

‘Understand us before you end us’: regulation, governmentality, and the confessional practices of raving bodies

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Abstract

In this article I investigate how power is (re)produced on and through the body, specifically on Toronto’s raving bodies during the summer of 2000. Toward the end of 1999 and throughout 2000, Toronto’s rave culture came under intense surveillance by institutional and discursive authorities such as city councillors, police, parents, community health organisations, public intellectuals, and the mass media. What ensued was a temporary ban of raves in Toronto on city-owned property. In response to this ban, Toronto ravers relied on liberal approaches such as educational programmes and state lobbying as a way to protect their ‘freedom to dance’. In light of these reactions, one of my primary questions is: As rave becomes more normative, what are its own disciplinary mechanisms or techniques of control that are asserted at the site of the raving body?

‘Overnight and underground: Do you know where your kids are?’¹

In March 2000 I, along with seven friends, headed to the Connect Party, an all-ages rave event that was being held at The Better Living Center on Toronto’s Canadian National Exhibition Grounds. I had just driven back from New York, a twelve-hour drive, in order to attend what promised to be one of *the* big parties of the year. Following our usual pre-rave rituals, we arrived on site ready to play, to dance, to rave. The crowd’s energy screamed a tweaked anticipation but the mass amounts of uniforms – police, security, ambulance and fire marshal – caused severe anxiety. The last time I had witnessed such an excessive presence of the state at a Toronto event was a few months earlier during a mass rally protesting cuts to so-called ‘unnecessary’ social services. I suppose all of us should have been ready for the extreme presence considering the recently renewed hype and controversy surrounding Toronto’s rave culture. This party in particular gave the authorities an opportunity to demonstrate their proverbial muscles and might over a significant crowd of potentially ‘unruly’ and ‘out-of-control’ raving youthful bodies. Despite the foreboding atmosphere created by state presence, thousands of us stood in the cold to make our way through the ridiculously long security lines to enter into a space of freedom, of pleasure, of sonic ecstasy. You see, this party, this rave, was also a chance for the participants, the

ravers, to demonstrate that we were not the irresponsible derelicts who had been described in the media, rather we were responsible citizens seeking out some hypnotic beats in an environment where we could dance all night, leaving the everyday behind. In fact, we were responsibly participating within the rules of liberalism and capitalism – work hard, play hard. Modern liberal power, similar to our search for freedoms, travels through the body, provoking it to move, to participate, and to govern itself. And yet herein lies a paradox – the greater the freedom, the more disciplined the body. The following discussion details my interpretation of this paradox as it manifests through the events that preceded and occurred during the banning of raves on city-owned property in Toronto during the summer of 2000.

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In 1999 and 2000 the Toronto rave scene was subject to an increase in surveillance and investigation by some of Toronto's most influential institutional and discursive authorities. Moreover, Toronto's rave culture, indeed the entire raving phenomenon became an object of concern to be researched and studied by municipal authorities, the police force, health care workers, various media, and public intellectuals. Through this increase in surveillance and further public discourse, tensions within and surrounding Toronto's rave scene began to emerge. The extreme and punitive tactics and policies employed by some institutional bodies were successful in creating hysteria and moral panic, which led to the banning of raves on city-owned property from mid-May to August 2000. In response to the criticism launched by these institutions, many Toronto ravers came together in order to organise, educate and advocate on behalf of their communities. Because the very nature of youth subcultures is often understood to be counter-hegemonic, opposition from the dominant culture group is a logical and necessary element for the sustainability of a subculture. The activism associated with rave in Toronto evolved from a sense of outrage against the targeting of a marginalised group whose voices are rarely heard or taken seriously – youth.²

At this point it is crucial to state that my research interests *are not* grounded in the fact that ravers responded to the criticism, instead what I find most fascinating about this situation is *how* the ravers responded. The PartyPeopleProject (PPP), a youth-run organisation, whose mandate is to 'celebrate electronic music culture, promote the well-being of community members, and encourage public understanding of the beauty and diversity of the rave community',³ formed in response to the targeting of Toronto's rave culture. The response by the PPP consisted primarily of a multi-faceted education campaign aimed at inclusion rather than further criminal and social alienation of their raving bodies. In order to understand such relations and tensions when discussing rave culture, it is essential to further contextualise this category of youth; Toronto's ravers are predominantly white and/or East Asian, middle class, and between the ages of fourteen/fifteen and twenty-four.⁴ These signifiers play a crucial role in the outcome of this particular political moment and they also help to provide an important commentary on how commodity culture and privilege play an active part in the politicisation of Toronto's raving subjects.

The culminating event of the PPP campaign was the *idance* Rally protest held at Nathan Phillips' Square, in front of Toronto City Hall on 1 August 2000. Many ravers relied on strategies such as lobbying and educating, embracing the slogans: 'It's about the freedom to dance' or 'Understand us before you end us'. The protest and entire campaign appeared to be successful because, over the following two days, Toronto



Figure 1. 'Understand us before you end us'. Photographed at idance Rally 2000 by author.

city councillors voted to rescind the motion to ban raves on city-owned property and voted in favour of holding the *idance* Rally as an annual event. However, as is the case with many such victories, the outcome produced inadvertent and less desirable consequences than anticipated.

Through careful consideration and analysis of the PPP's education campaign and the response to the campaign by government officials, health-care workers, the media, and public intellectuals, I argue that this campaign has had four profound effects. First, through their education campaign, the ravers offered their own bodies to municipal authorities to be studied as objects of knowledge, and in so doing, voluntarily offered themselves up as a problem to be studied, researched and regulated. Second, the regulations and restrictions imposed on raving in Toronto are now embedded within the legislature and city by-laws which aim to guarantee a 'safe' and 'free' raving experience for those who are legally allowed to attend. Third, through their participation with the regulating and discursive bodies of Toronto, the ravers themselves were active agents in the regulation and governing of their own raving docile bodies despite their slogan: 'It's about the freedom to dance'. Fourth, throughout this political struggle, the discourses of raving in Toronto significantly shifted from a dance culture of 'freedom' and 'escape' found in something forbidden, underground and perhaps even dangerous, to a culture of rave that is a regulated, safe, and disciplined activity. The normalising effects of neo-liberal power can be seen in what transpired. Ravers who were considered to be 'at risk youth' were absorbed into a normalising order as rave morphed into a state-sanctioned leisure activity.

Let me begin by explaining the process that I have undergone to engage with these events. Through a discourse analysis of the events leading up to the banning of raves in Toronto (comprising a history of rave-related incidents in Toronto, reports produced by various medias, interviews with city councillors, ravers, health officials,



Figure 2. 'Young girl as doll at idance'. Photographed at idance Rally 2000 by author.

and police), as well as the PPP campaign responding to the ban (including interviews with members of the PPP supporters of the rave community and city officials, and analysis of print media, the 2000 *idance* Rally, and the CD produced for that Rally), I explicate the means through which the raving body willingly takes up the regulating principles of the municipal government with the aim of sustaining a freedom (real or imaginary) that was arguably born in the (un)regulated depths of the underground. I also argue for a more complex understanding of what freedom is said to mean and how freedom is (or is not) judged to be achieved and sustained by raving bodies within Toronto's rave culture. Finally, I argue that what some people have described as the subsequent death of the Toronto rave scene *cannot* simply be attributed to the heavy hand of the authorities, but rather to the complex tensions that were created between these authorities and the ravers themselves.



Figure 3. 'Crowds with signs at idance'. Photographed at idance Rally 2000 by author.

The theoretical work of Michel Foucault is central to my analysis, in particular his notion of the bio-political, governmentality, liberal power, and confessional practices. Foucault initially introduced the notion of bio-political power in the first volume



Figure 4. 'Crowds raving in Nathan Phillip's Square'. Photographed at idance Rally 2000 by author.

of *The History of Sexuality* (1978), in the chapter entitled, 'Right of Death and Power over Life'. Here Foucault suggests that what marked the advent of modernity in the mid to late eighteenth century was that the biological body itself became a political site of intervention:

Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body. (Foucault 1978, pp. 142–3)

Once this shift occurred and power penetrated the biological body, the health and happiness of the individual body became intimately connected with the overall wealth of the nation and the collective population. Power became much less about coercion and oppression and more about normalising and regulating bodies.

There is a crucial link between the bio-political and Foucault's notion of governmentality. Colin Gordon takes up Foucault's notion of governmentality in his essay 'Governmental Rationality: an introduction' (Gordon 1991).⁵ Foucault proposed governmentality as ' "the conduct of conduct": that is to say, a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons' (Foucault 1978, p. 2). This definition of governmentality also implies that the individual governs herself. As an art, self-government engenders questions of autonomy, invention, and how the individual thinks of herself, her conduct and her ways of living and being. Within a liberal democratic nation, such as Canada, it is important to think about how liberal power works itself on the body. There is an obvious overlap between liberalism⁶ and Foucault's notion of governmentality in that both assume a certain level of individual autonomy. Even within a discourse of prohibition, it is important to realise that through liberal power, Toronto's raving communities actually had a tremendous amount of agency and control over their situation. Governmentality, as the regulation of the conduct of the self, entails opportunities for individuals to mould and shape their identities. What I hope to illustrate is the shift in the self-identification of the raving bodies; the ravers consciously and successfully reinvented how they thought about and conducted their bodies. Significant to this reinvention was the ideological shift from experimenting with life outside of the confines of capitalism or heteronormative ideals to one of mimicking an ethical and responsible citizen who desired acceptance within these very confines.

Finally, in their desire for acceptance, Toronto's raving community willingly engaged in what Foucault refers to as 'confessional practices' (Foucault 1978, p. 59). Foucault suggests that 'the confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth' (Foucault 1995, p. 59). As I demonstrate, these confessional practices opened the door to a plethora of authorities and 'experts', including health care workers, government officials, police, and public intellectuals, who then used these discursive truths, or more specifically these subject positions, produced by the ravers, to construct ideals around youth and morality.

Unique to Foucault's approach to power is his suggestion that power can be both punishing and productive simultaneously. 'The body is moulded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances' (Foucault 1995, p. 104). Foucault sees the body as caught up in a continuous dynamic flux of resistances and counter-resistances, and this dynamism does not allow for clear demarcation lines to be drawn between the freedom and the restraint of

the body. Foucault examines the hypocrisy of a society 'which speaks verbosely of its own silence, takes great pains to relate in detail the things it does not say, denounces the powers it exercises, and promises to liberate itself from the very laws that have made it function' (*ibid.*, p. 135). Foucault demonstrates the contradictory nature of power relations, not only within state institutions, but more significantly, within one's own body: 'Power after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counter-attack in that same body' (Foucault 1980, p. 56). Yet, this does not presume the weakening of power, rather the counterattack only increases the strength of power in the form of resistance. Power here works 'no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation' (*ibid.*, p. 57). The desire/repulsion effect allows us to construct signifiers of an imagined freedom. These signifiers often involve a disturbance of the docile body's routine, but often disturbances carry with them a long and burdensome history of power relations. And yet as Foucault warns it is never as simple as the Hegelian dialectic; power relations also manifest during moments of resistance. Indeed, the pleasure of the raving body, as a resistance to the dominant moral order, contributes to a different form of power relations. In this case, ravers take pleasure in a particular fashion aesthetic (consisting of brand name phat pants, little tees, sneakers, and over-sized hoodies) which operates as a self-regulating mechanism.

Toronto's rave 'communities'

In 1994, prior to the panic of rave-related death reports in Toronto, the Public Health's Reduction Unit formed the Toronto Raver Information Project known as TRIP. TRIP is an education, information-based organisation that 'targets the health needs of ravers using a harm reduction, peer-oriented approach'.⁷ As the primary intervening organisation in a harm reduction campaign, TRIP provides ravers with information on how to rave safely, the risks and effects of drug use (as well as facts about the drugs commonly found in the rave scene), and safe sex. Punitive approaches used to 'educate' ravers about drug use are generally reported to fail. These types of processes involve authorities from outside the rave community, and often appear to be more of a backlash which aims to dissolve or diminish rave culture, rather than educate people about the dangers associated with the culture. The more palatable harm reduction approach, on the other hand, which includes peer-oriented policies, seemingly promotes health and safety through a discourse of empowerment. The involvement of a group such as TRIP at raves contributes to the idea that members of Toronto's rave communities care for each other and make the effort to look after their own. Indeed, Toronto ravers primarily react favourably to the presence of TRIP at their parties, unlike their reactions to the often large number of police officers (undercover and uniform) and pay-duty officers. At the same time, however, I must call into question the position of privilege from which people educate others on the risks of something and, moreover, how these acts of goodwill and community responsibility can be imposing and self-serving. Even though this process can facilitate an open, more accessible environment, the approach taken by TRIP still creates moral judgements. The involvement of public health implies that there are larger agendas at stake and suggests a tension with the notion of a free, unregulated body. The discourse surrounding education and health & safety illustrate two elements of modern power. First, the politics of rave in Toronto are more appropriately defined as partially bio-political. It is the biological body of ravers which is under pressure. And second,

through organisations like TRIP, ravers construct and bring their own bodies into alignment with dominant conceptions of the healthy and responsible citizen.

According to Foucault, modern power is both totalising and individualising. Foucault does not deny that power can and does manifest itself from a centralised location, but rather he suggests that power is also fragmented; power manifests itself from a multiplicity of diverse locations and social relations. In a liberal democratic nation such as Canada, power operates in strange and unforeseeable ways. Certainly Toronto police (who are agents of the state) applied coercive and oppressive power against raving bodies, but what is most 'remarkable'⁸ is that much of the pressure exerted against the rave scene came from the ravers themselves.

As Foucault affirms in 'The Eye of Power' (Foucault 1980) when discussing Bentham's panopticon theory, if we as individuals understand that there is the potential for a regulating power to watch us at any moment, we learn to regulate ourselves in order to, not simply avoid punishment, but more productively to strengthen a particular subjectivity, one that is responsible and consistent. He argues that, unlike other systems of regulation, 'there is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze' (*ibid.*, p. 155). And under the weight of this gaze the individual 'will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself' (*ibid.*). The peer-oriented, harm-reduction approach employed by TRIP is indicative of how successful regiments of self-discipline can be, and further, how little the police are needed to regulate such bodies. Toronto's ravers were invited to interpellate themselves as responsible citizens who are capable of making healthy choices.

The Toronto Dance Safety Committee (TDSC) was formed in August 1999 in response to safety concerns surrounding raves. Members of Toronto's rave communities, including promoters and participants, joined together with city councillors, police, public health, municipal licensing authorities, and medical staff. The committee's goal was to promote the health, safety and well-being of all Toronto's rave communities. In opening themselves up to the public, the ravers (via the TDSC as the representative body) provoked a shift in the discourse from one of prohibition to one of health and well-being.

In asking to be understood, the rave community positioned itself as an object of knowledge to be interrogated and objectivised. In *History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains that the practice of confession is always accompanied by an imbalance of power relations:

Confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile . . . (Foucault 1978, pp. 61–2)

The police actually played a very small role in the regulation of the raving community, and instead experts from the disciplines of health and social sciences came to occupy a prominent position. The biological life of the raving body, as a coherent population, became the site of political struggle.

The controversy surrounding rave culture in Toronto began to draw substantial media attention in August of 1999 when the first rave-related death was reported. Although the cause of death was not fully determined, the link made between ecstasy and the raving environment was enough of an indication that raving youth were being exposed to danger. Because there was no legislation for raves when this

rave-related death occurred, the initial argument made by some ravers in response to the publicity was for the creation of legislation for 'safe' raves. This choice demonstrates that some ravers were willing to work in cooperation with authorities in order to contain the primary reaction of institutional authorities that wanted to completely ban raves as part of the familiar (United States') 'war on drugs' campaign. In order to 'save' Toronto's rave culture from an impending death, members of the rave community reacted quickly to the initial panic by participating within the very structures that would significantly alter what it means to rave in Toronto.

In October of 1999, Allen Ho, a twenty-year-old Ryerson University student, died while attending a rave. The media reported the cause of Ho's death as ecstasy related, and there was an immediate call for an inquest into the events surrounding his death. Overall, various media painted Ho as a 'good kid' who had gotten mixed up in the 'bad' drug-infested rave culture. Similar to what happened in other cities around the world that had, at various times, endured a backlash against rave culture, Ho's death was a catalyst for the next attack and Toronto's rave communities were the target.

In November 1999, Toronto's independent weekly paper *Now* ran an article written by Leah Rumack, claiming 'there's a war on repetitive beats' (Rumack 1999, p. 28), referring to the numerous by-laws that were being implemented in other cities under the guise of health and safety concerns. Rumack argued for the contrary, suggesting that an increase in regulation actually risked pushing the parties back underground. The article begins by questioning the credibility of regulation, suggesting 'Experience elsewhere gives a hint of what might be in store for us' (*ibid.*, p. 28). Rumack also discusses the problematic recurrence of crackdowns on Toronto's party culture. On Saturday, 20 November 1999, *The Toronto Star* ran a full page article describing 'the truth about ecstasy', picturing a 'sinister'-looking man with what we can assume is an ecstasy pill on his tongue along with the caption: 'It costs pennies a pill to make, and retails for \$30 to \$40. When you consider the Internet offers several recipes as simple as Betty Crocker, and most of the ingredients are available at Canadian Tire, you can forecast more home-cooking' (Potter and Powell 1999, p. A30). Adding to the concern about the relationship between ravers and drugs was the 14 March 2000 issue of the *National Post* which reported that Toronto was the ecstasy capital of North America according to 'a top local drug enforcement official'. Within the article, Detective Smith, from the Toronto Police Services, claims 'parents who let their children go to raves are sending lambs to a slaughter' (Eby 2000, p. A1).⁹

These claims did not go unnoticed by the rave communities. Following the call for the inquest into the death of Ho, the PPP also began surveying rave participants, and documenting rave experiences, in order to prepare the *PPP Research Package on Toronto's Rave Culture*. The package was made available to the public after 1 June 2000, following the jury response to the inquest. The document, divided into three parts, contains information concerning a historical overview of what rave culture is, who ravers are, how rave has and continues to be an integral part of Toronto's dance culture, and the benefits of rave culture for Toronto. Part I also identifies and calls into question myths about raving and the basic rights and freedoms of 'youth' under the Canadian Charter of Human Rights. The second section addresses various research studies that have been made concerning drug use and dance culture. The final portion of the package specifies the jury recommendations concerning the death of Allen Ho and the TDSC protocol approved by City Council in 1999. The document is meant to

provide valuable information for both the rave community and for the non-raver, those who are not privileged to insider knowledge.

Toward the end of March 2000, there was a massive rave (The Connected Party) held on city-owned property (The Better Living Center on the Canadian National Exhibition [CNE] grounds). It was at this event that the police decided to crack down on ravers, setting an example through a 'tough-love' punitive approach. Mass media coverage of the multiple arrests and the prior, three-part rave series by Jojo Chintoh, crime specialist, on *City Pulse at Six*, City TV, from 21 to 23 March, only overstated the situation. The information being presented by both the media and officials was often exaggerated and in some cases completely fabricated. Chief of Police, Julian Fantino, made claims that his force had seized guns and knives from raves. However, Fantino had to rescind his statement when it was discovered that there were no weapons seized at the Connected Party.¹⁰

As concerns about the dangers of raving grew, there was a subsequent regulation and disciplining of raving bodies that was meant to promote 'good' and desirable ways of living. On 15 December 1999, city council approved recommendations of the TDSC which called for a licensing procedure for all venues, building safety code regulations, fire codes, unrestricted access to water, the need for toilets and fresh air, food services, security, paid duty officers, ambulance services, drug and health education, communication with city authorities, a definition of rave, and the periodic review of the recommendations. Yet Bill 73, which attempted to dissolve rave culture by limiting dance hours, giving police ultimate authority (to search and shut down raves without a warrant even if the rave was a licensed event), and creating an impenetrable permit process, was subsequently introduced and debated in city council during May 2000. The response of the PartyPeopleProject to Bill 73 was issued in the following statement on their website and in other public venues around the city: 'Rave Act 2000 [Bill 73] is a provincial Bill that threatens the entire rave scene. The Bill forces raves to be licensed while at the same time allowing municipalities to turn down promoter's licence requests without reason. OVERregulation=BAN!!!!'.¹¹

On 8 May, the coroner's inquest into the death of Allen Ho, called for by city council in December 1999, began. Prior to the results of the inquest and despite the newly implemented guidelines for safe partying, city council acted by voting to temporarily ban raves from city-owned property.¹² The then Mayor, Mel Lastman, argued in support of the ban suggesting that he had initially been for the implementation of safe and controlled raves; however, he concluded his speech with the claim, 'it's not working'.¹³ City council agreed to take up the debate on raves when they reconvened in August 2000. Once raves had been banned on city-owned property, the media began to take an even greater interest in rave culture. Newspapers, tabloids, television broadcasts, talk shows, and radio broadcasts all began to report on what *really* goes on at raves, often painting a 'dangerous' picture. In order to unsettle and negate the media's depiction of Toronto's rave culture, the PPP felt a compulsion to confess; the PPP exposed *their truths* about raves to whoever would listen. Indeed, Toronto's ravers came under an intense timeline to prove themselves as valuable, healthy and productive citizens of Toronto.

The campaign to 'save' Toronto's rave culture

The community-based education campaign began in mid-May and was led by the PPP, with help from the TDSC, TRIP, and Councillor Olivia Chow. The significance of

Councillor Chow's mediating roles surrounding Toronto's rave culture prior to, throughout, and following the events of 2000 complicates the naïve and simplistic assumptions that all official bodies are oppressive. Because of her position and socialist political stance when negotiating with the municipal government and other institutional bodies, such as the police services board, Chow's assistance with the mobilisation efforts, and her participation at the various campaign events, presented a more 'rational' and 'contained' youth environment to the public.

As stated above, the PPP was promoted as being primarily composed of and run by 'youth', although the category of 'youth' was never officially defined. The organisation had an open policy of involvement whereby anyone could become part of the organisation as long as they agreed with its primary philosophy of celebrating and promoting electronic music culture, caring for fellow community members and encouraging 'public understanding of the beauty and diversity of the rave community'.¹⁴ Although the majority of the PPP membership consisted of ravers, the definition and mandate included 'event promoters, DJs, artists, community-based health projects, local businesses, and other interested individuals'.¹⁵ The mandate emphasises the different factions of Toronto's rave communities but does not necessarily reflect the complexities of the relationships between the various groups. For example, ravers (partygoers), promoters, and community-based health projects, all have very different investments in raving. Each group has something to lose if raves are regulated, but the stakes are not the same; the stakes vary according to the specific investments of each group. In other words, although many promoters lose out on both creative and capitalist-based interests because of the regulation of raves, community-based health projects potentially lose not only funding, but more importantly the perceived need for intimate ties to the community. The ravers themselves risk the loss of their 'freedom' to dance.

The campaign itself comprised numerous events, performances, and public actions. A day prior to the temporary banning of raves on city-owned property, a presentation on Toronto's rave culture as a thriving economic industry, including an art and photo exhibit, TRIP information, a discussion panel, and DJ performances, was organised for the Mayworks festival on 7 May 2000. Next on the agenda for the PPP was a massive letter-writing campaign to all city councillors, media outlets, the Chief of Police, and allies of the rave community. A standard form letter was distributed as a template that allowed people (especially younger members) who were not familiar with letter-writing campaigns to participate. The soliciting of Councillors' votes to rescind the ban and vote against Bill 73 was crucial to the empowerment strategies of the PPP who promoted strategic voting and political activism on the part of many young people who had previously never been involved with municipal government politics because of age, ignorance or apathy. Even those who were ineligible to vote were encouraged to contact Councillors and/or persuade parents to call on their behalf.

The 1st of June 2000 was a significant day for the rave community and their campaign because the jury from the Coroner's inquest into the death of Allen Ho returned with their final recommendations for addressing the circumstances surrounding Ho's unfortunate death. Following the opening statement, there was a list of nine specific recommendations about the safety of rave venues, including permits, licences, access to water, age restrictions, advertising guidelines, search areas, police officers, and pay-duty officers. Generally, these recommendations were in line with the safety protocol already established by the TDSC and city council. The jury also

recommended that because the use of drugs is a reality, a harm reduction programme, with the main goal of educating youth about drugs and the effects of drugs, must be put into effect. By encouraging a harm reduction approach, the jury did not ignore the reality of drugs, nor was there an attempt to (de)-moralise drug users. When taking up the regulation of bodies, the primary issue is about the constitution of appropriate and inappropriate regimentation of bodies. By recommending an education mandate, the jury argued for a self-regulating process, whereby ravers be educated on all of the risks of drug use so they can make informed decisions about participating in a drug culture. Further to the recommendations, the report includes numerous and various methods for carrying out an education mandate with a subsequent recommendation that the city of Toronto and the Province of Ontario consider funding harm reduction community groups such as TRIP in order to 'facilitate their contact with, and increase their abilities to provide information to youth at risk'¹⁶ and to assist in the maintenance of these regulatory practices. In their closing remarks, they made the point that their recommendations were intended 'to foster safe, licensed raves'.

Also on 1 June, MuchMusic hosted an hour entitled, 'Ranting and Raving: The Future of Rave Culture' on the Too Much For Much programme. Master T emceed the event with a variety of 'ravers' and 'ranters', which included 'cops and DJs, parents and promoters, rave enthusiasts and enemies', in order to 'exchange views on the true nature of all-night parties, rave culture and electronica'. Members of the panel attempted to dissolve the myths around rave culture, especially concerning the issues of drugs and violence. The discussion also focused on the recommendations released only hours earlier that day, the (dis)contentment with the recommendations, and the flaws of Bill 73, particularly concerning the definition of rave. Overall there was an attempt by MuchMusic to allow for a negotiation between institutional voices and ravers, creating a semi-legitimate venue for ravers to be heard.

Frenzy: 'It's about freedom to dance'

To publicly protest for their right to dance, the PPP organised a mass rave rally at Nathan Phillips Square, 1 August 2000. Strategically planned, the rally was held in front of city council at the same time that Councillors reconvened to debate Bill 73 and the ban of raves on city-owned property. The *idance* Rally, the climax of the education campaign, was the final moment for ravers to come out and fight for their right to dance. The event flyers called on Toronto to demonstrate its support for the rave community and furthermore to ensure the very survival of dance culture in Toronto. Organised by the TDSC and PPP in conjunction with promoters, businesses, and hundreds of volunteers, the rally was an enormous success. All of the participants, including the line-up of world-renowned DJs, donated their talent, time and effort to promote the event itself, as well as the freedom to dance. Between fifteen and twenty thousand ravers, friends, and intrigued people attended the free dance event from 5 to 10 p.m.¹⁷ There were numerous information booths sponsored by harm reduction groups like TRIP, as well as facts about the upcoming municipal elections, including voting procedures. The onus was then placed on the ravers themselves to fulfil their citizenship responsibilities.

Throughout the *idance* Rally there were a number of speakers who attended in solidarity with the rave community. Dr. Trance, one of the founders of rave culture in Toronto, and hip hop artist MC Flipside performed as Masters of Ceremony, motivating the crowd, introducing the speakers and performers, as well as explaining the new

governing rules of the scene which coincide with the self-regulating practices of the ravers: 'No Thugs, No Drugs, No Attitude'.¹⁸ Alex T of *Tribe Magazine* was the first person to express delight with how Toronto's rave culture had evolved and how 'cooperative' the PPP had been with the outside authorities. For him this cooperation was a sign of how mobilised and dedicated the PPP was to the larger cause of freedom; he failed to acknowledge the conflict between freedom and the self-regulating practices that were intertwined with this cooperation.

Kim Stanford, from the TDSC, TRIP and PPP, discussed the long and tough struggle the TDSC had trying to determine the protocol for safe dance spaces. But she was also quick to promote the rave community's willingness to cooperate even under terrible and oppressive conditions. Stanford claimed that the rave community has 'struggled to make the beauty and the value of our community understood and to reach consensus about how best to support Toronto ravers'. Throughout the education campaign, the need to express the beauty and value of the rave community was a priority. Even though these signifiers were never specifically defined, it was clear that if the rave community wanted to exist in Toronto it must be aesthetically pleasing and enlist productive citizens of society. In her speech, Stanford expressed the imbalance of power when working with the various institutional bodies: 'We and others have had to make some compromises at this table and even more we have continued to work in good faith with the authorities even though city and the police have wanted to eliminate our communities and our culture'. From Stanford's remarks it is evident that the rave community did in fact have to endure persecution while continuing to act as responsible citizens, in order to appease the institutions and authorities that simultaneously continued their attempts to annihilate rave culture.

When Dr. Trance introduced Councillor Olivia Chow, he could not find the words to express the significance of her political struggles on behalf of Toronto's rave culture. If Councillor Chow had not offered to spearhead the campaign from inside city council, the outcome may have been quite different. This community owed her a great debt for the success of the education campaign. By using her 'legitimate' voice, ravers were given a 'legitimate' status as desirable citizens with specific needs and 'safe' desires. Councillor Chow explained how city council's decision to ban raves was based on ignorance and fear. And she continued to praise the community for its organisation and activist response. Chow also reiterated how important it is for youth to get involved in the community and expressed her amazement at what can happen when young people believe in something and organise around those beliefs. In her comments, Councillor Chow likened the rave community to a family with responsibilities for protecting and caring for each other. Finally she claimed that ravers were 'the future of music'.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, I suggested that the education campaign undertaken by the PPP, representing purportedly the needs and rights of Toronto's rave communities, had four profound effects. First, through their education campaign, the ravers offered their own bodies to municipal authorities to be studied as objects of knowledge and, in so doing, voluntarily offered themselves up as a problem to be studied, researched and regulated. Second, the regulations and restrictions imposed on raving in Toronto are now embedded within the legislature and city by-laws which aim to guarantee a 'safe' and 'free' raving experience for those who are legally allowed to

attend. Third, through their participation with the regulating and discursive bodies of Toronto, the ravers themselves were active agents in the regulation and governing of their own raving docile bodies despite their slogan: 'It's about the freedom to dance'. Fourth, throughout this political struggle, the discourses of raving in Toronto significantly shifted from a dance culture of 'freedom' and 'escape' found in something forbidden, underground and perhaps even dangerous, to a culture of rave that is a regulated, safe, and disciplined activity. Thus, if I return to the quotation with which this article began, 'Overnight and underground: Do you know where your kids are?', which promotes fear and anxiety and plays on the mythic idea of rave culture as a space of wild abandon and bodily freedoms, it now seems less burdened, perhaps irrelevant to some.

The PPP's representation of raves as moving away from the underground (parking lots, fields, abandoned buildings) towards public municipal spaces that could be controlled and regulated was an attempt to demonstrate that the health and happiness of ravers is indeed connected to the surrounding community. Furthermore, as ravers began to govern themselves under the guise of liberal power, there was a critical shift in how they thought about and conducted themselves. The connection to resistance and the potential dangers of the 'underground', outside of the confines of capitalism and hetero-normative ideals, are no longer part of Toronto's rave mandate. At the same time, however, there are those ravers who long for the 'old days' when raving was illegal, underground and 'dangerous'. Their nostalgic memories do not include security guards, police officers, health care workers, media or public intellectuals' surveillance.

Since rave culture has moved into the realm of Toronto's mainstream (and more so because of the education campaign), the rave community has changed, the politics have changed, and the partying has changed. For those who were invested in rave culture prior to these changes, when ravers sought out freedoms associated with the risk of unregulated spaces, and when every clothing store did not stock phat pants, rave has lost something. But perhaps these new regulated spaces have created new kinds of freedoms and the nostalgic longing for the early days of the underground rave scene only illuminates the new generation gap. Or perhaps as rave became the new 'cool' thing, the 'cool kids' moved on, seeking out freedoms in a new musical dance culture. For Walter Benjamin (1955, 1968), this is the myth of the new – the impact of capitalism on the collective body's desires.

Thrown into a circumstance of prohibition, the ravers reacted with the same logic as the authorities and governing bodies. Through the ravers' confessional practices, the authorities and various groups (health care workers, coroner, parents, public intellectuals, media) were able to constitute the ravers as an object of knowledge. And once constituted, these raving bodies became governable bodies. Toronto's ravers of the new millennium were, ironically in their search for freedom, ensnared by their own self-disciplining techniques and their willingness to cooperate in regulatory practices. 'Understand us before you end us', a rally cry from the culminating moment of the education campaign, was perhaps the downfall of Toronto's rave culture.

* * *

We finally make it past security, through the doors, and into the party. The space is filled with sensory delights. I am momentarily caught off guard as my body attempts to adjust to the temperature of a room filled with thousands of dancing bodies. The air

is heavy from the heat generated by the energy of swaying sweaty bodies. The music is loud, coming through numerous massive speakers. The sound waves bounce off the walls, the bodies; they travel right through me. My lower body moves to the bass sounds driving the beat, while my upper torso, arms and hands pick up the higher registers. As I make my way through the crowds towards the DJ, I inhale deeply. The smell of tiger balm, smoke, and sweet candy fills my nasal passage. My eyes are attracted to the psychedelic images moving around the room pulsing to the beat. As I pass, dancers give a knowing smile. The DJ is just beginning to bring the crowd to a peak; she's working us, building the tension through layers of sounds, the tease of a familiar hook, an increase in dynamics, and the quickening of the tempo. Bodies move in anticipation of a release but she makes them wait. In the moment just before she pushes us over the edge I look around at thousands of bodies dancing in synch, crying out for release. The climax is sweet. The crowd responds to the DJ by raising their hands in the air, screaming, and dancing even more ferociously. The rush begins. My body remembers this place, this ecstasy, this freedom, even if it's only for a moment.

Endnotes

1. The title of a special series on *City Pulse at Six*, aired on City TV from 25 to 27 March 2000, illustrates the re-emergence of fear and anxiety created from a mythic conception of rave culture, where primarily underage youth dance all night, in 'underground', coded for 'dangerous', environments. Although the word 'rave' does not appear in the title, the response by city officials and police to arrests made at the Connect Party, held in March 2000, and the ensuing media frenzy, detailed both fact and fiction concerning the history of rave culture in general and Toronto's current rave culture.
2. It is important to note here that the category of youth is not monolithic, and whether or not 'youth' are taken seriously is often further linked to other identification signifiers such as sex, gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Certainly even within marginalised groups there are power structures that determine privilege(s).
3. <http://www.partypeopleproject.com/Aboutus.html>
4. The claim comes from my own experiences of attending raves in this region for over a decade, my analysis of the *idance* Rally, as well as from viewing media documentation.
5. Foucault had planned to write a book on governmentality, but unfortunately this never materialised.
6. Throughout the work I am using Foucault's understanding of liberalism as 'a practice, which is to say, as a "way of doing things" oriented toward objectives and regulating itself by means of a sustained reflection' (Foucault 1994, p. 74). Foucault goes on to suggest that 'Liberalism is to be analysed, then, as a principle and a method of rationalising the exercise of government, a rationalisation that obeys – and this is its specificity – the internal rule of maximum economy' (*ibid.*, p. 74).
7. PPP, *Research Package*, p. 81.
8. I have written 'remarkable' to demonstrate the contradiction in how these actions may be viewed. For Foucault, however, these events are not remarkable, but rather quite standard.
9. These warnings began to change as new material and statistics became available. In an article from *Eye* magazine on 8 June 2000, the ranking of North America's Ecstasy centres was published: Toronto ranked twentieth, Ottawa ranked sixteenth, and Washington D.C. and Oakland, California held first and second place, respectively.
10. See 'Fantino's fantasy gun bust', *Eye*, 4 May 2000, and 'Ravers ask Chief to face facts on gun claims', *Eye*, 11 May 2000, p. 30.
11. www.partypeopleproject.com
12. DeMara, 'Council votes to suspend raves', *Toronto Star*, 11 May 2000, pp. A1–B4.
13. DeMara and Moloney, 'Council votes to suspend raves', *Toronto Star*, 11 May 2000.
14. www.partypeopleproject.com
15. www.partypeopleproject.com
16. PPP, *Research Package*.
17. See the *Metro*, 2 August 2000; *Today News*, 2 August 2000; *Today News*, 4 August 2000; the *Toronto Star*, 2 August 2000; *The Globe and Mail*, 2 August 2000.
18. Dr. Trance, *idance* Rally, Toronto, 1 August 2000.

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