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Addressing authenticity through
discourse when looking at the
Midlands Rave scene.

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Abstract

This dissertation is looking at the authenticity through discourse when looking at the midlands Rave scene. Different theories and models of youth culture will be explored, such as subcultural theory, post-subcultural theory and neo-tribalism. This study will look into theories of club cultures, discourses surrounding rave and ideas of postmodernism whilst being interweaved with a personal commentary of ethnographic findings within rave culture. This dissertation will look at the findings of several interviews from participants within new wave rave culture and 'old skool' ravers to find trends and similarities to acknowledge and comprehend if new wave ravers are authentic to the old through discourse analysis. Findings from 'The Rave Story' will be included within this study.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

My mother had always filled my head with ideas of euphoria and community, that one moment when collectively everyone came together at a rave and shared this sense of belonging. I had been to 'reunion raves' along with my mother, I hear people recalling a time when you were the best dressed if you had the new Sergio Tacchini shell suit followed by fits of laughter exclaiming how glad they were that they came to their senses. Typically now at reunion raves everyone takes a bit more time and effort on appearance, everyone looks so glamorous, probably because it's more of an event, raving once a year instead of once a week. When the rise of this new rave culture began, I was keen to get involved to see if it was authentic to the old rave culture my mum had told me about. So basing my knowledge of rave on the ones my mother had once dragged me along to, I got all dolled up and ready to go. We pulled up to this venue in the backstreets of Birmingham, no streetlights, no pubs, no people. We were surrounded by old rundown warehouses under the arches of the bridge, the only lights to be seen were the escape of some strobe lights in the cracks of this particular warehouse and the dulcet drone of a techno beat let us know we were in the right place.

In this dissertation I will be looking at the midlands rave scene within the UK across generations paying particular attention to authenticity through discourse. I began this study to look at cultural trends and themes to see if the repetitive is authentic or if the trend in subcultural fashion fits Jameson's idea of Postmodernism. Through interviews and auto ethnographic research I will identify discourses connected to rave and compare my findings to find trends and themes to see if the newer rave scene is authentic to the old. Initially I will have to establish what the discourses surrounding rave are, through my interview questions and ethnographic research I will identify such discourses. Discourses will also be found by reading past club cultural studies such as Maria Pini's *Club Cultures and Female Subjectivity*. It's important to find out what makes rave culture unique and appealing to so many people. I will identify the reasons people wish to identify with said subculture and find out hierarchy within subcultures to find out what is considered 'authentic'. I will look into different subcultural theory frameworks such

as tribalism and neo-tribalism to find out if authenticity boundaries are solid or if there is more fluidity within rave culture.

Chapter 2 - Defining a Subculture

In 1976 the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), (Hall and Jefferson, 1976) adopted the term 'subculture' from the Chicago School to apply it to ideas of youth and style where previously the term had specifically been used to look at ideas of youth deviance (Merton 1957). The CCCS argued that the trends of style within youth culture were a direct result of class differences in post-war Britain. 'Youth' appeared as an emergent category in post-war Britain, one of the most striking and visible manifestations of social change in the period' (Hall and Jefferson 1976:9) Similarly it's argued by Cohen (1972) that

"When working-class communities are undergoing change and displacement – when the 'parent culture' is no longer cohesive – youth (and the focus here is always on working-class youth) responds by becoming subcultural. Subcultures thus become a means of expressing and, for Cohen, also 'resolving' the crisis of class" (Gelder, 1997, pg 84-85.)

It could be argued that subcultures are a tool to give youths a voice to fight back against the majority. (Hebdige 1979:90) wrote:

'Subcultures represent 'noise' (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media. We should therefore not underestimate the signifying power of the spectacular subculture not only as a metaphor for potential anarchy 'out there' but as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation.' (1979:90)

Despite the idea of subculture being relevant in describing youth culture, Redhead (1990) coined the term 'post-subculturalism', Muggleton (2000) then elaborates on this by expressing that subculturalism is no longer relevant in relation to current youth culture, as it is no longer defined by social class distinctions, but by individual choice. In contrast Blackman (2005) retorts that post-subculturalists dismiss the ideas of politics and resistance in relation to their subject. Nayak (2003)

goes further to suggest that people's cultural identity stem from their family history and other factors such as their habitat and class. Similarly, (Shildrick, T. A. and MacDonald, R. 2006) argue that 'such studies tend to pay little attention to the importance, or otherwise, of social divisions and inequalities in contemporary youth culture.' (2006:2)

Subcultural and post-subcultural debates have been fairly consistent within academic work on youth culture, yet more recently the Maffesoli's concept of the 'neo-tribe' seem to be more favoured when describing youth culture. Maffesoli (1996) describes neo-tribalism as:

'Without the rigidity of the forms of organisation with which we are familiar, [tribe] refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form' (1996: 98)

Hetherington (1998) expands on the concept of neo-tribalism by arguing that tastes are more fluid and can change over time, Hetherington noticed 'an identification with nomadism that is seen to be more authentic than the sociality of modern industrial societies' (Hetherington 1998:335). Due to this the framework, neo-tribalism seems best suited when describing youth rave culture.

Chapter 3: Club Cultures

I had arrived unfashionably early and walked up to the doormen, it was clearly apparent that I was not going to fit in very well from the looks and eyebrow gestures before me. I asked if I was overdressed and I got a couple of nods and a few smirks. An honest doorman, not what I was expecting. I tried to make myself at home in the dark and dingy venue. There were grotesque caricatures in a graffiti style that made one aware straightaway that this space was not for the mainstream. It was basic, but suited its purpose, as gangs of people started piling in; It became apparent that I was probably going to be the eldest raver there. Teenagers slowly began to fill the space in 'vintage' sportswear brands that I wore as a child. I began to draw comparisons to the warehouse raves my mother had told me about, 90's rave subculture was back and very, very alive.

'Raving, it's a different world.' It is like a different world. It's like having a month's holiday in a night and taking a month break in a night. (Teresa)

[Raving] is utterly different from everything else. It's a completely different world. It's like nothing else. (Clare)

'The [rave] scene was like a whole society – a different society. (Miriam)'

The above is an excerpt taken from the introduction of Maria Pini's *Cultures and Female Subjectivity*. Pini's research 'explores some such 'elsewheres' and (what are in some ways, very new) Sense of belongingness' Pini(2001), 'my aim at the start of this research was then, to make sense of why raving was considered 'liberating' by women...I wanted to examine why the act of raving was constructed by many...as a kind of 'declaration of independence...(Radway 1984)' (2001:1-3). Pini's research spans the pinnacle years of rave culture through the 1990's and focuses on women's liberation and the change from 'in home' (the typical woman is seen to be placed at home) to 'house' the movement of women being able to celebrate house music within club culture. Decades since Pini's research, recognizably, the want and need for rave culture has been rekindled by youths across the UK adopting this past subculture as their own. Not only has the concept of 'rave'

itself been adopted but similarly, 1990's dance records have found themselves being dusted off, chopped and changed through sampling and played once again to a younger, more inexperienced group of ravers. In Sarah Thornton's *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (1996), Thornton states that 'club cultures embrace their own hierarchy of what is authentic and legitimate in popular culture' (1996:3). Thornton goes on to state that 'the problem for underground subcultures is a popularization by a gushing up to the mainstream' (1996:5). To keep subcultures underground and authentic to a select niche, it cannot be open to the mainstream. Bourdieu (1979), socially groups' public identities are established through shared lifestyle preferences and commodity. If one was not to adhere to the lifestyle preferences by a subculture then they would be rejected. This is really important to address and identify what is considered 'authentic' to the rave subculture. One part of the discourse of rave subculture is explicit recreational drug use. Rosi Braidotti(1994) who specializes in Nomadic studies argues that 'not all nomads are world travellers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat. It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the Nomadic state, not the literal act of travelling' (1994:5)

This act of traveling relates to Pini's auto ethnographic research within club cultures, as one participant describes her experience as 'like having a months holiday in a night'. Pini goes on to explain that 'rave's and clubs often appears to allow for a kind of 'subversive' mental travel'(2001:14) This could be likened to Lyotard's variation of the concept of 'the sublime' originally coined by Longinus(1964), Lyotard recognizes that the sublime is the search for happiness or freedom (1984). Rave subculture is an escape from the mundane and alternatively offers, 'the enlightenment aspiration to liberate humanity' (Hedbidge 1987:68).

Thornton elaborates on Bourdieu:

'They [clubbers] carry around images of the social world that make up club culture...[it] offers them a distinct 'sense of [there] place but also a sense of other's place'(1990:131); 'most clubbers and ravers categorize their own crowd as mixed or difficult to classify, they are generally happy to identify a homogeneous crowd to which they don't belong... most ravers see themselves as outside

and in opposition to mainstream'(1996:99)

Despite the fact that ravers see themselves as opposing the mainstream, the idea that these ravers find themselves difficult to classify as a group, could perhaps suggest that adopting Maffesoli's concept of 'neo-tribes'(1996) might be more fitting as opposed to using the subculture framework. The 'Tribe' is described as being 'without rigidity of the forms of organization...it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind.'(1996:98)

This implies that ravers have a shared mentality and reasoning for occupying their space without the boundaries and limitations to style. Bennett (2006:112) expands (Willis 1978:191) argument that 'visual style and musical taste are bound together in a homological relationship', yet Bennett goes on to explain Redhead's argument 'mixing [of] all kinds of styles on the dancefloor...attracting a range of previously opposed subcultures from football hooligans to new age hippies (1993:4)'. Bennett argues that 'symmetry can exist between an individual's image and their taste in music...the relationship between musical taste and visual image is much less rigidly defined than once was thought' (2006:112). Bennett summarizes 'young people...are not rigidly bound into 'subcultural' community but rather assume a more fluid neotribal character.'(2006:112) This could be imply that the fluidity of the rave cultural space is like Bakhtin's concept of 'carnavalesque' and the idea that 'anything goes' in a 'symbolic sphere of utopian freedom' and like 'the carnival' rave has it's own idea of 'space and time'(1968).

Chapter 4 – Post Modernity

I had been checking my phone in anticipation all day awaiting that message to tell me where tonight's rave was going to be. 4pm, nothing. 6pm, nothing.

The last warehouse rave I was at I had overheard rumors that there was some secret raves being held across the city. Ticket only events and the location would only be released on the day. Sure we had to buy the tickets online and there was a facebook page to promote the event, but there was still something so exhilarating about turning up to an abandoned venue and taking things back to basics, just a room, the ravers and the music. The ticket stated that everyone must wear only black or no entry, a uniformed rave? This one was new to me.

BEEP BEEP. Ready to go! At least this time I don't have to worry about being overdressed, can't really go wrong with black, can you? After catching two busses across the city and a further hour looking up the postcode on google maps I finally found it. A small entrance to an underground tunnel was signposted and that same entrancing techno beat had the pavement vibrating beneath my feet. I can't help but thinking that this would have been much more difficult before the days of mobile phones and the internet, imagine having to stand outside in the pissing rain next to a phone box waiting to get a call about where tonight's rave would be held, no thank you. One benefit from this though would be, because most of these were probably illegal, it would be a lot longer before anyone got caught! The tunnel was long, dark and dank, in retrospect I'm glad it was dark because the sludge that I was treading through could have consisted of anything. The music got louder and louder then finally as I made my way down the fragmented cobbled staircase I was welcomed into the abandoned Victorian tunnel underneath the streets of Birmingham. A sea of waving arms and bobbing heads surrounded me, the thud of the beat carried everyone collectively as they sang: 'I get deep, I get deep, I get deep and the rhythm flows through my blood like alcohol.'

Fatboy Slim (2000)

Jameson(1991:ix) in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* begins by stating:

"It is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place"

Thus meaning, we must take the postmodernism and relate it to the past in order to comprehend. Jameson focuses on the loss of meaning within representation, art forms and artefacts are now mere copies of what has been before, mass produced and a commodity. Jameson writes that this is 'the end, for example of style, in the sense of the unique and the personal'. Jameson explains that a postmodern society is preoccupied with the past, 'Nostalgia does not strike one as an altogether satisfactory word for such fascination' It could be argued that the previously mentioned new wave of ravers is a result of a postmodern society. But if nostalgia is not the cause of youth culture repeating itself then perhaps Jameson's model of the pastiche could be adopted to explain. Jameson elaborates:

'Pastiche is, like parody, the limitation of the peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry without any of parody's ulterior motives amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter' (1991:15-19).

Chapter 5 – Methodology

Thus far, this study has outlined different theoretical approaches to youth culture and argued ideas of discourse and authenticity within club cultures. This chapter will look at how to gather information through interviews from two groups of participants', to identify their experiences and opinions to find out their connectivity to rave. This chapter will consider ethical implications and explore how interviews are the best method to achieve such a result. To follow this restrictions and limitations will also be looked at with regards to this study.

5.1 - Ethnography

For this study a combination of research methods were used, ethnographic field research was the initial method of research to source participants and gather a general understanding of rave culture. It was imperative to be submersed within the field of study to gain understanding and identify discourses within rave. (Burgess 1982:15) describes:

'Field research involves the study of real-life situations. Field researchers therefore observe people in the settings in which they live and participate in their day to day activities.' (1982:15)

Charmaz and Mitchell (2007) in *Grounded Theory in Ethnography*, argued that '[Ethnography] may prompt grounded theorists to go deeper into their studied phenomena to understand experience as their subjects live it, not simply talk about it.'

Ethnographic research is incredibly valuable to a social scientific approach to understand subjects. 'Ethnographic study can connect theory with realities, not just with research.' (2007:161) Dick Hobbs (2007) argues that Ethnographic research is 'the most popular within the sociological genre... 'Personal observation, interaction, and experience [as] the only way to acquire accurate knowledge about deviant behavior' (Adler, 1985: 11)' (2007:204). Despite the benefits of using ethnographic research there are many who believe the method is problematic with it's ethics. Murphy and Dingwall(2007) explain the ethical implications of ethnographic research:

'Ethnographers can harm the individuals or groups they study. Research participants may experience anxiety, stress, guilt and damage to self-esteem during data collection. (Cassell, 1978, 1979; Patai, 1991; Stacey 1991). (2007:340)

It's understandable that ethnographic research could be damaging to the participant it makes the protection of the participants engaging within this study imperative. Murphy and Dingwall (2007) write, 'Ethnographers can do much to protect settings and participants by removing identifying information at the earliest possible opportunity, routinely using pseudonyms and altering non-relevant details (burgess, 1985; Tunnell, 1988)' (2007:341). Due to this, this study will put participant protection as a high priority and all participants engaging within this study will be completely anonymous as will any venue's attended.

5.2 – Interviews

The second of methods used within this study is Interviews conducted with participants, sourced through ethnography, to gain an understanding of their feelings and emotions with

regards to rave culture. Through ethnographic field research two pools of participants had been gathered, one which belonged to first wave ravers, the second from new wave ravers. Once participants had been successfully acquired, interviews were conducted to identify if the feelings around rave were consistent to both participant pools. Two participants were sourced from the new wave ravers and one participant was sourced from the first wave ravers. It was thought that using a smaller group of participants to conduct the interviews for this study would be more sufficient as it would give participants more time and attention to express their opinions and experiences on rave. Due to the difficulty of contacting first wave ravers, or 'oldskool ravers' for the purpose of this study, a seminar, 'The Rave Story' (2016), was attended and recorded (appendix 3), to gather more data from 'Old Skool' ravers. The seminar attended was very valuable to this research as participants holding the seminar were some of the biggest names within 'Old Skool' rave culture.

For the interest of the ethics within the study, all participants had been given Participant Information sheets (appendix 1) with an in depth description of the study, explaining what the study would entail, what would be required of their participation and their rights with regards to participating. Included with the Participant information sheet was a Consent form (appendix 2) clearly outlining what they do/do not wish to participate in.

5.3 - Limitations

Despite initially wishing to conduct face to face interviews with participants, few wished to conduct computer-assisted interviews through email correspondence. Although computer-assisted interviews has it's own explicit benefits, the participant conducting their interview in their own time, there are many limitations. Kavale and Brinkmann (2009) wrote that 'it can be difficult to generate rich and detailed descriptions (Elmholdt, 2006)' (2009:149). Even with these limitations, Kavale and Brinkmann (2009) also wrote:

'One Advantage is that they are self transcribing in the sense that the written text itself is the medium through witch researcher and respondents express themselves, and the text is thud basically ready for analysis the minute it has been typed' (2009:149)

Other limitations that may present themselves within this study could be that the pool of participants is not varied enough demographically to represent popular opinion on rave culture.

Chapter 6 – Findings and Discussion

This chapter will discuss the results collected from the interviews conducted and the findings from 'The Rave Story'(2016) seminar, this chapter will also relate these findings to theories and discourses presented in preceding chapters. To ensure the research is ethical, participants from my research interviews have been given pseudonyms to keep the identities anonymous. The participant from the 'Old skool' raver pool, for the purpose of this study will be referred to as Mark. The two participants from the new wave ravers will be referred to as, Lana and Alan. Lana and Alan's interviews were conducted as computer-assisted interviews (Appendix 4 and 5). Where as the interview with Mark was conducted face to face (appendix 6). As 'The Rave Story' (2016) seminar was conducted on a public platform and has been filmed as an Internet resource, it is not necessary for their identities to be anonymised.

Mark – 'It was a very liberating time of my life'

Alan - 'I feel comfortable within myself to dance how I want, I feel free from the troubles of modern life and on the same wavelength as those around me.'

Lana- 'I feel on top of the world when I rave, for those hours that I spend raving, I can just forget about everything and just lose myself '

When initially comparing the findings of this research the main trend and aspect that stood out to me was about no matter what pool the participants belonged to, collectively all participants felt feelings of freedom and liberation. This can be seen as being typical of youth culture as Thornton(1996) explains that 'Subcultural capitals fuel rebellion against, or rather escape from, the trappings of parental class. The assertion of subcultural distinction relies, in part on a fantasy of classlessness.' (1996:12) This could suggest that in fact, this new wave rave subculture is a result of austerity and that it is authentic as Jumping Jack Frost, *The Rave Story (2016)* explains 'the rave scene was born out of a really bad time, the conservatives were in, there was a really bad recession...

people just wanted a release, this scene was born out of those times...for that reason alone it will never be the same.' In fact, for these reasons it could be argued that in fact, it is the same, it is authentic.

Alan, one participant from the new wave rave scene describes their experiences:

'It's this deep intangible thing but most people at raves share a common mind-set, many in the scene will tell you that. They're there to have a good time, but the crowd is different to with mainstream clubbing because many people are trying out recreational drugs. There's the illegal, stigma-ridden context of it all but you don't find the 'moral majority' in these places so people aren't judging each other'

This idea of shared mind-sets could reinforce the idea that Maffesoli's (1996) concept of neo-tribalism is best suited to rave culture. Explicit drug use is a typical discourse when related to rave culture and Braidotti's (1994) concept of the nomad can be seen to relate to such culture.: 'The nomad is only passing through: s/he makes the necessary connections that can help her/him to survive, but s/he never takes on of one national fixed identity.' (1994:33). This too relates back to Hetherington's (1998) view of neo-tribalism as tastes are much more fluid. Taste however is paramount to belonging to rave culture, Thornton (1991) summarises Bourdieu (1984) 'Bourdieu argues that next to taste in food, taste in music is the most ingrained.' (1991:113).

'When we took an ecstasy everyone became really loud, I'm really loud anyway so when I took an E I became a lot quieter and that felt fantastic, it was a magic, contemplative moment.

The drugs were much better because you paid the money; they were expensive but good quality' – Mark.

Having explicit drug use as a main discourse may make ravers have a shared mindset but it does not come without its dangers. Thornton(1996) writes: 'As soon as the 'gutter press' were hard up for a front page story the scene got out of hand: 'kids who shouldn't even have known about drugs, read about the raves in the *sun* and thought "Cor-Acid.

though, some very moody people, it wasn't all love, it's been packaged as that. There were just as many moody people on drugs as happy. Everything has rose tinted spectacles when you look back on it.'

When asking participants if anyone can be a raver Alan answered 'I think everyone has the potential to some extent but if everyone did it, it wouldn't be what it is because the scene's identity comes from being the thrill seeking, law-bending minority who like to go hard and separate themselves from the outside reality for a few precious hours.' It seems that similarly to what Thornton(1996) found, authenticity is still of importance to new wave ravers and they still do not consider themselves as mainstream. 'The mainstream is the entity against which the majority of clubbers define themselves' (1996:5). Similarly, Mark explains that this is what made rave culture so special. 'It felt like it [rave] belonged to us, it felt like if you weren't on the inside, you wouldn't have heard about it.'. Despite this, Mark explains 'it was different it was more inclusive, There was no racism or ageism, it felt perfectly natural to go to a club and Carl Cox was on the decks, it was brilliant.' Thornton (1996) explains that 'Techno was said to be a musical Esperanto. It was not considered to be the sound of any particular city or any definite social group but rather a celebration of rootlessness. As one producer said, 'Electronic music is a kind of world music.'" (1996:76).

When asking Mark if the new rave culture will ever be authentic:

'No, repeating the past never works, what will happen is it'll die because it's starved of air because it's merely a rehash of the past or it will serve as a catalyst for something new. People will want to experiment and take it further.'

Similarly Billy 'Daniel' Bunter, *The rave story (2016)* claims 'film gets rehashed, old comedy series gets rehashed, art gets rehashed, everything we hailed in those four or five years we're hearing again but in a different way'. These findings lead towards the belief that in fact this rehashed version of rave fits Jameson's (1991) model of the pastiche and a result of postmodernity. Despite 'old skool' ravers believing that this new rave culture is a result of postmodernity, the participants from the new wave of ravers still manage to identify and believe that they are authentic to the rave scene.

Alan:

'Whether you know the song you're skanking to at the time or not, if you express how you're feeling in your face and how you move, you can make eye contact with a complete stranger and dance with them, share that experience and very often make new friends with compatible interests to yourself.'

This form of shared experience with dancing is prominent within rave culture, Mark also had similar experiences 'we went to the book of love, we were dancing to the prodigy and it was amazing 15,000 of us dancing in the stadium together, the only time I've experienced it, it all just clicked at that time' Thornton (1996) explains that

'Many clubbers talk about the rightness and naturalness of the crowds in which they have had good experiences. They feel that they fit in, that they are integral to the group. The experience is not of conformity, but of spontaneous affinity. 'Good' clubs are full of familiar strangers who complement that 'well developed leisure activity, the discovery of the self' (Dorn and South 1989:179) (1996:111).

Buckland (2002) describes 'dancers and DJs and dancers and other dancers produced pleasure through valuing exchange; this reflected a utopic imagination' (2002:66). This utopic imagination in combination with recreational drug use could bring upon this euphoric, or perhaps Hebdige's 'Sublime' feeling that is present in both new and old skool rave cultures.

Unlike other youth cultures that had been before, rave wasn't necessarily restricted by certain fashion. This also reinforces the ravers being more 'neo-tribal' as aforementioned.

Nevertheless mark explains that

'All of the lads who went the footie started going on European tours in the 80's and started to bring back the Fila and the Sergio Tacchini and all that and that had a definite impact on what was happening, and then the style council Paul Weller and that, everyone had that haircut, Paul Weller was always at the right moment in time. It was really accessible though, you could have yourself a 20 quid Ellesse t-shirt on or you could have yourself a 200 quid replay

fortune on what you wore, and you could spend next to nothing, it was just about being there and being a part of it.'

It becomes apparent that regardless of if you are from the 'old skool' or new wave of ravers that there are certain discourses that are more important than others. Ideas of freedom and liberation are paramount to being part of rave culture and these feelings were not exclusive to 'old skool' ravers, new wave ravers still describe the same feelings.

Recreational drug use, although not of paramount importance was still popular in both 'old skool' and new wave ravers and perhaps recreational drug use could be best described as a tool to enhance other important feelings such as, shared experiences utopic imagination and ideas of the sublime as previously mentioned in this chapter.

Another important trend found within the data is that of rejecting the mainstream, ravers reject the ideas of being within the mainstream and form their own inclusive tribes of shared mentality.

Despite the similarities within the findings what cannot be ignored is the fact that 'Old skool' ravers do not see new wave ravers as being authentic. New wave ravers can be considered a pastiche by 'old skool' ravers and thus could be a result of Jameson's (1991) concept of postmodernism, yet the similarities of experiences and beliefs about rave culture cannot be disregarded when comparing the two, it's possible for new wave ravers to believe they are authentic.

The tunnel was very basic, like the promoter had said, 'stripping things back, just the music and the people', there were two pop up bars, a platform at the back of the room, a stage with the DJ equipment and the most incredible sound system I have ever heard. As I stared in amazement at all the dancing, the dance floor was cleared to accommodate a young lad in a wheelchair everyone high-fived him as he came into the middle and began dancing around him. I don't think I've ever seen so many happy people in one place before, everyone hugging and loved-up, it was a wonderful sight. Obviously One was not naïve enough to think that this was merely a result of the music and the vibe. In fact, earlier on a guy and his

girlfriend came up to me and asked if I was having a good time, they were selling some small white pills with doves on them. I began talking about a tragic incident that had happened just down the road two weeks before and explained how dubious I was in relation to the matter. The young guy and his girlfriend then invited me over to their little tribe, he explained how all his friends had been taking the same pills and I should talk to them about how they are feeling and if they are enjoying themselves. He even offered for me to take one and pay later to make sure I wasn't being duped. Once again I declined on the offer of the doves but proceeded to talk and dance with the group despite them not even knowing my name. The girls proceeded to tell me that they were looking for the euphoria, the feeling of unity and shared experiences, she said that it makes the world a less dark place. It seemed to me at the time that this wasn't too dissimilar of the stories my mother had once told me about. As I made my way around the Victorian tunnel I felt the mood begin to relax, I spoke to everyone and anyone who would pass me by. I spoke to people of all different genders, outlooks, religions, backgrounds and everyone there was there for the same reason, to simply enough, enjoy themselves, have a good time and escape the mundaneness of everyday life. I met students, accountants, personal trainers and people working in retail. It was astonishing to have such a diverse group of people all underneath the city, all dressed in black to celebrate the music and the vibe.

To summarize the findings of the ethnographic research, it has to be said that similar trends to the interviews were found, in the ethnographic research it was noticed that collectively almost everyone that had been spoken to were there for the same reasons of freedom and escapism. Despite the researcher being open and honest about the research they were conducting, all the ravers that were met were incredibly inclusive and just wanted to have a good time. To decide if this new wave of ravers were authentic to 'old skool' ravers is still a bit difficult as both arguments can be applied when looking to rave culture.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

The research within this study has identified and acknowledged through discourse what is authentic to rave culture. Through interviews and ethnography discourses have been identified from 'old skool' ravers and compared to new wave ravers to identify if it authentic. Thornton (1996) writes:

'Subcultural authenticities are often inflected by issues of nation, race and ethnicity. Gage Averill examines the significance of being 'natif natal' or native born and truly national to the perceived authenticity of Haitian music (cf. Averill 1989). While Paul Gilroy considers the trans-Atlantic circulation of discourses about racial roots and 'authentic blackness' to the meaning of post-war popular music (cf. Gilroy 1993).' (1996:30)

As rave culture is considered 'rootless' by Thornton, could it be possible that in fact due to this 'rootlessness' and the fact rave culture isn't defined by any nation, race or ethnicity that in fact authenticity itself cannot be defined within race culture. Although Thornton claimed that 'club cultures embrace their own hierarchy of what is authentic and legitimate in popular culture' (1996:3) Does that not mean that in fact that anything could be considered authentic when related to rave culture as rave is considered to be neo-tribal, thus tastes change and develop over time, what is authentic to rave culture could change and develop over time. Collins (1989) in *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Cultures and Post Modernism* writes:

'The use of past styles in this case is motivated not by simple escapism, but by a desire to understand our culture and ourselves as products of previous codings. In her article on the semiotics of fashion, Kaja Silverman defends "retro" dressing (the wearing of vintage clothing) because

It inserts it's wearer into a complex network of cultural and historical references... by putting question marks around the garments it revitalizes, it makes clear that the past is available to us only in a textual form, and through the mediation of the present....It is thus a highly visible way of acknowledging that it's wear's identity has been shaped by decades of representational activity, and that no cultural project can ever "start

from zero.”” (1989:133-134)

This could imply that although currently the new wave of ravers are authentic to the original concept of rave, new wave ravers need this authenticity and culture to build something new and more relevant to them. One participant within the study, Mark, wrote, “repeating the past never works, what will happen is it’ll die because it’s starved of air because it’s merely a rehash of the past or it will serve as a catalyst for something new. People will want to experiment and take it further.” Although there is nothing new, yet from the new wave ravers, it would be interesting to see if this will become apparent.

Appendix 1

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Addressing authenticity through discourse in midlands rave culture.

Lead Investigator: Lauren L Joyce, Coventry University.

Contact Phone Number: 07527930270

Email: joycel2@uni.coventry.ac.uk

You are invited to take part in a study, whether or not you take part is your choice. If you don't want to take part, you don't have to give a reason, and it won't affect the care you receive. If you do want to take part now, but change your mind later, you can pull out of the study at any time.

This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part. It sets out why we are doing the study, what your participation would involve, what the benefits and risks to you might be, and what would happen after the study ends. We will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in this study. Before you decide you may want to talk about the study with other people, such as family, friends, or healthcare providers. Feel free to do this.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form on which will be sent to you separately. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep. Please make sure you have read and understood all the pages.

The purpose of this study is to look at the concept of subcultures and neo-tribalism in relation to Rave Culture. The main aim is to see if current rave culture is authentic to when rave culture began. I hope to interview participants to find out about how rave is understood, remembered and essentially, 'What made rave, rave'. I will be looking at trends and themes identified within the establishing rave culture and then that of today to see if rave culture is still true to it's defining factors. The study is completely self funded and off my own back for my final year dissertation. I will be drawing on past critics, writers and theorists to help form my dissertation.

For my research I require participants from two different groups, 'Old Skool' ravers and people who in comparison are considered new to the rave scene. For the Interviews in which I wish to conduct, these interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed and kept on an encrypted memory stick. Once finished with the

findings I will dispose of all audio recordings, photographs and transcripts. The interviews will be held on a day of your choice, in a public place and will last for as long as you feel comfortable. All Information disclosed in interviews will be kept completely anonymous and in my findings I will change all names to keep the findings confidential.

This study could be really beneficial to the understanding of subcultures, neo-tribalism and youth culture. All participants have the right to gain access to any information collected about them as part of the study.

Appendix 2.

Consent Form

Title of Project: Addressing authenticity through discourse looking at the midlands rave scene.

Name of Researcher: Lauren Lucia Joyce, Coventry University.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to interviews being audio-taped and I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be made.
4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person giving consent

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 3

The Rave Story (2016) Part 1.

<https://soundcloud.com/lauren-lucia-joyce/the-rave-story-part-1>

The Rave Story (2016) Part 2.

<https://soundcloud.com/lauren-lucia-joyce/the-rave-story-part-2>

Appendix 4.

Interview Transcript – Lana

Do you think anyone can be a raver?

Lana: Of course they can, raving joins people together no matter who you are. It creates an environment where people can enjoy music together.

What do you feel when you're raving?

Lana: I feel on top of the world when I rave, for those hours that I spend raving, I can just forget about everything and just lose myself in the rave.

What's your best memory?

Lana: It would have to be NYD 2015. When I first walked into the car park at Tobacco Dock in London. I walked through a tunnel and into a car park which has been transformed into a rave. The low ceilings, dark room and industrial feel with thumping techno made it feel like something out of this world.

Why do I rave?

Lana: I must say raving has become an addiction, It just gives me so much happiness and euphoria that you can't get anywhere else.

What do I think rave is?

Lana: Raving itself literally is a number of people gathered together dancing to dance music. There are many types of rave which feature different types of music: Drum and Bass, Grime, Dubstep, House, Techno etc. Raving is all about expression and a way for people to escape their every day lives. Raving creates an atmosphere where people can be one with each other. Peace and Love.

Appendix 5.

Appendix 5

Interview Transcript – Alan

When did you start raving?

Alan: The first rave I went to was in an abandoned warehouse near the Thames in East London. It was New Year and I was 16, and I'd never really experienced anything quite like it. I'd been to gigs before for indie and rock bands but this environment was something different altogether.

What do you think makes the rave scene what it is?

Alan: It's this deep intangible thing but most people at raves share a common mind-set, many in the scene will tell you that. They're there to have a good time, but the crowd is different to with mainstream clubbing because many people are trying out recreational drugs. There's the illegal, stigma-ridden context of it all but you don't find the 'moral majority' in these places so people aren't judging each other. Everyone's generally liberal and positive, you don't get the drunk fights and rowdy guys groping girls anywhere near as much. For the most part everyone gets on way better in the underground scene than at high street venues. It's a mixture of personality, mentality and just having fundamentally more in common with your fellow ravers. Mike Skinner can explain it better if you listen to *Weak Becomes Heroes* from the Streets' first album, it sums it all up really well.

What do you feel when you're raving?

Alan: I feel comfortable within myself to dance how I want, I feel free from the troubles of modern life and on the same wavelength as those around me. You're usually surrounded by such a diverse group of the public, yet sharing a common reason to be in the space that you are; to dance away those woes and witness great sounds. Whether you know the song you're skanking to at the time or not, if you express how you're feeling in your face and how you move, you can make eye contact with a complete stranger and dance with them, share that experience and very often make new friends with compatible interests to yourself. That physical communication with those you've never met often transcends conventional verbal communication because you feel the same way at the time, it's a valuable thing. It also deviates from the social anxiety of starting conversations - when you've had a moment like that out of nowhere it's a great prefix to getting to know fellow humans. Music has such a capacity to occupy more senses than just the audible, and beyond even that on an abstract spiritual or soulful level as you take in every part of the moment and interact with those around you. Even mentally isolating the huge amounts of bass reverberating through your body feels strangely cleansing – you can engage with that physical feeling and in a weird but meaningful and personal way.

What's your best memory?

Alan: There's so many choose from since unique stuff of a hilarious, unexpected or downright awesome nature always seems to happen. The most recent New Year's was incredible for me simply because of how I felt around those I was with, in the environment I was in. I felt soulfully rejuvenated and carefree amongst a great set of friends while dancing to heavy drum and bass music for 6 hours. Mr Happy got dropped after the midnight countdown which was a great hats off to us ravers as it's such a cult classic. We all wanted to start the year with a bang and definitely succeeded there with such a huge, ecstatic atmosphere.

Do you think anyone can be a raver?

Alan: I think everyone has the potential to some extent but if everyone did it, it wouldn't be what it is because the scene's identity comes from being the thrill seeking, law-bending minority who like to go hard and separate themselves from the outside reality for a few precious hours. I've always loved music, going to events and being at the front, dancing the hardest and being up close to artists so in hindsight I guess it was going to happen once I reached the right age. It sounds pretentious but I never truly felt part of the majority. Having well informed political views tends to isolate you a bit, and I was 'weird' as a kid, but others like me in their more confident, developed forms without knowing it, naturally conglomerate in these places. For most people I'd imagine it's not something you go and do unless you've been introduced to the scene in some way, through a friend, etc. You just sorta find it and love it. Those that it doesn't appeal to steer clear out of dislike for the music or fear of being around illegal activities, others might dip their feet and realise it's not for them, while those that remain share that bond.

Appendix 6:

Interview Transcript – Mark

What age were you when you started raving?

Mark: Probably about 16 I think, or maybe 15, rave was just cutting edge and I had just finished school at 16 in 1989. So it was right as it had started to move away from underground parties and it had started to be called raves and acid house. It was really when I was 17 and I bought a car, as soon as I got a car that was it then you could do anything.

What do you think makes the rave scene what it is?

Mark: Rave was owned by us, computers were beginning to surface and there was a lot of vinyl on the market. It felt like you could go to a club and you could be stood having a drink with a bloke and ten minutes later he was stood up on the decks. It felt a lot more democratic than other movements that had been before, for me. Also it wasn't about the lyrics, it was based on the music, on the vibe, how it made you feel. The great thing about it was, a lot of it wasn't that memorable, cuz you didn't hear it often enough, it's uniqueness lasted a lot longer. It was difficult to get hold of tapes, you had to go to specialist shops, often cool trainer shops or stuff like that. It felt like it belonged to us, it felt like if you weren't on the inside, you wouldn't have heard about it.

What were the components that made up rave?

Mark: All of the lads who went the footie started going on European tours in the 80's and started to bring back the Fila and the Sergio zucchini and all that and that had a definite impact on what was happening, and then the style council Paul Weller and that, everyone had that haircut, Paul Weller was always at the right moment in time. It was really accessible though, you could have yourself a 20 quid Ellesse t-shirt on or you could have yourself a 200 quid replay or whatever and you were still in, it was really all about the dancing. You could spend a fortune on what you wore, and you could spend next to nothing, it was just about being there and being a part of it.

Do you think that it was accessible to everyone?

Mark: Like all popular music culture it was a youth driven thing, now I'm 43 I don't

game. I hope that it stays that way, older people did sometimes turn up and they were always well respected, it was different it was more inclusive, There was no racism or ageism, it felt perfectly natural to go to a club and Carl Cox was on the decks, it was brilliant. The ability to take music and remix it in a different way every night, dance music has survived quite well, even today it hasn't really been picked up by the mainstream. And it sells very well. You could get yourself a pair of decks, and you were away, you could do it.

What did you feel when you were raving?

Mark: it was a very liberating time of my life, I started to have lots of success with girls, you felt like you were becoming a grown up. It could be very moody though, some very moody people, it wasn't all love, it's been packaged as that. There were just as many moody people on drugs as happy. Everything has rose tinted spectacles when you look back on it. But I did have a bloody good time, no body knew about it, it wasn't very mainstream, we liked being on the inside. I remember everyone had to have a pair of Nike Air Max, everyone had to have a different pair on, just before the arrival of the mobile phone so we had to decide the week before what pair we were wearing for when we met the next week. But these people weren't even my close friends, these people were just my mates I met on a Friday or a Saturday night and had a great time and that worked. And when we took an ecstasy everyone became really loud, I'm really loud anyway so when I took an e I became a lot quieter and that felt fantastic, it was a magic contemplative moment. The drugs were much better because you paid the money; they were expensive but good quality. I remember going to raves and you took them and you didn't pay until you came up. There was violence in clubs but never at large-scale raves, everything was better organised.

What's the best memory that you have of rave?

Mark: My girlfriend was beautiful, we went to the Book of Love, we were dancing to the Prodigy and it was amazing 15,000 of us dancing in the stadium together, the only time I've experienced it, it all just clicked at that time, it had gone dark and they switched on the lasers, I had never seen that before, it was amazing.

Do you think new rave culture could ever be true to what you had?

No, repeating the past never works, what will happen is it'll die because it's starved of air because it's merely a rehash of the past or it will serve as a catalyst for something new. People will want to experiment and take it further.

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