

RISKS & RESPONSIBILITIES:
THE COMPLEXITIES OF ENABLING SAFETY & HARM REDUCTION AT
MUSIC FESTIVALS

A Thesis Submitted to the
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts
In the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By

ADRIENNE RATUSHNIAK

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

DISCLAIMER

Reference in this thesis to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favouring by the University of Saskatchewan. The views and opinions of the author expressed herein do not state or reflect those of the University of Saskatchewan, and shall not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology
University of Saskatchewan
55 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 5B1
Canada

OR

Dean
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
University of Saskatchewan
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 5C9
Canada

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the risks and subsequent harm reduction strategies that occur at music festivals with a focus on Western Canada. Music festivals are liminal spaces that form temporary communities in bounded locations, and as such are sites that see decreased inhibitions and increased risks. Using critical-interpretive medical anthropology as the framework, these risks are analyzed and grouped based on their impact – risks to the individual body, physically and mentally, and risks to the community as a whole. Instead of looking at each risk in isolation, a holistic approach in this context specifically is essential due to the interrelated and compounding nature of these potential harms. This framework also provides the basis for the second half of this thesis, which interrogates the entangled and often contradicting responsibilities at play for mitigating these risks.

Using a rapid ethnographic research design, three music festivals were chosen as the field sites for this research, with each festival located in a different province (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan) to allow for comparative policy analysis. This comparison helped to illuminate just how varied the experiences at different festivals can be. There is largely no formal regulation on risk mitigation at mass gathering events such as music festivals, outside of fire or alcohol safety. This absence forces festival organizers to engage with the securitization of habitat, as per Nikolas Rose, resulting in different harm reduction strategies and risk priorities at each event. In turn, through governmentality, many patrons have internalized responsibility for both themselves and those around them. Additionally, festivals and governments with prohibitionist stances on drug use, rather than harm reduction grounded in prevention and realism, are unintentionally contributing to more dangerous risk behaviours. My research demonstrates that all the different parties involved – individuals, communities, organizers, and governments – need to communicate and be on the same page in order to create and enable sustainable safety at music festivals. This is currently not the case in Canada, where criminalization and enforcement are still fundamental structures hindering harm reduction, contributing to the escalating risks created by the unregulated drug market.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A very special thank you goes to my supervisor, Pamela Downe. Her endless support throughout every stage of my degree has been invaluable. I am so thankful for the mentorship and guidance I have received from Dr. Downe, as well as from my committee members, Clint Westman and Karen Lawson, and the rest of the Archaeology and Anthropology Department. I am also grateful for all of the extra research, teaching, and learning opportunities this department has provided me. I have had some truly wonderful experiences.

Thank you to my cohort, and all the other graduate students and friends who have commiserated, peer-reviewed, and body doubled with me over the course of this research. A big thank you goes to my mum, Liz Hannah, for being my sounding board and spending countless hours helping me proofread and make sense of all my thoughts. And thank you to my partner, Cam McCracken, for helping me interpret policy, for keeping me grounded, and for making sure I ate and took my meds whenever my brain would get lost in the writing.

I would also like to thank all of the participants, festival organizers, fellow volunteers and other interlocutors for their words and their time, without which this thesis would not have been possible.

DEDICATION

For me, myself and I. This thesis will forever serve as a reminder that I never gave up, even when I may have wanted to. I have learnt so much throughout this degree, including about myself, and I am grateful for this growth and insight.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| PERMISSION TO USE | i |
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| DEDICATION | iv |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | v |
| LIST OF TABLES | vii |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW | 1 |
| 1.1 Research Questions | 2 |
| 1.2 Theoretical Framework & Definitions | 3 |
| 1.2.1 Critical Interpretive Medical Anthropology: The Three Bodies Approach | 3 |
| Neoliberal governmentality | 5 |
| 1.2.2 Pollution Theory: Normality & “Social Dirt” | 6 |
| 1.2.3 Definition of Drugs | 7 |
| Issues of legality | 7 |
| 1.2.4 Origins, Definitions & Critiques of Harm Reduction | 8 |
| 1.3 Drug Policy & Its Consequences | 10 |
| 1.3.1 Canadian Drug Policy & the War on Drugs | 10 |
| 1.3.2 Victimless Crimes & an Unregulated Market | 13 |
| 1.4 Recreational Substance Use | 14 |
| 1.4.1 Edgework | 15 |
| 1.4.2 Social & Cultural Contexts | 17 |
| 1.5 Anthropology of Festivals | 19 |
| 1.6 Significance & Chapter Outline | 21 |
| 1.6.1 Research Significance | 21 |
| 1.6.2 Chapter Outline | 22 |
| CHAPTER TWO: ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT & METHODOLOGY | 23 |
| 2.1 Research at Music Festivals | 23 |
| 2.1.1 Sask Festival | 25 |
| 2.1.2 Alta Festival | 26 |
| 2.1.3 BC Festival | 28 |
| 2.2 Methodology | 30 |
| 2.2.1 Participant Observation: Researching & Volunteering | 31 |
| 2.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews | 32 |
| 2.2.3 Policy Analysis | 33 |
| 2.2.4 Data Analysis | 35 |
| CHAPTER THREE: “EVERYTHING IS RISKY”: HARM REDUCTION HAS TO BE MULTIFACETED | 37 |
| 3.1 Risk to the Physical Body: Drug-Related | 38 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3.1.1 Individual Agency Through Informed Choice | 39 |
| 3.1.2 Sourcing Drugs at Music Festivals | 43 |
| 3.1.3 Supplies for Safer Drug Use & Safer Sex | 46 |
| Naloxone & overdose awareness | 46 |
| 3.2 Risk to the Physical Body: Environment Related | 47 |
| 3.2.1 Exposure to the Elements | 48 |
| 3.2.2 “The Best High is High-dration” | 49 |
| 3.2.3 Ear Plugs & Hearing Loss | 51 |
| 3.3 Risk to the Mind: Mental Health at Festivals | 53 |
| 3.3.1 Lights, Lasers, Bass & Crowds | 54 |
| 3.3.2 “Psy-crisis” & Psychedelic First Aid | 56 |
| 3.4 Risk to the Community: Interpersonal Conflict | 57 |
| 3.4.1 Safer Spaces & Consent | 58 |
| 3.4.2 Outreach & Intervention | 60 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: ENABLING SAFETY AT MUSIC FESTIVALS: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY | 63 |
| 4.1 Individual Responsibility | 64 |
| 4.1.1 Being Prepared | 65 |
| 4.1.2 Awareness & Deliberate Action | 66 |
| 4.2 Social Responsibility | 71 |
| 4.2.1 Creating Community in a Liminal Space | 72 |
| Motivations for volunteering | 74 |
| 4.2.2 Group Dynamics, Friendships & the Buddy System | 75 |
| When social responsibility fails | 78 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: ENABLING SAFETY AT MUSIC FESTIVALS: STRUCTURAL RESPONSIBILITY | 81 |
| 5.1 Organizational Responsibility | 83 |
| 5.1.1 Festival Control | 84 |
| Inclusivity through festival control | 89 |
| 5.1.2 Festival Reputations & Variation | 90 |
| 5.1.3 Barriers to Harm Reduction | 92 |
| Good intentions, ineffectual results | 95 |
| 5.2 Regulatory Responsibility | 96 |
| 5.2.1 Policy & Guidelines for Mass Gathering Events | 97 |
| The New Zealand example | 104 |
| 5.2.2 Police & Music Festivals | 104 |
| CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS | 109 |
| REFERENCES | 113 |
| APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS | 122 |
| APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE | 124 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Table 2.1 Festival Comparison</i> | 24 |
| <i>Table 3.1 Sample Drug Testing Results BC Festival 2018</i> | 42 |
| <i>Table 5.1 Explicitly Banned Items</i> | 86 |
| <i>Table 5.2 Comparing Government Guidelines for Events</i> | 99 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

The potential for danger exists in the actions, distractions, and carelessness of everyday life, some of which have minor or delayed consequences, such as sunburns, others more serious and immediate, such as car accidents. But that does not prevent people from living their lives. From a young age, strategies such as the use of sunscreen and seatbelts are learned, accepted, and adopted at an individual level to help mitigate potential harms. Some laws and regulations govern the safety of food, consumer products, health, and transportation, which are implemented to help mitigate potential harms at a societal level. However, the personal view of what constitutes an “acceptable” risk is not always compatible with a society’s policies and regulations. When conflict arises between individual navigations of risk and government-imposed policies instituted to minimize risk, it largely revolves around the perception of the behaviour in question. For example, some behaviours or activities, such as substance use, are criminalized or medicalized while others, such as sky diving or mountain climbing, are glamorized and celebrated (Carter et al. 2012, 114). Even though these activities have the potential to cause significant harm or death, the strategies used to reduce the risks associated with those activities are subject to individual and social assessment. These differing perceptions are particularly pertinent in this research, where different perspectives on how to enact responsibility for safety can be incompatible. Harm reduction, for example, is considered controversial due to its association with illicit substance use, yet it is fundamentally about increasing safety (Boyd et al. 2016; Carter et al. 2012; Rigg and Sharp 2018; Single 1995).

The criminalization of some drugs is a relatively recent change in the human experience (Davenport-Hines 2004). Humans have been using psychoactive, mind-altering substances for thousands of years (Riley et al. 2012, 5), most of which were plant-based and highly localized. Over the last 500 years, the world has become increasingly connected as a result of colonialism and globalization, which has exponentially increased the use of and access to these substances. The creation of new synthetic drugs and analogues have also increased in the last few decades, further complicating the situation (Boyd et al. 2016; Peters et al. 2015; Van Schipstal et al. 2016). As the access to these substances has increased, so too have governments’ efforts to curtail their use through prohibition and criminalization (Boyd et al. 2016, 1). In the last few decades, some administrations have increased penalties for drug trafficking, possession, and use; policies that

have had the unintended consequence of enabling the unregulated international drug market to proliferate. In North America specifically, those policies have become not only politically charged but have created an opioid crisis that has invaded every facet of the drug environment. “Party drugs” that are used recreationally have also been affected.

Recreational drug use and related harm reduction strategies are comparatively overlooked and under-researched with much of the literature focused on so-called “problematic” substance use and addiction. Yet, recreational users represent the invisible majority of people who use drugs (Bøhling 2017; Cruz 2014; DanceSafe 2019). Much of the research that has been done, on the use of psychedelics particularly, can be described as “clinical, disembodied and decontextualized” and tends to ignore motivations of use such as pleasure-seeking (Bøhling 2017, 134). This kind of research is problematic because substance use and the associated harms are contingent on the social and cultural circumstances in which they are used (Bøhling 2017; Moore 2002; Nutt 2012).

Music festivals are one example of where this kind of qualitative, and culturally relevant, research on substance use and harm reduction is needed (Dilkes-Frayne 2016, 27), particularly because they pose a distinct “public health challenge” (Cruwys et al. 2019, 211; Luther et al. 2018, 220; WHO 2015). The distinct combination of interconnected risks possible at festivals (e.g. dehydration, sleep deprivation, heatstroke, and overstimulation from large crowds, lights, loud music) is compounded by the bounded location and multi-day nature of these events (Beaulieu-Prévost et al. 2019; Cristiano 2020; Palamar et al. 2019). Festivals as liminal spaces are often associated with risks related to sex and substance use, due to decreased inhibitions (Hutton et al. 2018; Ruane 2018). Substance use is also common at festivals largely because drugs are perceived as a way to enhance the experience (Mema et al. 2018; Mohr et al. 2018; Palamar et al. 2019). As such, music festivals should be fully equipped with extensive and relevant harm reduction strategies. However, in Canada, there are no provincial or federal requirements regarding what duty of care events should be providing, beyond fire safety or alcohol permits. Yet music festivals across the country continue to be the site of preventable injuries, overdoses, and deaths. As festivals around the world continue to become larger and more numerous (St John 2017), there is an ever more urgent need for integrated harm reduction.

1.1 Research Questions

The primary research question of this thesis is: To what extent is the general concept of harm reduction part of the music festival cultures in Western Canada? To answer this question, I

identified four objectives: (1) Explore how festival organizers, volunteers, and participants understand harm reduction; (2) Identify what harm reduction strategies are routinely in place at festivals; (3) Assess how various harms are prioritized by current approaches to harm reduction at music festivals; and (4) Examine the factors, motivations, policies, and barriers affecting the implementation and use of harm reduction strategies.

To address these objectives, I relied on qualitative, ethnographic methods including participant observation and semi-structured interviews. During the summer of 2018, I attended and volunteered at three music festivals across Western Canada, one each in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. These festivals were chosen in part because they differed in duration, location, music genre, volunteer training, and services provided for patrons, allowing for a wider breadth of understanding in the variation of these events. While in the field, I also had many informal conversations about harm reduction and safety with fellow volunteers, festival patrons, and festival organizers. My volunteer work at each of the festivals also provided valuable participant observation opportunities.

There is ample data relating to the responsibility of the individual, and the festival community more broadly. However, the most troubling finding from this research is that the harm reduction services provided by music festivals are not consistent across Canada, nor even within each province. I argue here that while the risk and safety concerns at these events are often complicated and situation-specific, most harm reduction strategies can be adapted to fit each unique circumstance. Further, with no consistent, evidence-based policy mandating requirements, the question of whose responsibility it is (and whose it should be) to ensure the safety of those attending these events remains confused.

1.2 Theoretical Framework & Definitions

1.2.1 Critical Interpretive Medical Anthropology: The Three Bodies Approach

The framework for this thesis is the critical-interpretive approach developed by Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1996). Before the late twentieth century, the human body was largely absent from theoretical postulation within the social sciences. Lock and Scheper-Hughes argue that the theoretical significance of “the body” in anthropological research, and in social sciences more broadly, was facilitated by the field research conducted by medical anthropologists. Their research has helped in the promotion and understanding of the relationship among society,

politics, and health (1996, 42). Critical-interpretive medical anthropology aims to find metaphors and narratives about the body, made consciously and unconsciously, to understand how knowledge and explanations of the body, well-being, and illness are constructed and negotiated. In this framework, the body is looked at through three lenses: individual, social, and political (44).

The individual body represents the personal and lived bodily experience, both physically and mentally (1996, 46). Lock and Scheper-Hughes “think it reasonable to assume that all humans are endowed with a self-consciousness of mind and body, with an internal body image... and of being-in-the-world as separate and apart from other human beings” (52). But how experiences are perceived and enacted is not static and varies cross-culturally including socio-centric conceptions, a multiplicity of selves, and Cartesian dualism – the dominant of Western biomedicine (1996).

The social body refers to metaphors and collective representations of society through religion and spirituality, symbolic individual bodies, and vice versa (1996, 45). This body can demonstrate “symbolic equations between conceptions of the healthy body and the healthy society, as well as the diseased body and the malfunctioning society” (57). The social body is also seen in the embodiment or personification of the world, nature, or society. The metaphors adopted are indicative of society as well. For example, metaphors that equate the body with mechanics (e.g. feeling “run down”), would likely not exist in a society not dependant on machines (60).

The third, the body politic, refers to power and control through social regulation and surveillance (1996, 45). It is through this body politic that people are categorized as criminals, deviants, or traitors (60). For example, people who use illegal substances have been subject to criminalization and/or medicalization by the state. Medicalization is a sociocultural process through which a previously nonmedical problem or issue becomes understood and/or controlled through medical terminology, treatment, or professionals (Conrad 1992, 210-211). Michel Foucault’s references to biopower and governmentality are also central in this body politic analysis, though Lock and Scheper-Hughes argue that Foucault’s conceptualization of the body does not account for subjective lived experiences (1996, 64).

The critical-interpretive framework is well-suited for this research because it allows for the dynamic understanding of health required within the festival context. As Lock and Scheper-Hughes state, medical anthropology examines “the way in which all knowledge relating to the body, health, and illness is culturally constructed, negotiated, and renegotiated in a dynamic

process through time and space” (1996, 43). Different festivals have different risk profiles, reputations and strategies, but risks that are common at most music festivals directly involve all three lenses of the body. The individual body is the most tangible, evidenced by the physical and mental health of the individuals attending the festival. The social body is demonstrated by the festival communities as symbolic bodies. The body politic is revealed through presentations of responsibility and accountability at these events.

Neoliberal governmentality

Governmentality is a form of power and social control. It is the indirect means through which the powers that be manipulate the general public into governing themselves (Lemke, 2001; Li 2007). As Nikolas Rose (2001) states, through governmentality, “every citizen must now become an active partner in the drive for health, accepting their responsibility for securing their own well-being” (6). Neoliberalism is a form of governmental rationality through which individuals come to govern themselves by applying economic concepts of risk and reward to all aspects of life (Foucault 2008; McNay, 2009; Moisander et al. 2018). Responsibilization in this way can occur through an “appeal of freedom” and/or “threats to personal control” (Pyysiäinen et al. 2017, 215) because neoliberalism occurs through the management of freedom (McNay 2009; Moisander et al. 2018). Neoliberalism “consumes freedom, which means it must produce it... it must organize it” (Foucault 2008, 63). Similarly, referencing Foucault (1982), Tania Li states that power “acts on actions: it is only power so long as the target of that power retains the capacity to act. Total control requires violence so extreme that it removes agency under threat of death, enslavement or torture” (2007, 276). Drug use is one example where governments around the world have attempted to exert total control over their populations through harsh punishments, including the death penalty in thirty-five countries (Girelli and Larasati 2022, 6). In Canada, the current drug policy endorses harm reduction, but without legislation that explicitly legalizes harm reduction practices, people who use drugs are not truly free to make their own decisions. They are left to navigate their responsabilization without the full agency and freedom required to do so – indicating that this is perhaps an example of governmentality in its nascent stages.

Communities, organizations and other collectives are also subject to governmentality: “urged to take an active role in securing the health and well-being of their employees and members” (Rose 2001, 6). Rose (1999) refers to this collectivization of responsibility as the “securitization of habitat” (247). In my research, the festivals are subject to this form of

governmentality; forced to create their own safety protocols in the absence of government regulation. In turn, each festival is a microcosm of society exerting a form of governmentality on its patrons, wherein the community regulates itself through the internalization of responsibility for safety and well-being.

1.2.2 Pollution Theory: Normality & “Social Dirt”

Mary Douglas’s pollution theory, which uses dirt as a metaphor for the construction of social order, provides a useful tool for my analysis of perceptions and biases associated with music festivals and harm reduction. Douglas defines pollution, or dirt, as matter out of place – something that does not fit into the systematic ordering of society (2002, 44-45). As she explains, notions of dirt are relative, with socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts affecting how one perceives dirt, positing that pollution behaviour is the condemnation of anything “likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications” such as social conventions, labels, and appropriate behaviours (45). The word pollution implies some sort of negative external interference with natural processes, where normality is assumed and, therefore, the source of pollution must be considered abnormal. Lock and Scheper-Hughes discuss pollution theory in connection to the body politic; when a community perceives a threat there is an increase in the social control over the population, particularly in who is labelled deviant (1996, 61). This dirt metaphor is relevant to my research because of the opinions that music festivals and people who use drugs can invoke.

Douglas asks: “How often is one threatened with danger for failing to conform to someone else’s standards?” (2002, xi). Most human action entails some degree of risk but only some actions are forbidden by law (Douglas and Wildavsky 1983, 18-19). Pollution theory can be used as an instrument of control, where “Explanations of misfortune make social outcasts carry the stigma of vice and disease... the socially inferior are morally and physically contaminating, to be segregated and forcibly confined, punished if they try to break out” (1983, 44). Like dirt, morality is not a universal absolute. As Didier Fassin states, “It is not sufficient to analyze moral codes or ethical dilemmas as if they could be isolated from political, religious, economic, or social issues” (2012, 5). Punitive drug policies serve to classify people who use drugs as matter out of place, a form of “social dirt” in need of separation from wider society, the social body, despite indulging in behaviours that typically only affect the individual in question.

1.2.3 Definition of Drugs

Neuroscientist David Nutt provides scientific parameters for his definition of a drug as, “a substance that comes from outside the body, crosses the blood/brain barrier, and has an effect similar to our natural neurotransmitters” (2012, 54). This definition is useful because, although the word drug is ubiquitous in Western culture, it is not used consistently in the literature, and other terms are often used such as psychoactive substance, or medicine. The term psychoactive substance, however, is used consistently in social science literature to encompass everything that alters the mind: legal drugs (such as caffeine, tobacco and alcohol), prescribed medicine, illegal drugs, and substances that are not generally considered drugs under other circumstances, such as gasoline and other inhalants (Marshall et al. 2001, 157). The word medicine is used to describe many legal drugs within the Western biomedical system, but does not typically apply to alcohol and tobacco, and ignores the existence of other medical systems, Indigenous treatments, and illicit substances used by individuals who self-medicate. In this thesis, I use the words “drug” and “substance” interchangeably to refer to all mind-altering substances, unless otherwise stated, and “party drug” specifically for all recreational substances associated with music festivals. New psychoactive substances (NPS) is used to refer to the myriad of analogues and new synthetic drugs (see Appendix A for a glossary of drug and festival-related terms and phrases).

Issues of legality

The legality of a substance contributes directly to public understanding of its risks, and: “There is a tendency to lump all illegal drugs together as somehow more dangerous than drugs that are available over-the-counter in pharmacies or by prescription” (Boyd et al. 2016, 5). Over the last century, many drugs became illegal, classified as dangerous by governments that enforced and continue to enforce prohibitionist policies as a means of controlling these substances, and the people who use them. While the term prohibition is most often associated with alcohol, I use the term more generally to encompass all substances and the policies, laws, and social norms used to prevent their production, sale, and use. However, the prohibition of a drug is not based on factors of tangible danger such as toxicity, the possibility of addiction, and rates of overdose (Nutt 2012, 85). Nutt questions whether alcohol and tobacco would still be legal, if they along with all mind-altering substances, were re-evaluated by governing bodies for legitimate effects, both positive and negative, without historical baggage or current moral bias (2012, 32). The division of drugs by arbitrary definitions of legality also has implications for academic and medical research, in

what is *allowed* to be studied. With criminalization, the potential for therapeutic applications of illicit drugs has been neglected, but “After a near-complete moratorium dating from the late 60s, research on psychoactive substances has recently recommenced” (Ruane 2018, 342). For example, MDMA has gone through the third phase of clinical trials and is showing great promise in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (MAPS 2019). Had research on this substance not been blocked, research on therapeutic potentials could have begun decades earlier.

Another consequence of this legal divide is the distinction between “drug use” and the morally loaded term “drug abuse.” Many sources do not define either term, thereby assuming that the distinction is obvious. Based on legality, drug use could be used to refer to all legal substances and drug abuse to all illegal substances. This, too, is problematic. Classifying drugs in this way also inadvertently labels the people who use them – as either patients in a medical system or as criminals in a justice system (Campbell and Shaw 2008, 694). Yet, alcohol use is regulated and seen as a “normal” and legal consumption pattern, with alcohol abuse understood in terms of “addiction” or substance use disorder. A definition of drug use/abuse that is based on dependency is also problematic in that it does not account for substances without addictive properties such as LSD. The term abuse is also often used in connection with improper (i.e. not directed by a medical professional) use of prescription drugs. In my research, I avoid morally imbued language such as abuse except when self-identified or when interrogating the use of these terms by others.

1.2.4 Origins, Definitions & Critiques of Harm Reduction

Harm reduction, when taken as an attempt to avoid or reduce risk and damage, has likely always been a part of human behaviour. However, as a technical term, it is defined as a policy aimed at reducing drug-related harm without specific goals to stop actual drug use (Carter et al. 2012, 112; Single 1995, 288). Harm reduction’s neutral stance on drug use has led many to interpret harm reduction as *approval* of drug use because it is not condemned. However, there continues to be many different understandings of the term. Eric Single (1995) argues that the real problem with most harm reduction definitions is that they tend not to say what they exclude, which can lead to competing or contradicting claims and definitions (288). Many academics use the definition created by the organization Harm Reduction International (HRI), which was updated in 2019 to include more social justice aims. Harm reduction includes:

policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise negative health, social

and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws. Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights – it focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support (HRI 2019).

The updated definition is more in line with what Nancy Campbell and Susan Shaw (2008) have been arguing: that harm reduction must be framed as an “ethic of care” where people who use drugs are seen as “ethical subjects,” particularly if medical and criminal classifications continue (2008, 694). As ethical subjects in this person-centred model, people who use drugs are seen within the harm reduction paradigm as largely able to reduce their risks and harms (697). Most harm reduction advocates argue that people who use drugs “are, can and should be active participants in their own health care” (Miewald et al. 2017, 589). Boyd et al. expand on this active participation model by adding that harm reduction promotes both self-care and the care of others (2016, 103). This ethical approach to harm reduction has also been referred to as “a human rights approach” (Carter et al. 2012, 115). Community and grassroots organizations see harm reduction not as amoral or immoral, but rather as a deliberate “moral commitment” to improve the lives and conditions of the people who use drugs. The principle behind harm reduction requires that policies that contribute to and create risk and harm, including unnecessary and avoidable inequality and inequity, however unintended, must be challenged (Pauly et al. 2018; Roe 2005).

Some are cautious about harm reduction, not because they would prefer prohibitionist policy but rather, because it is seen as too corporate, an empty term that may replace other drug policies in name only (Cavalierrri & Riley 2012; Roe 2005). Roe argues that harm reduction could become part of the cycle of marginalization by becoming yet another bureaucratic service to navigate, rather than promoting change by preventing the need for such services in the first place (2005, 247). Ruane (2017) is cautious of using the term in her research out of concern that current harm reduction rhetoric has become too medicalized, creating tensions between the discourses (117). More community-based research and the inclusion of people who use drugs in policy planning and development could help address these concerns (Cavalierrri & Riley 2012, 393).

Without information and education about their positive and negative effects, drug-related risks will remain high. Evidence-based information is harm reduction at its most basic (Cruz 2014; Glover 2003). But for those who think abstinence and prohibition are the only way to deal with things such as drug use and sexuality, “The fear is that informing people (especially youth) about safe and responsible drug use endorses the behaviour” (Rigg and Sharp 2018, 349).

However, there is a difference between knowledge of something and actually doing it, and the greater risk is of *not* knowing and doing it anyway. In addition, “abstinence is a goal that displays ignorance of reality” (Groves 2018, 7), and ignoring something does not make it disappear. Harm reduction, by any definition, does not require abstinence from substance use, rather aiming to promote safer and more “responsible” ways of using (Munn et al. 2016, 229).

For this thesis, I use a holistic definition of harm reduction, which includes anything that is used to reduce harm of any kind. Festivals have an abundance of drug and non-drug related risks. These risks are also often compounded. For example, “dancing for hours in the heat, in large crowds, without adequate rest or hydration, can increase risk for [substance] users” (Palamar et al. 2019, 886). In a music festival context, harm reduction includes both personally and institutionally provided supplies, services, and practices – from safer sex supplies and free water, to drug testing and educational handouts. However, to be effective and efficient, everyone involved in the planning, philosophy, and execution of harm reduction strategies at an event must be “on the same page” (Lund and Turriss 2017; Luther et al. 2018). As I discuss in Chapters Four and Five, this is currently not the case in Western Canada.

1.3 Drug Policy & Its Consequences

1.3.1 Canadian Drug Policy & the War on Drugs

There have been recommendations for harm reduction-based drug policy in Canada for the last fifty years. The Commission of Inquiry in the Non-Medical Use of Drugs, referred to as the Le Dain Commission, was formed in 1969 to address growing concerns about drug use (Cavalierrri and Riley 2012, 382). Several recommendations from the subsequent reports were quite radical for the time (evident in that we are *still* having the same conversations), including removing the simple possession of cannabis as an offence and decriminalizing the simple possession of all other drugs (Boyd et al. 2016, 22). None of these recommendations came to fruition. The Commission “served the role of most Royal Commissions: it delayed action on a controversial issue long enough for public demand for action to subside” (Cavalierrri and Riley, 2012, 382). This policy reform failure was due in part to international pressures. United States President Richard Nixon coined the term “war on drugs” in 1971, increasing criminalization and surveillance (Boyd et al. 2016, 22). By the early 1980s, the Reagan Administration renewed those efforts with more pervasive and punitive policies, largely due to the influx of crack cocaine in

impoverished Black and Latino communities, serving to justify these harsh and draconian measures (2016, 22).

In 1987, Canada's Drug Strategy defined harm as: "sickness, death, social misery, crime, violence, and economic costs to all levels of government" (Cavalierrri and Riley 2012, 383), yet policies that created and perpetuated these harms continued to be enforced. More prohibitionist than the previous policy, The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act was created in the early 1990s and consequently, the human and financial costs of this unrealistic policy continued to climb "steadily, predictably, and avoidably" (2012, 383). While this strategy included the words "harm reduction," the lack of action demonstrated its superficial inclusion, with most funds allocated for enforcement measures (385). The Special Committee on Non-Medical Use of Drugs (2002) concluded that an effective drug strategy must use its funds more appropriately than law enforcement alone. It recommended that evidence-based prevention, treatment, and harm reduction services be funded and available for all Canadians (Boyd et al. 2016, 25-26). However, this recommendation, like those of Le Dain Commission, was ignored by Canadian policymakers, despite no decrease in trade or addiction rates of any drugs by the harsh laws enacted by these prohibitionist policies (Nichter 2003, 27). The Harper Government launched the National Anti-Drug Strategy (NADS) in 2007, continuing the escalation of prohibitive policy by placing it under the purview of the Department of Justice, rather than Health Canada (Boyd et al. 2016, 36). With this strategy, whatever pretense – or "duplicity and hypocrisy" – Canada's previous drug policies had had of including harm reduction were now gone (Cavalierrri and Riley 2012, 385). Harm reduction services that managed to stay alive during the NADS era had to constantly prove themselves "even in the face of overwhelming evidence that indeed they *do* work" (2012, 385).

Modern drug policy is targeted at certain groups of people that are seen as threatening to larger society, "by building institutions to confine them and so limit cultural contact with them, but above all by governing the 'known facts' about them" (Campbell 2002, 14). Racist and classist presumptions and profiling mean that marginalized populations are the most at-risk for drug-related arrests. Not surprisingly, these methods are not effective in catching the large-scale criminals who produce and traffic the drugs in question, and the burden of drug-related charges on courts, police, and communities, may outweigh the harms from the drugs themselves (Nutt 2012, 286). Indigenous peoples and other racialized groups are over-represented in Canadian prisons, and there is a disproportionate percentage of women doing time for drug-related

offences. These numbers are not reflected in drug-use rates, or overall involvement in the illegal market (Boyd et al. 2016, 52). In 2013, seventy-one percent of all drug-related offences were for possession, fifty-four percent of which was cannabis (2016, 47-48). Now that cannabis is legal and regulated, Bill C-93 has been introduced, allowing those who have been previously convicted to begin the bureaucratic process of applying for a pardon (Government of Canada 2019a).

The current Liberal Government under Justin Trudeau has taken less of an enforcement approach to drug use than the previous Conservative administration. Harm reduction has been restored as one of the main pillars of the new national strategy, which has a more neutral name than the previous one: The Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy (CDSS). This strategy is referred to as: “A comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and evidence-based approach to drug policy” (Government of Canada 2019b). The rhetoric used by the CDSS has also changed since it was first introduced. Where previously this policy used terms such as drug abuse, it now includes information on the stigmatizing nature of such phrases (Government of Canada 2021a). While much of this policy still lump all drugs together, there is more differentiation than previous versions such as the inclusion of specific considerations for cannabis (Government of Canada 2021b). These are promising changes as people are often less inclined to believe generalized drug-related information coming from the government (Groves 2018; Nutt 2012), which, “has long been perceived as inaccurate, alarmist, and informed by political agendas rather than the realities of drug use” (Ruane 2018, 340-341). This distrust is particularly evident in individuals who have already used substances, as they are more likely to recognize misinformation.

The openness of drug policies creates the potential for both progressive and regressive change. In Canada, while there has been progress made towards policy rooted in harm reduction, simple possession of illicit substances is still a crime, therefore, the country’s current drug policy remains rooted in prohibition rhetoric. By following the Portugal model, decriminalizing personal use and possession of all substances, and adding policies focused on preventative harm reduction, harm could be avoided in the first place. As Nutt argues: “Being willing to change our minds in light of new evidence is essential to rational policy-making” (2012, 7). I was only able to find one reference to a Canadian jurisdiction making a sweeping policy change regarding substance use at music events. Edmonton Police advised the city to mandate a moratorium on electronic music events following an increase in emergency room visits. However, after public and professional outcry, city legislators ended the ban and arranged for research. The result of that research has led

to a new bylaw requiring specific harm reduction plans as part of the permit application process for events with more than 2,500 people (Citizen Services 2020). As far as I can determine, Edmonton is the only Canadian jurisdiction with a formal regulation for harm reduction at events.

1.3.2 Victimless Crimes & an Unregulated Market

Boyd et al. (2016) argue that not only do prohibitionist policies perpetuate victimless crimes, but they also create other unintended harms. These harms include a higher risk of violence, and a higher risk of overdose due to adulterants – the unregulated illicit drug market is a direct side effect of criminalization. As Douglas (2002) questions, how many people have been sent to prison for personal behaviours that are deemed criminal? Personal drug use and simple possession can often be classified as victimless crimes (i.e. crimes which only affect the individual that commits them). In his article on policy alternatives for regulating the rave scene, Troy Glover (2003) discusses John Stuart Mill’s (1859) “harm principle,” which essentially “rules out paternalistic interference with the liberty of people for their own good”(2003, 317). Following this principle, victimless crimes do not need or “deserve” punitive punishments. Almost everything one does carries a certain amount of risk, yet only certain actions are prohibited by law (Douglas and Wildavsky 1983, 18-19). The logic behind these laws is similarly questioned by people who use drugs: “they did not believe their behaviour was hurting themselves or others... ‘you know, it’s just a strange thing to police’ (Male, aged 26, arrested for possession of cannabis and drug utensils)” (Leslie et al. 2018, 67).

Despite caution against exaggerated and blanket statements about the dangers of substance use, party drugs as a whole *are* currently more dangerous than they were even two decades ago due to the proliferation of NPS and adulterants in the unregulated drug market. A documentary on drug testing at American music festivals discusses this new drug climate: “[There are] so many different psychoactive substances floating through our country that people don’t even realize how complicated things have gotten” (Peters et al. 2015, 3:50). Currently, one of the biggest concerns about the North American drug supply is the presence of street fentanyl and its analogues in a variety of other substances. In March 2018, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan saw a surge of overdoses, including four fatalities from fentanyl-laced cocaine (Piller 2019). While the risk is relatively low (Cristiano 2020, 156), the opioid overdose crisis is not limited to people who choose to consume opioids (Laing et al. 2018, 59). Without drug-testing capabilities, people who use drugs have no way to confirm the composition of their substances, reducing their agency.

Those who use substances at music festivals are particularly at risk for unintended use of adulterants (Palamar et al. 2016, 201). The mistaken identity of recreational party drugs is one of the primary causes of drug-related deaths and overdoses at music festivals in North America (Saleemi 2017). This mistaken identity is, in part, the result of unscrupulous dealers deliberately cutting or replacing drugs with adulterants, such as PMMA, PMA, “bath salts,” and fentanyl. This is dangerous because they will have different effects, side effects, dosages, toxicity and drug interactions than anticipated by the user. For example, re-dosing MDMA throughout a session is a fairly common practice, but when PMA or other adulterants are present these dosages can become deadly due to higher toxicity (Day et al. 2018; Rigg and Sharp 2018). Deaths resulting specifically from PMMA at music events have been documented in North America (Boyd et al. 2016; Jones 2015); The United Kingdom (Saleemi et al. 2017); and Norway (Vevelstad et al. 2012). Harm reduction education at these events must include information on these adulterants, as well as common party drugs, because they are being unintentionally consumed (Palamar et al. 2019). To illustrate, in a study on ecstasy use among those who frequent night clubs and music festivals in New York City: “four out of ten... users tested positive for “bath salts” and/or other NPS, despite reporting no lifetime use of these substances” (Palamar et al. 2016, 204). Education must be comprehensive; coupled with drug checking these adulterants can be more easily avoided.

1.4 Recreational Substance Use

The pursuit of pleasure is a common human behaviour, including most recreational drug use (Cruz 2014,134). Harm reduction messages that ignore pleasure and focus only on the risks and negative effects fail to appreciate “the dynamic and strategic ways that young drug users negotiate both pleasure and risk” (Pennay 2015, 191), and by “perceiving drug use as only damaging or bad makes invisible the diverse drug-taking practices” (Boyd et al. 2016, 35). When pleasure is ignored, the motivations and realities surrounding substance use cannot be fully understood (Bøhling 2017, 135). When the motivations behind actions are misunderstood, it is difficult to implement relevant strategies or interventions: “A more developed understanding of audience behaviour provides critical information... to better predict and plan to minimize risk” (Hutton et al. 2018, 191). Risks are not uncontested facts that exist in a context-free vacuum. As such, seeing all drug use as problematic or inherently negative ignores the drug user’s perspective of positive, pleasurable, and beneficial experiences (Hunt et al. 2007, 75-76). When a substance has no known medical applications, the perceived benefits for those who partake are still

legitimate and are often rationally weighed against the negative effects (Cristiano 2020, 121).

In the negotiation between risk and pleasure, negative or unpleasant aspects of drug use are often seen as a normal and accepted part of the experience (Hunt et al. 2007, 84; Pennay 2015, 187). In Amy Pennay's (2015) ethnographic fieldwork on young people who frequent clubs in Melbourne, her participants identified "the sads" as the most significant side effect. The sads are "characterized by extended periods of low mood" following periods of certain drug use; however, it was seen as an accepted consequence of their partying (187). Some people who use drugs discuss negative effects as if they are inevitable; an unpleasant but expected part of their substance use. Others stopped or reduced their drug use when the negatives were seen to exceed the positives (Hunt et al. 2007, 84). Cruz (2014) states that the participants in her study were constantly and deliberately evaluating the costs and benefits of their drug use (144). Just like individuals who take prescription medications that have unpleasant side effects, some people are rationally navigating and negotiating the risks and pleasures associated with their substance use.

1.4.1 Edgework

Similar to Douglas's definition of pollution as something that defies the classification of ordered matter, edgework involves the deliberate negotiation of the boundary between order and chaos during a high-risk activity or behaviour. According to Stephen Lyng (1990), there are many different conceptualizations of what this edge entails for different actions, it could be life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, or sanity and insanity (857-858). However, the negotiation of this edge is not random, but the result of highly skilled and specialized knowledge – edgeworkers have to be the experts at their chosen risk, to maintain their control over a situation that the average person would find uncontrollable. As Lyng says: "The archetypical edgework experience is one in which the individual's failure to meet the challenge at hand will result in death or, at the very least, debilitating injury" (857). For someone who uses drugs, edgework could include knowledge of how to calculate dosages, what combinations of poly-drug use are safer, symptoms of overdose, and navigation of side effects. Many recreational drug users are edgeworkers who are capable of negotiating risk and pleasure with varying degrees of knowledge on and harm reduction strategies for the drugs they take (Glover 2003; Hunt et al. 2007; Pennay 2015; Van Schipstal et al. 2016). Participants in one study compared their substance use to skydiving and rock climbing, where knowledge and experience also serve to reduce risk. These participants also discuss the lengths they go to, to create what they call "hassle-free highs" (Van

Schipstal et al. 2016, 202). Of course, not everyone who consumes drugs are edgeworkers, which is why comprehensive harm reduction is so important, to help less knowledgeable users be safer.

Harm reduction at its most basic, is accurate and complete information or education. This has also been referred to as a “common sense” tactic (Rigg and Sharp 2018; Glover 2003). Douglas and Wildavsky (1983) say that it is a given that people often can and do put themselves and others at risk without intending to. The solution, they argue, “is better information” (17). Peer-based knowledge sharing is an integral part of harm reduction enacted by people who use drugs (Cruz 2014; Dilkes-Frayne 2016; Hunt et al. 2007), serving as a form of “collective self-protection” (Van Scheipstal et al. 2016, 200). Edgeworkers typically have a high opinion of their abilities and knowledge, and low regard for those not engaged in the same or similar activities (Lyng 1990), so peer-based harm reduction strategies are likely more effective than top-down approaches. Online drug-based forums are a common way in which information is shared informally. People can ask questions, and “psychonauts” share experiences through “trip report” posts. There are many of these websites which, “function as peer-based, bottom-up technologies” (Bøhling 2017, 135) and “rely almost exclusively on information sharing between peers” (Ruane 2018, 337). Some people describe these reports as an obligation, particularly when about their more unpleasant or dangerous experiences (Ruane 2018; Van Scheipstal et al. 2016).

Books, harm reduction websites, and non-profits are other ways in which knowledge is shared amongst peers. *The Honest Drug Book* by Dominic Trott (2017), republished in 2019 as *The Drug User’s Bible*, was written exclusively to help people mitigate their drug-related risks. Trott personally tried as many substances as he could, often several times, and systematically documented trip reports of his experiences, similar to the online forums. Nutt (2012) cites a similar reason for writing his book, to spread information about the positives and negatives of different substance use “so you can make better decisions about the risks you want to take with your own body” (6). Similarly, DanceSafe, a non-profit based in the U.S., that aims to provide “honest, fact-based, unbiased information on drug effects and potential harms to empower users to make informed decisions” (DanceSafe 2018). Created in 1998, it is one of the most well-known grassroots organizations aimed at the party scene in North America (2018). It provides many services including eye-catching information cards on different drugs. These cards are deliberately designed to “resonate” with people who use the drug in question, and can be ordered online to hand out at events (DanceSafe 2019) as two festivals researched in this thesis did.

Drug testing is another harm reduction strategy that contributes to the knowledge and agency of people who use drugs, edgeworkers and otherwise. Drug testing services can also function as “the hook” to engage patrons in conversations about health and wellness (Munn et al. 2016, 232), providing them with a “personalized risk discussion” (Mema et al. 2018, 740). Ultimately, drug testing, and harm reduction more generally, is about providing information “so they can make more informed choices” (Groves 2018, 3), “to keep them safe and alive” (Rigg and Sharp 2018, 348). In the absence of these harm reduction strategies, people are left without formal guidance on how to mitigate their risk. Studies found that drug tests helped inform patrons, reduced harm, reduced the risk of overdose, and in some cases changed consumption behaviour or intention (Barratt et al. 2017; Cristiano 2020; Day et al. 2018; Saleemi et al. 2017).

There are different kinds of drug checking technologies with different levels of reliability. Simple reagent testing kits, the cheapest and most common type, are limited in what they can accurately detect, which could lead to a false sense of security (Day et al. 2018; Munn et al. 2016; Rigg and Sharp 2018). Fourier-transform infrared (FTIR) and Raman spectroscopy are more reliable methods but require expensive equipment. However, drug testing “should appeal to all stakeholders concerned with improving the safety of nightlife and festival settings” (Barratt et al. 2017, 234). Other articles also explicitly recommend that drug checking is added to harm reduction programs and strategies (Groves 2018; Mema et al. 2018). Not only is drug checking a pragmatic approach to safety (Chai 2018; Groves 2018), it has been posited that it could add some self-regulation and quality control in the illicit drug market. When people are readily able to test their drugs, dealers are less able to peddle inaccurate or dangerous substances (Laing et al. 2018, 61). Despite the evidence, drug checking, like harm reduction as a whole, remains controversial and is seen as encouraging drug use (Groves 2018; Luther et al. 2018; Munn et al. 2016). This causal rhetoric is akin to saying emergency rooms encourage people to be reckless and have accidents, as opposed to a service addressing a dangerous reality already occurring.

1.4.2 Social & Cultural Contexts

Because drug use does not occur in a vacuum, substances cannot be understood simply by their base physiological effects. The physical environment, the individual’s personal experience and state of mind, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which substance use takes place, are all integral components of the experience. Here, social context relates specifically to people; whom one is with when engaging in substance use, and the group dynamics that ensue. I use the

term cultural context more amorphously to refer to several interrelated factors. These include but are not limited to: the country or geographical location, the political climate, the type of event in question, as well as the expected social norms of these locations. Research that is socially ambiguous and de-contextualized is problematic (Bøhling 2017; Briggs 2015; Moore 2002; Nutt 2012) because every one of these factors can impact the results. As Mac Marshall (1979) demonstrates: “the cross-cultural study of alcohol presents a classic natural experiment: a single species... a single drug substance... and a great diversity of behavioural outcomes” (1), where substances have different cultural merits that cannot be made external to its perceptions (Moore 2002, 20). By focusing only on certain aspects of drug use, such as the officially “therapeutic” properties of a substance, the nuance behind the motivations and experiences of recreational use is missed (Bøhling 2017, 141). Drug use is also “inherently idiosyncratic” (Turner 2018, 41), as in what feels pleasurable for some can feel unpleasant for others. When there is an understanding of the motivations behind recreational use, such as the pursuit of pleasure, more relevant and effective harm reduction strategies can be created (Nutt 2012, 69).

The phrase “set and setting” is a lay term often used to describe the impact that circumstances can have on the experience of substance use. Set refers to an individual’s *mindset* before drug consumption, as well as their expectations for the experience, and personal history (Nutt 2012, 251). Setting refers to both the people one is with, and the location one is in (251), which I refer to as the social and cultural contexts respectively. The environment in which people choose to use drugs is always an important consideration when looking at harm reduction. Some people will also change the type of drug they use based on where they are or who they are with (Cruz 2014, 142). Similar sentiments were expressed by participants in the Van Schipstal et al. (2016) study, where physical spaces are manipulated for increased comfort and audiovisual stimulus, aimed at increasing the pleasure of the activity (207). Different locations come with different risk factors to consider (Bellis et al. 2002), which is especially true for music festivals.

Ella Dilkes-Frayne’s (2016) ethnographic research in Melbourne, Australia shows that even among extensive poly-drug users at these events, problematic use and behaviour was socially regulated: “there was tendency to collectively maintain the norm that ‘messy’ or ‘destructive’ drug use was frowned upon” (32). This viewpoint was reiterated by Ruane (2018) who found that people were anxious to contradict negative stereotypes about substance users (338). People who use drugs recreationally are weekend or occasional partiers; people who

otherwise live “functional” (Cruz 2014, 134), “well-adjusted” (Erickson and Hathaway 2010, 138) lives. Research demonstrates that the majority of people who use drugs do not develop “problematic” or “dependent” drug habits (Cruz 2014, 134; Merkinaite et al. 2010, 113). However, largely missing from these studies is an analysis of the privilege often associated with recreational substance use. Party drugs are relatively expensive, as are the tickets for music festivals and other events.

Recreational users likely disregard prohibitionist drug laws because substance use has been normalized for them, in a similar fashion to those who disregard traffic laws by speeding. As Leslie et al state, “it is possible that being treated like a criminal by police is perceived as being at odds with their substance use behaviour, which recreational users may not judge to be deviant” (2018, 67). Rather than preventing harm, prohibitionist policies can lead to an increase in harm. Instead of preventing use, people simply find different and more dangerous methods of avoiding detection. For example, panicked ingestion of substances after finding out about or seeing police or security searches (Leslie et al. 2018; Lund and Turriss 2017; Malins 2019).

1.5 Anthropology of Festivals

Festival studies are now a well-established topic of research in the social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology. According to David Getz (2010, 2), before the 1990s, there were few studies that distinguished modern music festivals from other events. In an analysis of over 400 research articles, Getz found that the majority fall into three categories or discourses: the meanings and impacts on societies and cultures created by festivals, festivals as a form of tourism, and festival management (2010, 4-5). The themes identified within these categories are: political discourse, sociability, and notions of authenticity related to identity, commercialization, and commodification (2010, 6). More recent research includes motivations that drive festival attendance, including the music, socialization, escape, and the general experience itself (Elliot and Barron 2015; Little et al. 2018; Rahme 2020; Vinnicombe and Sou 2017).

Most academic research on music festivals mentions their liminal nature: ephemeral, temporary events, with temporary communities in bound locations. While most music festivals do not provide opportunity for transition or rite of passage that Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1969) originally described the concept of liminality, they are liminal in that they are an unclassified state (1969, 359). During liminal situations there is a suspension of regular everyday roles and responsibilities, thus attending music festivals can be understood as a form of

escapism (Hutton et al. 2018, 192). However, Susan Luckman argues that festivals do not represent an escape *from* anything, but rather an escape *to* something, emphasizing the experience itself (2003, 322). This escapism contributes to an event's risk profile because liminality can lead to decreased inhibitions, frequently leading to increased risk-taking behaviours (Ruane 2018, 338; Palamar et al. 2019), such as drug use (Hutton et al. 2018). For example, in Ibiza where Tim Turner (2018) conducted fieldwork, substance use is often seen as a "natural" thing to do. This normalization of substance use led some participants to engage in drug use that was "completely different to their lives at home in the UK" (40). Normalization of substance use is context-specific, either the location or the group of people. While drug use may not be considered "normal" by the general population, in a social context that often includes drug use it will have become normalized (Erickson and Hathaway 2010; Hunt et al. 2007; Turner 2018). Just as, "rave is deviant only in the minds of outsiders to rave culture, not ravers themselves" (Groves 2003, 316).

There are some festivals that are more characteristic of liminality in the traditional sense (Turner 1969; van Gennep 1960), which have been referred to as "transformational festivals." At a festival such as this, "festival citizens, participants are afforded passage into a transitional world possessing liminal conditions and carnivalesque logics (or illogics) to which inhabitants are compelled to surrender" (St John 2017, 10). Carnivalesque refers here to the freedoms, eccentricities and connections characteristic of festive celebrations through history (Bakhtin 1984, 1997). The term transformational festival was popularized by Jeet-Kei Leung (2010) in a TEDx talk, which he argues is the "rejoining of sacred ritual and secular festival." Leung describes these types of festivals as safe spaces to engage in identity exploration and formation, where intense emotions can be expressed. Transformational festivals also typically feature an emphasis on collaborative and participatory art and music experiences, electronic dance music, a focus on environmental activism or awareness, and a predilection for psychedelic substances (Ruane 2017, 119). At each music festival, there are going to be risks that need careful planning to be mitigated.

In Australia, one focus on music festival research has been on the enforcement practices of having police, and drug detection dogs at festival gates or roaming the grounds. Almost all this research focuses on the negative consequences this can have. If it is known ahead of time that police or security will be posted at a festival entrance, people may be more likely to buy their drugs on-site from strangers, rather than from a more regular, trusted source (Dilkes-Frayne 2016,

34). Buying from strangers increases the likelihood of poor quality or adulterated drugs, “raising the risks of poisoning, overdose, illness and fatality” (Malins 2019, 67). When patrons are unaware that there will be police, with or without drug dogs, they may panic and swallow all the drugs they have or hide them internally in body cavities, which can be deadly (Malins 2019; McNally 2013). Another strategy for avoiding detection is “front-loading” (Lund and Turriss 2017, 439). These are all riskier behaviours than normal use would have been. Yet, the political response to an increase in deaths at Australian festivals has largely been to double down on prohibition (Thompson 2019).

Harm reduction and safety strategies at music festivals are not limited to services directly related to substance use such as drug testing and peer support. Some of these other strategies include free potable water, access to shade, on-site medical services, and free supplies such as condoms and earplugs (Lund and Turriss 2017; Luther et al 2018). However, risk and harm reduction at events such as these must be looked at holistically. No single risk behaviour exists in isolation; there are many factors to consider, including the interconnected and compounding nature of the many risks prevalent at music festivals.

1.6 Significance and Chapter Outline

1.6.1 Research Significance

This thesis contributes to the growing body of literature on risk and safety at mass gatherings. As the popularity and size of music festivals continue to expand, and as the variety of drugs (and adulterants) increase, the safety concerns for these events will likewise continue to grow. I identify some of the motivations, perspectives, and strategies concerning harm reduction that could prove helpful for festival organizers and patrons alike. Of crucial concern, people are at the mercy of the unregulated market of illicit substances without access to testing services. Without testing services, no amount of knowledge regarding a drug – both its positive and negative effects – is enough. The absence of preventative harm reduction places more of an emphasis, and a burden, on reactionary harm reduction methods such as first aid and overdose awareness.

The majority of the research on harm reduction focuses on addiction, intravenous drug use, and HIV transmission. As demonstrated above, the literature that focuses on recreational use centres largely on personal methods of harm reduction, rather than on the institutional level of official services offered by a club or large-scale event. Moreover, recreational drugs are often

either reduced to MDMA, or lumped altogether without differentiation. I chose to do this research at music festivals specifically because while festivals are a well-researched topic, there is relatively little that focuses on safety, risk, and harm reduction. The interconnections between drug-related and non-drug-related risks at these events are also rarely interrogated.

1.6.2 Chapter Outline

Chapter Two covers the ethnographic context and methodology in which this research was conducted. I provide context concerning the three music festivals that make up my fieldwork, including logistical information, services provided, and the challenges faced in the field. This chapter then outlines the anthropological methods used to collect and analyze the data.

Chapters Three through Five are data-driven. In Chapter Three, I interrogate the notions, beliefs, and examples of different risks and risk-taking behaviours identified and prioritized by participants, and strategies used to combat these risks. As noted in the literature, and mentioned by several participants, risk is an innate part of everyday life. To dismiss these leisure activities chosen by a significant portion of the population as inherently too risky is reductionist and short-sighted. This chapter is framed around the individual and social bodies (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996), where risks are organized by what aspect of the body they affect, be it the physical or mental health of an individual body, or the festival community – the symbolic social body.

Chapters Four and Five are both focused on the responsibility of mitigating these risks, and the accountability that entails. In Chapter Four, this is examined at an individual level, how individuals enact responsibility for both themselves and those around them. Individual and social responsibility is largely impacted by governmentality, demonstrating the interplay among the individual body, the social body, and the body politic (1996). The focus of Chapter Five is structural responsibility, looking at the responsibility of festival organizers and governing bodies for the creation of safe events. Responsibility has been internalized by individuals, who often then assign blame to others for not being prepared enough, rather than expecting a certain level of precaution from organizers or governments with their regulatory power and control.

Chapter Six, the final chapter, discusses the outcomes and limitations of this project. I provide my conclusions and recommendations regarding safety and harm reduction at music festivals in future, as well as potential avenues for subsequent research.

CHAPTER TWO

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT & METHODOLOGY

There are a particular set of challenges when it comes to researching music festivals, specifically because of their short duration. These challenges are described in the ethnographic contexts for the three field sites in the first half of this chapter, where I discuss logistical information, the safety and harm reduction facilities, and volunteer requirements for each of the three festivals. The rest of the chapter describes the research methods used, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and policy analysis, as well as how the data is analyzed.

2.1 Research at Music Festivals

The nature of festivals, with their limited timeframes, requires the use of rapid ethnographic methods to produce fruitful research. As Sarah Pink and Jennie Morgan state, “in the practice of short-term ethnography it is not so much the use of new techniques ... rather it is the use of techniques and technologies in different ways” (2013, 352). The three festivals I researched had just eight official days amongst them. Fortunately, my volunteering at the events afforded me an additional ten, for a total of eighteen days in the field. Unlike traditional anthropological fieldwork, I could not spend weeks or months gaining rapport with any participants and interlocutors,¹ and most of my interactions at these events were brief and singular encounters. However, some deeper connections were formed, largely through my volunteer experiences, which helped to provide valuable insights throughout the research process. To supplement the fieldwork data, I have used information from the festivals’ websites, news articles, and social media pages. The strong sense of community and identity formed at many music festivals – largely because they are annual events with many loyal patrons – is cultivated by festival organizers and patrons alike through various forms of social media throughout the year. My own previous experiences and research at music festivals (Ratuszniak 2017) have also helped inform research decisions made throughout this project.

My research is multi-sited, allowing me to gather sufficient data and compare the differing logistical circumstances and corresponding safety measures at each event. Festivals in different provinces were chosen to explore how policy has an impact on what festivals are providing for

¹ In this thesis, participant refers only to people who were interviewed, and interlocutor is used for everyone else spoken to in connection to this research.

safety measures and harm reduction. As such, I researched three music festivals in Western Canada, one each in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, the identities of which are confidential. I use provincial abbreviations as identification for each festival (Sask, Alta, BC). Any references that identify these events have been redacted to ensure this confidentiality. I chose events that occur in different types of environments to highlight and compare the challenges of holding a festival in different circumstances. The three festivals also have different approaches and attitudes towards safety and harm reduction. Table 2.1 illustrates some of these differences.

Each festival has a different culture. In this thesis, “culture” encompasses the different values and norms promoted by festival organizers, the different topics that are emphasized through the workshops and activities available, and the rules that are enforced. This definition is informed by Lock and Scheper-Hughes (1996) who describe cultures as: “disciplines that provide

Table 2.1 Festival Comparison

| | Sask Festival | Alta Festival | BC Festival |
|--|---|--|--|
| Urban/Rural | Rural | Urban | Rural |
| Month | July | August | August |
| Age Restrictions | None - children allowed | 18+ | 19+ |
| Camping/Days Only | Camping | Days only | Camping |
| Total Festival Duration (official festival days) | Four days, three nights Thursday - Sunday | Two days Saturday - Sunday | Four days, three nights Friday - Monday ² |
| Music Duration (each day) | 7 p.m. - 3 a.m. Approximately | 1 p.m. - 11 p.m. | 3 p.m. - 8 a.m. Approximately |
| Genre of Music | Folk and Indie | Electronic Dance Music | Electronic Music |
| Number of Stages | Two | Three | Seven |
| Number of People (approximately) | >4,000 (including volunteers & workers)* | 34,000 (not including volunteers & workers)* | 17,000 (including 4,000 volunteers & workers) |
| Alcohol | Bring your own alcohol and sold by the festival | Sold by the festival only | None ³ |
| Pill Testing | No | No | Yes |
| Sobriety Support | Yes | No | Yes |
| My Volunteer Shifts | One eight-hour shift | Two five-hour shifts | Two twelve-hour shifts |
| Volunteer Training | Four hours | Zero hours | Ten+ hours |

² This reflects the face value of the festival ticket – for an additional fee per day patrons are allowed to arrive on the Tuesday, making the festival seven days and six nights long.

³ With the exception of bars backstage, primarily for performers, but accessible with a backstage pass.

* I was unable to obtain the number of festival personnel for these two festivals.

codes and social scripts for the domestication of the individual body in conformity to the needs of the social and political order” (63). The culture that is created by a music festival provides expectations for individuals, personally, socially, and politically while at that event.

2.1.1 Sask Festival

Sask Festival is my first field site. This festival takes place in a campground in the forest, about a twenty-minute drive from the nearest town. A week before the festival started, I attend the harm reduction training session. The training takes place in an LGBTQ2+ space, the first demonstration of the importance the two harm reduction coordinators place on inclusivity. There are approximately twenty-five volunteers seated in couches and chairs that have been arranged in a semi-circle in front of a projection screen. Katherine, one of the two coordinators, begins with a land acknowledgement for Treaty 6 territory. We then start with introductions, going around the room saying our names and pronouns. The training includes information on different categories of drugs (stimulants, psychedelics, depressants, and dissociatives), harm reduction strategies, and what the different volunteer roles look like. Harm reduction at this festival is a three-pronged approach: outreach (volunteers who roam festival grounds with supplies, looking for those in need); pre-consumption education (workshops, skits, and pamphlets about safer sex and substance use); and post-consumption intervention (peer support and working with security and first aid).

There are several guest presentations during the training session, covering first aid, peer support, and naloxone administration. The First Aid Coordinators arrive first to talk about common injuries and concerns. They are short on volunteers this year, so they ask for increased cooperation from the harm reduction volunteers to help things run smoothly. The second guest is a therapist, and former harm reduction volunteer, who conducts a workshop on peer support. She covers different techniques and strategies that we will be performing at the festival, including grounding techniques such as breathing exercises and sensory distractions. The final guests are nurses and addictions workers who provide naloxone training. They talk about opiates, the overdose crisis, and naloxone use before we practice by injecting oranges with water.

Through connections made at the training session, I get a ride to the festival grounds as part of a nine-person, four-vehicle convoy the morning before the festival. Volunteers and staff are the only people allowed to enter the grounds on the Wednesday, other festival patrons have to wait until Thursday morning. However, as we turn onto the dirt road that leads to the festival grounds, I see a long line of cars, many with tents set up beside them, waiting to get into the

festival. Throughout the weekend, several people tell me that the unofficial “line-up party,” which gets rowdier closer to the entrance, is one of the best nights of the festival. After checking in, getting our volunteer wristbands, and going through the mandatory car search, we decide to camp in one of the designated “quiet zones.” These spaces are designed for volunteers and families who want or need to sleep early at night and are set apart from other campsites. There are signs throughout these areas reminding patrons to be quiet after ten in the evening.

Harm reduction-specific infrastructure is a relatively new service provided at Sask Festival. The sanctuary⁴ space at this festival was initiated in 2016, after significant lobbying from Katherine and other patrons who then became the coordinators and first volunteers of a newly created harm reduction team. The services offered by this team are described in the festival guide provided to each patron upon entering the grounds. It reads:

Are you or your friend unwell? Having an anxiety attack? Looking for nonjudgmental support? Need a quiet, safe and supportive space? Looking for educational resources on safe drug and alcohol use? Need condoms or tampons? ... If you or someone you know might need these resources during the festival, we are open and ready to support you 24/7. There will be warm beverages, peer support, and a safe space to come if something bad happens, if you can't get in a good head space, or if you need a place to calm down before you continue on your way. All are welcome, we love you and are here to support you.

Despite the slow acceptance and implementation of these services, festival organizers are now supportive of harm reduction messaging and services provided. However, drug testing is not available due to festival organizers' (and their insurance company's) liability concerns.

2.1.2 Alta Festival

My second field site takes place in a city in Alberta. Of the three festivals, Alta Festival has the highest attendance in the smallest physical area – the parking lots of a large complex are transformed into the festival grounds for the weekend. Unlike Sask and BC, which are camping festivals in rural areas, the Alta Festival is day-to-day and open only from 1 p.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Since it is an open-air festival in an urban centre, it must follow local by-laws, particularly as they pertain to noise pollution, necessitating the early end of each night. However, additional tickets are sold for the various “after parties” on Saturday, at half-a-dozen

⁴ Sanctuaries, chill zones, and safe havens are where patrons can go if they are uncomfortable or overwhelmed; typically, with comfortable seats, tea, snacks, and volunteers trained in peer support.

clubs around the city featuring second performances from headline acts.

There is no harm reduction department at this festival because, as I find out on the first day of the festival, they have hired an external harm reduction company to provide those services. They have a table with earplugs, safer sex supplies, and posters with harm reduction information on hearing, consent, and substance use. They also have a small “chill” area with a few chairs. Since there was no harm reduction option, I choose two volunteer positions that still provide me with useful opportunities to make observations for this thesis: A ProServe facilitator and a ticket scanner. On the first day of the festival I am a facilitator, described in their handbook as follows:

Our job is to help ensure that everyone has a fun and safe festival without judgement. Please approach this assignment from a caring and compassionate perspective. Other circumstances can present like intoxication; a diabetic who’s insulin levels has dropped, someone who hasn’t drank enough water and is experiencing dehydration, someone experiencing a stroke, etc. NO JUDGEMENT!

While “no judgement” is a common pillar of harm reduction, this excerpt is not promoting harm reduction. By only asking for judgement-free care because other medical situations can present as intoxication, they are intimating that people who *are* intoxicated are not as worthy of care and compassion. This is antithetical to harm reduction. Further, having *ProServe* in the title implies that substance-related care is part of the role. ProServe is a program created by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, designed to ensure that alcohol is sold “according to law and in such a way that keeps customers, guests and others safe from alcohol-related harms” (ProServe 2018). Because alcohol is sold at this event, per Alberta law, all workers must have this certification.

Of the three festivals, Alta Festival has the strictest stance on substance use, taking a zero-tolerance approach. This stance was most obvious on Sunday when I was scanning tickets at the festival gate, just behind security. The festival entrance was divided into six security lineups labelled: men, men with bags, women, women with bags, VIP men, and VIP women. I was stationed to scan tickets for men with bags, enabling me to observe the security process. There was supposed to be an orientation for all volunteers in the week leading up to the festival, but my session was cancelled due to severe thunderstorm warnings. The email informing volunteers of this cancellation stated that: “We will go over everything that would have been discussed today on Saturday and Sunday prior to starting your shifts.” I do not know what this discussion is

supposed to have entailed, because before the shifts we only received brief instructions related directly to our jobs. This lack of preparedness and training appears to have extended to the contracted security guards. Each person is supposed to be thoroughly searched by security for substances and corresponding paraphernalia, including personal naloxone kits; however, the enforcement I witnessed, and experienced, was not consistent. The full list of banned and acceptable items for each festival is included in Chapter Five since it is particularly relevant to discussions on conflicting methods and understandings of safety and responsibility.

2.1.3 BC Festival

The last field site is BC Festival, which takes place on private property in the Kootenay Mountain region of southern British Columbia. This is the longest festival of the three by far. The festival officially starts on Friday; however, patrons are allowed to enter festival grounds as early as Tuesday morning. “Pre-show” volunteers and paid workers are on-site for weeks and even months before the festival to get the grounds ready, including landscaping and stage construction. As a “showtime” volunteer, I was allowed to arrive on the Monday before the festival. BC Festival also allows their patrons to stay a full twenty-four hours after the last music performance, to ensure everyone has the chance to fully sober up and rest before driving home. Everyone, except for “post-show” volunteers, must leave the festival grounds on the Tuesday.

BC Festival has the most extensive and holistic approach to safety and harm reduction. More than a thousand workers and volunteers are part of the overarching BC Festival Public Safety Team – which includes first aid, security, fire, and harm reduction. Colour coding is used to differentiate the various groups within the safety team from the rest of the crew members: first-aid workers wear red, security wear bright yellow, and harm reduction personnel wear purple. Harm reduction is further divided into six departments: sanctuary, safer space, drug testing, outreach, sexual health, and sober camping. Some are described in the festival guide given to every patron, as follows:

[Drug Testing and] Outreach. Provides: Info on possible risks with different substances, free pill testing, condoms, lubricants, and safer sex information, as well as safer party info, resources, and support.

Options for Sexual Health. Non-judgemental, accurate sexual education, and safe sex supplies. Hours with the “Ask a Sexpert” available at [Drug Testing] booth.

Safe Space – Open 24 Hours a Day. For: Anyone that feels vulnerable or have disclosed that they’ve been assaulted. Volunteers are trained in crisis intervention to support people in need and connect them to resources in their own community.

[Sanctuary] – Mental Health: If you or someone you know is experiencing any mental-health issues such as anxiety, panic attacks, hallucinations, delusions or dissociation, visit for a cool quiet place that’s staffed with experienced professionals.

Anyone interested in joining the sober camping site must fill out a form before or during the festival. No drugs, alcohol, or paraphernalia are allowed in the campsite, nor are intoxicated individuals. The area is fenced off to help facilitate these rules. The campsite is not promoting or associated with a twelve-step program and being “in recovery” is not a requirement for those who wish to camp there. However, there are three meetings every day, which are conducted via peer support for anyone needing help to stay sober. The meetings are open to all festival attendees.

BC festival has also developed an app to disseminate information when necessary to all patrons. Additionally, an “SOS” number was created as the emergency number while on festival grounds to help reduce volunteer response times, and clear up radio signals for emergencies. The number is available through the festival app, on the festival lineup/map handout, on 11,000 stickers distributed to patrons, and posted on large signs around the festival grounds. Each notice for this SOS number included the phrase “know your location.” BC Festival covers a large area, so fast emergency responses are dependent on accurate location information. There are twenty-two clearly marked muster points throughout the grounds that volunteers must be familiar with. This infrastructure has enabled them to boast a three-minute response time anywhere in the festival.

My harm reduction volunteer position was in the sanctuary space. This role required the completion of an eight-hour “psy-crisis” training course, complete with a manual and certificate. My training took place in June in Calgary and was not affiliated with any music festival. It was geared towards festival-specific harm reduction and the majority of the people were there as a requirement of their volunteering at several festivals across Canada. There were also more training sessions in the days leading up to the official start of the festival.

Unlike the other two festivals, alcohol is not allowed at BC festival. It is not sold, and security personnel search for it, and for any glass or weapons, during the initial vehicle checks upon entering festival grounds. The festival’s website states that the reason they are a dry event,

despite the 19+ age restriction, is because of patron safety and the desire to avoid fights – a common mentality at electronic music events. Alcohol was also largely absent from raves, the precursors of modern electronic music festivals (Glover 2003). Tim Weber (1999) is quoted saying that most ravers “mentioned their disdain for alcohol, which they believed did not belong in the rave scene because of its tendency to incite aggression and violence” (Glover 2003, 314). This deliberate avoidance of a legal substance like alcohol, yet apparent acceptance of illegal drugs, demonstrates a different perspective on and rationalization of risk-taking.

2.2 Methodology

Researchers are always connected to their research topic, even if just because they research it. I chose to research music festivals largely because they are something I enjoy. I have been attending festivals as a patron since 2013 and, therefore, consider myself to be an insider researcher. Paul Hodkinson (2005) examines the pros and cons of being an insider researcher, discussing the usefulness of personal experience in that it should be used selectively and with purpose (2005, 145). Reflexivity and positionality are essential practices in all qualitative and ethnographic research (Berger 2015; Davies 2008) and are particularly so when conducting insider research: “Ensuring that one’s position of social proximity is beneficial rather than problematic requires an ongoing reflexive and reactive approach” (Hodkinson 2005, 146). As a researcher with prior experience with festival cultures, my knowledge of the music and my fluency in the slang was instrumental in gaining rapport with participants – allowing me to interpret and analyze my findings in real time. However, it was a challenge to ask questions about things that were obvious to me. As such, I made a concerted effort to distance myself from the cultures to critically analyze my data in an attempt to “see the familiar as strange.” Although my personal experiences at festivals helped to shape this project, the bulk of the data in this thesis is participant-driven. While auto-ethnography is not without its merits, I have kept this research person-centred by focusing on interviews and other informal conversations, as “bringing the researcher into the researched carries the danger of researcher’s self-involvement to the degree that it blocks hearing other voices” (Berger 2015, 224).

With the help of my advisor, Pamela Downe, I submitted a research ethics application to the University of Saskatchewan’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board (REB) in March 2018. The REB approved this project and its methodology in May 2018. The methods are participant observation, semi-structured interviews, policy analysis, and content and thematic data analysis.

2.2.1 Participant Observation: Researching and Volunteering

Participant observation, and subsequent fieldnotes, are an integral component of this research. Fieldnote excerpts, identified by italics, are used throughout the thesis. While participant observation is a foundational method in sociocultural anthropology (Bernard 2011, 256), these observations are of particular importance in my project as I was unable to conduct as many interviews as I hoped. There are many roles that I had to play at the festivals: researcher, volunteer, patron, and friend. While juggling these roles is somewhat challenging, they all provide a valuable contribution to my data, particularly the volunteering.

My reasons for volunteering at each festival are four-fold. First, volunteering is a meaningful way to provide reciprocity. Second, it allowed me to be on-site before and after the official events, affording me more time in the field. Third, it enabled me to meet people and participate in more spaces – increasing the scope of my participant observation. Lastly, since festival volunteers do not buy tickets, it drastically reduced the cost of my fieldwork. I deliberately chose volunteer positions that were most applicable to my research subject – harm reduction and safety teams. At Sask Festival, I worked my official eight-hour shift in the harm reduction tent (a combined safer space and sanctuary), which was unsurprisingly quiet given it was scheduled on the last day of the festival. I also assisted other volunteers in the tent throughout the festival. At Alta Festival it was useful to see how the festival used its volunteers in other capacities. Ticket scanning for example gave me insights into the security process, but I was underutilized in my outreach role. I spent the day circulating among festival attendees, answering logistical questions and looking for people in need of help. At BC Festival, I worked in the sanctuary, one day-shift and one night-shift.

At each of the three festivals, whenever not volunteering or participating in an activity, I sit in or walk through the high traffic areas and harm reduction services taking notes. This looks different at each festival, and what worked well at Sask and B.C. proves more difficult at Alta. Alta Festival has either too few or too many people in a small area, so walking through the grounds is not effective. Once busy, it became so crowded that there were times when I could not move at all. With bodies pressing in from all sides, I had to literally shove my way through the crowd to move. Writing and sketching are common sights at both Sask and BC festivals, so writing jot notes in my notebook did not seem out of the ordinary. A woman at the BC festival eating near me at one of the communal dining tables even asked how my journaling was going.

The Alta environment however, is not conducive to note-taking – it is essentially an outdoor nightclub, with no escape from the crowds or loud music. There are also no tables, and hardly anywhere to sit down, so it felt out of place to even carry a notebook. Instead, I use my phone to write jot notes, blending in with other patrons on their phones, texting, taking pictures and posting on social media.

2.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted eleven informal, semi-structured interviews with a total of fourteen people; my only rule of inclusion is attendance at one of the festivals. Throughout this thesis, I use two terms to distinguish the kinds of interactions I had. The term “participant” is used exclusively to refer to interviewees, and “interlocutor” is used for everyone else with whom I had more informal conversations and interactions. Five of the interviews occur at Sask Festival, the rest are related to the BC Festival, which were conducted after the fact for logistical reasons. (Unfortunately, no interviews with participants from Alta Festival were possible.) Eight of the interviews are recorded with a hand-held audio recorder, and the last three are conducted via email (as they were long-distance). All the interviews are relatively brief (ranging from nine to thirty-three minutes), largely because I was concerned about the time commitment participants would be willing to make while at a festival, and I wanted to keep the questions as consistent as possible. For the three interviews done via email, I use my interview guide (see Appendix B) as a template. I add probing questions where possible using my prior knowledge of each participant to elicit longer written answers related to their experiences – such as volunteer experiences, and comparisons to other festivals. To maintain the confidentiality of all participants, each person created a pseudonym for this research. No identifying photographs or videos were taken. Rather than honorariums, I made bracelets that participants could choose from, as gifting is common at many festivals.

Participants are chosen at Sask Festival through convenience and snowball sampling. Most are found in the “downtown” area of the festival; to be as unobtrusive as possible, I choose people who were not too preoccupied with their friends, the music, or an activity. I had only one person decline, her young son had just finished his activity and wanted to go somewhere else. I also interview several fellow volunteers and their friends. All the interviews occur on the spot, sometimes while walking together through the grounds, sometimes sitting downtown, or in their campsite. I receive verbal informed consent (documented in my fieldnotes) before interviewing

anyone, after providing an explanation of who I am and what my research entails.

For BC Festival, five people are interviewed in person with an audio recorder over three interviews. Two of them take place at my home, and the last one is conducted in a pub of the participant's choosing. The final three written interviews are emailed back to me. All participants receive my contact information, in case they have questions or concerns, and are not contacted again unless they wish to be notified of research updates. Knowledge sharing to the general festival community will be done through informal articles on music festival blogs, pending permission.

2.2.3 Policy Analysis

Research that examines policy is a common purview of applied anthropology, and “Policy research intends to assess the effects of a policy, to adapt or change it, or to generate new policies” (Trotter et al. 2015, 662). For the purpose of this section, a policy is a guideline used to interpret legislation and regulation for specific situations. According to the Government of Canada, legislation refers to a federal or provincial law that is examined and enacted by parliament. Regulations, or subordinate legislation, determine the application and/or enforcement of that legislation (Government of Canada 2006). The main distinction is that legislation and regulations have the force of law and are easily searchable. One of the biggest challenges I faced with this thesis was finding the relevant policies. For example, a piece of legislation, such as the Criminal Code, prohibits the possession of certain substances. The RCMP will have specific policies on how the enforcement of the prohibition is achieved. While the policy is, at least ostensibly, informed by the law, the policy itself has no legal force. If legislation is the end that parliament seeks to achieve, policies serve to explain to the layperson how to enforce legislation.

However, in some cases, a policy can get so removed from the legislation it is supposed to be providing guidelines for, that it is no longer an accurate interpretation of that law (Buhler and Dodge 2019; Kerr 2015; Sossin and Smith 2004). Lorne Sossin and Charles Smith (2004) highlight these issues, among others, in their commentary on policy, or “soft law,” guidelines:

policy guidelines vary across different political and bureaucratic settings. They are sometimes developed in response to external pressures and sometimes due to internal initiative. Still other bureaucratic settings have no code of ethics or policy guidelines at all. This *ad hoc* development of codes and guidelines calls into question the accountability, coherence, and fairness of public administration ... who develops these guidelines, according to what processes, and for what

objectives? To what extent are they binding or enforceable? In what circumstances are they made publicly available? (868)

Soft law, like legislation and regulations, reflects political preferences. However, because soft law is developed and applied by the bureaucracy, it is not subject to the accountability measures applicable to legislation and regulations (870).

One of the most obvious examples of confused policy in my research relates to legislation commonly referred to as a “Good Samaritan Act.”⁵ The first aid coordinators for Sask Festival said during the training session that they cannot provide medical care that is not covered by Good Samaritan legislation, which they understood to exclude all forms of medication except for EpiPens. However, in Saskatchewan, the legislation, officially called *The Emergency Medical Aid Act*, makes no mention of specific actions that are either acceptable or unacceptable. It is also surprising that an event with an established first aid station would be subject to *The Emergency Medical Aid Act* at all, given that it only covers protection for “the services or assistance [that] are not rendered at a hospital or other place having adequate medical facilities and equipment” (Revised Statutes of Saskatchewan 1978). There is no definition of what “adequate” means in any context, so festivals are essentially forced to choose between better medical facilities with more liability, or less adequate facilities with more legal protection – a case of poorly written policy incentivizing the wrong actions. The first aid coordinators cited above were likely referencing a policy created by Sask Festival that was interpreting this act, but if so, I was unable to find it.

I conduct my fieldwork at festivals in different provinces to see if and how different jurisdictions have an impact on the harm reduction strategies in play. The constitutional division of power in Canada makes this issue particularly hard to track. Most health care is under provincial jurisdiction, while drug laws are federal (The Constitution Act 1867). Because drug use currently remains in both the criminal/legal and medical/health realms, it is difficult to have nationally consistent programs and access. For example, while the Criminal Code of Canada is the only document to be interpreted by courts regarding criminal law, I have found conflicting decisions from provincial Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada on whether a police officer “smelling cannabis” in a car is enough cause to conduct a search without a warrant. Several interlocutors took issue with this “excuse” because it relies on subjectivity and often

⁵ This label is used colloquially regardless of the official name of the provincial legislations, as they serve to protect ‘good samaritans’ from liability for actions in emergencies that may result in a lawsuit.

cannot be verified as cannabis odours can dissipate quickly. Guidelines for festivals and other events from provincial and municipal governments are also comparatively analyzed for health and safety issues.

2.2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis began in July with the transcription of interviews from the first festival. The process took several months to complete, and while long it was not the painstaking process I had been anticipating. I quite enjoyed reliving the experiences I had with participants – although I inevitably found myself wishing I could go back and ask follow-up questions. As I transcribed, I made notes of possible codes and themes, and flagged passages that seemed especially significant and relevant. To ensure accuracy, following transcription I did a final read of each interview while listening to the audio file – paying particular attention to punctuation and whether I stayed true to the participants’ cadence and tone (Bernard 2011, 417).

I used both content and thematic methods to analyze my interviews (Bernard 2011; Creswell 2007). I chose to use simultaneous coding for my content analysis, to ensure the first round of coding was flexible and exploratory (Saldaña 2016, 73), allowing for overlapping codes. The coding styles I used are holistic, concept, and in vivo. I chose holistic coding, a type of macro analysis where codes are assigned to larger “chunks” of data because I had a “general idea of what to investigate in the data” at the start of the process (2016, 166). I chose concept coding, another type of macro analysis, where a word or phrase “symbolically represents a suggested meaning broader than a single item or action” (119) because it allows for the isolation of overarching big picture ideas in the data. This was valuable for comparing interviews from different festivals. In vivo coding was critical to my analysis because it helped ground my research by using “the direct language of participants as codes rather than researcher-generated words and phrases” (71). As a result, I was able to use participant-generated folk terms (106).

After coding each interview, I made a list of all the codes and counted how many times each one appeared in the transcript. The results from each interview were then compared. With further reflection of my research questions, irrelevant codes and slippage between the holistic and concept codes was noted, with cross-code redundancies. I condensed my codes into a shorter list of concepts, using some in vivo terms, writing rules of inclusion for each. This list of codes was used for the second round of coding, which was done with a deductive focus. These codes were then counted, within each interview, within each festival group, and total occurrence in all.

I formed the initial framework for my thematic analysis using the codes from the condensed list. This thematic framework was then colour-coded for visual reference. After the second round of coding, I sorted significant passages based on these themes and identified possible exemplar quotes and vignettes to support and contextualize the analysis (Bernard 2011, 438). To help ensure thematic accuracy, I printed several quotes (making sure to keep them in context) from each theme so they could be pile-sorted based on similarity. I did this pile sorting twice, a few weeks apart, and then asked several friends and fellow graduate students to sort them as well (2011, 431). When there were differences in sorting, it was documented and discussed until consensus was reached.

Throughout the analysis process, it became increasingly clear that there were two overarching themes: risk and responsibility. Risk is the focus of Chapter Three and serves to demonstrate *what* is occurring at festivals: what the prominent risks in question are, and what is being done to mitigate them. Responsibility is divided between Chapters Four and Five each with a focus on *who* is considered responsible and *why* these risks end up occurring.

CHAPTER THREE

“EVERYTHING IS RISKY”: HARM REDUCTION HAS TO BE MULTIFACETED

For several days now, the skies have been hazy and orange, thick with smoke from numerous forest fires, forcing patios to close across the city despite the August heat. I am seated in a quiet corner of the pub when Willow arrives, unwrapping a scarf from around her face – protection against the smoke.

When the interview turns to risks at music festivals, at first Willow is confused: “Everything is risky, I don’t know.” I rephrase, asking what she would say to someone who said: Isn’t going to a festival risky? She sighs, and then laughs out of exasperation, repeating “I dunno, everything is risky. Don’t go outside then. Don’t breathe the air right now... what’s riskier than that?” gesturing towards the window, while her head continues to shake with laughter.

Throughout the interview, it is clear that safety is a deliberate and conscious effort for Willow, not just at festivals but in her everyday life. She accepts that risk is unavoidable: “You just have to sustain yourself. It’s just like, minimal ‘humanness’ values. Like, look both ways when you cross the road; don’t do meth. These are just things you do as a human to survive.”

In this chapter, I explore how festival attendees conceptualize and negotiate risk. As Willow points out above, risks are an intrinsic part of life. Individuals, companies and governing bodies alike engage in risk analysis, where some things are deemed worthy of the chance, and others are actively avoided and considered too dangerous to consider. However, the conclusions individuals and organizations come to are often at odds. How a risk is perceived depends on the individual, their motivations, and what information they have available. For those who actively engage in minimizing risk, it is more of an embodied experience.

For some, the very act of attending a music festival is too risky to consider. For those without personal experiences to draw from, information about festivals likely comes from the media – which is often prone to sensationalism. The propensity of the media to paint a negative image of music festivals is brought up by participants when asked if they think the general public view festivals as safe places: “I think it’s rare to read a newspaper article and see something like, ‘BC Music Festival went as planned, and it was good’... You only hear, like, somebody died at X festival, somebody died at Y festival” (Ant Man). Another participant thinks that “you can’t understand it until you get there” (Misha). These comments demonstrate how difficult it can be for those without first-hand knowledge to understand the motivations behind attending events that are often portrayed as dangerous in the media.

Using the critical-interpretive model provided by Lock and Scheper-Hughes (1996), this

chapter is divided by risks that affect different aspects of the body. Risks that primarily impact the physical body include the consumption of substances, unsafe sex, physical injuries, dehydration, lack of food and sleep, exposure to the elements, and hearing loss. These risks are separated into two categories: drug-related and environment-related. Each risk considered in this chapter was identified by a participant and is contextualized by their corresponding perspectives and harm reduction strategies, both personal and institutional. Understanding the motivations behind risk-taking behaviours is an important element of risk assessments. This is particularly true if targeted health and safety plans for events are to be effectively developed, "...to better predict and plan to minimize risk and reduce patient presentations at events" (Hutton et al. 2018, 191).

The mind and physical body are both aspects of the individual body, but they are discussed separately because it is common in Western society for the mind and body to be conceptualized separately. This "legacy" of Cartesian dualism (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996, 46-47) is clear in my research. The mind and physical body are not often connected or discussed in tandem by participants or organizers, or in the harm reduction services provided. Section 3.4 looks at examples of risk that affect the safety or wellbeing of the community as a metaphorical body, and connections between the individual and social bodies (1996, 57), through examples of interpersonal conflict or violence.

3.1 Risk to the Physical Body: Drug-Related

I include two brief stories, as they were told to me, to demonstrate the severity of drug-related harms. The first story is from Zelda, the instructor of the BC Festival psy-crisis course, she has been working in sanctuary spaces at music festivals for the last decade. The second story is from Delphine, a participant from Sask Festival.

Several years ago, we had a guy who had taken NBOMe thinking it was acid. He ended up climbing over the security barrier... and started attacking the DJ who had been playing. This dude had been terrified out of his mind for some reason, because of the sound and realized that the DJ was the source of the sound. He didn't "come down" for another sixteen hours, with barely any memory of what happened. He was devastated when he was told he was facing assault charges (Zelda).

There's varying degrees of experience in use and what people can handle. My first... or second year at [Sask Festival], somebody's little sister, I think she was like 17, took like, an entire bag of mushrooms because she didn't know how to eat mushrooms. So, she was *hammered* and then she ate like an *entire* bag. Like,

an entire bag. She was vomiting, and the ambulance had to come and take her. Yeah, I think she ended up having to go all the way to [the hospital], it was bad (Delphine).

These examples highlight the importance of holistic harm reduction practices and services. Both of these unfortunate and dangerous situations were avoidable. The first is an adult who was poisoned by an unregulated drug market. The second is a minor who was not aware of how to safely measure or combine her substances. With the provision and use of harm reduction such as drug testing and education, the likelihood of such dangerous outcomes is reduced. These preventative measures and other harm reduction methods are described in the following sections.

3.1.1 Individual Agency through Informed Choice

“No matter how hard you try, it’s never going to go away. Some people are always going to drink too much, or do too many drugs, or whatever. You’re not going to ever, ever, stop that. So, yeah, you’re making them educated in how they partake” (Rainbow Brite).

When asked, “What do you think harm reduction means?” participants almost invariably gave an answer related to substance use. Following the literature review on edgework, people cannot fully exercise their agency as rational individuals without *informed* choice. Peta Malins (2019) agrees with the notion that agency cannot be considered in isolation: “it makes sense only as a relation of forces that must be traced in each instance or context. Drug-related harms are not exclusively ‘caused’ – in a linear fashion – by the inherent properties of a particular substance, nor by the essential characteristics of an individual” (65). Additionally, Nutt (2012) states that: “you are only free to choose if you have correct information, and this means being free from false or misleading presentations of the benefits and risks of an activity” (207). Agency through informed choice in the context of music festivals means access to information or education on the positive and negative effects of various substances, as well as drug testing services that can help verify the composition of substances before consumption.

Harm reduction is, instead, focused on creating a safe environment in which people can make their own informed decisions. However, “Agency is no longer confined to the human, nor can it ever be isolated to one person or thing” (Malins 2019, 64). Therefore, agency for any one individual cannot be assumed by festival organizers without providing education or information at their events. Rainbow Brite’s quotation above echoes this foundational element of harm reduction, which focuses on reducing harm rather than reducing substance use. Information-based

harm reduction takes two main forms: knowledge sharing amongst friends and peers, and educational materials such as pamphlets, charts, and infographics, provided by festivals and harm reduction companies. Ant Man talks about how important the sharing of information is:

It's all about providing people with the information. Allowing them to make an informed decision and supporting them on what that decision might look like – the healthiest way to, to kind of make those decisions... to educate people on, 'this is how this substance works and here's what works poorly with it.'

Ant Man uses language here that invokes the responsibility of festival organizers: providing, allowing, supporting. By having these services, festival organizers are helping to enable patron safety. A common message promoted at BC Festival is, "If you choose to use, then be informed." This dynamic between individual and festival responsibility is present throughout the data.

Proactive forms of harm reduction are the most common responses participants give when asked about the most important forms of harm reduction. The goal of proactive services is to prevent or reduce harm before it can occur, thereby reducing the burden on reactive harm reduction services, as well as local emergency services. Participant answers to this question appear to be informed more by services offered by the festivals they have attended than by external knowledge. For instance, almost all participants at BC Festival felt drug testing was an obvious inclusion, which is not surprising given that drug testing has been a part of the harm reduction culture at that festival for over a decade. By contrast, none of the Sask Festival participants brought up drug testing in their interviews, again, not a surprise, since they do not provide or allow drug testing on the premises. Additionally, several people at Sask Festival initially assumed I was referencing surveillance and/or enforcement through urinalysis drug testing, which prompted a spate of negative reactions. This association and negativity may speak to the prevalence of prohibitionist rhetoric in the communities and lives of these individuals.

The first instance of this misunderstanding takes place during an interview:

I joined Dave and Jenny on their folding lawn chairs in the "living room" space of their campsite. When our conversation turns to harm reduction services at the festival, I ask for their opinion on drug testing. Dave immediately says: "No not at all. I have no interest in needing people to be screened at this festival, I think a large part of the environment at Sask Festival is that sort of, meeting people where they're at." Before he can continue, Jenny interrupts saying, "No, like, drug testing kits." I also clarify, and Dave laughs and gives his head a bit of a shake before saying:

Oh! I'm so sorry. I immediately thought of that from, like, an enforcement perspective (laughs). Oh yeah, no! Actually, that would be... (laughs) I reverse what I was saying 100%... I'm just sort of sad that that's my immediate take on that! Um, no, I absolutely think that that would be coming from a really great harm reduction standpoint and the idea that it's going to happen regardless of enforcement measures taken to prevent it. And with that in mind, I think making sure that people are putting what they think they're putting in their body is, is really like, the best way forward so that people know, what, in terms of compensating for their body, like the toll it's going to take if you know exactly what you're putting in your body that's really going to help that. And I think a lot of people would do that in an effort to know what they're doing and to the best they can to know what they're doing and that it's not going to exceed their limit.

Dave's response to his misinterpretation is interesting. He is upset with himself for assuming an enforcement perspective over a harm reduction one, even though his initial reaction was to condemn it over harm reduction principles. The assumption and subsequent rejection of prohibition and enforcement are perhaps indicative of the pervasiveness of these policies, even amongst those who disagree with them. Throughout the interview, Dave brings up intentionality and body awareness as key forms of individual harm reduction – things that people should do to help themselves. He is a strong advocate for people exercising their agency to keep themselves safe. However, as he points out, individuals can only do so much on their own.

The second misunderstanding around the term “drug testing” occurred during my volunteer shift at Sask Festival. At six a.m. I am sitting by the harm reduction tent's fire, chatting with a few people who are still enjoying the fire while they “come down” off the various substances they imbibed during the night. When I ask if they would use drug testing services if they were provided by the festival, I am first met with disdain and incredulity. Remembering the previous misunderstanding, I quickly clarify. While everyone said they would use personal testing kits provided by the festival, several did not like the idea of the festival conducting the testing. One interlocutor said it sounded uncomfortably like surveillance.

Polydrug use is another common risk factor at music festivals, where two or more substances are deliberate used simultaneously for the synergistic effects which, “produce a more intense or prolonged effect compared to the action of each substance alone” (Johnson et al. 2020, 6). But some drug combinations can be very dangerous, which is one reason why adulterants are such a big risk; what may typically be a safe combination of substances can turn deadly. Proactive

harm reduction measures are crucial here: “In contexts where we must accept that recreational drug use is endemic,” such as music festivals, drug testing services are “an essential harm reduction safety net” (Chai 2018, 1). Preventative measures empower individuals to engage in informed drug use.

Of the three events, BC Festival is the only one to provide drug testing. Accessing this service is anonymous, no identifying information is necessary for participation. The company that conducts all the drug testing at BC Festival keeps records of substances that test differently than advertised. During the festival, these results, which used to be kept on a whiteboard, are updated live on TV screens positioned outside the tent. These screens include what the substance was expected to be, what it tested as, descriptions of the sample, and information about the results. Table 3.1 provides a sample of these results from BC Festival.

This sample was chosen from the 115 results that were published online after the event, which represent the nearly 3,000 tests posted on screens during the festival. The sample reflects

Table 3.1 Sample Drug Testing Results BC Festival 2018

| Expected | Actual Result | Sample Description | What You Should Know |
|----------|--|---|---|
| 2CB | DOB | Sold as “2CB,” unknown | DOB is a long-lasting (8-24 hours) psychedelic and much more potent than 2CB, with a risk of overdose over 3mg. Start with less than 1 mg (very hard to measure). |
| Cocaine | 70% Inositol and 30% Cocaine | Found on site; green weed plant baggy | Inositol is a sugar alcohol used to “buff” the appearance of cocaine. Be sure to rinse your nasal cavity with saline solution available here. |
| MDMA | Cocaine | Blue star bag, big chalky crystals | Very different drugs, heads up - mistakes happen! |
| Cocaine | Cocaine and Baclofen | White powder. Red ‘420’ bags | Baclofen is a muscle relaxant. Combining uppers and downers can cause extra strain on organs. |
| Ketamine | Ketamine and Methamphetamine | Crystal crushed to white powder, from in Edmonton | Not the combo you intended? Combining drugs increases risk of overdose. Come see our drug combo chart for more information. |
| MDMA | Cocaine with potential fentanyl spectra. | Red baggie, white powder | This sample tested negative for fentanyl with our dip test, but possible positive result with spectrometry—possible false positive. Talk to us about our testing limitations. |
| LSD | Positive for Indole - strange reaction pattern, maybe other ingredients. | Red blotter with design | Reported very bad trip. If you had a weird experience we can send weird things to a fancier lab. |
| MDMA | MDA | White crystals in big red gel capsule | More psychedelic and also neurotoxic than MDMA. Duration 3-6 hours. Start small, halve your dose. |

the most common party drugs: cocaine, MDMA, ketamine, and the 2C family of drugs. It also reflects the most interesting comments, which were provided by the volunteers who posted the information. These comments identify additional services, such as saline solution and polydrug use information, as well as cautions, should the patrons decide to still consume the adulterated drug. Of note are the “testing limitations” and “fancier lab” comments. There are different methods of drug testing, and the ones available at festivals are rarely able to provide conclusive results. BC Festival is a leader when it comes to testing. They have several different technologies, including chemical reagents, and FTIR and Raman spectroscopy – the last two of which were added through crowdfunding efforts. In line with the recommendations to have, “a collaborative testing approach in conjunction with laboratory-based scientists” (Johnson et al. 2020, 7-8), BC Festival has access to a more comprehensive lab, for at least the “weird” results.

Other common adulterants present in the published result, but not included in the chart on the previous page, include: caffeine, acetaminophen, and lidocaine; and supplements such as creatine and tyrosine. Adulterants also include “buffers” such as cellulose, sugar, sucralose, flour, and mannitol, used to add bulk to the appearance and weight of a drug. Although not dangerous in and of themselves, depending on the circumstances, any of these adulterants or fillers could pose a health risk, particularly when they are consumed without prior knowledge.

The last few pages have served to demonstrate the necessity of proactive harm reduction strategies for substance use. These strategies reduce the likelihood of drug-related risks, such as overdose and consumption of adulterated substances. Proactive harm reduction allows patrons to exercise a greater degree of agency, and therefore power, over their decision-making.

3.1.2 Sourcing Drugs at Music Festivals

People who consume drugs at music festivals fall into two main categories: Those who bring drugs from home, and those who buy from dealers on location – although some do both. Both of these strategies come with positives and negatives. Drugs brought from home run the risk of being found by festival security, however, they are more likely to have been bought from a trusted or familiar source, with the potential to be tested before attending the festival. Alternatively, buying drugs at a music festival from a random dealer “...with whom there is unlikely to be any possibility of future contact, means that little-to-no quality feedback loop exists, thereby increasing the chances of the drugs being poor quality, or containing dangerous adulterants or fillers” (Malins 2019, 67). This second option is particularly risky if the festival

does not provide on-site testing or has banned personal testing kits (as is the case for the Alta Festival), both of which would provide some form of quality feedback.

It cannot be assumed, however, that all dealers at festivals take advantage of their relative anonymity to abuse customers and maximize profits. Many of the drug dealers in Ruane's (2018) research were psychonauts who also enjoyed the substances they sold: "most of [them] said they strove to deal drugs 'responsibly,' and described this explicitly as a form of harm reduction... by providing carefully measured doses of good-quality substances, telling customers what to expect" (341). Similarly, at BC Festival I talk to several of what I refer to as "good guy drug dealers." These people are small-scale dealers, supplying a limited number of substances under specific circumstances, and engaging directly with harm reduction principles. Betty and Benny are two such dealers, and Betty is a key interlocutor in this research. Benny is gone for much of each day, roaming the festival grounds selling, while Betty handles sales from their home base. Their campsite, themed after a popular science fiction franchise, is located deep in the forest and is always in the same area to help customers from previous years find them again. This reputation building has helped them maintain a strong customer base each year, a key factor in building loyalty at an event where a large number of the patrons return each year. Betty and Benny supplement their income by selling drugs at music festivals each summer, selling only what they also enjoy. Another reason why I include Betty and Benny in the "good guy drug dealer" category is their disdain for dealers who overcharge their customers. Benny became heated describing dealers who took advantage of a ketamine shortage the year before: "I heard one guy was selling it for \$150 a gram! That's almost double the regular street value for 'ket' in BC! Such assholes, there's just no need to charge that much. We *always* charge the same price for our shit."

I spent several afternoons with Betty at their campsite, particularly in the days leading up to the official event, enjoying a reprieve from the heat in their shaded campsite, observing small-scale drug deals and the information Betty shares with her customers. For example:

It's Wednesday and we are sitting in their camp "living room," when a young woman walks over, asking, "Are you Betty? My friend told me you guys sell really good acid and M." This is the woman's first time at BC Festival, but she is camping with someone who has been coming for years who, like Betty and Benny, has a regular camp spot. After sitting with us for a while, she asks Betty if she has tested her product. Betty replies:

No, I don't check my supply because I know it's good. Other people will get it

tested, then they come back and buy more. I had a guy earlier today buy one pill and he came back about an hour later asking for twenty more. I've had others in the past tell me they've taken it to the testing tent then they come back. I've had the same chemist for my M for the last six years and from him to me there are only four hands including the driver. Similar story with my acid, I've been using the same guy for the last five years. Don't worry! I won't waste your time, I only sell good shit!

Here we have a clear quality feedback loop that is often missing from this type of festival interaction, but Betty appears to be a natural at it. I would advocate for testing drugs regardless of the familiarity with the supplier, because as Ruane describes: “even with the best intentions dealers may be wrong about what they are selling and its effects. Their knowledge is subject to the quality of their testing procedures... the trustworthiness of their source” (2018, 341). Regardless, Betty continuously demonstrates harm reduction practices throughout the festival, such as telling all of her new customers to start with a small dose.

Another example of harm reduction in their business is the decision to only sell MDMA in gel capsules. Betty tells me that they do not sell loose MDMA, as is more common, even though “capping it” can be laborious: “Don't you think I know it'd be easier to just bag it! (laughs).” This is an indirect line of harm reduction that discourages customers from snorting the drug. Although Betty acknowledges, “You'll always get the odd person who just wants to rail it, but most people are lazy and will just swallow the pill.” She elaborates, explaining that snorting MDMA is a less effective high and is also a more dangerous route of drug administration than oral ingestion. Betty's harm reduction extends to her own behaviours as well. She is very particular about her drug use, having what she describes as a “virgin nose” because she has never used “nose candy.”

In contrast, the context at Alta Festival is quite different. Because there are far more people in a much smaller space at Alta, there are no private or semi-private places for dealers to set up safely. Anyone who manages to sneak substances past security at the festival entrance would have to be making clandestine deals on the crowded dance floor. As a ticket scanner at this festival, I witnessed many people fail to sneak in drugs, including cannabis and unidentified powder in baggies (most likely MDMA, ketamine or cocaine). However, I also saw many people enter the festival who had clearly “front-loaded,” taken substances ahead of time, as Lund and Turriss (2017) describe. These individuals exhibited signs such as dilated pupils, red eyes, jaw clenching and teeth grinding, which appeared to go unnoticed by security.

3.1.3 Supplies for Safer Drug Use & Sex

Another type of preventative harm reduction is the provision of safer drug use and sex supplies. These supplies include syringes, straws and saline solution, as well as condoms and dental dams. Straws, cut into approximately one-inch pieces, were provided by both Sask and BC Festivals, to be used as “snooters,” snorting devices. It is important that snorting devices not be shared, even though it is a fairly common practice, due to the risk of transmitting blood-borne infections such as Hepatitis C. Blood vessels in the nostrils can break with drug use, leaving small amounts of blood on the snorting device. As a small pamphlet on “Safer Snorting” states, “Even if your nose doesn’t look or feel raw inside – avoid sharing straws or bills!” Limited supplies of saline solution were available at BC Festival because: “Rinsing the inside of your nose both before and after snorting can decrease the amount of irritation you experience while snorting your drugs. It also means that you’re likely to have two healthy nostrils rather than one big one, as some drugs can eat away at the division between your nostrils.” Mike, an acquaintance I share a camp space with at BC Festival, is fervent in his personal harm reduction techniques. He uses a nasal saline lavage every morning to clear out any dust and drug residue from the night before, something he describes as a necessary part of his festival preparations.

Similar to the increase in substance use, the liminality of music festivals leads to riskier sex behaviours among patrons at music festivals (Beaulieu-Prévost et al. 2019, 2056). Providing condoms is a useful intervention, based on research from the U.S. festival Burning Man, where “lack of preparation” was found to be a common factor related to sexual health choices (2019, 2069). People are also more likely to engage in unsafe sex practices when under the influence of drugs. To have comprehensive harm reduction, events need to “...recognise the close relationship between substance use and sexual health” (Bellis et al. 2010, 1030). All three festivals provided free condoms and dental dams, handed out by outreach volunteers and located at resource tables, where there are also signs and/or handouts promoting consent and STI awareness.

Naloxone & overdose awareness

Naloxone hydrochloride, known simply as naloxone or by its brand name Narcan, reverses an opioid overdose by binding to the opiate receptors in the brain more powerfully than most opioids themselves. Although opioids are not a common substance of choice at music festivals, there is always the possibility of adulteration. Naloxone can be administered intravenously, intramuscularly, or intranasally (Heavey et al. 2017, 28; Rudski 2016, 1771), but most take-home

kits are intramuscular. Given the escalating opioid overdose crisis in Canada, particularly in Western Canada, it is not surprising that opioid awareness posters and messaging are present at all three festivals. The posters include signs of an opioid overdose and provide prompts to do rescue breathing, to call emergency services, and to administer naloxone if available.

Sask and BC Festivals encourage their patrons to get naloxone training and carry a kit with them while at the festival and naloxone training was included in volunteer training for both festivals. BC Festival further facilitates awareness by offering patrons free naloxone training each day of the festival and providing free kits to anyone who asks. For example:

I am sitting in the safer space tent the day before BC Festival starts, talking with the volunteers who are on duty when a woman walks in asking for a naloxone kit. She says she is camping in the grounds furthest from the festival's "downtown" area, which is about a twenty-minute walk away in an open field with no natural shade. She wants a kit because she is concerned for some of her new neighbours: "They just arrived after driving for eighteen hours and they are clearly exhausted, but they just immediately started partying." One of the volunteers hands her one saying, "Of course! Everyone should have a kit, especially all the way out there."

In stark contrast, Alta Festival includes naloxone kits on the list of items banned from festival grounds, no one is allowed to carry a kit except for first aid personnel.

Risks related to substance use are far more complicated than just the use of them in and of itself. As this section has demonstrated, there are risks to consider for every aspect of substance use. How individuals and organizations mitigate these risks are varied. Sometimes these strategies work well together, but patrons may have to work around festival restrictions, just as festivals may have to work around government recommendations.

3.2 Risk to the Physical Body: Environment-Related

The risks discussed in this part of the chapter are the most tangible. Unlike ailments of the mind, they are easier to identify in that they can often leave a mark or physical representation of the harm suffered by the body. During fieldwork I found a pamphlet called "[BC Festival] Survival Guide: Tips so you can have more fun." This pamphlet is from approximately 2010, based on dated details on the map, but still provides relevant harm reduction messaging, referencing most of the risks discussed in this chapter. A passage that pertain specifically to the risks that affect the physical body states:

Take care of yourselves and each other. That's the '[BC Festival] Spirit'. Dehydration is the most common medical emergency at [BC Festival]. Get Free vit-C and emergency contraception at the First Aid tent & get earplugs @ the [drug testing] booth. This is a FESTIVAL not a marathon so Pace Yourself!! Take breaks. Drink Water regularly... Sun-block is xln⁶. Earplugs will save your ears. Sleep! Especially before you drive home. And remember YOU are WORTH IT

The key risks addressed in these passages – sun damage, sleep deprivation, dehydration, and hearing loss – are discussed in the following pages.

3.2.1 Exposure to the Elements

Festivals are, essentially, extended outdoor parties. As such, they are subject to the specific environment and weather of their locations. During the last night of Sask Festival, rain poured down so hard that the performances had to temporarily shut down while everyone scrambled for cover. BC Festival takes place in the mountains, so patrons have to come prepared for a wide temperature range from day to night. At Alta Festival, patrons are not allowed to re-enter festival grounds after leaving, requiring them to arrive as prepared as possible. A first aid volunteer for BC Festival primarily discusses environmental factors as concerns: "...at night people are partying too hard and they're exhausted, and during the day people forget to eat or drink water and we get tons of heatstroke. And dust is another big problem for us too, we go through a lot of puffers here" (Volunteer Medic, quoted by a journalist, 2017). Sask and BC festivals both take place in forested rural areas, a risk that concerns Shelly at Sask Festival:

Being well, in this, in this environment I guess getting to the point where somebody is too intoxicated [pause] stoned, and they wander off, and you've got a lot of forest. Yeah, and they may not necessarily know, you know, how to get out again, in that kind of condition [pause] I watched a young woman last year who was definitely on something and was falling down, almost passing out, and then she'd wake up and she'd be laughing and happy and then she'd fall down and pass out again... but if she does that and wanders into the trees, she's not necessarily going to know how to get back home when she does sober up.

It is not the wilderness alone that concerns Shelly, but the combination of wilderness and substance use. Depending on how intoxicated an individual is, their cognition of where they are and what their body may need is going to be limited.

Similarly, when someone is intoxicated, or simply caught up in the excitement of the

⁶ Short for "excellent"

festival, they may forget to apply or reapply sunscreen. Sandra, an interlocutor told me a story about a friend on LSD that she helped at a Manitoba festival. This woman had a severe sunburn over her whole body, and she was unaware of how cold it had become as evening fell: “She was just wearing a bikini top and shorts, and her hands were shaking but she just couldn’t stop talking about how fun her day tripping was.” As she was in no state to help herself, Sandra made sure that she got to the harm reduction tent, where they helped her get warm and hydrated.

One of the harm reduction pamphlets I found at BC Festival is specifically on heatstroke at music events, created by the organization DanceSafe. It warns that dancing energetically in a warm environment (due to weather and/or the number of people) in and of itself is a risk factor for developing heat stroke. Adding substances like MDMA or other stimulants increases this risk because they, “inhibit the body’s natural ability to regulate temperature, making you more susceptible to heatstroke.” The pamphlet also urges precautions including drinking enough water, but not too much, and replacing electrolytes to avoid hyponatremia (water toxicity).

3.2.2 “The Best High is High-dration”

Eight other people are sitting on the logs and tree stumps surrounding a fire when I arrive for the Party Drug Awareness Workshop at Sask Festival. One of the first things we discuss is general tips and tricks for having a safe and fun experience. One person mentions drinking water, and a young woman starts nodding her head in agreement, saying enthusiastically: “Yes! That is so important! The best high is high-dration!”

Dehydration is a common risk at music festivals, commonly associated with many other risks such as getting lost, sunburn and heatstroke. All three festivals provide free potable water filling stations, which unfortunately is not the case at all music festivals. Many participants comment on how “ridiculous” or “crazy” it is that not all events provide free water for their patrons, highlighting it as a prominent risk to be aware of. Ant Man elaborates, complaining that the places that do not provide free water also usually only sell expensive bottles of water, where, consequently, “you tell yourself that maybe you don’t need it, but really, you probably should be drinking water.” Rachel talks about how not drinking enough water can affect how one reacts to substances: “I think a lot of bad shit happens when you don’t drink enough water, you get too drunk, you get too fucked up.” However, as the pamphlet referenced above indicates, drinking too much water can also be harmful.

Each of the three festivals uses signage to promote hydration throughout their events.

These signs include messages such as: “Got H₂O?” and “Stay hydrated” (Sask Festival); “Feeling tired? Take a break! Drink some water + get some rest!” (Alta Festival); “STOP! Have a drink of water” (BC Festival). It reached temperatures above forty degrees Celsius for multiple days during BC Festival and there were numerous announcements each day reminding patrons to stay hydrated, primarily from festival workers and DJs over the speakers at the stages during the day. I heard one MC at noon on the second hot day in a row say: “The rule of today is whenever you see someone else drink water, you also drink water!” Concern is also expressed by patrons to each other. While scanning tickets at Alta Festival, I hear someone say, “Everyone stay safe! Stay hydrated!” to his group of friends and others standing around them.

Sally, a participant from Sask Festival, also makes connections between substance use and physical factors, in connection to hydration and nutrition:

Know your personal limits and listen to your body, and that’s like, even before you start doing drugs. Like have you been drinking water and eating, or did you not do any of that and do a whole bunch of drugs, that’s going to be different than if you took care of yourself during that day, and then you do drugs, you’re probably going to have a better experience cuz your body’s like “Oh! I’m not that unhappy.” Like, even if we don’t drink water or don’t eat all day and not even put drugs into the equation you’re going to feel like shit, but then you put drugs in and it’s like whoa! Like I’m throwing up, I’m fainting and passing out.

Sally is also a proponent of deliberate action for individual responsibility for safety. She recognizes that not only does dehydration impact the drug-taking experience, but vice versa. Some drugs impact the perception of time, making it feel as if time is going faster or slower than normal, attributing to forgotten meals and dehydration. Further, the social environment of a festival itself can impact time perception – regardless of substance use. There are so many stimuli at a festival that a sober person can also easily lose track of time. During Sask Festival, I missed a workshop on party drug safety because I got caught up in a conversation with volunteers and performers backstage after eating lunch, and it was “suddenly” several hours later than I thought.

Additionally, proper hydration is associated with ear health and protection, which as discussed below is another key concern at music events. In a message directed at concert and music festival attendees, this connection is made clear: “Always remember to drink plenty of water. This improves the circulation of blood to the hair cells in the cochlea which helps your hearing to function properly” (Hear the World Foundation 2019).

3.2.3 Ear Plugs & Hearing Loss

One evening before BC Festival officially starts, I am lying in my tent writing up notes from my day. There is a chill in the air now that the sun has set, but I am cozy in my sleeping bag. I hear people start to come back to the campsite we share; work at the stage must be done for the night. A couple of my neighbours are talking to a woman unknown to me. As they get closer, the first clear thing I hear is Mike saying incredulously: “What do you mean you never wear earplugs!” Intrigued, I quickly turn the page of my notebook to jot down the rest of this conversation:

Woman [giggling]: No... I know, I never do.

Steve: What? That’s crazy!?

Mike: That’s straight-up dumb.

Woman: I know, and the thing is, I like to be up by the speakers, too.

Mike: I don’t go to any event without earplugs... concerts, clubs, festivals. The shitty thing about your hearing is once you lose it, it’s gone forever.

This conversation further demonstrates how seriously Mike takes his harm reduction. Hearing loss or damage is a common risk at most music festivals, especially tinnitus which is a form of ear damage that includes both temporary and permanent ringing in the ears. A handout from BC Festival indicates that the risk of hearing damage is dependent on several factors: the decibel output of the speakers used, proximity to the speakers, length of time on the dance floor, and previous hearing damage. It further states that “Alcohol and drugs lower your sense of pain and increase the risk of hearing damage,” again reiterating the connection between substance use and other risks. The harm reduction signage at Alta Festival includes a poster that demonstrates the exponential nature of the decibel scale. According to “Noise Induced Hearing Loss: Know the Risks,” a poster uploaded to Facebook by DanceSafe in 2019, the decibels commonly associated with concerts, around 120 decibels, damage can occur in less than ten seconds.

DanceSafe included a caption with this poster: “Many partygoers say that it’s “too late” or they won’t “feel the music” with earplugs in but investing in a pair of high-fidelity earplugs that don’t detract from the sound will let you listen for many years to come. Hearing is irreversible. Give your future self the gift of listening to music” (2019). Delphine at Sask Festival is one of these partygoers, arguing that loud noises do not bother her *anymore*. When I ask if she ever wears earplugs Delphine says: “See, I’m probably not the best person to ask because my ears are probably shot from all the years that I have spent standing next to a drum with a cymbal going *ts ts*, cuz I’m a bass player. So, I have ten years of playing professionally, and *never* wearing earplugs. So, for me, it never bothers me.” For my ProServe facilitator shift at Alta Festival I am

partnered with Carol and James. I wear my earplugs almost constantly at this festival because there is no respite from the speakers due to the small space. When I realize Carol did not have any, I offer her my extras, but she declines. I ask if she ever wears earplugs and she replies “I’ve been to, like, a concert a month for the last twenty years. I love to be up close to the speakers and I’ve never worn earplugs.” Carol’s justification, predictably, is that the loud music does not hurt her ears, so she does not “need” ear protection. However, James and I learn to turn our faces towards Carol whenever we speak to her because she relies on lip-reading in loud environments. Just because someone already has hearing loss does not mean that they are protected from further damage. Neither Carol nor Delphine consider this risk important, yet they demonstrate harm reduction methods for other risks. Delphine’s comment about being a professional musician is particularly interesting because, in my experience, professionals are more likely to advocate for hearing protection since listening is an important element of their work.

Different genres of music also come with different levels of risk. Based on information from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, a similar public safety announcement was created for people who attend raves and electronic music festivals:

In electronic bass music the lowest frequencies produced aren’t meant to be heard, they’re designed to be felt, that’s why the music at EDM events is played LOUD... If raves were a workplace, you wouldn’t legally be allowed to enter without hearing protection. Feel the bass, protect your hearing (Project Safe Audience 2019).

Harm reduction literature or signage about ear protection is present at all three festivals studied, and free disposable earplugs were provided by Alta and BC Festivals. BC also has a variety of higher-quality reusable earplugs for sale at multiple locations around the festival. High quality in this case means that the sound quality you hear is not diminished. Disposable foam earplugs typically have a higher efficacy rate in their protection, but they also muffle the music, making them less desirable. Katherine, the Sask Festival harm reduction coordinator, told me they did not have a large enough budget this year to accommodate free earplugs, however, the music at this festival was also significantly quieter than at the other two events. The music played at Sask Festival is primarily folk and country music, whereas Alta and BC focus on electronic genres, which as demonstrated above is often designed to be played at exponentially higher levels to be felt as well as heard. There was only one act at Sask Festival loud enough to make me want my

earplugs. Of the three festivals, Sask is the only one open to all ages, and most young children I observed were wearing either noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs when near the stages.

Almost all participants at BC Festival discussed earplugs as part of their harm reduction strategy at festivals. ACW also mentions that she keeps track of her earplugs regardless of her level of intoxication, illustrating her commitment to the harm reduction strategy: “I always have them on a string around my neck, no matter what state I am in I can always find them without having to rummage in my bag and I can take them in and out easily without being worried about losing them.” Misha talks about how she was not aware of how important earplugs were before she attended BC Festival for the first time: “Wear earplugs, yes! I didn’t even know. My friend knew that you were supposed to wear earplugs, and I was like why? And then I found out very quickly why you have to wear earplugs. Oh my god. *Always* wear earplugs.”

There are many themed campsites at BC Festival, one of which is called “Hugs for Plugs.” This camp is close to the main festival grounds, and throughout the week I see people carrying the distinctive “totems” bearing their slogan “hugs for plugs.” These totems are shaped and coloured to look like the disposable neon pink and yellow foam earplugs they are handing out – boxes of which are attached to the poles holding up the signs. At festivals like BC, there is a strong gifting culture. Some people gift jewellery and other crafts that they have made, while others give out small things they have bought such as gum or earplugs.

The first two sections of this chapter serve to demonstrate the risks to an individual’s physical body that can be present at music festivals. The harm reduction methods that are used to mitigate those risks are largely preventative measures designed to educate and empower individuals to party safer. However, not all harm reduction is within an individual’s power. Music festival organizers must make efforts to protect their patrons. These reactionary services are particularly relevant to the rest of this chapter which focuses on risks that are connected to mental health, as well as those imposed on individuals by the people around them.

3.3 Risk to the Mind: Mental Health at Festivals

Risks that impact physical health are only part of the story, yet mental health at music festivals has not received much research attention, even though these events can have both positive and negative effects on mental health (Cruwys et al. 2019, 221). As I discuss in Chapter Four, there is often a strong sense of community and acceptance associated with music festivals. However, the festival environment can quickly become overwhelmingly stimulating from all the

people and audiovisual effects, particularly for people with anxiety, autism, or other mental health concerns. One participant, Ursula, identified anxiety attacks as her primary concern at music festivals. She is easily overwhelmed in large crowds and often copes by spending some time alone in her tent. Small issues can also often become larger under stressful situations. ACW, a participant from BC Festival says that discomfort can exacerbate mental health issues, where, “needing eye drops or chapstick or gum or earplugs and having to go back to camp by yourself, or convince someone else to go with you, or not having these items at all, can feel like the end of the world.” Feeling this overwhelmed can be scary, and as a BC Festival medic describes: “sometimes people are just scared and all they need is just that little bit of confidence from someone else.” The next section looks at how these external factors impact mental health.

3.3.1 Lights, Lasers, Bass & Crowds

Friday night at BC Festival, my group for the evening heads to one of the stages to see a popular DJ. This DJ has played the festival before and recently released new music so this is a highly anticipated performance, which becomes increasingly evident as we push our way through the dense crowd to get to our regular dancing spot. I turn and see Cleo, someone I have just recently met, looking wide-eyed and panicked. I lean my face close to hers, turning to hear her over the music. She says, “I really can’t do this” with a hand pressed to her chest. Grabbing her other hand, I lead her to the edge of the dance floor where there are fewer people – signalling to our friends where we are headed. I find a rock for Cleo to sit on and she tells me: “My anxiety is too bad to be in a crowd that busy, but back here I’ll be okay.” She then talks about going to the sanctuary yesterday after getting overwhelmed by all the people: “I have never felt so taken care of before! Everyone there was so warm and nurturing.” Because Cleo has not been to BC Festival for several years, she had not anticipated how much more crowded it would be.

Sensory overload is something that can occur virtually anywhere, but the conditions at festivals are particularly conducive, with the unrelenting audiovisual displays, huge crowds, and multiple activities happening simultaneously. For example, lights and lasers are an integral component of BC Festival, where all six stages have extensive production teams who put together combinations of flashing lasers, backlighting, and projected animation displays for each performance. Many people who end up at the sanctuary or safer space are also overwhelmed or distressed, after getting separated from their friends. It can be easy to lose track of friends, sometimes not finding them again until the next morning. Zelda’s psy-crisis course preaches what she calls “radical self-reliance,” the ability to have fun or take care of oneself if alone, as a way to combat any negative feelings caused by situations such as these.

One participant at BC Festival describes accessing harm reduction services after getting overwhelmed: “I used the safe space this past year because I was feeling overwhelmed and anxious about a new friendship, and just by the festival environment in general” (Luna). The website Festival Survival Guide, “built by festival fans for festival fans” (2020), includes a blog post on anxiety at music festivals. This blog states that anxiety attacks are common for many people at festivals: “Often these are caused by large crowds, lack of sleep, sensory overload, and dehydration... You are putting your body and mind through a lot so taking care of yourself can help with the anxiety” (2020). This quote speaks to the necessity for awareness of other risk factors to reduce the likelihood of anxiety, as they can impact one another.

As well as being a contributor to sensory overload, crowds are a risk in and of themselves. When asked about festival-related risks, one participant answers: “I think crowds cuz it’s hard to get to someone having a problem... I feel, not *unsafe* in a crowd, but I don’t like being jostled, and I know that it’s, like, if something should go wrong this is a hard place to get out of... It’s why I like being at the back, or up high”⁷ (Rainbow Brite). Ant Man in the same interview agrees, “I could see that being the hardest or the biggest risk from the festival’s perspective, cuz like, crowds and making sure that you can access people and get through crowds and get them the help that they need” (Ant Man). As mentioned in the previous chapter, a strategy employed by BC Festival is the use of muster points to facilitate faster response times for emergencies. Both Sask and BC Festivals use small vehicles such as golf carts to transport crew and injured people to and from the medical tents. Additionally, the stages at BC Festival work together when building the schedules, to make sure that popular acts perform at the same time to help with crowd control. Although, this strategy is not always successful, as some performers have unparalleled appeal.

Comparatively, Alta Festival with the largest number of people in the smallest area has limited options for crowd control short of selling fewer tickets. On the first day of this festival the weather is miserable; cold, windy, and drizzling intermittently. As a result, the festival grounds are relatively empty for the first few hours, not getting crowded until later in the evening when the headline performers begin to play. By 7 p.m., the dancefloor by the main stage is so packed that it is very difficult to move through and made more difficult by a large number of crushed beer cans, cups, and other debris on the ground. This would make responding to an emergency within the crowd slow and difficult. Due to the density of the crowd, identifying an emergency to begin with

⁷ Most of the stages at BC Festival have elevated platforms or walkways as part of the dance floor.

is difficult, and ProServe facilitators do not have radios to help facilitate a quick response.

3.3.2 “Psy-crisis” & Psychedelic First Aid

The training required to volunteer in the sanctuary spaces at Sask and BC Festivals both include information on psy-crisis, however, they are not consistent. The training provided by Zelda describes two main types of psy-crisis: drug-related and non-drug-related (caused by emotional or medical stress). Sask Festival, on the other hand, differentiates three types of psy-crisis: emotional, psychological, and spiritual. However, regardless of how it is defined, the strategies of providing peer support to someone experiencing the crisis are consistent, outside of any necessary drug-specific care. These strategies include grounding techniques such as breathwork, sensory exercises, reassurance and distraction, as well as the provision of comforting items such as tea and blankets.

For Rachel, one of the biggest risks at a music festival is people trying new drugs for the first time because of how overwhelming a festival can be. She has had multiple experiences where friends of hers did not have a good time: “Even just doing something for the first time and being overwhelmed, it’s an overwhelming place to be, and then if you throw in some acid or molly or something [pause] space and place, right?” Space and place in this context refer to set and setting, as discussed previously. An individual’s mindset and the physical space they are in can impact how a drug affects them and can be the difference between a “bad trip” and a good one.

The BC Festival schedule describes the sanctuary space entirely in terms of mental health, rather than emphasizing the connection to substance use that has been the primary association in the past: “Mental Health: If you or someone you know is experiencing any mental-health related issues such as anxiety, panic attacks, hallucinations, delusions or dissociation, visit the sanctuary for a cool and quiet place that’s staffed with experienced professionals.” However, the extensive harm reduction services offered at this festival also help to reduce the shame that can be associated with both mental health and substance use. Identifying shame as a barrier to accessing services is brought up by two participants at Sask Festival. For Sally, removing shame from drug use is the most important element of harm reduction, and Jenny credits the harm reduction tent at the festival with helping to remove or reduce shame:

I think having a [sanctuary space] is like, a really good step in the right direction, a place where that stigma, you know, when people are really messed up, they’re often in tough mental headspaces as well, and that shame is really prominent

when you're at your most vulnerable. Trying to create a shift of, you don't have to go and hide yourself, you can trust that there are people who will take you as you are and say you are valuable even if you are totally fucked up. You have worth, and that is not dependent on your sobriety, and I think that that mentality is really, really important.

While physical injuries and environmental harms are tangible and more easily understood from a risk mitigation standpoint, as Jenny alludes, mental health is more complex. Music festivals are such busy environments, particularly at night, that can easily overwhelm people, exacerbating mental health issues. Given the crowds and low visibility, someone having a mental health crisis (drug-related or otherwise) may be missed. For example, not all panic attacks or “bad trips” have physical presentations, making them especially difficult to recognize in the dark. However, at festivals that actively work to reduce the shame and stigma attached to mental illness and drug use, patrons will be more comfortable seeking help, rather than relying on volunteers to find them or being in distress all alone.

3.4 Risk to the Community: Interpersonal Conflict

In this thesis, risks to the community are those that create interpersonal conflict, including all forms of oppression and discrimination. They are more to do with collective identities such as gender or ethnicity, than factors such as substance use that involve or impact the individual, because those who perpetrate violence against others are a risk to the community as a whole. This is an external risk that, unlike environmental risks, cannot be mitigated by individual choices such as wearing enough sunscreen. Education on consent as well as the provision of safer spaces is an important aspect of increasing the potential for a safer community. Intervention by festival volunteers, as well as fellow patrons, during instances of aggression or discrimination, is also an important harm reduction measure. However, it is equally important to have education in how to recognize these situations and methods for effective conflict resolution.

Using the Lock and Scheper-Hughes (1996) theoretical framework, a festival community is considered to be a social body; a symbolic representation of an individual body, where interpersonal conflict risks the safety and integrity of that body. A music festival that promotes the image of a safe, accepting community can lead to the false impression that harassment and assault do not occur there. I have seen numerous posts and discussions on social media about sexual assault at BC Festival, for example, that are filled with comments of shock that it happened at that event in particular – even though assault can occur anywhere.

3.4.1 Safer Spaces & Consent

The label “safer,” as opposed to the declarative “safe,” is used to recognize that no space can completely guarantee safety for every single person. Safer spaces are primarily used for crisis intervention and sites to report an assault, but also as areas for resilience and community building. However, these spaces are often specifically for women, which can be exclusionary to LGBTQ2+ people, particularly those who are transgender, non-binary, or gender-fluid, as well as others who regularly face other forms of oppression and discrimination. Jenny wishes that there were multiple safer spaces: “There aren’t any femme only or BIPOC⁸ only spaces... Those are the folks that experience oppression outside of festivals and will experience oppression in different ways inside the festival.” Ursula, a participant from BC Festival, also argues that women-only spaces are necessary, saying: “I think something that starts to address how misogyny manifests in music festival environments could be helpful for many people.” Safer spaces are identified as the most important aspect of festival harm reduction for Shelly because she sees harassment as one of the most significant risks, and people need, “someplace where they can go and get help from it.”

At BC Festival, there is a safer spaces tent, which in previous years was a self-identified women-only area. But in 2018, they attempted to create a fully gender-inclusive space. The description of this space in the festival schedule is: “For: Anyone that feels vulnerable or have disclosed that they’ve been assaulted. Volunteers are trained in crisis intervention and support people in need and connect them to resources in their own community.” Unfortunately, during my volunteer shift in the sanctuary space on the Saturday of the festival I noticed a large “Women only” sign had been placed over the entrance. Carmen, the sanctuary shift lead, and I talk about this new development during a quiet moment in our shift. Carmen tells me that it makes them feel “super alienated” as a “curvy, femme-presenting but gender-neutral person with body dysmorphia.” They point to the box of tampons that used to say “feminine hygiene products” as another example of gendered language making them uncomfortable. Carmen was able to change this sign to “menstruation products” but is unable to do anything about the safer space. When I see Katie, the safer space coordinator, she looks dejected as she talks about the multiple incidents of cis-men entering the tent and being verbally aggressive and sexually inappropriate towards volunteers and patrons. She then adds: “I’m just so sad that it didn’t work out. Because of a few assholes, we have to be exclusionary. We need that sign, but what we really mean is ‘everyone

⁸ Black, Indigenous, People of Colour

but rude and aggressive cis white men.’ I don’t want anyone who needs help to feel unwelcome.”

I spend several hours in the BC Festival safer space tent, when it is not very busy so as not to take up needed space. One woman, who is clearly in emotional distress is escorted to the tent by two other women (one security and one outreach volunteer) who explain that she was assaulted last night. I offer to stay in the tent while the other volunteers are busy in case anyone else comes to access services. One safer space volunteer helps this woman get settled in a private corner of the tent and the other volunteer goes to get a female medic. They arrange transportation for this woman to get to and from the hospital for her requested sexual assault forensics exam.

Largely prompted by the #MeToo movement, there has been a shift towards safer spaces and inclusion policies at more events including music festivals. For example, the Society for the Advocacy for Safer Spaces (SASS), a Calgary-based collective, was created in 2016 to reduce racism, sexual harassment, and other forms of discrimination at music events in the city (SASS Calgary, n.d.). Similarly, Good Night Out is aimed at preventing sexual assault at clubs, bars, and festivals. It started in the United Kingdom in 2014 and now has multiple locations, including Vancouver (Good Night Out Campaign 2021). However, policy is not enough in and of itself. Stacey Forrester, the founder of the Vancouver branch argues that, “Every single staff and volunteer needs to be given a briefing on harassment, including what it might look like and ways to intervene;” training and education are necessary for policy to be effective (Grady 2018).

All three festivals use signs and other messaging to promote harm reduction at their events, including consent. At Sask Festival volunteers perform scenarios every evening on the main stage to demonstrate how to ask for consent, most often using a hug as an example. Some of the condoms handed out by the outreach volunteers have small “Just add consent” stickers added to them, and one of the signs posted outside the sanctuary tent says, “Consent is necessary.” At Alta Festival, the harm reduction table includes a bowl of “got CONSENT?” pins for patrons to take, as well as several posters explaining what consent is and how to ask for it. One of these posters outlines that consent needs to be informed, specific, enthusiastic, an ongoing process, and freely given with no pressure or manipulation. Another one emphasizes that consent occurs between “sober” individuals, without the influence of any substance, and additionally that consent given while sober cannot be assumed and transferred to when they are inebriated. A poster promoting consent at BC Festival (posted on many porta-potties) elaborates:

‘High’ sex can be great, but Be Informed! A person who is intoxicated cannot legally consent to any sexual activity. So if you’re gonna do it, check in explicitly with your sexual partner(s) about what they do and do not want. If you have **any** doubt, think about meeting up the next day instead. [BC Festival] is a Community – Let’s take care of one another.

Given the plethora of messaging, this issue is clearly taken seriously by festival organizers. The last sentence on that poster also emphasizes the social responsibility that is expected at BC Festival for patrons to look after each other, demonstrating the community values of this event. The bystander effect, where individuals are less likely to intervene under the assumption that someone else will, is something that BC Festival is trying to avoid. However, as I explain in the following section, intervention is a skill that must be learned in order to be effective.

Other messaging at BC Festival include: “Consent is sexy” and “Consent is mandatory.” Prior to the #MeToo Movement, the promotion of consent as a “sexy” thing to do was common, at music festivals as well as other places such as university dorms. However, there has been more of a push to emphasize the importance and necessity of consent, rather than using an oblique and indirect approach. While an indirect method may be well-intentioned, it diminishes the seriousness of the topic. Consent is also not limited to sexual activities; all forms of physical contact and social interaction need to involve consent and the maintenance of boundaries.

3.4.2 Outreach & Intervention

“What we can do as a music festival community is doing a better job of making people accountable. When you see a person act in a way where maybe they are touching another person, or you notice someone pressuring another person, being verbally violent or whatever, having the confidence and the skills and the tools to step in and intervene. How do we call each other in more? I’ve really had to do that a few times, and I think that informal learning, that informal connection, to just be like, I recognize that the community that you are from, the folks that surround you in your jobs use this language and they’re not aware, or maybe they are aware but choose to use this language anyways. We’re going to talk about the impacts that this has; I’m going to teach you that the words you use don’t hurt you, but they hurt other people” (Jenny).

Each of the three music festivals had volunteers responsible for outreach in some capacity. The ProServe facilitators at Alta Festival serve as a form of outreach, looking for patrons who need help and connecting them with either medical or security personnel. For Sask and BC Festivals, outreach volunteers are a subsection of the harm reduction departments. In addition to roaming festival grounds in the same manner as the ProServe facilitators, these volunteers are armed with supplies, such as condoms, water, snorting devices, and candy. At all three festivals,

outreach works with security, medical, and harm reduction to provide patrons with the help they need. Sometimes, conflict is easily diffused by outreach volunteers, other times more mediation is required, and patrons are escorted to the appropriate department.

Where Stacey Forrester argues for all staff and volunteers to be trained in intervention and harassment, Jenny advocates for *everyone* to be responsible for the creation and maintenance of a safe environment. As she says in the quotation above, “How do we call each other in more?” But intervention during tense or aggressive interpersonal situations is a skill, which requires training from qualified instructors to be effective. To illustrate, Rachel, a participant from Sask Festival, knows that being able to recognize moments that require intervention is important:

how do you recognize the signs of somebody else being, ‘oh that person’s not in a good place,’ especially if all the people they’re with are not in a good place... I wouldn’t be super comfortable going up and being like ‘hey you need to check yourself’ but, like, I don’t know. I would hate to offend someone. But you know, maybe that would be a good, like, be aware of other people as well as yourself.

During the interview, Rachel refers to recognizing when someone is too inebriated and may need help, as well as when a situation involves interpersonal conflict or discrimination. Her concern with personally intervening in one of these situations is connected to potentially misinterpreting a situation and inadvertently offending someone. Education and practice would help to ease some of that concern by increasing her confidence in recognizing the signs. In my experience, people are more likely to be grateful for a stranger’s show of concern, even if that concern is unfounded.

Gender dynamics are important to note because there is a distinct difference in the phrasing men and women use when discussing risks at festivals. Although, given the differences in how men and women are socialized, this is not surprising. Both Dave and Frog Boy reference their personal responsibility for their own safety, and do not seem to consider interpersonal conflict or violence: “I don’t feel like my safety is contingent on those around me,” (Dave, Sask Festival); “Well, it’s only unsafe if you make it unsafe for yourself” (Frog Boy, BC Festival). In contrast, women are more likely to say their safety is related to or contingent on the people around them. For example, Delphine states that she thinks “women are especially vulnerable” at music festivals; Rachel describes always having her guard up, particularly at music festivals; and Jenny identifies harassment and sexual assault as the first festival-related risk that comes to mind. Jenny also explicitly says the opposite of her partner Dave, when describing an uncomfortable situation that happened to her earlier in the festival:

As a queer person, I was made to feel unsafe in my own campsite, you know what I mean. But like, it was addressed and there was learning and education for them. But I know that intersectional identities, folks who would be considered lower in socioeconomic status or the colour of your skin or your gender expression or whatever, I feel like there's definitely more acceptance of people dressing in however ways they want, but I do still think that there are folks who are always, like, there are power dynamics at play at all times, you know, and so I think safety is relevant to who is around me, and definitely being able to take care of myself. But I think, yeah, the people who surround you definitely impact your safety.

Jenny provides a nuanced understanding for why the individuals who made her feel unsafe felt that their language or actions were acceptable, and as she acknowledges in the quotation at the start of this section, different people have different frames of reference and versions of normal. I learn that this is why Jenny approached the situation from an education standpoint; to teach them why it was harmful, in the hopes that they do not make anyone else feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

This interaction, however, feels particularly invasive because of the concerted efforts Jenny made to turn her campsite into a safe and comfortable home for the festival duration. Jenny says that she is not much of a camper, so she brought a carpet and decorated the walls of the large pop-up canopy tent with lace tablecloths that served as her group's shared living room space. When individuals are made to feel unsafe even in their own campsites because of bigotry or intolerance, the social body as a whole is at risk. Violence against one person is, in effect, violence against the whole community. Sask Festival promotes inclusivity within its community, but it takes everyone within that community respecting and enacting that inclusivity in order for it to be true. By not acknowledging the prevalence of assault and interpersonal conflict at these events, the social body will continue to be at increased risk.

The objective of this chapter has been to demonstrate the varied interconnected risks that can be present at music festivals. However, what it also raises is the differing perceptions organizers have of what "risk" encompasses in a festival setting, and the varied approaches they take to mitigate them. Not all festivals seem to know or appreciate the compounding effect these risks can have, as evidenced by the harm reduction strategies and services that are prioritized, and the fact that some are not provided at all. Although risks have been organized in this chapter by what they affect most – the physical body, the mind, or the community – it is clear that in a music festival environment they are all connected. The focus of the next two chapters is on who bears the responsibility for mitigating these risks.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENABLING SAFETY AT MUSIC FESTIVALS: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

While waiting for a training session to start in the sanctuary at BC Festival, I chat with other volunteers. ACW is also volunteering here for the first time and is looking around at the decorations and the set-up of the space. I ask if it was her first time in the sanctuary:

To be honest, until this year, I found the sanctuary and medical centre to be scary and intimidating. I had never been to either but just have always felt a weird energy being close to that area... Energy is contagious, the last thing I want to be around when I am feeling negative is other people. I do not want to absorb from them or to give them my energy either.

She adds that every time she has had an emotional or difficult trip her close friends have been there to help her process it, in her campsite or other more comfortable places.

ACW is aware of the services provided by the festival and knows herself well enough to know that they likely would not work well for her. She is comfortable not accessing services because of the trust that she has in her friends to look after her when needed, demonstrating the dynamic responsibility for safety. There is a long list of parties responsible for the creation and maintenance of safety of a festival, including: “event producers, permit-grantors, public health, security and policing, health advocacy groups, attendees, volunteer and contracted event medical services (on-site) providers, local and contracted ambulance services, local hospitals, and health authorities” (Lund and Turris 2017, 438). Each of these can be divided into the following four categories: individual, social, organizational, and regulatory. This chapter focuses on personal responsibility, both individually and socially. ACW demonstrates individual responsibility through her self-awareness, and her friends engage in social responsibility by being there for each other. The next chapter focuses on structural forms of responsibility – the ways that festivals and governments create and enforce safety at events, often contradicting the strategies of patrons.

Examples of individual responsibility are the most common in my data. Through governmentality, responsibility can be internalized where some then shame others for not enacting the same level of personal responsibility as themselves. Some participants argue that the imperative is placed on each person at a music festival to ensure their own safety, rather than on the festival organization. In this thesis, individual responsibility encompasses preparation, and awareness of one’s self physically, mentally, and situationally, as well as engaging in mindful decision-making.

Social responsibility includes notions of trust, friendship, and group dynamics. These are all identified by participants as important elements to consider for both personal and collective well-being. Many festivals also deliberately cultivate a sense of community or familiarity amongst their patrons. This community building, in turn, facilitates a feeling of responsibility; of looking out for one another at these events. In effect, governmentality is exerted on patrons by festival coordinators through messages of community and togetherness, leading many to feel a sense of obligation to perform social responsibility. However, social responsibility is almost always enacted through individual responsibility. Although both are performed by individuals, for the purposes of this thesis, “individual responsibility” refers to being responsible for one’s self, and “social responsibility” refers to being responsible for others.

4.1 Individual Responsibility

A lot of the responsibility for safety is placed on individuals at music festivals. This responsibility is both self-imposed and ascribed to others, as well as often forced on individuals when there are no alternatives in place. Governmentality and the body politic have led to responsabilization, the internalization of personal risk, for many people, as if there are not a multitude of factors outside of their individual control (Pyysiäinen et al. 2017). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Frog Boy from BC Festival asserts that festivals are “only unsafe if you make it unsafe for yourself,” but it is clear from the risks described in Chapter Three that this is never fully possible. There are often not enough harm reduction services at festivals for patrons to solely rely on. The means through which individuals enact responsibility for their own safety in the absence of formal services and regulation is also often antithetical to the wishes or demands of the festival organizers and/or governing bodies.

Preparation is an example of proactive forms of harm reduction, and in this context refers to preparing for both the music festival itself, as well as drug use. This preparation includes research, through the internet as well as talking to more experienced people for advice. Several participants discussed the importance of knowing what services are available at a music festival, as well as what to expect from the experience. Preparation also means packing the right clothing, camping gear, food, and personal harm reduction supplies for each event. Festivals can have drastically different environments, making it important to not make assumptions.

Awareness can be broken into two types, self and situational. Self-awareness includes individuals being cognizant of their physical and mental well-being to inform their decision-

making throughout a festival. Considerations such as hydration, nutrition, and sleep are highlighted by participants as being key to having a fun time. Situational awareness extends beyond the individual body itself to the external factors that can impact it. The social and cultural contexts of an event are important to consider, where people are actively aware of the space and people around them. When talking about different forms of awareness, participants and interlocutors stress the importance of deliberate actions; conscious decision-making.

4.1.1 Being Prepared

“Step one, safety beforehand. So, you have to be prepared. So, you want to bring water, food, hats, sunscreen, all the appropriate stuff, like tents, sleeping bags, so you can survive. You want to be able to actually, physically survive at a festival without dying... I would say the biggest risk is just not being prepared... Know where shit is so you can get there if you need it. But they have everything [at BC Festival] so that’s good. Yeah, just educating yourself” (Misha).

Proactive forms of harm reduction are absolutely essential for creating a safe experience by reducing harms before they can occur. On an individual level, being proactive at a festival requires knowledge about that festival before attending. Similar to Misha, Willow also thinks it is important for festival goers to educate themselves: everyone “should always research before they go. Know what you’re getting yourself into.” This research includes looking at festival websites and social media pages to see the services or amenities available, what items are allowed or banned from festival grounds, and environmental concerns to be aware of. When Willow says, “know what you’re getting yourself into,” she speaks from the personal experience of not being prepared enough the first time she attended BC Festival:

You need water, you need sunlight protection, a lot of people don’t realize how hot it is in the mountains, and how freezing it is at night. My first year I had a really horrible time. I expected it to be kind of like camping, but not in a crazy ridiculous acid filled valley. I was not prepared at all, I was way too hot, every single day I woke up super early in the morning cuz I wasn’t prepared with shade at all, so I was just being beat down upon by the sun at like 7 am... and so I was exhausted the whole time. And I didn’t have enough water. Honestly, I just wasn’t prepared like, my food all went bad ... it was freezing at night, and I didn’t have enough blankets, I didn’t have enough jackets, and I just, I literally thought I was going to die.

As Willow experienced, the temperature at BC Festival is a critical factor, ranging from above forty degrees Celsius in the day, to below ten degrees at night. For Sask Festival, there are bears in the area making it critical for proper food storage to be used while camping. At Alta Festival,

re-entry to festival grounds is not allowed so important items cannot be forgotten.

Peer-based research is helpful for first-timers to gain insights from the experiences of people who have attended the festival in question. This peer-to-peer information is shared among friends, as well as via online forums, including social media and “survival guides” posted on blogs and websites dedicated to music festivals and drug use safety. Most participants' answers to the question, “What advice would you give to someone attending this festival for the first time,” included some form of preparation or research. Misha thinks that educating one’s self on the effects of drugs is very important: “if you’re just running around like, ‘I just want to get high’ ... shit’s going to go down. But if you research, if you’re like, ‘I’m going to try this, but I don’t know what it does,’ and then you look into it and you’re okay with what’s going on, then that would be the best thing.” Willow similarly emphasizes researching drugs and “taking your time to do them *properly*.” For Rachel, being prepared means always having a bag filled with supplies such as snacks, water, and lip balm: “I usually carry way more than I need for the day just to make sure that you have those kinds of things. I guess just being prepared is probably my best tip.” Sally also emphasizes how planning ahead of time and preparing for the essentials such as sleeping, eating, and hydrating, can enhance the rest of the experience. As previously established, looking after the physical body can help mitigate other risks at these events, by having a better mental state. Risks are interconnected and compound each other, for example, having a sub-optimal mental state as a result of sleep deprivation or poor nutrition can impact the risks of substance use.

Because individual responsibility is contingent on external rules and regulations, “attempts to engage in harm reduction at festivals are often stymied by aspects of the festival settings and the drug policy environments in which they take place” (Ruane 2018, 337). At Alta Festival, items that have been banned from festival grounds include many of the things that are recommended by participants and other festivals, such as eye drops or umbrellas (see Table 5.1 in Chapter Five for the full list). However, even the most prepared individual must also have awareness to be able to react to situations as they occur, as demonstrated in the next section.

4.1.2 Awareness & Deliberate Action

Listening to my body and assessing the situation... and with psychedelics it's very key to know your surroundings and know who you're with. So, if you're in a situation where you don't feel like you're going to be well-supported, it's for me, a no-no. Like I'm just not, I'm not going to go there because I feel like the potential risk of having a shitty trip is higher, and so I'm a little bit more

cautious cuz I have a sensitive body and I know that. So, I'm probably not going to mix a bunch of drugs cuz I won't be able to function. I know sometimes when I'm just smoking weed I'm like "I am off my fucking rocker" and that's, to me, I'm like, I could probably be on acid to someone else, kind of thing. So knowing what works for me, and I'm also fearful about things being laced, so like even that mentality going into MDMA or cocaine or something like that it'll just probably mess with my head. And I think that's a really key thing about self-awareness too, if I'm in a shitty space like, maybe I shouldn't do drugs, or I should be aware that the potential to go down some deep dark places is greater, which might also be alright for my well-being (Sally).

“Set and setting,” is inherently connected to the concept of awareness. The self-awareness of an individual’s mindset or mental state, and the situational-awareness of the environment and people around them. Sally mentions avoiding MDMA and cocaine because she knows she is afraid of adulterated drugs. Even if the drugs were not adulterated, the doubt or second guessing could be enough to ruin the experience for her and create a “bad trip.” However, Sally also alludes to the philosophy behind psy-crisis training, which reframes bad trips as “difficult trips.” This reframing can help people process trauma or repressed memories. The psy-crisis manual I received during volunteer training for BC Festival states:

We believe that although panic attacks and intense emotional reactions may be uncomfortable, they are a normal fear response to the unknown. Many past sanctuary volunteers have witnessed their guests experience intense emotional experiences (some that have lasted hours), only for a guest to report these intense emotional experiences have gleaned them tremendous gifts and insights.

However, if a festival does not have a designated safe space with trained volunteers, processing these kinds of emotions may be more difficult or distressing.

Self-awareness not only includes awareness of mental states, but also the physical state one’s body is in. Different people can have different reactions and sensitivities to different substances and knowing “what your limits are” (Sally) is crucial. Like Sally, Dave emphasizes how important it is to have constant awareness of one’s body when engaging in substance use, and advocates for self-awareness. Dave’s response to a question about personal harm reduction methods individuals could use, refers to deliberate decision making and intentional substance use:

I think being really informed consumers about their own health. Knowing their needs, knowing what medications they’re on, knowing what that means in terms of them, what extra tolls that might be taking on their body. Being aware of the fuel they’re giving themselves, keeping track of you know water, and making sure they’re staying properly hydrated. It’s really easy to both eat less and do more, in a setting like this as well as doing more than whatever your normal is in terms of

substances. So, I think that combination can be potentially dangerous if you're not 100% aware of all the different stresses and I guess other equations going on.

Willow also references how important it is to eat, drink, and sleep regularly at a festival, especially when she is using drugs: "Sometimes you have to like, make yourself eat something before you go to sleep, like I do. I really hate feeling that gross hungry gnawing in your stomach in the morning, like, when you're also coming off of whatever you're on." The point Willow makes about eating is connected to side effects from some drugs that can make it difficult to eat, such as nausea, dry mouth, time dilation, and "gut rot." Being aware of these possible side effects and making deliberate attempts to mediate them, by eating a meal beforehand for example, can increase the likelihood of a pleasant experience. Additionally, similar to many medications, drugs that are ingested are impacted by stomach contents – an empty stomach will digest and absorb psychoactives faster, which may feel harsher or more unpleasant.

Sally also discusses the importance of being aware of side effects, and not making assumptions about how a substance is supposed to feel, particularly for first time use:

have you mixed things before, do you know people that have? What are common symptoms of having too much or talking to people beforehand about it and getting that education out there. Like, 'my face is numb,' this isn't actually normal for this drug, I need to go seek help. Instead of being like everyone's face is numb I guess, I'm not going to talk about it... Communication is key.

Talking to other people, especially if they are more experienced, is an example of peer-based education and support. As Sally mentions, being open to communicating with others about substance use is important. This extends to both friends and personal connections, as well as volunteers and professionals who are there to provide support. It is necessary for individuals to have trust in the people they attend a music festival with for this reason, which is highlighted in the following section on social responsibility. It is also crucial to foster trust between patrons and festival volunteers or organizers to increase the efficacy of harm reduction services.

Music festivals can have very different cultural contexts, which may be more conducive to certain kinds of drugs and activities. Festivals such as BC Festival, which can be labeled "transformational festivals," typically see more psychedelic drug use to enhance art and visual performances as well as identity exploration. Some festivals, such as Alta Festival, replicate a more traditional clubbing environment where stimulants or "uppers" are more common – to facilitate dancing for hours on end. Other festivals, such as Sask Festival, which are family-

friendly events, see a wider demographic of patrons and, likewise, a wider range of substance choices and motivations. Festival layouts are also widely varied so it is important to “know your surroundings” (Sally). This means not only researching the setting to find out what services are available at a festival before arrival, but also familiarizing oneself with the environment once at the festival. Knowing where those services are located can save valuable time during an emergency: “Being aware of all the safety, like the medical tent, being aware of where the water fountain is, just like orienting yourself with the festival grounds” (Misha).

Setting also refers to the social context, the other people at the event – friends and strangers alike – which will impact the experience. Attending a festival with a group of trusted and experienced friends, versus going alone may have very different outcomes. A woman at BC Festival came to the sanctuary space for several hours because she came to the festival by herself and decided to try LSD for the first time, thinking that it would help her make connections with others. Instead, it made her feel overwhelmingly alone and isolated. LSD has a reputation for bonding people, however that is typically only the case when everyone has taken it together, bonding over the shared experience. Radical self-reliance, as advocated by Zelda, would have helped this woman cope with the demoralization she felt from not finding connection. Sometimes friends wander off and are not reunited until the next day, or the assumption of creating meaningful social connections is harder than expected.

It is important to reiterate that individual responsibility is not enough in and of itself to create safety and reduce harm. Zelda mentioned several times throughout the psy-crisis course that, “What you know when you’re sober may not reflect what you know when you’re high.” To demonstrate, she told a story from when she was in charge of harm reduction at a music festival:

We had this woman come in who had eaten some mushrooms and was now experiencing ego death. She had high anxiety, and literally thought she was dying. But because she was a medical professional, she thought she knew better than the sanctuary and first-aid workers, who knew that she was okay and not in any real danger. I’ve helped dozens of people through ego death over the years, it’s unpleasant but a temporary experience. But because she was terrified, and felt superior in her medical knowledge, she insisted on calling an ambulance, which requires RCMP notification.

Preparation and awareness are important measures for individuals to make for safer experiences at music festivals, particularly in that they are largely proactive strategies for reducing harm before it can occur. However, as Zelda’s story helps illustrate, strategies and services aimed at

helping people after the fact are also crucial. The woman she describes was perhaps unaware of the possible side effects and did not trust the festival personnel to look after her, resulting in an unnecessary use of, and potentially strain on, local emergency services.

Based on participant answers, women are more likely than men to acknowledge that their individual responsibility for personal safety is limited. Because of this limitation and her own negative experiences, Rachel extends self-awareness to include clothing choices, particularly in tandem with excessive substance use:

I feel like I always have a little bit of a guard up I guess. And I sometimes, again and it sounds like I'm, I don't know, a negative old lady I guess. But sometimes I'll see a girl and be like, oh, I wish that you'd not dress like that right now, you know? I don't know, that sounds bad, I'm not trying to like, shame you or anything like that. You do what you like, but when a girl's clearly blacking out and is like, in her bra and underwear uhh, you should probably go put some clothes on. I wish, I don't know [pause] Yeah, if you just want to do your thing then do your thing. But, if you're also probably not going to be aware of where your nipples are then maybe someone should just throw a jacket on you.

Rachel seems to be aware of the inaccurate and problematic victim-blaming connotation of “what were they wearing” type statements. From her perspective, it seems that women should either plan to wear revealing clothing or focus on excessive substance use; it is the combination of blacking out or losing the capacity for self-awareness that is the issue for Rachel. This is likely because without active cognition, a woman's choice is removed. This connects to what others advocate for above, for deliberate and informed decision-making in all capacities.

Ideally, consumption to the point of blacking out would not occur because it can be dangerous and can be connected to overdose. However, in my experience there are always some who want to experience that level of inebriation. Delphine, a self-described recovering alcoholic from Sask Festival, used to have this mindset before she stopped consuming alcohol: “It's all about excess. There's no such thing as moderation at a festival like this.” Delphine likely would have been someone that Rachel is concerned about, as she describes: “showing everyone my tits” and “mooning everyone” while being extremely intoxicated and having no safety awareness at the time. Delphine states that if she had been asked about safety and her drinking she would not have cared: “I'm here to fucking party, I'm going to party all weekend, and I don't give a shit, I'm not thinking about safety. Like, that wasn't even in my realm of thinking.” This demonstrates that while individual responsibility is important for safety at festivals, it is not enough on its own.

Encouraging those who attend festivals to research and be prepared for the experience and to be aware of themselves and their surroundings is important for reducing the chances of harm occurring. However, expecting each person to constantly be fully prepared and aware of the countless risks and factors that impact safety at these events is unrealistic.

4.2 Social Responsibility

Social responsibility has two main applications in a music festival context. At a general level, social responsibility applies to the entire community as a collective entity that shapes the experience. This is where a festival is most indicative of a social body; a metaphorical representation of the mentality, reputation, and trends of the individual bodies that comprise it. As some festivals grow and change, there can be friction between the old patrons and the new, with both groups having different interpretations of what that social body should look like. Given that friction, an important question to consider is how individuals interact with strangers in that space and what social contract, if any, has been developed. Both Sask and BC Festivals started as small grassroots events over twenty years ago, but where Sask Festival has remained relatively small, BC Festival continues to expand the physical size of the festival grounds and the number of patrons in attendance. While it is difficult to determine how many new people attend the festival each year, numerous comments heard and overheard at the festivals and on social media make it clear that this divide can exist amongst the patrons. Similarly, there are many reasons why people have an affinity for one festival over another: “a growing body of work that has found attendance at mass gatherings to have positive effects on well-being... a central reason why people take part in such events is that they represent collective celebrations of shared identity” (Cruwys et al. 2019, 220). Finding the right collective community experience is a motivation for many patrons.

The second application of social responsibility pertains more specifically to those who attend a festival in groups. Although some people go to festivals alone, those who attend in a group often demonstrate responsibility for each other. Groups that do not share that sense of social responsibility can be at higher risk. Additionally, when any semblance of this responsibility fails, there can be conflict and broken trust within the group. Peer-based harm reduction falls under both types of social responsibility. Dilkes-Frayne (2016) identifies campsites as a location where this form of knowledge sharing is common among friends and strangers alike. Similarly, Graham St John (2017) states that: “sharing experiential knowledge with friends and neighbours” at campsites and dancefloors helps with, “communicating norms,

for exchange and use, and for enabling informal harm minimization practices (i.e. friends ‘keeping an eye on’ each other)” (14).

4.2.1 Creating Community in a Liminal Space

You definitely feel like you’re in your own little community. So, you have 10,000 or whatever, people all get together at this one place and you feel like, you know, maybe you don’t know anybody there, or you know a few people, but you feel kind of like a bit of community for that weekend. And then [pause] you go your separate ways after. People probably have lasting friendships and hang out afterwards, but for, I get a sense that you’re a community for the time being and then everyone kind of goes back and does what they normally do. But you get a sense of a “togetherness” (Ant Man).

Because music festivals exist in liminal spaces, effort must be made to create meaning for these yet temporary communities, where a group of patrons, volunteers, production crews, and artists come together for a few days a year. What that community looks like is dependent on both the festival organizers and the people who choose to attend. Research on mental health at festivals and other mass gatherings indicates that “getting involved in a mass gathering can represent the enactment of a valued identity – an opportunity to publicly express the values, beliefs, and norms of that group” (Cruwys et al. 2019, 212). Ant Man, above, refers to both the temporary nature of festivals, as well as the feeling of “togetherness,” that manifests for the duration. Alice O’Grady (2017) argues that festivals that take place in rural, outdoor locations help to facilitate a strong community connection more so than those in urban settings: “The removed geophysical character of such events helps individuals and groups congregate, organize, and form social bonds in ways that are different to, say, urban events or those that occur indoors” (156). Outdoor, rural festivals are more likely to involve camping on site, workshops, and a more fully immersive experience in the community. For urban or indoor events such as Alta Festival, the social body is only whole for a few hours each day with no activities outside of the performances, so forming connections is more difficult. This is perhaps why Alta Festival focuses on VIP packages, which may be more conducive to an urban environment.

A festival typically builds its reputation by the community it wants at its events, largely through its promotions on its website and social media. For example, Sask Festival emphasizes their strong ecological values, Alta Festival emphasizes exclusivity and VIP experiences, and BC Festival emphasizes a deliberate familial connection amongst their patrons. Although reputation building is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, I include it here because a festival’s

culture creates expectations for how patrons will act at the festival. However, not all patrons meet those expectations, which can be frustrating or disappointing for those who feel a responsibility to do so. The creation and maintenance of a respectful and inclusive community is not always an easy process, and it can require intervening in uncomfortable situations. This requires confidence and skill to first recognize what is happening, and then step in if need be.

Sask Festival is described by some as having a non-judgemental and accepting community. Sally says the atmosphere is her favourite thing about Sask Festival, adding that: “the open, loving, acceptance feel that this place provides is so wonderful... so it just feels like a really cool opportunity to deeply connect with those that I love, and also strangers and have the space to have open conversations.” Similarly, many people refer to BC Festival’s familial connection. Misha describes how fellow patrons and festival workers alike say “welcome home” to people arriving at the festival, and that this is a connection she would feel or identify with upon returning to the festival. She also refers to this festival as the, “least judgemental community I’ve ever been around,” and connects this to the family mentality of the festival.

Some interlocutors describe how being at BC Festival makes them feel more accepting and non-judgemental than they typically are in their everyday life. For these people, something about that event facilitates their social responsibility to embody the values of the collective, at least for the duration of the festival. For others, the bonding nature of BC Festival is extended beyond the event itself, to a point of connection when meeting a new person and discovering their shared experience. As Ursula says, “[BC Festival] has this weird power of connection sort of. I’ve met a lot of people, like, as soon as you find out they’ve been to [BC Festival], they’re your friend immediately. And like, obviously they’re a sweet dude or sweet person.” A common phrase and mentality at this festival is that strangers are just friends you have not met yet, where, “You could be friends with anybody!” (Rainbow Brite). There is an expectation of familiarity with everyone at this festival, and by extension as Ursula indicates, everyone who has ever been to the festival.

However, for those who have been assaulted or experienced violence at a festival, the trust they had in the social body has been damaged. In that context, strangers are more likely to be seen as a potential threat than a potential friend, regardless of the festival’s reputation. As O’Grady warns, “the paradigm of socially inclusive practice and conscientious living is a common trope that permeates many festival narratives... they are also messy, unpredictable, chaotic spaces dedicated to hedonism and excess” (O’Grady 2017, 142), which is also apparent in my research.

The unpredictable nature of festival communities has led some participants to be wary of these familial constructs. For example, when asked if she feels safe at BC Festival, ACW says:

Yes, very safe! But I understand how not everyone would. I know a lot of people in different areas of the festival, so even if I start to feel anxious or overwhelmed, I always have somewhere close to hide out or someone to talk to. Although I want to trust everyone and believe we are part of a big family, the sceptic in me never lets myself get too mangled that I would be worried about being on my own.

It is the trust in her own individual responsibility and her friendships that allows ACW to feel safe at the festival, not faith in the community more generally. She gives a definitive yes to the question, but then follows up with qualifiers. She personally feels safe but does not extend that safety to the social body. While ACW wants to believe in the values and messaging promoted by the festival, she does not let herself get too inebriated – just in case. Ultimately, she trusts herself and her own awareness the most. The safety of the social body is contingent on every person within it, and not everyone is equally committed to the responsibility required.

Before an individual can contribute to an open and non-judgemental community, they need to be educated on what that means. When describing the advice she would give someone attending Sask Festival for the first time, Shelly says: “be aware of the different diversities here, you know, keep an open mind.” With this advice, Shelly demonstrates how each person needs to first be aware of the community to be responsible for maintaining its safety. For Rachel, having harm reduction services and demonstrations of community through skits and posters help everyone at a festival get “on the same page.” However, it is important not to get complacent in the assumption of safety, regardless of the narrative promoted by a festival and its patrons. As Jenny points out: “there are folks who are always [pause], there are power dynamics at play at all times, you know.” Jenny references the importance of acknowledging privilege repeatedly throughout her interview, something that is important for her work at an LGBTQ2+ non-profit.

Motivations for volunteering

Most participants and interlocutors who are volunteers describe a sense of obligation to help their community, akin to Van Scheipstal et al. (2016) and Ruane (2018). ACW said that her motivation for volunteering is because she was, “Ready to take on more responsibility and wanting to give back to the community that has helped shape who I am today.” This goal of reciprocity, to give back to the community, is also echoed by many people who ask how they can

be volunteers at future festivals. For example, throughout the day during my first volunteer shift at BC Festival at least five people entered the space, all of whom had accessed sanctuary services in the last couple of days. Each of them had a similar objective, to express gratitude for the volunteers who had helped them, and to inquire about the volunteer hiring process. Several of these people explicitly make the connection between the help they received and their desire to help others in turn.

Carol describes her volunteering as a “duty.” She has attended every Alta Festival and has volunteered almost every year, but her sense of duty comes more from her experience as a mother. Carol is in her forties, older than the typical demographic at this event, and after seeing everyone around her drinking a lot at the first festival she decided that she wanted to help keep them safe because she was reminded of her own children. While the parameters of her volunteer position change each year, it always involves roaming the festival grounds and assisting patrons.

Rachel also uses the word duty to describe her volunteering, but her obligation comes more from an understanding of privilege than reciprocity. Rachel regularly volunteers at other festivals and events, and says: “Well, I like giving back... I’m also, I guess, in a position of privilege where I can take the extra off work and you know all that kind of shit, and not everybody can so it’s kind of my duty I guess. But I probably won’t be doing it again.” For Rachel, the work at Sask Festival was not worth it. She volunteered at the drink ticket booth, a job where she works a four-hour shift every day of the festival during the headline performances of the main stage. In addition to missing out on the majority of the music, Rachel does not like that this position forces her to act too similar to her everyday life: “I like being here and you don’t care what time it is, or you don’t look at your phone or anything like that, but like, I’m constantly watching the time just like when I’m at home.” Because she volunteers every day, Rachel is unable to fully experience the liminality of the event, resulting in her no longer wanting to volunteer at this festival, at least not in that same position.

4.2.2 Group Dynamics, Friendship & the Buddy System

“Be with someone you trust as well. I wouldn’t advise going by yourself or meeting up with someone you don’t know. Have a buddy with you, buddy system... be open with people about what you’ve done, if you’ve done something, so they know to look out for you” (Ant Man).

For Ant Man, having a buddy system, especially with someone trusted, is also important because then another person knows about their substance use – which is particularly useful if they

need to go to the medical or sanctuary tents. Using a buddy system is also recommended by Misha, who thinks that staying with a friend throughout a festival is important for personal safety. Although she does acknowledge that some people are independent and confident in their own capacity to look after themselves, saying: “if you’re the type of person to run around, you could, if you’re comfortable with that, that’s cool, if that’s what you’re going for. But I would say stick with a friend especially if you’re new.” Misha acknowledges that while something bad could have happened, she felt safe and had a good time, which she credits to being with friends who all “approached the festival with good intentions.”

Five participants explicitly reference trust as a key component to a safe and fun event. Specifically, trust associated with friendships and festival “crews.” When asked what advice they would give to someone attending a festival for the first time. Misha reiterates that it was her friends’ prior experience with BC Festival that helped her have a good time: “It was really good to have somebody there who knew what was going on... it helped me, and it made me feel really comfortable. I had a lot of fun because I was around people I trusted.” Similarly, for Ursula, trust, as well as common goals or interests, are most important when forming a group to attend a festival with: “I think it’s so important to go with a crew that’s all on the same page! People that make you laugh and that you can trust, just in case things go a little sideways.” Ursula has social anxiety, so being with people that she can trust is an important measure for her mental health.

The Festival Survival Guide, a peer-based resource for festival attendees, covers a variety of topics from budgets and packing lists to health and wellness. The author of one article uses their own experiences to talk about what helps them the most during panic attacks:

During the period where I hid my panic disorder from everyone, it was not until I was sitting on the ground with my white face and cold sweats that someone knew I was in trouble... The more people tried to help the more panic I felt. Now I go ahead and warn my friends about the signs. I tell them in advance that if I get a little quiet and walk off or start going pale, just leave me be. Don’t talk to me or ask me if I’m okay, just hand me some cold water and give me a minute to calm down and get myself out of it. Because they have been warned in advance, they already know that when I start to panic we may have to chill in the back for a minute before pushing into the crowd and getting buried in a sea of people. Having this conversation used to be really awkward for me but I have found that most people understand (2020).

Mental health issues are often stigmatized or a source of shame, which, as the author describes above, can make the situation much worse. Willow mentions that she has a core group of friends

that she always attends BC festival with, adding that: “We’re really conscious about if somebody needs something you need to be able to vocalize it.” Having trust in close relationships can help foster the open communication needed to make a music festival safer and more enjoyable.

Self-awareness is also an important consideration for group dynamics; having the confidence to do what is best for oneself, even if it goes against what the rest of the group wants to do. Jenny makes this connection between individual responsibility and group dynamics when talking about setting personal boundaries and being with trusted or respectful people:

I think it’s really important to take opportunities throughout the day to check in on yourself and be aware of what your boundaries are, and surround yourself with people who are going to support you in decisions to either engage or not engage in substances, later to go to bed...To have people who are lifting you up. It’s easier for you to also take care of yourself and you also have more space, emotional energy. And just being able to voice ‘hey I know you folks are wanting to continue to, like, go hard, but I’m going to go back to the campsite’ [pause].

When Jenny pauses I ask if she would connect it to “resisting FOMO” (fear of missing out), she replies: “Yes! Yes exactly, and just be like: you know what, there is so much going on, you are not going to get to do it all. Right? There are things every year that I’m like, I wish I got to experience this. But yeah, it’s really, really important to just check in and be honest.” Her point reinforces that people need to be honest with themselves and their friends, for their mental health and well-being.

Group awareness is also important. As mentioned previously, getting separated from friends during a festival can cause significant distress for some. Unless a plan to regroup has been established it is unlikely to happen before the night is over, particularly if the festival is in an area with poor cell phone reception. This is a common situation at BC Festival because there is so much variety, with seven different stages geared towards different “vibes” and genres of music. It is impractical to expect a large group of people to stay together the whole time. One strategy that festival attendees have for keeping large groups of friends connected throughout the busy and chaotic nights, is designating areas on the dance floor at each stage. By establishing locations at each stage, the likelihood of finding friends is much higher. It is also common to see smaller groups of people holding hands, single-file, as they move together through a crowded dance floor or walkway, so as not to lose anyone. One interlocutor commented that forming a “human chain” was the only way to “herd acid tripping cats” from one stage to another. People on psychedelic

drugs can be easily distracted by visual stimuli and may not otherwise notice that their friends have moved on. Human chains are used at Alta Festival too, where the dense crowd makes it easy to lose track of someone without physical contact.

Organizers still need to facilitate harm reduction services because not everyone is willing or able to engage in individual or social responsibility. Delphine was one such person. She reflects on how scary she now finds some of her past actions at Sask Festival:

I think women are especially vulnerable at these places... like frick, I never, I never even thought about things like that... I would have friends that would look out for me... [but] what are they going to do, like, follow me around in all this crazy chaos? Cuz that's all it was, I was just walking chaos wherever I went... I remember one year I passed out... and they stacked coolers, like seven feet in the air. And I'm lucky they just stacked coolers and twigs on me. They could have ripped off my clothes and violated me horribly, and I wouldn't have known.

When asked if she ever tried to use a buddy system, Delphine laughs and says, “No! Never,” and describes how confrontational she had been when drinking. Friends did try, but she acknowledges how difficult it must have been to keep track of her. Delphine talks about “passing out” and waking up in unfamiliar locations frequently and thinking nothing of it. She now considers herself lucky not to have been assaulted, with the caveat that she does not actually know if she ever was due to the memory loss and lack of consciousness in which many of her nights used to end.

When social responsibility fails

It is 10:30 p.m. at BC Festival, a couple hours after my second shift started, when a security guard escorts a man (Tim), and a woman (Alice), to the sanctuary space. She explains that these two patrons have been abandoned by their friends without a tent to sleep in or a ride home, but Alice's dad is on his way from a nearby town to pick her up. Alice is in tears and hyperventilating when they arrive, and she is clinging to Tim's arm. I bring them both to a free couch in a quiet spot and start helping Alice regulate her breathing. Tim is telling me that Alice often gets panic attacks, when she interjects saying “This is my first one in three months! I usually use MDMA to help me manage them, but I'm all out of serotonin⁹ now.” After some breathing techniques we talk about the festival to try and keep Alice distracted from her anxiety, when a phone call from her dad sends her back into a panic attack. She gives me her phone because she cannot speak through the tears. He is nearby, and I tell him that security will escort him to the sanctuary once he arrives at the gate. Alice is anxious that her dad is upset with her, but when he arrives he is supportive. Alice and her dad leave the festival, but Tim stays in the sanctuary, hoping to find a ride in the morning.

⁹ Heavy use of drugs such as MDMA over a short period of time leads to a temporary deficiency of serotonin, an important neurotransmitter. This typically results in a “come down” period of volatile emotions sometimes referred to as the “sads” (Pennay 2015).

As previously mentioned, social responsibility failures at music festivals creates an increase in risk. This applies whether people are over-intoxicated and negatively impacting others on the dance floor or are breaking social agreements with their friends and breaking their trust. Alice and Tim are unfortunately not the only people to come to the sanctuary that night as a result of friends or rideshares leaving unexpectedly. At least half a dozen others were stranded, but the sanctuary space at BC Festival had enough air mattresses, hammocks, and couches for everyone. No matter how someone gets stranded at a festival, it is down to someone's irresponsibility.

Lack of respect is another example of a failure to uphold social responsibility, and negatively impacts the social body. Jenny describes an evening at Sask Festival where she became increasingly uncomfortable due to the actions of those around her on the dance floor:

You could tell the energy had really shifted from everyone, like, cohesively sharing space and dancing to where people were just very intoxicated, tired cuz it's later in the evening, so people were being less consenting, encroaching on other people's space, and like, were slamming into each other and you know and not checking in to see is this okay where I am. So, we actually ended up leaving the show a little bit early... my patience is lower because I'm on substances and I'm tired and it's getting later, but I could feel that with other folks pushing their limits. Sometimes people will make different decisions that can impact the people around them.

Delphine's perspective is: "When you have people, of varying degrees of healthiness and wellness, using and cohabitating together that can be a cocktail for disaster, whether its sexual assault or people fighting, or you know... there's varying degrees of experience in use and what people can handle." That is what makes Jenny's decision to leave a show that she had been excited about so important in this context. She had the self-awareness to know that it was the best action for her well-being, acknowledging that neither she nor the people around her were at their best. If more people put as much effort into their responsibility for themselves and their community as Jenny does, music festivals would be safer places. As a harm reduction sign at Alta Festival says: "Take responsibility for the energy you bring into this space."

This chapter has focused on personal forms of responsibility. As discussed, individuals enact responsibility for their own safety through proactive forms of harm reduction, as well as being aware of themselves and their surroundings. Deliberate decisions based on that awareness is an important and effective way to increase safety individually, as well as socially. Individuals also enact responsibility for others safety by maintaining the values of the festival community and their personal group dynamics. Having trust in one's companions at a music festival, with all of

its potential to overwhelm and overstimulate, is particularly important for those who have anxiety and other mental health concerns. As I have established, these forms of responsibility are not enough on their own. Festival organizers and governments must also be responsible for enabling the safety of these events by putting services and regulations in place. Harm reduction and safety is most effective when structural forms of responsibility are developed with realistic understandings of patron behaviours, including personal forms of harm reduction. However, as the next chapter demonstrates, these perspectives are rarely fully aligned.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENABLING SAFETY AT MUSIC FESTIVALS: STRUCTURAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is Sunday at BC Festival, and I am working my first volunteer shift in the sanctuary space. During a quiet moment early in the afternoon, a few of the other volunteers and I sit and chat to pass the time. We talk about our various plans for the last night of the festival, and Brian mentions that he is going to have an early night because he is driving his friends home in the morning, adding that he hopes “everything goes smoothly.”

Brian has attended and volunteered regularly at festivals throughout British Columbia for over a decade and has had several unpleasant interactions with police at check stops. One officer in particular has had a recurring role in these negative experiences. He says, “I drive a converted school bus for all my friends, which has definitely made us a target at check stops. It’s shitty, we’re always getting pulled over, and then we always get searched, especially by that one cop. He just seems to enjoy giving us a hard time.” He adds that he is aware he looks like a “hippie,” gesturing to his dreadlocked hair, facial piercings, and harem pants, “But I always try to be respectful, so it’s just really frustrating. I just want to get my friends home safely.”

Carmen, the volunteer shift leader, empathizes with Brian, and tells us their own story about a frustrating police interaction following a festival:

My husband and I usually take a sensitive scale with us because we like to use research chemicals and they’re extremely dose sensitive. So, we try to be as safe and careful as we can. A few years ago, we were driving home from [BC Festival] and we were pulled over by an aggressive cop who said that he smelt pot in our car. Which is ridiculous, we don’t even smoke pot. But he searched our car and found our scale and even though he didn’t find any drugs, because there weren’t any, he tried to claim that we’re dealers, because supposedly ‘only dealers carry scales.’ Just so ridiculous!

Eventually, after searching their vehicle thoroughly, the police let Carmen and their husband go, but the threat of arrest left them both shaken. Carmen, Brian, and others agree that after experiences such as these, they are uncomfortable or anxious about future police interactions.

Differing, and even opposing, perspectives on what safety means or how it should be achieved can result in friction amongst different parties (Carmen, Brian and the police in the cases above) all of whom have the same end goal: to act responsibly. For Carmen, having a scale is a critical form of personal harm reduction, a deliberate measure for safer, more responsible drug use. It can also be said that the police were aiming to increase safety by searching vehicles at a check stop. However, in that particular instance, the two interpretations of safety were mutually exclusive and resulted in unnecessary tension. A quote in Chapter One bears repeating: “How often is one threatened with danger for failing to conform to someone else’s standards?” (Douglas 2002, xi). In my view, the police officer’s demeanour seems overbearing at best, and a misuse of

power at worst. However, this kind of conflict is especially common at music festivals, which appears to stem from the differing views on, and the morality associated with, substance use.

This chapter demonstrates that harm reduction is most effective when all the different parties in question – individuals, communities, organizers, and governments – work together. When defining what she thinks harm reduction means, Shelly says it's about giving “people the opportunity to not injure themselves, whether it be physically, mentally, socially, [laughs].” The key word here is “opportunity,” because individual responsibility cannot exist in a vacuum. Typically, “neoliberal discourses would diagnose as problematic such societal conditions that prevent individual agents from effectively assuming responsibility for outcomes to themselves” (Pyysiäinen et al. 2017, 218), because those individuals cannot then assume the full consequences of their actions (Lemke 2001). Yet, in the festival context there is an inherent contradiction between the neoliberal push for governmentality and responsabilization; restrictions are imposed on individuals by governments and organizations dictating what they are *allowed* to do to enact this responsibility. Additionally, accepting and distributing responsibility is further complicated by its implications of blame, fault, and accountability.

Organizational (i.e. festival) and regulatory (i.e. governmental) forms of responsibility are less present in the participant data than individual and social responsibility, despite their crucial relevance. While music festival organizers are required to meet certain health and safety protocols to ensure the relative safety of their patrons, these can vary by province and even municipality. There is no federal policy mandating what harm reduction services are required at these events. Consequently, each festival has a different approach to how they create a safe environment for their patrons, including different definitions of what that safety means. Given the absence or ambiguity of policy and regulation regarding safety at music festivals at the local, provincial and federal levels, it is not surprising that participants do not reference these categories when discussing safety and responsibility at these events. However, relying on individuals to be responsible for themselves and others is not enough. The safety of any environment or event should not be assumed, it has to be created and sustained. Alison Hutton et al. (2018) state: “Too often, there is an expectation that audiences will comply with set rules and not act outside societal boundaries at [mass gathering] events. This belief can be a mistaken one, as with freedom of choice comes freedom of action, and staying healthy or being safe is not always at the forefront of people's minds” (195). Complicating this issue is that the government, the festivals, and the

individuals do not necessarily all know what the rules are, or agree with what they should be.

5.1 Organizational Responsibility

Planning for safety is somewhat paradoxical: “A safe environment depends on what happens in this place, and what happens in it depends on how safe it is perceived to be” (Ceccato and Nalla 2020, 263). In order for festival organizers to enable safety, they need to have a realistic understanding of what occurs on festival grounds. Likewise, people will often adjust their behaviour based on their perception of an event, including choosing to only attend events with safer reputations. Music festivals have a responsibility to their workers and patrons to provide certain services to promote health and safety. Given the many variables associated with these events that are outside of any one individual's control, it is not enough to rely on individual and social responsibility: “Relying on the audience or event-goers to act safely and responsibly at all times is short-sighted when event-goers can be supported to stay safe and healthy at an event” (Hutton et al. 2018, 194). Delphine is of the opinion that most people do not take safety or consequences into consideration: “maybe this is the only four-day weekend off you get this summer from your job... so you’re going to be fucking ripped all weekend.” Providing support at music festivals is complex and situationally specific.

With the absence of explicit government regulations on what to provide, festival organizers must decide for themselves how best to create a safe event. This is an example of governmentality and the securitization of habitat (Rose 1999) where communities are to:

take responsibility for preserving the security of its own members, whether they be the residents of a neighbourhood, the employees of an organization, the consumers and staff of a shopping complex... Risk reduction here takes the form of the construction of different spatio-ethical zones (247).

Rose adds that these communities assume or are “forced to assume – responsibility for ‘its own’ risk management” (248). Likewise, each music festival has essentially been forced to assume the responsibility of the risk management and mitigation for their event and all the people involved. With each festival considered to be a different “spatio-ethical zone,” the reputation a festival develops is connected to these safety and ethical considerations. Additionally, festivals that provide harm reduction-related infrastructure are in effect providing the freedom that patrons need to exercise their individual responsibility under neoliberal governmentality, as indicated by Foucault (2008). There are also other questions to consider, such as when this responsibility starts

and ends, whether travel to and from the event is included.

I have identified three considerations for the responsibility of festival organizers in the creation of safe events. The first consideration is the control exerted over their events and the people who attend them. Rules are the crux of what I refer to as festival control. These rules dictate both the behaviours and the items that are allowed on site at each festival. Each festival has different expectations for their community; different things that are prioritized. The variation and inconsistency of festival experiences, including what harm reduction services are provided, is a key reason why preparation prior to a festival is an important measure of individual responsibility. This is especially true for international patrons, as they will be subject to not just the festival's unfamiliar rules, but a country's unfamiliar laws.

The second consideration is the reputation that is built for the festival experience and community. Because rules help shape the experience, they are also inherently connected to the reputation each festival develops. These reputations are also built by festival organizers through event promotion and media coverage, as well as through the word-of-mouth recommendations of patrons and workers who have attended in the past. A festival's reputation can impact a patron's assumptions or understandings about an event, dictating which event they want to participate in. There is a high degree of variation in entertainment, values, and services provided, and patrons are able to choose a festival that matches their priorities if they research them ahead of time.

The final consideration of festival responsibility is the barriers organizers face in implementing holistic harm reduction services. For example, liability concerns are often cited as the reason why a festival cannot provide drug testing kits or services. Sometimes the barrier to harm reduction at an event is the festival organizers' own perspective on substance use and harm reduction as a whole, which is then reflected in the rules laid out for the festival. Another barrier for festivals is the lack of government regulation promoting and instructing event organizers on how to implement effective measures, as well as laws that directly inhibit harm reduction, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

5.1.1 Festival Control

“It [harm reduction] means that people are going to do drugs and it's just being prepared if something goes wrong. It's like, knowing that even if you say, 'don't do drugs,' people are going to do it anyway. So, it's just being prepared in case something does go wrong, and also making sure that, just minimizing overdoses and stuff like that” (Frog Boy).

Several participants, including Frog Boy above, reference what Glover (2003) calls a “reality-based approach” to substance use. They correctly identify that harm reduction does not include preventing or reducing substance use as one of its goals and realize that attempts to prohibit these actions can lead to dangerous consequences. For Sally, transparency and open communication between a festival and its patrons is a necessary step for reducing harms:

because if a festival is too afraid to talk about drug use, there’s going to be a lot of problems. Cuz people are going to do things, like, under the radar and be more unsafe with what they’re doing, sharing stuff, and if there’s a little bit more of an open air to it then people can enjoy themselves while being safe.

By having a prohibition approach, refusing to acknowledge the reality that some people are always going to use drugs at music festivals, they are increasing the risk that patrons will have more dangerous outcomes at their events. Glover agrees, adding that, “Reactionary responses are largely moralistic and they are too quick to limit liberty under the premise that the behavior in question is objectionable” (2003, 322-323). Glover is referring to government regulation enacted as a reactionary response to raves; however, I consider his critique equally applicable to a festival’s approach to drug use at their events. Having harm reduction measures is not encouraging or condoning substance use, it is encouraging safety.

The most explicit form of control is the list of items not allowed at a music festival, used by security to perform searches of cars, bags, and pockets prior to entry. Each list is specific to the unique conditions and environments of the event in question because what is dangerous in one context may not be dangerous in another. Table 5.1 on the next page lists all the items that are explicitly banned by each festival, as stated on their official websites and information guides. I say explicitly because assumedly illegal substances are not “allowed” at Sask Festival, but both Alta and BC Festivals make a point of including them on their “do not bring” lists. The most obvious difference between these three lists is their level of specificity. Alta Festival’s list is the most detailed and has been edited to reduce repetition in the table.

There are items on each of these lists that may seem innocuous, which may be included for different reasons at each event. For example, Sask Festival has a strong ecological focus, which is why glow sticks are banned because they are a single-use plastic and harmful for the environment. The same item is banned at Alta Festival because, according to Isabelle the head security guard, they could be used as a weapon. Glass is not allowed at all three festivals. At BC

Table 5.1 Explicitly Banned Items

| Sask Festival | Alta Festival | BC Festival |
|---------------|---|-----------------------------|
| glass | illegal or illicit substances, drugs, or drug paraphernalia | alcohol |
| pets | personal naloxone kits | fire |
| fireworks | glass or metal containers | fuel |
| drones | outside beverages, including alcohol | generators |
| glow sticks | weapons or any object that could be used as a projectile | glass |
| glitter | fireworks; poi or fire dancing equipment; flammable or dangerous goods including aerosols | lasers |
| | homemade food in re-sealable containers | illegal substances |
| | spray paint or permanent markers | motorized vehicles |
| | opened over the counter medication or eye drops | pets |
| | glow sticks or balloons | weapons |
| | water guns, spray bottles, misting fans | hate speech |
| | footballs, soccer balls, other sports equipment | synthetic feathers and boas |
| | large backpacks or duffel bags | Indigenous headdresses |
| | umbrellas, chairs, stools, large blankets, sleeping bags, tents, coolers | offensive totems |
| | bicycles, skateboards, scooters, or hoverboards | |
| | animals | |
| | long or large chains or spikes of any kind. | |
| | laser pointers | |
| | musical instruments, noisemakers, or megaphones | |
| | professional cameras or recording equipment | |
| | selfie sticks, flag poles, sticks, or totems | |
| | drones or other flying vehicles | |

and Sask this is to protect the animals and wildlife in these rural environments, as well as the many patrons who choose to walk around without shoes. At Alta Festival, the concern, again, is that glass can be used as a weapon. Synthetic feathers, another seemingly innocuous item, are banned from BC Festival because they are dangerous for the farm animals that live in portions of the event space the rest of the year. Additionally, many of the items on Alta Festival’s banned list are due to the limited physical area of the event. They do not have the space to allow everyone to bring in bulky items such as chairs, coolers, large bags or bikes. Accommodations are made for those who can prove they need an item, such as the patron who brings a chair for his broken leg.

BC Festival bans “weapons,” on their “Don’t Bring” list which is elaborated on the website as, “Anything that could potentially harm another guest” such as machetes, knives, guns,

axes, and baseball bats, providing patrons with a clear understanding of what is allowed and what is not. Conversely, Alta has an extensive list of “Items to Avoid”; however, the word avoid does not convey the seriousness with which this list is taken by the festival. In addition to “Weapons of any kind,” which is similar to BC Festival’s wording, there are a number of seemingly innocuous objects listed because of their potential to be used as a weapon. For example, when explaining why items such as chains, umbrellas, and selfie sticks are not allowed on festival grounds, security guards reference their potential danger to others in a crowd.

The fear of projectiles is strong at Alta Festival. Isabelle is called upon many times during my shift to determine whether an item is permitted or not, such as a small ice pack designed for food that ended up being confiscated. This list ends up being ineffective as a guide for patrons and security alike. Virtually anything can be considered an improvised weapon – cell phones, keys, cans of food and drink, even pencils – based on the parameters provided. It is unclear as to whether it is the security team or the organizers who are accountable for the inconsistency in how Alta Festival’s safety protocols are enforced. Given the broadness of what a weapon is and the lack of consistency in enforcement, it is not surprising that many people had items confiscated. The list is also not displayed in the security tent, so confiscation ends up being enforced based on each security guard’s discretion and memory, rather than a consistent rationale. Additionally, there were moments of tension between patrons and security over items with spikes or chains that had been purchased from festival vendors the previous day. Ultimately these people were allowed to keep and bring their items into the festival with them, but Isabelle was left very frustrated that vendors were allowed to sell items that security had been told to confiscate by festival organizers.

From what I observed, there is inconsistent enforcement of a number of rules at Alta Festival. For example, emphasis is placed on not allowing re-entry to the festival each day, citing generic safety concerns as the motivation, which in theory is enforced through the scanning of tickets. Each ticket for each day is only scannable once, yet my position as ticket scanner is treated as an afterthought. The supervisor simply shrugged when I told him that multiple patrons were surprised that I needed to scan their tickets, as no one had the previous day. When the lines to get through security started getting too long, another line was added next to mine to speed up the process. Three security guards were added to this new line, but no ticket scanner. Yet, this scanning is the only way to ensure that each patron has a valid ticket for the event. This is typically a high priority for festivals where standard ticket prices can be between \$200 and \$600.

The number of tickets sold is also determined by factors such as fire safety, so allowing people without tickets into the festival could have dangerous consequences from overcrowding.

Some security guards at Alta Festival are overly officious while searching bags. Some have patrons empty their bags onto tables for inspections, while others do a quick look with a flashlight inside the main pocket before moving on. This inconsistency is also true of Sask and BC Festivals, where the extent to which a car is physically searched is dependent on each security guard. It is also likely that volunteer cars are not searched as thoroughly as regular patrons. The security guard at BC Festival did not search our car at all, simply looked in the back window and asked my fellow volunteer and me to name the “big three” banned items: glass, alcohol, and weapons. This more casual attitude could indicate a higher level of trust in or the assumed responsibility of volunteers, particularly for those arriving several days early. However, immediately upon entering BC Festival grounds another volunteer asked us how much alcohol we had managed to sneak in – indicating that that is not always the case.

Food and over the counter pharmaceuticals are other items that have specific rules at Alta Festival which can impact festival attendees’ personal harm reduction strategies and supplies. Items such as ant-acids and eye drops are often used to combat side effects from substance use, yet both get confiscated. It is clear that no matter how prepared someone is to engage in individual responsibility, they are subject to the whims of the least informed person with the power to impact their efficacy. Homemade food is banned at this festival, at least in part because drugs could be hidden inside:

Throughout the second day of the festival, while I am scanning tickets I see that patrons have had to leave many things behind. Within a couple hours each security table has a large pile of food, beverages, and personal items stacked underneath. One man coming through my line is particularly upset at not being allowed to keep the sandwich he had prepared for himself. The security guard tells him there could be drugs in the sandwich, so they have to throw it out, to which he replies: “Seriously?! There’s no drugs in there man, I promise! Can you check it? I’m going to be so hungry later.” The guard just shakes his head and tells him there are food trucks to buy from inside, pointing in their general direction.

Food that is allowed is stipulated as a “personal amount of commercially produced sealed food (such as chips, trail mix or snack bars).” However, even though chips are specifically included as an example of approved food items, bags of chips were one of the most common food items confiscated. This is another example of the inconsistent enforcement of rules at Alta Festival.

Unfortunately, if the primary concern is the circumvention of hidden drugs, the rule is also ineffective because there are ways to reseal commercial food to look like a factory seal.

Inclusivity through festival control

BC Festival includes social justice aims in the creation of their banned list, which includes hate speech, Indigenous headdresses, and offensive totems. Each rule is explained further on the festival's website, under hate speech it states:

At [BC Festival] we do not tolerate hate speech of any kind. If you display images or symbols that represent hate, including but not limited to signs, totems, flags or attire, you will be immediately asked to leave. We welcome each and every human being with open arms on the farm regardless of their ability, sexual orientation, gender, sex, age, race, colour, ancestry, aboriginal status, ethnic origin, place of origin, citizenship, marital and family status, immigrant status, political affiliation, religious affiliation, creed, level of literacy, or language.

The festival also calls on its patrons to engage in social responsibility by contributing to the inclusivity at their event. It requests that everyone notify a festival volunteer or crew member immediately if they “notice any signs, totems, etc. that display concerning messaging” and may ask the patrons seen with offensive imagery to leave the event entirely. Other music festivals across Canada have also banned Indigenous headdresses from their events: “controversy over the widespread adoption of feathered headdresses at festivals sparked outrage among First Nations peoples, fueling debate within festival communities” (St John 2017, 13). Most festivals that have this rule added it between 2014 and 2016 after an influx of headdresses worn as costumes after celebrities wore them in music videos or during performances. In an opinion piece written on this issue for the University of Alberta, Patricia McCormack, Professor Emerita, Faculty of Native Studies, is quoted as largely attributing this problem to a combination of stereotyping, and ignorance in what constitutes appreciation versus appropriation: “It’s the difference between deliberate versus implicit racism. People don’t like to think they’re racist, but they do racist things” (Stirling 2015). McCormack also makes a connection between racism and social responsibility: “We are all hurt by racism and stereotypes, and we should all be offended when we see them” (2015), echoing BC Festival’s call for the collaborative enforcement of these rules.

Neither Alta or Sask Festivals have explicit bans of Indigenous headdresses, but I also did not notice anyone wearing one at either event. Rules are often only introduced after a problem occurs. Perhaps this issue has not been prevalent at these two festivals. Sask Festival also places

an emphasis on inclusivity, particularly with local First Nations. There are workshops, skits, and cultural awareness exercises specific to the aim of education and appreciation. Music festivals in Canada are predominantly white, middle class events, so the onus is on the organizers to foster inclusivity, and the cultural awareness necessary to ensure the safety of diverse peoples.

5.1.2 Festival Reputations & Variation

“I feel this, like, community here is very strong and vibrant and they’ve tried to create a culture and they like stick with that and, and that’s really beautiful and I align with a lot of those values and hope that people that come here, not that everyone is exactly the same, but kind of tries to embody those things too and that promotes some trust for me” (Sally).

A festival’s reputation is not just dependent on how the event is marketed, but on how the event itself follows through on its messaging. Some people buy tickets to music festivals simply because of the performers who are scheduled, but for many the motivation is the experience of the festival itself, regardless of the artists booked to perform in any given year. There are well over fifty music festivals of various genres to choose from in Western Canada alone, but many patrons are limited to attending only one or two each summer because they are expensive and a fairly significant time commitment. The recommendations from friends and family can play a role in narrowing their choice, as does a festival’s reputation. As such, music festivals are driven to create a distinctive image or reputation for themselves, as fundamentally commercial endeavours in an increasingly competitive market. Transformational festivals, such as BC Festival, emphasize the experience of the event because, “survival and growth relies on events becoming strategically distinguished from those that do not offer counter-cultural¹⁰ authentica in their experiential design” (St Johns 2017, 11). As Sally says above, the culture and community of Sask Festival align with her own values. She commends the festival for following through on the image they have created and expects that the majority of patrons who attend do their part to facilitate those values as well.

However, sometimes music festivals will try to change or adapt their image to suit new audiences. For example, Alta Festival’s organizers announced that their 2018 event would be open to all ages for the first time when tickets first went on sale. However, that decision backfired on them. Only a couple of months before the festival they announced that it would once again be

¹⁰ Counter-culture refers to a rejection or opposition to the dominant cultural and political norms in which one lives (Roszak 1969).

an 18+ event, and refunds were provided for tickets purchased for minors. This reversal came about because there were subsequent protests against this change, including two petitions with more than 1,200 signatures between them. The two main reasons why people participated in these petitions seem to be concern for the children, or concern that the party will change too much. Having previously established itself as an event for adults, in addition to several drug-related incidents reported by the media, it is unsurprising that the family-friendly transition was not successful. By contrast, Sask Festival has marketed itself from its inception as a family-oriented event, while also managing to appeal to young adults looking for a party. This reputational promise is a key component of the experience that patrons expect.

When asked about how safe festivals are some participants give qualified answers. Shelly says: “I think it would depend on which music festival you’re going to. Different ones have different reputations.” Similarly, Sally thinks that “it depends on who you ask,” because different people have different interests and bad experiences will impact opinions. Exceptionalism seems to be playing a role for patrons who identify strongly with a particular event, where familiarity with an event can lead some festival attendees to believe that it is safer than others, regardless of reputation. For example, Dave describes Sask Festival as a “uniquely safe place,” and tells a story to explain this perspective: “We accidentally left our car keys out in a very public area for a few hours while we were away from our campsite the other day, and we’ve had other, sort of, slip ups in the past, and I don’t think we’ve even heard of people being sort of taken advantage of. In this place in particular.” However, it is important that everyone at any festival, regardless of the precautions in place, be aware that there are a lot of risks at these events. In order for a festival to maintain its reputation for safety, patrons, staff or organizers cannot be complacent.

ACW agrees with Shelly and Sally that the safety of a music festival is subjective. ACW lists three music festivals in British Columbia that she believes to be unsafe, based only on stories she has heard. However, she adds that she feels this safety is relative because: “Canadian festivals are so, so, so much safer than American festivals.” Ursula and Willow both make similar comparisons between Canadian and Australian festivals. In Ursula’s experience, the harm reduction rhetoric at Canadian festivals is “more proactive on staying safe,” while in Australia there is no emphasis on harm reduction or safer spaces. Willow says that comparatively, “Canada is trying to push forward for ‘healthy,’ air quotes intended, options for drugs. Yeah, I feel like there’s always room for improvement, but I think [BC Festival’s] doing the best they can with

what they have... better than most other festivals.” Willow’s use of air quotes for the word healthy in connection with drug use is significant. “Healthy” does not have a universal definition. To those who disapprove of substance use or equate all substances and methods of use as dangerous, the people who use them are often considered unhealthy by default. These comparisons show that while there is variation and inconsistency within Canada, there is far more internationally.

5.1.3 Barriers to Harm Reduction

There are a variety of internal and external factors that impact the harm reduction services implemented by a music festival. For example, drug testing services are typically not included at festivals for two reasons: Not wanting to “condone” substance use at the event, and concerns about liability. For Alta Festival, the motivation behind its decision not to have drug testing services is unclear, but given the extensive measures taken to try and prevent substances from festival grounds, it is likely the former of those two reasons. For Sask Festival, according to the first-aid and harm reduction coordinators, drug testing is not currently possible due to insurance-related liability concerns. Delphine admits that she does not understand the intricacies of setting up a drug testing service, but becomes emotional when describing that she does not understand why every effort is not being made by Sask Festival: “I can’t [pause], I don’t [sighs], I mean why not? If you could figure it out to make it work? Why not? Why not do one more thing to make people safe, one more thing. It’s just, it’s never enough.” However, Sally has faith that drug testing is in their future, describing it as a “next step” for the festival.

I am not surprised that Sask Festival has experienced issues with their insurance company regarding on-site testing, based on other music festivals’ experiences. In 2015, Evolve, a music festival in the Maritimes, was almost cancelled the week before the event was scheduled to start due to their insurance company cancelling their coverage following the festival’s announcement that they would provide do-it-yourself testing kits to their patrons. Jonas Colter, Evolve’s executive producer, had to sign a waiver promising that they would not allow any “drug-testing kits or paraphernalia” at the event in order for it to go forward. Despite the setback, Colter’s perspective on the topic is: “In the big picture, it’s just about keeping people safe. It’s not about condoning drug use, it’s about offering information and letting people make hopefully wise decisions” (CBC 2015). In 2016, this festival moved from Nova Scotia to New Brunswick and was able to provide on-site testing conducted by trained volunteers. Similar to Colter’s views, the posters at BC Festival that refer to drug use include the following liability message: “[BC

Festival] and affiliated organizations do not condone the use of drugs and alcohol at this festival.” These organizers are upfront in their belief that it is unrealistic to think that substance use will not happen at their event. Their primary concern is patron safety.

When a music festival tries to deny that substance use occurs at their event and puts extensive measures in place to try and make this the case, they are ignoring reality, and their patrons’ motivations. Motivations are an important factor for festival organizers to understand because they, “tell what kinds of interventions can be used to achieve an understanding of audience characteristics and the opportunity to develop tailor-made programs to maximize safety and make long-lasting public health interventions to a particular “cohort” or event population” (Hutton et al. 2018, 191). Not all festival attendees use drugs, but they are prevalent at these events and it is not realistic to assume otherwise. Similar to the use of alcohol at sporting events, substance use at music festivals is more about enhancing the experience than being the main draw. A report on risk minimization at music festivals in Australia argues that a coordinated effort is required to meet the public health needs of these events, and not overwhelm the surrounding medical facilities by “accepting intrinsic risk-taking behaviour” and providing harm reduction (Luther et al. 2018, 220).

As per Lock and Scheper-Hughes (1996), and Douglas (2002), those who engage in illegal activities can be seen as social dirt, contaminating the community and reputation of the whole; endangering the social body. When a community is perceived to be under threat, real or imagined, there is an increase in the “social controls regulating the group’s boundaries. Points where outside threats may infiltrate and pollute the inside become the focus of regulation and surveillance” (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996, 61). Similarly, Rose (1999) argues that zero tolerance policies are imbued with morality. He states that: “Placing the harms to society in opposition to, or above the harm of users, has the added consequence of the exclusion or ‘othering’ of drug users, in effect curtailing notions of social citizenship” (30). If a music festival is more concerned about the presence and use of drugs at the event than the safety of their patrons, regardless of their personal choices, then it follows that their idealized conceptualization of a “healthy” festival is one without people who use those drugs. Conversely, events that prioritize safety in all contexts conceptualize a healthy festival as one where no harm occurs.

Drug testing is not the only avenue of harm reduction that has faced barriers at music festivals. Katherine, the lead harm reduction coordinator at Sask Festival, tells me that she had to

really fight to get the sanctuary space approved, the first year it was in operation was 2015. The festival's board of directors thought it might encourage drug use or be an area where people would go to consume drugs. Now, the Board is in favour of harm reduction at their event – during lunch one day I spoke briefly with the president of the Board who mentioned how important he thinks the sanctuary is for the festival community. However, there are still examples where the coordinators feel underappreciated:

Shortly after arriving at the festival and finding a campsite, some of the other volunteers and I had just finished setting up our tents when Katherine and Anika arrive looking upset. We help them set up their camp while they tell us about the festival coordinators meeting they had just been to. Anika starts by saying: "So, there's been a bit of a hiccup with the [harm reduction] tents." Apparently one of the two tents got destroyed in a storm last year. Not only did that tent not get replaced, but the festival did not notify Katherine or Anika until they arrived on site. Katherine is clearly frustrated: "Don't they remember how busy [we] were last year? Don't they see how necessary it is? Two tents are required! We need to be able to have a quieter, more private area." Upon hearing this, Anika is close to tears, and agrees that it feels like a lack of acknowledgement and recognition of both the work they do as coordinators and the harm reduction service they want to provide as a whole. Fortunately, a few hours later we learn that we can use a mess tent left behind by a tree-planting crew to improvise a workable set up.

While I do not have the statistics for how many people used the harm reduction services in 2017, over a hundred people accessed the peer-support services provided by volunteers in the sanctuary space in 2018. This number does not include the much higher number of patrons who only required information or harm reduction supplies, so the role this service plays is not insignificant for this festival. By the end of the festival Katherine feels validated from feedback received from curious patrons and people who have accessed services.

Sask Festival relies entirely on unpaid labour in most sectors including harm reduction. Late into the festival, an exhausted Anika tells me how difficult the festival has been for her: "All of us coordinators are volunteers too, no one gets paid, and it is *a lot* of hard work. But, you know, everyone is so supportive of one another! It's all about the people who care about the festival and want it to go well, helping each other out." Both Anika and Katherine are on-call for the entire festival in case of emergencies. I constantly saw them moving around the festival grounds using the bicycles they brought to facilitate their transportation while communicating with other organizers on their radio headsets. This critical part of the festival's safety is left up to the initiative and responsibility of these two individuals. In addition to the work during the festival itself, volunteer coordinator positions across departments require many hours of work in

the weeks and months leading up to the event – approving and communicating with volunteers, organizing the training, and ordering and managing resources. The only compensation coordinators get for their extra work and effort is a handful of drink tickets. Given the extent of their commitment, if these two women were unable to continue doing this uncompensated work, and unable to find replacements for themselves, the harm reduction department would likely be vastly less successful, or even disappear entirely.

Another important consideration for festival organizers, especially those in a rural setting, is whether they are or should be responsible for festival patrons during their journeys to and from the festival, and how this responsibility can be enacted if they deem themselves to be. Misha is the only participant to reference getting back home as part of the awareness and preparation that needs to go into the safety of a music festival: “making sure that you are like, sober enough to drive home, and yeah get your shit together.” But all three festivals have messaging about patrons getting home safely. At Alta Festival, there are several large “Don’t drive high” signs, and the MC ends each night with a similar message: “If you do anything tonight, don’t drink and drive. Stay safe tonight everyone!” At Sask Festival, where not all patrons camp on festival grounds, there is a free, hourly shuttle to the nearest town available to anyone. An announcement is made each night reminding everyone about the shuttles and a plea not to drink and drive. The festival program describes this shuttle service and includes a warning that “The RCMP maintain diligent check-stops, so be smart.” And at BC Festival, there are signs on the road before the highway warning patrons: “Last chance to turn around, possible police check ahead.”

Additionally, BC festival allows patrons to stay an extra night to ensure they are rested enough to drive safely, with security stopping any renegade parties. Unfortunately, security also prevented people from accessing the sanctuary (which along with first aid and the safer space was still open) in their attempt to keep the festival’s downtown area clear. When the sanctuary shift lead discovered this problem she told security, “We are still open for a reason! You *have* to let people in. Medical and the safe space are also open. Hopefully no one who needed help was turned away!” This is the second year that the sanctuary space has remained open for this extra night, an indication of services that continue to expand, however, a possible miscommunication with security impacted its efficacy. As Willow says: “there’s always room for improvement.”

Good intentions, ineffectual results

Safety measures at music festivals, despite the best of intentions, do not always lead to the

desired outcomes. One example is the “Are you ok? initiative” from Sask Festival. It is a volunteer campaign designed to get all volunteers to check in on patrons throughout the festival. There was a presentation on this initiative during the volunteer orientation the day before the festival started and is described in the volunteer handbook as follows:

When you see someone who may need a hand, please ask them if they’re ok. If the person needs assistance, radio the nearest Campground Host station or other appropriate radio channel and follow instructions. If you think the person may need help but tells you they are OK please inform the volunteers at the Campground Host stations or security.

However, during my psy-crisis training in Calgary, Zelda mentions several times *not* to ask someone if they are okay, because the question itself can plant a seed of doubt – if someone is asking them, they must not *look* okay, which can then spiral into a state of distress. “How are you doing?” is a more neutral and open-ended way of getting that information. Katherine and Anika were aware of the problem and adjusted their safety presentation on the main stage to reflect more neutral phrasing. This initiative had the intention of promoting social and festival responsibility, and with a slight informed adjustment it can be more effective.

Another example of the incongruity between intentions and outcomes is the description of the ProServe facilitator role at Alta Festival. It is intended to promote “a caring and compassionate perspective” yet includes unnecessary and moralistic statements about intoxication. Additionally, the instructions given at the start of the shift are vague and ineffectual. We are to circulate the festival grounds and keep an eye out for those who may be in distress, but as the grounds get busier the crowds become too dense to walk through without difficulty – and looking for those in need of help becomes virtually impossible. Carol, James and I also often find ourselves in close proximity to other facilitators, so we develop a more stationary strategy. Every hour or so we move to find a position on the outskirts of the large crowds where we cannot see other volunteers and scan the crowds. For festivals with large populations within relatively small spaces, a lifeguard approach would likely be more effective, dividing the grounds into zones with designated volunteers. Roaming volunteers are more suited for events with much larger grounds.

5.2 Regulatory Responsibility

Most of the substances used at music festivals are still illegal in Canada, and simple possession has not yet been decriminalized. It is likely that the illegal status of these party drugs

plays a role in whether festival organizers opt for a prohibitory stance over a harm reduction model. Rose (1999) discusses how governments have the power to determine and define what counts as “truth” within their jurisdiction, “concerning the objects, processes and persons governed – economy, society, morality, psychology, pathology... and the functioning of their concepts of normality and pathology, danger and risk, social order and social control” (30). In Chapter One, I establish that the federal government largely views illegal drugs in Canada as an amorphous whole, despite each one having its own risk profile and pattern of use. This is significant given the legality and social acceptance of alcohol and tobacco, drugs that have well-known and well-documented first- and second-hand harms (Nutt 2012, 43). Because governments have the authority of truth, alcohol use has become normalized, while other substances of equal or lesser risk are more associated with shame and deviance. Groves (2018) argues that when risk assessments and definitions of criminality place the harm of society above the harm of the othered individual, “this duality produces two distinct but related possible responses by the state: denial of responsibility for the problem and the increased use of punishment as evidence of ‘doing something’” (4). By not providing regulations for music festivals and other mass gathering events that acknowledge the reality of substance use in these contexts, the burden falls on the organizers and the individuals.

This section is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on pertinent government guidelines that have been created for mass gatherings by either provincial or municipal governments. There is little congruity amongst these documents, with each emphasizing a different element of event creation and safety. The second part looks at police interactions in and around festivals, which is advocated by most of these government guidelines but largely condemned by participants and interlocutors.

The responsibility that governments have for the safety of their citizens and residents is noticeably absent from participant data and other sources on safety at music festivals. The reason for this absence is unclear and likely not singular. Given the apparent lack of trust in police officers, this distrust could be extended to governing bodies as a whole. It is also possible that due to governmentality, individuals do not recognize the role the government has, or could have, in facilitating safer practices through policy change and regulation.

5.2.1 Policy & Guidelines for Mass Gathering Events

Provinces and municipalities often provide event planning guides for those who wish to

create or change a mass gathering event, which is the case for Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatoon.¹¹ These three documents are quite different, however only one of them include information on drug-related risks or harm reduction. Additionally, Edmonton published a research report in 2020 on harm reduction at electronic dance music (EDM) events that has since been used to inform the regulation of large events within the city. While the festivals discussed in this thesis may or may not have taken place in Edmonton or Saskatoon, these documents are useful to demonstrate the scope and variety of government recommendation and regulation for these kinds of events. More to the point, none of these documents in and of themselves are comprehensive enough to be a holistic manual for the creation of a safe event, as per the definitions and risks identified in this thesis. One of the key problems is the wide range of events they pertain to, given that the activities and risks associated with music festivals are typically very different from those associated with cultural, art, or food festivals. Table 5.2 on the next page illustrates some key differences in the Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatoon documents (the Edmonton document is not included because it is a research report informing local policy, rather than a manual for event creation, and is discussed further below). It includes an excerpt pertaining to each document's purpose, definition of risk assessment and the examples of risks used.

Alberta's manual is a how-to guide for organizers that includes: committee formation; delegating; volunteer recruitment; finances and fundraising; and tools and templates for managing responsibilities, budgets, schedules, and timelines. The document was last revised in 2016 and is published by Alberta Culture and Tourism. British Columbia provides two complementary guidelines for event organizers and local communities. Document A, "Major Planned Events" provides guidelines that focus on the impact of events on host communities and local emergency services, developed by Emergency Management BC in 2014. Document B, "Public Health Guidelines" identifies and provides fact sheets on common risks including drug use. It was written by the Health Protection branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Health in 2017. Saskatoon's guide provides information on the application process, event organizer responsibility, and event logistics, as well as emergency services. It was last revised in 2020, and is posted on the Parks, Recreation and Attractions page of the City of Saskatoon website. It is important to highlight that all of these documents purport to facilitate safe/successful events. That they are

¹¹ Despite a lengthy search, I was unable to find a comparable document for Saskatchewan; only municipalities in that province have similar documents.

Table 5.2 Comparing Government Guidelines for Events (emphasis added)

| | Name and Description of Document |
|--------------------|--|
| Alberta | Setting the Stage: A Community-based Festival and Event Planning Manual “Whether you’re thinking of starting up a new festival/event or wishing to grow an existing one, this manual has been developed to be a fill-in-the-blank tool to help you plan, implement and then evaluate your festival/event... Much of the information has been compiled from discussions with festival/event organizers, producers and directors” (2016, i). |
| British Columbia A | Planned Events Guidelines: A Resource Towards Safe, Successful Major Planned Events “to identify, discuss, minimize and mitigate the risks associated with Major Planned Events, identify best practices and <i>protective factors</i> associated with well-run events and provide context around operational requirements, developing tools and resources for Local Authorities and event organizers and to potentially promote recommendations for future legislation” (2014, 7). |
| British Columbia B | Public Health Guidelines: Major Planned Events “provide an overall event-planning framework. They offer information on the event organizer’s role in planning for public health concerns and reducing incidents associated with major planned events” (2017, 1). |
| Saskatoon | City of Saskatoon: Outdoor Special Events Information Guide “This information guide will assist in how to plan and apply to host an outdoor special event on City of Saskatoon property. The guide includes contact information and answers to frequently asked questions. The information in this guide will help ensure that the event is <i>safe</i> and successful” (2020, 1). |
| | Description of Risk Assessment |
| Alberta | “A Risk Assessment identifies any hazards or issues that need to be addressed to eliminate accidents or mishaps that would require <i>the assistance of emergency services such as ambulance, police and fire department</i> . All risks should be listed and prioritized according to their potential seriousness, and what actions and procedures need to take place to remove as many of those risks as possible. The site should be evaluated for emergency egress and procedures put in place should these services be necessary” (2016, 76). |
| British Columbia A | “A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, at your event, <i>could cause harm to people</i> , so that you can assess whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent the likelihood of incidents” (2014, 21). |
| British Columbia B | “You can <i>reduce the potential</i> for incidents at your event by careful planning...completing a risk assessment of your event by: identifying potential hazards, estimating the likelihood of occurrence and magnitude of consequence for each hazard (i.e., the risk), [and] developing a plan to reduce risk and handle consequences.” (2017, 2). |
| Saskatoon | n/a |
| | Example of Risks or Hazards |
| Alberta | Vendors on uneven ground without shade; inadequate audience sight lines; dark pedestrian pathways; ponds, hazardous to young children; outdoor power cords and outlets; uneven or high concrete curbs (2016, 77). |
| British Columbia A | Any slipping, tripping or falling hazards; poor lighting, heating or ventilation; fire safety; electrical safety; dust, fumes, and other hazardous substances; traffic control; high noise levels; crowd intensity and pinch points; security incidents; severe weather (2014, 23). |
| British Columbia B | Weather; inadequate drinking water; substandard sanitation; improper food handling; overcrowding; unsafe or inadequate physical infrastructure; unsafe use of alcohol or other drugs; environmental hazards; wildlife (2017, 2). |
| Saskatoon | n/a |

vastly different is less surprising given the different departments responsible for creating them – British Columbia’s by emergency and public health experts, the other two by tourism departments.

There is not much overlap in the content of the documents created by Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatoon but where there is overlap, there is misalignment. The common risks included in the documents is one such issue. For Alberta, the risks provided are mundane and obvious logistical concerns. It only cites physical attributes of the event location as potential risks to consider, with no mention or consideration of the behavioural risks common at music festivals. As the table shows, the risks identified relate to the choice of event location and layout – ensuring that the stage, vendors, and other services are in the best location possible – rather than bringing awareness to the risks that can occur at a festival regardless of layout and location. For British Columbia, between the two documents almost all risks discussed in this thesis are included: weather, noise levels, crowds, drinking water, drug use and opioid overdose. Notably, the word risk is only mentioned twice in the Saskatoon document. Both are in connection with determining the kind of security necessary based on “the level of risk the event is perceived to have” (2020, 9-10). This ambiguity leaves the reader in the position of assuming what is meant. If safety is the absence of danger, and risk is the potential for danger, an event cannot be considered safe without a full understanding of the risks. I am unclear as to how this guide will promote safety, as it claims, when it does not discuss risk or danger as concepts for organizers to consider. Likewise, the Saskatoon document uses the word safe or safety infrequently and ambiguously. For example, regarding the use of barbeques: “Users are required to supply their own firewood and are responsible for safe fire practices and clean up” (2020, 10-11). It does not define what is meant by safe in any context.

The absence of drug-related risks in the Alberta and Saskatoon documents is of significant concern, given how interconnected risks at music festivals are. The Saskatoon document does not include a single reference to drug use and the Alberta document mentions it only once, when describing what to include in a volunteer manual: “Rules and Regulations regarding drugs & alcohol, no show and late policies and procedures” (2016, 91). This singular reference implies that the only concern given to substance use is directed at on-duty volunteers, as opposed to the safety of patrons and off-duty volunteers. I initially found it troubling that the only mention of drug use in British Columbia’s first document relates to overdose when describing mass casualty events: “These situations can arise through a number of means including stage collapse, sudden

weather changes, drug overdose, violence, etc.” (2014, 10). Overdose is one of the most dangerous outcomes of drug use, and can largely be avoided through proactive harm reduction measures, and this document’s primary concern is reducing the impact on host communities, including the burden on local emergency services, yet it is still written with a reactionary mindset. However, it is comforting that Document B was published only a few years later, for together they provide a very comprehensive guide to common risks at these events. Almost half of Document B relates directly to substance use, defining harm reduction as “an effective public health approach to issues concerning psychoactive substance use, including the use of alcohol” adding that effective harm reduction measures are informed by those with lived experiences (2017, 23). Providing on-site harm reduction services is described as a “pragmatic, non-stigmatizing” way to support those “who may be vulnerable to drug-related harm” (2017, 25).

The Edmonton report also has very similar findings to my research. EDM events in Edmonton experienced an increase in emergencies in 2017 and 2018 which led to a temporary ban on these events at the recommendation of the Edmonton Police Service (2020, 3). After an immediate backlash to this ban, the city opted to create an advisory committee to research harm reduction strategies. The research was conducted over eighteen months and included qualitative and quantitative methods. It also consults diverse perspectives, including “industry professionals, venues, emergency services, medical professionals, harm reduction agencies and EDM event [...] participants, artists/DJs, staff members, volunteers” (2020, 4). One key excerpt from the report is:

higher risk behaviour present at these events, in part from the alcohol, drugs and the co-consumption of alcohol and drugs, but also from aspects such as harassment, sexual assault and sexual harassment. Some groups do not experience safety in these spaces in the same way (e.g., safety concerns expressed were higher for women and for those who identified as LGBTQ2S+). Some of the safety issues that came through in the research were due to the nature of the environment (i.e. EDM events have long periods of dancing that can lead to dehydration and overheating), crowded spaces that attract predatory behaviour, and a number of participants expressed concerns with having access to options for getting home safely (6).

The similarities of these excerpts with my own research are a clear indication that the Edmonton report would be useful for festival management beyond Edmonton and beyond electronic music.

At Sask Festival, there are EpiPens, naloxone kits, and an AED available for emergencies, but volunteers, including first aid are not allowed to give patrons any other kinds of medications. Several people tell me that their “license” only covers what is included in the “Good Samaritan

Act.” The first aid coordinators expressed frustration with this limitation, and the harm reduction volunteers are also told to be mindful of this rule because even giving someone an over the counter medication “could lead to a liability issue for you and the festival.” Yet the act, called The Emergency Medical Aid Act in Saskatchewan, makes no mention of medications, or any other specific actions that would or would not be covered. Reviewing relevant decisions of the courts reported on the CanLII Database in the jurisdiction of Saskatchewan, as well as Alberta and British Columbia, I could find no examples of an individual or event being sued for providing emergency first aid under the relevant provincial legislation. The lack of precedent indicates that this liability concern may be misplaced.

The focus of the first aid team at Alta Festival also seems ill-considered, given how small the physical first aid space is, especially compared to the large number of patrons. The medical company providing all first aid on site relies on roaming teams equipped with backpacks filled with supplies. Since I was not a first aid volunteer, I do not know what supplies were in the backpacks, or if the team is allowed to provide over the counter remedies when required. It is also unclear if this company is under similar liability restrictions as Sask Festival. It is a third-party provider, so it is possible that they have separate insurance and do not rely on an interpretation of the equivalent Act for Alberta. In stark contrast there has been ample news coverage on the first aid team at BC Festival because it is so extensive. They have a cardiac unit, nurses, doctors, and administrative staff, essentially making it a field hospital for the festival duration. The British Columbia Document A mentions multiple times that event medical teams should have their own insurance, which is likely why BC Festival is able to have such an extensive medical set up. Those guidelines further outline that festival medical teams and local health and emergency services need to communicate and plan together for successful execution. Despite the first aid team at Sask Festival consisting only of medical professionals, they are not empowered to provide their “highest level of care” at that event, as they are in BC (2014, 10). The Edmonton report also found that private medical services at events decrease the burden on local emergency services. The private medical industry has also recently been developing and becoming more established at providing care at music events (2020, 52).

The Edmonton report is significant because of the resulting by-law that now regulates EDM events with more than 1,500 patrons within the city. This by-law outlines a new permitting system that requires event organizers to submit four plans with their application: Medical,

security, noise control, and patron welfare. Patron welfare plans are to include drug education, safer spaces, consent education, patron well-being, ear protection, and post-event transportation (2020,10). Enforceable regulation is far more impactful than government recommendations that can simply be ignored. For example, Alberta Health Services (AHS) encourages all music festival patrons to carry their own naloxone kits. In direct contradiction to this recommendation, Alta Festival bans naloxone kits from all but first aid personnel. The director for health and safety at Alta Festival issued a statement to the media in response to this recommendation: “Given our onsite medical resources and commitment to the health and welfare of our fans, we want to ensure that only trained medical professionals administer medications to third parties, so we do not permit guests to carry private naloxone kits within festival grounds.” If AHS wants festival patrons to have access to something as crucial as naloxone kits, it cannot rely on recommendations. Government regulations are needed. The Edmonton report also includes personal naloxone kits as important for event patrons. This is an important inclusion because, as the report states: “The kit is carried either for themselves or for others encountered either on the way before or after the event as medics aren’t outside the venue” (2020, 88). This point is particularly relevant for Alta Festival because patrons leave festival grounds each night, many going on to additional events. It has also become more common in areas most affected by the opioid overdose epidemic to carry naloxone kits as a “just in case” measure (Heavey et al. 2018). To not allow patrons to bring their own kits to events associated with substance use is antithetical to harm reduction.

A document combining elements from all five of the aforementioned documents would provide a more holistic guide to creating safer music festival environments. The organizational structure and templates provided in the Alberta document are important for creating the logistical foundation necessary for an event to run smoothly. The Saskatoon document clearly outlines fee structures, which permits are necessary, and when each application needs to be submitted in relation to the start of the event, reducing confusion for organizers during the planning phase. British Columbia Document A places emphasis on communication and cooperation between event organizers and local authorities and services is important to foster a respectful relationship between an event and its host community. As BC Festival states on its website, for one weekend a year that festival becomes the largest “city” in the region. A huge influx of people engaging in comparatively risky behaviours would strain any community, no matter how temporary.

Cooperation is vital to reducing the stress on local emergency services. The Edmonton report and British Columbia Document B both provide evidence for the efficacy of harm reduction strategies and addresses patron concerns regarding the safety of music events, including drug purity and assault.

The New Zealand example

In response to an increase of overdoses at music festivals, New Zealand amended its federal drug policy to enable these events to provide effective harm reduction strategies. Their Drug and Substance Checking Legislation Act was introduced in May 2021 “to enable a permanent licensing system for drug checking services.” Two drug testing companies now have official government approval to work with music festivals, and their efficacy is further enabled by working with “an approved laboratory for further testing” (Ministry of Health 2021). The New Zealand Drug Foundation, a charity organization that had been advocating for policy change, states that: “Due to a recent law change, festival organisers can now feel confident that they cannot be prosecuted for allowing drug checking in their events.” Despite the fact that drug testing services had previously been available at some events, there was no legal framework in place prior to this law being amended, so these services were “effectively operating illegally” (NZ Library of Congress 2021). This is currently still the case in Canada. Because drug checking is still technically illegal, they “remain underdeveloped in Canada even though illegal drug checking services have been implemented at some music festivals” (Karamouzian et al. 2018, 2). While it is commendable that Edmonton has taken it upon itself to support harm reduction efforts such as these, it is needed on a national level to ensure the safety of everyone at music festivals across the country. Guidelines and recommendations that have no real power to dictate practices are only impactful if event organizers are already on the same page.

5.2.2 Police & Music Festivals

One element the event documents in all three jurisdictions have in common is a recommended or mandated police presence at mass gatherings. British Columbia states that: “Police are responsible for maintaining order, and for ensuring that MPEs [mass planned events] are both safe and legal (2014, 15). The Saskatoon document similarly states, “The Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) evaluates an event with the primary objective of public safety” (2020, 18), and organizers may be required to hire Special Duty officers based on this evaluation. Police costs

are also included in the budget templates provided by the Alberta document (2016, 110).

However, a police presence at a music festival can lead to unintended consequences that increases harm. Patrons may engage in riskier behaviours, such as panicked drug consumption to avoid getting caught with illegal substances.

It is not surprising that festival attendees are apprehensive about police interactions. Police often turn to prohibitive measures rather than harm reduction, as the Edmonton Police Service recommended in 2018 in reaction to the “recent spike in medical transfers and presentations at hospital emergency rooms,” across the city. Had Edmonton followed their recommendation to ban EDM events, they would be in a similar position as the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW). The restrictive enforcement policies in NSW all but banned music festivals following an increase in deaths in 2018 and 2019, resulting in a war on music/ festivals (Thompson 2019). As Andrew Wowk, an Australian journalist specializing in music, explains:

These policies are being introduced without consultation with the very people they affect. In fact, they’re being introduced without even so much as a regulatory impact statement, a fundamental part of legislature that helps communicate how regulations are designed to achieve a stated goal. The New South Wales government repeats over and over how they have people’s safety as their primary interest here. And yet, they haven’t indicated exactly how their measures will prove more effective than methods which have actually been researched and successfully trialled elsewhere (2019).

The state government also failed to communicate how it was defining and calculating risk at these events, saying simply that some events are considered low risk, while others are high risk and require extensive police involvement, at the expense of the organizers – one festival being given a \$200,000 AUD quote for the forty-five mandated officers (Wowk 2019).

Ironically, a larger police presence has made things worse in NSW, rather than safer. A spate of unlawful strip searches forced on festival attendees, some as young as 15, came to light in late 2019, increasing the distrust, apprehension, and fear patrons have towards police at these events (King 2020). There is a policy mandating that minors must always be accompanied by a parent or guardian during a strip search, yet police have violated that policy repeatedly. A senior constable who had conducted several searches on minors at one event admitted that, “he had not been aware of the requirement while working at the festival” (McGowan 2019). The resulting Law Enforcement Conduct Commission said that officers responsible followed “no logical basis”

in determining when and on whom a strip search was ordered, and there were thousands each year (Thompson and Cormack 2020), but the majority found nothing (McGowan 2021).

Blindly stating that a police presence will increase safety at an event is misguided at best. Blindly implementing a solution to a health and safety concern without understanding the context of the situation or the root cause of the tragic deaths is both dangerous and illogical. In this situation, there was no forethought of the actions the police would undertake or the consequences of those actions. The Commission has recommended that “police make it clear to officers that general intelligence regarding the use of drugs at festivals wasn't by itself sufficient to justify strip-searching an individual patron,” and the police force has publicly stated that they have already started implementing changes to both policy and training (Thompson and Cormack 2020). The wrong measures were implemented in NSW. Hopefully there are repercussions for those in charge of police training and investigations into officers who behave unethically.

While there is a certain amount of tension with the police presence at festivals in Canada, I am unaware of similar misuses of power such as what happened in NSW. Not many participants and interlocutors bring up the police during my fieldwork. Those who do, however, only have negative things to say. When asked if she would want anything removed from the festivals she frequents, Ursula states: “I don't like seeing uniformed cops at festivals [pause] it's just unnerving.” Police are also identified as a potential barrier to accessing services out of fear of legal repercussions. According to the Sask Festival coordinators, the police had been involved in a “mystery drug” incident on site several years prior that caused a number of people to have seizures. They said this incident was “handled badly,” resulting in many people becoming defensive and hesitant to disclose relevant information due to the police presence. The distrust and hesitancy around police is so prominent that when asked how Sask Festival could be improved, Shelly says: “They could use security that don't have the big name “security” written on them, looking like a policeman... I can assume that there are some people who wouldn't go to a security person, whereas if they can go to somebody that looks like them!” Given that Shelly is a white woman in her 60s, a demographic that typically has no cause to fear or distrust police, it is particularly interesting that she identifies this barrier. The Alberta document states that security, “Maintain a safe, comfortable environment for everyone participating in the festival/event” (2016, 98). To Shelly's point, there has to be a concerted effort in order for security to maintain safety and comfort equally for everyone at a music festival. It cannot be assumed that every person at an

event, particularly if they have been using illegal substances, will find authoritative figures comforting. BC Festival addresses this issue by hiring security workers that embody the spirit of their community. The festival's head of security states: "We're not here to crash parties, we're here to help people party safe... We try to avoid the door-bouncer type. We want the caregiver types," making it clear that security should not be intimidating (media interview 2014).

As indicated in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, there are almost always police check stops on the highways towards the end of BC Festival. They are a source of stress for many patrons, but I learn that Steve and Lauren (who are driving me home) have established techniques to make these stops go smoother:

I am about to take my lanyard off while we are driving up the dirt road to get to the highway, when Steve asks me to stop: "Keep it on until after we pass the check stops, they're always more lax with crew. I always play up having to work all weekend to make it easier." Lauren adds that it is more important this year because we are in their friend Ryan's truck which does not have any crew stickers on the windshield. There is a police officer standing in the highway directing some cars down a side road and waving others through without talking to them. As we wait, we notice that only the dusty cars are being sent to the check stop. Steve is indignant and says: "So I guess next year we're power washing the car before we head home." We head down the side road and see fifteen to twenty vehicles in a vacant lot being questioned by police. More than a handful of drivers are being made to do roadside coordination tests. But the directing officer only asks a couple of questions before sending us on our way.

The assumption that only dusty cars should be subject to the check stop is flawed and ineffective. There are other farms and dirt roads in the area, and a number of festival patrons washed their cars at the gas station in the nearest town before the check stop. This is biased and discriminatory – assuming that everyone leaving the festival is unfit to drive, and everyone else that happens to be driving down that highway is sober, rather than focusing on dangerous or erratic drivers.

There are also no effective roadside tests equivalent to a breathalyzer for other substances, or for sleep deprivation. With no tools other than making drivers do things such as walk in a straight line and touch their nose with alternating hands, police are left with making a subjective judgement, both on who is required to do these tests and what their conclusions are. These tests are also ableist. Anyone with a disability or condition that affects their coordination or balance would have difficulty performing these tasks and may be subject to discrimination if the police assume it is an indication of intoxication. Additionally, nerves from the police encounter itself may be interpreted as anxiety due to guilt and treated as suspicious. Ultimately, while the police are enacting their responsibility to ensure the safety of the roads, they are ignoring the

responsibility of the festival and its patrons. By having the option to stay an extra night at the festival, patrons are able to ensure they are sober and rested to drive safely on the winding mountain roads. Given that there are relatively few road accidents associated with this festival, it is likely that the majority of individuals *are* ensuring that they are capable of driving before leaving the festival.

As discussed in this chapter, structural forms of responsibility are critical in music festival settings. Festival organizers and governing bodies have the power to mitigate many of the risks associated with these events. Yet, that power is not being used effectively or consistently across the country. In the absence of formal government regulation, it is left up to the festival organizers and patrons to identify and mitigate these risks, or not. When music festivals do not provide harm reduction services, they exacerbate the risks of their patrons. For example, by not acknowledging that substance use will happen, patrons are forced to hide both their use and personal harm reduction strategies – increasing the shame and stigma associated with drug use and increasing the risk of bad outcomes including death and overdose. Unless harm reduction is mandated, morality will continue to play a role in whether these services are provided.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

With this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate a holistic understanding of the common risks and safety considerations at music festivals in Western Canada. Given that the popularity and size of music festivals continues to expand worldwide – many with hundreds of thousands, or even millions of patrons – it is clear that they are not going away, nor are the risks and harms associated with them. In fact, this exponential growth means the safety concerns for these events are getting bigger and more complicated as climate change brings with it heat domes, fires and flooding, and the proliferation of tainted drugs becomes more prevalent.

While I began this research out of my own personal interest in and enthusiasm for music festivals, I am troubled by a number of my findings. First, this topic is not something people, generally, are thinking about nor are sure why it is worthy. I was asked countless times why I was doing this research, some even suggesting that I had somehow “hacked” the academic system with this topic. Second, is how complex music festival contexts are and how everything is interconnected. No one risk factor can be addressed in isolation of the others. Most troubling, however, is the ad hoc nature of how festivals are governed in Canada, especially given their potential for serious harm. There is no consistent, evidence-based policy mandating safety protocols, so every festival is guided by its own vagaries and whatever guidelines have been created either municipally or provincially. And from what I could tell, few are talking to or learning from each other.

By theoretically framing this thesis around critical-interpretive medical anthropology, I was able to parse out the many factors contributing to safety at music festivals. Using the three bodies approach provided me with a nuanced way to understand the different levels of risk and responsibility entangled in the data. There are many different perspectives in question, which I have framed using the individual, social, and political bodies, allowing for a grounded critical analysis that demonstrates how disconnected these perspectives can be. Rather than coming to a consensus of how best to create and maintain safety at these events, festival patrons, organizers and government officials are more often working both disparately and separately. While most of the risks identified in this thesis directly endanger the patrons, they have the least power to mitigate them. As I have demonstrated, when festival organizers and governments do not provide harm reduction services, patrons are left to navigate their own safety as well as the repercussions

of breaking rules or laws. Without cooperation, the issue has become fraught with competing strategies and understandings.

This research started with the primary question: To what extent is the general concept of harm reduction part of the music festival cultures in Western Canada? What I have determined is that while each music festival has safety considerations, there is no consensus among festival organizers, volunteers or participants, never mind jurisdictions, on what harm reduction should entail, nor on who should be responsible – except for the assumption that harm reduction only pertains to substance use. As discussed throughout this thesis, because the risks are so interconnected, to be effective, harm reduction must be holistic. Each of the three festivals I researched had a completely different approach to harm reduction. BC Festival had the most established and comprehensive safety and harm reduction strategies, most of which have been in place for over a decade. At Sask Festival, harm reduction is a more recent addition, becoming a formal service only in 2016, but there is still a lot of room for development. At Alta Festival, harm reduction is virtually non-existent. Evidently, across Western Canada, there are no harm reduction strategies that are routinely in place at festivals. Each event creates its own and consequently, different risks are prioritized by each event. Although there are many factors that impact the implementation of harm reduction at music festivals, there are two of note: liability concerns (primarily associated with drug-testing services) and organizers' unrealistic perspectives (i.e. that drug use will not occur at their events). There are also barriers impacting the personal harm reduction strategies used by patrons, including festival rules and legal restrictions (such as not bringing their own supply of drugs or paraphernalia out of fear of security or police searches).

The majority of the relevant academic literature has been narrower in its scope. For example, some look at festivals from a tourism, motivation, (Elliot and Barron 2015; Hutton et al. 2018) or community perspective (Luckman 2003; Rahme 2020); others research drug-related harm reduction in clubs (Cristiano 2020; Pennay 2015) or festivals (Dilkes-Frayne 2016); some research one type of drug use in club or festival environments (Little et al. 2018; Ruane 2017, 2018) and others focus only on drug-testing and other formal strategies (Johnson et al. 2020; Munn et al. 2016; Mema et al. 2018). These studies have made important contributions on these subjects, increasing the understanding of drug use in these settings and the role festivals play in identity creation. My research contributes to the literature by looking at safety at music festivals

from a wider, more holistic perspective, with a focus on the compounding nature of all the possible risks. Risks associated with drug use in general are impacted by many other factors such as lack of sleep or nutrition, dehydration, and the set and setting in question, making drug-related safety complex. With other factors such as environmental concerns, crowd sizes and audiovisual effects to consider, safety at music festivals is even more complex. More research is needed to further understand the interconnectivity of risks in bound locations such as music festivals, the impact they have on mental health, and the holistic harm reduction strategies required to mitigate them.

Over the course of my research, it became increasingly clear that the number one issue regarding safety at music festivals is the lack of coordinated, collaborative engagement across all the various stakeholders. As demonstrated in Edmonton with that city's recent research on drug use, harm reduction and large-scale electronic music events, and the subsequent by-law enforcing harm reduction services, this kind of engagement is possible. However, it is needed on a much larger scale, to ensure consistency and prevent unnecessary harms. As already noted, the evidence collected in Edmonton has wider applicability, and could be used to form the basis of province-wide, or even nation-wide, regulation. While each festival context may have specific or situational risks to consider, harm reduction strategies are easily adapted to fit different circumstances. My research could be used in tandem with the results from the Edmonton project to inform future policies and practices.

There are a number of risks and types of responsibility related to music festivals that did not fit within the scope of my research, that are potential future research avenues. The risk to the environment is one example. Without conscious waste management and recycling programs, the places where music festivals occur will be left damaged and polluted, particularly when they take place in rural locations. Similarly, with destination festivals and festival tourism, host communities are placed at risk if the organizers do not make a concerted effort to educate their patrons on local customs and cultures. There are many international festivals that see a majority of Western patrons, where cooperation between event organizers and local services is even more necessary than normal to facilitate a safe experience for all involved.

The responsibility of performers is another consideration that could not be included in this thesis. Bands, DJs and music producers are often seen as leaders or role models, whom fans are likely to listen to. Being on stage also provides these performers with an unparalleled view of the

crowd, where many accidents and other emergencies occur. Additionally, it is becoming more common for performers to create or organize their own festivals, increasing the responsibility those individuals have for their patrons. For example, following Astroworld Festival in Texas (2021) where ten people died and many more were injured, there were numerous articles and blogs pointing the blame at Travis Scott (the main headliner and founder of the festival) for undermining event security and encouraging rowdy behaviour. Video clips of other performers stopping mid-song to point out individuals in their audiences who needed help were also shared widely to contrast the inaction of Scott who continued to perform, seemingly oblivious to the ambulances and emergency personnel in the crowd. Crowd mentalities are another relevant factor to consider, as it was a “crowd surge” rushing forward that led to so many people being crushed. Tragedies such as these reinforce just how necessary continued research is on this topic.

REFERENCES

- Alberta Culture and Tourism. 2016. "Setting the Stage: A Community-Based Festival and Event Planning Manual." Government of Alberta. Last modified January 2016. <https://www.alberta.ca/festival-event-planning-guides.aspx>
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
1997. "Carnival and Carnavalesque. *In Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. 2nd ed. John Storey ed. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Barratt, Monica J., Raimondo Bruno, Nadine Ezard, Alison Ritter. 2017. "Pill Testing or Drug Checking in Australia: Accepting of Service Design Features." *Drug and Alcohol* 37(2):226-236.
- Beaulieu-Prévost, Dominic, Mélanie Cormier, Megan Heller, David Nelson-Gal, and Kateri McRae. 2019. "Welcome to Wonderland? A population study of intimate experiences and safe sex at a transformational mass gathering (Burning Man)." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 48: 2055-2073.
- Bellis, Mark A., Karen Hughes, and Helen Lowey. 2002. "Healthy Nightclubs and Recreational Substance Use from a Harm Minimisation to a Healthy Settings Approach." *Addictive Behaviors* 27:1025-1035.
- Berger, Roni. 2015. "Now I See It, Now I Don't: Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Research* 15(2): 219-234.
- Bernard, H. Russell. 2011. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Fifth ed. Plymouth: AltaMira Press.
- Bøhling, Frederik. 2017. "Psychedelic Pleasures: An Affective Understanding of the Joys of Tripping." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 49: 133-143.
- Boyd, Susan, Connie I. Carter, and Donald MacPherson. 2016. *More Harm Than Good: Drug Policy in Canada*. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Briggs, Daniel. 2015. "Living Realities: The Importance of Ethnographic Drug Research." *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 22(3):308-310.
- British Columbia Ministry of Health. 2017. "Public Health Guidelines: Major Planned Events." Government of British Columbia. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/pses-mpes/major-planned-events>
- Buchanan, Kelly. 2021. "New Zealand: Government Indicates that "Drug Checking" Law Will be Made Permanent." Library of Congress, April 14, 2021. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2021-04-14/new-zealand-government-indicates-that-drug-checking-law-will-be-made-permanent/>
- Buhler, Sarah and Amanda Dodge. 2019. "Policy, Practice and Privatized Prison Telephones in Saskatchewan." *Canadian Journal of Human Rights* 8(1): 1-27. <http://canlii.ca/t/smtn>
- Campbell, Nancy, and Susan Shaw. 2008. "Incitements to Discourse: Illicit Drugs, Harm Reduction, and the Production of Ethnographic Subjects." *Cultural Anthropology* 23(4): 688-717.
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. 2014. "Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans."

http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter2-chapitre2/#ch2_en_a2.3

- Carter, Adrian, Peter Miller, and Wayne Hall. 2012. "The ethics of harm reduction." *In Harm Reduction in Substance Use and High-risk Behaviour: International Policy and Practice*. Richard Pates and Diane Riley, eds. Pp. 111-123. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Cavalierrri, Walter, and Diane Riley. 2012. "Harm Reduction in Canada: The Many Faces of Regression." *In Harm Reduction in Substance Use and High-risk Behaviour: International Policy and Practice*. Richard Pates and Diane Riley, eds. Pp 382-394. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- CBC News. 2015. "Evolve Festival in Jeopardy over Drug-Testing Kits for Concertgoers." *CBC News: Nova Scotia*, July 7, 2015. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/evolve-festival-in-jeopardy-over-drug-testing-kits-for-concertgoers-1.3141965>
- Ceccato, Vania and Mahesh K. Nalla. 2020. "Crime and fear in public spaces: an introduction to the special issue." *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 44(4): 261-264.
- Chai, Ningyu. 2018. "Front of house drug testing by the Loop is essential in reducing future harm." *BMJ* 362.
- Citizen Services. 2020. "Electronic Dance Music (EDM) Events in Edmonton: Research Findings July 2018 to February 2020." City of Edmonton. https://www.edmonton.ca/attractions_events/rentals_event_planning/application-process-electronic-dance-music-events
- City of Edmonton. 2020. "Bylaw 19166: Electronic Dance Music Event Bylaw." <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/documents/Bylaws/BL19166.pdf>
- City of Saskatoon. 2020. "Outdoor Special Event Information Guide." Parks, Recreation and Attractions. Last modified October 2020. <https://www.saskatoon.ca/parks-recreation-attractions/events-attractions/event-planning/outdoor-special-events-festivals>
- Conrad, Peter. 1992. "Medicalization and Social Control." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18: 209-232.
- Cristiano, Nick. 2020. "Managing Risk Environments: An Ethnographic Study of Club Drug Use and Harm Reduction in the EDM Scene." PhD diss., York University.
- Cruwys, Tegan, Alexander K. Saeri, Helena R. Radke, Zoe C. Walter, Daniel Crimston, and Larua J. Ferris. 2019. "Risk and protective factors for mental health at a youth mass gathering." *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 28:211-222.
- Cruz, Olga S. 2015. "Non-problematic Illegal Drug Use: Drug Use Management Strategies in a Portuguese Sample." *Journal of Drug Issues* 45(2):133-150.
- Creswell, John. 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Second ed. London: Sage Publications Inc.
- DanceSafe. 2018. "About DanceSafe." DanceSafe. <https://dancesafe.org/about-us/>
2019. "Drug Info Cards." DanceSafe. <https://dancesafe.org/product-category/drug-info-cards/>
- Davenport-Hines, Richard. 2004. *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd.
- Davies, Charlotte Aull. 2008. *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

- Day, Niamh, Joshua Criss, Benjamin Griffiths, Shireen Kaur Gujral, Franklin John-Leader, Jennifer Johnston, and Sabrina Pit. 2018. "Music Festival Attendees' Illicit Drug Use, Knowledge and Practices Regarding Drug Content and Purity: A Cross-sectional Survey." *Harm Reduction Journal* 15(1):1-8.
- Dilkes-Frayne, Ella. 2016. "Drugs at the Campsite: Socio-spatial Relations and Drug use at Music Festivals." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 33:27-35.
- Emergency Management BC. 2014. "British Columbia Major Planned Events." Government of British Columbia. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/pses-mpes/major-planned-events>
- Elliot, Caitlin, and Paul Barron. 2015. "Escape to Mayhem? Toward an Understanding of Attendees' Motivations at Heavy Metal Festival." Paper presented at Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures, International Academic Conference, Finland. <https://iipc.utu.fi/MHM/Elliott.pdf>
- Erickson, Patricia G., Andrew D. Hathaway. 2010. "Normalization and Harm Reduction: Research Avenues and Policy Agendas." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 21:137-139.
- Fassin, Didier. 2012. "Introduction: Towards a Critical Moral Anthropology." In *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*. Didier Fassin, ed. Pp. 1-17. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Fast, Danya, Jean Shoveller, Will Small, and Thomas Kerr. 2013. "Did Somebody Say Community? Young People's Critiques of Conventional Community Narratives in the Context of a Local Drug Scene." *Human Organization* 72(2): 98-110.
- Festival Survival Guide. Nd. "Don't Panic." *Festival Survival Guide*. Accessed November 20, 2020. <https://festivalsurvivalguide.com/dont-panic/>
- Foucault, Michel. 1982. "Afterword: The Subject and Power." In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow eds. Pp. 208-228. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
1991. "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller eds. Pp. 87-104. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Michel Senellart ed. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: PALGRAVE MACMILLIAN.
- Getz, Donald. 2010. The Nature and Scope of Festivals. *International Journal of Event Management Research* 5(1):1-47.
- Girelli, Giada and Ajeng Larasati. 2022. "The Death Penalty for Drug Offences: Global Overview 2021." *Harm Reduction International*. https://www.hri.global/files/2022/03/09/HRI_Global_Overview_2021_Final.pdf
- Glover, Troy D. 2003. "Regulating the Rave Scene: Exploring the Policy Alternatives of Government." *Leisure Sciences* 25(4):307-325.
- Good Night Out Campaign. 2021. "Info." Good Night Out Campaign. <https://www.goodnightoutcampaign.org/info/>
- Government of Canada. 2006. "Legislation and Guidelines." <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/about-health-canada/legislation-guidelines.html>

- 2019a. “Bill C-93 – No-fee, Expedited Pardons for Simple Possession of Cannabis.” <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2019/06/bill-c-93-no-fee-expedited-pardons-for-simple-possession-of-cannabis.html>
- 2019b. “Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy.” <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/canadian-drugs-substances-strategy.html>
- 2021a. “Opioids and the Opioid Crisis – Get the Facts.” <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/get-the-facts.html>
- 2021b. “Talking to Teenagers about Drugs.” <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/talking-about-drugs/talking-with-teenagers-about-drugs.html>
- Grady, Lora. 2018. “We Love a Summer Music Festival – But are They Really Safe Spaces for Women?” *Flare News*. July 4, 2018. <https://www.flare.com/news/sexual-harassment-at-music-festivals/>
- Grewcock, Michael, and Vicki Sentas. 2021. “Strip Searches, Police Power and the Infliction of Harm: An Analysis of the New South Wales Strip Search Regime.” *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 10(3): 191-206.
- Groves, Andrew. 2018. “‘Worth the Test?’ Pragmatism, Pill Testing and Drug Policy in Australia.” *Harm Reduction Journal* 15(1): 1-12.
- HRI. 2019. “What is Harm Reduction?” Harm Reduction International <https://www.hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction>
- Hear the World Foundation. 2015. “Safe and sound: Enjoy festival season.” The Hearing Review. <https://www.hearingreview.com/hearing-loss/hearing-loss-prevention/infographic-music-festivals-hearing-loss-hear-world>
- Heavey, Sarah C., Bonnie M. Vest, Lorraine R. Collins, William Wieczorek and Gregory G. Homish. 2018. “‘I have it just in case’ – Naloxone Access and Changes in Opioid Use Behaviours.” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 51: 27-35.
- Hectic Events. 2019. “Feel the Bass, Protect Your Hearing.” Facebook, June 13, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/HecticWPG/videos/685792715190345>
- Hodkinson, Paul. 2005. “‘Insider Research’ in the Study of Youth Subcultures.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 8(2): 131-149.
- Hunt, Geoffrey P., Kristen Evans and Faith Kares. 2007. “Drug Use and Meanings of Risk and Pleasure.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 10(1):73-96.
- Hutton, Alison, Jamie Ranse, and Matthew Brendan Munn. 2018. “Developing Public Health Initiatives through understanding motivations of the audience at mass-gathering events.” *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 33(2): 191-196.
- International Harm Reduction Association. 2010. “What is Harm Reduction? A Position Statement from the International Harm Reduction Association.” http://www.ihra.net/files/2010/08/10/Briefing_What_is_HR_English.pdf
- Jenkinson, Rebecca, Anna Bowring, Paul Dietze, Margaret Hellard, and Megan Lim. 2014. “Young Risk Takers: Alcohol, Illicit Drugs, and Sexual Practices among a Sample of Music Festival Attendees.” *Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases*

- Johnson, C.S., C.R. Stansfield, and V. R. Hassan. 2020. "Festival testing: A survey of suspected drugs seized from New Zealand music festivals, December 2018 to March 2019." *Forensic Science International* 313: 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016>
- Jones, Stephanie. 2015. "We Could Have Prevented Those PMMA Deaths in the UK with Drug Checking." Drug Policy Alliance, January 11, 2015. <http://www.drugpolicy.org/blog/we-could-have-prevented-those-pmma-deaths-uk-drug-checking>
- Karamouzian, Mohammad, Carolyn Dohoo, Sara Forsting, Ryan McNeil, Thomas Kerr, and Mark Lysyshyn. 2018. "Evaluation of a Fentanyl Drug Checking Service for Clients of a Supervised Injection Facility, Vancouver, Canada." *Harm Reduction Journal* 15(46): 1-8.
- Kerr, Lisa Coleen. 2015. "The Origins of Unlawful Prison Policies." *Canadian Journal of Human Rights* 4(1): 89-119. <http://canlii.ca/t/6xj>
- King, Maddy. 2020. "NSW Police Watchdog Uncovers Further Unlawful Strip Searches at Music Festivals." *ABC*, July 22, 2020. <https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/nsw-police-watchdog-uncovers-further-unlawful-strip-searches-at/12482546>
- Laing, Matthew, Kenneth Tupper, and Nadia Fairbairn. 2018. "Drug Checking as a Potential Strategic Overdose Response in the Fentanyl Era." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 62: 59-66.
- Lemke, Thomas. 2001. 'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-liberal Governmentality. *Economy and Society* 30 (2): 190–207.
- Leslie, Ellen, Adrian Cherney, Andrew Smirnov, Robert Kemp, and Jake Najman. 2018. "Experiences of Police Contact Among Young Adult Recreational Drug Users: A Qualitative Study." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 56: 64-72.
- Leung, Jeet Kei. 2010. "Transformational Festivals." Filmed 2010 at TEDxVancouver, British Columbia. Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8tDpQp6m0A>
- Li, Tania Murray. 2007. "Governmentality." *Anthropologica* 49(2): 275-281.
- Little, Noah, Birgitta Burger, and Stephen Croucher. 2018. "EDM and Ecstasy: The Lived Experiences of Electronic Dance Music Festival Attendees." *Journal of New Music Research* 47(1): 78-95.
- Lock, Margaret and Nancy Scheper-Hughes. 1996. "A Critical-Interpretive Approach in Medical Anthropology: Rituals and Routines of Discipline and Dissent." *In Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Methods*. C. F. Sargent and T.M. Johnson, eds. Pp.41-70. London: Praeger.
- Luckman, Susan. 2003. "Going Bush and Finding One's 'Tribe': Raving, Escape, and the Bush Doof." *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 17(3):315-330.
- Lund, Adam, and Sheila Turriss. 2017. "The Event Chain of Survival in the Context of Music Festivals: A Framework for Improving Outcomes at Major Planned Events." *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 32(4): 437-443.
- Luther, Matt, Fergus Gardiner, Shane Lenson, David Caldicott, Ryan Harris, Ryan Sabert, Mark Malloy, and Jo Perkins. 2018. "An Effective Risk Minimization Strategy Applied to an Outdoor Music Festival: A Multi-Agency Approach." *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 33(2): 220-224.
- Lyng, Stephen. 1990. "Edgework: A Social Psychological Analysis of Voluntary Risk-Taking." *American Journal of Sociology* 95(4): 851-886.

- Malins, Peta. 2019. "Drug Dog Affects: Accounting for the Broad Social, Emotional and Health Impacts of General Drug Detection Dog Operations in Australia." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 67, 63-71.
- MAPS. 2019. "Funding Priorities." Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. <https://maps.org/donate-redirect/funding-priorities>
- Marshall, Mac. 1979. *Beliefs, Behaviours, and Alcoholic Beverages: A Cross-Cultural Survey*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Marshall, Mac, Genevieve Ames, and Linda Bennett. 2001. "Anthropological Perspectives on Alcohol and Drugs at the Turn of the New Millennium." *Social Science & Medicine* 53: 153-164.
- McGowan, Michael. 2019. "NSW Police Officer Admits His 19 Strip Searches at Music Festival May Have Been Illegal." *The Guardian*, October 22, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/oct/22/nsw-police-officer-admits-his-19-strip-searches-at-music-festival-may-have-been-illegal>
2021. "More Than 5,500 People get NSW Police Record after Strip Searches Which Found Nothing Illegal." *The Guardian*, April 22, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/apr/23/more-than-5500-people-get-nsw-police-record-after-strip-searches-which-found-nothing>
- McNally, Lucy. 2013. "Man Who Died After Defqon1 Dance Party 'Took Three Pills'." *ABC News*, September 16, 2013. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-16/dance-party-drug-victim-27took-three-pills27/4959608>
- McNay, Lois. 2009. "Self as Enterprise: Dilemmas of Control and Resistance in Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics*." *Theory, Culture & Society* 26 (6): 55-77.
- Mema, Silvina, Chloe Sage, Yuhui Xu, Kenneth Tupper, Daniel Ziemianowicz, Karen McCrae, Mark Leigh, Matthew Brendan Munn, Deanne Taylor, and Trevor Cornell. 2018. "Drug Checking at an Electronic Dance Music Festival During the Public Health Overdose Emergency in British Columbia." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 109(5): 740-744.
- Merkinaite, Simona, Jean Paul Grund, and Allen Frimpong. 2010. "Young People and Drugs: Next Generation of Harm Reduction." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 21:112-114.
- Miewald, Christiana, Eugene McCann, Alison McIntosh, and Cristina Temenos. 2018. "Food as Harm Reduction: Barriers, Strategies, and Opportunities at the Intersection of Nutrition and Drug-Related Harm." *Critical Public Health* 28(5): 586-595.
- Ministry of Health. 2017. "Public Health Guidelines: Major Planned Events." The Government of British Columbia. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/pses-mpes/major-planned-events>
- Mohr, Amanda, Melissa Friscia, Jillian Yeakel, and Barry Logan. 2018. "Use of Synthetic Stimulants and Hallucinogens in a Cohort of Electronic Dance Music Festival Attendees." *Forensic Science International* 282: 168-178.
- Moisander, Johanna, Claudia Groß, and Kirsi Eräranta. 2018. "Mechanisms of Biopower and Neoliberal Governmentality in Precarious Work: Mobilizing the Dependent Self-Employed as Independent Business Owners." *Human Relations* 7(3): 375-398.
- Moore, David. 2002. "Opening Up the Cul-de-sac of Youth Drug Studies: A Contribution to the Construction of Some Alternative Truths." *Contemporary Drug Problems* 29 (Spring): 13-63.

- Munn, Matthew, Adam Lund, Riley Gobly, and Sheila Turris. 2016. "Observed Benefits to On-Site Medical Services during an Annual 5-day Electronic Dance Music Event with Harm Reduction Services." *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 31(2): 228-234.
- New Zealand Drug Foundation. n.d. "Music Festivals." Accessed August 20, 2021. <https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/info/drugs-in-bars/festivals/>
- New Zealand Ministry of Health. 2021. "Drug Checking." New Zealand Government. <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/drug-checking>
- Nichter, M. 2003. Harm reduction: A core concern for medical anthropology. In B. H. Harthorn & L. Oaks (Eds.), *Risk, culture, and health inequality: Shifting perceptions of danger and blame* (pp. 13-36). London: Praeger Publishers.
- O'Grady, Alice. 2017. "Dancing Outdoors: DIY Ethics and Democratized Practices of Well-Being on the UK Alternative Festival Circuit." In *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event-Cultures*. Graham St John, ed. Pp. 137-158. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.
- Palomar, Joseph, Patricia Acosta and Charles Cleland. 2018. "Attitudes and Beliefs About New Psychoactive Substance Use Among Electronic Dance Music Party Attendees." *Substance Use and Misuse* 53(3): 381-390.
2019. "Planned and Unplanned Drug Use during a Night Out at an Electronic Dance Music Party." *Substance Use and Misuse* 54(6):885-893.
- Pauly, Bernadette, Bruce Wallace, and Katrina Barber. 2018 "Turning a Blind Eye: Implementation of Harm Reduction in a Transitional Programme Setting." *Drugs: Education, Prevention, and Policy* 25(1):21-30.
- Pennay, Amy. 2015. "'What Goes Up Must Come Down': An Exploration of the Relationship between Drug-related Pleasure and Harm Experienced by a Sample of Regular 'Party Drug' Users." *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 22(3):185-192.
- Peters, Kyle, Jeffrey Chambers, Jordan Fisher, and Rachel Benbrook. 2015 "'What's in My Baggie?' Documentary." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYzmZ1IU4zY>
- Piller, Thomas. 2019. "3 Men Charged in 4 Drug Overdose Deaths in Saskatoon." *Global News*, February 21, 2019. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4985428/3-men-charged-in-4-drug-overdose-deaths-in-saskatoon/>
- Pink, Sarah and Jennie Morgan. 2013. "Short-term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing." *Symbolic Interaction* 36(3): 351-361.
- ProServe. 2018. "What is ProServe?" <https://proserve.aglc.ca/index.aspx?tabid=1>
- Pyysiäinen, Jarkko, Darren Halpin, and Andrew Guilfoyle. 2017. "Neoliberal Governance and 'Responsibilization' of Agents: Reassessing the Mechanisms of Responsibility-shift in Neoliberal Discursive Environments." *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* 18(2): 215-235.
- Rahme, Madeline. 2020. "More than Music: The Lived Experiences of Communities Developed through Music Festivals." PhD diss., University of Denver.
- Ratuszniak, Adrienne. 2017. "Neo-tribe Sociality in a Neoliberal World: A Case Study of Shambhala Music Festival." *The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography* 7(2): 54-71.

- Riley, Diane, Richard Pates, Geoffrey Monaghan, and Patrick O'Hare. 2012. "A Brief History of Harm Reduction." *In Harm Reduction in Substance Use and High-risk Behaviour: International Policy and Practice*. Richard Pates and Diane Riley, eds. Pp 5-16. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Rigg, Khary and Amanda Sharp. 2018. "Deaths Related to MDMA (ecstasy/molly): Prevalence, Root Causes, and Harm Reduction Interventions." *Journal of Substance Use* 23(4): 345-352.
- Roe, Gordon. 2005. "Harm Reduction as Paradigm: Is Better than Bad Good Enough? The Origins of Harm Reduction." *Critical Public Health* 15(3):243-250.
- Rose, Nikolas. 1996. "Governing "Advanced" Liberal Democracies." *In Foucault and Political Reason. Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government*. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose eds. Pp. 37-64. London: UCL Press.
1999. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2001. "The Politics of Life Itself." *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(6): 1-30.
- Roszak, Theodore. 1969. *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*. Garden City: Double Day & Company Inc.
- Ruane, Deirdre. 2017. "Harm Reduction or Psychedelic Support? Caring for Drug-Related Crises at Transformational Festivals." *In Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event-Cultures*. Graham St John, ed. Pp. 115-136. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.
2018. "Field Experiments: Psychonauts' Efforts to Reduce the Harm of Old and New Drugs at Music Festivals." *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 25(4): 337-344.
- Rudski, Jeffrey. 2016. "Public Perspectives on Expanding Naloxone Access to Reverse Opioid Overdoses." *Substance Use & Misuse* 51(13):1771-178.
- Saldaña, Johnny. 2016. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 3rd edition. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Saleemi, Sarah, Steven J. Pennybaker, Missi Wooldridge, and Matthew W. Johnson. 2017. "Who is 'Molly'? MDMA Adulterants by Product Name and the Impact of Harm-reduction Services at Raves." *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 31(8):1056-1060.
- SASS Calgary. No date. "About." *Society for the Advocacy for Safer Spaces*. Accessed August 20, 2021. <https://sasscalgary.com/about/>
- Scott, Ian A., and Russ J. Scott. 2020. "Pill Testing at Music Festivals: Is it Evidence-Based Harm Reduction?" *Intern Med J* 50(4):395-402. DOI:10.1111/imj.14742
- Singer, Merrill. 2012. "Anthropology and Addiction: An Historical Review." *Addiction* 107: 1747-1755.
- Single, Eric. 1995. "Defining Harm Reduction." *Drug and Alcohol Review* 14:287-290.
- Sossin, Lorne, and Charles W. Smith. 2004. "Hard Choices and Soft Law: Ethical Codes, Policy Guidelines and the Role of the Courts in Regulating Government." *Alberta Law Review* 40(4): 867-893.
- Stirling, Bridget. 2015. "Why You Should Reconsider that Festival Headdress: Native Studies Professors Explain the Trouble with a Growing Trend." University of Alberta July 23, 2015. <https://www.ualberta.ca/native-studies/about-us/news/2015/july/why-you-should-reconsider-that-festival-headdress.html>
- The Constitution Act. 1867. 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, <https://canlii.ca/t/ldsw>

- The Emergency Medical Aid Act. 1978. Revised Statutes of Saskatchewan, c.E-8, s.2.
- Thompson, Angus. 2019. "Forcing Music Out 'Crippling for the People of NSW.'" *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 14, 2019. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/forcing-music-out-crippling-for-the-people-of-nsw-20190213-p50xfw.html>
- Thompson, Angus, and Lucy Cormack. 2020. "Drugs in Body No Reason to Strip-Search: Police Watchdog." *The Sydney Morning Herald*. December 15, 2020. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/drugs-in-body-no-reason-to-strip-search-police-watchdog-20201215-p56npj.html>
- Trotter, Robert T. II, Jean J. Schensul, and Kristin M. Kostick. 2015. "Theories and Methods in Applied Anthropology" *In Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd edition. H. Russell Bernard and Clarence C. Gravlee, eds. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Turner, Tim. 2018. "Disneyization: A Framework for Understanding Illicit Drug Use in Bounded Play Spaces." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 58: 37-45.
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.
- van Gennep, Arnold. 1960. *The Rights of Passage*. Chicago: The Chicago University of Chicago Press.
- van Schipstal, Inge, Swasti Mishra, Moritz Berning, and Hayley Murray. 2016. "Harm Reduction from Below: On Sharing and Caring in Drug Use." *Contemporary Drug Problems* 43(3):199-215.
- Velvestad, Merete, Elisabeth Øiestad, Gerrit Middelkoop, Inger Hasvold, Peer Lilleng, Gerd Delaveris, Tormod Eggen, Jørg Mørland, and Marianne Arnestad. 2012. "The PMMA Epidemic in Norway: Comparison of Fatal and Non-Fatal Intoxications." *Forensic Science International* 219:151-157.
- Vinnicombe, Thea, and Pek Sou. 2017. "Socialization or Genre Appreciation: The Motives of Music Festival Participants." *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* 8(3): 274-291.
- World Health Organization. (2015). "Public health for mass gatherings: Key considerations." https://www.who.int/ihr/publications/WHO_HSE_GCR_2015.5/en/
- Wowk, Andrew. 2019. "Australia's War on Festivals, Explained." *DJmag*, March 21, 2019. <https://djmag.com/content/australias-war-festivals-explained>

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Analogues: Chemical compounds with similar physical structures, that may have different effects.

2C-B: There are many drugs in the 2C family, psychedelic research chemicals. 2C-B is the oldest and most common. In use since the early 1990s.

Bath salts: Synthetic cathinones, analogues of a stimulant naturally found in the khat plant.

Blacking out: A total or partial loss of memory, most commonly associated with heavy alcohol consumption.

Cocaine: A popular stimulant, derived from the coca plant.

DOB: An uncommon synthetic psychedelic stimulant with a long duration and very low doses. Rarely deliberately consumed, often sold as LSD.

Downers: More formally known as depressants, a class of substances that lower neurotransmission levels.

Ego death: Also known as “ego loss,” when an individual’s sense of self or identity is temporarily lost or intangible, which can be a scary and/or transformative experience. It is associated with large doses of psychedelics.

Empathogen: A drug characteristic that increases feelings of empathy and connection with others.

Fentanyl: An opioid analgesic, approximately 100 times stronger than morphine. This drug and its analogues are largely attributed to the current opioid overdose crisis.

FOMO: Stands for fear of missing out. This fear is a form of social anxiety connected to social pressure, and the worry that others are having fun without the person in question.

Gut rot: An upset stomach or abdominal cramping caused by drug use.

Ketamine: A dissociative with hallucinogenic effects, it is an anaesthetic at high doses and used in emergency medicine and veterinary surgery. It is a popular party drug at sub-anesthetic doses.

LSD: A popular synthetic psychedelic more commonly referred to as “acid.” It has a relatively long history of use and research and is therefore considered safer than many newer or less researched drugs.

MDMA: Also known as “molly,” “M,” or the “pure” form of ecstasy. It has stimulant, psychedelic and empathogenic properties.

Methamphetamine: Also known as “crystal meth,” it is a common stimulant.

Mushrooms: Also known as “magic mushrooms,” referring to any fungi with psilocybin. They are psychedelics with similar effects to LSD.

NBOMe: A series of psychedelic research chemicals, many of which have dangerous vasoconstrictive properties. Often sold as LSD.

Nose candy: Any substance ingested through snorting, insufflation.

Opiate/opioid: Opiates refer to any drugs that have been derived from opium, they are depressants with analgesic effects. Opioids refers to synthetically created drugs with similar properties.

Party drugs: Also called “club drugs.” A category of drugs most commonly used socially and recreationally.

PMMA and PMA: Stimulant empathogens that have led to many hospitalizations and deaths. PMA has been nicknamed “Dr. Death.” Both are sometimes sold as MDMA because of their similar effects, but have longer times to take effect and higher toxicity rates.

Polydrug use: The deliberate combination of multiple substances, typically for their synergistic effects.

Psychedelics: A class of drugs that causes hallucinations and other non-ordinary states of consciousness.

Psychonauts: Individuals that use hallucinogens to explore altered states of consciousness.

Rail: Another term for snorting or insufflating a substance.

Snooters: Snorting devices.

Uppers: More formally knowns as stimulants, a class of substances that increases activity in the central nervous system.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

For Everyone: General Questions:

- How many times have you been to this festival?
- Do you go to other festivals?
 - Which ones?
- What advice would you give to someone coming to this festival for the first time?
- Do you have a favourite memory about this festival? Or something that stands out that you would like to share?
- Are you a crew member, volunteer, media, performer, or attendee?
- Are you aware of the current federal drug policy?
- Do you ever research local policies and laws when traveling to a music festival?

*If crew/volunteer:

- What made you want to work at this festival?
- What team are you with?
- How many years have you done this?
- Have you worked at any other festivals?
 - Which ones?

**If part of the first aid, harm reduction, or security teams:

- What made you choose to be part of this team?
- Is there anything you wish you could change about your role?
- Do you think the festival could be doing more, in terms of safety and harm reduction?
 - Why/ why not?
- Are there any barriers preventing the addition of more services?
- What is one of your most memorable experiences while you were on duty?
- Are there any differences in safety and first aid procedures before and after the festival officially starts?
- *If they've been working at the festival for several years: Have there been any changes to how the festival runs?
 - Any changes to the services that are offered?

For Everyone: Harm Reduction and Safety:

- What do you think safety means?
- Are music festivals generally thought of as safe places?
- Do you feel safe at this festival?
 - Why/ why not?
- What is the first music festival related risk you can think of?
- Do you know what harm reduction means?
- What is the most important form of harm reduction generally?

- Are you aware of the different services available at this festival?
 - *If yes: Do you think the harm reduction precautions at this festival are adequate?
 - Could anything be added?
 - Should anything be removed?
- Have you ever used any of the harm reduction or safe space facilities at this festival?
 - Why?/ why not?
- What do you think is the most important harm reduction to have at a festival?
- What are some things people could do to look after their own safety?
- Are there any personal harm reduction or safety methods you have for festivals?
 - Can you give me any examples?
- Do you wear ear plugs?
 - What kind? (Disposable, reusable, custom-made?)
- How much sleep do you typically get during the festival?
- What do you eat at festivals? (e.g. bring your own food, eat from vendors, both)
- Have you ever been, or do you know anyone who has been, in need of help, emergency or medical attention, while at this festival? Or at any other festival?
 - *If yes: Could you tell me about it?

For Everyone: Demographics:

- Where do you live?
- If international or out of province: did you come here just for this festival?
- How old are you?
- What do you do?
- What is your gender identity?
- What are your preferred pronouns?
- How would you describe your race and ethnicity?