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Introduction

It's not our revolution unless we can dance.
Dancing is not a crime unless you live in AmeriKKK.
—T-shirt slogans at the 2003 Rave Act Protest by ROAR[1]
Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.

It is 11:30 P.M. on a hot July night in 2004, near Philadelphia's riverfront. I am walking toward the entrance of one of the city's largest electronic dance music (EDM) parties. In the weeks prior, I heard some locals call this event a rave, but most people simply referred to it by its name: Explosion! I am recalling the many contradictory opinions I have heard during my fieldwork about raves' current state. Tonight, I suppose, I will get another chance to think about that debate, since this is the only contemporary party I have heard some scene insiders call a rave.

The group that owns and promotes this party put me on the guest list, which saves me a whopping $40. As soon as I pass through front gate security (metal detector and pat-down), club staff put a yellow plastic band around my wrist, signifying that I am over twenty-one years of age. Younger than twenty-one-year-old partygoers get blue bands. I hear some complaints about the color-coded bands—mostly rants against club alcohol policies—but most objections are about the steep cover charge.

Inside the nightclub, I begin surveying the event's layout. The first room I come to is the party's "main stage" or "main room," which, judging from the reputations of the DJs posted on a list outside, is the trance music room. Eight DJs are scheduled to play here, rotating pretty much every hour.

The DJ is playing music from a booth high above the dance floor. A mostly white and Asian crowd is listening or watching. Others are chatting or dancing, some with glow sticks. I feel slightly overdressed. My shirt is fitted and feminine, not over-sized with a catchy slogan, like those on the people around me.

My pants (jeans) are tight rather than baggy, comfy, or covered with pockets. And my shoes are black leather wedges, not sneakers or trendy sports shoes.

Undeterred by my wardrobe faux pas, I start dancing beside two Asian males, who greet me with smiles and hand me glow sticks. After thirty minutes or so, I thank my sweaty and happy dancing buddies, pass my glow sticks on to a tattooed woman beside me, and move on to check out the two bars in the main room.

The first bar is elevated on a platform, level with the DJ booth. It is guarded by security. A tall, muscular man asks about my wrist band when I start climbing the stairs. He tells me I need a yellow one to enter. I raise my arm and he lets me pass. A few older heterosexual couples are standing around flirting over swanky drinks—imported beer for the men and colorful cocktails for the women. They are dressed more like me, but not much is happening here, so I drift into the other bar.

At the under-twenty-one-year-old bar, only Pepsi products are being sold. Not many people are hanging out here either, but I start talking to a young Goth couple—Craig and Eva—who look more out of place than do I. The young man intrigues me immensely because his hair is glued into a razor-thin, multicolored Mohawk stretching more than a foot above his head. His girlfriend has dyed jet-black hair; heavy, dark makeup; and a black outfit, including fishnet stockings with knee-high, platform leather boots. Silver rings and studs pierce both of their noses and tongues.

Craig and Eva are kind and talkative and I buy them Pepsis as we chat about Goth, rave, and EDM cultures. About thirty minutes into our conversation, a commotion between club security and a skinny, black, male breaks out close by. People immediately converge around us to see what is going on. Two security guards confiscate his pills and disappear into a private room, leaving the third guard behind to supervise the "suspect." A few minutes later, several other security guards push into the room and stay there about ten minutes. They emerge without the pills and tell the young "suspect" he can go back to the party.

As the commotion subsides, the crowd I am standing in disbands. Craig and Eva have slipped away during the distraction. The people around me want to know what happened, but the bouncers remain tight-lipped and the young male under suspicion has disappeared. So, I take a quick peek into the adjacent small, dank, and sweaty techno room, see a handful of people talking along its perimeter, and head outside to the drum and bass tent.

This tent is packed, mostly with white and black males dancing somewhat aggressively to very fast music. There does not seem to be any room on the dance floor, so I make my way to the bar that surrounds it, also guarded by security checking for yellow wristbands. I become frustrated because I can barely maneuver my way through this crowd and I am getting tired from being on my feet for more than two hours now. Clearly, I am wearing the wrong

shoes! Thankfully, I see an outdoor chill area and nudge my way toward it to find a place to sit down and relax.

The outdoor chill area encompasses the main tent where progressive house music is being played by some of the event's most famous DJs. This is going to be a good spot for me since the air is fresh, the space comfortable, and the music fantastic. I locate a spot to sit down, a cement step near the Porto-pots, and I say hello to two white guys, Aidan and Connor, sitting next to me. They tell me they are from Cleveland and ask me where I am from. I tell them I live close by and then we start talking about the party, dance music, and DJs.

I take this opportunity to ask them if this event is a rave. My question ignites a heated discussion about how this branded party has changed over the years and what this signifies for rave culture. It also "outs" me as an academic studying the rave and EDM scenes, which both men find interesting. Aidan indulges my question by complaining that the party is more like a concert or at least costs as much as one. He says he cannot buy a proper drink because the cover charge and his "chemicals" have tapped him out. He says this means he has to refill his water bottle in the bathroom, rather than buying new ones for $5 apiece. Connor calls my attention to the "corporatism" around us. He tells me in the old days—in 1999 when he was fifteen—companies like Pepsi, Red Bull, or Sobe did not sponsor raves, but now they did. Connor told me he also was not going to pay $5 for water or Pepsi or $7 for a Red Bull or bottle of Sobe.

Just then, Aidan yells, "Yo! Check out the dude puking over by the Porto-pots." The two men look at each other and say, "Wonder what he's on?" Aidan and Connor leave me behind to go find out, unconcerned about whether event security might interfere with their euphoric plans. So, I get back up to dance. By 4:00 A.M., sweating, heaving, and altered states are more common among the remaining partygoers.

In my car on the way home, I think about the party and how different or similar it might have been to a late 1990s[2] rave in Philadelphia or elsewhere in the United States. Back then, I was a mid-thirties postdoctoral student in Chicago, socially distant from rave scenes anywhere. I wondered if raves in the past were corporate sponsored, had guest lists, cost $40 to get in, and had electronic security. Early in my project, I read that "shady" people made lots of money from raves and had often endangered ravers via overcrowding, drug selling, inadequate water and fluid supply, and exposure to theft and other crimes (Collin 1997; Hill 2002; McRobbie 1994; Redhead 1993, 1995; Reynolds 1999). While I did see some drug selling and the drum and bass tent was packed, tonight's security and event staff seemed overly concerned with safety and policy enforcement. And there was no shortage of modern comforts for attendees (ample sitting space, fresh air, fluids, bathrooms, etc.). Yes, there were Aidan and Connor's complaints, but there also were glow sticks, drug use and drug sickness, and lots of EDM, DJs, and dancing.

Maybe raves had changed, but in what ways and why? The relative infrequency of events like Explosion! in Philadelphia and their diminished attendance (Explosion! was down more than 50 percent from peak rave years, a promoter told me on the way out) certainly made me think that decline, not simply change, was occurring. Was rave culture dying? What forces were reshaping raves or helping to bring about their decline, and who were the people, groups, and institutions involved?

Historical Glimpse of Raves

After the civil rights victories, liberal social policies, and an emerging secular morality in the 1960s and 1970s, the United States entered a conservative period in the 1980s. Ronald Reagan's presidency earmarked a rightward shift toward capitalism, laissez-faire government, individualism, and religious morality. The conservative 1980s would also host the coming of age of Generation X,[3] that is, the Baby Boomers' children. While many Generation Xers grew up listening to their parents' stories about equality, freedom, war, peace, Woodstock, and debauchery, their own reality would be anchored in materialism, corporatism, alienation, equity challenges, parents groups, and War on Drugs policies. It is within this context that raves originated.

Raves, or grassroots-organized, antiestablishment,[4] unlicensed all-night dance parties featuring electronically produced dance music (EDM), emerged during the repressive Thatcher and Reagan eras in the United Kingdom and United States via Generation X's[5] efforts and actions. Many teens and young adults in the late 1980s and early 1990s responded to cultural tension by participating in raves. Raves' significance as a cultural phenomenon gained momentum during the Majors-Blair and Clinton administrations of the 1990s, even while these more liberal governments actively sought to control raves' existence through drug-related and other social policies. This law-and-order approach stemmed from concern, mostly from white middle-class parents, that their Generation X children would fall victim to drugs and lawlessness.

In the past, similar concerns about youth activities, especially those involving music and drugs (e.g., jazz and marijuana, or hippies, LSD, and cocaine), motivated government controls on drugs and the subcultures, scenes, or lifestyles that celebrated them (Cohen 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hier 2002). Thus, by the late 1990s, when raves peaked in the United States, social problems, drugs, and public health scholars were treating them as another troublesome matter to be controlled, rather than a meaningful cultural experience.

Since their emergence, aspects of rave culture have spread beyond late-night parties to other types of settings, for example, art galleries, social benefits, and chat rooms (see also Chapter 4). EDM—raves' primary cultural product—became emancipated from the rave scene and can now be found in leisure establishments, popular culture, and everyday life. For example, today you can hear dance music in upscale city restaurants, at spin and aerobic

classes, or as background music on video games. The events or parties themselves have also dramatically changed in form and style, departing significantly from their original form.

Today, scholars and authorities[6] debate the current state of raves (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007). Two perspectives tend to dominate. The first is especially favored in the United Kingdom among British scholars. They conclude that raves are over in both the United States and the United Kingdom, but they do not rule out their return. These conclusions appear at the end of a vast number of culturally oriented books and papers[7] that have done a good job documenting the origins and ascent of raves. Raves' decline or death, they argue, is largely due to both local and nationwide[8] social control policies. Today, they talk and write about "clubbing" instead (e.g., Hadfield 2006; Malbon 1999; Measham 2008; Silverstone, Hobbs, and Pearson 2009), which includes numerous EDM and other youth-based music activities.

Another viewpoint is more drugs- and deviance-oriented. It has been favored among government institutions in both the United States and United Kingdom and most clearly articulated by substance abuse and public health scholars. This viewpoint claims raves still exist in the United States and constitute a social and public health problem. Many drug researchers[9] have obtained large grants from federal agencies to study club drugs[10] problems. Those favoring this approach typically do not focus on the culture of the scene. As a result, they do not distinguish past raves from EDM parties housed in commercial club culture today, nor do they seriously consider their social significance.[11] They consider raves any extended-hour or all-night events, featuring EDM and illicit drug use; by this definition, raves are alive and well.

Objectives and Thesis

This book presents my ethnographic study of the alteration and decline of the rave scene in Philadelphia, from its high point in the mid- to late-1990s to its diminished and fragmented state today. Raves carved out an alternative, EDM lifestyle via an underground youth scene that many across the world participated in and enjoyed. However, even more quickly than their creation and ascent, perhaps, was raves' subsequent alteration and decline. Briefly stated, this is a story about the forces, institutions, and people that helped usher the once highly popular rave scene toward its death.

In Chapters 1 through 5, I lay out my argument for raves' alteration and decline in Philadelphia. In the process, I draw comparisons to other U.S. locations where raves once thrived. For example, in a 2005 post on a popular U.S.-based rave and EDM Web site, www.raves.com, journalist Shawn Wallace[12] wrote a rave obituary for Washington, D.C.:

> On the heels of some long, well-fought battles by the clubbing community, we [the rave scene] made some progress. In the end though, we

have seen the rave party slowly fade into a distant memory. As superclubs began to focus theme nights around DJs and getting numbers in the doors, somewhere along the way the party became secondary to creating the next big marketing brand.

Chapter 6 reports on fieldwork I did in London and Ibiza, Spain, in the summers of 2004 and 2005. This comparison work allows a preliminary glance at the viability of the alteration and decline thesis beyond the core research site. To be perfectly clear, then, this is primarily a study of the transformation of one music scene in a northeastern U.S. city.

The study examines a few basic objectives which promise to contribute to the sociology of scenes, culture, youth, identity, deviance, and social control. A primary goal is to develop a preliminary explanation of scene alteration and decline, one that considers multiple and intersecting forces. Specifically, why has the rave scene changed and declined over time? By engaging this question, the book illustrates how cultural collectives operate in everyday life and identifies their resilience and vulnerability to forces internal and external to them. The resulting explanation may be of value for understanding change in other types of scenes and social worlds.

Before such an explanation can be offered, however, an understanding of how raves have changed over time is necessary.

Second, what do raves look like today compared to the past? Today's EDM scene differentially showcases raves' cultural elements in six different types of parties or events that can be placed on what I call a "rave–club culture continuum." Existing studies (e.g., Malbon 1999 and Thornton 1996) have shown that raves have commercialized over time, but they have neglected the important middle ground between original raves and commercial club culture. Therefore, addressing the inattention to the cultural space between authenticity and commercialism will likely inform matters pertaining to identity, alternative lifestyles, underground-mainstream tensions, and how and why certain cultural elements are carried into the future while others are left behind.

A third objective is to advance knowledge about the connections between individual and collective identities. Identity has been a central topic in studies of music collectives and the people (e.g., youth) who populate them. To date, much of the scholarly focus has been on the collective side of identity as it relates to social change (Denisoff and Peterson 1972; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk 2006; Roscigno et al. 2002), subcultural resistance (Frith 1981; Haenfler 2004a), or commoditization (Shank 1994). Much less work addresses the link between personal and collective identities. By describing the "ideal types" of people involved in the past rave and current EDM scenes, how they differentially got linked up to them, and how their involvement helped change the scene over time, I hope to contribute to the understanding of personal and collective identities within music collectives and other social worlds.

A fourth objective is to understand how everyday people engage in cultural work to restore, preserve, or adapt their scene. Such cultural work can compromise alternative lifestyles and oppositional identity or reinforce them. Resources—social, cultural, and financial capital—play an important role in the cultural work and outcomes people can accomplish. Consequently, this book offers insights into the cultural work people do to secure change within the social worlds that matter most to them.

A final objective is to further evaluate the book's major conclusions by reporting on comparative work on scenes in London and Ibiza, Spain. To date, very few studies of scenes have offered such comparisons. In addition to providing important support for the sociological contributions of the book, such comparisons add interesting information and permit a sort of cerebral voyage to other places.

Origins of the Research Project

My interest in raves and the EDM scene started a few years prior to the Explosion! party described above and accidentally in the fall of 2000. I was participating in a national craze, using a popular Internet program to download "free" music to my PC at my new university office. I immediately found that, among the available songs, there were "remixes," or extended EDM versions of popular songs I knew. While I had never heard of most of the DJs who remixed songs by famous artists (e.g., Donna Summer, Madonna, and Sara MacLachlan), I gathered they must be onto something special because there were loads of wonderful remixes and plenty of people file-sharing them. For example, early on I downloaded about fifteen different versions of Madonna's "Erotica" and noticed a huge increase in others tapping my hard drive for them.

At the beginning, it was the music itself, however, that motivated my interest in this research topic. I quickly grew to adore what I would later learn were house, trance, and techno music. I found their structure and form simultaneously energizing and soothing and I was at a point in my life when I needed that. The relative absence of lyrics and the fast beat pattern (e.g., 125–160 beats per minute) stimulated and liberated my thoughts from what seemed like constant messages of materialism, machismo, and heterosexism in commercial radio. Later, I would learn—from scene insiders and academics—that others found this music to be inspirational as well and that peace, community, and connections were often underlying messages. It also helped, of course, that the music could induce trance-like states and release endorphins.[13] The music did this for me and many others naturally, without chemical assistance, although there was no denying that the music was closely tied with drugs, including ecstasy (E), Gamma hydroxy butynate (GHB), Rohypnol, ketamine (K), and LSD.

As I began to admire some DJs' work, I moved away from remixes of popular tunes and began searching the Internet for more original tracks by the DJs

themselves. I wanted underground[14] stuff, anything not commercially available. While I started looking for dance CDs at big retail stores, I used Internet radio stations to find them as well. In early 2002, I found one called www.clubradio.net. Here, DJs like Kev Hill[15] and Greg Zizique from London, DJ Chewmacca from Scotland, Wes Straub from Calgary, CP from Belgium, DJ Skate from Boston, Eve Falcon from Los Angeles, and many others from all over the United States and the world posted dance music mixshows by genre (e.g., techno, house, trance, break beat, jungle/drum and bass) that you could listen to on your computer. Single tracks were not available there. Furthermore, it was not really possible to jump track by track when listening to one of these mixshows, like you could on a typical CD. Thus, you had to listen to the entire mixshow, which was anywhere from about forty-five to seventy minutes in length.

The mixshow's fusion of EDM tracks into what sounded to me like an electronic symphony was most revelational. I found popular radio songs too short, directive, and haphazard. By contrast, the EDM mixshow was a collage of longer tracks, mixed together and at times over the top of one another, to create a new sound,[16] one that transported me to a different place. In many ways, the mixshow—the musical form showcased at raves—embodied a journey or story composed of parts (musical tracks) assembled by a DJ. Many DJs sought to navigate the listener toward a higher consciousness. Thus, the rave DJ was like a conductor, storyteller, or even a shaman.[17] Later in the project, at Josh Wink's Philadelphia monthly, guest DJ David Alvarado explained:

> Like any other person, I basically use the influences and experiences in my life. I piece them together in the mixshow that is completely different from the next guy. The fan should sit back and allow the story to be told.

Whether streamed to my computer, burned on a CD, or mixed live, I consumed these mixshows just as Alvarado, Wink, and nearly every other DJ I spoke with wanted. And my listening to their musical stories or traveling on their journeys delivered what I valued most about EDM music—enlightenment, inspiration, and connection.

I started e-mailing the virtual www.clubradio.net DJs to request their mixshows on CD so that I could listen to them outside of my office. They were mostly white males—with some exceptions—and they were from numerous cities, states, and countries as indicated above. I wrote to lots of them and got lots of responses. These virtual DJs became my first key informants and I stayed in touch with them over the course of my study.[18]

While much of our communication was about mutual tastes in music and their expertise in assembling a mixshow, it also focused on more cultural matters pertaining to the scenes and sites where EDM genres were showcased. Because of this, I soon learned about the connection between musical genres and the scenes that surround them and also about raves and rave culture.

In the summer of 2003, I discovered 611 Records, a dance music record store in Philadelphia and a central site of Philadelphia's EDM scene. The 611 store was said to be one of the best stores for EDM music south of New York City, which has birthed many, many music scenes, including EDM's predecessor: disco. From my interaction with the store's staff—who were mostly local DJs—I began learning about the Philadelphia scene. These part-time retail workers and DJs explained how the EDM scene in Philadelphia was inherently tied to neighboring cities, towns, and states and other countries[19] and communication strategies using Web sites, chat rooms, and event flyers to market music events.

My connection with the 611 DJs also proved a direct passage into the culture of the contemporary EDM scene. The guys—especially Cameron (techno/house DJ and producer), Rick (progressive DJ/producer), Tony (hard techno DJ), and Chris (techno DJ)—told me about events I "had" to attend. Typically, I did not question them. I went where they were playing or to events they recommended. In addition, my biweekly visits to the store would result in my taking home a new stack of rave or EDM event flyers. These hung on the wall inside the record store, dropped off by those involved in the scene on the East Coast. There were tons of them!

Over time, these flyers not only served to identify events for observation and recruitment but also became a source of information and amusement. For example, Chris and I developed an EDM culture game, using the flyers as our game-pieces. Each flyer was illustrated with identity markers—language, images, and color—that we attempted to place on what was emerging as a rave–club culture continuum. I'd pick up a card and attempt to categorize it, while guys like Chris, Doug, William, and Jon (all store employees and DJs) refereed. Given their expertise and insider status, I deferred to their judgments on the flyers or events until my own insider status became established. Then, we debated. I describe these cultural markers in more detail in the next chapter.

In the meantime, I was attending many dance music parties locally. My observations at EDM events exposed me live to the remnants of the rave scene and to modern club culture, where I learned that modern EDM parties were very different from one another and unlike raves in the past. For example, newer "raves"—like the one described above—featured multiple tents or rooms anchored in a specific genre (e.g., hard house versus drum and bass), with a lineup of DJs trading off every hour or so. While many attendees had their genre preferences, there existed a sense of respect and tolerance that connected them to a larger EDM collective identity at the event. However, most EDM parties I attended featured only one genre (rather than many housed together), had a "main" act (i.e., DJ), and did not possess such a physically or symbolically unified structure. Over time, it became apparent that the trend toward music fragmentation and scene specialization would fundamentally help alter rave culture and the EDM scene.

Furthermore, all of the events featured the art of live DJ-ing, but I quickly learned that the vibes of events (between and across genres) differed

dramatically, thus accounting for diverse meanings for attendees. At the more rave-like events, I often found the qualities I liked about EDM music and mix-shows: enlightenment, inspiration, and connection. For example, after a visit to a nightclub in London 2004, I wrote in my journal:

> There were three-dimensional tunnels of light beckoning me to enter, pleading for me to come inside and take a journey on them to a different world! I found it mind-altering to hear the music and stand within this passage of light. I kept putting my hands up into it, trying to break it up, but its neon brilliance over-powered me. Its reach was far, out to the chill areas where those who were on synthetic trips rested.

Later that month at another London club where Philadelphia native Paul Ferris was DJ-ing, I noted:

> The club was still crowded at 5am and most people were on the dance floor paying attention to Paul. The vibe was really about the DJ and his music. Drugs took a close second with dancing not too far behind. People were positioned on the floor so they could see Ferris. It stayed like that all night. Paul is their hero. The fans stayed in tune with him all night and had an ear to his every move. This was a temporary community of sound and movement. Nothing else existed for them, no matter where they came from. And I met people from Germany, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Scotland, the Czech. Republic, South Africa, and, of course, England. The world seemed at peace and in unity here. Whether this is a stated politics or not, it seems to happen when people come together for this music.

Yet, many other EDM events, especially those in Philadelphia, lacked this type of vibe, purpose, community, and interaction. Instead, more commercial club culture themes of status and heightened sexuality dominated, with the DJ's work often being reduced to background music for courtship and other socializing rituals. Rick, a white male DJ, explained to me:

> Like nowadays, people are more about going out and getting fucked up, and trying, you know, to meet guys or girls or whatever, you know, and it's like the music is more of a background thing.

Comments like this intrigued me academically and caused me personal consternation. On the one hand, I was curious about the differences between EDM events and the people who attended or produced them. On the other, I was afraid that the music and scenes I was growing to love, and the cultural elements they celebrated, were in jeopardy. I was becoming more enmeshed in a scene that was in transition and, perhaps, decline. Consequently, I launched

an "official" (i.e., university-funded and IRB-approved) study of the cultural aspects of the EDM scene in the spring of 2004.

The approach I used to gather information for this book is called an autoethnography. Autoethnographies are those where the investigator acts as both an observer of and participant in the social world he or she is studying. From the beginning, I was an evolving member of the scene I was investigating (Merton 1988). My dual role as a member in the EDM scene and as a researcher of it requires making myself visible throughout the book (L. Anderson 2006) via the principle of reflexivity. This means paying attention to how I interacted with people in the scene and reflecting critically on any problems I encountered. I discuss more about reflexivity and other aspects of the autoethnographic approach in the methods appendix.

The Research Site

Philadelphia is the largest city in Pennsylvania and the fifth largest in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Its early raves were often held in abandoned warehouses or in parks and open fields in the surrounding area rather than the city proper. As raves gained popularity and moved indoors, they relocated into large nightclubs located on or near Summerfield Boulevard, which dissects the city's industrial center and ends at its riverfront. Two of these venues, Epic and The Lighthouse,[20] catered specifically to raves and the burgeoning EDM scene.

The Philadelphia rave and EDM scenes are similar to those in other major U.S. cities in at least two major ways. First, Philadelphia was home to several rave DJ pioneers, who are now superstars on the global EDM scene. A few are still based in Philadelphia and host monthly events that keep the local scene viable. Second, like nightclubs in New York and New Orleans, two of Philadelphia's major rave nightclubs were shut down for various violations, including—but not limited to—illegal drug use and sales. These closings happened before passage of the federal Rave Act: they were local law enforcement operations designed to control the rave scene.

Additional evidence of rave culture's decline in Philadelphia can be found in Table 1.1, a breakdown of DJ club events in the city. Over the course of my study, there was a decline of EDM parties (of all varieties) and a precipitous increase in hip hop parties. One obstacle for the rave scene in Philadelphia has been the dominance of hip hop in the city's leisure industry, as indicated in Table 1.1. Philadelphia's smaller size, in comparison to New York and Los Angeles (which have more prominent EDM scenes currently) and demographic profile (working class and nearly half African American) may privilege hip hop over EDM as the music of choice among local residents, especially among younger clubbers today.[21]

Philadelphia is not unique. There is additional local and national evidence that the EDM scene is struggling and that raves are over. For example, one

TABLE 1.1 A 2003–2005 COMPARISON OF DJ EVENTS LISTED IN THE *PHILADELPHIA CITY PAPER*

	Primary[a] *Genre Listed*				
Year	*EDM*[b]	*Hip Hop*	*Funk/Soul*	*Other*[c]	*Total Events*
2003	99 (46%)	62 (29%)	18 (8%)	36 (17%)	215
2004	101 (44%)	76 (33%)	11 (5%)	41 (18%)	229
2005	79 (30%)	114 (43%)	18 (7%)	56 (21%)	267

Source: This table is compiled from Sean O'Neal's "DJ Nights" column in the *Philadelphia City Paper*, a weekly listing of who's spinning what and where within the city limits. While the column does not list every DJ-ed party, it is comprehensive and considered the best of its kind in Philadelphia. For this table, I randomly chose a week—the second week in May—for a yearly comparison. While there may be some seasonal or annual variation in events, comparing the same week each year allows for a meaningful analysis. Percentages are rounded; thus they may not total 100.

[a]*Primary* is defined as the first genre listed in the event's entry. Many events list more than one genre of music, but there is a general understanding that what is marked as the first genre is largely how the event is identified.
[b]This category includes all house, deep house, and progressive house, trance, techno, electro, and drum and bass genres—all considered within the EDM scene.
[c]This category includes world music, rock/pop, reggae, Latin, ambient, industrial/goth, and trip hop.

disappointment for dance music has come from commercial radio. Just a few years ago, Michael Paoletta (2000a) wrote in *Billboard* that dance music was getting increased airtime on mainstream and commercial radio. Yet, between 2004 and 2005, I learned that several dance music radio stations in Miami, Philadelphia, and elsewhere had closed. Today, EDM remains largely available on satellite or cable radio channels or college radio stations. Only the most commercialized pop star remixes (e.g., Top 40 songs by artists such as Madonna, Beyonce, etc.) might be in rotation on commercial radio stations.

Also, many rave support groups, alliances, and constituencies have disbanded or changed priorities since raves' peak in the mid- to late-1990s. For example, the ROAR political action group I quoted at the beginning of this chapter is now defunct. Gone too are other lobbying groups that supported the EDM scene or came to its defense when it was under scrutiny. For instance, the EM:DEF,[22] set up by the Drug Policy Alliance (DPA), the leading drug policy reform institution in the United States, to protect the national scene against federal drug laws like the Rave Act, is now fairly dormant,[23] and rave-related legislation is not currently a priority at DPA.

At a more local level, groups like the DC Nightlife Coalition (DCNC) used to combat antinightlife activities in the nation's capital. The group's Web page is no longer up and running and the group has also disbanded. The former president of DCNC, Barrett Atwood, signed off from his duties with a call for action:

> As you may know, I am the former president of the DC Nightlife Coalition (DCNC). Now defunct, DCNC was a grassroots political organization that sought to protect DC's nightlife by opposing such things as

> the Rave Act and the abuse of voluntary agreements in DC's neighborhoods. In that role, I often met with DC council members and I believe I have some insight into some of their personalities and into their views on nightlife in DC. Therefore, I'm reaching out to you to encourage you to elect pro-nightlife politicians here in DC (see www.buzzlife.com).

Given these developments, Philadelphia is as likely as any U.S. city to investigate the alteration and decline of the rave scene, and even though this is primarily a study of a local music scene, findings reported here can be placed in a broader context thanks to fieldwork I conducted in London in 2004 and Ibiza, Spain, in 2004 and 2005. This comparative research enables me to show that the study of local scenes can be valuable in informing our understanding of both national and international phenomena.

Understanding Cultural Change from Music Scenes

The study of scenes, music and otherwise, is fairly new to sociology. Early on, John Irwin (1977) defined them as expressive, leisure-oriented social worlds,[24] most often urban, that people voluntarily joined for pleasure and gratification. All scenes have a central activity and physical space where that activity occurs and culture develops. Later, Will Straw (2004) described cultural scenes as entities that cohered around clusters of social and cultural activity and a particular genre of cultural production (e.g., music).

While both Irwin and Straw viewed music scenes as types of cultural scenes, a distinction between the two would emerge as the study of music collectives exploded in sociology in the late twentieth century.[25] For Bennett (2000, 2001; Bennett and Peterson 2004), music scenes are geographical spaces where cultural (e.g., music production) and social activities (music consumption) center around a particular musical genre or set of interrelated genres. Thus, scenes have a discernible culture (e.g., rave culture). They also feature participants, collective or group[26] identity, and distinctive cultural elements such as identity markers (rave fashion), ideology, ethos (e.g., PLUR), and behaviors (dancing and drug taking). These are described in more detail in Chapter 2. Music scenes evolve from the pursuit of fan interests and practices, which help inspire constant innovation (Bennett 2006). While music scenes are especially likely to be found in cities (Sara Cohen 2007; Straw 2004) or other specific localities, they may cross physical and virtual boundaries and achieve a much broader appeal (Bennett and Peterson 2004; Straw 1991).

Notable music scenes include the English punk scene in the 1970s and 1980s, the New Orleans jazz scene in the 1930s and 1940s, and the 1980s and 1990s rave scenes in the United Kingdom and United States. Scholars have used music scenes to articulate sociological concepts and ideas; most notably,

Howard Becker (1963) used the jazz scene to elucidate deviant identity, subculture, and social control. Scholars from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) used the English punk scene and the earlier mods and rockers to examine youth resistance and countercultural identity (e.g., Hebdige 1979). Still others have investigated collective identity (e.g., race and nationality) and social change[27] in, for example, rock and roll (Frith 1981), white power music (Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk 2006), rap or hip hop (Chasteen and Shriver 1998), world music (Connell and Gibson 2004), punk (McLoone 2004), bhangra (Dudrah 2002; Huq 2003), black metal (Kahn-Harris 2004), and the punk straightedge movement (Haenfler 2004a, 2004b).

Currently, a debate is waging in sociology about the appropriateness of the terms *scenes*, *subcultures*, and *tribes* to discuss music communities.[28] I prefer to use the terms *scene* and, to a lesser extent, *tribe* to describe the subject matter in this book. This is because the concept of scenes captures the people active within the collective as well as the many institutions, agencies, groups, cultural products (e.g., music), venues, media, communication outlets, and activities that comprise a scene. Throughout the book, therefore, I use the term *rave* or *EDM scene* to refer to people, activities, culture and cultural products (e.g., music and parties), institutions, communication outlets, and physical spaces. My use of the term *rave* or *EDM culture* or *lifestyle* pertains to the unique culture elements and lifestyle sensibilities located in either scene.

Early work utilized the term *subculture* to explicate raves' origins and ascent (Knutagard 1996; McRobbie 1994; Melechi 1993; Redhead 1993, 1995; Reynolds 1999; Rietveld 1993) and more recent work on other music collectives; for example, the White Power movement[29] (Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk 2006) or hardcore straightedge (Haenfler 2006; Williams 2006), adopts the same approach. These scholars note that subcultures have explicit political goals and activities focused on social change. However, raves' goals were focused on resistance through indifference and creating an alternative social world that opposed mainstream culture. They were not geared toward political goals. Also, Bennett (1999, 2001, 2002) and Ben Malbon (1999) have argued that the concept of subculture has come to imply a static social group with a particular social class. Instead, people attending raves came from many social classes. These are still other reasons to employ the term *scenes* in this study.

The terms *tribes* and *neotribes* have also appeared to describe youth groups who populate scenes. They are fluid cliques with loose, apolitical collective identities. Bennett (1999, 2001) and Malbon (1999) believe these terms are useful in the study of youth and popular music because membership to collectives can be temporary, brief, and without commitment. I also believe that the scene concept is more useful than the concepts of tribes and neotribes. While it is true that scenes are often populated with tribes or neotribes, and that such groups engage in activities that define and alter collectives, scenes are broader in scope simply because they contain things external to groups and people who

are not necessarily attached to them. At certain points in this book, therefore, I refer to scenes as having tribes or to tribes as helping to shape scenes.

Book Overview

Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the cultural elements of raves and the current of the EDM scene and its event types. In other words, it details the parameters of raves' alteration: it explains what raves were in the past and what they look like today. Understanding such alteration requires a discussion of authenticity, or how to define what a real rave is. Opinions about this vary among scholars, policymakers, and scene participants. Yet, by reviewing what might constitute a real rave, we can gauge how they have changed over time.

Chapter 3 continues marking scene alteration by focusing on the content and change in scene-related collective and personal identities. The goal of Chapter 3 is not only to further describe alterations in raves' collective identity; it is also to provide understanding of the types of people involved and how they differentially get linked into the scene. To date, elaboration of the connections between these identity types has not been offered in studies of music scenes, nor has it played an important role in the more public-health or deviance-oriented work related to music scenes and other contexts of social concern.

In Chapter 4, I address questions about how and why raves changed after rapid ascent and widespread success in the 1990s. I detail intersections among five main reasons: (1) *generational schism*, or the aging out of Generation X ravers and failure to recruit younger, Generation Y participants; (2) *commercialization*, or the appropriation of rave culture and EDM events into the music industry for economic reasons; (3) *cultural hedonism and self-destruction*, that the rave lifestyle and culture were ultimately too deviant and hedonistic, leading to their demise; (4) *formal social control*, or actions by federal, state, and local government agencies to quash the rave scene; and (5) *genre specialization and the development of subscenes*. Attention to these matters fills an important gap left by past work, which has failed to comprehensively explain the reasons for raves' alteration and decline.

In Chapter 5, I discuss how people and groups negotiated the transformation using a few different methods of cultural work: restoration, preservation, and adaptation. This work has also contributed to raves' metamorphosis and, furthermore, will be important in defining the scene's future. By linking more external forces of change with these forms of individual action, the book will likely facilitate a better understanding on not only raves but also other music scenes and popular culture phenomena.

In Chapter 6, I compare what I discovered in Philadelphia with London and Ibiza, Spain. This comparative work considers the utility of the Philadelphia-based findings for other EDM sites. In the closing chapter of this book, Chapter 7, I consider the future of the EDM scene in the United States and beyond. Many believe that cultural phenomena (especially pop-culture varieties) come and go

in cycles. Where will future cultural work take EDM and youth culture in the twenty-first century? Will raves come back en vogue? Will EDM music become more institutionalized? Or will both the EDM scene and genres of music fade to dust? Speculations about these matters are discussed in Chapter 7 and will also be considered for other contemporary music scenes, such as hip hop and mash-up—two dominating scenes in Philadelphia with growing national and international appeal.