior (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009), lest they face antagonization or alienation (Fine 1987). The homosocial contexts of many music subcultures situate women as “objects of sexual desire, conquest or derision, or linked with the domestic sphere of family and home” (Cohen 1997: 22), characteristics embedded through sexist and sexualized exchanges - celebrated between men, but dehumanizing of women. Bird (1996) suggests that this victimization is not a reflection of sexual interest, but instead are tools to articulate masculinized traits such as emotional detachment, competitive drive, and adherence to boundaries between men and women. Despite this too-ordinary abuse, some women may tolerate sexist harassment from their male peers to articulate subcultural belonging and to legitimize the benefits reaped from membership in predominantly homosocial groups. Unfortunately, acting like “one of the boys” seldom relieves them from sexist targeting, nor do these affiliations immunize women from the broader impacts of these conversations.

Bayton (1997) notes that in her study of rock music performers, nearly every woman she interviewed experienced some form of sexist or sexual violence from fans, venue employees, media entities, and even other musicians, nearly all of them men. These women described a range of offenses: audience members, other performers, and professional venue and production staff devaluing their talent and competency as musicians; countless calls requesting artists to “show us your tits” (46); and, even violent physical altercations. Insulated by their homosocial networks, offenders seldom encounter repercussions for such acts and leave performers little redress for these violations. Performers are not the only targets for this denigration; women holding executive and management roles within these communities also report encountering such

actions and attitudes. In one online blog, the author recounts her experiences as an EDM promoter and tour manager, stating:

I've been asked to pour drinks for DJs who clearly didn't have the wrist muscles to do it themselves, and have also had to put up with the ego of one up-and-coming artist who assumed that one of my breasts could be used as an air-horn, a free-for-all ball of fun ready and waiting to be honked. (Fiddy 2015)

In his study of male-dominated space, Fine concludes, "The number of social locales from which women are completely excluded is rapidly diminishing in American society. Yet, the mere fact that women have access to a male-dominated setting does not mean they will be fully accepted or treated with respect" (1987: 131). Jamtronica performance and production professions epitomize this statement; this "boys' club" requires women must not only fight their purposeful exclusion but adopt "masculine" behaviors and attitudes to defend their presence within it. However, the "boys' club" and its demand for masculine-typed traits does not constitute all sectors and positions within festival professions. Comparatively, "women's work" within festival professions distinguish from "men's," closely yoking women's roles within subcultural industries to mainstream conceptions of femininity.

#### *Healers and Helpmates: Women's Facilitative Roles at Festivals*

Numerous participant observations and textual analyses suggest a common characteristic of the types of work predominantly undertaken by women in the festival arena: most, if not all, of the roles taken on by women, involved "caretaking" as a primary responsibility. Even within the upper echelons of festival production staff, women were much more concentrated within positions requiring emotional labor and tasks associated with mainstream feminine traits (i.e., cooking/catering and

“hosting”/hospitality and accommodations). Regardless of the feminization of the work they performed, the number of women observed at field sites who occupied these high-status, salaried, professional positions were still comparably small in relation to the overwhelmingly male staff.

At these field sites, it was far more common to observe women taking on semi-professional “teaching” positions within the festival arena, which rarely offered equitable status, access, or resources compared to “men’s work” at these events. This phenomenon was noted across the textual bodies of several events’ official participant programs (Glow Worm 2014, Tree Ridge 2014, and FreezeOut 2014) where women were overwhelmingly listed as workshop leaders – instructing informal courses on yoga, natural healing, permaculture, poetry, hula hooping, acrobatics, jewelry-making, New Age religious mythologies, subcultural beauty practices (i.e., bodypainting, culturally-appropriated traditions of henna and dreadlocking), and storytelling. These texts also listed women as the primary practitioners of healing services such as massage, sound, and energy therapies, and divination (tarot, tea leaf, and palm readings). Women were also identified as the facilitators of community-building roundtable discussions, humanitarian and environmental advocacy efforts, and as auxiliary artists, entertainers, and musicians – many of whom were omitted from posted performer line-ups.

These observed roles persistently posit women as the healers, teachers, and prophets of the subcultural scene, the informal gatekeepers of subcultural beauty practices and consumptive self-presentation, and as entertainers who are peripheral to men’s mainstage acts. Performing such roles often requires heavily-embodied tasks (sustained movement, physical touch, and modifications of the body). Further, women



perform significant emotional labor through these roles, as they foster creative and welcoming educational spaces, foretell futures based on deep-seated personal intuitions, and facilitate community dialogues between ever-shifting participant demographics. “Women’s work” within jamtronica music festivals demands sociability, cooperation, and openness; this widely differs from the technical expertise and interactional displays of dominance expected within “men’s work.”

The emotionally-driven, facilitative positions women do adopt within the festival arena are not representative of any innate drive or proficiency; instead, the roles that are available to women noticeably replicate mainstream gender divisions of labor. Charged with the socialization of new members of the “familial unit” and fostering solidarity and integration of the subcultural community, these positions transpose expectations of “women’s work” into new fields – engineering a subcultural “private sphere.” This fabricated private sphere allows women to professionalize their festival participation, but only through distinctly “feminine” labor that supplements essential “men’s work” and does not challenge men’s predominance within festivals’ professional labor force.

“Women’s work” within festivals is seemingly ancillary; this is particularly apparent through its marginal publicity within key event texts, likely correlating with its abysmal reception and attendance. Within my participation observations, I took part in several scheduled educational workshops, healing arts services, and community outreach efforts endorsed through festival programming. However, these participant observations suggested that these workshops are very sparsely attended, losing critical advertising to program texts’ visual and journalistic attention to (mostly men’s) music performances. Unsurprisingly, the majority of positions that women take on within the festival arena are

unpaid, as these workers frequently exchange their labor for waived admission to the festival. Some participant observations suggested that these positions confer other small benefits, such as on-site meals, the ability to keep one's "tips", and opportunities to network with high-profile festival personnel; however, the pay of these positions is hardly comparable to that in masculinized scene sectors such as production, performance, or security. Blau and Kahn (2016) estimate that, within mainstream contexts, gendered divisions within industry sectors and between occupations contribute to nearly half of the overall wage gap. Mainstream inequalities of labor compensation observably prevail within festival contexts, despite claims of subcultural immunity from such ills.

I observed this curtail of "women's work's" prestige and compensation across multiple event sites and texts. The enduring patterns of gender disenfranchisement suggest the importance of considering how longitudinally (un)viable these "caretaking" positions are for women – emotionally, physically, socially, and financially. These subcultural structures construct multifaceted barriers to women's accrual of comparable subcultural capital as men, given the many ways they are purposefully excluded from the prestige, access, and resources that "men's work" within the scene would confer.

### **SUBCULTURE, STYLE, AND PERFORMATIVE ASYMMETRY**

By analyzing in (labor) roles and expectations, one may observe gender disparities in how these tasks are allocated and the endowments that they respectively earn. Whereas professional roles and positions offer insight to the institutional and organizational (re)production of subcultural gender inequalities, disparities also materialize through more individual, performative processes. In this section, I examine festival participants' discussions on dress, clothing, and style as a site where subcultural

community members interactionally negotiate gender meaning, construct gender difference, and entrench gender inequalities. Though scholars frequently overlook dress, clothing, and style as frivolous, it “may serve as a symbolic metaphor of the relationship of the individual to the cultural system [... and is] an extremely powerful way of expressing and reinforcing subtle values, relationships, and meaning in human culture” (Hamilton and Hamilton [1989] 2015: 115). Here, jamtronica music festival participants’ use of clothing: contextualizes their relationship to and differentiation from the outside world; asserts subcultural belonging and competence; and, organizes participants’ self-presentation in accordance to idealized configurations of subcultural gender performance.

The ways one consumes and organizes commodities is central to the construction of their identity and lifestyle participation (Miller 1995), allowing groups to establish and enforce boundaries of belonging (Moloney and Hunt 2012). Subcultural communities collectively develop guidelines for commodity consumption, giving stylized, local meanings to dress, music, behaviors, and attitudes as to differentiate group members from larger society (Hebdige 1979). Group members, in turn, may innovate and renegotiate these styles, meanings, and boundaries, rendering these processes dynamic and perpetually responsive to members’ deployment and revision. Yet, subcultural group members do not always uniformly agree upon or practice all styles, ideologies, or meanings, cultivating both diversity and conflict within subcultural communities.

Festival participants frequently use extraordinary costumed dress to enhance advertised burlesque and carnivalesque festival atmospheres, giving festival-goers opportunities to engage in “temporary countercultural identity performances” (Johansson and Toraldo 2015: 11). Within festival arenas, participants deploy consumed goods to

express their subcultural membership and to differentiate the festival landscape from everyday contexts. Interestingly, both mainstream and subcultural discourses characterize consumptive processes (shopping, listening to music) as intrinsically feminine and trivial in contrast to the “authentic” productive subcultural enterprises of men. In contrast, numerous authors detail the centrality of style and consumption to subcultural articulations, regardless of participants’ gender identities and expressions (Anderson 2009; Hutton 2006; Malbon 1999; Perrone 2009; Pini 1997, 2001; Rief 2009; Thornton 1996). Several festival participants of all genders endorsed the importance of clothing within festival arenas. Rajon, a 22-year-old man interviewed at Empieza (2014) explained, “[...] What people choose to wear is the vibe they choose to give off to people.” In light of interviewees’ use of personal and event “vibes” to foster community solidarity, event success, and personal expression and safety (Chapter Four), clothing is an essential medium which connects individuals’ identities and expressions to larger subcultural identity and participation. Interviews with festival participants evidence that mainstream gender meanings and prescriptions saturate festival participants’ use, valuation, and meanings of stylized subcultural dress.

### *The Utilitarian Code of Festival Masculinities*

Until Europe’s Industrial Revolution, clothing was relatively gender-nondescript. This period heralded many technological and sociocultural changes, including the rise of gender-divided labor. As men increasingly partook in public sphere economic pursuits, their clothing became more uniform – a symbolic tool for communicating one’s social class, occupation, and prestige (Davis 1992). Today’s discourses of clothing, dress, and gender build from this bifurcation, discouraging men from being too concerned with

appearance, dressing too ornately, and participating in “emasculating” beautification practices. In mainstream contexts, men’s clothing is still observably homogenous. Although workplace contexts still inform men’s contemporary styles, men’s clothing has adapted to accommodate the broad range of activities and identities men take on in advanced capitalist cultures. Though men’s clothing is increasingly diverse, the modes by which most men curate their appearance are comparably narrow. Diverging from culturally-valued norms of masculine dress and self-presentation may result in ridicule, stigma, or even outright physical harm (MacKinnon 1987, 1989).

Within jamtronica music festival arenas, event organizers and subcultural discourses encourage participants of all genders to embrace aesthetic and interactional “freakiness” (St John 2009) to accentuate the distinction between festival immersion and mainstream life through participants’ embellishment – of personality and person. These arenas act as environments where mainstream codes of dress and gender (and their attending sanctions) temporarily relax, authorized by the festivals’ *laissez-faire* logic. Although many festival-going men acknowledge these broadened conventions of dress and laud their power to enhance festivals’ atmosphere, the majority of men I interviewed did not participate in “freaky” costuming or dress practices. Instead, these men opted out of amending their clothing use during their event participation, claiming their breach of festival aesthetics as utilitarian, individualistic, and accommodating to the social and professional roles they took within jamtronica communities and arenas.

Throughout my interviews with festival participants, men frequently called attention to festivals’ arena-specific distension of men’s clothing norms; however, they were equally as quick to point out their eschewal of these opportunities. Though “[...]”

you do see more men's fashion out here than you would normally," Patrick, a 29-year-old man interviewed at Mudslide (2014) appended that "Guys seem to be more utilitarian like you see in the regular world [...]". Bubba, a 21-year-old man attending Thumbs Up (2015), furthered this claim. He explained:

I wear the same thing [clothing] when I'm outside of here. [...] I could get why people might wear things they would normally wear out in public, because it's kind of an atmosphere where anything goes. You know what I mean? But, for me, where someone tells me I can wear whatever I want, to me, that just means I can wear my normal clothes and I'll be fine. I don't think of it as being given permission to wear something crazy and flamboyant.

Interestingly, festival websites, paper programs, and other prominent texts reflect dedicated efforts to encourage their participants to "wear something crazy and flamboyant," as Bubba rejects. Textual analyses of the Mudslide (2014) and Fall Ball (2015) participant programs explicitly advertised costume theme days organized by festival production staff. However, many men purposefully disregarded these opportunities to transcend everyday gender-clothing codes, in favor of dressing for comfort and practicality. These practices usually appropriate clothing these men already owned and wore in their everyday, mainstream lives for use within the festival arena. Billy Ray, a 30-year-old man attending Mudslide (2014) reflected on his dress considerations, claiming, "[These choices] depend on where the festival was at... Most of the festivals I go to are warm, so [I will wear] shorts and a tank top. [...] But really, I don't wear anything different than what I'd wear to go 'float a river,' which I do almost every weekend. I wear shorts and a t-shirt."

Many men prided themselves on their austere approach to festival dress, using men whom they considered "too extravagant" to foil and elevate for their own choices.

Gary, a 22-year-old man interviewed at Summer Swelter (2015) acknowledged an array of festival-going men's dress presentations, listing, "You've got some people like that guy over there who is just wearing a t-shirt and khaki shorts. There's [sic] guys wearing the 'drug rugs' [knit woolen sweaters] and dreads... And then, for me, it's just gym shorts and a bandana. Whatever's practical." Gary's survey of men's festival attire unwittingly positions himself as an ideal festival participant, appropriately prepared for the event as compared to the impractical attire of those he denigrated. Gary's use of everyday clothing within carnivalesque environments disregards the "freakiness" encouraged of participants; however, he manages this breach through using "practicality" as a proxy to subcultural capital claims. In knowing what is "practical," Gary articulates his familiarity with and ability to manage the unpredictable physical, social, and spatial conditions of festival arenas. This "know-how" shields the subcultural capital, status, and belonging he is afforded through the enmeshing of masculinity and music subcultures, presenting his disregard of arena clothing expectations as not only acceptable but superior to "impractical" prescriptions for arena participation.

Merton, a 49-year-old man interviewed at Empieza 2014, framed his use of casual everyday apparel during festival participation, explaining, "I'm just a short and t-shirt kind of guy. I'm not representing anything. Sometimes, these 'uniformers' [scene members who closely conform to ideal types of subcultural dress and self-presentation] are making a statement with what they're representing. [I'm representing] that I don't care." By "not caring," Merton similarly spurns the outlandish costuming that events solicit from their participants. In turn, he distinguishes himself from other more ornamental forms of men's festival clothing choices and the men who adopt them,

disparaging them as conformist and diminishing their subcultural legitimacy. Unlike those who emulate clothing themes, symbols, and practices that are popular within jamtronica communities, Merton shows his belonging and authenticity through his lack of adherence to these codes, privileging his individuality over community standards. Even though he recognizes these patterns as subculturally-valued (enough that they have become “uniforms” within the community), Merton demonstrates a purposeful and publicized pride in breaking the “rules.” Whereas subcultural and mainstream discourses frame this rebellion, autonomy, and confidence as masculine, Merton articulates what Morris (2012) terms “contrived carelessness.” The initial context of this term describes young men and boys’ staged disregard of education expectations as a means to resist domination within school settings. Here, Merton seems to echo this articulation of masculinity. By framing those who concern themselves with and conform to subcultural dress expectations as “uncool” or illegitimate, Merton, like Gary, presents his disregard of subcultural costuming suggestions as more “authentic,” thus, superior to the subcultural legitimacies of those (mainly men) who do comply.

Men’s inattention to and noncompliance with subcultural dress expectations does not go unnoticed by other festival participants. Crystal, a woman interviewed at Nocturne (2015, no age given) ascertained that this disregard exhibits gendered dimensions, where “[...] girls are expected to look better and more appropriate, and guys can just get away with nothing. I guess we don’t even fully expect them to dress up at all.” In contrast to dominant subcultural prescriptions that encourage festival-going women’s flamboyant costuming, men openly defy these subcultural expectations – permitted to “do nothing” to contribute to the carnivalesque arena, yet evading



contestations of their subcultural competence and authenticity. Though men's commitment to this "nothingness" is performative, men's privileged, naturalized positions within jamtronica music festival communities offer them subcultural security in ways that are seldom similarly afforded to their women counterparts.

Some men suggested that elaborate costuming prescriptions did not align with their community and event roles, activities, or priorities. Seth, a 31-year-old interviewed at Nocturne (2015) rationalized his use of utilitarian dress over carnivalesque costumes, stating, "I can only answer for myself, but dressing up wasn't even something I was interested in. I'm just out here to see music more than anything. [...] It's just about enjoying the music." Seth justifies his utilitarian style as a reflection of his intentions and practices within the festival arena, identifying costuming as a prospective distraction to his unambiguous goals: to see music. As the identified "the movers and shakers" of the scene, ornamental dress may impede men's fulfillment of their high-status tasks and positions, potentially penalizing the organization and execution of the event. As such, men shirk prescriptions of "freakiness" with impunity earned from their central roles within the community, further reinforcing the symbolic and material boundaries of gender, and their attending inequalities.

#### *Femininity and Festival Flair: Observing Women's Dress-Driven Ornamentality*

The industrial revolution's impacts on labor and familial structures profoundly impacted women's clothing styles and expectations. As women were increasingly pressed into the domestic, private sphere, their clothing reflected this segregation from the formal workforce and the private sphere. Removed from sites where men attained and articulated social status, women developed alternative means to assert what status

they had through men's proxy by using cultural tools available to them within the private sphere: their homes, their children, and their own bodies. Women used their bodies as "cultural canvases" to display their "good taste" (Parsons 1943: 36) and their compliance with social, gender, and familial expectations. In constructing these "ornamental surfaces" (Bartky 1988), women were pressured to consume goods and periodically refashion themselves in accordance to emergent cultural ideals and styles, in addition to the caretaking, emotional labor they performed. These directives charged women to fulfill "internal," often embodied, achievements rather than external material projects rewarded with compensation and public esteem. In effect, these dynamics reinforced gendered divisions of labor between men and women, as well as the practices that sustained them.

Women's clothing continues to uphold these historical divisions and practices, though its styles have evolved to reflect the vast array of personal and social identities and roles that women currently hold. Despite the increasingly complex obligations women fulfill within both public and private spheres, mainstream gender discourses encourage women to use their bodies as reflections of their status, coupling their (perceived) social worth with their personal appearance. From very early ages, women internalize these directives, learning to treat their bodies as never-ending "projects" they must modify in accordance to ever-shifting fashion trends and unattainable "beauty myths" (Brumberg 1997; Wolf [1991] 2002). Rapid technological developments in manufacturing and globalization's exchange of resources and styles broaden the available tools that women use in these "projects." Even in contemporary times, historical patterns

endure, charging women to derive status from consumption and adornment, in contrast to men's acquisition through occupation.

Jamtronica music festival scene members adopt dress norms that are specific to the subcultural community, using clothing to articulate membership and to set themselves apart from mainstream society. No less, mainstream fashion currents do considerably influence clothing expectations and use within the subculture. As a result, festival-going women's incorporation of mainstream clothing goods entrenches women's ornamental legacies within the positions and practices of their music festival participation. Festivals' encouraged "freakiness" offers women increased authorization to craft elaborate costumes, collaging already-bountiful dress selections to innovate even greater ranges of style. Further, festival "freakiness" gives women temporary license to dress in ways that may receive harsh social reprimand in mainstream contexts. For example, festival-going women often don body-revealing clothing within these arenas, demonstrating festivals' divergence from everyday life and as opportunities to articulate forms of self-expression and sexual agency that mainstream codes of gender and sexuality discourage. Though festivals may offer women extended opportunities for innovation and self-expression, women's dress within festival arenas may also inadvertently reproduce larger delineations and hierarchies of gender.

*"Pretty things!": women's expected adornment*

Festival participants were quick to identify examples of women's clothing, chiefly by framing instances of women's ornamentality in contrast to men's utilitarian dress. Melba, a 34-year-old woman attending Empieza (2014), reflected upon her recent observation of gendered clothing differences, recalling, "[...] I was actually in the line for

the restroom yesterday, and I was looking at the two lines. All the guys standing in line were in shorts and t-shirts, or just shorts. But, the girls were more accessorized.”

Though subcultural assumptions tend to infer men’s lack of concern and competence in the field of dress, many men enthusiastically shared their knowledge of dress expectations for festival-going women; again, they did so through its distinction from men’s dress. When asked about what women were expected to wear to jamtronica music festivals, Cory, a 22-year-old man attending Empieza (2015), exclaimed, “Pretty things! Lots of makeup. Leather, makeup, and body paint. But, lots and lots of makeup.” Men, according to Cory, were advised to wear “Levis! And, tank tops!” His friend, Lopez, a 19-year-old man, added that women should wear “dresses, skirts, glitter, and tinsel” and advised that men bring “jeans and work boots.” He quickly noticed and addressed this disparity. “There’s not the same expectation, though, for guys to dress up,” Lopez argued; moreover, he noted that the difference in expectations was due to “the same reasons as to why it’d be different out there [in mainstream contexts]. It’s just about the differences in genders.” Interestingly, neither Cory nor Lopez was able to explain just exactly what “the differences in genders” entailed.

Merritt, a 22-year-old man interviewed at Empieza 2014, presented a slightly more developed conceptualization of the “differences in genders” Lopez introduced, suggesting, “I personally think that [women] care more and they want to look good. Guys don’t care. They just get dressed up in like, twenty minutes. [...] I think female clothing is elegant and they are able to dress up here, where guys just want a shirt, shoes, and pants – there’s not much to dress up.” To some interview participants, women’s concern for appearance is an inherent one that permeates into their subcultural

participation. Melba, continuing her reflection on the gender differences in festival clothing appraised the difference, stating, “Girls are automatically more interested in fashion and trends. I don’t think guys are on the internet looking up the “Top 100 Fashions of Bonnaroo” [a very popular music festival]. My sister [...] I’m sure she looked at it. [...] She’s into fashion. Guys just don’t care.”

Gendered differences in festival costuming require women to put forth disparate effort into their appearances. Pumpkin, a 23-year-old woman attending Glow Worm (2015) stated, “Girls go a little bit further with their outfits, whether that’s because it’s festival fashion or they just find it easier to express themselves.” Further, some interviewees revealed that subcultural dress expectations may not always ensure women’s comfort. Lucky, a 33-year-old man interviewed at Mudslide (2014) insisted, “At festivals, you see more women putting so much effort into what they’re wearing. They’ll still wear their rave gear even when it’s way too cold.” While some festival participants may interpret these practices as individual choices stepped in inexperience, ignorance, or lack of preparation, diffuse subcultural discursive systems uphold women’s ornamental displays. Even when they require significant investments of energy or sacrifices of comfort, these expectations encourage women to maintain “ornamental surfaces” throughout their subcultural participation (Bartky 1988, 1990; Bordo 1993). Meanwhile, these same discourses simultaneously defend and naturalize men’s apathetic approach to dress, even in “freaky” arenas.

Despite these discomforts, many women expressed that clothing is a critical component of their festival participation and experience – sometimes even before they enter event grounds. Brooke, a 25-year-old woman attending Tree Ridge (2014) divulged

that the process of packing for a festival was a way for her to both emotionally and materially prepare her for the event. She explained, “[...] As I was packing – I was like, ‘this is what I want to wear,’ but I can interchange these things together. It is a big part of getting prepared for a festival, figuring out what kind of awesome stuff you’re going to wear for the weekend.” Lesa, a 27-year-old woman interviewed at Mudslide (2014) remarked, “I think that part of the festival is dressing up. And, of course everyone is going to experience [the festival] in their own way, but that’s part of it for me – dressing up and being able to wear whatever.” Within the festival sphere, clothing acts as a tool mediating one’s experience – and, may provide a (temporary) site of agency. Mia, a 24-year-old woman interviewed at Thumbs Up (2015) describes her festival clothing:

I tend to be myself, but with more flair. Like, with more glitter. Compared to when you were a child, you can’t really dress up in fun things. And, when you get older, you’re expected to be mature. I feel like being at a festival gives you the opportunity to have fun and do what you want. No one is going to judge you because everyone is going to be doing the same thing [having fun and doing what they want].

As globalized mainstream conditions expand the diversity of clothing available to women, subcultural institutions also promote women’s adornment practices. Dennis, a 33-year-old man interviewed at Mudslide (2014) outlined this phenomenon, expressing:

I feel like women have a lot more [clothing] available to them, so they have more choices. But for guys, I guess, what [clothing] they have available to them, they can certainly take it to the extreme here. But, it seems like girls can do so much more with what’s available to them.

Framing this issue as a reflection of disparate dress resources, Dennis implies women’s ornamentation within the festival arena as a predictable outcome. Yet, this disparity holds additional implications for women’s festival dress displays. Continuing

her thoughts, Mia (Thumbs Up 2015) reflected on this pattern, listing, “For guys [...] you’ve got sport t-shirts, but for girls, you’ve got crop tops, bras, and all of those designs versus one thing, so there’s more there. So, it makes sense for girls to care more [about clothing and appearance] because they have more possibilities.” Like Dennis, Mia suggests that the pressure for women to adorn themselves within festival arenas stems from an imbalance in resources offered as options. However, she inadvertently illuminates a critical distinction between men and women’s dress expectation in the examples she lists: women’s clothing (“crop tops, bras, and all of those designs”) are far more body-revealing and sexualized than the “sport t-shirts” men wear. Festivals’ carnivalesque atmospheres offer opportunities to express oneself in ways beyond the restrictions everyday contexts present. As Mia suggests, festivals are sites women may use to augment their identities and presentations of self. Using subcultural codes of libertinism and libertarianism to defend these breaches of mainstream femininity, Brooke, Lesa, and Mia describe clothing as means to shape their festival experience and envision feminine agency – in both mainstream and subcultural contexts. Despite women’s increased options in clothing choice, women’s clothing designs frequently show off and sexualize the body in ways that men’s (limited) clothing choices often do not. Thus, both individuals and institutional mechanisms reflect and reproduce the messages and means by which women prioritize, organize, and articulate their subcultural memberships.

“Style,” Eckert notes, “is interpreted not just as an indication of social affiliations but as a direct and intentional expression of group values, a marker of group boundaries, and thus a rejection of alternative values” (quoted in Wilkins 2008: 245). Here, style acts as a tool to differentiate subcultural members from larger society. Interviewed

jamtronica festival participants and discourses insinuate a corollary to this: subcultural styles may offer boundary delineations within groups, sometimes in ways that align scene values and norms with those of the mainstream, which dominant subcultural discourses claim to reject. Jamtronica festival dress expectations encourage women to modify their appearances to fit subcultural ideals that, similar to those of the mainstream, centralize on their bodies rather than women's actions, agency, and humanity (Bordo 1990; Frederickson and Roberts 1997).

While Brooke (Tree Ridge 2014) previously celebrated festival dress as an effective opportunity to outline her event participation, she also observed a double standard in the effort expected and resulting evaluation of men and women's bodies. She grumbled, "Our friend earlier remarked about [how] it was a shame that all the girls had to put so much energy into shaving so much of their body, but extremely hairy guys can walk around [festivals] shirtless, and they don't have to worry about it at all." These divergent arena-based standards and evaluations suggest a disparate subcultural review and policing of women's bodies, often exempting men invisible from this form of monitor.

Seth, continuing his interview at Nocturne (2015), defended dress-based double standards as an apparent dimension of jamtronica festival participation. He reasoned:

[Dressing up and putting on makeup] is just kind of what women do. For example, you'll [*to me, as a woman-identifying and -presenting researcher*] find some really cute clothes and put on some makeup to party it out at night. Guys, in any facet of society, don't really dress up. For me, I'm more here to see music. For me, the costume is never the biggest focus, nor is creating a specific environment. Like, I never think, 'Oh, I need to make or wear something extravagant to make this [event] more magical.



Whereas Seth acknowledged his lack of investment in fostering the carnivalesque, integrative environments festivals advertise, he also exposes how he benefits from the ornamental, facilitative work that women undertake in these arenas. Seemingly, men do not bear the interactional brunt of cultivating these fantastical spaces, as they more frequently adopt organizational roles that remove them from such work. Instead, as Seth infers, men are the primary consumers for whom festivals are designed: whereas women both formally and informally “make the magic,” this “magic” happens for an audience of men.

Designed by men (as they occupy critical organizational roles) and for men (as women facilitate festival experiences through their emotional, caretaking labor), jamtronica music festivals amplify these observed gender disparities by interrelating gender expectations and hierarchies with those of sexuality. Discouraged from high-status positions of labor within the scene, women’s ornamental displays broadcast their contingent memberships which are secured primarily through the approval of men who gatekeep subcultural memberships. Even then, women experience intense public monitor and frequent demands to perform laborious modifications to their appearances and behaviors, adapting to the arbitrary shifts in subcultural boundaries that gatekeepers dictate. These dynamics pressure women to emphasize their heterosexual appeal through their (sexualized) ornamentality and idealize subcultural femininities that reflect men’s desires. Connell (1987) terms these exaggerated forms of femininity which conform to men’s desires “emphasized femininity.” This femininity functions as an “adaptation to men’s power” (Kimmel 2000:4) as it rewards women’s attractiveness with men’s protection and proxied access to power.

Whereas dress displays are primarily public and deeply embodied experiences, men may gain pleasure from women's ornamentation without mutual benefit to the women they "consume." Given men's normalized exemption from sexualized ornamental displays, they relegate women as informal architects who beautify festival arenas with their decorative bodies. Simultaneously dehumanized and revered, women constitute a carnivalesque and burlesque background to men's participation, exposing the reverberating inequalities that interactional processes like clothing induce.

### **THE INVISIBLE OMNIPRESENT VERSUS GO-GO GIRLS: ENCOURAGING MEN'S VOYEURISM AND WOMEN'S EXHIBITIONISM**

*Vignette: Party with Whom? Party in THAT?*

*This project did not start out with the focus and form it currently has and takes. Initially, I set out to explore shifting notions of identity and authenticity within this subcultural scene through analyzing the medium of fashion. Yet, from the very first interview I collected and purposeful observation I recorded, gender and sexuality was a central theme, growing stronger with the project's emergent data analyses and themes. Armed with my tablet device and a brimming enthusiasm, I optimistically set out to chart the subcultural scene I had grown to claim as my own – a task much easier said than done.*

*My inaugural study respondent, Sally, a festival-going woman vending clothing at Empieza (2014), patiently responded as I fumbled my way through my still-developing interview schedule. (Thankfully, my interviewing skills improved over time and with extensive practice.) About three-quarters of the way through this mutually-grating exercise, I finally took a breath, looked up from the tablet screen, and was startled by the objects I saw behind my "victim." Secured to a display board, I saw "pasties" (fashioned adhesive nipple coverings) bearing the logo of the jam-legendary Grateful Dead. Nearby, another vendor had posted several pairs of colorful women's underwear brandishing the logos of up-and-coming funk and dance acts. At another store in the vicinity, a salesman was hawking hats screen printed with the phrase, "Party with Sluts."*

*Curious about this newly-evident pattern, I asked Sally if men ever purchased the pasties for themselves. Further, I inquired, has she ever come across vendors selling men's logo'd underwear. She heartily laughed at what I assume was a vehement "no" to both. Given the disparate goods, marketing, and prescriptions for men and women's clothing, I came to conclude that, even in the jamtronica scene, sex sells. Even in this claimedly equal community, how advertising was undertaken, whose bodies were used as sales tools and given both social and economic value, and to whom artists were (unconsciously?) appealing became increasingly evident through the fashions and other material goods vendors hawked.*

Systems of gender and sexuality deeply intertwine, as they are experienced simultaneously (Andersen and Collins 1992; Crenshaw 1991). Within many Anglo-Western societies, the success of one's gender performance frequently depends upon the successful performance of or inference to culturally- and contextually-approved sexual practices, desires, and identities (Mahay, Lauhmann, and Michaels 2005; Pascoe 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995). Though both gender and sexuality are social constructs, the interactional frameworks individuals develop and use to give meaning and power to them embed within larger institutional processes and hierarchies (Schwalbe 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987), serving to police and maintain boundaries that delineate who receives access, control, prestige, and other resources. Kimmel (1987) succinctly summarizes this relationship: "Sexuality is organized around a gender axis; gender is perhaps the key organizing principle of sexuality. Gender informs sexuality, sexuality confirms gender" (19).

#### *Masculinized Voyeurism, Feminized Exhibitionism*

Sexual scripts (Gagnon and Simon [1973] 2011) outline and give power to the meanings, practices, and relationships of sexuality within society, reflecting local and larger sociocultural norms and hierarchies. Similar to mainstream contexts, the sexual

scripts that guide jamtronica music festival participation interrelate prescriptions of gender and sexuality in ways that validate and normalize men as privileged, powerful subjects within the scene, while subordinating women through a series of conflicting stipulations which limit their agency within the community. As previously mentioned, subcultural discourses coerce women to articulate their subcultural membership through adorning themselves to be heterosexually appealing to festival-going men – evaluating women’s gender performances through their adherence to subcultural sexual scripts and moreover evidencing the subcultural reproduction of mainstream gender-sexual inequalities. Within jamtronica festival subculture, men exhibit diverse manifestations and interpretations of masculinity; some of these may integrate more feminine traits than mainstream idealizations of manhood. Though some scholars speculate that increasingly flexible conceptions of masculinity mark a larger sociocultural turn in gender (Pascoe and Hollander 2016; Sarvan 1998), festival-going men develop local, community-specific practices that embed mainstream hegemonic masculinity within the subculture.

An example of this colonization evidences within voyeur/exhibitionist dynamics. Mainstream gender systems insist that men articulate their masculinity through performative displays that surveil and subjugate women. In contrast, women endure men’s non-consensual objectifying review as an assumed inevitability of femininity (Bartky 1980; Bordo 1993; Calogero, Tanteleff-Dunn, and Thompson 2011). Jamtronica music festival subcultures mimic these dynamics, encouraging men to participate in public, often homosocial, sexualized consumption of women and celebrating women’s gender performances that contradictorily entice and deflect men’s review. By using the “gaze,” men indicate their ability to command hegemonic performances of masculinity

(Bordo 1999; Queen 1997), conveying their heterosexuality and domination over others. Men frequently deploy the “gaze” through their homosocial interactions with other men. Men’s homosociality discerns men’s friendship and intimacies as sites to reinforce masculine identity and garner social status (Flood 2008; Kimmel 2008). In many cases, men develop these bonds through the performative heterosexual consumption and devaluation of women, legitimating their positions as voyeurs within mainstream and subcultural contexts. Given jamtronica music festival subculture’s legacy of excluding women, it too becomes a homosocial space that entrenches gender-sexual inequalities and reifies men’s sexual and social subjectivity.

Complementarily, mainstream and subcultural gender interactions and institutions encourage women to develop their performances of femininity in response to the desire of men and endorse women’s sexual and gender subordination (Bartky 2010; Bordo 1989; Hlavka 2014). Within “emphasized femininity,” women adopt positions as passive sexual objects, deriving social value through men’s consumptive “gaze” and exploitation of their bodies, appearance, or heterosexual appeal (Bordo 1990; Frederickson and Roberts 1997). This consumption may entail: fragmenting women’s bodies into parts; dismissing women’s abilities to communicate their own intentions and identities (Langton 2000); organizing these part through sexual function to and desires of men (Bordo 1999); and, even the dehumanization of women through denying their agency and subjectivity (Nussbaum 1995).

Women internalize these objectification dynamics to accommodate men’s gaze. While participating in beauty practices that the gaze eroticizes, women receive rewards for these investments including perceptions of self-worth and social status. These returns

reinforce the connection between sexuality, beauty, and manicured femininity, obscuring the larger inequalities that may induce and result from these processes (Calogero and Jost 2011). Jamtronica festival subculture replicates mainstream prescriptions which pressure women to adopt positions as ornamental exhibitionists who use beautifying techniques to enhance the carnivalesque and burlesque atmospheres of jamtronica events. Dominant festival discourses encourage participants to elaborate on their everyday dress through dramatic cosmetic use and (often sexually-provocative) costume elements (Crane 2000; Melechi 1993; St John 2009). However, music festival participants I interviewed disclosed how gender disparities emerge through the ways men and women (do not) abide by these dress prescriptions. These disparities reinforce women as the primary participants within festival ornamentation and subject them to sexual objectification within festival arenas in ways that men, as in their mainstream lives, do not often experience (Murnen and Smolak 2000). Some men do engage in adornment practices, both within and outside of this scene. Yet, men's ornamental dress does not receive the similar type or severity of erotization that women's adornment practices endure (Wolf 1991 [2002]). Further, men's beautification practices frequently evade stigmatization through men's public displays of class, race, and heterosexual privileges (Barber 2008).

Sexual double standards buttress voyeur-exhibitionist dynamics, presenting rhetoric that naturalizes gender hierarchies and provides unequal consequence for the same behaviors. Privileged by sexual double standards, their status-granting roles, and unencumbered by practices that would subject them to sexual objectification, men enjoy greater permission to demonstrate agency, autonomy, and their pursuits of pleasure

within their sexual lives – particularly within touristic contexts such as jamtronica music festivals (Berdychevsky and Gibson 2015).

From very early ages, women internalize messages that natural men’s “natural” sexual dominance, and develop means to avoid, or if necessary, tolerate men’s sexual aggression (Hlavka 2014). The same sexual double standards that privilege men’s agency encourage women’s sexual passivity and resignation, leaving many young women to conceptualize sex as something done to them by men instead of something in which they may mutually participate, much less enjoy. Though these gender-sexual dynamics alienate women from sexual subjectivity, women are not exempt from cultivating heterosexually-appealing appearances. In learning to monitor and modify their bodies to fit cultural and contextual ideals (Bartky 1990), women also learn to exact self-surveillance strategies that help them pre-empt and negotiate risks they perceive. Women must demonstrate an “appearance of sexiness” (Levy 2006:30), but never display the real sexual desire or agency which may penalize women (Bay-Cheng 2015; Lamb 2010; Tolman 2002). Among other issues, women contend with sexual double standards, rape myths, slut-shaming, and victim-blaming which give rise to a very narrow field of “acceptable” femininities. Jamtronica music festival scenes and arenas layer mainstream expectations of femininity with calls for even more elaborate (and erotic) adornment practices and subcultural norms that may encourage interactional breaches, drug and alcohol use, and sexual libertinism; as a result, already narrow fields of femininity and sexuality grow even smaller. Moreover, festival-going women endure significant coercion to present themselves as sexualized exhibitionists within the music festival; yet,

these charges also assign them responsibility for recognizing and coping with the risks that these coerced gendered subcultural displays may entail.

*“It’s like I’m entertainment”*: participants acknowledge gender-disparate sexualized monitor

During on-site interviews, many festival-going women acknowledged both the extent of and their personal experiences of subcultural voyeur-exhibitionist dynamics. Crystal, continuing her interview held at Nocturne (2015), reflected on how these dimensions frequently pander to broader subcultural expectations and divisions, stating, “The girls are always hooping and doing cool shit, and the guys just stand around and watch.” Public performance and exhibitionism may be a site to express one’s individuality and identity, and potentiates challenges to external hegemonies of gender and sexuality (Wall 2013). However, the divisions between who is watched and who is watching replicate the very gender-sexual hegemonies these performances seek to overturn. Kelly, also interviewed at Nocturne (2015), explained, “[Compared to other contexts, at festivals] I’m dancing and everyone else is just watching me. It’s like I’m entertainment. People would hang outside [the vendors’ areas] and stare at us, because we were entertainment for them.” Kelly notes, however, that the “entertainment” women provide is informal and interactional, rather than the organizationally-sanctioned, -advertised, and -compensated music performances that men predominate.

Festival-going men justify these expectations through emphasizing their longitudinal presence within the subcultural scene. Jared, a 27-year-old man attending Empieza (2014) resigned, “There are certain groups that have been at festivals for years, and they aren’t going to change or go anywhere. One example is [that] there’s always



going to be the topless girl hooping at the back. That's it." Though jamtronica music festivals are a relatively contemporary (sub)cultural phenomenon, Adrian (Nocturne 2015), quipped that "[...] stuff like this has been going on for hundreds of years. The women perform and the men just observe." Framing these divisions as inherent, thus, unchangeable, festival-going men seemingly show no intention to disrupt dynamics which observably exempt and benefit them.

Rief (2009) describes that dance cultures like jamtronica music festivals encourage a "loss of self" that permits those who participate opportunities to disconnect the body from the mind – a means by which participants eschew internalized and embodied discipline in pursuit of pleasurable movement and collective identity. Yet, many of the festival-going women I interviewed expressed discomfort in the gendered disparities between those who "perform" and who are "consumed." Additionally, they mentioned their sustained self-consciousness and consciousness of others' (lack of) participation. Men, on the other hand, did not dispute these disparities, remaining complicit in their subcultural reproduction. Women's adoption of performative, exhibitionist roles within the festival arena supports work suggesting a more substantial, contemporary shift away from passive, chaste, delicate femininities and toward one that (on the surface) exemplifies increased sexual agency, autonomy, and engagement in pleasurable activities (Attwood 2006; Tolman 2002). However, these performances seemingly maintain gender-sexual dynamics that grant women increased agency but only if they continue to appeal and be sexually available to heterosexual men (McRobbie 2009).

*“Don’t Walk Around Naked, Unless You’re a Girl”: Double Standards in Voyeurism/Exhibitionism*

Festival participants described festival arenas’ generalized welcome of women’s exhibitionism. Comparatively, these same participants often framed men’s exhibitionist displays as unusual or even deviant. Alyssa, a 21-year-old interviewed at Glow Worm (2016), noted this phenomenon, observing, “I’ve seen guys that are wearing those short-ass booty shorts, but it’s mostly girls. [...] I saw some straight-up butt-ass naked girls yesterday.” Adrian, a man participating in Nocturne (2015) who did not give his age, claimed: “Like, I feel as if it’s more accepted for women to dress and behave in any way they want. But, with a guy, it’s a little less forgiving. We’re more willing to accept a girl in a string bikini than a guy in a Speedo.”

Emily, a 21-year-old participating in Summer Swelter (2015), noted that men and women’s arena-based exhibitionism earns them different reactions, and for some, repercussions. She insisted, “I think girls are definitely allowed to be more naked than guys. [...] I saw a girl completely topless with pasties, and no one said anything.” Her friend, Luke (a 21-year-old man), added, “Many people would look at the guy in the speedo weird than if it were a girl in something similar.” Ryan, a 19-year-old man attending Glow Worm (2015), clearly asserted his disapproval of men’s adoption of exhibitionist displays attributed to women, grumbling, “Like, if guys started going naked and not wearing shorts and stuff, I would not like it.” Ally, a 19-year-old interviewed at Glow Worm (2015), effectively summed up this observed disparity, claiming the reactions people would have to each gender’s exhibitionism would be “actually, very, very different. [...] ‘Cause now girls are doing this [festival nudity] more often, but if a guy started doing this, it would be very... strange.”

*Normalizing the nude nymph, nixing nude dudes*

Ally identified the disparate consequences for men and women's festival exhibitionism, but her statement alludes to another critical point: women's exhibitionism is both commonly-occurring and subculturally-normalized. Alyssa, continuing her observations above, noted of festival-going women, "They could be naked and I'd be like, whatever, so... it's just normal. [...] That's just what you expect here." Rico, a 23-year-old participant at Empieza (2014) suggested, "I feel like girls are expected to dress slutty. [...] I don't know why, but I feel like you just don't see girls who are covered up at shows. I mean, nowadays, that's not even considered slutty. That's just how it is." These expectations foster an environment that is progressively stratified, where "[...] the girls just seem to lose and lose and lose clothing until they are naked... just dancing around in nothing – and, the guys just keep adding clothing" (Crystal, Nocturne 2015). Whereas festival arenas and participants seemingly welcome women's sexualized exposure and exhibitionism, they do not hold men's exposure as warmly. Jon, a participant in Glow Worm (2014, no age given), illuminated these gender disparities, admonishing, "Don't get naked. Not fully naked, unless you're a woman. Naked guys are never okay."

*"They are very visual creatures": discursive defense of men's voyeurism*

Although dominant claims within jamtronica music festival subculture articulate the scene's immunity from larger inequalities of gender, many festival participants use mainstream discourses of gender and sexuality to naturalize men's roles as consumers of women's exhibitionist displays. Larger discourses of men's sexuality frequently assert

heteronormative associations that assume women's sexuality as submissive to men's dominant, aggressive sexuality. Sometimes, these discourses even suggest men's inability (or lack of need to) control their sexual desires (Hlavka 2014; Phillips 2000). This naturalization further buttresses sexual double standards that condone men's predation and sexual violence.

Dan, a 21-year-old, interviewed at Nocturne (2015), claimed that men's consumption of women's exhibitionist displays is an automatic response. He insisted, "I can't not [sic] look at boobies as they're passing by. Males can't. They cannot." Festival-going women also rely upon these discourses to explain men's actions, likening these consumptive exchanges to primal, even animal, interactions. Mia (Thumbs Up 2015), trying to avoid this generalization, stuttered, "I mean, guys are so... Without comparing them to animals... they are very visual creatures." Other interviewees did not similarly hedge their responses; instead, they overtly compared these actions (and extractions) to "biological" affairs. Gabby, a 19-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), minimized men's consumption of women as inherently natural, laughing, "You can't expect guys not to look at you. A male horse is going to look at a female horse if it thinks it's hot." Dan, continuing his thoughts presented at Nocturne (2015), continues this animalistic analogy, arguing:

So, I think that dressing skimpy or slutty, or whatever you want to call it is just a woman commanding sexual attention. It's just a woman being sexual – and, humans are animals. If a dog sees another dog in heat, he becomes turned on, but if you see a girl dressing skimpy... She's not [necessarily in "heat"], but she's still dressing skimpy, and she's trying to get attention.

In his explanation, Dan describes human sexual interactions as biologically-driven; however, he lacks consideration of the sociocultural characteristics that frame human

sexuality. In addition to assuming heteronormativity within both human and animal sexual desire and exchange, Dan ignores that animals (presumably) do not contend with the sexual double standards that preclude human sexual activity. Further, Dan speculates that women use their exhibitionist performances to demonstrate their heterosexual appeal and availability. In her work on the club-based dance cultures whence jamtronica festival scenes derive, Pini details that “[...] rave is seen to be ‘positive’ in sexual-political terms because the dressed-up, drugged-up, dancing female body is seen to have been wrenched or at the very least loosed up from its long-standing associations with sexual invite” (2001: 118). Dan’s position reattaches these assumptions to women’s ornamental, exhibitionist displays – ignoring the many reasons that women may adorn (or undress) themselves in their pursuit of social and sexual pleasure.

Men and women equally justify men’s consumption of sexualized women as “natural” or innate. In the rare case of men’s sexualized exhibitionism, some interviewees expressed that women are very much capable of the control that men seemingly cannot exact. Courtney, a 20-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), speculated that her reaction to men’s exhibitionism would be far different from men’s reactions to women’s displays. She rebuked men’s actions, stating, “[...] if I saw a guy’s penis hanging out, I certainly wouldn’t go up and grab it, or yell something stupid, like that.” Alyssa (Glow Worm 2016) appended Courtney’s sentiments, using her own behavior as a platform to denaturalize men’s “innate” sexual characteristics. She remarked:

I don’t look at a guy without a shirt and be like, [*participant exaggerates a leering facial expression*]. He shouldn’t be in danger because I looked at him without a shirt on. It shouldn’t be like that for girls either. If a girl wants to go without a shirt, she should be able to.

Reasoning that women can assert control over their sexual consumption over men's (albeit uncommon) exhibitionist displays within the festival arena, Alyssa rejects men as "natural" predators and voyeurs, and questions the double standards of permissibility and the punishments that attend these larger gender-sexual discourses. In mainstream contexts, young men learn to participate in the sexual objectification and "consumption of women" as an essential component of expressing their masculinity – primarily through and to other men (Bird 1996; Flood 2008; Kimmel 2008). Within the jamtronica music festival scene, men display and defend "proper" power dynamics through inter- and intra-gender interactions, using the voyeuristic "gaze" as a "naturalized" license to gain pleasure as sexual subjects extorted from consumable, feminized "objects."

*It Is What It Is: Subcultural Entrenchment of Voyeurism/Exhibitionism*

The subcultural embedding of gendered voyeurism/exhibitionism dynamics does not merely occur through diffuse participant-driven replication of mainstream gender ideologies. Jamtronica cultural artifacts, artist performance practices, and projected performance texts demonstrate larger institutional patterns which reproduce and legitimate these dynamics within festival arenas.

Within my participant observations, I curiously noticed several instances where subcultural artifacts suggested the normalcy of women's sexualized exhibitionism – and men's near-complete exemption from it. These observations ranged from hand-drawn images of barely-dressed goddesses adorning event admission passes (as evidenced by the Thumbs Up 2015 ticket) to vendors' sale of women's underpants and adhesive nipple covering ("pasties") that feature artist logos. I observed no shortage of illustrations of impossibly-shaped women who adorned event posters and t-shirt designs or clothiers who

advertised “sexy hot mama tops” they sold as pairs with “bootay shorts” [sic]. However, there was a noticeable dearth of logoed men’s underpants, event tickets, posters, and women’s t-shirts that featured muscular and well-endowed men. Though vendors, artists, and media teams may not explicitly condone women’s objectification, the economization and wide distribution of physical artifacts that sexualize women (and exempt men) indicate voyeur-exhibitionist dynamics as commonplace, commodifiable, and seemingly unquestioned within festival scenes.

Prominent festival figures such as jamtronica music artists also promote women’s exhibitionism, at times even glorifying this exploitation. Dan, interviewed at Nocturne (2015), recalled from a previous event in which he had participated: “I went to a more mainstream festival and a popular artist was playing. And, he announced to the crowd that he wanted all the slutty-dressed girls to get up on stage and dance for him. And, all these girls were super happy to do it.” My own participant observations indicated that this artist-encouraged exhibitionism is not relegated to mainstream music performance events. At both *Empieza* (2014) and *Mudslide* (2014), I witnessed several artists call on women from the audience to dance with them onstage, to reveal themselves to other audience members, and to perform various forms of striptease. Women “esteemed” enough to be asked to participate were harangued by both audience members and performers to comply with these requests. Though many women did willingly participate in these activities (demonstrating the means by which women become complicit in their objectification and subordination), when women did not do as they were instructed, artists and audience members issued a variety of verbal and symbolic put-downs. These statements ranged from gendered slurs (i.e., “bitch,” “slut,” “cunt”) to contestations of

their subcultural loyalty and belonging (“Looks like someone doesn’t like to have fun”), and inferred that other women would be more than happy to take their places.

Though not every artist encouraged these derogatory and dehumanizing practices so ostentatiously, many music artists’ (predominantly men) displayed visual projections of scantily-clad women to adorn their stage backgrounds. Within participant observations, I noted that visual representations of men were observably absent, save for stereotype-laden images that depicted men of color primarily as pimps and gangsters. Further, I observed no visual projections of men’s scantily-clad or sexualized bodies whatsoever. Seeing that men dominate positions within festival production (producers, performers, technical staff), they also hold significant discursive control in curating images used within visual performance projections. As Loza (2012) argues, men’s disproportionate control over the creative products that supplement EDM performances allows them to fragment audio-visual depictions of femininity, and “clip” them together into a synthesis of idealized (yet impossible) erotic representations of subcultural womanhood. These texts demonstrate what Althusser calls a “structured absence” ([1970] 2001), purposefully omitting representations of men, manhood, and masculinity within these projections altogether. More so, the entrenchment of women’s performative sexualization for the enjoyment of men occurs at all levels of the scene membership (production, performance, staff, and participants), evidencing deeper strains of gender inequality. These dynamics legitimate and celebrate men’s articulation of voyeuristic subcultural power through commanding representations and coercing behaviors of compliant, interchangeable, sexually-appealing women – not for the attention of women, but in pursuit of peer esteem and homosocial validation.



The predominance of unidimensional, heavily-sexualized representations of women within festival-based texts discursively reinforces community expectations that imply women's beautification and adornment practices are central to their subcultural participation. Additionally, the fragmentation and objectification of women through mainstream and scene-based media's symbolic forms contributes to beliefs and practices that normalize the consumption and devaluation of women, primarily by men. Within scene-based texts, women's bodies come to signify festival participation and events as a whole, mimicking mainstream uses of women as political and cultural currencies (Dellinger and Williams 1997; Eagly et al. 1991). Advertised as items to be traded or things to be consumed, women and their representative images often serve as symbolic mediators of subcultural experience, instead of independent, subjective participants within these events. In effect, the objectifying practices observed in intra-community texts replicate long-standing binaries that further limit women's subcultural memberships.

Men rarely appear within festival-promoted texts, but their presence is heavily inferred. When men are present, jamtronica music festival advertisements depict men as outnumbered subjects who are surrounded by scores of heterosexually-appealing and -available women. Bruce, a 21-year-old man interviewed at Fall Ball (2015) reflected on men's lack of representation in these texts, remarking, "See, that's like with any of the [festival] reviews. The only time I see just a guy in, like, a [festival – name redacted] review, it's a guy dancing with a girl, or just a bunch of girls running around." Though men predominantly attend jamtronica music festivals (Connors 2013; Nielson 2014), festival organizers and promotion teams continue to market festival events to men by

accentuating the allures (and seemingly, the expectations) of heterosexual access and appeal.

The lack of representation of men in festival texts minimizes men's subcultural participation, predominance, and power within jamtronica music festival arenas. Festival organizers and promoters accessorize what infrequent representations of men they extend with fragmented, sexualized feminine bodies. These designs are results of intentional choices made by influential festival stakeholders, and significantly influence both festival-going men and -women's attitudes, interactions, and behaviors - toward themselves and each other. Jade, a 20-year-old woman participating at Fall Ball (2015) astutely observed:

Pictures of a festival is an advertisement. And, if you're only advertising hot White chicks, then you're going to lure in a bunch of people who are only here for one reason. But, the girls are going to look at that and, for the most part, with what we've been taught, we'll want to be that [advertised] girl. But, if you showed pictures of nothing but guys [at festivals], then maybe the girls would feel intimidated by that, and the guys wouldn't want to come, because they'd think it would be a total sausage fest, or something.

Music (and music-oriented) texts reflect the identities, experiences, and sociocultural contexts of the individuals and groups that produce them (Wall 2013). Within jamtronica music festival culture, many prominent textual authors are, in fact, men. Men's demographic dominance within jamtronica's production and performance ranks sustains their numerical and discursive control over the scene, despite the genre's broadening fan and staff demographics. This androcentrality is not circumstantial; it results from long-standing practices that exclude women from subcultural prestige and belonging, as powerful actors (in)advertently design and perpetuate dynamics that disproportionately benefit festival-going men.

Music festival texts guide memberships and participation within jamtronica communities and arenas; however, they additionally serve as vehicles which translate subcultural experiences and values to mainstream audiences. These media inform mainstream audiences as to who jamtronica music festival participants are, what values and beliefs they hold, and in what activities they partake. The same intra-community texts that narrowly depict idealized festival womanhood to subcultural audiences often constitute the majority of those that are presented for mainstream review. Further, these texts potentially invite “undesirable” newcomers to the scene.

Though dominant subcultural discourses characterize jamtronica music festival scenes as insulating from external mainstream influences, many festival participants contradict these claims. When asked to account for gender-sexual dynamics shared between mainstream and subcultural contexts, interviewees offer copious examples which infer that these arenas are not wholly immune from larger social forces.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, I explored three dimensions through which jamtronica music festival participants conceptualize and perform subculturally-valued forms of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality. First, I analyzed the social and professional roles that formally and informally organize scene membership and labor allocations. Next, I examined the individually-enacted but discourse-driven dress expectations that guide men and women’s self-presentations within festival arenas. Finally, I discussed how gender informs sexual dynamics of the scene: coercing women’s erotic exhibitionism within their subcultural self-presentations and interactions, and buttressing men’s

positions as independent and entitled – the unchallenged voyeurs of the subcultural community and its events.

Despite dominant subcultural discourses and the insistent claims of numerous event participants (as reported in Chapter Four), jamtronica music festival scenes do harbor inequalities of gender and sexuality. Similar to other music-based subcultures, women who participate in these events and communities experience marginalization (Bradby 1993; McRobbie and Garber [1977] 2012; Thornton 1996). Though jamtronica music festival communities and arenas offer their participants roles and norms that diverge from many mainstream positions and practices, institutional and interactional expectations within the scene frequently mimic mainstream gender-sexual patterns and power relations.

Participant observations, on-site interviews, and textual analyses suggest that men and women hold very different professional and social roles within jamtronica music festival communities. Men frequently adopt high-status professional roles that are central to festival organization, production, and performance. Moreover, they also tend to comprise the majority of the scene's informal social leadership. Women, on the other hand, frequently populate positions that teach, heal, or serve others through their caretaking, event-facilitative roles. Both consciously and unconsciously, men sustain the purposeful exclusion of women from powerful professional and social subcultural positions. Additionally, the caretaking, facilitative roles that are available to women tend to hold lesser social status and inequitable financial compensations. These disparities reverberate through women's subcultural and mainstream lives, discouraging their long-term occupation of professional and social positions within the jamtronica community.

As Houston (2012) suggests of many music-based subcultural scenes, “If gender were not relevant, we should see an equal proportion of women and men in the scene with equal access to the most powerful positions” (167). The observed social and professional role divisions reveal that gender is very much central to the organization of jamtronica’s institutional structures.

Scene gender disparities also manifest in the normative practices of clothing and self-presentation within the festival arena. Despite calls for participants to foster carnivalesque environments through wearing “freaky” clothing during their event participation, men frequently adopt straightforward, utilitarian clothing presentations; many festival-going men’s event dress and costuming only occasionally diverges from their everyday dress choices. Conversely, women cultivate very ornamental dress displays to facilitate a burlesque and carnivalesque atmosphere in which they often (over) compensate for men’s lack of costuming. Though clothing choices and displays are very much dependent on the personal preferences and backgrounds of their wearers, dress norms also reflect subcultural role divisions between men and women and insinuate their attending power dynamics. Though men openly disregard event dress expectations that encourage participant-driven “freakiness,” they seem to evade community criticism. This may be due to men’s centralization in high-power positions which dictate allowable “exceptions.”

The gender divisions between men and women’s roles in the scene and their dress expectations contribute to the scene’s sexual dynamics. Shielded by influential positions that demand (or rather, permit) ordinary, utilitarian clothing displays, men position themselves as invisible voyeurs of women’s exhibitionism – a dynamic enhanced by the

foil of festival-going women's facilitative roles and ornamental, eroticized costume displays. Festival participants, producers, and performers normalize, naturalize, and embed these gender-sexual dynamics through their arena economies, performances, and interactions. These dynamics entrench mainstream inequalities of gender and sexuality within the scene as they often reproduce wider sexual double standards, heteronormativity, gender binaries, and (sexual) objectification in the subcultural field.

Jamtronica's gender-sexual dynamics inform and impart power, belonging, and capital within the subcultural scene. Women's facilitative, ornamental, and "consumable" roles within the scene denote their secondary, contingent subcultural status. As in other music-based subcultures, gender inequalities underpin community memberships, positioning subcultures as masculinized, men as "authentic" scene participants and peripheralizing women as "mainstream" outsiders (Thornton 1996). Positioned to appeal to or provide auxiliary services to subcultural men, women's relational status renders them dependent upon men's subcultural participation. Thus, women may not be perceived or even perceive themselves as independent, subcultural subjects. Conversely, men's institutional, interactional, and discursive centrality position them as "natural" subcultural members: the indispensable audience and assumed participants for whom jamtronica events are designed. This maintains men's dominance even in "deviant" or "transformative" arenas (McRobbie and Garber [1977] 2012).

Jamtronica music festival scenes impart different roles, expectations, and power to its members, often based on its participants' genders. These disparities indicate that festival participants experience, navigate, and contend with the event arena very differently. Although dominant subcultural codes purport arena insulation from outside

influences and applaud its community egalitarianism, the patterns that emerge here clearly do not support these claims. Instead, mainstream institutional and interactional dynamics of gender and sexuality markedly reproduce within jamtronica music festivals' subcultural contexts. Women's secondary, marginalized status within festival scenes leave them vulnerable to physical, social, and sexual threats posed by other arena participants. Frequently lacking powerful subcultural roles and opportunities to develop and display subcultural capital, women also contend with the augmented subcultural and mainstream consequences these impositions entail. Men's centrality and invisibility within festival scenes permit them to conspicuously and inculpably pose physical, social, and sexual threats to other festival-goers, particularly to festival-going women. Guarded by homosocial subcultural networks that privilege men's belonging and benefit within the scene, men act as naturalized, invisible voyeurs within the libertine and libertarian festival arena. In effect, men usually face little chance of reprimand for their predatory or threatening behaviors.

## **Chapter Six – Menacing Masculinities, Minimal Reprimand**

Gender inequality manifests not only in the disparate event-based threats that festival-going men and women face but also through the distinct roles, dress prescriptions, and sexual power-relations they are expected to hold within the scene. Counter to many festival-goers' claims that these events deviate from, and even challenge, mainstream norms, subcultural expectations of gender and sexuality suggest much more similarity to than difference from, everyday inequalities. Within this chapter, I describe how dominant subcultural patterns of masculinity mimic those of the mainstream, sometimes enabling even more blatant displays of gender-sexual dominance. Additionally, I demonstrate how subcultural codes that uphold non-interventionism compound with mainstream discourses, to permit men to "be the threat" with impunity. Lastly, I explore how festival-going men create alternatives to both mainstream prescriptions and scene-specific threat-posing displays of masculinity. I also consider these gender innovations' ability to overturn dominant forms of power- and violence-oriented subcultural masculinity. This chapter concludes with a discussion on how festival-going men's deployment of threat-posing masculinity cultivates a "rape subculture," increasing the already-numerous considerations and negotiations festival-going women must make throughout their jamtronica scene membership and event participation.

### **HOMOSOCIAL FESTIVALS, HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES?**

Despite the broadening demographics of jamtronica music festival communities, men constitute the majority of artists, event organizers, production staff, and informal fan



leaders. Building upon a history of women's exclusion from public drinking, leisure, and social spaces – unless as a guest of or as entertainment for men – (Griffin et al. 2012; Valenti 2014), the institutional and interactional gender-sexual dynamics affirm festival communities as notably homosocial. Participation in homosocial environments offer men a means of claiming personal and collective identities, cultivating status and knowledge, and fostering emotionally-intimate relationships with other men (Cohen 1997). Although homosocial groups appear to be a transformative arrangement for men and masculinities, they are stabilized through “the exclusion of women”; women's relegation to solely sexual interactions underpins “an ideological emphasis on men's differences from and superiority to them” (Flood 2008: 342) – evidenced by women's separate, marginalized roles and statuses within the scene.

Homosocial environments bond men together through orienting their actions and values toward hegemonically masculine ideals, and instilling each member with the ability to monitor and sanction others if they should stray from these prescriptions (Arxer 2011; Bird 1996); this ensures group solidarity and cohesion. In these groups, men use interpersonal interactions, termed “manhood acts,” to earn peer esteem and ensure group inclusion – primarily through activities and values which subjugate women and “othered” masculinities (Schwalbe 2005). In turn, hegemonic masculinity's embeddedness within homosocial groups assists to normalize, perpetrate, and perpetuate homophobia, the sexualized exploitation and devaluation of women, the augmentation of men's social and sexual power, and interpersonal violence (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Pascoe 2007). Like men's homosocial confederacies in other sexualized party environments, within jamtronica, “one's male peers are the intended audience for competitive games of

sexual reputation and peer status, public displays of situational dominance and rule transgression, and in-group rituals of solidarity and loyalty” (Grazian 2007: 224).

Festival events, then, provide a competitive amphitheater and a critical audience of peers required for the performance and assessment of one’s manhood acts.

In the jamtronica music festival scene, men competitively articulate their homosocial group memberships and masculinities through: drug and alcohol use; name-calling; rough-housing; brazen commentary about other participants (particularly, the normative sexualized dress of festival-going women); and, pulling pranks. Through these activities, festival-going men distinguish themselves from other men within the scene, community outsiders, and women. Subsequently, they embed hegemonic ideals within these individual practices and identities, tying them to scene expectations of gendered interaction and community memberships, as well as into larger organizational and mainstream values and norms (Houston 2012).

### *Hegemonic Masculinity, Competition, and Subculture*

Ashley, a 21-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne 2015, identified one of the more unique criteria by which festival-going men size each other up: “There’s kind of this whole alpha male thing here, but I don’t really understand it, because this is my first music festival. There’s this weird judgment around what types of music you enjoy, and I’m like, ‘Who cares?’ You like what you like.” Given the EDM and jam band fan demographics that blend within jamtronica festival scenes, men’s homosocial competition may play out through the adjudication of peers’ music tastes – a critical element of determining group affiliation, scene authenticity, and status within the community; these are all central elements to constituting idealized festival-going

manhood. Further, during participant observations at Glow Worm (2015), I witnessed a different form of men's intra-gender competition taking place: a manifest scramble for supremacy as young festival-going men fought each other to be the sole standing occupant atop one of the event's already limited water distribution centers. Despite repeated peer and security interventions, these threat-posing competitors did not cease their bloodlust-driven game of "King of the Castle" until the spigot system they fought over was useless, trampled into disrepair. As a result, these men's ostentatious displays deeply impacted other participants' access to a critical resource in fighting a frequent festival foe: dehydration.

While some homosocial interactions more immediately center upon the scrimmages men hold between themselves, other interactions serve to teach and affirm "proper" power dynamics and interaction rituals between men and women (Kimmel 2005, 2008) – ones that often exploit, exclude, and victimize women. Similar to mainstream homosocial contexts, men who participate in jamtronica festival communities may assert their group membership and status through practices of collective sexual harassment (Quinn 2002).

*Vignette: "We've Got Boners and We're Not Afraid to Use Them!"*

*Trying to patiently uphold playground wisdoms collected over the years, I gritted my teeth and looked ahead. "If you just ignore them, they'll go away." They didn't. For more than five minutes (which seemed like an eternity), a group of offending Glow Worm-going men shouted in unison, "We've got boners [erections], and we're not afraid to use them!" All the while, they continuously bopped me on the head with a totem (a group-constructed object used to represent their sub-scene affiliations and interests, and to locate other group members in large crowds) composed with streamers, reflective tape, and phallic sex toys.*

*The group eventually crumbled into debilitating fits of laughter, echoing the young Australian military academy men studied by Flood (2008: 3): using “ritualised sexual humiliation of a woman for men’s collective amusement.” As the dildos slapped my reddening cheeks, all eyes were on me. While I’m unsure as to what prompted these men’s collective behavior or why they targeted me, I’m sure of one thing: I certainly wasn’t laughing along.*

*“Proving” Masculinity through Objectification, Sexualization, and Predation*

Homosocial interactions not only teach and normalize the dynamics by which men are to subjugate women but also educate its group members in the practices through which this gender stratification is achieved. One example of these performative subordination practices is men’s blatant participation in the (sexual) objectification of women, primarily orienting these behaviors to appeal to or entertain other men - or, as to engage in a collective activity within homosocial groups (Bird 1996). Though objectification may manifest in a variety of non-sexual dehumanizing forms, sexual objectification encompasses a range of activities that serve to intimidate, impose, consume, and victimize women: “gazing or leering at women’s bodies, sexual commentary directed toward women, whistling or honking at women, taking unsolicited photographs of women’s bodies, exposure to sexualized media imagery and pornography, sexual harassment, and sexual violence” (Calogero and Tylka 2014: 764). While all of these acts are unfortunately common occurrences, homosocial groups’ endorsement of objectifying practices magnify the consequences of men being positioned as the scene’s agentic yet invisible voyeurs. Men’s consumption and subordination of women is not only tolerated but is encouraged as a fundamental element of men’s peer group cohesion and membership.

Several festival-goers gave vivid examples where they observed men's homosocial voyeurism and sexual objectification of women within the jamtronica festival arena. Lola, a 19-year old woman attending Thumbs Up 2015, described her own confrontation with men's homosocial objectification practices, recounting:

[...] I was just sitting here, and [two unknown men] came over here... but, one guy was like, "Keep it in your pants." And, [the other man gestures into the tent of a sleeping woman and] goes, "You know who's in charge of this [woman]? Man, she's hot, but she's too young." And, the girl who was sleeping woke up and took her shirt off, and was wearing just a sports bra and some shorts. The same guy [who pointed out the sleeping woman] was like, "It's so hard not to look." And, I'm just like, "Ew! Check yourself before I wreck you!"

Lola's friend, Rainbow, a 31-year-old nonbinary-identifying festival-goer, added:

I woke up and asked you about the temperature, and he goes, "It's hot out here, so I bet you're hotter than anyone else out here, and I don't even know what you look like." [...] *That's* what I woke up to this morning – a conversation about what girls [the aforementioned men] wanted to "do" [have sexual relations with].

Jack, a 21-year-old man interviewed at Glow Worm 2015, recalled another recent incident, detailing, "There are [festival-going] dudes who see a girl with pasties on or something like that and like, I was watching [them] while standing in line yesterday. A girl was getting her breasts painted, and there were four dudes [...] literally just staring at her."

Many festival-going women denounce men's sexualized surveillance and at times even accost their offenders. Kelly, a 22-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne 2015 recollected one of her own encounters with and confrontations of this consumption, divulging:

[...] during the heat of the summer, yes – I get skimpy too. It’s fucking hot. There would be creepers [potential perpetrators] that would come to the booth just to stare [at me]. And, by the end of the summer, I got good at saying, “Walk along. You’re being creepy.” [...] You know, this happened multiple times, but people just kind of don’t get it. They just awkwardly laugh – and I have to say, “No, really. Get out of here.” And *then* they leave. But, sometimes, they come back. I really wish I could understand it from the creeper’s point of view. But, maybe [they’re] just taking in the visual [image of a woman] to put in the brain to use later – which is kind of creepy. It’s really cool to talk to guys where you don’t feel that kind of energy from [them].

In each of these four recollections, festival-going men subjected fellow participants of other genders to unsolicited sexualized review. Whereas a lone perpetrator may face reprimand for his actions, homosocial groups’ practices of “girl watching” (Quinn 2002) seemingly insulate its members from the castigation of other participants, even when repeatedly committed (and often chided for) it. In effect, jamtronica’s homosocial characteristics and memberships serve to interlink men’s culturally-valued performances of subcultural masculinity to mainstream masculinities’ heterosexual consumption of women – where one’s group membership and merit as a man is contingent upon one’s ‘sufficient’ (and publicly-enacted) adherence to masculine gender norms, and participation in sexually-objectifying acts, as assessed by their peers – without concern for those they consume, or acknowledgement of their targets’ objections.

Similar to mainstream contexts, jamtronica music festivals generate conditions which normalize objectification (women’s expectations for sexualized un/dress, gendered voyeur-exhibitionist dynamics), encouraging sexual competition between homosocial group members and augmenting the likelihood of men’s (hetero)sexual predation of other event participants. Dominant festivals discourses call for its participants to paradoxically stand out and yet surrender oneself to the subcultural collectivity. This seemingly incites men’s “competitive games of sexual reputation and peer status, public displays of

situational dominance and rule transgression, and in-group rituals of solidarity and group loyalty” (Grazian 2007: 224). Sometimes, these acts manifest in acts such as collective ‘street’ sexual harassment (Gardner [1994] 1995), or even coerced group sex/group rape (Flood 2008).

Davis’s work on music festivals and identity lends insight as to why men may commit such heinous offenses when goaded by their peers. He suggests that festivals’ liminal conditions yield a contradictory result: festival-goers respond to the encouraged loss of self through their intensified adherence to group social norms – even in a space that participants and scholars claim to distend pre-existing norms (2017). It is important to note that one’s conformity to group norms and actions does not necessarily indicate one’s support or agreement with larger collective identities, norms, and practices. Instead, festival-goers’ acquiescence to them may seek to avoid consequences of contested memberships and loyalties that non-participation may incur, and the potential subjugations that stem from them. Men who do not adhere to the hegemonic codes of homosocial groups risk peer ridicule (Prohaska and Gailey 2010). Even if men opt out of full participation in evoking or enacting physical, psychological, social, or sexual violence, their non-intervention and failure to report these offenses and offenders silently validate those who do actively pose threat to others, suggesting non-participants’ acceptance and endorsement of these offenses. Further, non-intervention renders men complicit with the actions of the group – benefitting from privileges that homosocial groups provide and avoiding subjugating ostracism, in exchange for maintaining loyal silences about such incidents.

In contrast to men's homosocially-oriented interactional affirmations of masculinity, Brannon and David's (1976) "pillars" of masculinity posit four commandments of idealized manhood:

- No Sissy Stuff – avoid all traits and behaviors associated with femininity and womanhood;
- Be a Big Wheel – metrics of manhood can be found in one's status, wealth, and power;
- Be a Sturdy Oak – Sustain a guise of rationality, emotional and physical invulnerability, and self-reliance as an 'unshakeable' entity; and,
- Give 'Em Hell – Confront risk, conflict, and impossible odds through aggression and an honorable fearlessness

While these foundations underpin contemporary expectations of masculinity, gender's performative nature highlights the mutability of these prescriptions. These ideals may not be central to all configurations of masculinity; so too, these commandments might not prove appropriate or useful across various categories of identities and/or sociocultural contexts (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Mainstream gender-sexual dynamics and configurations of hegemonic masculinity are clearly evident within jamtronica communities. However, widespread festival codes significantly diverge with the ideals prescribed by Brannon and David. Jamtronica events promote the temporary subversion of everyday forms of power and prestige, as well as encouraging participants' interrogation of "objective realities" and their pursuit of cathartic emotional release. Additionally, festivals offer spaces to practice playful parodies of gender expectations and to experiment with gender expressions and identities, potentially leading to enacting more egalitarian, "hybrid masculinities" (Arxer 2011). Though plenty of festival-going men draw from these ideals to inform their personal constructions of subcultural identity and respective attitudes and behaviors, conceptually, carnivalesque



festival events and scenes are incongruent with three of the four prescriptive codes of masculinity: No Sissy Stuff, Be a Big Wheel, and Be a Sturdy Oak. Even the remaining “pillar,” Give ‘Em Hell does not seem to appropriately encompass festival-going men’s relationship with fear, risk, and conflict within their subcultural participation.

Faced with no impossible odds, diminishing “dangerous unknowns” within the physical and cultural world, few bravery-demanding crusades, and no noble cause to sacrifice oneself for, the aggression and risk-taking that Brannon and David conceptualize is a far cry from participants’ navigation of festival events’ bounded, monitored, and carefully managed arena. Their model suggests an isolate, self-sufficient masculine subject, omitting discussions of how patterns of both mainstream and subcultural masculinity arise from men’s interactions with other men, and relationships to and with women. These authors seem to suggest that men will quell danger rather than instigate it, effectively demonstrating dominance over oppositional people, conditions, and environments. Situating men as loner heroes, this model does not explain how men may opt to articulate dominance in ways that may challenge Brannon and David’s gallant idealization of manhood, positioning themselves as foils to this image. This classical conceptualization of masculinity exhibits many shortcomings when used to analyze the predominant patterns of masculinity within the jamtronica subcultural scene and its festival events: none of these four masculine tenets truly conveys how jamtronica subcultural masculinities are either idealized or expressed within the festival area. In light of these conceptual limitations, I capsulize the interactional-institutional patterns of men’s homosocially-oriented predation into an emergent maxim of subcultural and mainstream masculinities: “Be the Threat.”

## **“BE THE THREAT”: A MENACING MASCULINITY EMERGES**

Festivals’ carnivalesque characteristics observably move their participants away from their everyday identities, expectations, and behaviors, often (unwittingly) subverting mainstream power dynamics and distorting one’s position in everyday orders within this temporary upheaval. Within this “world of upside down,” many festival-goers alter their self-presentations, interactions, and actions (Davis 2017). Festival-goers use these transformations to act as means of designating spatial and mental shifts as signifiers of their event participation, communications of subcultural group membership and status, or as tools to escape the real-world constraints and problems with which they contend. Just as festival-goers accredit jamtronica’s non-interventionist codes to validate their event-driven augmented identities and exploratory interactional repertoire, some festival-going men consider festivals’ disruption of mainstream orders as an opportunity to amplify and ostentate their public performances of masculinity through hyperbolic and physically, socially, and sexually intrusive acts and speech. I codify these acts with a phrase seeming to summarize their goal(s): to “Be the Threat.”

As a part of their homosocial appeals for in-group status, some festival-going men may use physical intimidation, physical hazards, social and subcultural disrepute, sexual objectification, and other forms of gendered violence as cardinal resources to inform their interactions, behaviors, and self-presentations. In doing so, men articulate their membership within homosocial groups privileged by both mainstream and subcultural gender-sexualities – conspicuously externalizing men’s organizational and interactional dominance of the scene through pronouncing the problems they could prospectively pose to other participants. Fashioning themselves as threat-posing antagonists within the event

arena, they become dexterous despots who weaponize fear to command deference from other 'subordinate' festival-goers, including women and men of other marginalized masculinities.

Previous scholars of dance music cultures portray men's participation within the rave communities of yesteryears as unaggressive, unobtrusive, friendly, and non-threatening to their fellow ravers. Even after appreciable drug and alcohol consumption, these authors characterized these men's subcultural participation as asexualized and egalitarian – respecting the physical, emotional, sociocultural, and sexual boundaries that women maintained (Pini 2001). Yet, festival-goers overwhelmingly argued that, in the contemporary iterations of rave of jamtronica festival scenes, men behave in ways far different than their raving predecessors – cat-calling, grinding on and groping, and 'casually stalking' festival-going women – even after these women directly express their disinterest or discomfort.

As they navigate and participate in the event arena, festival-going men take on additional risks including partaking in illegal and often untested substances, consuming alcohol to excess, and withstanding the natural elements and harsh conditions, and navigating the unpredictable terrain of these liminal spaces. Instead of working to ameliorate these physical risks for themselves and others, some festival-going men use events to conspicuously enact a brand of masculinity that encourages them to "be the risk" with which others contend. Through (re-)structuring festival landscapes and its attending interactional codes, these men use danger (and the possibility to create it) to entrap, humiliate, intimidate, and inconvenience other event participants for their own entertainment and interests.

Their blasé attitudes toward violence and flagrant disregard of subcultural civilities and normative decorum proclaim their independence from others, reframing their antisocial attitudes and actions instead “escapes” from both mainstream and subcultural expectations and control. In a realm encouraging autonomy, anonymity, and non-interventionism, some festival-going men use aggressive territorial claims and interpersonal antagonization of their peers to articulate their personal domination of other subcultural positions and identities.

Some interviewees noted that scene members offered a label to these threat-posing men: “festival bros.” Merrick, a 22-year-old man described the traits of these men, stating, “A bro is someone who is super cocky, and they display it that way, too. They’re loud and want people to hear them, but not in a positive way. They’re very ‘in your face.’” This term is seemingly commonplace within the jamtronica community and its associated EDM and rave scenes. In Park’s study of Asian-American-identifying EDM participants, her respondents mention their general distaste for “bros,” characterizing these men as obnoxious, disrespectful, self-serving, and destructive. They depict these men as troublemakers who instigate and participate in physical and verbal altercations, among themselves and with other festival-goers. Park’s respondents considered these behaviors and attributes to be antithetical to the central rave ethos of peace, love, unity, and respect – “having fun at other people’s expense” (2015: 28).

Similar to the views of Park’s study participants, jamtronica music festival scene members dissociate from their threat-posing peers, openly disclosing their disdain for and discomfort with men’s immoderate performative posturing. In his interview at Empieza 2015, Travis (no age given), recalled a recent stand-off with another festival-goer, stating,

“The guy we saw last night [...] Like, I thought it was completely inappropriate. Like, if he had been walking down the path naked, just doing his thing, that would have been fine. But, he was being really aggressive.” Mimi, his compatriot (woman, no age given), added, “I was uncomfortable. I didn’t want him coming near us.” Mimi and Travis’s example suggests that, even in the semi-anarchic realm of the event arena, there are implicit expectations of and boundaries to one’s participation.

During a participant observation at Hilly Hike (2014), a similar scenario took place. For a day and a half, several groups of young twenty-something men plagued the campsites and music stages, bellowing a widespread jamtronica catchphrase: “Wake Up and Rage!” Raging, to some, may include emphatic dancing and coaxing others into inebriated revelry. However, their brand of “raging” was marked by loudly labeling each other with homophobic slurs and harassing other patrons at the event site’s swimming hole. As they slapped the water, nearby objects, and each other with boat paddles and “pool noodles,” they modified their refrain, calling on other patrons to “Get the fuck in the water and rage!” In doing so, these clans of young men earned the murmured chagrin of other festival-goers, especially ones that had brought their school-aged children to the event. Despite the rising whine of these children begging for a promised swim, their parents pulled them away from the offending groups and the water, grimacing as they shielded their young from the projectiles the young men were hurling into the now-separate, observing crowd that had gathered on the dock. Overstepping or outrightly forsaking these unspoken regulations may incur community disapproval; no less, these festival-going men still command considerable deference, as other participants modify

their own event activities and involvement to resist, seemingly more so accommodate, the dangers that threat-bearing men and masculinities yield.

*On the Prowl? Participants Attribute Threat as Inherently Masculine*

Event participants capitalize on the unique liminalities of jamtronica festival arenas, using these events' temporary distension of mainstream norms to partake in a variety of deviant acts. However, some festival-goers' responses to these events' relaxed expectations of conduct and propriety assail and encroach upon their fellow participants' well-being. Interviewees surmised that these predatory practices were an inherently masculine convention.

Hannah, a 23-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015) deduced, "It does seem that in the rave world that more people are kind of... on the prowl. And, I don't know, it might be the drugs they're choosing to do with the type of music, but they are more so on the prowl." In her interview at Thumbs Up (2015), Diva, a 56-year-old person identifying as a crossdresser (using feminine pronouns), elaborated on what, exactly, people were prowling for. She divulged that "[Men] know there are naked girls here, and that's what they seek out. [...] That's what their intentions are."

Though festival participants were quick to indict men as the primary perpetrators of physical, social, emotional, and sexual violence against women, interviewees were equally as quick to naturalize this conduct as innate to and, therefore, expected from men, mirroring mainstream orders of gender and sexuality. When asked to explain why men were the predominant bearers of threat within the festival subculture, Violet, a woman interviewed at Glow Worm 2016 (no age given) asserted, "Men typically have the

predatory role that women don't innately have." Dan, a 21-year-old man interviewed at Nocturne (2015), similarly concluded that, "There are just creepy guys everywhere. That's just fucking males. A dude was walking around last with a full-on erection, just looking around [and] smiling like he was looking for a victim."

The notion that men are natural predators is so deeply-engrained that some interviewees noted that any alternative would be laughable. For example, Raphael, a 26-year-old man attending Glow Worm (2014), inferred the "impossibility" of men's victimization, scoffing, "Are women preying on men? Should I watch out? It could happen." The glibness of Raphael's skepticism trivializes the issue of violence perpetration altogether, treating it as a laughable subject. Dissecting his sarcasm reveals a troubling conjecture that invariably positions men as offenders and women as victims, both within mainstream contexts and the festival scene. This supposition works to erase men's experiences of victimization (as well as those of queer, trans\*, and non-binary survivors) and the rather un-humorous impacts that violence has in their lives (Abdullah-Khan 2008).

*Vignette: "We're Raping the Forest!" A (Pantsless) Showdown with 'The Threat'*

*I had the most restful sleep I had in months. Despite the commotion that arrives with twenty-thousand people setting up camp, planning their weekend, and already breaking into their "emergency" reserves of whiskey, I had managed to find a campsite that was not only central to the main stage but was quiet and comfortable, insulated by a level ground cover of ivy. My partner-at-the-time and I, despite obtaining upgraded tickets that allowed for reserved camping spaces and plush amenities (like flushing toilets and unlimited showers), decided that camping in the general admission area of Empieza arrivals had yet to break into my blissful slumber, when not but four inches from my face I heard a deafening crack and felt a heavy limb fall onto the tent.*

*Jolted from unconsciousness, I was panicked and confused to hear shrieks and quickening thuds coming from nearby. Fearing someone was hurt, I hastily put on my glasses and tore out of the tent – somehow without bothering to put on shoes – or pants, for that matter. Emerging, I found a group of ten to twelve thirty-something men howling and laughing, kicking at another nearby sapling tree. “We’re raping the forest!” one bellowed, fist held aloft.*

*As a survivor of sexual violence, I did not take these comments gracefully. Breaking the image of a calm, collected, semi-objective researcher, I stormed shoeless (and pantsless) to the group, asking JUST WHAT, EXACTLY, THE HELL THEY WERE DOING. Gleefully repeating that they were “raping the forest” through destroying nearby campsites (quite literally) limb-by-limb, I lost any remaining sense of propriety and professionalism that I had come to idealize of effective researchers. Despite my exasperated run through of their litany of offenses: disrespecting me, their neighbors, the festival, and the natural environment in which the event was held, they shirked all requests to cease, even as similar pleas began to arise from other surrounding campers.*

*The emergent ringleader of this group, topped with a poorly-positioned purple wig – which would have been laughable in other circumstances – attributed my anger to inexperience and maladjustment to broader subcultural codes. “Obviously, you must be new to this,” he spat. “You’ve got to realize that here, this is how it goes down.” Having participated in this particular festival over the previous four years and having nothing but courteous, if not generous and community-minded neighbors, I knew that this was certainly not “how it went down.”*

*A bit taken aback by their interrogation of my belonging and know-how within the scene, I was startled when a slightly-inebriated twenty-something woman quickly approached me, attempting to take me aside. “Reasoning” with me, she noted that her brother and his friends were “just assholes” and she had some extra earplugs to help me drown out the noise that they were making. This was not the redress I had hoped for. The ensuing moments rapidly escalated to me trembling and screaming at the full volume that my adrenaline-filled lungs could manage why sexual violence metaphors minimize the experiences of its survivors and perpetuate rape culture. Deliberately-deafened, some members blankly stared at the quickly-disintegrating shell I had become. Others maliciously chuckled, then went back to work snapping branches, but never truly broke eye contact.*

*Waking my still-sleeping companion, I informed him of the exchanges that had just taken place. As he sleepily held me, I shook, overhearing the vulgar things that were being said about me outside the tent – that I was a “mouthy cunt” who “didn’t know what [I] was talking about,” and that I “needed to be taught a lesson.” I no longer felt safe at a festival that I had come to call home. I was too busy revisiting montages of my own victimization to be concerned with their opinions.*



*We packed up posthaste, moving to the VIP section to which our tickets allowed entry. Waved away with comments that, fading, sounded a little like the Wizard of Oz's "Ding! Dong! The Witch Is Dead," I felt more than a little regret in not being able to more soundly "defend" myself throughout the recent events. Then again, I considered as I zipped up my jean shorts, I shouldn't ever have had to do so in the first place.*

While more blatant, festival-going men's exacerbation of subcultural risks do not end with overt interpersonal impositions. They additionally subordinate other festival participants through more implicit, though sometimes no less visible, means. Festival-going men may use language, humor, and dress articles that glorify and normalize tropes of physical, psychological, social, and sexual violence throughout their event participation. In doing so, men who draw from threat-posing masculinities publicly advertise their support of – at minimum, their indifference – toward these offenses. Further, festival-going men's use of these linguistic and material media seemingly boasts that those who nonchalantly wield these tools are as equally (and breezily) able to carry out the dangers they flaunt.

As findings across festival events, geographies, temporalities, and various sources of data suggest, the perceived lawlessness of festival events authorizes festival-going men's use of clothing portraying misogynistic, hypersexual, and threat-oriented texts and images. Widespread press coverage of popular music festivals has documented (and condemned) several instances of smiling festival-going men proudly displaying their shirts' contemptible messages – for example, "Eat, Sleep, Rape, Repeat" and "Rape Your Face" (Gupta 2015). While neither of the festivals where these men and their shirts were photographed were jamtronica events, the phrases and motifs they incorporate derive from popular electronic dance music and jam band song lyrics and symbolism (Fatboy

Slim and Riva Starr's "Eat, Sleep, Rave, Repeat" – brought into current vogue by a Calvin Harris remix, and The Grateful Dead's "Steal Your Face," respectively). Some festival-goers decry these messages and those who display them as external to the jamtronica subcultural scene, suggesting that media review of these popular music festival examples contributes to existing negative stereotypes about "ravers" and "hippies." Yet, informal media outlets, such as blogs created by and for members of the jamtronica community, indicate that tendency is not isolate to more mainstream festival events. One blogger detailed her observations of men's shirts at a well-known EDM festival she attended, which displayed phrases such as "DJs <3 BJs," "Show Me Your Tits," "Cool Story Hoe, Now Suck My Dick," and "I Run Faster Horny than You Do Scared" (Lukashenko 2015). The purchase and wear of clothing that overtly commands women to perform sexual acts on and for festival-going men, and acts as a reminder of men's potentiality to victimize women who resist these demands. Festival-going men's casual wear of these items implies that they feel as if these are appropriate messages to display. Moreover, it intimates that those who use these dress items feel secure enough that they will not meet reprimand during their event participation for wearing these items. Men's interactional and discursive intimidation within jamtronica music festival arenas stabilize the scene's imbalance gender-sexual dynamics through underscoring the very real threats that women face – and men's indifference, even amusement, in being able to conjure fear in other festival-goers.

*Adversity from Above: Threat Posed by Powerful Event Actors*

Although many of those who draw from threat-posing masculinities are fan participants, event organizers, artists, and staff also enact these predatory performances. Artists' and organizers' secluded accommodations and segregated social circles often discourage interactions with event participants; instead, these high-status scene members tend to physically, socially, emotionally, and sexually victimize other members of these groups (Fiddy 2015). However, interviews with fan participants expose event security and staff as particularly-prevalent predators. This is likely due to staff members' considerable contact with event participants, in comparison to other upper-echelon subcultural scene members, such as artists, production staff, and other event organizers. Smelly, a 23-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), offered a vivid example of an inappropriate interaction driven by a staff member, confiding:

One time, we were walking into [another festival – name redacted], and I wasn't really wearing anything. I was wearing a short skirt and a bra, and the security guard... He was like, 'I don't need to check you, but I wish I could.' And, I'm just like, 'Excuse me?' That doesn't flatter me at all!

Smelly's friend, Kimberly (also a 23-year-old woman), expanded on this issue, sharing her own experiences of staff harassment:

Honestly, I feel less safe with the security guards that check our cars, because they always make comments like, 'Aw, I like the way you're dressing. Look at that! Can you shake that [gestures to her behind]?' I feel as if the people who work here – just because they're here to work – they're not here to fully experience it. They do things that aren't cool or are just creepy. Overwhelmingly, [festival security, staff, and contracted laborers] are the ones [who are] acting the most inappropriate.

People are more likely to report situations they perceive as threatening and incidences of violence when they feel as if their leaders, authorities, and community institutions are able to respond effectively (Sulkowski 2011). Yet, if the same people that are charged to ensure the safety and security of an event's participants are those that festival-going women report as their most significant threat, to whom should a festival-goer report their concerns with other threat-posing fan participants? The pervasion of men's victimization of women across all levels of the scene indicates insufficient attention to and accountability for these issues within its events' organization and communities.

#### *No One Is Immune from Experiencing Threat*

Just as members within all subcultural sub-groups enact aspects of threat-posing masculinity, no sub-group of festival-going women are exempt from the threats (and perpetration) of physical, social, and sexual violence that co-participating men impart. Women within event production and its staff are often subject to harassment by artists, fellow staff, and random participants (Fiddy 2015). Even artists who are women, despite their apex position within broader music scenes, experience threats to their well-being, including media-covered incidences of their victimization. Per one report by Bogan (2014):

[M]usic superstar Beyonce herself had her ass slapped by one concertgoer last year, and others aggressively pulled her offstage. Rapper Iggy Azalea revealed this past spring how fans tried to finger [manually penetrate] her when crowd surfing at shows. She now wears multiple layers of underwear and has had to implement new security precautions.

Though these two covered incidents occurred at popular music festivals, women within subcultural scenes are no stranger to these incursions. Women artists who participate in rock music scenes often face physical intimidation and assault, exclusion from homosocial performance and social spaces, in addition to varied forms of sexual harassment from other members of their subcultural communities (Cohen 1997). Similarly, in electronic dance music scenes, DJs who are women commonly report experiencing unwanted sexualized attention, pre-show thefts of gear which disallow their performance, and the consequences of fierce rumor-mongering (Farrugia and Swiss 2008). Although this project's scope does not include interviews with jamtronica artists who are women, the problematic practices within the two genres that primarily constitute the studied hybrid subculture likely persevere within their integrated emergent form.

Academics who research rock, EDM, and jamtronica subcultures often inhabit unique positions as neither fully-integrated scene member nor a wholly-removed objective observer. Instead, undertaking work within these fields requires researchers to vigilantly balance multiple, complex roles which situate them on the periphery of the subcultural communities they study. Unfortunately, this afforded distance does not shield women who research these subcultural scenes from the threats posed to other festival-going women.

Female ethnographers and field-workers' experiences of sexual harassment by heterosexual interviewees is very common, reporting their own negotiations of situational threat, concerns for physical safety, exposure to inappropriate physical contact, and experiences of sexualized or misogynistic interactions men they interviewed.

Unsurprisingly, male researchers do not experience or perceive themselves to be vulnerable to participant harassment as their female counterparts (Green et al. 1993).

*Vignette: A Different Kind of Rapport*

*In a matter of the few weeks that had transpired since my very first project interview, I had proudly gained a sense of competency in my budding interview skills. As a well-closeted introvert, randomly approaching strangers, going through necessary small talk, then delving into closely held insights about society wasn't exactly a very enticing task set. No less, semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed a bit of flexibility and improvisation, and permitted the project to grow rather organically – taking in the feedback of interviewees and incorporating it into subsequent conversations with other even participants: what to ask, who to contact, and what to look for.*

*Yet, I did not take all study participants' suggestions into consideration. In some (immediately-deleted) interviews, event participants goaded me to use drugs and alcohol with them, claiming it would not impact my ability to perform my research – or, that it would even improve my ability to conduct it. Other event participants offered very illicit and unethical ways of gathering data – video-recording and audio-recording people without their consent and interviewing those who were visibly too inebriated to offer assent. But, no suggestion stood out to me so much as one offered by Gilligan, a 27-year-old man attending Glow Worm (2014): “You should try giving one of your interviews topless sometime.”*

*I looked around to see if any of his peers would step up to challenge him, so I wouldn't have to go through the uncomfortable calculus of asserting my personal dignity and professional role, yet maintaining much-needed participant rapport. They didn't. “That, um, would, um... really expose a lot of, um...my own...”, I sputtered, taken aback by this blatant proposition. Forrest (26, man), Gilligan's companion interrupted my stuttering, wryly appending, “That could be a good thing, though.” Needless to say, these men and I had very different ideas on how to build interviewee trust and rapport.*

Several women who have undertaken research in dance music and jam band scenes report their own experiences of gender-sexual threat within rave, club, and festival arenas, as well as the considerations they had to make in negotiating their roles both as event participants and researchers within these subcultural communities (Bhardwa 2013; Perrone 2010). Maintaining rapport with event participants is essential to eliciting valid

and reliable data, as well as ensuring one's own well-being within these chaotic environments. This may require researchers who are women to: overlook problematic interviewee positions on gender and sexuality; feign fearless indifference toward the various threats they perceive; and, suppress the traumas of their own experiences of violence perpetrated by research participants. Even highly-experienced researchers admit their concerns and fear of being victimized during their fieldwork, especially if they identify as members of marginalized communities of gender and/or sexuality (Bhardwa 2013; Coffey 2002; Lee 1997).<sup>1</sup>

### *Threat-Posing Directives' Implications*

In C.J. Pascoe and Jocelyn Hollander's recent work interlinking emergent masculinities, gender domination, and sexual violence, they introduce the term use of "mobilizing rape," proposing that:

[...] sexual assault is not simply an individual incident but a wide-ranging constellation of behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and talk that work to produce and reproduce gendered dominance in everyday behaviors [... This] includes not only engaging in activities legally defined as rape but also engaging in other forms of sexual assault and nonconsensual interaction, talking about rape and sexual assault, making jokes about it, labeling oneself or others as rapists, blaming sexual assault survivors for their own victimization, or otherwise symbolically deploying the idea of rape. (2016: 69)

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<sup>1</sup> Researchers often omit their experiences of physical, social, and sexual violence in their fieldnotes, especially eliminating them from public research products. These erasures occur for many reasons: feeling bound to professional expectations that assume researchers' invulnerability, gender and sexual barriers within academia, anxieties about losing participant rapport, and a fear of losing project-sustaining resources and institutional ethics approval. In addition to these concerns, researchers may well internalize these encounters and minimize them, characterizing these incidents as an inevitable risk of research (Green et al. 1993; Motl 2017). This assumption posits that women are: fully aware of; acknowledging of; able to anticipate; and, are able to act against the risks that their field and participants pose to them. These circumstances are unfortunately unlikely for many researchers.

To Pascoe and Hollander, men's mobilization of rape is an interactional practice through which they articulate masculinity. While sexual violence is not the only form of abuse that festival-going men implicate and perpetrate through their endeavors to "be the threat," it is a frequent theme within interviews with festival-going women, interlinking their related concerns about their physical, emotional, and social well-beings. Within jamtronica subcultural contexts, festival-going men mobilize rape to (assumedly) enhance their homosocial appeal to other men. In doing so, men's purposeful exacerbation of gendered risk tightly interweaves their performance of dominant, peer-sanctioned subcultural masculinities with broader discourses that promote misogyny, violence, and event-based practices of sexual predation. These become the interactional underpinnings of rape-permissive societies, which are also termed "rape cultures." Men's individual casual deployment of these practices and perspectives may seem inconsequential in relation to more blatant forms of sexual violence. However, festival-going men's frequent use of rape-mobilizing language, texts, and practices within this homosocial community normalizes their ubiquity inside the scene as well as in mainstream contexts (Pascoe and Hollander 2016). This process weaponizes these discourses to competitively command respect among peers and to prey upon and intimidate festival-going women without fear of reprimand. In effect, men's mobilization of rape within jamtronica music festival scenes upholds existing subcultural gender-sexual hierarchies, the centrality of men's extractive and non-reciprocated sexual pleasure within the community and its texts, and – extending the theorizations of Pascoe and Hollander – justifications for the interrelated perpetration of social and physical violence against women.



These rape-mobilizing practices cannot be labeled as “compensatory manhood acts” – performances of the “compensatory masculinity” attributed to low-income men from disadvantaged identity groups, as a means to claim masculine privilege in light of their other marginalized statuses. Men’s displays of emotionless invulnerability, aggression, and confrontation-driven intragender competition characterize this form of masculinity, in addition, its subordination of women and other men (Ezzell 2012; Pyke 1996). While festival-going men’s use of aggression, homosocial competition, subjugation of women and other men, and territorial claims may align with existing definitions of compensatory masculinity and its enactments, most of the men who participate in festivals (thus, constituting the sub-population who pose threat in these contexts) come from positions of relative privilege: white, able-bodied, middle to upper-class, heterosexual men, often with some degree of education and occupational prospects. As exemplary representatives of those who are already imbued with the markers and privileges of mainstream hegemonic masculinity, their attempts to dominate other festival-goers through posing threat do not reflect attempts to claim power they perceive as inaccessible or denied to them. Instead, these threat-posing practices appear to replicate the presence of mainstream hegemonic masculinity into a subcultural terrain – one that seemingly amplifies the privileges of the already-privileged.

#### *Men Are Immunized from Consequences of Posing Threat*

Discourses that masculinize and naturalize threat or perpetration of gendered violence within jamtronica festival arenas add an additional layer by which men may buffer themselves from retaliation and reprimand. Already insulated by their homosocial dominance in both fan and production factions as well as the anonymous, non-

interventionist nature of festival events, interviewees reveal additional discursive claims that assist festival-going men in evading consequences for the hostile and hazardous environments and exchanges they incite. Interviewees disparaged festival-going men as innately uncouth, irresponsible, and irreverent. Though these generalizations vilify festival-going men, they simultaneously work to absolve men of offenses they commit.

First, these festival participants attribute men's perpetration to a generalized masculine immaturity exacerbated by competition-driven homosocial environments. Dan, a 21-year-old man interviewed at Nocturne (2015), maintained that, "Guys don't have a sense of reason, especially when they're out with their dudes," suggesting that men's incivility is somehow innate, yet exacerbated when immersed in homosocial contexts. Lillian, a 27-year-old woman attending Thumbs Up (2015), expounded upon this lack of acumen, seething, "Guys just don't have common sense, because mommy and daddy didn't teach them the right way [to behave]." Lillian recognizes that these incursions are not due to genetics; instead, these result from the gender-disparate socialization of men and boys which legitimize their use of aggression, conflict, and destruction as an inalienable aspect of culturally-idealized masculinities.

Taking a different position, Patrick, a 29-year-old man interviewed at Mudslide (2015), alleged that festival-going men's articulations of threat-posing masculinities are a temporary phase. "The younger ones," he said, "are trying to compete with each other [...] Younger people are going to be more [physically and sexually] aggressive, but also more naïve, naturally." Patrick reflected confidence that festival-going men eventually age out of juvenile practices that harass and imperil women and each other, insinuating that, due to their understood and transitory insolence, these risk-exacerbating men could

not – and should not – take responsibility for their troubling actions. Festival-goers’ *laissez-faire* attitudes toward men’s threat are aptly condensed by Gilligan, a 27-year-old man participating in Glow Worm (2014), who shrugged, “[...] there are going to be assholes at every festival.”

Festival participants also suggest that the normative use of drugs and alcohol during participation in festival events hazards statements and behaviors for which one cannot be held accountable. Alcohol consumption is a common practice within men’s homosocial groups; it is one that contradictorily loosens inhibitions and enforces group members’ conformity to hegemonically masculine norms that often normalize men’s social and sexual dominance (Bogle 2008; Campbell 2006; DeKeseredy, Alvi, and Schwartz 2006). Though the implications of men’s drunken interactions are dire, both men and women legitimize men’s alcohol use as a tool to “explain away, rationalize, and excuse embarrassing, unsightly, and even violent behavior” (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013: 59), including those that threaten or even victimize others. Similar to members of other party scenes (i.e., bars and pubs), jamtronica festival-going women endure sustained unwanted physical, social, or sexual contact from inebriated men, even after repeated rejection (Griffin et al. 2012: 193). Scene members often excuse these forms of harassment as an indiscretion committed by an intoxicated self – maintaining that what is said or done during these spells are not an accurate representation of the real, sober, accountable self. While men maintain inculpability for their offenses, women contend with the sociocultural expectations to carefully monitor their drinking and drug use (as well as those of others) in ways that men do not. Women are more likely to experience victimization in co-educational settings involving alcohol, like festivals (Abbey et al.

2001; Johnson and Dawson 2011). Yet, alcohol consumption diminishes the likelihood that a victim will report or pursue legal actions against their assailant (Crosset 1999). Women who experience physical, social, or sexual violence while under the influence frequently encounter severe scrutiny for their “irresponsibility” – a trait seldom interrogated of or in men.

Lastly, interviewees suggest that most incidents involving intimidation or assault are “actually” harmless and humorous, as they are but mere misunderstandings of the “parodic” subtext in men’s threat-bearing, rape-mobilizing self-presentations and displays – one’s that the victim or observer simply just does not “get.”

*Vignette: Roofies and Duct Tape*

*It was finally the “witching hour” – a daily span of time during festival events around sunset when people increasingly used drugs and alcohol in preparation for the night’s festivities ahead. The collective sobriety of event participants was rapidly diminishing, so I figured it to be time to make my way back to my campsite to debrief and secure my recording device after a long day of interviewing. As I made my way down the main thoroughfare of Glow Worm (2015), I heard a young white man in his early twenties drawing near, bawdily hawking his “wares”:*

*“Roofies and duct tape! Roofies and duct tape for sale! We got what you need to tape her and rape her, folks! Roofies! Duct tape! Roofies and duct tape for sale!”*

*Seeing that he was without pockets, packs, or noticeable places where he could have stored said tape, I very boldly accosted him, stating that I was interested in what he was selling. “Tell me, good sir,” I overemphatically remarked, “how many rolls do you think you could give me? Further, what is your price on the Rophynol [a sedative “date rape” drug]? I don’t have much cash on me, but with an advance on the duct tape, I’m sure I could get you what you want.”*

*He stood, astonished and silent. He muttered, “Dude, it was just a joke.” I leaned in, just close enough for him to hear me whisper, “I don’t get it. Explain it to me why it’s funny.” As he stumbled over his words, he eventually backed away, muttering to himself. Although adrenaline-inducing and having the enormous potential to backfire, I had to grin, triumphantly claiming the “joke’s” last laugh.*

Jamtronica music festivals foster carnivalesque atmospheres in which event participants are permitted, even encouraged, to temporarily subvert mainstream norms and hierarchies. Carnivals use parody to release the social strain of everyday inequalities, poking fun at things considered sacred or taboo. In theory, all oversteps within Carnival are ameliorated by assuming everyone is “in” on the joke and ascribe similar meanings, hold similar values, and situate within similar strata that these events overturn, like Forrest, a 26-year-old man attending Glow Worm (2014) insisted, “You see people our age [late teens – early adulthood] who come to this might have the same expectations or jokes that get passed around and everyone’s in on it. [Everyone’s] in on the fun. Nobody’s kept out for the most part from what I’ve seen.”

In reality, diverse jamtronica demographics conflict with the integrated and in-group egalitarian assumptions the parodies within Carnival require. Subcultural codes within jamtronica event arenas suggest that “anything goes” – even using language, images, or actions would be highly offensive outside of the event. While in previous times, Carnival was used to rebel against socially and politically conservative climates (Bahktin [1944] 1968), current transitions within mainstream contexts call for more identity-sensitive, “politically correct” conduct and worldviews. Although a racial-ethnic, gender, class, sexuality, age, and ability - inclusive society is certainly an important ideal to pursue, these emancipatory positions increasingly constitute the everyday conventions that festival-goers seek to disregard or actively dismantle through their threat-posing festival participation. In effect, threat-posing enactments of masculinity seek to ‘buck the system,’ even though these rebellions affirm social

conditions that are antithetical to the idealized jamtronica utopias the subculture envisions.

Men's participation in homosocial competition to "find the edge" of offensive material and behaviors that their peers will tolerate augments the frequency, intensity, and severity of these practices. Yet, this participation and escalation remains seemingly unchallenged, given non-interventionist subcultural codes. As in most homosocial environments, being unwilling or unable to "keep up" with other members' predation or threat-perpetration puts one's membership and group loyalty into question. This subsequently positions men who defect from these practices or groups as prospective targets for subordination and derision from their peers – as feminized or otherwise "less than."

Whereas homosocial escalations that offend, taunt, or intimidate help define the homosocial group as hostile fields for women and discourage their inclusion, these practices also keep the group cohesively invested within the defense of the group as all members become "equally guilty" through participating (or at minimum, not challenging) other men's misogynistic jokes and behaviors (Lyman 1987) Legitimizing women's very real fears, festival-going men act upon peer-oriented demands which further embed the victimization of women as not only "masculine," but normative and subculturally-valued.

When other festival-goers call out men's mobilization of rape – their posturing and predation – as problematic, some festival-going men defend their words and behaviors by claiming that they were intended as jokes. Shielding their actions and intentions as inoffensive, festival-going men use "sanitizing language to cognitively

disguise the appearance and meaning of harmful behavior” when confronted, re-framing these actions as pranks, jokes, flirting, banter, or innocent fun (Page et al. 2016: 256).

Dennis, a 33-year-old man interviewed at Mudslide (2014) succinctly summarized this position:

[At festivals], you can't take anything seriously, down to what you wear or how you act. [...] In the moment, I can see why [something said or done would be] extremely offensive, but viewing back on it? I mean, honestly, there are a lot of people walking around on a lot of chemicals. And, you should never ever take offense to something somebody says where they are...

Jokes work to express latent emotion or cultural values. However, when these statements and action are recognized as a “joke,” its deliverer avoids the consequences of expressing these views, even if they are grossly misogynistic, sexualized, or violent (Lyman 1987). Those who intervene or challenge the “humor” in these acts are subject to scrutiny, as they are viewed as inauthentic or inexperienced members of the subcultural community who are simply unacquainted with the scene’s codes and conditions. Labeling an offensive or threatening act or behavior as a joke – along with jokes’ ability to deflect consequence – allows those who harass and victimize “to obscure and minimize feelings of personal responsibility by externalizing the causes of detrimental behavior to social pressures or the dictates of legitimate authority” (Page et al. 2016: 256). Jokes facilitate collective harassment by homosocial groups and allow members to eclipse feelings of personal involvement and responsibility for offenses and their consequences, by faulting other group members or the entire group. Interestingly, the ability to evade personal responsibility for one’s danger-escalating actions echoes subcultural calls to abandon self in favor of supportive whole, yet with unexpected

results. Additionally, shielding one's own behaviors as a joke trivializes men's harassment and predation as less severe or unimportant in comparison to more flagrant cases of "real rape." In effect, this dismisses the variety of forms in which violence may manifest and the multiplicity of ways that rape may be mobilized to assert men's dominance within this subcultural sphere. Just as jokes reflect and reinforce larger (sub)cultural values, their content and reception further embed gender inequalities within scene (and mainstream) interactions, hierarchies, and structures.

### **"BOYS WILL BE BOYS" – AS IN THE MAINSTREAM, SO IN SUBCULTURE**

Men's predatory and threat-posing behaviors are sheltered by numerous conditions, allowing festival-going men to evade the consequences of their behavior. Just as men are naturalized as threat-posers and predators within the jamtronica scene, mainstream discourses further justify and entrench these risk-exacerbating practices. Men and boys increasingly pose threat in mainstream contexts as the primary perpetrators of cyber-bullying and physical attacks (Wardman 2017). In these acts, they use violence, homophobia, and misogyny to assert dominance over public places, organizations, and interactions. Despite the frequency and severity of their impositions, boys routinely escape punishment for their noisy, aggressive, or deviant behaviors, as these are considered intrinsic traits of boys (Dalley-Trim 2006), even if they are sexually-aggressive or violent (Robinson 2005; Tolman et al. 2003; Wardman 2017). Patriarchal discourses naturalize men's irresponsibility, lack of control, biologicized sexual urges, and proclivity toward physical, psychological, social, and sexual violence – effectively exculpating them from much of their actions. These same discourses compound within the *laissez-faire* festival arena and its homosocial cultures of silence, seemingly allowing



men to be doubly “off the hook” for their exploitation of women (and other men) no matter how blatant – not to mention their complicity and benefit from the subcultural subordination of women.

Jamtronica subcultural contexts mimic those of the mainstream not only in the community’s construction of gender-sexual hierarchies and enforcement of expectations that support these power stratifications, but also through events’ “absence of deterrence” (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013: 61). Festival-goers, as noted in Davis’ work on identity shifts within music festival arenas, often default to familiar identities and practices within liminal spaces. Seeing that traits of hegemonic masculinity seep in from participants’ mainstream lives (evidenced by the gendered roles, codes of self-presentation, and sexual power dynamics discussed in Chapter Five), it is no surprise that hegemonically masculine orientation and pursuits of domination should constitute the foundations of men’s practices, purposes, and relationships within the festival arena. As Merrick, a 22-year-old man interviewed at *Empieza* remarked, there is little difference between threat-posing “festival bros” and their mainstream counterparts. Overall, they are practically the same, he notes, “pretty much just with tie-dye [clothing.]” Thus, jamtronica festival codes are not solely responsible for creating the conditions that enable and fuel predatory and threat-posing masculinities.

Although subcultural conditions may augment these problematic performances of manhood, the carry-over and modification of men’s homosociality and domination within these “emancipatory” contexts indict mainstream ideals of masculinity as well. In short, it is not that festivals create new exploitative dynamics. Instead, they offer new terrain to enact mainstream masculinities without retribution. As reprimanding men for

endangering other festival-goers is, as suggested by festival participants, functionally absent, there is little that prevents festival-going men from posing physical, psychological, social, and sexual threat to others. As Morgan, a 21-year-old woman participating in Nocturne (2015) lamented, “A lot of people just want to party. Others want to seek enlightenment and let everything go and just be free of consequences. People yell things that they shouldn’t be yelling and there’s no fucking consequences.”

Noting that “individuals with a chronic predisposition to harass will usually only engage in harassing behaviors when exposed to local social and management norms that are viewed as condoning and permissive of it” (Page et al. 2016: 255), festivals’ lack of consequences for men who pose threat cultivates conditions that exacerbate, expect, and excuse their acts of physical, emotional, social, and sexual violence. Festival-goers’ beliefs in the inevitability and unpunishability of these men’s infringements normalize the notion that threat and victimization are inherent to women’s festival participation, and diminish the possibilities of effectively addressing them. Drawing from the work of Gavey (2005), I label the normalization of these masculine performances, women’s fear, and the compounding conditions that contribute to them “the subcultural scaffolding of rape” – a process which contributes to an overall “rape subculture.”

### **#NOT-ALL-[FESTIVAL-GOING]-MEN: ALTERNATIVES TO THREAT-POSING MASCULINITIES**

Obviously, not every festival-going man enacts threat-posing displays of masculinity. As festivals’ carnivalesque arenas encourage their participants to step out of their daily lives and identities, some festival-going men may use these liminal zones as a site for gender-sexual play, dabbling in and innovating alternatives to mainstream

hegemonic hetero-masculinities and their threat-posing subcultural extensions. Several interviewees lauded the jamtronica scene and events for their receptivity of men who diverge from dominant masculine self-presentations and self-concepts, giving examples of how these men articulated these gender rebellions. Merton, a 49-year-old man interviewed at *Empieza* (2015), remarked, “[Guys wearing] skirts or sarongs [...] is unacceptable outside of here. We’re less judgmental here.” Noel, a woman (who did not give her age) participating in *Glow Worm* (2016), claimed, “Guys at festivals wear tons of jewelry. I think you see that more here than you will anywhere else.” Her friend Tiffany (another woman who did not offer her age) added, “[...] a lot of the guys I know who have gone to other festivals get just as dressed up as the girls do.”

Some festival-going men revealed their own anticipated breaches of mainstream and dominant scene codes of gender and sexuality. During a discussion that interrogated the gendered and sexualized nature of women’s clothing prescriptions, Jack, a 21-year-old man interviewed at *Glow Worm* (2015), chimed in to state his plans to challenge the feminine associations made of revealing clothing. He bubbled, “I mean, tomorrow I’m wearing a rave tutu, so my booty will be out.” His friend, Tristan (a 31-year-old man), appended, “The gender barriers are definitely less at festivals.”

Festival-goers frequently celebrate these breaches of mainstream and subcultural prescriptions for men’s self-presentation. Attributing these displays to a society-wide broadening of gender expressions and categories, Sebastian, a 24-year-old man interviewed at *Nocturne* (2015) remarked, “I find the more I go to festivals, the more gender identities I see. [...] I’ve seen so many crazy things at festivals I never thought I’d see before and it makes me happy. You’ll see a dude just chilling and wearing rave-

booty shorts. I'm just happy that he's just being him and not worried about anything.” Pumpkin, a 23-year-old woman attending Glow Worm (2015), suggested that men's divergent displays are commonplace and welcomed within the scene. She insisted, “It doesn't really matter if guys or girls are wearing shorter shorts or if the backs are like Speedos. I saw a few of those [people] walking in, and no one really thinks twice about it.” Bob, a 21-year-old man interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), attributed these counter-hegemonic expressions to festivals' uniquely permissive conditions, reasoning, “I saw a guy on stilts the other day wearing women's pants and a corset, and he was having a great time. Wear whatever you want! I mean, that's what [festivals are] all about.” Gerald, an 18-year-old man attending Glow Worm (2015) echoed, “Like, I've seen some crazy stuff here – and, that's awesome. You see [such] things walking down the path here because people feel comfortable expressing themselves. This is their comfort zone and they can express themselves and be whoever they are. [At this event, I've seen] a lot of naked people and 'cross-dressers.’” Paradoxically, the same subcultural codes that enable men's exacerbation of danger conjointly endorses festival-going men's public and embodied rejection of these threat-posing articulations of masculinity.

Festival-going men also challenge hegemonic gender-sexual orders and conventions through acknowledging their problematic nature, educating themselves about these inequalities, and even proposing ways to address these issues. During a turning point in his group's interview at Glow Worm (2014), Forrest (aged 26) interjected his criticisms of mainstream gender-sexual expectations, exclaiming, “Can I just jump in and say that the gender role for guys is disgusting right now? Like, the norm [normative] gender roles.” His peers (interestingly, all men) took turns in expressing their contentions

with larger expectations and inequalities of gender, with each grievance growing more emphatic than the last. Later, Forrest's friend Lakhem (a 26-year-old man) revealed the inception of his gender consciousness: his growing edification through feminist scholarship:

I've been reading a lot of bell hooks and she talks about us [men] being the dominating culture and it happens on multiple levels with race, gender, and class. There are people on the top and on the bottom and there are consequences for being on the bottom. So, she argues that the system is damaging to both sides. They are both trapped by a patriarchal system – so, both men and women are asked to obey these rules of society and that's not just a one-way thing. [...] I think it limits both sides.

Festival-going men's increased awareness of and concern for inequalities of gender and sexuality compels them to generate prospective solutions to these issues. To Hersh, a 23-year-old man interviewed at Nocturne (2015), evolution away from malevolent mainstream and subcultural ideals of masculinity begins with men's widespread recognition of these inequities and how they are complicit in them. He fumed, "[...] men need to fucking step up and do their job and be the one telling the oppressor to stop. How do we rectify this? Inviting men in and show them this is a community where we want to shed this [threat-posing] behavior." By indicting festival-going men for both their deliberate and inadvertent contributions to mainstream and subcultural gender-sexual inequalities, Hersh argues that jamtronica community members may recalibrate scene values, discourses, and hierarchies toward more equitable futures. In the conclusion of his interview at Glow Worm (2014), Shiberka, a man who did not give his age, offered a slightly more even-tempered suggestion:

Maybe we need new words to use or new definitions for things. A new form of dialogue. [...] I don't know. But, we need new words – new ways to talk about things. [...] You hear these things over and over again and when you hear them enough you internalize it and you just reuse it. And, after reusing things, it just becomes a reality.

Through consciously modifying the symbols, phrases, and conventions that constitute scene and mainstream gender-sexual discourses to reflect more equitable ideological underpinnings, Shiberka reasons, jamtronica scene constituents (and members of wider society) confront these issues by reconstructing even the smallest sociocultural components. Overhauling gendered systems of language, he argues, will mobilize more widespread, impactful transformations.

Broadening affirmation of men's gender-blurring self-presentations and their emerging interrogation of scene and mainstream orders of gender and sexuality indicates a growing gender consciousness within jamtronica festival communities. As I observed these practices and sentiments at several different music festival events, across various geographies and timeframes, and from widely diverse demographics, I believe there is significant *potential* for these intra-scene dialogues and on-ground efforts to foster gender equality. This emerging momentum will be required to encourage their needed proliferation throughout the scene and to prompt their embedment within its subcultural values and practices.

Unfortunately, these interrogations of inequality reflect the attitudes of a minority of festival-going men. Many men were reluctant to participate in discussions about gender, much less gender-sexual inequalities or gendered violence within the scene. These reservations led some prospective study participants to immoderately reject

solicitations to sit for an interview altogether. In cases where men did assent to these interviews, they often retreated from these discussions, or quelled deeper dialogues by denying the existence, frequency, and/or severity of these widespread offenses.

Interestingly, the presence of even one woman within an interview group reduced the skepticism and cynicism that men expressed. This exposes the coercive powers of homosocial environments and the astounding power of a singular voice to uproot climates that protect offenders and silence survivors.

Yet, in the rare instance when men did discuss inequalities and innovations of gender and sexuality, either in self-presentations or ideologies, these exchanges often overlooked the significance and simultaneous construction of other sites of marginalization, such as race, class, and ability. These oversights were not isolated to men; they were ubiquitous across almost every interview, regardless of participants' reported demographics. While the expansion of gender-sexual advocacy efforts within jamtronica subcultural communities is highly desirable, participants' viewpoints lack intersectional insights and the imperative attention needed to address the racist, classed, and ablest implications of these emerging activisms.

Festival-going men's re-negotiations of mainstream and subcultural gender and sexuality forge new means by which masculine identities, expressions, and attitudes may be conveyed. However, meta-analyses of the project's observations, interviewee demographics and group compositions, and discourses reveal that many of these gender-sexual insurgencies are accomplished through the provision and protection that accompanies acquired subcultural capital (Thornton 1996) and membership within large, often homosocial, networks. In addition to their episodic occurrence, the contingency

and conditionality of these gender rebellions intimate their inchoateness and subsequent instability, even within claimedly progressive jamtronica communities. Jamtronica music festivals' unique codes and conditions may encourage the development of broader expressions and understandings of masculinity; time will tell whether the ever-diversifying communities of this scene will fully embrace these challenges to mainstream and subcultural gender discourses and hegemonies.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Men's idealized enactments of scene- and event-specific masculinity demand them to "Be the Threat," a hyperbolic gender performance that exploits the non-interventionist, carnivalesque atmosphere of festivals to openly subject other participants to physical, psychological social, or sexual risks. These threats manifest in the forms of pranks, traps, catcalls, outrageous rumors, as well as sexual harassment and predation. By escalating the dangers that festival-goers (particularly women) experience or perceive, men: publicly display their ability to subordinate women and other men; articulate their defiance of both mainstream and subcultural civilities; and, vie for power within the (predominantly) homosocial scene. In short, these subcultural displays draw from privileges of mainstream hegemonic masculinity – they attune to subcultural codes that amplify men's ability to pose danger but elude both subcultural and mainstream consequences for doing so. "Being the threat" requires festival-going men "mobilize rape" to assert interpersonal dominance, testing the limits of subcultural tastefulness and expectations in this "land without rules."



Jamtronica music festivals' encouragement of personal autonomy and non-intervention, though well-intended, may yield tyrants and troublemakers emboldened by promises of "unchecked" festival freedom. On the seldom occasion that those who purposefully augment fellow festival-goers' physical, social, and sexual risks are called out and subjected to sanction, they are able to argue their innocence. Shielded by the carnivalesque and parodic license these events confer, perpetrators are effectively immunized from consequence. They avoid reprimand through insisting offenses are jokes or reflections of their immaturity or lack of acumen. They are additionally insulated from punishment, having their misdeeds attributed to behavior-altering drugs or alcohol. Some festival-going men do use these events as opportunities to interrogate dominant interactional and institutional expectations of gender and sexuality through their gender-blurring self-presentations and ideological challenges to mainstream ideologies and hierarchies of gender. Unfortunately, their episodic appearance and observed requisite of group support seemingly prevent these discursive and interactional shifts from moving toward more radical imaginations and configurations of masculinity. These challenges appear relatively unstable and imperiled – endangered and subordinated by other men's homosocial, threat-posing masculine performances.

Subcultural participation in jamtronica festival communities may offer men unique "solutions" to their mainstream problems of gender and sexuality: articulating power, claiming membership and personal identity, and providing stability in light of larger shifts in masculinity and gender-sexual power. However, these threat-posing articulations of subcultural masculinity foster a "rape subculture," directly impacting women's access to and engagement in full event participation and scene membership. In

this context, festival-going women must consider their threat-posing peers as an additional variable to be evaluated alongside the risks inherent to subcultural scene and event participation.

## Chapter Seven – Festival Femininities: Arbitrations of Peril and Prospects of Pleasure

Throughout their jamtronica music festival event participation (and as detailed in Chapter Five), women contend with sexualizing and subjugating expectations that guide their self-presentations and the roles they hold within the community. Parallel to men's threat-posing reproduction of everyday gender-sexual hegemonies within subcultural arenas (discussed in Chapter Six), the marginalizing prescriptions and dynamics that women enact so too tend to mirror those of the mainstream. In this chapter, I look more intently into how these mainstream gender-sexual discourses, divisions, and dynamics shape women's subcultural identities and scene involvement. Fulfilling both mainstream and subcultural expectations requires a delicate "balancing act" involving the constant identification, assessment, and (non-) address of potential threats and dangers to women's well-beings. These negotiations additionally seek to capitalize on festival events' unique opportunities to augment pleasure and prospects for (self- and societal) transformation, despite the various threats that women face (as identified in Chapter Four). I conclude this chapter by outlining two major strategies that festival-going women employ to negotiate this "balance" and to self-govern their potentially perilous, but possibly emancipatory, scene involvement.

Men often bear little responsibility and encounter even less reprimand for the threats they (sometimes purposefully) pose to other participants during their event involvement (see Chapter Six). Deeply-entrenched *laissez-faire* subcultural codes discourage participants' confrontation and regulation of other festival-goers; this allows mainstream hegemonic homosocial dynamics to compound with scene-specific

discourses of masculine irresponsibility. These overlapping discourses further safeguard men from the consequences of their behavior within the festival arena. Women, on the other hand, do not enjoy similar license or insulation from consequence (intra-scene or from the mainstream) within their subcultural participation. Rather, mainstream and subcultural conventions appoint women as the informal moral superintendents of the jamtronica festival community. These prescriptions oblige women to shoulder many of the mainstream and subcultural responsibilities and considerations that festival-going men are permitted to shirk in these arenas. As a result, festival-going women are more deeply tethered to their mainstream lives – contending not only with the unique expectations that each of these respective worlds imposes, but with the missive to concurrently fulfill the often-conflicting demands of both. Moreover, women must manage the constraints, challenges, and dangers that independently plague each of these contexts, as well as the embroilments that may arise from their aggregation – taking account of the Vance’s “pleasure-danger binary” between and across their mainstream and subcultural lives.

As women are: (1) guided by internalized mainstream prescriptions of gender and sexuality within subcultural arenas; (2) urged into subcultural roles that mimic unequal mainstream roles and statuses; and, (3) held to conflicting expectations of mainstream and subcultural womanhood, festival-going women bridge two lives in which neither wholly affords full gender-sexual equality. Surprisingly, women’s peripheral belonging in both mainstream and subcultural contexts may offer them unique opportunities to garner gender-sexual power in ways each individual context could not provide on its own. In effect, this peripherality may permit women to interactionally re-negotiate

dominant mainstream and subcultural codes of gender and sexuality throughout their event participation.

### **INTERNALIZED MAINSTREAM MANDATES, INCITED (SELF-) SURVEILLANCE**

Festivals' carnivalesque and liminal atmospheres prospectively foster opportunities for its participants to subvert and re-imagine everyday meanings and hierarchies of gender and sexuality, enabled through these events' temporary distention of mainstream norms. Unfortunately, women cannot simply shed or altogether forget a lifetime of precautionary and prohibitive socialization immediately prior to their event participation or even within the span of the few days whence the festival takes place. Mainstream sexual scripts (as termed by Gagnon and Simon [1973] 2011) organize broader discursive, interactional, and institutional frameworks, and offer information and expectations that structure sexual desire, acts, and orientations. These scripts codify men's sexual (and social) agency, dominance, aggression, and sexual (self-) gratification as natural and idealized. Contrastingly, these scripts encourage women's sexual and social submission, issuing discrepant demands to enhance their appeal to men but to also remain passive to – yet, not necessarily accommodating of – men's advances. A sexual double standard emerges from these directives: honoring men for their sexual activity and displays of (heterosexual) desire, but penalizing women for any similar sexual expression, desire, or agency (Bay-Cheng 2015; Murnen and Smolak 2000; Zaikman and Marks 2014). Elevated for their disciplined lack of desire (and the assumed moral fortitude this engenders), women are tasked to monitor and manage their self-presentations and interactions to contradictorily attract and evade men's "uncontrollable"

predatory hetero-desire. Interminably satisfying these incongruent specifications become the criteria by which (ideal) womanhood is assessed and rewarded. As a result, girls learn from their early youth that accommodating the desires of, and enduring violence perpetrated by, men and boys is an inevitable part of life – one that women must manage as a duty of their gender through minimizing these incidents and suppressing their fear of victimization. Threat, girls and women learn, seems to be an inherent condition of femininity (Hlavka 2014). Further, women and girls absorb various practices by which one may better evade or manage men’s violence. Unfortunately, in most cases, rape and harassment myths tend to constitute most of this advice.

Women internalize mainstream gender-sexual discourses that corroborate the inevitability of men’s violence; an omnipresent gender-sexual fear and how to cope with the threats one faces; and, (ill-informed) prescriptions shaping one’s (self-) management and monitor, all as a part of their day-to-day existences. While music festivals may construct arenas to “escape” the everyday, interviewees expressed that their embedded apprehensions did not vanish upon entering festivals’ manufactured “oases.” Lillian, a 27-year-old woman interviewed at Thumbs Up (2015) expounded upon how these internalizations influence her jamtronica festival participation, walking through the deliberations she makes in response to them, narrating:

Right, like, if I take my shirt off and walk down [the event path] and back, is someone going to follow me and try to rape me? That’s what I’m constantly thinking and that’s really sad, because I shouldn’t be worried about that. A lot of times, I don’t feel comfortable walking by myself... especially when there are guys getting drunk. I want to feel safe, and that doesn’t make me feel safe.

Though tourist and leisure opportunities like jamtronica music festival events may allow some participants to disconnect from their everyday prescriptions and responsibilities, mainstream sexual scripts, sexual double standards, and rape myths do profoundly organize the psychological and emotional fabrics of femininity and womanhood, across spaces and places (Berdychevsky and Gibson 2015; Valentine 1992). Instead of freely partaking in scene-touted opportunities to release one's inhibitions, festival-women may use modified mainstream tactics to surveil themselves and their surroundings, consciously assessing and preparing themselves to address prospective threats to their well-being. "Playing it safe" may prompt festival-going women to only selectively engage in risk-presenting festival activities (like drug and alcohol use); or, simply avoid these compromising scene customs altogether. Resultantly, festival-going women may never truly shed the constraints that accompany mainstream self-management and monitor – a frustrating limitation that, as revealed earlier in this study, festival-going men seldom experience or acknowledge.

## **THE KEEPERS OF TWO KINGDOMS**

Women face additional ties to mainstream obligations through the gendered subcultural roles, codes of interaction, and ideals of self-presentation that arise from and shape jamtronica communities. Scene prescriptions characterize women as peripheralized helpmates within the festival, overlooking women's taken-for-granted labor and their debatably gender-equitable privileges of subcultural membership. Even though festival-going women already juggle numerous "facilitative" obligations (receiving limited compensation therein), widespread subcultural codes encourage festival-going women to extend their mainstream "mothering" work into their scene

participation: “safe-keeping” and “house-keeping” to attend to the physical needs of others (i.e., acting as “rave moms” that ensure the physical health and safety of their friends); peace-keeping through somehow maintaining a supportive, pro-social environment within the chaotic and capricious festival arena; and, “gatekeeping” men’s sexual advances. These acts of “-keeping” mirror women’s mainstream charges to monitor and manage not only themselves but the conduct of others (Fine 1988; Tolman 1991).

Dan, a 21-year-old man interviewed at Nocturne (2015) summarized the transposition of women’s “supervisory” roles into subcultural contexts and his support of these duplicated dynamics, arguing:

I think a woman at a festival, if she’s into males, and she’s with her boyfriend... I think she should be there, partially just to help guide him. Guys need a strong woman to help guide them. That’s what I believe. They need a strong guiding hand... like, questioning whether or not you need that extra beer. You get that look [from her], and you know that you probably shouldn’t.

Dan infers that festival-going women act as natural agents of order and morality within the subcultural scene, particularly in the scene’s event arenas. Through monitoring men’s intake of drugs and alcohol and intervening in men’s wild and wanton endeavors (albeit in subtle, unimposing ways), women constrain their anarchic and annihilative masculine counterparts. Yet, urging women to extend their mainstream efforts to control “uncontrollable” men is an impossible assignment from its onset, made even more impractical in application to the purposefully unbridled subcultural context. In pressuring women to act as referees of the unruly event arenas and as virtuous wardens who look after the subcultural community at large, these overlapping mainstream and subcultural gender orders set women up to fail. Respectively, this gendered delegation of



responsibility works helps excuse men of their improprieties, impositions, and abuses, even in blatant, severe, or criminal incidences (Hlavka 2014).

### **DO AS I DESIRE, NOT AS I SAY: CONFLICTING PRESCRIPTIONS OF IDEAL FEMININITY**

Yet another consideration festival-going women make is how to effectively reconcile subcultural prescriptions (which openly encourage women's sexualized dress and exhibitionist gender-sexual dynamics) with mainstream expectations (which more subtly intimate, yet condemn, these same practices). Festival costuming is an extremely powerful, highly personal display of individual and subcultural identity, even when it does incorporate sexualized aspects into its composition. In the construction of subculturally-revered feminine performances, festival-going women solicit the heteromale sexual review of their peers. Yet, they often more so act to fulfill their own sovereign sexual and social desires. Such practices and prerogatives directly conflict with the many mainstream conventions of femininity that demand passivity, objectification, and complicity in one's gender-sexual domination. Unfortunately, these subculturally-idealized displays may open women up to experiences of violence, frequently committed by men who participate in these events.

In contrast, women who deviate from hegemonic gender-sexual prescriptions (in either mainstream or subcultural contexts) often encounter: derogatory social labels; interpersonal conflicts; homophobic taunts; social exclusions; and, even physical violence (Attwood 2007; Miller 2016; Tanenbaum 1999; Tolman, Anderson, and Belmonte 2015). Given the drastic consequences of failure to fulfill conflicting mainstream and/or subcultural expectations of gender and sexuality, following these prescriptions may serve

as a safeguard to festival-going women's scene involvements, as well as their mainstream lives and livelihoods.

On top of existing tensions between mainstream and subcultural femininities, contemporary shifts in mainstream feminine ideals further complicate the already-contradicting expectations that festival-going women face. Emergent mainstream expectations for women reflect a very specific imagining of "liberated" sexualized femininities. Prescriptions to engage in partying, pranks, casual sex, and drinking and drug use may seem much more coherent with jamtronica music festival scene norms.

However, these expanded liberties come with numerous conditions:

[...] to be sassy and independent – but not feminist; to be 'up for it' and to drink and get drunk alongside young men – but not to 'drink like men.' [Women] are also called upon to look and act as agentically sexy within a pornified night-time economy, but to distance themselves from the troubling figure of the 'drunken slut' (Griffin et al. 2012: 184)

### *Paradoxes of Femininity, Amplified*

These emergent ideals of femininity call on women (festival-going ones, in this case) to fulfill their feminist duty by routinely demonstrating active appreciation and use of the broadened opportunities and gender-sexual agency for which their predecessors fought. Yet, other extant ideals revere women's "respectability" and moderation, characterized by women's meticulous personal monitor, restriction, and management of one's composure, physicality, emotionality, and social relations even as they "let loose" within cultures of intoxication such as jamtronica music festival subcultures (Hutton et al. 2013). Seeing that festival-going women are still very much harnessed to the inequalities and considerations of their everyday existences, subcultural prescriptions complicate the

gender-sexual expectations women must concurrently upheave and uphold within their synchronously-maintained lives. These (often internally-) conflicting expectations make festival-going femininities an even more “impossible space to occupy” (Griffin et al. 2012: 186), perpetually positioning these women to negotiate the unsolvable “paradoxes of femininity.”

Attempting to solve these paradoxes of femininity requires women to delicately balance their attitudes, self-presentations and (inter-)actions to construct conscious co-occupancies of and between their mainstream and subcultural lives. In addition to the design and deployment of liminal identities required to reflexively navigate both realms, festival-going women must manage the “supervisory” responsibilities (and consequences) that women unduly face in both contexts. As festival-going women negotiate multiple “layers” of gender-sexual expectations, they attempt to live up to a narrow and difficult to achieve ideal – an ideal that protects them from the mounting dangers that arise from compounding their mainstream and subcultural lives. Failing to secure this “middle ground” of expectations, ideals, and identities may prospectively pose severe repercussions for women in both their subcultural and mainstream lives. Yet, completely withdrawing from the subcultural scene may deprive these women of engaging in the expanded activities, identities, and opportunities won through feminist advocacy efforts. Furthermore, opting out of the scene may prevent them from experiencing and exploring the personal benefits (“pleasures”) that these carnivalesque arenas may confer. The complex considerations that festival-going women must juggle and the severe consequences that miscalculation or mismanagement of these demands present reveal an intricate and ongoing decision-making process that women undertake across various

fields and contexts of life. These decisions are real-life applications of a theoretical schema called the “sexual pleasure-danger binary.” The sexual pleasure-danger binary explains the dualistic relationship between women’s experiences of sex and sexuality as they are framed by patriarchal structures that oppress, objectify, and impress threats to women – but simultaneously serve as tools to cope with these systemic issues through advancing personal agency and pleasure (Vance 1982).

### **PURSUING PLEASURES OF JAMTRONICA EVENT PARTICIPATION AND SCENE INVOLVEMENT**

Despite the additional considerations of danger and increasingly complicated expectations that jamtronica music festival participation entails, it is essential to inquire as to what sustains these women in light of these perilous subcultural prospects. Doing so lends insight as to how festival-going women may utilize arenas fraught with structural, interactional, and discursive inequalities to re-negotiate meanings and hierarchies of gender and sexuality, both in their subcultural and mainstream lives. The “pleasures” that women identify as central to their music festival participation include: peer acceptance and encouragement; personal expression and autonomy; personal and professional growth; and the ability to challenge mainstream (and subcultural) orders of gender and sexuality. These benefits may transmute or act on their own as “solutions” to the constraints and challenges women encounter outside of the festival gates.

*Vignette: Crouching Tigress, Hidden Pleasures*

*“There.” I had just completed a face-full of vibrant orange, yellow, white, and black makeup, complete with impeccably-applied dramatic “cat-eye” eyeliner. While Glow Worm’s heat and humidity would have certainly prohibited such an elaborate display during the daylight hours, the sun had finally set, and the now-bedecked festival-goers were incrementally emerging from their campsites readied for the evening’s adventures to transpire. Just as ornamented as most of my peers, I pulled on my tiger “spirit hood” – an often-customized plush costume hat made to emulate an animal with which the wearer identifies – and shot an unnervingly feline final grin into my rearview mirror. I felt invincible, goddess-like, even. The transformation was complete.*

*Drawing from the solitary traits of the tigress (more so, making the most of traveling to and participating in this event alone), I quite literally prowled from stage to stage, stopping to admire the interactive art installations that peppered the paths between them. In the meantime, several fellow participants of all genders stopped me to express their platonic admiration of my costuming, commenting on how “gorgeous” I was and how “fierce” I looked. This, of course, did wonders for my confidence. Leaning against a delicately-designed fifteen-foot high, neon-colored geodesic dome, I settled into a surprising serenity. Despite the chaos and commotion surrounding me, I felt safe and at ease – content to simply be present and observe the immersive festivities.*

*In navigating the festival space on my own, despite the very real dangers I had perceived and experienced at previous event sites, I felt as if I had come into a new resilience. After all, up until that point, I had trekked over 120 hours back and forth through “uncharted territories” to various festival sites for this project on my own. This was a very significant accomplishment for someone whose longest drive prior to this time was the 12-hour (and incredibly uneventful) highway loop to visit her familial homestead. I had nearly crisscrossed the country, and then some! And, during that time, I engaged in some rather frank discussions with myself, clarifying my personal and professional ambitions. At the past eight field sites, I somehow managed to pry myself away from my well-concealed introvert ways, and developed not only my skills as an aspiring researcher but my interpersonal skills in general. I had made many friends along the way. Even the passing acquaintances I had made served as inspiration, reflecting traits or sharing insights that I quickly integrated into my project, or more deeply, into my day-to-day practices.*

*Meditating on everything that had transpired thus far, for better or worse, I wrapped myself more tightly into my hood. What I hoped would come out as a proclamation of gratitude emerged instead as an equally-meaningful quiet purr. This tigress was finally becoming who she intended – and was intended – to be.*

### *Peer Acceptance and Encouragement*

Festivals, much like their rave predecessors, are sites of connection, constructed through the convivial atmospheres, subcultural values elevating community, and the congregation of far-flung fan bases in a particular space and time (Pini 2001). Despite their tendency to anonymize participants and the episodic memberships that jamtronica festival scene members hold, music festivals cultivate feelings of belonging, encourage connection to larger communities and entities, and foster a place to convene with like-minded individuals (Davis 2017).

Kelly, a 22-year-old woman participating in Nocturne (2015), enthusiastically described the sense of connection she felt from her festival participation, bubbling:

[...] people are definitely more open and social out here than in their daily lives. My mind was blown by all the people who didn't know – [they are] just being awesome and doing their awesome thing, and [they] would look at me with the most love they could possibly give and I didn't know them at all. We'd look at each other, exchange energy, and then move on to the next fun [encounter]. There was just so much of that. It was the highest I've ever felt in my entire life – and it was just off of everyone's love. They were just giving it out and there was so much of it. It was so pure and awesome. I was like, "this is insane!" I've never experienced this [where I'm from].

Festivals, to Kelly, offer social support in ways and to extents that she had never encountered within her mainstream life. Feeling accepted, even by complete strangers and for very brief periods of time, she noted, was an incredibly emotional and uplifting experience. This experience, she infers, is unique to the subcultural scene and its community. Lillian, a 27-year-old woman interviewed at Thumbs Up (2015), similarly compared her experiences within the festival community to less-than-inviting outside worlds, warmly stating:

[At music festivals,] we can all be appreciated. When you go home, at least from my perspective, my family is not very supportive, and I worked this job where I didn't feel very appreciated either. Here, you can just be who you are. You can be creative or wear funny hats, and somebody is going to come up to you and give you the biggest compliments. I think it makes you feel good about yourself and you can make others feel good. And, if someone's being an asshole, you can just smile at them until they smile back – or, just go about your business.

Morgan, a 21-year-old woman interviewed at Nocturne (2015), echoed how festivals helped to develop her sense of self and belonging, recalling:

I was having a lot of problems with self-love and acceptance before I came out here and I realized a lot of it is being in this environment where there's no competition. Normally, in everyday life, there's this superiority thing going on between women and it doesn't feel like that here. It feels like everyone is going at their own pace and doing their own thing.

In comparison to a cut-throat, competitive mainstream, Morgan describes festivals as opportunities to break away from everyday expectations and to just be who one is – and, better, to be appreciated for it. As in the drinking cultures studied by Hutton et al. (2013), women who participate in jamtronica festival music scenes do so to physically, emotionally, and socially relax. Through decreased perceptions of competition and increased encouragement to be one's "true self," they can interact and network with their friends and acquaintances in mostly unstructured situations where the stakes are assumed to be lower or to not exist at all.

Whereas the normative substance use found in drinking cultures such as festival scenes may enhance participants' social confidence and augment their emotional connections to each other (Hutton et al. 2013), even without this partaking in this practice, women use festival arenas to congregate and develop informal, often temporary – yet no less meaningful – relationships with people. In effect, their jamtronica festival

participation acts as a site to celebrate themselves and each other. Later in her interview, Lillian (Thumbs Up 2015) aptly encapsulated this sentiment, reasoning, “[People go to festivals] For the same reason people loved going to raves: unity. Feeling connected. Not feeling so alone. Especially when you struggle from PTSD or depression... it’s hard to be depressed when you’re here.”

### *Personal Expression and Autonomy*

Previous works on women’s involvement in raving subcultures identify women’s dance and scene participation as ways to express their individuality; articulate claims over space, subcultural membership, and wider aspects of power; and, to demonstrate their agency (McRobbie 1984; Pini 2001). Festivals purposefully create risks and uncertainty, branding them to appeal to consumers (Spring 2006). Simply being present in these risk-filled semi-touristic events given its dangers “can be an emancipatory practice associated with feeling like a strong, powerful, self-reliant and exciting person” (Berdychevsky and Gibson 2015: 300). While many of the agencies and freedoms festival-going women described oriented around the politics of self-presentation within the scene (as compared to their mainstream lives), the ability to articulate oneself through dress is a very real and powerful tool. Self-expression can defy external subcultural and mainstream control and subjugations, so that this autonomy reflects the ability to craft reflexive representations of oneself – and the impacts that this self has, or can make, on society.

To some festival-going women, the loosened regulations on self-presentation are one of the largest draws. Leslie, a 20-year-old woman attending Glow Worm (2015), argued that:



[...] the best part of festivals is the freedom of expression. You can literally wear and do whatever you want. You can walk around topless with nothing on your tits and people will accept you no matter what. Not even just [this festival], but the communities they bring together are just open-minded. Like, piercings, tattoos, rock n' roll, drugs, sex [...] Everyone's just super accepting.

Scene-wide *laissez-faire* practices and women's senses of peer- and self-acceptance encourage participants' willingness to deviate from mainstream expectations and authorities. In her Glow Worm (2015) interview, Britta (aged 23) acknowledged that her self-presentation during her festival participation was far different from the dress she wore in her everyday life. She admitted:

I definitely have certain clothes that are brighter, or just stuff that I wouldn't normally wear out in public or around my parents. They are very conservative and those are clothes they would refer to as my 'hippie clothes.' I don't wear them at home, or if I do, it's out at the beach when they aren't home. It's a funny little power struggle between us.

In her mainstream life, Britta must defer to her parents' authority and conservative dress regulations. However, festivals offer her a place to wear the clothes she could not (or would not) don. This act symbolically undermines her parents' power by constructing her own preferred representation of self, and (albeit temporarily) rejecting the everyday hierarchies and constraints with which she contends.

The event-based allowances for self-expression extend past choices of what one wears and into negotiations of sexual expression as well. This, study participants say, is quite unique to jamtronica music festival contexts as it allows festival-going women to curate sexualized self-presentations that may be significantly more hazardous to undertake outside of the festival arena. Violet, a woman (no age given) participating in Glow Worm (2016), explained:

I think there is such a respect for people wanting to let other people [do as they please] . . . in this environment, to really ‘do’ themselves. If you walk down the street to a venue in [large city – name redacted], there’s rows of men hounding you or staring at you. But here, if someone walks by naked, then cool. If that’s what they want to do, then this is the three days where they can, and there really isn’t men hounding down women in gross, creepy ways. I’m sure there’s a few, but I’m not seeing that as the general picture.

Violet argues that festivals actually provide a buffer for women’s sexualized dress displays, allowing women a safe (at least, a safer) zone to construct self-presentations that provide self-esteem and a sense of social agency (Adriaens 2009). Mainstream society, in other festival-going women’s eyes, purposefully dampens women’s sexualities. Festivals, though plagued with some risks, allow a more “liberated” sense of femininity. Lesa, a 27-year-old woman at Mudslide (2014), insisted:

I just feel like, when you dress in short shorts and a tank top, that sexuality that our culture portrays on women is so bad. But here, it’s your chance to be free. I don’t feel like because some girl is wearing shorts with her butt cheeks hanging out guys are going to react the same way [here] as if they see that girl walking down the street.

Her friend Keeli (aged 30), added, “If she were to be wearing the same thing in a bar downtown, she’d be labeled a slut, whereas here, people would be like, ‘Oh! Those shorts are cute!’”

As these women indicate, jamtronica music festival subculture is a realm that encourages (sexualized) self-expression, offering it an authorized, even elevated place within the event arena. In providing a domain where women may (to an extent) break free of mainstream constraints of gender and sexuality, festival events and scenes encourage women’s deeper senses of self, sexuality, ability, and agency.

### *Personal and Professional Growth*

In studies of broader festival-going populations (ones that extend beyond the jamtronica genre and fan bases studied here), participants identify several reasons for their event participation. Many of these orient around accruing “cultural, social, symbolic, creative, and relational capital within the creative tourism industry” (Davis 2017: 484). As in wider festival contexts, festival-going women regard jamtronica events as sites of (self-) discovery, as well as of personal and professional growth. In these domains, they claim that they are able to build skill sets, exercise leadership and management strategies, and obtain hands-on professional experience. Although available skills development opportunities festivals offer primarily center around entertainment, tourism, logistics, public relations, and hospitality industries, festivals create means by which women may enhance their professional and personal capital both within and external to the subcultural scene.

### *Skills development*

Textual analyses of the Tree Ridge (2014) and Nocturne (2015) event programs advertise workshops that focus on personal knowledge and skills development. These events featured workshops that taught fundamentals of upcycling, flow arts, yoga, meditation, food preservation and permacultures, and subcultural beauty practices. Further, these programs promoted enrichment events oriented around psychedelic philosophies and ideologies, drumming and introduction to other instruments, and art. Additionally, these festivals included events on building mindfulness for self and in interactions, energy work and massage, crystal, and lucid dreaming.

In contrast to many of these advertised workshops, other skills-building programs, such as event volunteering, similarly enhance festival-goers' opportunities to build on their professional skills and networks. I personally engaged in several of these tickets-in-exchange-for-labor programs. Within these programs, I performed a variety of tasks, that included guiding traffic, washing and folding stage towels, monitoring trash bins and performing eco-outreach lessons as I reminded event participants to recycle their refuse as able, and providing supplemental back- and side-stage security. As I became more experienced and "certified" within these volunteer programs, I was "promoted" to higher-ranking volunteer positions, which included preparing and serving meals to artists, staff, and VIP participants, transporting meals to artists and staff, fulfilling artists' hospitality "riders" (organizing and compiling requested food and drink items and preparing performers' "green rooms"), and an infinite number of other jobs and tasks. Though many of these volunteer positions were relatively "unskilled," as supervisors offered satisfactory feedback on my work, I advanced to more and more specified jobs – positions that were higher stakes, requiring more staff trust, volunteer reliability, and on-the-job knowledge. In recent years, these volunteer programs have blossomed into more elaborate professional development opportunities beyond weekend events: offering its participants internships, and even encouraging them to enroll in production company-sponsored festival planning and hospitality professionalization seminars.

### *Building networks*

Festival-going women additionally identify opportunities to meet new people as one of the factors that sustain their involvement in the jamtronica scene. Festival events permit demographically and geographically diverse groups to convene in central

locations (Davis 2017), which assists festival-going women to extend their personal and professional networks. Suzanne, a 26-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), maintained that, “[... at festivals,] everyone shares a common interest in trying to walk away with new friends. You make life-long friends out of strangers here. There’s also a lot of really cool people from a bunch of different states.” The draw of making new friends is so strong that it attracts festival-goers from afar, and the experiences shared among congregated peers forge bonds that span significant geographic distances and that endure across time. For example, in her interview, Willow, a 31-year-old woman participating in Thumbs Up (2015) reminisced about a treasured experience at a jamtronica music festival several years ago. At this event, she met a group of people with whom she became fast friends. Despite the brevity of their time together (a mere weekend), she cheerily reported that, at the time of her interview, she remained friends with a few of the people that she met at that particular event.

Festival-going women also enhance their professional networks through their event participation. In her interview, Leslie, a 20-year-old woman interviewed at Glow Worm (2015), mentioned her prospective professional leap into designing and crafting apparel. She remarked:

[...] I’ve been thinking more and more about going into clothing because I used to sew a lot. I have all my friends helping me with the business aspect of trying to put together this company. Nowadays, it’s exposing myself and who I am and gathering information and ideas. I just walk through the [festival] lots and talk to these girls who go to a lot of festivals and get insight from them on what they like and don’t like. And, that’s really useful. I see it as me getting out there and seeing what I can do to help others, more so than me taking on a new identity, because I want people to eventually know who I am and not not [sic] know who I am.

To Leslie, festivals are a site to gather inspiration and information from the audience she wishes to later target. She utilizes social encounters to promote herself and her up-and-coming business, and to develop her personal and professional “brand.” Though festivals may assist in spreading scene-driven social and political campaigns, i.e., environmentalism, music and arts education funding (Ruane 2015), festival-going women additionally use these events to bridge demographically and geographically diverse groups for social and economic gain.

### *Identities*

Jamtronica music festival scene and event participation allows women to construct and perform identities that they may or may not take on in mainstream contexts. As festivals’ anonymity and codes of non-regulation reduce sanctions for stepping outside one’s everyday roles and expectations, they possess “[...] the potential for re-figurations of the here and now, the possibilities for creating alternative fictions or narratives of being, and the opportunities for the development of new (albeit temporary, incomplete, and constituted partly in fantasy) ‘identities’” (Pini 2001: 2). Many festival-going women regarded this opportunity for “identity play” as a draw of the subcultural scene. Ellie, a 22-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015) explained festivals’ ability to foster emergent identities, avowing:

Outside [of festivals], you’re worried what people think – how do I look, or how do I compare – but here, we’re just, like, having fun. [...] No one’s judging you, and if they are, then you just don’t care. [...] It’s a safe place to experiment. [...] It’s a place where you can just let go – whether that means being yourself or being someone you’re not.

Maggie, a 26-year-old woman interviewed at Glow Worm (2015), also communicated the importance of festivals for participants' ever-evolving self-definitions, remarking:

Something I like about festivals is that you get stripped down to your bare minimum. You [only] have what you brought – and that starts peeling away layers. And, that will either make you uncomfortable or more comfortable. It's usually really good, but in the end, I think it does end up exposing your true self. You might pick up on new things from that experience, but that's just you absorbing that [experience]. I think it's totally possible to find yourself at places like this.

Maggie's friends, Anthonii and Lotta (both 22, and respectively non-binary and woman-identifying), later added on to her thoughts. Anthonii argued that, "At a festival, you can be whoever you want to be. There are people around here named Barbeque." Lotta interjected, "That's why they say you find yourself."

Similar to Pini's studied ravers, jamtronica festival-going women depicted scene events and communities as welcoming arenas for both finding one's "true self" or building a completely "new self." Although many of these alternative and emergent subcultural identities are temporary and bounded by event-specific contexts, festival-going women extend the suppositions of Pini (2001), arguing that these identity innovations and explorations often transcend well past the confines of a weekend event and make profound impacts upon the personal and professional identities of its participants. Lillian, continuing her interview at Thumbs Up (2015), noted how her experiences at music festivals had shaped her life outside of the scene. She observed:

I'm just able to live in a way where my lifestyle is being completely changed [through my festival participation]. I realized at another festival that, while I was drinking, I was processing some stuff... just sitting, thinking how lazy I was. [...] This lifestyle has definitely taught me that if I want to keep coming to these things, then I'm going to have to work really hard for it.

Festival-going women moreover professed that the emotional uplift they receive from their event and scene participation often carries back over as they return to their mainstream worlds. Continuing her interview at Thumbs Up (2015), Willow indicated that the “pleasures” she receives during her festival participation have very real impacts on her mainstream life. “Sometimes,” she said, “I feel like I take [the festival spirit] home and I hope I keep radiating that positivity. I might smile more in public and give someone a hug at work just because I’m in that [festival] mode.” Maggie (Glow Worm 2015) also observed the reverberations of her subcultural participation in her everyday life, sighing:

I love when I come home from a festival – like, my first day going back to work and I think it’s going to be awful – but I see everyone, and I’m just, like, really friendly and happy to see everyone again. I just love everyone when I come back. [Laughs.] It’s weird going back to that structure when all weekend you’ve basically just made your own city and it has its own vibe. You don’t want to take it down at the end of the weekend.

For festival-going women, the identities and uplift they receive within their event participation make their mainstream lives more manageable. Although the “play” the subcultural scene encourages may be temporary, festivals’ support of participants’ emergent and innovative identities has very real, lasting effects in their lives outside of these events and scene communities.

### *Rejection of Mainstream (and Subcultural) Gender-Sexual Expectations and Hierarchies*

Comparable its rave origins, jamtronica music festival arenas are not only sites of articulating temporary yet emergent personal identities, but are also domains which embolden new meanings, expectations, and hierarchies of gender and sexuality (Bradby



1993; Pini 2001). Women are able to experiment with assumptions and articulations of womanhood, many of which contest mainstream conventions of femininity. These events foster grounds by which women may assess their modified or new configurations of femininity for personal salience, as well as their viability for mainstream adoption and acceptance. While challenging hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality may prompt sanctions within mainstream contexts (Johnson and Dawson 2011; Marcus 1992), subcultural arenas offer women a/n, albeit narrowed, space where they may (temporarily) upend everyday expectations and hierarchies.

#### *Challenging the sexualization and objectification of women*

In several interviews with festival-going women, many vociferously expressed contention with both mainstream and subcultural orders that encourage women's sexualization and objectification. Ellie, a 22-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015) attributed the permeation of unequal gender-sexual dynamics into jamtronica subcultural scenes to the impacts of mainstream media. She lamented:

The media is making girls feel like they have to [sexualize themselves] and guys are thinking that girls have to be like that, because the media is only showing girls like that. If the media showed more normal girls, then guys wouldn't expect that, and girls wouldn't think that they'd have to dress like that to find a guy [at festivals].

As Ellie airs her frustration with mainstream actors' influences on the subcultural scene, she also interrogates both mainstream and subcultural expectations of gender and sexuality. Noting that prominent visual texts and discourses have significant sway on scene participants of all genders, she criticizes the underlying dynamics of sexualization and objectification on which these mainstream (and subcultural) expectations are built.

Lillian, a participant at Thumbs Up (2015), conveyed her discontent in a much more direct form, fuming, “I can’t be objectified in a fucking winter coat, but I’ve been objectified in a winter coat. I have a vagina, and I’m a girl. I *will* be objectified. There’s no way around it, but I shouldn’t have to accept it.” While her statement may express her belief in the inevitability of imbalanced gender-sexual dynamics on the surface, the subtext of her message insinuates a veritable resistance to these inequities. In this, she challenges broader objectifying practices of gender-sexuality, articulating her discontent and dissent quite openly – something that may receive sanction outside of the jamtronica festival context.

#### *Challenging heterosexuality and heteronormativity*

Women who attend jamtronica music festivals also work to undermine common mainstream and subcultural assumptions about heterosexuality by speaking openly about their queer, kinky, and asexual identities. By doing so, these festival-going women interrupt broader heterosexual matrices (Butler 1990) that couple sexually-powerful men and sexually-passive women as the dominant and valued gender-sexual arrangement within mainstream society and the jamtronica scene.

Claiming sexual identities and expressions that diverge from mainstream constructs of gendered heterosexuality (and its power dimensions) often elicits both interactional and institutional sanctions, ranging from ostracization to the very real loss of material benefits. These consequences result from sociocultural devaluation of one’s sexuality and sexual orientation. However, interviewees found these events to be a safe, even welcoming, place to openly discuss and display sexual identities and expressions

that go beyond the heteronorm. Lillian, a participant at Thumbs Up (2015), spoke of her festival experiences as a non-heterosexual woman very honestly. She reflected:

This is, like, my fourth event and everyone has been so genuine, you know? If I was back home and I express[ed] that I was bisexual and kinky, people would just think that I'm weird. But here, people are like, 'Really? Cool! What that mean? Tell me more!' People just give a fuck, and at home, they don't.

Lillian's mention of her sexual identities facilitated a break-out discussion among her fellow focus group participants about the role of sexuality within their lives and within their scene participation. Without a moment of observed reservation, Lillian and the other now-engaged interviewees commented candidly on how festival events offered them bountiful opportunities to claim and articulate kinky, queer, asexual, and genderblurred identities and expressions.

Although these conversations were quite enlightening and data-rich, per the request of two of these focus group members, I elected to omit their exact quotes. They justified this request through recalling the severe mainstream consequences that using this "incriminating" information may have on their everyday lives – possibly resulting in their loss of employment, loss of family ties, and loss of long-standing romantic partners. In light of the devastating ramifications of non-heterosexual/non-heteronormative sexualities that festival-goers may face outside the subcultural arena, festival events and scenes cultivate spaces where participants may honestly articulate (a)sexual identities and displays that may be (personally or socially) suppressed outside of these spaces.

### *Rejecting respectability, advocating women's sexual autonomy and agency*

Festival-going women also utilize their event and scene participation to articulate their sexual autonomy and agency, and to challenge the "respectable" femininities that

would shun them for doing so. Women contend with mainstream and subcultural sexual scripts, sexual double standards, and assumptions surrounding sexual violence. These phenomena and their consequences discursively de-incentivize women's active pursuit of and agency within sexual exchanges. Further, these constructs work together to reward "respectable" women – women who uphold hegemonic gender-sexual expectations, experiencing moral elevation and admiration for their complicity within an exploitative gender system. Those who cannot or do not model this chaste, passive "moral imperative" of femininity endure a variety of admonishments and sanctions. By distinguishing themselves from "shameful" women who express or act upon their own sexual desires for personal pleasure (rather than deferring to the desires of men), women draw and enforce boundaries of what it means to be a good woman and who is entitled to the physical, financial, and social returns that "buying in" offers.

While enacting "respectable" femininities tends to earn dividends – including men's favor and protection – women's divergence from these expectations and arrangements may also elicit benefits to women, even given the repercussions "unrespectable" women face. The ability to articulate and act on their sexual desires might act as opportunities for women: to build self-confidence and personal identity (Adriaens 2009); to pursue or reject sexual exchange on their own terms; to attune to their own bodies, health, and sexual well-beings; and, to signify themselves as subjective, independent, and competent social actors (Berdychevsky and Gibson 2015; Cahill 2011; Nussbaum 1995).

Braving the challenges and consequences that limit their sexual and social subjectivity, women's divergence from ideals of respectability evinces their dissent and

purposeful defiance of existing gender-sexual relations. Yet, interviewees did not seem to reflect a sense of guilt or wrongdoing in these departures, regardless of the steep consequences that “unrespectability” poses. Rather, festival-going women deploy revered libertine and libertarian subcultural codes in interesting (and possibly emancipatory) ways.

Rain, an 18-year-old woman participating in Nocturne (2015) chided festival-goers for their contradictory scene-wide glorification of festival-going women who adhere to sexualized expectations of self-presentation and the disparagement that women often meet when they mirror these ideals in “real life.” She protested, “I don’t care when people dress in skimpy clothing. I used to dress in skimpy clothing when I went to raves. It’s hot. It’s my body. I’m going to do whatever I want with it – and if you have an issue with that, then just walk away.” Here, Rain claims her body as sovereign and as a subject, positioning herself as the only person with jurisdiction over it. Instead of manipulating her body and behaviors to fit expectations of respectable womanhood, she flagrantly spurns a form of gender and sexuality that is managed by and for the interests of others. Decidedly orienting her self-presentations and body toward enhancing her own comfort and articulating her personal identities and desires, Rain disrupts interactional and institutional gender-sexual orders which prioritize the interests and pleasure of men rather than her own.

Jamtronica music festival subcultural scenes orchestrate conditions in which participants purposefully and recreationally subvert mainstream expectations. Yet, the ephemeral and experimental re-imaginings of gender and sexuality that festival-goers fabricate during their participation illuminate the performative nature of these constructs

and thus their lack of fixity. Festival-going women's challenges to respectable femininity, as well as their use of assertions of sexual and social autonomy, yield fertile grounds in which women may purposefully revise the expectations, power dynamics, and meanings of gender and sexuality – both within the scene and in their everyday lives.

*Rejecting the fixity of women's responsibility and fear*

Within mainstream contexts, women contend with an ever-evolving set of overwhelming yet increasingly infeasible demands. The expectations and attending stresses of contemporary femininity (“to be fully responsible in their sexual activity, to become good citizens, to find a job and earn a living, to find a partner and have a family in a world where marriage becomes a ‘temporary contract’”) compound with the everyday dangers women may face (physical, social, emotional, economic, and political threats and uncertainties), building additional layers of consideration, obligation, and management for women to undertake (McRobbie 1994: 172).

Overbooked and anxious, some festival-going women accredit jamtronica events as a way to stay sane in light of the innumerable considerations they must make and manage, given the expectations they are charged to fulfill and the dangers they may confront. To them, festivals are hallowed places where they may temporarily tune out the constraints they face in their everyday lives. Here, they are able to physically, emotionally, socially, and even sexually “let go.” Similar to their rave origins, jamtronica music festival events “afford [women] a space for publicly ‘going mad’ or ‘losing it’ in a way they feel they simply cannot within other spheres of their lives” (Pini 2001: 38). The psycho-emotional and physical tolls of women's constant (self-) monitor and management in their everyday lives exhaust and strain them. Festivals' bounded

landscapes act as constructed “safe places” in which they may, as Lillian (Thumbs Up 2015) suggested, “get away from the everyday grind of work, reality, and having to deal with people.” As observed in broader tourist contexts, many festival-going women emphasized how essential these temporary, yet powerful, events were in sustaining their ability and drive to manage the growing responsibilities women increasingly shoulder. Some even believed these “escapes” to be more important to and more fulfilling for women than for men (as in Berdychevsky and Gibson 2015).

The pleasure that some festival-going women sense in their “abandonment” of outside responsibilities during their event participation frees them (to an extent) to refocus their energies and identities within the subcultural arena. Temporarily unbridled of their obligations to people, projects, and “problems” outside the event, festival-going women may be able to center and act upon the personal desires that women’s mainstream obligations tend to overshadow. Festival-going women’s temporary abdication of (some) mainstream responsibilities demonstrates the prospects to loosen or even reduce these obligations. In doing so, festival-going women discover opportunities to pursue pleasure and to articulate agency. Not only may they perceive themselves as impacted by the changes these festivals yield, but might imagine themselves as agents of larger sociocultural change.

### **DESPITE DANGERS, WOMEN KEEP COMING**

Jamtronica music festival scene members maintain that the prospective conflicts, constraints, and threats participants encounter during events or within the community are best addressed through passive, individualized approaches. These strategies may include: avoiding participants perceived as dangerous; assessing and obeying the “vibes” of the

event; influencing others through one's unfailing positivity' ignoring offenders; as well as other tactics detailed in Chapter Four. Contradictorily, many of the festival-going women characterized their address of the threats they face as highly active – going against dominant subcultural expectations of event negotiation and management.

Drawing from previous literature, I classify these active approaches of pleasure-danger management into two categories, finding them to be examples of “safety rituals” (Silva and Wright 2009) and “gender maneuvering” (Schippers 2002). By detailing how they purposefully adopt techniques of self-defense and confrontation of offenders, interviewees shed light on how they dispute mainstream and subcultural depictions of (festival-going) women as passive-but-persevering targets of violence. Additionally, they show that women do not simply passively navigate perilous event arenas, but may use incidences of gendered threat as sites to interrogate perpetrators' conduct and interactionally undermine exploitative gender-sexual relations. Moreover, these festival-going women subtly reveal the scene prescriptions they must break to maximize the benefits that event and community participation bestows, in light of the constraints and threats their subcultural involvement augments.

### *Safety Rituals*

When festival-going women pre-emptively deploy self-protective and active defense behaviors, they engage in “safety rituals” (Silva and Wright 2009). Festival-going women contend with scene expectations that: promote sexualized self-displays and drug and alcohol use; enhance the threats that festival-going men pose; and, encourage the seep of mainstream gender-sexual inequalities into subcultural fields. Independently, these factors increase the likelihood of women's victimization. Yet, these conditions'



overlap amplifies these dangers and their risks considerably. Whereas scene norms encourage participants to use drugs and alcohol to the point of intoxication, festival-going women, like women in other party cultures, still readily take note and act in response to risky situations that emerge or escalate during their event participation (Murphy et al. 1998).

Similar to women ravers studied by Pini (2001), women who participate in jamtronica music festival subcultural scenes often attribute their ability to manage event uncertainties, conflicts, and dangers through an intrinsic sense of “knowing.” Ellie, a 22-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball 2015, explained this “knowing” as a sense and sensibility, stating:

Growing up, you learn to be aware of your surroundings. As a girl, I know these things are happening, and I know it’s a worry, but that’s why I don’t take a random drink from a guy, and that’s why I don’t do something stupid [an offered drug] from a random person. You have to be aware. You have to just know. And, it’s not just girls being roofied either – guys get that too. You’re here to have fun, but keep yourself in mind. [...] I just feel like you have to know where that line is.

As festival-going women cultivate subcultural awareness, they quickly attune mainstream tactics of (self-) management and monitor, and apply them to jamtronica events’ and communities’ specificities. Many interviewees likened this “knowing” to a set of regulations, requiring specific (in)actions to best evade the dangers they perceive and experience. As Kelsey, a 19-year-old woman participating at Fall Ball 2015, detailed, “There are general rules – like, never accept a drink from a random person.” Gabby (aged 19) another woman participating at the same event, endorsed women’s use of the “buddy system”: remaining in pairs or groups throughout the event, regardless of how brief the distance traveled. Some interviewees even admitted to carrying contraband

weapons and defense tools (i.e., knives, mace, tasers) as an essential component of their event participation; doing so could easily get these items confiscated and their carriers ejected from events altogether. These practices become engrained into the fabric of women's subcultural participation. They offer a sense of security during women's event and community involvement, even as these "rituals" subject themselves to in-event limitations or something even severe consequences.

To many interviewees, these practices of "active defense" were not reported to be a constraint or to be a passive response to the threats they faced. Instead, like the women studied in Silva and Wright (2009), festival-going women reported that their safety rituals were empowering practices that allowed them to confront threat as needed while still permitting them to freely partake in subcultural scene events and communities. Although this form of active negotiation is much more strongly informed by women's considerations of danger, festival-going women's use of "safety rituals" recognizes the need to prepare for scene-based threats and offers means to resist them as needed.

### *Gender Maneuvering*

A second strategy that women use to negotiate danger within festival arenas is "gender maneuvering," a concept first introduced by Schippers (2002) in her work on women's engagement in alternative rock music scenes. This term describes the practices and exchanges by which women interactionally re-negotiate symbolic, discursive, and behavioral associations of gender and sexuality and the power relationships that accompany them. More specifically, gender maneuvering occurs when "one or more people manipulate their own gender performance or manipulate the meaning of their own or others' gender performances in order to establish, disrupt, or change the relationship

between masculinities and femininities” (Schippers 2002: xiii). Similar to women who participate in other highly-gendered music subcultures, women in jamtronica music festival subcultural scenes use this form of “active address and amendment” to directly confront problematic gender-sexual meanings, practices, and hierarchies, and to construct alternative (pleasure-oriented) models of gender and sexuality in their place.

Festival-going women presented several examples of their use of gender maneuvering. While Linda, a 24-year-old woman participating in Nocturne (2015), bemoaned the common practice of men’s unwanted sexual contact through the guise of dance, she also recommended as to how one might actively rectify the situation. She advised:

If they can get off on you, then you have the freedom to say whatever you want to them. If I’m dancing and some man creeps up behind me and starts breathing down my neck, I can say whatever the hell I want to. You can do it in a right way or the wrong way. [...] Personally, it’s up to you [to decide how to address threat]. If you talk to someone like a human being, then they are more likely to talk back to you. If you call them out on it and tell them that you’re a living being with feelings, you let them know they are stepping on your toes.

Linda’s friend Ruby, a 23-year-old woman, added later in their interview, “You just have to be more assertive than normal. I just say ‘be the bitch,’ ‘cause that’s what men will say – but we just think of it as being more assertive and standing our ground.”

Both Linda and Ruby actively critique the sexually aggressive actions of festival-going men. However, instead of passively ignoring or evading these interactions, they encourage their peers to directly challenge perpetrators by “calling [them] out on it” and assertively claiming one’s subjectivity. In this, they interrupt a behavior which capitalizes on jamtronica’s gender-sexual inequalities, giving women license to choose how to best approach this confrontation. Additionally, Linda and Ruby break down

assumptions that women's assertions of wants and needs is "being bitchy," refashioning this pejorative ascription into a more desirable one. This new position helps festival-going women: claim subcultural space; articulate independence; argue for uninterrupted event participation; repel unwanted sexual attention; and, assert social and sexual subjectivity. Ruby and Linda utilize this hypothetical offense as a site to interactionally renegotiate what constitutes appropriate contact between event participants and what claims women have to enjoy the festival arena unbothered by threat-posing men. In this, they upend deeply-embedded masculine entitlements to women's bodies and sexualities, as well as men's homosocial dominion within this scene.

*Vignette: The Tigress Shows Her Teeth*

*Jarred from my earlier blissful moment of costumed gratitude, I was suddenly aware that I was no longer alone in the area I had invisibly staked as my impermeable reverie. A mixed-gender group – however, mainly consisting of men – had made their way into my "territory."*

*Seemingly under the command of two similarly-dressed young men, they appeared to circle me – yet remained unclear in their intents. All alone and unprepared to deal with such intrusions, I found their whispered beckons of "Heeeeeeeere kitty kitty kitty" all the more menacing.*

*Effectively backed into a wall, the group continued their descent, hands held outwards as if they intended to pet me. I assumed that they were likely inebriated, making the prospect of these strangers' contact all the less appealing. With the return of each coercive "Heeeeeeeere, kitty kitty kitty," they closed in, leaving me fewer and fewer options.*

*I had reached my breaking point. With a strikingly-accurate pantherine yowl, I mutated my face, back, and limbs into the most fearsome cat-like contortion my body would allow. Taken aback by my response (and slightly impressed with my own big cat re-enactment), I looked up to notice that the approaching horde had begun its apprehensive retreat. Mustering whatever I had left at that moment, I hissed, again with a feline finesse. They departed with a flourish, stumbling into the night.*

*At that moment, I could have responded in an infinite number of alternative ways. However, my unconventional admonition worked in a way that, in retrospect, traditional rejections and requests would have not. This interactional accost acted to disrupt fellow participants' perceived entitlement to gain pleasure from (through touch) an ornamented festival-going woman. In this, I manipulated my own, albeit zoomorphic, gender performance to claim my right to reject unwanted physical contact (even if anticipatedly unsexual), and defended myself from a group that was likely well-meaning, but was no less perceived as a threat.*

Within jamtronica music festival scenes, women's participation is often marked by (self-) monitor and management. These practices require a hyper-reflexivity by which women may adapt their bodies, behaviors, and interactions in response to shifting subcultural scenarios and surroundings. Their ability to observe, interpret, and modify themselves to fit the emergent event and community contexts demonstrate the presence of women's agency. Albeit, this agency is limited by the mainstream and subcultural dynamics that women negotiate as part of their music festival involvement. These modifications may reinforce existing gender-sexual disparities within jamtronica communities. Yet, as festival-going women increasingly speak out against those who pose threat to their well-being, they can utilize gender maneuvering within these liminal event spaces to subvert – and re-negotiate – mainstream and subcultural gender-sexual meanings, norms, and hierarchies.

## **THE EXTENT AND CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL (NON-) ADDRESS**

While very useful for addressing the threats that women face within their jamtronica event and community participation, safety rituals and gender maneuvering are both highly individualized. In many ways, their individualization assists festival-going women to respond to the unique challenges each festival-goer faces within their widely-

varied mainstream and subcultural lives. These tactics also permit women to protect themselves from danger and pursue subcultural pleasures, while remaining simultaneously shielded by dominant subcultural codes which elevate personal autonomy and non-interventionism. Thus, women can articulate challenges to mainstream and subcultural gender-sexual inequalities through seemingly scene-approved discursive frameworks and actions. These tactics reflect festival-going women's strategic efforts to re-appropriate the very same codes that endanger them. In doing so, they transform these codes into tools that better claim women's social and sexual subjectivities – within jamtronica communities and beyond.

Alternatively, festival-going women may use these individualized approaches in response to the notable larger silence of jamtronica stakeholders about issues of gender, sexuality, risk, and women's disparate victimization within the scene. Across the several festival sites studied, I observed no dedicated programming around gender or sexuality – until the later events of 2015. The projects that emerged at that time included an art installation celebrating womanhood and femininity (Fall Ball 2015), tabling outreach by local (sexual) violence centers, and very early pilot projects assessing participant interest in gender-segregated camping and women's empowerment programming (Glow Worm 2015 and 2016).

Though these gestures are likely earnest attempts to generate feelings of inclusion and community valuation for festival-going women, they remain quite problematic. As she attempted to recount targeted programming around gender and sexuality within her festival experiences, Gabby, a 19-year-old woman, lauded the mentioned art installation she had seen a few hours earlier at Fall Ball (2015). She remarked, "I think it was cool

that they had this exhibit for women. It was just a really cool tribute to women, and I'd never seen anything like that before. It made everyone think about it. It had writings of all the roles that women play in men's lives." While festival-goers may applaud these efforts as thought-provoking and ways to bring awareness to gender-sexual inequalities, Gabby inadvertently points out that, in what little programming she has witnessed at music festival events, women continue to be portrayed as relational to, helpmates of, and adjudicated by men.

The lack of acknowledgment or dedicated address of these issues by a majority of jamtronica event organizers, production staff, and artists communicate these issues' seeming lack of importance to powerful stakeholders in the scene. Worse, this inattention and silence may portray these disparities as exaggerated or even non-existent. These misrepresentations normalize gender-sexual inequities and embed their exploitative dynamics even deeper within the everyday fan ranks of the scene. Yet, all ranks of scene participants tend to engage in a customary silence about or minimization of these issues. In doing so, they become complicit in the reproduction of gender-sexual systems that promote and benefit from the predation, harassment, and victimization of women, in addition to the larger inequalities that enable these practices.

Jamtronica music festival scenes' lack of or undeveloped address of gender-sexual inequalities and gendered threat additionally shapes the demographic landscape of these events. Interviewees indicated that, for some festival-going women, feelings of unsafety within events and acknowledgment of their peripheral status within scene communities might discourage their sustained subcultural participation altogether. Consumers actively reject and avoid products (including brands and events) that hold

negative meanings (Banister and Hogg 2004). In turn, common subcultural assumptions about the scene's "inevitable" yet unaddressed threats may give off the unintended message that women who (may prospectively) attend festivals might most easily avoid or manage scene-based risks through simply not attending jamtronica festival events at all. Andromeda, a 28-year-old woman interviewed at Fall Ball (2015), encapsulated this sentiment astutely, shrugging, "If people heard about [experiences of victimization, gendered threat], I feel like people wouldn't go [to festivals]. I wouldn't want to go someplace where I didn't feel safe."

Even if negative scene or event connotations arise from outside of the subcultural community (i.e., through a scalding mainstream media exposé about trends in sexual violence perpetration at music festivals), these attributions still have dramatic impacts on the scene's events and communities: creating unstable or further-imbalanced member demographics and representation; imperiling the reputation and viability of (a) festival(s); jeopardizing event sponsorship, profits, and scene influence; and, unwittingly encouraging those who do continue to participate in these events to engage in more frequent or more intense pre-emptive self-defensive practices.

### **(FRAGMENTED) FLEDGLING FESTIVAL FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESSES**

Rather than consign themselves to a subcultural scene fraught with "inevitable" risks and no considerable momentum to address them, or withdraw themselves from jamtronica event and community participation altogether, festival-going women appear to be collectively propagating a more discernible feminist consciousness among themselves. Rebecca, a 26-year-old woman participating in Glow Worm (2016) ascribed this shift to a subcultural critical mass, declaring, "I feel like in the past there have been a lot of horror



stories [about gendered threat and women's experiences of victimization within festivals] and people are waking up to that, and realizing the consequences [...] So, people are more aware [of these issues now] and willing to help each other out."

Rejecting previous subcultural codes that elevated, like Morgan, a 21-year-old woman attending Nocturne (2015) summarized, "'love and acceptance over everything,'" a growing contingent of festival-going women express their doubts of these events being the utopias many festival participants claim them to be. Instead, festival-going women like Paige (aged 26, Fall Ball 2015) appraise these events and scenes more realistically, purporting that "[festivals are] a more accepting place than safe. You can walk around naked if you want to, but that doesn't necessarily make it safe. It's just accepting." Here, Paige acknowledges both the transformative and troublesome aspects of the scene, its events, and the gender-sexual dynamics held within its communities. Yet, many interviewees communicate being unwilling to "accept the scene's acceptance" if they are unable to secure their own personal safety. Festival-going women recognize that as Morgan (aged 21, Nocturne 2015) continued, "[...] these things are happening and no one's talking about it." The naturalization of gender-sexual inequalities and women's experiences of danger, to festival-going women like 20-year-old Jade (Fall Ball 2015), "needs to change. You don't need to prepare for people to be assholes – you need to condemn them."

Whereas women in mainstream society increasingly adopt a breadth of feminist tenets and advocacies, so too do festival-going women. Ruby, a 23-year-old attendee of Nocturne (2015), regarded growing feminist consciousnesses across mainstream and subcultural contexts to be a marker of a larger cultural turn. She reasoned, "We are in a

new age for a reason. We are just now coming into this acceptance that women are equal. I think it's a matter of time [before the jamtronica music festival community accepts this] as that [sentiment] continues to spread." Women's presence within subcultural scenes encourages other women's recruitment, engagement, and sustained membership (Farrugia and Swiss 2008). As festival-going women amplify their calls for safety, entitlements to sexuality, subjectivity, and centrality within jamtronica scenes, they endow future generations of festival-goers with platforms for a more intentional, accessible, and egalitarian subculture – and with the additional momentum to replicate such conditions beyond event arenas.

As promising as these platforms are, the emerging "festival feminist" discourses are still very nascent. The "proto-feminist" stances pronounced by interviewees – and the strategies they deploy in their self-directed balance of subcultural pleasures and dangers – are highly fragmented approaches. Interrupting oppressive discourses and supplanting them with more egalitarian alternatives are very powerful means of challenging larger hierarchies and expectations, when these efforts amalgamate (Butler 1993). That said, future festival-going women and researchers may find considerable use in exploring how these individualized managements and meanings may evolve into more cohesive, scene-coordinated campaigns. In doing so, they may move the scope of festival-going women's efforts beyond advocacy for the self toward advocacy for a larger (sub)cultural constituency.

## CONCLUSIONS

Many scene members maintain that festival arenas insulate their participants from mainstream constraints, inequalities, and consequences. Yet, festival-going women reveal that they do not simply shed the deeply-entrenched concerns and practices that guide their everyday lives. Women's internalize mainstream gender-sexual expectations and hierarchies, requiring them to fulfill unequal subcultural roles and react to scene dynamics that mirror mainstream ones. Broader discourses of gender and sexuality position women as the moral arbiters of society and press women to not only claim social and sexual responsibility for themselves but for others (here, men). Failure to uphold this role opens them up to a broad range of consequences including but not limited to physical harm, sexual violence, victim-blaming, and slut-shaming. Mainstream discourses dictating gendered (lack of) responsibility permeate into subcultural contexts and urge women to be constantly vigilant by monitoring their surroundings, their (inter)actions, and those of other participants. The same discourses that structure women's responsibility naturalize men's sexual and social aggression, allowing them to pose threat to others with impunity. To resist the dangers and threats men pose, women must fulfill two sets of already internally-conflicting gender-sexual prescriptions, informed by difficult-to-reconcile mainstream and subcultural ideals of femininity. Jamtronica scene expectations encourage women to construct appealing subcultural self-presentations and engage in practices that often break mainstream rules or laws. Both mainstream and subcultural discourses frame men as inherently hazardous hellions, easily justifying their divergences in self-display, conduct, and interaction. In contrast, festival-going women

contend with conflicting mandates, acutely aware of how their “irresponsible” scene-based conduct may have lasting implications for their mainstream lives.

Contrary to the popular depiction that festival-goers purport, women’s jamtronica music festival participation does not necessarily release them from everyday expectations and inequalities. As mainstream edicts carry over into and are reinforced within subcultural realms, festival-going women attempt to reconcile the two worlds in which they concurrently reside. They are paradoxically encumbered by the obligations and dangers of each, yet peripheralized in both. Nonetheless, many festival-going women use their event and community participation to challenge the mainstream physical, social, and sexual challenges and constraints within which they cope.

Interviewees claimed to use their scene involvement to:

- Counter feelings of alienation from their mainstream peers and cultivate a sense of belonging through their subcultural scene membership;
- Actuate and enact the “real selves” they felt as if they had to repress or conceal in their everyday lives;
- Realize (aspects of their) identities they had yet to avow, and/or reconnect with (elements of their) identities from which they had been estranged;
- Assert entitlements to personal choice and agency, as well as their sexual and social subjectivity;
- Cultivate and capitalize on personal and professional skills, networks, and identities; and,
- Challenge hegemonic gender-sexual discourses that:
  - o characterize women as the inevitable victims of men’s threats and violence;
  - o charge women to assume responsibility for themselves and the ones who may seek to endanger them;
  - o urge women to undertake a ceaseless program of (self-) surveillance and management; and,
  - o allege that women’s experiences and negotiations of fear are axiomatic aspects of femininity.

By doing so, women who participate in music festival scenes may be able to (re-) claim and redeem agencies and opportunities they may have been limited from, or altogether denied, in their everyday lives.

To effectively manage the gendered dangers that they perceive and to maximize the benefits they derive from their subcultural participation, festival-going women must engage in multifactorial negotiations of Vance's "sexual pleasure-danger binary." Yet, interviewees illuminated additional dimensions aside from sexuality that helped them to manage these negotiations of power and vulnerability (Wesely 2002). Interviewees' concerns predominantly expressed festival-going women's fears of sexual violence or other forms of victimization they might encounter within the event arena. However, the variability of concerns women held extended well beyond those regarding expectations or experiences of victimization. Correspondingly, the "pleasures" that festival-going women gained through their subcultural scene involvement reflect an equally-diverse set of benefits. These encompass things like permissions to perform sexualized feminine self-presentations, temporary license to pursue sexual desires deemed "unfeminine" in mainstream contexts, and the fundamental gratifications of feeling whole, autonomous, and included. Festival-going women use claims to and practices of sexual or social agency as tools to initiate and defend their entitlements to subjectivity, in a near-circuitous but effective logic. In effect, they demonstrate the co-constituted (or, at least co-contingent) nature of these emancipatory constructs. Subsequently, they expose prospects by which liberatory efforts in one socio-identity field may reverberate throughout the other.

Gender and sexual inequalities unmistakably entrench within jamtronica music festival subcultural scenes' discourses, expectations, (in)formal structures, and larger hierarchies. Given a cursory review, one might conclude that this subculture is rife with misogyny and exploitative sexual dynamics. It is apparent that the scene's gender-disparate conditions and problematic subcultural codes serve to benefit men and women differently – so much so that women's perceptions and experiences of threat within the scene may dissuade their participation in it altogether. Inasmuch as these inequalities plague jamtronica scenes, many festival-going women willingly endure these inequities and dangers, (re-) interpreting festival events as amphitheaters of opportunity, pleasure, and emancipation. Seeking out and capitalizing on the pleasures that scene involvement returns requires festival-going women to defy dominant subcultural prescriptions to ignore or passively accept the peer-driven threats and intrusions they will likely face.

Instead, women who attend jamtronica music festivals deploy agentic, yet individualized, techniques to navigate these chaotic and often danger-laden terrains. The first set of strategies, termed "safety rituals," seeks to pre-empt and prepare women to defend themselves from threats to their well-being. The second set of techniques, termed "gender maneuvers," aims to construct one's own gender displays (or interrupt those of others) to interactionally challenge the meanings, practices, and hierarchies in which these performances root. Women's use of these two strategies offers insight into how women must "break the rules" to be able to "make the room" for their subcultural participation. This "necessary deviance" reveals an even deeper layer of scene disparities to be investigated and raises further inquiries into the alternative means by which festival-going women forge jamtronica subcultural memberships "equitable" to those of

men. Moreover, interviewees' incorporation of these tactics within their scene participation sheds light on how festival-going women appropriate subcultural ideals of personal autonomy and expression to confront the inequitable and predatory scene dynamics these codes concurrently underpin.

Women involved in jamtronica music festival scenes may adopt individualized danger management approaches to better align with subcultural tenets of libertinism and libertarianism. They may do so to more adeptly function within arenas that elevate these values. Alternatively, these individualized approaches could reflect the makeshift solutions festival-going women have developed in light a larger subcultural silence on women's victimization and other gender-sexual inequalities. As U.S. jamtronica music festival organizers and production teams continue to overlook these issues, they increasingly lag in comparison to accelerating global policy and programming efforts seeking to address these concerns.

Though key jamtronica music festival stakeholders (i.e., organizers, artists, sponsors) are seemingly reluctant to draw attention to inequalities apparent within the scene, there is an emergent proto-feminist consciousness arising from the scene's fan ranks. Within their interviews, festival-going women detailed the variety of ways they claimed space, subjectivity, liberties of gender and sexuality, and senses of subcultural (and broader) agency; in this, they demonstrate a subcultural mimic of the expansion and adoption of mainstream feminist discourses. Individual modifications to intra-scene discourses, interactions, and hierarchies do provide meaningful transformations. However, sexual violence perpetration and other expressions of gender-sexual inequality are not isolated to individuals or their interpersonal exchanges. Because these challenges

reflect larger subcultural and mainstream inequalities, they require more intentional, coordinated responses in which scene stakeholders of all types and ranks must actively engage in these equalizing efforts.



## **Chapter Eight – Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how dominant norms of gender and sexuality within jamtronica music festival scenes complicate women's negotiations of gender and sexuality, in addition to investigating the threats that they perceived during their participation in subcultural communities and events. To date, there has been significant coverage of women's roles within music subcultures and party cultures (i.e., Greek life). Many of these works detail the disadvantages and dangers that women face within these contexts. This research complements the rise of literature exploring gendered (primarily sexual) violence, and various propositions on how to best address women's victimization. Existing documentation of women's experiences within EDM and raving subcultural scenes do provide sturdy conceptual foundations and research frameworks. However, the work done in this area has not updated in response to contemporary permutations of dance music stylings, modes of performance and consumption, or the scene's constituency and its attending internal dynamics. Research on jam bands seemingly lacks thorough analyses of gender and sexuality's impact on their subcultural scenes, instead focusing on ethnomusicological coverage of specific band followings (i.e., Deadheads), the construction of subcultural or countercultural identities, and rock music's histories and genealogies of influence. Yet, little work exists about the rising genre that hybridizes these two music forms through an event-oriented subculture and the gender-sexual dynamics within its respective scenes, creating a need for a more detailed cartography of jamtronica landscapes and their burgeoning sociocultural significance.

The recent popularization of music festivals has popularized the academic review of these events. Although current inquiries into festival events and their associated subcultural scenes are multi- and interdisciplinary, the majority of these works center upon the public health risks and medical concerns that these events pose, the practices and impacts of participants' normative drug and alcohol use, community and consumer responses to these events, and best practices for event planning, marketing, and execution. Here, existing works identify the empirical challenges and constraints that these events present to its organizers, its participants, and broader society. Yet, they do not seem to effectively examine how these more manifest issues may be structured by underlying inequalities of social location. There is even less review available on the internal mechanics that drive these mentioned subcultural disparities. The few works that do examine inequalities within this subcultural scene (or those of the subcultures that jamtronica blends) often fixate on the transformative power these scenes or its events have in eclipsing or addressing larger inequities and social problems. While jamtronica music festival scenes may enable their participants opportunities to envision a more egalitarian world and offer tools by which they may realize this ideal, these subcultural scenes are also rife with inequities and exploitation. As such, this requires those who study these events and their respective communities to engage in an even closer interrogation.

To address these observed dearths, I conducted a multi-site, focused ethnography over the span of three years. During this time, I undertook immersive participant observations at fourteen jamtronica music festival events, giving rise to several autoethnographic vignettes to contextualize my own experiences within these events as

well as to reflect my positionality as a researcher. I used these gatherings as opportunities to conduct numerous semi-structured interviews with event participants and stakeholders. This project incorporated data from 179 of these interviews, but primarily drew from a smaller sample of 50 individual and focus group exchanges. Additionally, I used these sites to acquire image-based and material artifacts present within the event, as well as descriptive field notes detailing observed artifacts that could not have been personally collected. With the help of an audio-recording tablet device, I was easily able to tape participant interviews, to conduct daily observational and analytical debriefs, and to document artifacts that would be later subjected to textual analyses.

Outside of these events, I gathered supplemental textual resources from online blogs and scene-centric media outlets. I transcribed and formatted the audio-recordings and various other data to be compatible with NVIVO, a qualitative data management software program. Informed by the tenets of modified grounded theory, I iteratively collected and analyzed data, primarily through thematic coding schemes. This approach helped refine the topic and scope of this project and the interview tools that I used in it. Additionally, these dialogical research-analyses processes offered insight into emerging patterns within the data. These patterns helped guide the focus and the interpretation of subsequent interviews or analyses. Some participants within the later few festivals opted into in-depth member-checking practices held on-site during my own event participation. Member-checking festival-goers offered indispensable feedback, clarifications, and suggestions for future research in this field. The synthesis of these analyses and the refinements suggested to them yields this very document – now drawing to its conclusion.

In this closing chapter, I begin by presenting three overarching findings of this study. I then collocate these findings to correspond with the research questions that guided and organized this project's course of inquiry. Next, I propose the theoretical and practical contributions of this project. I also extend a brief set of recommendations in hopes of fostering further coordinated address of gender-sexual inequalities within the scene and beyond it. Finally, I send forth the project by disclosing some of its limitations and imparting a few suggestions to support future research in this area.

## **FINDINGS**

### *Finding 1 – Festival Experiences and “Problems” are Not the Same for Men and Women*

Many jamtronica scene members and scholars laud music festivals for cultivating arenas where participants can paradoxically express their individuality and become wholly enveloped within a larger organismic body. In this tension, they claim, festival-goers may be able to transcend external constraints and inequalities like those of gender and sexuality. However, men and women who were interviewed reported far different “problems” – challenges, constraints, and considerations they face within their festival experiences. Although there is some overlap in the concerns that men and women raised, women communicated a unique set of concerns that men did not: apprehensions about personal safety, fears of victimization; and, their conscious decision-making about scene involvement. These concerns may lead women to minimally partake in subcultural (and often stigmatized) activities that allow them to enjoy themselves, but would not sanction them too heavily within mainstream worlds. Women also noted that these concerns might be so severe and pervasive that it can actually discourage women's involvement in

festival scenes and events. As men and women express different perceptions of their festival involvement, they subsequently make different choices based on different considerations that they must make. While the claimed inequality-eclipsing capabilities of these events and communities may be an ideal, this observed disparity indicates that gender and sexuality continue to shape subcultural expectations and experiences. This prompted investigation into what aspects of the subcultural scene engender these gendered concerns.

*Finding 2 – Jamtronica’s Gender-Sexual Prescriptions Mimic the Mainstream’s*

Within the jamtronica subcultural scene, men and women hold observably different professional and informal roles, expectations for self-presentation and event participation, and idealized positions within the scene’s sexual dynamics.

Festival-going men more frequently occupy powerful, central roles within the scene. They primarily incorporate utilitarian clothing within their self-presentations, prioritizing comfort rather than the scene’s encouraged “freakiness.” Their power and plain dress allow them to easily become voyeurs of the scene’s delights, affirming their dominance within jamtronica’s subcultural sexual dynamics. These gender and sexual subcultural expectations heavily co-construct each other and assist men in deriving power from and commanding status within the scene. These privileges help conceal their subcultural centrality, legitimize their sexual and social aggressions within event arenas, and shield them from consequences of their (in)actions.

Festival-going women customarily fulfill secondary roles within jamtronica communities, often serving as the caretakers, educators, or sexualized entertainment of the scene. As they practice this scene-modified brand of emphasized femininity, they

craft ornamental self-displays and fulfill exhibitionist sexual expectations – fashioning themselves as beautiful things to be consumed and enjoyed by voyeuristic men.

Contrastingly, these displays and dynamics may bring women pleasure and provide them an escape from mainstream suppressions of women’s sexual desire and sociocultural agency. Regardless, women receive less status and compensation for their subcultural participation, and are perceived to have less claim to and control within their scene memberships.

Although there may be a bit of flexibility within these codes, the predominating gender-sexual expectations of jamtronica music festival subcultural scenes seem nearly identical to those of the mainstream as they reinforce gender binaries, exploitative sexual dynamics, and Butler’s heterosexual matrix. Despite participants’ perceived immersion within the event and its lauded partition from everyday realms, these disparate expectations help further embed gender and sexual inequalities within “immune” subcultural communities and arenas.

### *Finding 3 – Festivals Help Manifest, Magnify, and Sometimes Mitigate Mainstream Gender-Sexual Power Dynamics*

Mainstream influences on jamtronica’s gender and sexual landscapes deeply inform the imbalanced power dynamics apparent within the festival scene. These inequalities not only manifest within festival-goers’ positions and presentations within the event arena, but also in how they interact within and navigate these spaces.

Jamtronica music festival demographics expose the average participant as rather privileged within the mainstream: white, middle-class, presumedly heterosexual, able-bodied, masculine-presenting young men. Non-interventionist subcultural codes assist

these predominantly-privileged men in using festival events as “unpoliced” sites of leisure and homosocial competition. The over-the-top nature of jamtronica events facilitates similarly over-the-top articulations of gender and sexuality; unfortunately, there are overwhelmingly informed by practices of mainstream hegemonic masculinity. Though festivals’ liminal atmospheres offer festival-going men opportunities to imagine and enact masculinities that may challenge those of the mainstream, most festival-going men use jamtronica to escalate their mainstream articulations and adjudications of masculinity and dominance. These practices often intimidate, endanger, and subordinate other event participants. Their actions and interactions generate a heightened sense of subcultural risk that festival-goers face within their scene participation. Yet, compounding mainstream and subcultural codes (and privileges) shield men from the culpability and consequences of their behavior, both within the scene and in their everyday lives.

Studies of women’s involvement in electronic dance music cultures abound. Despite their merit in bringing attention to the gender and sexual inequalities enmeshed within these scenes, nearly all of these works frame women solely in context of their subcultural involvement. Scene involvement is no doubt important to the many festival-going women, who adopt several aspects of the raving subcultures academics have studied to date. Many festival-going women craft their personal, social, and professional lives to reflect their involvement in jamtronica events and communities. For many, though, the weekend party must end sometime, and eventually women must return to the lives they “left behind,” exhibiting a mainstream-scene interconnection over which many authors seemingly gloss.

Festival-going women reproduce mainstream expectations and inequalities of gender and sexuality within their subcultural involvement, as they are often charged to fulfill similar emotional and facilitative labor within the scene as they customarily undertake in their mainstream lives. Although festivals are regarded as places where outside responsibilities and conventions erode, women communicated the elaborate calculations they made to manage conflicting mainstream and subcultural expectations. Additionally, subcultural codes encourage women to act as the “responsible” caretakers of the community. This assignment requires women to carefully monitor and manage themselves as they navigate festival arenas. This same mandate presses festival-going women to fulfill the preposterous expectation to do the same for others, even the chaos-inducing men that objectify, harass, endanger, injure, and violate them. As they juggle impossible-to-fulfill gender-sexual expectations, they must also evade the dangers of the scene – primarily, threats that festival-going men pose. If women fail to “responsibly” manage these impractical tasks and experience gendered (often, sexual) violence, they may face both mainstream and subcultural repercussions.

Despite the very real dangers with which festival-going women must contend, they readily identify scores of reasons why they continue their scene engagement. Many of these reasons seek “workarounds” in hopes of addressing the social, sexual, professional, and many other constraints women experience in their daily lives. This sustained interlinkage illuminates women’s purposeful “betweenness,” reflexively managing the identities, expectations, and concerns of both worlds in dialogue with each other. Women’s peripheral status in jamtronica festival scenes increasingly endangers them, but due to this detachment they are more able to “break the rules.” Thus, they may



use their position on the fringe as a site of transformation to improve their lives within the subculture and outside of it.

## **EXPLORING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### *How Are Subcultural Norms of Masculinity, Femininity, and Sexuality Constructed Within Music Festival Subcultures?*

Men's predominance within central, high-power (in)formal roles in jamtronica music festival subculture offers them: better compensation; more esteem; wider personal and professional networks; stronger claims to subcultural memberships; and, more organizational and discursive control over the scene. Men's utilitarian self-displays interlink with these roles. As central actors within the scene, they are able to evade prescriptions that promote "freakiness" without much reprimand. This demonstrates their ability to episodically make and break subcultural codes to fit their personal interests. Men's utilitarian clothing does not ornament or sexualize them in ways that scene-promoted womenswear does. Instead, the scene's gender-sexual dynamics position men as observers, allowing them to recreationally enjoy the benefits of women's objectifying and sexualizing ornamental displays. This laid-back pursuit of pleasure illuminates men's scene- (and mainstream-) legitimized voyeurism. Furthermore, these same dynamics help underpin men's sexual predation and threatening behaviors as "natural" and "inevitable."

Women primarily occupy peripheral roles within jamtronica scenes, facilitating events and their communities through "caregiving" services or educational work, or through providing entertainment to supplement listed music acts who are primarily comprised of men. Women's ornamental self-presentations assist them in fulfilling their

caretaking roles, as they are often charged to enhance the carnivalesque and burlesque atmosphere of festivals through their dress and makeup. Vendors and scene-centric texts encourage women's sexualized displays, offering it as a welcome alternative to stifling respectabilities of the mainstream. Jamtronica gender-sexual dynamics position women as sexualized objects to be observed and consumed, presenting them as a seemingly active locus of voyeur/exhibitionist exchanges (the thing that is crafted with the intention to be seen). Consequently, this subjects them to objectification, sexual double standards, slut-shaming, and victim-blaming. Attributing blame for their victimization to women, contrastingly, helps conceal the exploitative gaze that men's voyeurism enables and allows this gender-sexual dynamic to remain unchallenged.

*How do prescriptions of gender and sexuality impact expectations for subcultural participation?*

Festival-going men and women fulfill different subcultural expectations, providing divergent experiences of and routes to affirming scene membership. While music festivals provide opportunities to evade mainstream norms that discourage drug and alcohol use, identity play, sensuality and sexuality, and ethnomethodological breaches, many of the practices associated with subcultural membership intrinsically assume a masculine actor. That is, these practices structure scene membership with the presupposition that everyone will be able to fulfill these criteria, experience the same circumstances, and hold access to the same resources they require. However, this perspective does not acknowledge the variety of reasons as to why women may be restricted from partaking in prescribed subcultural activities (i.e., drinking or drug use) and the severe mainstream and subcultural punishments they may face in doing so

anyway. This presumed neutrality serves to naturalize men's status and belonging within these groups and to nurture homosocial subcultural contexts in which they may dominate others with impunity.

Women's subcultural marginalization makes them vulnerable to danger within these contexts, as is heavily exacerbated by their low-power roles, encouraged ornamentality, and expected exhibitionism. This peripherality limits women's jamtronica participation through gender-disparate standards and diminishes women's power to fight for alternatives to unequal gender-sexual prescriptions. Additionally, women fulfill an exhausting set of additional responsibilities: caregiving; scene supervision and stabilization; and, the evasion of risks that are posed by men. Women may find this laundry list of contradictory expectations discouraging, if not wholly prohibitive of their scene engagement. This may consequently reduce women's physical and ideological representation within the subculture. Thus, a self-affirming cycle sets up the scene to reproduce mainstream inequalities of gender and sexuality, yet contradictorily brands its ability to escape these everyday constraints.

*How do larger phenomena of gender inequality permeate subcultural communities? How do these issues contribute to the prominence of gendered risk within festival of arenas?*

Contrary to popular claims, festivals are not places where gender and sexuality can be entirely undone or disarticulated. While they hold flexibility and opportunities for innovation, underlying mainstream currents still significantly inform subcultural prescriptions, hierarchies, and interactions. Festival-goers do not solely exist within the event-based scene; their mainstream socialization and lives outside of these events encourage them to internalize hegemonic discourses and norms of gender and sexuality.

Participants carry these beliefs and practices into the event and use them to inform their interpretation of: sex-categorized and gendered bodies; interactional codes; deference to scene-based hierarchies; and, other aspects of their subcultural engagement. In turn, the external inequalities of gender and sexual embed within the scene, both intentionally and unintentionally.

Mainstream hegemonic masculinities' permeation into festival subcultural arena amplifies the privileges from which many of its white, able-bodied, middle-class, and (as observed through interviewee self-disclosures) heterosexual men already benefit. Men's centrality within jamtronica scenes endows them with discursive control to construct rules and texts that support their interests and reflect their desires. This centrality also allows them license for the "power to prey," often without challenge. As in other homosocially-driven party cultures, cultures of silence and protection insulate offenders and help shield them from both subcultural and mainstream consequences of their actions.

Women are not equally protected by these cultures of silence and protection, as they are often subject to mainstream and subcultural pressures to remain "responsible" – conducting themselves to evade the threats that men pose and managing their event participation as to avoid (possibly long-term) mainstream consequences. As such, they contend with similar sexual double standards, encouragements to objectify and sexualize themselves, slut-shaming, rape myths, and victim-blaming as they face in their external lives – risks they perceive and account for in their intra-arena decision-making. Whereas privileged participants of subcultural scenes (such as men, heterosexuals) often do not face long-term consequences or stigma from their subcultural involvement (and its

respective deviances), those of marginalized social locations (here, gender and sexuality) may not be able to escape these mainstream constraints or consequences so easily.

Jamtronica music festivals may allow participants to distend mainstream norms (including those of gender and sexuality), but not altogether discard them. The permeation of mainstream phenomena of gender and sexual inequalities throughout the scene suggests the discourses, practices, and hierarchies within the subculture may not challenge larger gender-sexual hegemonies. Instead, as Bahktinian Carnivals do, they may more so serve to embed them.

*How May Participation in Jamtronica Events and Communities Prove Paradoxically Empowering and Endangering for Festival-Going Women, Both within the Scene and in their Everyday Lives?*

Within their mainstream and subcultural lives, festival-going women face (internally) conflicting gender-sexual expectations that objectify, exploit, and peripheralize them. Further, women's marginalized status, internalized gender-sexual exploitation, and perceived "responsibility" within the subculture affix them more closely them to their mainstream lives, teaching them to fear mainstream repercussions for "indiscretions" – their victimization included – in their scene participation. Scene-tolerated displays of threat-posing masculinity purposefully augment women's perceptions and experiences of danger, creating prospective risks that women may not similarly encounter within their everyday lives. Acknowledged as "problems" that they uniquely face within their jamtronica scene involvement, women deal with these impositions, viewing them as yet another factor that they must consider and accommodate within their navigation of subcultural arenas. With so many concerns and expectations to juggle, festival-going women may feel constrained within their festival

participation. Their ties to both mainstream and subcultural worlds may confer these women with a managed “betweenness” that may paradoxically marginalize and empower them. Despite the gendered threats they face as a part of their subcultural involvement, participation in subcultural scenes may help festival-going women abate mainstream and subcultural constraints and contentions, through using them as sites to actively resist gender-sexual inequalities and to “reprogram” the gender-sexual orders of both contexts.

*What are the mainstream constraints of gender and sexuality festival-going women seek to overcome or overturn in their participation? (How) do they accomplish this?*

Several themes emerge from field interviews with festival-going women as they identified the reasons they engaged in the scene and participated in jamtronica festival events. The mainstream constraints of gender and sexuality they claim to challenge through their scene participation include:

- Alienation, isolation, and lack of peer support within their everyday lives;
- Repression of and disconnection from their “true” or idealized selves;
- A lack of capital, skills, networks to personally and professionally advance;
- Calls to uphold conflicting and unattainable ideals of femininity and respectability;
- Physical, social, and sexual violence that women who defy gender-sexual expectations endure and for which they tote blame;
- Mandates to be constantly vigilant and responsible, the ongoing monitor of self and others, and acting in service to others desires or needs;
- The “inevitability” of experiencing gendered threats and victimization, and sustained “feminine/feminized fear;” and,
- Suppression of women’s social and sexual subjectivity, autonomy, and agencies.

Festival-going women may ameliorate these constraints passively by: ignoring threats; creating “shields of positivity” and banking on the protective power of “good vibes;” or, by simply avoiding threat-posing people, scenarios, or festival events of poor repute altogether. Alternatively, these women find solutions to mainstream problems of gender and sexuality through their purposeful use of defensive safety rituals for

protection, and/or direct confrontation of reproduced inequalities through gender maneuvering. Expectantly, festival-going women use similar strategies to address subcultural manifestations of the constraints listed above. In nearly all cases, women dealt with these issues in very individualized ways, which helps them to customize their actions to fit their personal needs. Yet, this individualization may also fail to recognize these experiences as symptomatic of larger gender-sexual inequalities.

*How do festival participants negotiate tensions between their empowering pursuits of (sexual and social) pleasure and the gendered risks that these scenes and arenas pose?*

Interviewees across genders expressed general concerns about: festival logistic;s health risks; scene memberships; the recent push of festival events into mainstream popularity's impacts on participant influxes; and, public (non-) reception of the subculture. Women, however, uniquely communicated their concerns about managing themselves throughout their event participation, their drug and alcohol use, and their fear of being "spiked" with drugs or alcohol without their consent. They conveyed their apprehension of other festival-goers (particularly men), relating this to their perception of the heightened likelihood of being victimized by them. They also (at an astonishing frequency) mentioned their anxieties about how the consequences for their scene participation and in-arena conduct might carry back to their mainstream lives and earn them severe sanctions. These concerns illuminate a double bind within the scene: festival-going women endure risks by simply participating in the subculture. However, if they do not partake in normative practices (i.e., drinking, partying), they may also experience subcultural alienation and the augmented risks that it presents. In this, festival-going women reveal that their scene membership and the subcultural or

mainstream benefits they receive through their involvement are continually contingent, requiring calculated pursuit and active negotiation if they are to claim either in a gender-disparate, threat-filled scene.

Despite these perceived inevitabilities of danger, many festival-going women press on in their subcultural scene participation. Following a combination of internalized mainstream assumptions and learned subcultural dictates, they undertake strategies to passively avoid the gendered threats they perceive or to actively negotiate them. They cite that the pleasures and benefits they receive from their involvement frequently outweighs the dangers they recognize but must brave no less to claim privileges, agencies, and resources that they are denied in their mainstream lives. Although many festival-goers of all genders fail to acknowledge the (additional) negotiations that women make within their scene participation, those who do recognize these gender-disparate considerations (primarily festival-going women) understand them to be an inherent part of subcultural participation and womanhood at large.

*How do festival stakeholders (not) work to address these concerns/risks?*

The majority of the sampled event arenas evidenced little, if any, larger organizational efforts by festival stakeholders (producers, staff, artists, fans, and other associated community members) to address victimization or other gender-sexual inequalities within the subcultural scene. This dearth in acknowledgment and action indicates a significant lag of these U.S.-based scenes in comparison to efforts of festival communities abroad, as well as similar domestic party cultures like university Greek life. *Laissez-faire* subcultural codes help shield organizers from responsibility and similarly discourage other festival stakeholders from imposing upon others' event-sanctioned



expression, even in cases where participants intimidate, endanger, or violate other festival-goers. In the two festival sites where event-sponsored address of these issues was present, the programming appeared to be in pilot phases (soliciting feedback from festival participants about gender-sexual issues within the community) or relegated to static art installations in low-traffic areas of the event. Although these efforts lay the groundwork for scene-wide adoption, they demonstrate that these actions and their impacts are still very inchoate, encouraging festival-going women to individualistically manage these issues throughout the event arena.

## **THEORY OF PHENOMENON**

Mainstream discourses, norms, and hierarchies of gender and sexuality inform those of the jamtronica music festival subcultural scene. Consequentially, mainstream phenomena of gender-sexual inequality such as objectification, sexual double standards, sexual violence, and many others still overwhelmingly manifest within jamtronica's communities and subcultural arenas. Subcultures may offer temporary places to disrupt hegemonic gender-sexual prescriptions and ideologies. Yet, participants still use internalized mainstream gender-sexual framework to organize their subcultural participation, paying mind to the everyday constraints they face and the broader consequences of scene involvement they perceive. The considerations, experiences, and problems men and women face as they navigate festival events and communities are quite different, and reveal rifts in subcultural discourses that tout festivals' foster of unity, equality, and the eclipse of difference.

Though jamtronica community members across genders overwhelmingly characterize festival arenas as transformative or even emancipatory, paradoxical

mainstream and subcultural prescriptions disproportionately complicate women's involvement within festival events and communities, and open them to gendered threat, danger, and victimization. Men exacerbate the risks festival-going women face as they manipulate well-intentioned *laissez-faire* subcultural codes and repurpose festival events as homosocial competitive arenas. Their use of hyperbolic, intrusive displays of misogyny, homophobia, and dominance reflects a unique configuration of masculinity that is both subculturally revered and reviled. Interestingly, men who experience racial-ethnic, gender, sexual, ability, and class advantages in their mainstream lives primarily deploy these behaviors, allowing subcultural members who are already privileged by broader hegemonies of social location (and their intersections) to construct and enact even more flagrant displays of gender-sexual dominance.

Overlapping mainstream and subcultural discourses excuse men's aggressions and offenses as natural, necessary, or non-issues, and allow them to evade the consequences of these actions. Instead, as in the mainstream, complementary prescriptions position festival-going women to remain vigilant, monitoring oneself and one's surroundings for potential threats that could endanger them. If a woman were to experience threats or violence of any sort, these discourses infer that her victimization evidences a breach of her expected (self-) responsibility, justifying the consequences she meets. As the expected individualistic arbiters of risk within the scene, women utilize everyday practices through which they attempt to maximize the benefits of their subcultural engagement, in consideration of the threats (here, posed by festival men) they encounter. This is a task that many women find discouraging or prohibitive to their subcultural participation and membership. This subsequently reinforces the gender asymmetry of

jamtronica scenes and permits these “boys’ clubs” to reinforce homosocial cultures of silence and protection in which they may commit, justify, and evade punishment for their victimization of women with impunity.

Subcultural codes discouraging intervention and negativity (here, the mere mention of festivals as anything less than utopian) impede the needed organizational address of these issues. This dearth further embeds gender-sexual inequalities into the festival subculture and enmeshes sexual violence as an “inevitable” risk of scene participation, buttressing what I term a “rape subculture.”

In the face of these prohibitive subcultural conditions, festival-going women continue their involvement in scenes that often disadvantage and endanger them because they perceive very real returns from their community and event participation. To them, jamtronica event arenas act as unique domains from which they may gain mainstream and subcultural capital and privileges, or challenge barriers to these rewards in both contexts. The strategies and “solutions” women find within their subcultural participation, though often individualized, have immense transformative potential as they carry their subculturally-attained benefits and agency-enhancing behaviors back into their mainstream lives.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY**

This study affirms the Bahktinian claim that Carnival events strengthen pre-existing inequalities through their resolution and participants’ return to reality. However, I reject the notion that these events enable participants to fully shirk the mainstream power relations and identities they hold. Carnivals help strengthen everyday inequalities throughout events, structuring more flexible, yet still bounded, prescriptions for its

participants, often dependent upon the external privileges a participant holds. Those with greater privileges outside of the Carnival event may often engage in these periods with fewer consequences upon Carnival's conclusion. The "release" or "subversion" one may achieve, as this study demonstrates, is often dependent upon the identities (and externally-informed power relations) a participant takes into the carnivalesque arena.

This inability to fully shed outside identities (and their attending inequalities) indicates that, although many authors tend to portray members of subcultural communities solely within the context of their scene involvement, these participants are more closely tied to their mainstream lives than these scene members and scholars may infer. Most subcultural participants are not isolated from the outside world, having been brought up and socialized in mainstream contexts. Most participants do not live their entire lives going from one festival to another. Instead, they are more so immersed in mainstream contexts than the episodic event-based scene memberships they claim. Accordingly, mainstream inequalities often heavily inform the roles, interactions, and hierarchies of these subcultures and covertly reproduce these larger power dynamics within seemingly-resistant communities.

Jamtronica music festivals' shifting participant expectations and performances demonstrate the constructed nature of gender and sexuality. This lack of fixity suggests grounds for expanding possibilities through which we categorize and characterize gender and sexuality in the future. This study additionally demonstrates how deeply interlocked understandings of gender and sexuality are, as one's gender often dictates allocations of sexual agency, how one may objectify or be objectified, and the likelihood that one may encounter threats or experiences of danger, including those of sexual violence, in both

mainstream and subcultural contexts. These intersections of gender and sexuality further dictate one's roles, capital, and membership within the subculture, showing how privileges permeate throughout social contexts.

In both their mainstream and subcultural lives, women contend with ever-narrowing prescriptions of an ideal femininity that rewards their compliance and restricts their agency. While festival-going women must attune to many conflicting gender-sexual prescriptions, this study suggests that women actively critique subcultural and mainstream gender systems, and willfully reject these paradoxical demands. As they navigate these new gender-sexual terrains, they negotiate the (sexual) pleasure-danger binary Vance models. This study shows how women carry out this theoretical model within their real-life concerns and decision-making. Though the decisions festival-going women make often hinge upon their perceptions of sexual danger and pleasure, they reveal that sexuality is not the only axis by which women calculate their pursuits. Instead, they illuminate an emerging dialectic between women's sexual subjectivity and their social subjectivity. As these women increasingly claim their rights to safe, consensual, pleasurable sexual expressions, they additionally discover a form of social agency through which they may use to command other forms of sociopolitical change – and vice versa.

Some scholars have wrung their hands about the increasingly fragmented forms that gender advocacy has taken, lamenting the lack of feminist futures this trend seemingly forecasts. However, I believe that this fragmentation should not be interpreted as a total breakdown, but a metamorphosis of broader feminist consciousness. The burgeoning proto-feminist momentum within these subcultural scenes portends a return

to oft-idealized collective action. However, disparaging these individualized practices by which women change gender-sexual meanings and practices discredits the humble interactional processes by which these advocacy efforts are built. Every coalitional movement originates with an individual who challenges the status quo. Festival-goers' feminist consciousnesses, though now primarily individualized and emergent, may gift the needed spark – a hashtag, an activity, a platform, a figurehead – for lasting emancipatory change.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

These hoped-for egalitarian futures will not fall into festival stakeholders' laps without dedicated action. In fact, inaction serves to exacerbate gender and sexual inequalities of the jamtronica subcultural scene. Based on scholarly literature, suggestions made by festival-goers, and personal experience, I offer five recommendations to guide jamtronica community members – be they fans, vendors, or producers – as they initiate efforts to address sexual violence perpetration and gender disparities within the scene.

### *Recommendation 1 – Recognize the Issue*

Members of the jamtronica music festival community must acknowledge the multiplicity and subjectivity of participants' experiences, recognizing that differences in social identities and locations do shape how people act, interact, and experience festival events. Festival-going women contend with different constraints and challenges than men. Similarly, those who are marginalized by race, class, sexuality, age, ability, and other factors likely have different perceptions, experiences, and means to navigate this

scene. Encouraging “one-size-fits-all” norms and expectations is exclusionary and can actually harm already-marginalized scene members in both their event participation and their everyday lives. Festival-going women experience disproportionate threats to their well-beings (including sexual violence) that they have to consider and accommodate. Stop drowning out the very real tensions and problems that exist within the community by proclaiming blanketing statements of unity, acceptance, and equity. Instead, recognize the shortcomings and problematic aspects of the scene’s events and community dynamics, and intentionally work to make the utopian ideals it claims realities. To learn more about this variability of experiences, foster more authentic connections between festival-goers as they teach and learn from each other, and patiently work toward tangible solutions to the issues that these conversations illuminate.

#### *Recommendation 2 – Coordinate Efforts*

Because sexual violence centers receive more requests during the months in which festivals are held, it is critical for stakeholders to communicate and strategically co-coordinate response plans. Event organizers and staff may look to employ or consult anti-violence advocates, medical professionals trained in sexual health, emergency response, and trauma care, and non-profit groups. Non-profits should claim an active role at these events by escalating their services and outreach during these events. Organizers, staff, community representative, and other (subcultural) community members must carefully cooperate to build a response program that corresponds to the unique characteristics and dynamics of each event, as informed by fan participants.

*Recommendation 3 – Produce and Consume Wisely*

Refuse to buy or sell goods, or sponsor with advertisements that capitalize on gender and sexual inequalities. This means being mindful to structure images and designs to not fall into easy patterns of sexualization, objectification, or “mobilizing rape.” Listen to and be flexible in adapting to the feedback of festival-goers’ about their reception of these goods and services. Conscientiously develop, sponsor, and purchase products that seek to remedy current gender-sexual inequalities. Realize that the things one buys, sells, or sponsors have widespread and profound impacts on people, their relationships with each other, and those they hold with larger sociocultural worlds.

*Recommendation 4 – Get Educated and Act on It*

Require staff trainings about bystander intervention techniques and give them explicit authorization to use them. Rapport and trust with event security, production, and medical staff are essential as these teams often stand in as the “law and order” of an arena that historically has discouraged police monitor. Festival staff must establish and uphold severe consequences for staff members who perpetrate sexual violence, even within assumedly glib and casual interactions. As event staff and production teams hold profound influence within the subcultural scene, others may be discouraged from engaging in threat-posing behaviors or displays through staff modeling this behavior.

Watch out for fellow scene members. Know when to seek external assistance in dealing with medical, interpersonal, or security issues, and how to effectively do so. Listen to, believe, and support survivors. Call out those who pose gendered threat and endanger fellow festival-goers. Do not shelter perpetrators, regardless of one’s



association to them or their esteem within the subculture. Remaining silent expresses acceptance and complicity in the offense. Educate oneself and others about consent, teaching and learning how to effectively request, negotiate, and communicate within consensual sexual exchanges, and allow these lessons to reverberate in other aspects of life (i.e., relationships, work life). These skills transcend the bedroom (or the tent, in most festival cases) and ensure more egalitarian actions and response in broader society.

#### *Recommendation 5 – Take It to the Next Level*

Help raise and engrain community knowledge about issues of gender and sexuality, violence, consent practices, and bystander intervention skills. Get involved with non-profit advocacy and activist groups that deal with these issues. Speak up, and share information and resources. Actively seek out and undo entrenched oppressive discourses, practices, and hierarchies within the scene and beyond. Further, support music and professional education, as well as mentorships to socialize the next generation of scene artists, staff, associates, and fans. Call for greater representation and professionalization of women (and other marginalized groups) within this scene and in the mainstream. Just get started.

#### **PROJECT LIMITATIONS**

First, the findings of this project are not generalizable to the wider population of jamtronica music festival subcultural scene members. Though I purposefully drew from fourteen fields sites, over 150 online and material texts, and nearly 200 interviews (a sampling frame larger than most qualitative projects), these data are not a total representation of the demographics and perspectives of the larger scene or its

demographics. Interviewees represent a small percentage of the several thousand attendees of most festivals, of the festivals that were within a bounded geographic reach. This study may not reflect patterns of jamtronica festival scenes in other parts of the United States or abroad.

Next, issues of consent, participants' ability to articulate their understandings and experience of gender, sexuality, and threat, and my own hybrid identity as both research and long-time festival participant ethically limit this study. Research participants' ability to fully and knowingly consent for inclusion in this project may be impacted by the widespread subcultural acceptance of drug and alcohol use within these events. Even if interviewees were able to offer their full consent, my interpretations may not accurately reflect the situated knowledges they use to frame gender, sexuality, and risk, even as someone who claims membership within jamtronica music festival circles. While I worked carefully to sample and analyze interviewees and their comments in ethically-sound and appropriately-representative ways, there can be no perfect means of sampling for sobriety through visual review and no perfect interpretation or re-telling of these conversations.

Lastly, there is a significant stigma of discussing topics such as sexual violence and inequalities, especially in a vacation-like arena that is supposed to be free of such external problems. Several prospective study participants rejected requests to "keep" the recording of finished conversations (requiring me to delete countless hours of work), to talk about these subjects, or to be recorded at all. Seeing that such interviews held the possibility of indicting oneself, others, events, and the scene as a whole, participants may not have been as forthcoming or honest as could have been.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

This exploratory study aims to lay foundations through which others may continue in this research field as well as the many related fields that this project synthesizes. As this project attempts to answer several preliminary questions, it opens tenfold more. I encourage future studies within this area to:

- Expand these analyses beyond “traditional” assumptions and binaries of gender, asking “how do those who do not fit within these binaries make meaning and orient action in a scene so organized by binaristic prescriptions?”
- Investigate queer folks’ experiences within overwhelmingly heteronormative and gender-sexually prescriptive scene;
- More thoroughly incorporate analyses across social identities and locations that are not as prominent within this set of analyses, such as race, class, age, ability, and so forth; and,
- Assess the viability, underpinning discourses, geographic and ideological spread, and scene reception of emerging gender-sexual and violence prevention programming.

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Revised Interview Schedule  
Summer 2015

### *Warmup Questions*

- Why do you come to festivals?
- How did you start coming to festivals? What's your "creation story"?
- Is there a difference between "festival" life and "real" life? If so, how do you feel different in "festival life"? Do you feel more like "yourself" in one context or the other?
- Do you think that how you act within the festival impacts how you conduct your life outside of it? Or, is your "festival life" separate from your "real life"?
- Are men and women expected to behave a certain way within "real life"? Do these differ from how men and women are expected to act within festivals? If so, what are some of these differences?

### *Festival Commercialization*

- Why do you think festival fashion has become such a "trend" as of late?
- What consequences does increased popularity of festivals have on the festival community? Have you noticed any difference in how people act/dress, who attends, etc.?
- Do you feel that the increased popularity of festivals impacts how people dress and act?
- Festivals are increasingly sponsored by large product brands. What brands have you seen around the festival, and how do they participate or contribute to the festival experience? What impacts do you think that corporate sponsorship of festivals has on the patrons? What impacts do you think corporate sponsorship of festivals has on the festival experience?

### *Frames of Reference and Socializing the Festival Self*

- How do you "construct" your festival look – by simply wearing what you wear, or carefully considering what items you bring?
- When you came to your first festival, to whom or where did you look to find out what to wear? Have you ever looked at a festival fashion blog, or social media post? What do these media suggest to you as appropriate festival attire?
- Whose voices do you think are most represented in these blogs or social media posts? Are they aligned with your own beliefs? Do what they prescribe as festival attire match your own choice of what to wear to festivals?

- How does the internet contribute to passing along information regarding festival fashion?
- Do you make decisions on festival wear based upon particular situations, or are your fashion decisions similar regardless of festival/real-life contexts? Why do you choose to do this?

### *Gendering Festival Fashion*

- What “rules” are there for men in terms of what they “should” wear to festivals? What “rules” are there for women in terms of what they “should” wear to festivals? Do think that clothing and fashion at festivals is more important to one gender rather than the others? Why, or why not?
- Major brands, such as Victoria’s Secret, H&M, and Sephora have promoted lines that are supposed to be targeted toward “festivals.” However, these clothing companies have been traditionally marketed towards women. Have you heard of any clothing lines for men that have released festival fashions?
- Do you have a specific festival wardrobe? Is there a difference in what can be worn at festivals rather than in “real life”? How do you feel when you are in your “festival wardrobe”? What impacts your decisions (job, school, family) to incorporate festival fashion into your daily life?

### *Undress, Sexuality, and Gender*

- Why do you think that women go around topless/nude/in scanty clothes at festivals? How do you feel about it? What do you think other people think about it? What happens if a man goes around undressed? Are your feelings the same as they would be for a woman?
- It’s hot, and baring skin is sometimes the easiest way to cool off. But, how much is too much? What consequences, if there are any, are there for baring too much skin at a festival? Are there different consequences for women who bare a lot of skin, versus men who do the same?
- Some other interviews that I’ve had have talked about women who walk around in particular outfits as “slutty.” Do you think they’re talking about the clothing or the women? Why is there a particular association made with specific outfits and sexuality? Do you think that there are certain outfits that men can wear to be “slutty?”
- I’ve noticed that some vendors will sell women’s underwear with band logos on them, but I’ve yet to see men’s underwear for sale. Why do you think that they don’t sell both?
- Some popular magazines have published articles as to “how to have your best festival sex ever.” What do you think about this? Do you see sex and festival culture as connected? Are there certain things you should do to attract a festival hook-up?

### *Cultural Appropriation and Festival Fashion*

- Who usually comes to festivals? Do you think that festivals are popular with certain demographic groups rather than others?
- I've noticed that a lot of vendors here sell items that are indigenous to certain areas (bindis, kimonos, Guatemalan sweaters, etc.). Why do you think these items are popular at festivals?
- Recently, there have been debates on the appropriateness of Native American headdresses and their use by festival patrons. What are your thoughts on the debate?
- Are there any items that should be off-limits when considering festival fashion? Why do you consider these boundaries? Why are they important to abide by?
- When you are constructing your festival wear, do you ever consider bringing items from other cultures to enhance your "look"? Why do you do this? How does this shape how you think about yourself and others – in terms of what groups you identify with, your position within the world, etc.? Is there a benefit of bringing in cultural items into your wardrobe, specific to festival participation? Do you ever think about the background of some of the items that you wear – where it's made, how it's used, etc.?

*Idealized Festival Femininities*

- How would you describe an ideal (or “perfect”) festival girl/woman? What does she look like? How does she act? What is her role in the festival?
- Do women serve a particular role at music festivals? If so/not, why/not?
- Where do we source our understandings of femininity as they pertain to festival life?
- Do you look to any particular resources to help define your role within the festival, such as blogs or internet forums? How do you think these resources have impacted how you think about and experience festivals?

*Gendering Festival Participation*

- Are men and women expected to behave a certain way within “real life”? Do these differ from how men and women are expected to act within festivals? If so, what are some of these differences?
- What “rules” are there for men in terms of what they “should” wear to or “do” at festivals? What “rules” are there for women in terms of what they “should” wear to or “do” at festivals? Is clothing more important to festival participation for one group, rather than the other?
- How do women demonstrate power within festivals? Do you think that these modes are different than opportunities offered outside of festivals? If so/not, why/not?
- Women are increasingly participating in festivals, but we only see a few women on stage or in production crews. Why do you think that this disparity exists? Do we bother fixing it?

*Undress, Sexuality, and Gender*

- Why do you think that women go around topless/nude/in scanty clothes at festivals? How do you feel about it? What do you think other people think about it? What happens if a man goes around undressed? Are your feelings the same as they would be for a woman?
- Usually, festivals are held in the summer and it’s quite hot. Baring skin is sometimes the easiest way to cool off, but, how much is too much? What consequences, if there are any, are there for baring too much skin at a festival? Are there different consequences for women who bare a lot of skin, versus men who do the same?

- Some other interviews that I've had have talked about women who walk around in particular outfits as "slutty." Do you think they're talking about the clothing or the women? Why is there a particular association made with specific outfits and sexuality?  
Do you think that there are certain outfits that men can wear to be "slutty?"
- Festivals are all about self-expression. Do you think nudity is a way to express something about yourself?
- I've noticed that some vendors will sell women's underwear with band logos on them, but I've yet to see men's underwear for sale. Why do you think that they don't sell both?
- Some popular magazines have published articles as to "how to have your best festival sex ever." What do you think about this? Do you see sex and festival culture as connected? Are there certain things you should do to attract a festival hook-up?

### *Perceived Threats and Solutions*

- Do women experience specific challenges during festivals? What may some of these be?
- In your festival experience, have you ever observed something really worrying or shocking? How did you cope with this? Was the situation able to be resolved on its own, or did you have to help/get help? If this event had happened to a member of the "opposite" gender, would you have reacted in the same way?
- In my experience, I have seen many people groped and verbally harassed at festivals. How do you feel about this? Is this a common occurrence? Why may people act beyond norms of common courtesy during festival events?
- What happens if someone is deemed slutty within festival communities? Do you think that this label is assigned with equal frequency and weight?
- Some authors that I've been reading have said that the mainstreaming of festivals has prompted a change in festival behaviors. Have you noticed any shifts in how people participate in festivals? Why do you think that there may have been a change in this pattern?
- A lot of media attention has been directed toward issues of sexual violence within festivals, such as rape. What do you think the outcomes of this media coverage could be?
- If you could wave a magic wand and fix anything related to festivals, what would it be?
- Could there be any problems with addressing the "problems" of festivals?



### *Gender Transgression and Agency*

- In wider society, men are expected to have a large number of sexual partners, while women are expected to maintain a small pool of sexual partners. Do you think that the same expectations apply within festival communities? Why may festivals act to alter some of these norms?
- Where do gender arrangements come from? Do you think they can change at all? How?
- I would be worried if a woman \_\_\_\_\_ at a festival.
- I would think it totally cool, but still pretty bold, if a woman \_\_\_\_\_ at a festival.
- If I had no fears of repercussion, I would \_\_\_\_\_ at a festival.
- How much do you think personal choice plays into how we express ourselves, our gender, and our sexuality?
- What is a common gender norm within festivals? How often is this broken? What are its consequences?

## **APPENDIX B: RESEARCHED FESTIVALS AND FIELD SITE DESCRIPTIONS**

### *Empieza (2014, 2015, 2016)*

Nestled in the heartland of the upper-Midwest, Empieza is a three-day long music festival, hosting an optional “opening night” event the Thursday night prior to the festival’s formal commencement. Characterized by several open plains, a small patch of forest, and hilly amphitheaters, Empieza primarily features bluegrass and improvisational jam rock. However, in recent years, there has been a contested shift toward incorporating more EDM artists. Attendance at Empieza usually averages around 20,000 participants. Empieza is Spanish for “beginning;” as this festival not only marks the beginning of the summer festival season, but my first festival experience, I figured the pseudonym fitting.

### *Fall Ball (2015)*

Held in the deepest South at the very end of summer, Fall Ball incorporates fall holiday themes into its production. Attendance to Fall Ball has steadily increased over the last few years, averaging around 17,000 participants. This may be due in part to the increased EDM performances at this previously jam-oriented event, attracting fans from a worldwide dance music hub. At this event, production staff members make intentional efforts to blend light, music, and art installations to cultivate a “spooky, yet friendly” liminal atmosphere for their participants.

### *Freeze Out (2014)*

Located in the south-central portion of the Midwest, FreezeOut is a two and a half day music festival held over a traditionally chilly fall weekend. Hosted on flat fields, Freeze Out offered plenty of room for camping; however, foul weather kept many last-minute festival participants from attending. Featuring several interactive art exhibits, this budding festival recently emerged out the “festival boom.” Attendance is estimated at 9,000 participants.

### *Glow Worm (2014, 2015, 2016)*

The Glow Worm Festival is a world-renowned arts and music festival located in the upper-Midwest. Characterized by hilly terrain and its wide span of woodland area, over 45,000 attendants flock to this festival annually. Glow Worm is held over four days, with several headlining acts performing multiple times over the weekend, focusing on cultivating a distinctive blend of jamtronica. However, in recent years, Glow Worm has gained acclaim through its increased incorporation of EDM. It is a heavily-produced event, with several weeks of work going into setting up the interactive art and performance spaces that serve to bring the most intense forms of identity and physical play to the immersive and engaging event.

### *Hilly Hike (2014)*

Hilly Hike is a festival like no other. Not only does it draw the smallest group of participants from the events included in this list (approximated around 150 attendees), but it is by far the most “primitive,” requiring a hike down a steep incline to access amenities such as latrines, medical assistance, and cellular service. Though Hilly Hike is small and only a day and a half long, it features some of the finest local and national artists on its singular stage. Though camping at the top of the hill was quite a challenge, opportunities for swimming and intimate bonfires proved delightful.

### *Mudslide (2014)*

Appropriately named for its consistently inconsistent weather, Mudslide is located in the deep south-western regions of the Midwest. Attracting around 18,000 participants, this festival is strategically located within hillside hollers, offering stadium-style seating and plenty of space to spread out over the three-day-stay. Though not as intensively manufactured as other festivals, Mudslide gains its draw from its central location and its breathtaking views. Mudslide is renowned for their bluegrass fusions, creating a unique interpretation of jamtronica and demonstrating the vast origins from this emerging and diverse genre and scene draw.

### *Nocturne (2015)*

Approaching the end of festival season, Nocturne is a product of the emergent festival boom. Located in the southern mid-Atlantic region, the festival hosts around 1,200 participants in its hilly, wooded locale. Focusing explicitly on bands that blend electronic and jam rock genres, this festival uses only a few production elements to bring forth the immersive experience it claims. Intimate camping and community workshops that focus on spiritual and physical development are central to the festival’s production.

### *Summer Swelter (2015)*

Timed at just when the southern summer hits its peak, Summer Swelter’s name is true to form. Though located closely to a nearby mountain range, the event’s topography is surprisingly flat, a challenge over the four-day event span. Summer Swelter, in its recent years has moved away from its jam band origins, accommodating popular rock, hip hop, and international groups. Similarly, there’s something for everything at this festival, as it incorporates comedy acts, movie showings, and late-night competitions to keep its attendees busy at all hours of the day. This diversity of performance and activity has expanded the demographic reach of Summer Swelter, as well as transformed how the mainstream views festival events and their associated cultures. This festival attracts the largest number of participants of the events studied here, hosting more than an estimated 90,000 festival-goers annually.

*Thumbs Up (2015)*

Thumbs Up features bluegrass and folk music that hearken from the festival's south-eastern roots. This three-day festival, despite its strong lineups and longitudinal success, has experienced significant turnover in the last few years, repeatedly displacing its location. In 2013, this event was the test site for pre-pilot observations and proved to be highly informative, as its hilly terrain permitted expansive and holistic observations. With approximately 16,000 attendees, Thumbs Up utilizes a strong event-based following to adapt to new challenges.

*Tree Ridge (2014)*

Based on an intimate campground in the south-central Midwest, Tree Ridge attracts approximately 5,000 participants over its two-and-a-half-day duration. As the event is somewhat small, it provides a rare opportunity to camp on the hill across from the stage. Based out of a regional music following, Tree Ridge is yet another spin-off festival that emerged out of the recent festival boom. This festival primarily draws on improvisational rock and funk influences in a minimalist, yet pleasant festival.

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**EDUCATION**

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2018 (Expected)	<b>Ph.D.</b> , Sociology, University of Kentucky
2016	<b>Graduate Certificate</b> , College Teaching and Learning, University of Kentucky
2013	<b>M.A.</b> , Sociology, University of Kentucky
2010	<b>B.A.</b> , Sociology and International Relations, McKendree University.

**PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS HELD**

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2017 – current	<b>Visiting Assistant Professor, Georgetown College</b> (Georgetown, KY)
2015 – 2017	<b>Part-Time Instructor, Transylvania University</b> (Lexington, KY)
2013 – 2017	<b>Independent Graduate Instructor, University of Kentucky</b> (Lexington, KY)
2015 – 2016	<b>Online Instructor, Brescia University</b> (Owensboro, KY)
2011 – 2013	<b>Teaching Assistant, University of Kentucky</b> (Lexington, KY)

**SCHOLASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL HONORS**

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2018	UK Graduate Student Congress Outstanding Service Award
2016	UK Department of Sociology, Graduate Student Teaching Award
2016	UK College of Arts and Science, Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award
2015 – 2016	UK Association of Emeriti Faculty, Endowed Teaching Fellowship
2015	UK Graduate School, Dissertation Enhancement Award
2014	UK Student Government, Scholarship for Academic Excellence
2011 – 2013	UK Graduate School, Daniel R. Reedy Quality Achievement Fellowship
2013, 2014, 2015	UK College of Arts and Sciences, Outstanding Teaching Award Nominee
2012	Phi Kappa Phi, Love of Learning Award
2012	UK Sociology Department, Howard Beers Summer Student Fellowship
2010	McKendree University, Best in Major Award for Sociology
2010	McKendree University, Technos International Award

**PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS**

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Forthcoming	Motl, Kaitlyne A. “‘Dashiki Chic’: Color-blind Racial Ideology in EDM Festival-Goers’ ‘Dress Talk.’” <i>Popular Music and Society</i> .
2017	Motl, Kaitlyne A. “Fear in the Festival Field: Threat, Apprehension, and Apathy.” <i>DanceCult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music</i> 9(1).
2008	Frederking, Brian, Kaitlyne Motl, and Nishant Timilsina. “Nuclear Proliferation and Authority in World Politics.” <i>Journal of International and Global Studies</i> 1(1): 72-88.

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