

SOUND AFFECTS: THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN AFFECTING QUALITY OF LIFE

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

Music is a topic that is not often covered in leisure studies even though it frequently accompanies many of the activities we participate in. Music is central to human development, communication and meaning-making, and as will be displayed throughout this dissertation, can be integral to establishing and sustaining relationships, developing and maintaining identity, and acting as a source of positivity which can impact one's life for the long-term. Relying on ethnographic methods for data collection and examination, this study described and analyzed the music scene that surrounds the touring rock band Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons. The study was guided by the following research questions: How do ephemeral moments of interaction in the music scene ultimately lead to the formation of a community and intimate feelings for one another often identified as family? How do fans use a performer's persona to interpret their lives? And, how do positive emotions generated from participation in the music scene affect quality of life outside the concert setting? Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, participant-observation at concert events and music festivals and textual analysis of an un-moderated online discussion forum centered on the band.

The average age of the participants was forty-two, making them a worthwhile population of an understudied cohort (middle-aged) in regards to how music is used to affect quality of life. Due to long tenures of involvement with the band, the participants had established significant relationships with other fans which were perceived as family. The relationships transcended the designation of community due to the level of sincere

sentiment shared amongst much of the fanbase. Additionally, the performative qualities of Jerry Joseph served for many as a testament to commitment, and for some, he was a role model for recovery in their struggle to overcome substance abuse. Finally, the participants' extended and immersive involvement in the music scene surrounding the band was a positive outlet to draw from in dealing with the hardships of life outside of the music scene.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not be fair to start this dedication without acknowledging my parents and their role of providing a comprehensive insurance of support for the entirety of my time on this planet. As far back as I can remember, I have never been in need, and rarely have I ever had to want for anything either. Their generosity rivals no other, and most of the time it is beyond humbling. They no doubt had to deal with some questionable choices due to my many antics over the years, but hopefully we have weathered the storm! Thanks, Mom and Pops!

I also have to acknowledge the role of serendipity in this program. Speaking with a professor of mine in the Performance Studies program here at A&M in the fall of 2012, we were talking about my interests in regards to music. I mentioned that I was intrigued by the role of secular spirituality in popular music scenes and he suggested I meet with Dr. Dox. We met several times and a very relaxed but directed correspondence grew from our meetings. When she accepted my request to be on my committee, I was very thankful and knew I was gaining a fountain of knowledge, a collaborator and an ally.

Nearly fifteen years ago random chance put Dr. Woosnam and me in a cabin in very rural Mississippi for a semester. We didn't have an extensive knowledge of each other at that point, some familiarity, but not enough to call one another friends. That changed during the course of those three months as we grew together through necessity and common ground. Though we lost contact over the years, when I sought him out again in the summer of 2010, luck reared its head again when he pointed me to Dr.

Dunlap, someone he saw as a perfect mentor for my research interests. I and Dr. Dunlap hit it off quite well and formed a great professional relationship, but also an equally important personal relationship. I was honored when Dr. Dunlap was willing to still serve on my committee after leaving A&M, and our relationship has grown on all corners since our first email exchange going on five years ago. I was sad to see him go when he left for new opportunities, but as luck would have it, I was able to take advantage of another relationship that was nurtured through Dr. Dunlap's introduction, Dr. Kyle.

Dr. Kyle is an interesting juxtaposition of a professor and a friend. Many afternoons I have been both happy and fortunate to share the side patio at the Rebel Draft House in College Station, Texas with him. While we always met under the guise of advisory, our conversations were frequently far from academia. We would cover the necessary ground in terms of my professional development, but we were always eager to move on to swapping stories the way friends do and should. When I made the decision to finish my degree from afar, it was with a heavy heart that we would no longer see one another on the side patio, he with his Rodeo Clown double IPA and I with my can of Pearl. His guidance has been nothing short of welcome, beneficial, and lucky, to keep with the theme. I have never considered myself a lucky person, but my experiences and relationships here at A&M would say otherwise.

Last but not least, my writing and reading buddy, Worry (my dog). Many afternoons have been spent on the couch, the backyard or in the 'office' both reading and writing throughout this program. I never felt alone with my sidekick by my side, and I

look forward to many more years of her ‘assistance’ in that regard as we begin our career together. And finally, the Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences department here at A&M; I am thankful for the opportunities that have been given me, and the prestige that will forever follow my name by being associated with this fine program. I never thought I’d end up in Texas, and often grumbled about some of the state’s unique attributes, but to borrow from the Grateful Dead, “Once in a while you get shown the light, in the strangest of places if you look at it right.”

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

I remember when my family used to go to Florida every year for spring break. One particular vacation sticks out to me, March of 1984, when I was six years old. As we were driving into Treasure Island, the city where we often stayed for a few days, my brother put his Walkman's headphones on me. Groggy after the long day's drive from Illinois, I was immediately captivated by the music blaring into my ears; it was Van Halen's *Jump*. As we neared our hotel and my dad pulled in to park, the synthesizer breakdown had started, and I refused to get out of the car until after the song was over. In that moment the instrumental segue had captured the spirit of the moment. Here I was, getting away from home and school, on an adventure in this beautiful, tropical area. The reduction of the keys to the point just before the music exploded again was as fitting to my emotions at that time as it ever could be. I think that's where it all started for me....

I had always been surrounded by music in the house growing up. On the weekend my mom would listen to Casey Kasem's *Coast to Coast Top 40* or Dick Clark's *Rock, Roll & Remember* as she did chores, read or entertained us kids. But it wasn't just background for her; she had her favorites, and you knew what they were when they came on. To this day, 30 years later, whenever the fictional band Steam's hit, *Na na, hey hey, kiss him goodbye* comes on, my mom turns the radio up to levels that would seem inappropriate for most 70 year old women. It makes me wonder what that song symbolizes for her. The song came out during the Summer of Love (1969), and my

parents had been married just a year earlier. Perhaps it reminds her of the early stages of her marriage to my dad, and the future they envisioned together. I don't know, I've never asked.

Some of my earliest recurring memories revolve around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration in town when the local oldies' cover band, Captain Rat & the Blind Rivets, would play before the fireworks. But they were more than just the house band for the holiday event to my parents, as I vividly remember going to see them at various other locations during my formative years. It seemed that seeing that band was important for my parents, and perhaps that is because they played the hits of my folks' era and it allowed them to reflect back on their youth, when they met, and how they developed their relationship into a lifelong commitment.

My maternal grandma played a key role in my understanding of others' appreciation of music. At the first Farm Aid, which was held in 1984 in my hometown, she took me to the event which included such artists as Willie Nelson, John Fogerty, B.B. King and Bob Dylan. Unfortunately I don't recall any of the music, but I do remember the hordes of people enthralled to see the events that were unfolding. It wasn't until 1987 when I saw my first real concert I actually remembered (sorry, Captain Rat), The Beach Boys. It was on a school night and I remember falling asleep near the end, but years later, that band is still one of my favorites. When I lived for a short time in Southern California I really got into The Beach Boys, and every time I listened to them, it would take me back to that first experience.

Music has been interwoven into my personal history in many ways. It was defining to my relationships in my formative years, and also acted as a place where I could escape when things weren't going the way I would've liked. I always had a stereo in my room, and when I would inevitably get myself in trouble for doing something stupid growing up, I always had the refuge of my music and my four walls. My parents think I was sent to my room for punishment, but the reality of the situation is that I was sent there to find myself. And maybe that was the intended result from my folks anyways.

My parents never changed my bedroom after I left upon the completion of high school. Every time I return home I am reminded of some of my earliest musical influences. Posters of Nine Inch Nails, Weezer, Bone-Thugs-n-Harmony and Guns n' Roses still line my walls. And I'm proud of that. It reflects my eclectic taste, and it reinforces the importance that music has had for me since the very beginning. The aforementioned group Weezer's song *In the Garage* is quite fitting for the experience of many youth and their relationship to music:

*In the garage  
I feel safe  
No one cares about my ways  
In the garage  
Where I belong  
No one hears me sing this song*

## **The Opener**

I was disappointed at the third and final night of the Dixie Mattress Festival (DMF) this year (2014). The first two nights were great, but the third night lacked the pizzazz I had hoped for when being sent back into the “real” world. The setlist was made up of a lot of songs from the Jackmormons’ most recent album, Happy Book, and while a good album, those songs had been played an awful lot since its release in 2012. Filling out the setlist were a bunch of slower songs making the event far less energetic than I would have liked.

I was well aware of the reputation of Jerry Joseph to do as he pleases, that attitude had caused him to burn several bridges in his career, but I never let it affect me because I saw him as an equal opportunity offender; he was an indiscriminate asshole. Don’t get me wrong, he has his charm and allure, as will be displayed throughout this dissertation, but he also has his negative attributes as well. We all do. However, on this night, I began to feel those negative attributes seep into his performance (or so I thought). I saw it as disrespecting the fans by not playing what they (I) want – a very diverse setlist chocked full of hard rock anthems. I thought to myself that he knows what the fans want; why not give it to them (me)? This was, after all, a festival centered on his band made up of fans from all over the country that made the effort to get to this remote location in rural Oregon. At best he was aloof and unconcerned about the fans’ desires, at worst he didn’t care. That wouldn’t be the first time he was chastised for indifference.

Upon returning home to Colorado after DMF, I inevitably started playing Jackmormons’ shows and albums as is habit after seeing the band live. The funny thing

is I started to play a lot of their slower songs; quite the opposite of what I yearned for at the festival and antithetical to my hurt feelings at not being blown away by the third night's performance. Ironic, isn't it?

A few weeks later I'm in Telluride, Colorado for a two-night run at a dingy basement bar in a beautiful, if not surreal, natural environment. There were only about a dozen or so fans that clearly made the trip specifically to see the band. The remainder of the crowd was made up of locals out for a good time. Joseph knows his fanbase well; something I may have not considered that night in rural Oregon. He appreciates those that make the effort to come to the distant locations where the "true" fans are greatly outnumbered by the others in attendance. This first night of the run would bring things back into perspective for me about the power and quality of his music, the depth of his catalog, and his true understanding of his fans.

When the band walked on stage that night, they kicked down the door like a fucking SWAT team hell bent on taking control of the situation. From note one the band did not let up. Their setlist was as diverse as any I'd heard in my twelve-plus years of seeing them, and they played two of my favorite songs I hadn't heard in years, but had been chasing ever since. I typically stand in the back at shows trying to avoid the crowd, but when they played *Golden American* and *Poison*, I was front and center and fully aware that this band is the best kept secret in rock and roll.

That first night in Telluride marked the start of a five day run in Colorado. Two nights in Telluride and two nights in Denver, all with his band, the Jackmormons, and the final night, a Sunday, was a solo show in Boulder. His solo acoustic performances

tend to consist of a lot of slower songs, and even the typically faster songs he plays with his band are toned down a notch to fit the intimacy of a solo performance. I don't think I had any preconceived notions of what to expect, I was just happy to be involved in this invite-only event. Little did I know how special the evening would turn out to be.

In the back room of an art gallery, forty people squeezed in to witness a performance that had everyone singing along by the end of the night. Jerry's mood was clearly positive; you could tell by his mannerisms on stage and his interactions with fans that he was enjoying himself and appreciated those in attendance. At setbreak he came up to a group of us and asked what we wanted to hear. I sat there sort of dumbfounded because I had never been asked that before, but I had always wished that I would be. Of course I was taken back; I was unable to offer up any suggestions. One fan named off a few songs and said, "She wants to hear *Thistle*." This 'she' was Bella, an early-30s fan I had just interviewed hours before that show. She was telling me about one of her favorite songs, *Mohawk*, which is typically sandwiched in with *Thistle* and the Neil Young cover *Comes a Time*. She had expressed that when she got married she wanted to have *Mohawk* played at her wedding. Well, Jerry played those three tunes together, and when he did, I looked over at Bella; she was smiling as wide as can be, glowing with elation, and fixated on this musician who she had only hours ago expressed how his music affected her "positively in every way imaginable" (8/03/2014).

I walked away in awe, thankful to be in attendance, having reconsidered my reaction to that third night at the DMF. They may not all be heavy, power-driven rock shows, but they are all special. Having expectations doesn't allow you to be fully

present; the key is to let the music take over. To borrow from the Stones, “You don’t always get what you want, but if you try sometime, you might just find you get what you need.” Jerry knows what his fans need.

### **Background**

Music, or rather rhythm, syncopation, and sound, is an integral and ever-present component of the human experience. During the earliest moments of our development, we are exposed to an ‘intrauterine symphony’ composed of the mother’s heartbeat, her voice, and the noises of the surrounding environment for which we come in to contact with on a daily basis during our period of gestation (DeNora, 2000). After we have been brought into the world, we continue to be exposed to the sounds of our environment, and these sounds are essential to our growth and understanding of how to interact with our surroundings (Schlaug, Norton, Overy, & Winner, 2006). One of the primary collections of sounds that come into play for our personal development is that of music (Hargreaves & North, 1999). Merriam (1964) stated that there is likely no other human cultural activity which is as pervasive as music and that music has the potential to reach into the depths of the human mind and soul to shape and affect human behavior. Cross (2001), following Merriam (1964), stressed the important social components of music in creating the grounds for interaction and construction of meaning. DeNora (1999) agreed having stated that music is a cultural resource that individuals draw on for their own construction of self, which includes the emotional, memory, and biographical work they do to learn about themselves, their environment, and their social relationships.

It is the discovery of the self and the inherently human desire to create and maintain meaningful relationships *through music* that is the focus of this dissertation. Schäfer and Sedlmeier (2009) claimed that the most important reason that people like the music they do is that it allows them to express their identity and values, and this creates the opportunity to share these affiliations with likeminded others. People often use music as a ‘badge’ to represent their membership or identification in a social group (Frith, 1981), and these shared music preferences frequently lead to shared bonding experiences (Boer, Fischer, Strack, Bond, Lo, & Lam, 2011). Ruud (1997a) stated that listening to and talking about music is not so much a reflection of our identity, but more a way of performing it. He went on to say that music could be thought of as an object we act towards in order to clarify our place within the social and cultural constructs of our lives. Ruud (1997b) further elaborated that music is a source of personal authenticity which helps us perceive and give meaning to the world. It is through our development of specific music tastes that we enter into a dialog with others and society at large. Establishment of our musical preferences aids us in showcasing our spiritual, emotional, and social characteristics (Rentfrow, McDonald, & Oldmeadow, 2009). The acknowledgement of these preferences can be valuable to making friendships through music association as well as act as a form of self-therapy that increases positive mood and produces a sense of well-being about life (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). Further, music possesses the potential to be a substitute for human relationships by being embraced as an understanding and valued friend (Laiho, 2004). The bottom line is that music possesses many possible applications for improving a person’s quality of life. And

whether those uses are intended for personal or social development, music is a “powerful medium of social order” (DeNora, 2000, p. 163) with the potential to relax, comfort, and inspire, or just simply to just make one feel better (Laiho, 2004).

There are several questions that have not been fully investigated when it comes to the role of music in people’s lives. The first question this dissertation will address is how do people’s involvement in music subcultures allow them to form communities, and what constitutes those communities? Community is a term that stands in contention amongst disciplines and popular culture, as it is often used in multiple descriptive avenues, such as referring to a place, a group of people, or the quality of a relationship (Creed, 2006). This dissertation will illustrate how music fans engage in moments of communion, or the loss of one’s sense of self in collective interaction (Schmalenbach, 1977). These moments of communion take place in the liminal stages of Turner’s (1969) *communitas* and allow for the establishment of community, as indicated by the participants in this doctoral research. Communities are formed through the development of close relationships that transcend differences to find common cause and leisure provides a forum for this common ground through shared interests and social networks.

Another question that will be addressed in this dissertation is how performers affect fan sentiment and identity through music. As will be revealed by the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons, there can be a significant attachment to the musician(s) who perform their favorite music. Fans relate to Joseph in numerous ways. Some feel as if he were speaking to them directly, providing guidance for overcoming life’s difficulties. Others see his music as being beneficial to the creation of meaningful friendships. Still

others have moments of euphoria through their participation that leads to a perceived connection to the Joseph for providing these experiences and resulting emotions. This chapter will rely on Max Weber's (1978) theory of charisma as grounded in the context of a musical performer's ability to affect thought and behavior amongst his or her fans.

The final issue to be addressed in this dissertation is the impact of music on individuals in midlife, specifically between 30 and 60 years of age. Much has been written about the role of music in affecting identity, emotions, and establishing friendships in adolescent age groups, but there has been a scarcity of research conducted on middle-aged adults and their role in music scenes, and the effects of music involvement on quality of life. This stage of the lifecycle is particularly important given the potential occurrence of a number of significant life events (e.g., career development, marriage, family, prevalence of disease, and retirement). This chapter will draw from the work of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in the area of positive psychology, and specifically the broaden-and-build theory as developed by Fredrickson (2001) which states that positive emotions broaden people's thought-action repertoires thus leading to a store of enduring positive resources for future benefit. The chapter will reveal how aging fans use the emotional stores acquired through music scene participation to affect their quality of life outside of the concert setting. In most cases these are positive experiences, though there are documented accounts of individual participation that have led to negative consequences, particularly due to alcohol or drug use. In these instances where a fans' involvement has led to undesired effects, the relationships formed within the music scene offer a positive outlet in overcoming their personal obstacles, and the

music is still used to generate positive emotions, and in some cases, serve as a guide in the road to recovery.

### **Case Study**

According to Cross (2001), music is a form of expression situated in culture. Music in this view is constituted by practices and perceptions which are grounded in social interaction and personal meaning-making (Blumer, 1969). This dissertation's focus is on a small group of devoted fans of the band Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons in the United States. The band's lead singer and guitarist, Jerry Joseph, has been a professional musician since the early 1980s when his first band, Little Women, started by playing in parking lots throughout the country before and after Grateful Dead shows. Little Women disbanded in the early 1990s, and Joseph formed his current band, the Jackmormons, in 1995. It is comprised of Joseph, the bassist, JR Ruppel, and the drummer, Steve Drizos. Joseph plays in several other arrangements, and frequently solo as well, though his fans are most drawn to his performances with the Jackmormons. In the last three years alone, Joseph (in various musical collaborations) has played in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Germany, Switzerland and Costa Rica, and will have just finished a tour with the Jackmormons in Ireland, England and France at the time of this dissertation's submission (February, 2015). This frequent and diverse tour schedule illustrates the broad appeal of Joseph's music.

The Jackmormons are commonly lumped into the "jamband" genre (populated by bands such as the Grateful Dead, Phish, Widespread Panic, and Furthur). Fans of jambands are predominately white, range in age from 18-30 years old (Hunt, 2008), and

often are highly educated and come from middle-class upbringings. Depending on the popularity of the band, groups from this genre play a wide variety of venues, and often operate on a heavy touring schedule. Jambands rely on revenue more from concert appearances than album and merchandise sales.

The Jackmormons play a style of music that covers a wide array of influences from country, folk, rock, metal, and hip-hop, and they never play the same show twice. There is a considerable amount of improvisation on stage (jamming), and they operate from an extensive catalog of songs (250-300 songs) that are familiar to their fans. Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons frequently play after-shows following the band Widespread Panic's (WP) concerts. The Jackmormons are a favorite of music clubs seeking to pull in the late-night crowd departing the WP shows, as they are very popular within WP's fanbase. Ironically, WP got their start by opening for Joseph's original band, Little Women, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Because of the close association of the two bands, many of the people I have spoken with came to Joseph's music through their already established connection with WP.

The Jackmormons tour year-round, and while they play all over the United States, they spend a lot of their time on tour in the Western states. Fans of the band reside throughout the United States, and typically range in age from 30 to 60 years old. Most are professionals in a variety of fields, including academia, law, real estate, and tourism. Some have been intimately involved only for a short time, whereas others have been seeing Jerry Joseph play since the early 1980s.

## **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this dissertation are four-fold:

(1) To describe the music scene in which Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons is situated (Chapters II-IV);

(2) To explore communion (Schmalenbach, 1977) created amongst fans using Turner's (1969) liminal stages of communitas (Chapter II);

(3) To investigate how a charismatic performer affects fan sentiment and connection to the music (Chapter III);

and

(4) To examine how middle-aged fans use the music scene as a place to build reserves of positive emotions which affect quality of life outside the concert setting. Particular emphasis will be directed toward understanding enduring personal and collective outcomes (Chapter IV).

## **Research Design and Methodology**

The research was conducted following Gonzalez' (2000) Four Seasons method approach which included pre-ethnography, ethnography proper (immersion, observations, and interviews), analysis of field notes, and the writing decisions derived from the cultural accounts I documented. The Four Seasons approach is guided by four ideals: (a) natural cycles, in that ethnographic research is conducted in a preparation, growth, harvest, rest sequence that continuously repeats itself ensuring that opportunities are not lost, only delayed; (b) an awareness of the interdependence of all things, which is a consideration that all that transpires within the culture I am studying are data that is

relevant to the research; (c) preparedness, which involves personal reflexivity in the authentic reporting of the events and discussions that are revealed (this often involved letting go of control in order to let the participants' voices shine); and finally, (d) harmony and balance, or the need to show the dichotomies that exist within the focus of study (Gonzalez, 2000).

### ***Site Selection***

I often pondered what would be the best fanbase to pursue, as well as why and how that would be the case. I was already an active participant in several fan communities (Phish, Widespread Panic and Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons), and I knew one of those three would be my best bet for several reasons. For one, each band embraced the heavy touring schedule that was reliant upon returning customers. For another, I had already established several friendships and multiple more acquaintances through my decades-plus participation in all three music scenes. Finally, each of these bands was loosely tied in some manner to the Grateful Dead, the band whose fans embodied the 'community' concept I wanted to study (Barnes, 2011).

But when I really began to think about what was of utmost importance in band, and therefore fan, selection, it became obvious that the best option was the last; Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons. The other two, Phish and Widespread Panic, had massive followings. It was not unheard of for them to sell out 10,000-plus seat stadiums multiple times over on any given tour. Therefore, it meant that not only was there great potential to get 'lost in the crowd,' but that there would be pockets of fans who only participated regionally, and therefore not evidence of a true 'community' as the term worked in my

mind. Another reason these two bands were not the best option was because of their success they had come to be known as the 'cool thing' to do when they came to town. Many people in attendance were there for the circus atmosphere that surrounded their entry into town, similar to that of the Grateful Dead, and a high degree of those in attendance were there for the drugs, be it ingestion or sale, and some simply for an alternative lifestyle where they were not involved in the music at all. That last reason could make for an interesting study, but since the purpose for involvement there was devoid of music, it was not of primary interest to me.

That left Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons. A road-tested band of nearly twenty years led by their frontman who adds another decade of professional experience to that, the band never attained any significant degree of acclaim. They have never charted a single or an album, have never received radio play on mainstream channels, and are not often included on the large festivals that turn folks on to lesser known musicians. To get to the music of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons requires a little luck, a few years or more of listening in the right circles, and an appreciation for something that is not like any other band they are often lumped in with. Because of this, the following of fans is small, but they are dedicated. Most of the participants of this study have been involved with the band for a decade if not longer, and they pride themselves on their devotion, their small numbers (though they wish the band had more awareness for no other reason than they want them to be successful, in terms of numbers of fans or earned income) and the value of their personal involvement and friendships made within the music scene.

In short, this music scene seemed to capture the ‘community’ I was hunting for, whether or not it truly existed. It also embraced the importance and commitment of having a favorite band and the residual effects that come from it. There were no headlines when this band and its fans came to town. People did not make their living selling beer, food, clothing or drugs on their tour. People did not talk about this band, for the most part, unless they either loved or hated them. The fans I spoke with loved them, and that provided the foundation of my choice to conduct research in the music scene that surrounds Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons.

### ***Entry to the Scene and Establishing Connections***

As with most music scenes<sup>1</sup>, be they bands, solo artists, DJs, etc., if you have the money, you can (hopefully) enjoy the show. However, making friends within the concert setting can be a little more difficult. Concerts are loud and therefore not conducive to verbal exchange. Oftentimes when people attend concerts they tend to go with friends making the likelihood of meeting new people and having truly significant interaction with others less likely. But when you become captivated by a band or musician and make the effort to see them frequently, you begin to recognize those others who feel the same way and engage in the same high level of participation. These familiarities provide the context for social approach and can lead to developing acquaintanceships that have the potential to evolve into friendships and more.

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<sup>1</sup> The entirety of a subculture that surrounds a band, and includes concert environment and experience, relationships cultivated and maintained through interaction, and outside and indirect connections to the band and its music.

This is how it started for me. I first saw the band in 2002, but did not really meet anyone intimately involved in the music scene until 2008; even then we would have been best described as acquaintances. However, as my frequency of attendance increased, especially to distant locales, I began to see more of these acquaintances and we became friends. This resulted in them introducing me to others, resulting in the pattern of acquaintance to friend, and the introductions snowballed from there leading to the establishment of participants in this dissertation research (Tracy, 2013).

### ***Research Methodology***

For my data collection and analyses, I employed ethnographic tools (Tracy, 2013) that were essential to the potential of multiple realities and the idea that “truth [and] meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in *our* world” (Crotty, 2010, p. 8; emphasis added). Meaning is constructed in relation to a certain phenomenon, so two different people could have completely different understandings of the meaning of that phenomenon. Each individual had their own story about their involvement and how the music affected their lives, so it was best to adopt an inductive approach that would allow everyone to speak the truths of their lives as pertaining to their involvement in this music scene (Charmaz, 2006). Data analysis allowed for the establishment of themes to address shared sentiment in terms of the items of discussion, as directed through my study guide, or introduced by the fans. My data collection was conducted by becoming immersed in the music scene, which included the totality of fan interaction surrounding the band and comprised of attending concerts, the fans’ practice of listening to the band’s music outside of concert settings,

making and maintaining relationships with other fans, the prioritization of attending concerts in their lives, and the maintaining of a sense of identity through involvement with the band and its music (Moberg, 2011). I also employed Kotarba's (2002) ethnographic tourism, which is the researcher's attempt to pursue the phenomenon as a "stranger in a foreign land" to avoid taking anything for granted due to an already established connection to the area of research (p. 399). Over the course of my research I have acted as a participant observer, immersing myself in the social world, and this called for the writing up of field notes at times when I was away from participants so as to not blur the lines of researcher and participant (Tracy, 2013). These field notes were compiled in a reflective journal that further elaborated on what transpired within the music scene.

### ***Study Area***

Given that Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons are an ever-touring, internationally established band, the study area was limited to the their time spent in the Western states, primarily Colorado, Oregon, and the Rocky Mountain states in between. The band has four annual events each year that tend to be big draws for fans. Three of these took place during the intensive portion of this study (April 2014 – September 2014) and were the primary focus for participant observation activities. There was a number of other events in which I participated in that took place in order to document rich, thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the fanbase and the members' behaviors during their interactions with the band and its music. In total I attended forty concerts during the participant-

observation portion of the research period that took place in five western states over the course of a twenty-one month period.

### *Participants*

As mentioned earlier, the participants varied in terms of place of residence, age, and profession, but the common shared interest between them was their unbridled enthusiasm for the band. The fanbase was predominately an “older” crowd, at least in terms of the average age commonly affiliated with touring rock and roll bands (Hunt, 2008). At the time of interview, the youngest participant was twenty-eight years old and the oldest was fifty-eight, with an average of forty-two years old.

Having been a follower of the band for over a decade, I have established a level of rapport with many fans of the band. When I made the decision to use the band and its fans as my case study for this dissertation, I began telling the friends I had made within the music scene of my intentions; they then told their friends about my project. Since that initial decision I conducted thirty-three interviews, ranging in length from one hour to nearly three hours a piece. Two of those interviews were follow-ups, and the reason for doing so will be revealed throughout this dissertation. On several occasions people have sought me out to participate in the investigation stating that they want to contribute and tell me their story about why this band and its music are so important to their lives. I also informed the band of my decision to use their fans as participants for my research, to which Joseph replied that he was “honored.”

### ***Data Collection***

The primary data collection methods for this study involved: (1) in-depth, semi-structured interviews; (2) participant observation; and (3) textual analysis of postings on an un-moderated fan email listserv online. The interviews were my primary method of data collection because what I was looking to capture through a variety of lenses was a picture of how the fans' involvement affected their lives. This choice to prioritize the interviews allowed for me to focus on the subjective experiences of each participant as indicated through their responses. Because involvement in the music scene inherently operated out of individual commitment, interest and meaning-making, the ability to capture these sentiments through the participants' own words was integral to documenting the phenomenon under consideration. The interviews also allowed for the fans to speak about their friends, often referred to as their 'family,' in a safe and intimate environment situated in confidentiality. While some interviews were conducted in more public arenas, those that were onlookers were all close friends of the fan(s) being interviewed. In some ways this communal feel of the interview process, though directed to a specific contributor, captured the sentiment that many who participated espoused of their involvement.

Participant observation was a key component of my data collection as well. Not only did it allow for me to hone in on what specific fans said about their involvement and interactions at concerts, but it allowed me to capture rich descriptive scenes (Geertz, 1973) about what went on before, during and after the concert. During participant observation I made brief notes on a small notepad to spark memory when it came time to

write up field notes. I also had a pocket-sized voice recorder in the car/tent/hotel that allowed me to capture lengthier thoughts before I would go to bed. Field notes were always written first thing in the morning following a concert. The participant observer role I embraced was particularly fruitful in the festival atmospheres where the band played multiple shows in the same location. The extended periods of downtime created great opportunities for fans to bond with one another and build upon their already established relationships, or to form new ones through the small, but intricately woven fanbase.

The email listserv that is dedicated to the band and is populated by the fans was another effective tool for finding rich data in regards to fan experience. Even though the fanbase is relatively small, there were still fans that I did not meet or was unable to interview due to temporal or spatial limitations. It was often through the conduit of the listserv that I would be presented with evocative reflections on shared experiences and relationships that would strengthen my analysis and interpretation by providing confirmation of what I had witnessed through triangulation; the use of multiple methods of data collection to best capture the essence of the phenomenon (Denzin, 2006). This is not to say that what I found is conclusive; all research is presented through the eye and mind of the author's interpretation. We cannot fully abandon our preconceived notions, expectations or subjectivity entirely, but we try our best to make the effort to be objective whenever possible. And while I was not a "stranger in a foreign land" (Kotarba, 2002, p. 399), I was cognizant of my need to remove myself from my natural role as fan to one of researcher. This often involved me literally taking a step back in the

concert setting to reinforce my purpose of providing a description and analysis of what was taking place.

## CHAPTER II

### INTERLUDE I

It was a long time before I took notice of the existence of the music scene surrounding Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons. I was a very casual fan for the first several years, still somewhat tied to Phish, and slowly becoming immersed into Widespread Panic. And even though my first experience at a Phish concert in the summer of 1996 was overwhelmingly positive, I didn't truly understand what was going on from a fan perspective and certainly not from the perspective of a researcher. I had listened to the Grateful Dead and other jambands enough to have an idealistic vision of the 'community' that supposedly surrounded the music, but I didn't give much thought to it aside from some weird desire to be a hippie. But hippies didn't really exist anymore, and retrospectively I wondered if the community I saw was simply just the necessary gathering of fans in closed-quarters. What was it about the people, place, and experience that provoked my assumption of a community?

I was very far removed from the time where I would actually consider and critique 'community,' so what did I think I saw, even as a novice to the Phish music scene? I saw people motivated by fun and friendship. Those that purposefully wanted to live a life different from the mainstream. I saw the romanticism of people coming together to live a different life of creating bonds through music. But the reality of the situation was that much of this really only transpired on the surface. I never dug too deep, I was simply content that my assumptions were true based on the twenty-five or so

shows I saw over a four year period. Sure, I had several friends who were equally drawn to the music and the scene that accompanied it, and even though I didn't question them at the time, looking back I think they were also grasping at this figment of our collective imagination of something we aspired to have, but likely never really existed (Creed, 2006). But what lay in that aspiration, however ephemeral, may be the most important aspect to consider.

We loved the debauchery and lack of structure that accompanied the music scene that surrounded Phish. We liked the freedom of being on the road, interacting with likeminded others. We liked knowing we were different from the straight crowd, even if it was only for three days at a time. But perhaps we most liked that it was simply something we did, and therefore something we did not do at other times. It was something to look forward to, something to align our identities with, something to use as a reference point when telling others about ourselves, and what was important to us. But it was never something we lived on a daily basis. We aspired to engage in the mythical communities that were crafted through music from our understanding of the 1960s, but in reality were much different. The confines of the festival grounds were structureless arenas that allowed us to indulge in ephemeral celebrations. We listened to the music frequently, dressed the part and spoke the lingo, but we weren't on tour every day of every year. And therefore, possibly, this 'community' didn't exist for us every day either. It began to surface as we would prepare to go on tour, and certainly be apparent when we were living the tour lifestyle, going from city to city, buying food on the lots, and being completely satisfied, three days at a time, in a small, impromptu tent

community full of people with similar aspirations. And when it was time to go home, we would leave our community behind, another episode documenting our allegiance and the development of our personalities, identities, and outlooks on life.

But when I am more honest about this supposed community, I have to address that the majority of my significant interactions that occurred during those days on Phish tour were predominately shared with just a few close friends. Sure, we interacted with others casually and respectfully, but the core of the social component was exchanged between people who I had already established a friendship with in other settings. We came together from a larger social sphere to form a smaller unit of friendship based in shared enjoyment of music, and an appreciation to capture an idealistic, if not fictional, way of life. The larger community which I thought I saw was more accurately a reflection of what I shared with a few close friends in a unique setting. But that statement is not intended to discount the quality of those shared interactions in those places, but more to show appreciation for those places to foster that sense of community I had come to appreciate and look forward to when resources allowed. The operative word in the preceding statement is ‘sense;’ it implies a fleeting feeling or emotion invoked from a reaction to an experience, interaction or thought. And while that sense or feel is what I came to seek, it was not something that was sustainable outside of my experience in the music scene, but it is something I came to hope to embrace every time I could be involved. This feeling is what Schmalenbach (1977) called communion.

It may then perhaps be most accurate to associate the term ‘community’ in the category of emotional responses, much like happiness or calmness. The latter two

sensations are attained only through experience and only last as long as the moment does, or until the next of life's endless issues surface to supplant it. So maybe community exists there also, as a feeling acquired through the accumulation of positive emotional experiences, interactions and thoughts. And while the majority of respondents for this dissertation's research invoked the term community to describe their group of friends and the sentiment shared amongst them, the first paper (Chapter II) attempts to sort out what is transpiring within the confines of a close-knit music scene and the fans that are involved, some for decades, and just how their shared experiences led to meaningful relationships and feelings of camaraderie that exist solely within the confines of the subculture surrounding Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons.

*In 2008 after I had moved back to Colorado from Illinois following the completion of my master's degree, I made plans to travel up to Virginia City (VC), Montana for the Jackmormons' annual three-day run in an old ghost town (population: 190). I didn't know anyone that would be there, but the music of the band was now front and center in terms of my preferences, so I brought my girlfriend with me and we made the 12-hour drive through sometimes unsightly but mostly beautiful country with my dog in tow, and stayed at a cozy little cabin in Ennis, Montana (population: 1,000), about a 15-minute drive from VC, down a windy, hilly, unlit road.*

*The entirety of my social interaction for the weekend was mostly with my girlfriend, as well as the people you inevitably talk to when sidling up to the bar for a drink; I had several drinks that weekend, so there were numerous brief conversations. However, on the last day of the event, a late 30s guy came up to me and started up a*

*conversation. He asked me how long I'd been seeing the band, and where I came from. He was also up from Colorado, and he had been seeing the band "religiously" since 2001, never missing a show within "reasonable" driving distance. That comment didn't affect me the way it might the droves of uninitiated others; 12 hours is likely 11 hours farther than most people would drive to see any band.*

*Fast forward 5 years to 2013, my second return to VC. Those 4 years in between I had always hoped to make it back for the festival, but something was always coming up. That year (2013) I made it a point that I would make it. After all, this was my research now, I had to go.*

*This second trip I made plans to stay in Nevada City (population: 0), the next town over, just a mile and a half from VC. I knew a number of people coming this time, and they were scattered in houses and hotels between Ennis, VC and Nevada City, and several were camping at the local RV park and up the canyon as well. The fans came from all over, but predominately the Rocky Mountain states and the Northwest. This was the ninth year of the event, and many bragged of having been part of every one.*

*I had been immersing myself as a participant observer for about eight months at that point (19 shows including those that weekend), so I had conducted several interviews (12) and established many acquaintances and a few friends, too. I found myself floating between where the groups were dispersed, but I spent a majority of my time at the RV park, as there were several sites clustered together of fans. The bass player's campsite was right in the thick of it also.*

*The weekend wasn't especially productive in terms of conducting interviews (only 2), but it was a blessing in terms of my ability to soak in the scene and interact with those that were most passionately involved in the subculture that surrounded the band. I took advantage of the opportunity to sit back and watch and listen to old friends act like old friends. I took a few side adventures with individuals (a trip to the nearby hot springs particularly sticks out) which allowed me to get to know my participants on a more intimate level. And I sat in the stands with about 15 fans while another 20 or so played softball, an activity that had become tradition, and was typically orchestrated by the band's bass player.*

*The first two nights of the festival were held in the local community center which was actually an old converted basketball gym. There was an impromptu bar whose bartenders poured stiff drinks as they grooved to the music. There were couches in the corner on one side and a bench that ran down the opposite side of the arena. It probably wouldn't have mattered if there was any seating though, as the only time anyone sat down was at setbreak.*

*The third and final night of the event took place in an old bar called the Pioneer Bar. Not at all an ideal setting for a raucous rock and roll band to play, it still managed to capture my affection once the smoke cleared and the dust settled. At least 100 years old if it were a day, it was long and narrow, and not suitable for accommodating the nearly 200 in attendance. To further illustrate its inappropriateness as a venue for a concert, the bathroom sat at the opposite end of the entrance, right behind where the*

*band was set up. This caused for the facilities to be roped off so as to not crowd or disturb the band. Need to piss? There's a tree outside.*

### CHAPTER III

“THIS COULD BE THE KIND OF PLACE WHERE I PRETEND THAT I FIT IN”:

#### COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND LEISURE IMMERSION

Community is a concept that exists in a grey area due to the diverse meanings projected upon it by the different disciplines and popular culture. Community, however, is frequently a defining term for those intimately involved in leisure activities to describe their fellow participants (Dunlap, 2009). This paper seeks to elucidate how participation in music subcultures can lead to the establishment of communal bonds that come to be referred to as community, and in this instance, family. To better understand how activities such as this aid in the development of these close-knit relationships, it was necessary to examine the intricacies of individual and collective action in this form of leisure participation.

The fanbase of the rock band Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons are spread throughout the United States. While the following is small in terms of total numbers, the dedication level is high in terms of the number of concerts attended annually. The band plays a number of large yearly events where many of the most faithful make every effort to attend. In addition to the music, these events are lush grounds for renewing bonds and strengthening relationships with friends made through the music scene. For this reason, the subculture of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons offers a rich site for analyzing how the consumption of leisure (music) leads to the formation of a community and intimate feelings for one another often identified as family.

## **Introduction**

The setting of a concert environment is inherently an ephemeral one. Bands come play some venue in a town, fans come out and see the band, and for the most part, that is the end of the contract. In some instances, however, there can be a sense of connection formed through the fans' participation at the event, though after the event has transpired it is often difficult to capture that feeling again. But in the instances where followers have been moved by the performance of the music, we might see the growth of a bond between a fan and the music that inspires the individual to become more involved in the music scene surrounding the band, including the desire to see more of the band's concerts. As fans become more deeply immersed in the subculture surrounding their favorite group, they can come to form meaningful relationships with one another, oftentimes referred to as community. Arai and Pedlar (2003) said about community that:

It is more than a mere association; it is a unity in which the individuals are members. This membership is neither artificial nor instrumental, but rather has its own intrinsic value. The coming together of people around meaningful leisure is a potent illustration of community – community of celebration as described by Borgmann. (p. 192)

For the followers of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons, it is celebration through habitual, but intermittent, gathering that aids in the construction of their fan community. Glover and Stewart (2006) said that "leisure provides a window into community life" that allows for participants to engage in a social process that leads to an understanding of

their role in a community, thus connecting them to others in “need of being connected” (p. 325).

As I will display, the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons established meaningful relationships through their participation in the music scene that came to be identified as family. The use of the term family for the majority of participants appeared to be rooted in the socialization of values and traditions that came to be symbolic of those deeply immersed in the music scene. The strength of the invocation of the family metaphor, then, beckoned an idealized vision of comfort, loyalty and love through immersion in the subculture (Rosenblatt, 1994).

*Outside of the bigger annual festivals, fans typically attend shows that are closer to home or at least more regionally sensible. Oftentimes those in attendance will report on the events that transpired at the shows they attend via an email listserv dedicated to the band. After attending a show in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, one fan posted this to the group forum:*

*I've seen my share of Jerry shows in the last ten years but never have I seen a room of 40 people all singing along. From 'Thistle' through 'Comes a Time', the crowd and Jerry were like one big locomotive! It was beautiful and powerful and loud! (3/09/2014)*

*The sentiment captured here speaks to the overwhelmingly feeling of 'communion' people often sense within this music scene. Another fan, posting under the heading, "Thank you for a fantastic time in VC [Virginia City]," wrote a general email to the group after an installment of VC (2013) which started, "I'm not even going to try and*

*thank folks by name. There were so many small moments and so many folks that have become near and dear to me that it's just not possible.” From there she outlines some specific moments of interest for her and ends the email with “Much love to my Jmos’ [short for Jackmormons] community” (9/03/2013). But just what is ‘community’ exactly, and how do you know when you have one?*

### **Literature Review**

When fans begin to interact with likeminded others they create significant, but fleeting, moments of musical appreciation amongst one another, and with the band. These shared experiences are often referred to as *communitas* (Turner, 1969). This term is sometimes juxtaposed with the concept of community. Community is a broader term used to refer to many things, including a place, a group of people, and oftentimes the quality of a relationship (Creed, 2006). For this study, a group of people and the quality of a relationship are of particular interest. It is the ambiguity of the term community that calls for the necessity of *communitas*, and subsequently communion (Schmalenbach, 1977), or the loss of one’s sense of self in the collective, as defining factors in the ephemeral interactions that accompany participation in a music scene. The use of these concepts can allow for the potential of establishing a ‘community,’ even if the term only acts to serve as a point of reference.

#### ***Communitas and Communion***

*Communitas* is an appropriate term for the kind of communities that emerge in fan culture. Turner (1969) spoke of three types of *communitas*; normative, ideological, and spontaneous, the latter being most relevant to this paper’s focus on the establishment

of relationships through music. Spontaneous *communitas* is “richly charged with affects, mainly pleasurable ones” (p. 139) and is the type that often occurs during counter-culture events (Olaveson, 2001), whereas “life in structure is filled with objective difficulties” (Turner, 1969, p. 139). These difficulties Turner spoke of include having to make tough decisions regarding personal and social issues, sacrificing for the group, and overcoming obstacles to maintain one’s livelihood. Whereas in spontaneous *communitas*, it is of a ‘pure’ variety in that it is self-generating and therefore oppositional to the structure of society (Olaveson, 2001). The temporal moments of *communitas* allow for participants to be free of the burden and monotony of their daily lives due to the excitement of participation in celebratory events. Societal structure consists of the common knowledge that people share about civil discourse and public life; it comprises the preconceived notions people have for social exchange and the basis from which they operate when they engage in new manners of joint interaction. Spontaneous *communitas*, while transitory in its staying power in terms of the moment of occurrence, is a “transformative experience that goes to the heart of each person’s being and finds in it something communal and shared” (Olaveson, 2001, p. 105). The temporal spaces that comprise Turner’s (1969) *communitas* are where we see the powerful incidences of Schmalenbach’s (1977) communion that can lead to lasting communal attachments and the potential for the establishment of ‘community.’

An issue warranting further inquiry concerns how individuals form the elusive, often-misconstrued term ‘community’ through their involvement in music subcultures. If moments of communion, or the loss of one’s sense of self in the collective

(Schmalenbach, 1977), as observed through Turner's (1969) liminal stages of communitas are effective in creating significant shared moments of interaction between fans, how do these momentary experiences lead to the establishment of communal bonds that last beyond the encore? Why is this music scene conducive to forming community?

The objective guiding my inquiry was to describe the close-knit relationships that are formed through involvement in the music scene surrounding the band Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons. This includes exploring the fans' sense of communion (Schmalenbach, 1977) as evidenced through Turner's (1969) liminal stages of communitas. The fans of the band have rich, enduring connections to the music, and those that I spoke with all found a different means of becoming involved in the music scene that surrounds the band. As their involvement level increased, so too did their musical moments of epiphany that signaled to them that they had discovered something special. Along with these personal realizations often came the formations of friendships through the music which led to the establishment of what many of the participants referred to as family. The primary research question guiding this paper, then, is how does the consumption of a cultural product like music lead to the experiences of communion via communitas and the formation of a community and intimate feelings for one another often identified as family?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Due to the multiple appropriations of community, I found it best to draw from the communitarian conceptualization that expressed the mutual affection and shared appreciation evident in this music scene. Building off the work of Avineri and De-Shalit

(1992), Arai and Pedlar (2003) stated that the communitarian concept of community is one that leads to “social cohesion, openness and acceptance of difference, and engages people in the common good” (p. 194). Avineri and De-Shalit posited that communitarians are dependent on social attachments to affirm their individual identity. Since the individual is reliant on this community to aid in self-actualization, it follows that the individual seeks to serve the greater good of others who make up the community. The type of leisure embraced by communitarians is one “that brings people together around practices of shared meaning” (Arai & Pedlar, 2003, p. 188). This “shared meaning” is nurtured over time through the building of relationships with other fans and the development of a meaningful connection to the music.

### ***Attempting to Understand Community***

Because of the lack of consensus among the disciplines of the term community, not to mention the multiple appropriations of the term in everyday use, it is unlikely that we will come to a universal agreement on what is actually entailed by the use of the word ‘community.’ In the late nineteenth century, Ferdinand Tönnies (2011) crafted what has come to be recognized as one of the most influential sociological articulations of community through his concepts of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). He stated that community “starts from the assumption of a perfect unity of human wills as an original or natural condition which is preserved in spite of actual separation” (p. 37). This conceptualization was based on people who were intimately connected through shared livelihood and culture in rural villages. For Tönnies, community existed in terms of a past that was sought to be reawakened, and as

emphasized by Zygmunt Bauman (2001) in a more contemporary account, community “stands for the kind of world that is not available to us, but which we dearly wish to inhabit and we hope to repossess” (p. 3). More than a century separates these postulations and the common thread is that community does not currently exist. It is, however, something that we should aspire to finding for ourselves.

It seems, though, that community may be a difficult goal for collectives to strive to attain. In the closing statements of her book, *Against the Romance of Community*, Miranda Joseph (2002) stated that we need to “refigure our understandings of *here*, of who is here with us” (p. 174; emphasis original). This statement comes in response to the consideration of how we go about finding and understanding the important aspects of community, and how we proceed if an agreement can be reached. Essentially, it is a call to consider the people that comprise the elusive ‘community.’ Without individuals, social interaction, and the relationships that are formed through this exchange, the concept of community is one not worth considering. Perhaps, then, community should remain solely as a concept, and the emphasis should focus on the components that are most commonly attributed to community. The descriptions of Creed’s (2006) account of what can be meant by community (a location, a group of people, or quality of relationship) all imply a shared something, and this is often coupled with the genuine concern for those involved in that sharing. So if two aspects of the community we seek are mutual affection and shared appreciation, however fleeting, then perhaps those elements are of most importance to explore.

Following Schmalenbach (1977), Yack (1993) sought to illustrate a clear difference between the ambiguous term ‘community’ and what Schmalenbach called ‘communion.’ Those that experience communion consciously experience the loss of their individual identity through their involvement in a group activity that is intense in nature. Communion, however, is an ephemeral occurrence; it cannot be sustained. Communion disposes those involved to high levels of trust and cooperation with their fellows, whereas members of a community do not lose their sense of personal distinction (Yack, 1993). In a sense, Yack is reinforcing Turner’s (1969) original claims of *communitas*, in that community exists on the other side of a group’s shared engagement in communion. Community could simply be the remembrance, or re-visioning, of past social interactions. Community may exist solely as a mythical carrot, but it resides assuredly in lay vernacular as something to aspire to. After all, the non-existence of Santa Claus does not prevent children from dreaming of presents ending up under the tree.

As indicated above, communion is probably best understood alongside Victor Turner’s (1969) concept of *communitas*, which is the existence and participation in an unstructured collective that operates as a transformative experience for the individual and often leads to something shared with the others who are involved (Olaveson, 2001). *Communitas* exists in a space of liminality, which is the “betwixt and between” of social structures (Turner, 1969, p. 95), and as Turner stated, liminality implies that a ‘high’ can only be a ‘high’ with the existence and experience of a ‘low’ for which to provide balance. In effect, participation in *communitas* is dependent on doing so in relation to the

structures and realities of everyday life. This study seeks to address what aspects of participants' lives are most affected by their involvement, which includes the totality of their interaction surrounding the band, comprised of attending concerts, listening to the band's music outside of concert settings, making and maintaining relationships with other fans, the prioritization of their involvement in attending concerts, and the maintaining of a sense of identity through involvement with the band and its music. These elements in sum commonly comprise what is referred to as a 'music scene' (Moberg, 2011). In earlier work on the role of collective interaction and identity associated with music, the term 'subculture' has been used (Hebdige, 1979), and will be used interchangeably with 'music scene.'

Schmalenbach's (1977) experiences of communion, which take place in the participation of Turner's (1969) temporal spaces of *communitas*, provide a theoretical framework. Schmalenbach (1977) stated that communion does not come in to effect until there is a shared experience, and that these experiences that give rise to communion are decidedly individual in nature, yet only emerge as "collateral feelings" (p. 89). The coming together of individuals to participate in the music scene surrounding Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons allows for the establishment and maintenance of relationships through the transitory moments of elation that come with experiencing the band and its music.

## **Methods**

The research was conducted following Gonzalez' (2000) Four Seasons method approach which includes pre-ethnography, ethnography proper (immersion,

observations, and interviews), analysis of field notes, and the writing decisions derived from the cultural accounts I documented. The Four Seasons approach is guided by four ideals: (a) natural cycles, in that ethnographic research is conducted in a preparation, growth, harvest, rest sequence that continuously repeats itself ensuring that opportunities are not lost, only delayed; (b) an awareness of the interdependence of all things, which is a consideration that all that transpires within the culture I studied is data that is relevant to the research; (c) preparedness, which involves personal reflexivity in the authentic reporting of the events and discussions that are revealed (this often involved letting go of control in order to let the participants' voices shine); and finally, (d) harmony and balance, or the need to show the dichotomies that exist within the focus of study (Gonzalez, 2000). The use of this approach was beneficial to the investigation for several reasons. In order to understand how fans came to recognize their social involvement as a community, observation and inquiry involved both an emic and an etic understanding of the phenomenon (Crotty, 2010) that required a lengthy involvement in the music scene surrounding the band. To fully capture the essence of the participants' meanings they held for the relationships formed through the music, it was necessary to allow each informant to illustrate their involvement in their own words as much as possible. This meant letting the interview take tangents as introduced by each participant to fully capture the spirit. Finally, there had to be a context established for each participant in terms of their use of terms like community or family, as well as how the fleeting moments of interaction, both personal and collective, aided in the establishment of a community, as defined by the participants.

### ***Study Participants***

The primary data collection methods I employed for this investigation were in-depth interviews and participant observation. Participants were recruited through the help of gatekeepers (Tracy, 2013), influential people involved in the music scene that were integral to gaining knowledge of, and access to, other valuable informants, as well as snowball sampling which involved recommendations of other fans to interview as generated by the already established participants (Tracy, 2013). The primary participants were chosen through purposive sampling (Patton, 1990), which involved my knowledge of their level of involvement and included consideration of their history and frequency of participation, as well as their tendencies to be outspoken about their involvement and love for the band and its music. There were thirty-one participants, and two of those were interviewed twice. All interviews lasted at least one hour, but several went for as long as nearly three hours. Each interview was recorded with permission of the participant, and notes were taken during the session. All participants have been assigned a pseudonym to provide confidentiality, but based on some of the responses given, if people within the music scene were to read this paper, they may be able to surmise the identity of the speaker. The participants resided all over the United States, but mostly in the Western states, specifically Colorado and Oregon. The fanbase is predominately an “older” crowd, at least in terms of the average age commonly affiliated with touring rock and roll bands (Hunt, 2008). At the time of interview, the youngest participant was twenty-eight years old and the oldest was fifty-eight, with a mean average of forty-two years of age.

### ***In-depth Interviews***

I crafted a number of questions that were used as the guide for the interview, though all questions were written so as to allow for flexibility on the part of the interviewee to explore potential issues in greater detail based on their responses to my initial questions. All questions were open-ended so as to ensure the most complete response, and the introduction of relevant topics on the part of the participant was encouraged. Some sample questions included topics such as establishing their individual history with music, how they came to hear of the band's music, their memories of their first time seeing the band, what they hoped to get by attending the band's concerts, as well as how the music affected their quality of life outside the concert setting. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission, and notes were taken during the interview to prompt further questions, as well as to act as cues when it came time to write up field notes. I also included notes based on body language, change in speech pattern, and any emotional affect demonstrated by the participant so as to provide the richest detail in recording their responses and capturing the 'feeling' of their story.

### ***Participant Observation***

I undertook this study as both a participant and an observer. In the scenarios of the concert event where the performances were one-night stands (one show in a city), the emphasis was on the pre-show (often times at the bar) behavior and interactions, the during-show intra-actions (how specific individuals responded to the music; how was their manner of self-presentation) and interactions with others and the band, as well as any post-show gatherings. In the more festival-like atmospheres (multiple-day runs that

occur in the same city), in addition to what has just been mentioned, I also interacted and engaged with fellow fans in their process of living the tour-lifestyle during the entire duration of the event, including hanging out, eating meals, and any side-adventures that occurred, such as group softball games, and trips to hot springs (Virginia City, Montana, 8/2013). Documenting the communal interactions of fans outside of the concert setting, as well as the individual reflections on one's personal connection to the band and its music in the festival atmospheres provided another outlet for providing rich detail of the phenomenon. The sincere social exchanges of fans during their downtime surrounding concert events provided depth to the idea that a community, as expressed by the participants, did indeed exist. These observations and interactions of the fans speak to Gonzalez' (2000) assessment that all social engagement associated with a phenomenon is relevant to describing it in the most accurate way.

### ***Data Analysis and Interpretation***

The foundation of data analysis was through grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1999), in that an understanding was reached through an inductive process which spoke only to the truths of those participating in the research. The analysis process continued through the use of primary and secondary coding techniques that started with a thorough reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts, field notes, and selected excerpts of fan postings on an internet discussion board. Information deemed important based on its relevance to the research objectives was highlighted through the use of a multi-color highlighting technique to differentiate the coding of

each statement or observation. As part of the initial coding I assigned primary codes using, when possible, in vivo terminology (the language of the participant).

Next, I grouped primary codes into further concentrated categories through focused coding (Tracy, 2013). The data was managed with a physical organization system that included establishing a hierarchy of each quote or observation as it pertained to the category or research question (Saldaña, 2012). This method of data management best suited my manner of interpretation, understanding, and explanation because it allowed me to physically organize all the data in a space where I could see everything at once making it easier to look for overlap in themes, as well as to plot how I would incorporate the data into my writing. Once the categories were created, themes emerged that displayed the context and content of the phenomenon being considered. These data provided the foundation of my paper exploring the unique aspects of the music scene and its participants, as well as demonstrated the intricacies and significance of interpersonal relationships, intrapersonal meaning making, and the impacts of the music on quality of life in general.

## **Findings**

### ***Establishing a Sense of Community***

*The Dixie Mattress Festival (DMF) is entirely dependent on fan support to pull the weekend off; the majority of labor is volunteered. Before the latest installment (2014) I was reaching out to a few fans that I had hoped to interview over the weekend. One of them, Arlo, informed me that he would be arriving the day before the festival started to lend a hand in erecting the stage and sound system. When I arrived at the festival*

*grounds mid-afternoon on the first of the three-day event, I was greeted by other fans, Julia and Mallory, who were checking people off the “paid” list and selling tickets to others who had not purchased tickets in advance. Still others walked from campsite to campsite passing out garbage bags and explaining the amenities (or lack thereof) in the vicinity. It was truly a collective endeavor.*

As was mentioned in the theoretical framework section, the study of ‘community’ should focus on shared meanings and concern for others involved in the communal setting. By focusing on these components I have extracted two of the most significant aspects from the otherwise ambiguous term ‘community,’ and this allows for an understanding of the importance of interactions and relationships as described by the participants. The following are excerpts of participants’ responses to the ephemeral moments of communion that transpire in the concert setting, and how they are integral to establishing a sense of community surrounding the band and its music, as specifically indicated by most, if not all, of the fans I interviewed. As the level of involvement increased, accompanied by an increasing sense of connection to the music, the fans attended to issues of personal identity and meaning making, and did so in a shared environment with likeminded others.

### ***Ephemeral Moments***

*At the DMF of 2012, on the final night, the band played the song ‘Life’s Just Bitchin.’ Originally recorded with Joseph’s first band, Little Women, in the 1980s, it is a much loved song that had not been played in several years. At the first DMF in 2009, the promoters attempted to write the playing of the song into the contract; Joseph simply*

*crossed it out. On this Sunday night of 2012, a weary, but happy crowd passed glances around the cramped barn in astonishment of what they were hearing. The song seemed to capture much of the emotion that fans sought from this band. Many had never heard it played live and it seemed as if it were dedicated to this close-knit group of folks who had weathered a cold, wet weekend to see their favorite band. On this night, life was indeed just bitchin.*

Towards the end of most of my interviews I often asked the participants if any moments stuck out to them as special at Jackmormons' concerts, whether they were music-related or not. While speaking with Brett (8/31/2013), he referred to a trip to Costa Rica to see the band with his current girlfriend who he had just started dating at the time:

[We were] dancing in the ocean with bio-luminescent phytoplankton lapping up at our feet and the band is right there. We're in the ocean, listening to them play, glowing plankton. [And] it's like everybody [is] coming together; when you get everybody together, its collective energy. When you get enough people together, you can get carried away in the emotion of it.

For Brett, an almost surreal experience of interacting with his girlfriend and other fans in a beautiful, secluded environment while listening to his favorite band gave him a sense of satisfaction that was overwhelming. He felt that being able to share such an experience with people he had only just come to know allowed for them to have a connection that is often hard to find in other social outlets, and was instrumental to establishing a "sense of fellowship" with one another.

While talking to Bella (8/03/2014) about her first time seeing Jerry Joseph play (which was a solo show), she described the evening as “intimate.” She further elaborated on the night by saying:

I loved it. It was a really small venue, and there were maybe fifteen people in attendance. The passion and emotion with which he played, I mean he could have been playing to a room of 50,000 people; he was giving the same intense performance. It was just so emotionally raw for one person to be standing up there by himself, and the content of the lyrics, he just evoked so much emotion that I was blown away. It was somebody bearing their soul.

I asked Bella if she had ever experienced anything like that before to which she replied, “no.” I was curious if this type of sensation had ever been duplicated through her involvement in the music scene surrounding the band, and while she said every interaction resulted in her feeling “happy, hopeful, uplifted [and] *just good*,” that first time was special because it opened her eyes to something she had never before encountered and immediately found to be significant to her life.

Susanne (12/30/2013) had something similar to say in regards to her first experience seeing the band. She said, “I finally found someone playing this hard music that I was looking for but didn’t know I was looking for. When I first saw them, I was like, ‘this is *exactly* the kind of music I like.’”

### ***Shared Appreciation***

*On the third day of most DMFs there is an acoustic set in the late afternoon before the final electric set to close out the weekend. This past DMF (2014) I looked*

*around the crowd to see everyone seated casually (which is the opposite of an electric show) before the show with their heads slowly swiveling trying to locate the friends they had been renewing bonds with all weekend; they were met with glances of a quick nod and smile in acknowledgement. Sitting next to Catie, she commented to me, “We all love Jerry. We don’t ask for anything other than the gift of his music.”*

The special moments that often transpire for fans at the concerts are very important for feeling a personal connection to the music, just as the intimate relationships that are formed through shared interaction lead to developing important connections that transcend mere friendships. Another important component in establishing the sense of community that was reported by fans is that of shared appreciation. While this can and does occur detached from the concert setting, it is often the environment of the concert where you will see the sincere exchanges of elation and appreciation shared amongst the fans. The preceding statement does not apply to every fan in attendance; there are many who show up that have little or no interaction with other fans. Those that participated in this research, however, all had several friends with whom these interactions occurred, and many spoke to their desire to meet and develop similar friendships with other passionate fans of the band.

I sat down to talk with Dani (12/28/2013) after the first night of the four-day New Year’s run in Portland, Oregon, and I was commenting about how she is frequently one of the “front row kids” (those that are always in the front row, as close to the stage as possible) and wondered why she felt the need to be up there, so close to the band. She responded:

I have my eyes closed and I'm just taking it all in. I enjoy the camaraderie of being amidst a group of people and dancing and hugging. And when a song comes on that you're really excited about hearing, I can just look around and share that with others and remind myself of how important this is to me and how grateful I am to have these wonderful people to share it with.

While speaking with Ivan (6/28/2014) about the differences in the music scene surrounding the Jackmormons and his previous affiliation with Widespread Panic, he said:

[The Jackmormons] is a lot more of a personal scene. You actually meet people. If there are only 20 people and they go 2-3 nights in a row, it's pretty quick to meet people. A lot of why the Jackmormons' scene is so special is because it's remained so small. How could we all know each other if there was 100,000 of us? That's too many. These are friends that become friends outside of the concert. Friends transcend the music scene. The people you meet become your community.

### ***Feeling a Part of the Community***

*This past December the band played a semi-annual private event in Boulder, Colorado. Nestled right between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the event was a potluck open to about 40-50 fans who were friends of the promoters. The event was held at one of the promoters' art gallery. Fans came early to share food, exchange stories and get ready for a night of amazing music. There was an impromptu contest for best dish served, and everyone made sure to clean up after themselves to ensure the storefront*

*stayed in pristine condition. To further capture the sense of community that transpired on this night, friends gathered for group pictures and made plans to gather for upcoming holiday events. When it came time for the band to play, there was no cue needed; everyone filed into the music room to hear the band that brought them all together in the first place.*

In many instances the participants often used the terms family and community interchangeably, and when they would, I would try to get them to distinguish the differences. Kim (6/29/2013), a former Deadhead, said that, “Family is about caring, community is about shared values. Family is I accept you, I like you for who you are, possibly love you; community is a larger system of shared values.” Kim was the sole participant that made a somewhat clear distinction between the two terms. For Kim, the shared values of community consisted of respect for one another that extended to maturity in how you behave at the concerts, as well as sincerity and positivity when engaging with others in the music scene. Her comments echo something I addressed in the theoretical framework section as perhaps one of the more important components of the elusive community, and it reinforced my interest to see if others found shared values essential to establishing a sense of community around the band.

Dave (7/24/2013) called the community feel surrounding the band a “church” and a “traveling country club.” He said that many of the friendships he formed were full of “texture based on longevity.” He went on to say that, “This community is really laid back, and really accepting. For a guy who never belonged to a church and went out on his own, ending up here, I’m very lucky to have found this community.” As we neared

the end of our interview, I asked Dave for closing thoughts, and he told the story of a friend who he had known before his involvement with the band, but who was also deeply entrenched in the music scene surrounding the Jackmormons. This friend, Tom (a participant), had been dealing with substance abuse issues as well as a serious illness in his family. Dave said, “[Tom] needs us as much as we need [Tom] (crying). It feels good to share that and think about him.” I asked Dave if his relationship with Tom had grown stronger through their mutual immersion in the band’s subculture, to which he responded:

Absolutely. [Tom’s] counting on us. When there is a friend in need, if [Tom] didn’t have this community, and all he has is his history of substance abuse, (crying) and whether it’s perfect or not, it’s more safety lines than he would have any other way. We care about each other. The support I’ve had from my Jmos’ (short for Jackmormons) friends over the years has only been bolstered by my involvement, and Jerry [Joseph] is our rallying point.

### ***The Closeness of Family***

*The Dixie Mattress Festival (DMF) of 2012 (the fourth installment) was special, but for a different reason than simply the music. The promoters, a husband and wife team, were celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary that weekend. On Sunday, the third and final day of the festival, the couple had a renewal of their vows at the venue and everyone in attendance was invited. Of the nearly 200 there for the music, the couple knew most of those in attendance and had established very close bonds with several. There is often a spirit of fellowship that surrounds this band, and especially so*

*at the annual festivals which tend to pull in fans from all over the country, so it was not at all strange for this romantic celebration to take place. If anything it was appropriate; 'family' is a term often used by the participants to describe their friends in the fanbase.*

As mentioned earlier, the use of the term 'family' in reference to friends made in the music scene surrounding the band was a common, if not nearly unanimous relational association. The designation of family was never introduced, but typically surfaced when I would inquire into how the participants would describe the fanbase, or when I asked about the friendships they had made through their participation. By probing further into the depths of their choice of this categorization, the participants predominately used the word family in relation to their biological upbringings. These comparisons to blood-ties produced mixed results as to the quality of their original 'family' associations. While some had what they described as "wonderful" upbringings and relationships with their families (Tom, 12/30/2012; Bella, 8/03/2014), others had childhoods that featured physical or emotional abuse (Matt, 12/31/2012; Janet, 6/15/2013) or neglect (Kim, 6/29/2012) that caused them to seek the love commonly associated with family through friends. Those that reported negative family associations, however, knew what they would want and expect from a family member, and many came to find that sensation with the friends they made through participation in this music scene.

While speaking with Becky (8/15/2013) about the difference between her friends she knows through music and those she knows through other outlets, she unintentionally divulged that she considers her friends made through the music of Jerry Joseph, as her "Jerry family." I asked her why she used the word 'family;' to which she compared the

relationships to that of a biological family, in that, you don't have to see each other or speak often, but when you do come together "you're still family." Becky went on to say that she, and the other fans that she is close to, live their lives and listen to the music on their own, but "then get to come together and exalt in joy [together] at the same time." She and her fellow fans share a love for Jerry Joseph's music, and through this shared connection, it "elevates [us] to a level of understanding without ever having to speak about it."

Family was a very common term used by the fans I spoke with, but just as other common terms are overused in lay vernacular, such as love or hate, not to mention community, I always made it a point to delve deeper into why the participant chose that specific terminology, and tried to establish the context for which they drew from. While speaking with Bill and Viv (4/12-13/2014), a married couple, in Alaska (they had traveled up from Portland, Oregon to see the band), I asked them why it was so important to travel so far to shows, especially when the band played in Portland so often (they had traveled to Costa Rica only two months earlier to see the band as well). Bill mentioned that their social circle had largely become Jackmormons' fans, and when they attended shows in their hometown, most of their interactions with others from different states were limited. But by traveling to "destination" shows, it allowed for them to actually "hang out" and get to know their fellow fans intimately. Bill went on to say that, "It's about the family; being with the family and the band members too. They're part of the family." I asked Bill why he chose "family," and he said it was "an easy moniker to put on what we have here between us." Still not fully convinced of the weight or value

of his use of the term, I dug a little deeper. I asked the couple if what they share amongst their Jackmormons' "family" was unique, to which Viv responded, "Some of the shows are like family reunions. We have a shared culture and a similar language about experiences we've all been through and shared through the music." Viv went on to say that "bonding because of the shared emotional intensity" happens more because of the close family-like connections.

For Bill and Viv their involvement in the music scene surrounding the band (nearly 20 years for the pair) had been integral to establishing relationships that transcended merely being friends. The shared sentiment for the music allowed for a "similar language" that helped them to relate to one another and establish bonds that were especially meaningful. Jack (6/28/2014) made a similar comment:

The way that we all have a commonality about how we can enjoy music and share that with one another is the source of a lot of the bonds in this circle. That's what it's all about; ultimately you have the feeling that you're not alone and there's togetherness. The lyrics can really do that, and the feelings you have as fans – you can just have a look and know that you're feeling the same way because of the music. It helps to strengthen bonds with those whom you are closest to.

### **Discussion**

The relationships amongst the fans that were developed in the music scene surrounding the band Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons involved a complex network of interactions. I have presented ethnographic data to showcase the connections of the fans

to the music, how those connections led to the establishment of friendships, and how those friendships grew into important social networks often referred to as family. These experiences took place in the ephemeral connections of communion (Schmalenbach, 1977) as evidenced through Turner's (1969) temporal spaces of *communitas*.

Engagement in *communitas* was necessary for this group of fans to establish the community that came to be a significant component of their involvement. As relationships grew, and real bonds were forged between fans, valuable experiential connections of communion emerged that signaled a sense of fellowship that was unique and reinforcing of the connection to one another and the music. As these instances of communion replicated themselves over time, the value of the relationships were nurtured into what became described as family by the participants.

### ***Communitas***

The initial involvement of fans began with a personal attraction to the music. Whether or not it was introduced by someone close to them, the sense of enjoyment and connection that was stimulated by the music evolved to hold a place of profound importance in their lives. The music acted, amongst other things, as a conduit to engage in social interaction. The fans began to develop friendships with likeminded others that not only possessed the potential to reinforce personal sentiment to the music, but also created opportunities for them to engage meaningfully in a setting of shared appreciation. These interactions transpired in the structureless environs of the concert experience, void of the mundanity and responsibilities of daily life. As Turner (1969) stated, *communitas* emerges where structure is not present. These temporal moments

were then both indispensable and conducive to creating the air of freedom necessary for participants to engage in their personal paths of release, recharging, catharsis and joy.

When the fans habitually engaged in the temporal spaces of *communitas* over the duration of their involvement in the music scene, the seeds of fellowship and friendship were planted.

### ***Community***

Yack (2012) said that every community relies on imagination to connect its constituents to one another as “objects of special concern and loyalty” (p. 59). As evidenced in this research, the fans overwhelmingly expressed sincere concern for others’ well-being, whether it be as a general well-wishing, or more specifically in the case of ailments and illnesses that have affected certain fans’ lives. It is through this act of caring for others, whether it be expressed openly as through the email listserv, or individually through one-on-one interaction and social exchange, that we see further confirmation of the uses of terms like community (and more so, family) to describe many of the relationships developed by participants of this fanbase.

So while it may be easy to use a term like community as an ascription to our real or perceived sense of connection, if we are to do so, we have to proceed with designating the components that are most essential to defining community; mutual affection and shared appreciation. Arai and Pedlar (2003) said that, “community is more than a mere association; it is a unity in which individuals are members. This membership is neither artificial nor instrumental, but rather has its own intrinsic value” (p. 192). Their mention of ‘individuals’ is key to the establishment of community and integral to the mutual

affection and shared appreciation that comprise it. If a community is to exist, and one is to be a part of it, it must appeal to one's sense of self, thus reinforcing Yack's (2012) claim. The others who reside within the community also must share some degree of similarity in terms of interest, personality or desired outcomes; otherwise the 'community' will not be conducive to maintaining the key components of mutual affection and shared appreciation. Once these vital components have been established, however, the potential for greater bonds is created through experiences of communion.

### ***Communion***

The collective experiences extended to genuine concern for others which contributed to the strengthening of the sense of community that was described by the fans of the band. During the concert experience it was common for fans to share brief, but meaningful interactions, dance together, embrace one another, or simply share space, even if no words were exchanged. This last occurrence spoke to the comfort level that exists amongst the fans, as they are content to be in each other's presence, even in the absence of conversation. There is a sense of liberty to be one's self and to not be judged within this music scene that for the participants, further contributed to their reciprocal sense of connection to one another and their frequent designation as family.

Schmalenbach (1977) stated that the 'emotional ecstasy' often associated with communion is fleeting, but "its felt impact is deep" (p. 28). The fans built on these experiences of communion over time to develop the relationships into what came to be described as family.

## *Family*

While most definitions of family are based upon marriage or biological connections as decided in the legal system (Carbone, 2005; Meyer, 2006), with the turn towards the legalization of same-sex marriage in many states (Pfisterer & Wynn, 2010) and the demise of adherence to traditional family structures in younger age brackets (Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2007), the characterization of what a family entails is ever-changing. There has been little research conducted on the socio-emotional aspects of family outside of relationships that involve marriage or children, yet the prevalence of people to refer to non-related friends as family is high (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Cranston, 2010). Descriptions of unrelated individuals as family occur in popular nonfiction frequently on topics such as the military (Parnell, 2013), professional sports (Pearlman, 2009) and rock and roll (Jackson, 2000) to name just a few.

The study of family and leisure has largely been done so with the ‘traditional’ definition of family as its foundation (Taylor, Ward, Zabriskie, Hill, & Hanson, 2012; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Whether nuclear, blended or extended, the focus of research on family is primarily done in regards to the parent-children (and sometimes grandparent) relationship (Buswell, Zabriskie, & Lundberg, 2012; Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011). There is little examination given to non-traditional appropriations of the use of family, even when those appropriations occur with the same foundational tenets of love, appreciation, understanding and acceptance. This is where we build on the concept of community to better understand family. If community exists as a past to be

reawakened as Tönnies (2011) said decades ago, or serves as a refuge from an uncertain world that protects our collective identity as Glover and Stewart (2006) claimed in a more contemporary consideration, we know that the concept is both aspirational and conducive to producing and maintaining comfort and identity; two vital components of familial relationships.

For the participants of this study, regardless of the quality of their familial upbringing, they predominately aspired to building and maintaining valuable friendships, and these often came to be known as family. There existed, however, a period of liminality in the attainment of these valuable relationships. From first entry into the music scene until the point of deep immersion that was accompanied by these profound and lasting relationships that eventually came to be referred to as family, there were necessary stages of development of the relationships formed. These relations started as acquaintances and slowly were built into the rich affiliations they are today. It is the setting of this music scene coupled with shared interests and openness to others that constituted the grounds of community that paved the way to the establishment of a sense of family that was shared amongst many of the participants. The building blocks of community, we see, are evident in the foundation of strong familial relationships.

Loose relationships can evolve into communities through a common cause, goal or preference that involves commitment to seeing an objective reached or experience realized. When these shared values and reciprocal sentiments through mutual interaction are developed and built over time, the relationships residing within that community can produce a heightened sense of appreciation and affection that comes to resemble the

closeness and feelings often attributed to a family. This allows for the use of the term ‘family’ to expand and embrace non-traditional, but close groups of unrelated people through shared appreciation, mutual affection and the building of significant relationships. These interactions that led to the development of relationships referred to as family were possible because of the structureless, celebratory experiences of *communitas* (Turner, 1969) that occurred in the concerts and festivals of the band Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons. Equally as important, the meaningful, shared instances of communion (Schmalenbach, 1977) that occurred in the concert environments allowed for the formation and strengthening of relationships through shared values and a deep connection to the music.

For Tönnies (2011), community existed in terms of a past that was sought to be reawakened. And while the fans that comprise this community are not harkening back to centuries past, they are returning to their past shared experiences accrued through the subculture surrounding the band that saw their development from an individual who was attracted to the music, to individuals who felt at “home” in the company of their “family” when they interacted in the music scene surrounding the band.

### ***Conclusion***

It is my assertion that leisure should continue to be explored as the domain for which to establish relationships that transcend merely being ‘just friends’ or communities. The conscious invocation of the metaphor of family by the participants in this study suggests the need for the evolution of the concept to describe the close-knit bonds that can be established through passionate immersion in leisure activities.

Cranston (2010) asserted that the metaphor of family is often used to “draw boundaries around and limit larger concepts” of community (p. 588). If the ephemeral, serendipitous or intentional communities that are formed through leisure harness the potential to establish significant, reciprocal relationships based in mutual appreciation, shared affection and loyalty that come to be embraced as family, then it is our job as researchers to examine how these relationships are formed *through* leisure, and how they extend into other domains of life. Much as Dunlap (2009) called for greater inquiry into “private, grassroots efforts to rediscover the importance of leisure for the well-being of individuals and communities” (p. 432), I challenge the leisure academy to go beyond community studies and embrace the family dialogue as a very real, and necessary, concept in understanding how the passionate consumption of leisure brings unrelated people together to levels of connections not often considered in the discipline. The fanbase of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons is evidence to this need.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERLUDE II

In 2006 I bought every studio album Jerry Joseph had ever released that I didn't already own. At that point I was still unaware of the accessibility of his live catalog on the Live Music Archive, so my only options for consumption were his official releases. Over the course of the next year I slowly absorbed more and more of his music. Eventually it started to become very meaningful to me. Certain albums were used to set a mood, and certain songs captured a feeling I wanted to occupy. His music had transcended background; I was truly appreciating it for the art it was, as well as the meanings I had begun to draw from it and apply to my life.

I managed a small music venue during my time in my master's program, and I had asked the promoter to book Jerry. When he did, finally, in February of 2008, I was elated. I knew I wanted the concert to be a success, and that required drawing people out to this sleepy college town in the middle of the cornfields. I drove north two hours in the weeks before the show to Madison, Wisconsin, home to the University of Wisconsin, to post fliers and leave handbills at the "cool" places in town. I drove ninety minutes east to Chicago to do the same at a popular jamband's concert, hoping to find likeminded people willing to make the drive.

When the day of the show came, I waited eagerly to meet Jerry for the first time. I even brought a drumhead for him to sign. I had never before, or never since, asked anyone for an autograph. I got my picture taken with Jerry right before the show, and he

tolerated my fandom all very well. After his performance I followed him down to the green room where the bands got to relax before and after a show. We both had been drinking, so maybe this allowed him to be more tolerant of my eagerness to interact, but we seamlessly found our way into a ninety minute conversation about politics, music, books and current events. Towards the end of our conversation he gave me his email address, and I asked him to sign one more thing; the booklet from one of his albums. On it he wrote, “Justin, thanks for being smart. Jerry Joseph.” It made my night.

As time went on, my dedication to the music grew. In August of that year (2008) I made the twelve-hour drive from Boulder, Colorado to Virginia City, Montana, the site of one of the band’s most popular annual festivals. I slowly began to meet people who were as equally attracted to the music, if not more so, and I started to realize that there was a definite following for this band, even if it were rather small, especially when compared to that of similar bands like Widespread Panic.

Another thing happened in tandem with my growth of attraction to the music. I started to consider Jerry separately from the music. Not because I was becoming fanatic or idolizing of him, but because I started to appreciate his career and dedication, and the amount of time and energy that went in to producing this music that was growing on me. I recognized him as an artist, something I’m not sure I had ever done before as a music fan. I mostly consumed music in the past, not really giving much consideration to the effort or the person behind my enjoyment and enthusiasm. In these moments of separating the artist from his music I began to develop a respect for his ability, an appreciation for his gift of talent that transcended into a gift for his fans through

consumption, and a curiosity about the man behind the music. I knew he was well-read, well-traveled, and intelligent, and I began to respect these valuable qualities apart from the music. But when I did allow the whole package to merge together in one powerful consideration of him, I recognized that he had a very unique ability to be affable and inspirational, in spite of the rumors of brashness and negativity that often followed him. Jerry possessed the ability to move audiences; not just physically, but emotionally, and intellectually too.

## CHAPTER V

### “YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS STILL MY GREATEST GIFT”: THE CHARISMATIC QUALITIES OF MUSICAL PERFORMERS

A group of local musicians were performing at a street festival in Portland, Oregon and started playing Marvin Gaye’s classic hit *What’s Going On*. When it was time for Jerry Joseph to take a verse, he shouted “**WHAT’S GOING ON?**” to the throngs of onlookers. So, you might ask? That’s the title of the song. What’s the big deal? Well, the big deal is only obvious to those fans of Joseph. He is well-known for his worldliness and intellect, and his sincere concern for issues of social justice. When he screamed “What’s going on?” it wasn’t a rocker’s take on an R&B classic, it was a literal question to the audience. What is going on in our world? Why is there so much violence, so much hate? Why do we, the richest, most powerful country sit back idly and generally respond apathetically to the atrocities of the world? In short, what are we doing here?

This story was told to me by Viv at the end of my interview with her and her husband Bill in Girdwood, Alaska (4/12-13/2014). She had always known the song as a ‘pop’ tune from her youth, and had never really considered its meaning or the intention of the original performer. Viv said, “He [Joseph] turned the meaning to ‘pay attention to what is happening here.’ I watched everybody around me understand what that song meant for the very first time.”

I asked if they perceived Joseph any differently because of his role as a performer. As was common of many of the participants, Bill (Viv’s husband) invoked a

language of spirituality and said, “We all kind of worship him.” Viv said she was “starstruck” by Joseph’s ability and persona. When I probed for clarification, Viv and Bill then decided tremendous respect may be more accurate than ‘worship,’ but you could tell Viv wasn’t entirely comfortable with that designation either. She said that even though it is a very strong word, “genius” may be the best description of what Jerry Joseph is for her. She then went on to tell the preceding story, and ended her statement with this thought: “That’s when I use words like ‘genius.’ When an artist has the ability to change and define the conversation and make you think about it. When he or she can make you realize your place in the world, and your ability and responsibility to make a difference.”

### **Introduction**

Because of the absence of mainstream popularity, and a considerably small, but faithful allegiance of fans, many of the followers of Jerry Joseph with whom I spoke felt as if they were part of something very special, and his charisma and musical ability is a significant reason for that sense of connection. As this analysis will show, musical performers, particularly Jerry Joseph in this case, possess great ability to affect fan sentiment and thought through performance, and this can lead to the fans holding the performer on a pedestal in terms of their respect for the ability to significantly impact their lives.

The reality of the situation is that there are rarely opportunities for fans to interact with their beloved musical performers. Lohof (1972) posited that distance makes the musician into a “great man [sic],” someone with whom the fan wants to have a real

relationship. The distance that is created on the stage acts as a buffer between “the intimacies of the hero” and “the curiosities” of the fan (p. 164). As cultural performers, musicians possess the ability to reinforce the values and dreams of their fans, have the capacity to seduce the audience, and create transcendent paths that can aid in the development of both individual and collective fan identity (Dotter, 1987). This sense of identity can come to be viewed as maintained through the performer’s musical abilities as well as the message they share through their music, leading to the musician possessing an air of charisma in the eyes of adoring fans.

While there has been significant research conducted on the role of charismatic leaders’ abilities to affect their followers in religious (Bentz, 2012; Malina, 1984), political (Post, 1986; Schram, 1967), and organizational structural systems (Harvey, 2001; Sankowsky, 1995), there has been little written on the role of charismatic leaders’ ability to shape leisure behavior, specifically within the realm of music outside of Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead (Adams, Ernest, & Lucey, 2014; Barnes, 2011; Pearson, 1987).

In this paper I explored the individual relationships, both real and perceived, of the fans to Jerry Joseph. I relied on Max Weber’s (1978) foundational and theoretical concept of charisma, which he defined as a “certain quality of an individual’s personality by virtue of which he [sic] is set apart from ordinary men [sic] and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (p. 241). As I show in this paper, Jerry Joseph, in the eyes of the fans I spoke with,

embodies this definition. The primary question guiding this research was; how do fans use the performer's persona and gifts to interpret their lives?

### **Theoretical Framework**

*My interview with Bill and Viv took place over two days to accommodate the beauty and abundance of recreation in the Frontier State, and it was nice to give them the night, and a concert, to think about their relationship to the music before concluding. After the second installment, we all met at the third and final night of the Alaska run to a much smaller and more intimate crowd than had been there the previous Friday and Saturday nights. The band was playing their song LAX, written about the unexpected death of Joseph's father, and Viv told me about how Joseph had written that song at the time her mom was dying of brain cancer. She found the song to be quite fitting to her experience of dealing with her mom's passing, and that she also felt she had a connection to Joseph, through the music, about shared tragedy. After she told me the story, we both returned to the music, but I took a step back to consider what had just been articulated. In the midst of our most trying of life's experiences, we instinctively search for reason and meaning as to why 'this' is happening. And though it doesn't make the heartbreak any easier to get over, music can be integral to aiding our ability to cope and move on. And when a song is able to capture our emotion, and provide some comfort, it follows that we might be thankful to the artist who penned that song. Because in our time of need they wrote the song for us.*

### *The Charismatic Individual*

Max Weber (1978) defined charisma as a “certain quality of an individual’s personality by virtue of which he [sic] is set apart from ordinary men [sic] and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (p. 241). Leaders such as Adolph Hitler, Winston Churchill, and Mahatmas Gandhi have all fallen under the category of charismatic figureheads. Their ability to connect with their audiences and transcend the status quo has allowed them to be remembered, for better or worse, for their gift of relating to the masses. In a study by Conger, Kanungo, and Menon (2000), the authors stated that under charismatic leadership, it is likely to find follower effects of heightened reverence, trust and satisfaction with the leader. In this paper I establish that the charismatic qualities of Jerry Joseph aid in the creation of the significant attachment many of his fans have for him and his music.

DePertuis (1986), citing Weber (1978), said that the power of charisma rests upon the belief in revelation and heroes, and manifestations of these acts of heroism are extremely valuable to followers. Perhaps it is that Jerry Joseph is placed on a pedestal and portrays a sort of hero role to the adoring fans. If this is so, it is not something that happened overnight, as it was earned through dedication to his craft, the quality of his music, and his ability to appeal to audiences. Perinbanayagam (1971) stated that charisma is created by symbolic processes that involve appropriate presentation of selves, and the management of enhanced identities. These presentations to the adoring fans are integral to the creation and maintenance of the performer’s charisma. However,

how does the charismatic quality come into effect in the beginning? Weber (1978) claimed that charisma is not actually the property of the person or the situation, but that charisma is the product of the *interaction* between the person (musician) and the situation. The performer cannot lose charisma, because he or she never possessed it. The loss of charisma can only happen if the musician fails to demonstrate a sense of mastery or representation in their performance.

Thomas Dow (1969) said the best representation of a charismatic leader would be that of an individual who can inspire belief in his or her message, not because of particularly facilitating conditions, but in spite of tremendous odds. This is evident in the music scene that surrounds Jerry Joseph. Even though Joseph has performed extensively for more than thirty years, he has never reached significant popular acclaim. He has a very loyal fanbase throughout the United States, but his concerts are mostly smaller affairs, sometimes having as few as 25 people in attendance (though they just as often attract several hundred). The music business is an increasingly difficult profession to be in, and when the monetary compensation for performers is less than they would like, their perseverance to stay active must rely on the strength of conviction to their craft. And the fans play no small part in encouraging the band to continue making and playing music. William Swatos Jr. (1981) said that charisma is fundamentally social, and is always subject to validation by the followers. This can be seen by the participation of passionate fans that come out to support their favorite musician as often as possible.

Joseph has an uncanny ability to greatly affect his audience from the stage. Not only does he possess superior musical skills in his guitar playing and songwriting ability,

but he exudes consistent, high energy throughout all of his performances. Spencer (1973) said that the role of the charismatic innovator possesses both mastery which inspires awe, and representation that inspires enthusiasm and love. I would be remiss to not make reference to the religious undertones that often accompany charismatic leaders; not necessarily that they always conjure thoughts of the divine, but that they possess the ability to summon “mystical states of consciousness” (Bryan, 2002, p. 33) that are inspirational and transforming of the intrapersonal relationship (Barnes, 2011). As has been documented in earlier research, many fans of Joseph frequently have spiritual moments at his performances, and some consider it to be their “church” and the place where they go to “cleanse their soul.” It is also important to note that Joseph is commonly referred to as “The Reverend” by both his fans and contemporaries in the music industry.

Joseph exemplifies many of the qualities attributed to charismatic individuals as revealed through the aforementioned accounts. As I will display, Joseph’s charisma resides in how his fans respond to him because of his lyrical content (musical message; Dow, 1969), performative abilities (awe and inspiration; Spencer, 1973) and his gift of serving as a role model for overcoming hardships and finding one’s way (enhanced identities; Perinbanayagam, 1971). In short, Joseph possesses ‘exceptional qualities’ (Weber, 1978).

### **Methods**

Gonzalez’ (2000) Four Seasons methodology was adopted for this study. This method includes pre-ethnography, ethnography proper (immersion, observations,

interviews), field note analysis, and the subjective interpretation of the phenomenon.

This approach is guided by four ideals: (a) natural cycles: investigation is conducted in a preparation, growth, harvest, rest sequence; (b) acknowledgement of the interconnection of all objects of inquiry; (c) attention to the personal reflexivity involved in reporting the events and dialog; and finally, (d) harmony and balance, and the necessity of presenting the contrasts inherent to the study (Gonzalez, 2000). This approach was adopted because of the amount of time it takes to find, coordinate, and speak with key informants, as well as due to the necessity to create welcoming environments where the participants feel safe and open to expressing their appreciation for Joseph.

### ***Study Participants***

In-depth interviews and participant observation were the primary data collection methods used for this examination. Interviews were conducted with the help of gatekeepers, (Tracy, 2013), well-connected people involved in the music scene that introduced me to key informants. Snowball sampling was generated by the recommendations of existing participants (Tracy, 2013). There were thirty-one participants, two of whom which were interviewed twice. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to offer a degree of confidentiality, though if other fans from the music scene were to read this manuscript, they might surmise the identity of informants. The contributors live throughout the United States, primarily in the Western states. The fanbase is older than the average age commonly affiliated with touring rock and roll bands (Hunt, 2008). The youngest participant was twenty-eight and the oldest was fifty-eight at the time of interview, with an average age of forty-two years.

Because this study focused on the most passionate members of the fanbase, defined by level of involvement based on frequency of attendance and declared devotion, there were a substantial number of fans who were much more casual in their association with the band and its music who were not included in this study. While most of those that attended the annual festivals and destination events were more than likely to fall within the boundaries of ‘passionate’ fan, there were others who only went to shows occasionally, typically when they were more reasonably accessible, often in their hometowns. Just as you or I may go see a band on a whim, or at the insistence of a friend, those who possessed similar motives for attending Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons’ shows would likely not perceive Jerry Joseph to have charismatic qualities. Though harder to access, a study of casual fans of any music could prove fruitful on learning about motives to participate without becoming completely absorbed by involvement.

### ***In-depth Interviews***

An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was used in order to capture the most complete responses from the participants. The participants were encouraged to introduce topics relevant to their experiences within the subculture. This included their impression of the effect of the music on their personal being, as well as on that of others affiliated with the band. Interviews lasted at least one hour, though several lasted up to three hours. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission. I kept note of body language, changes in speech pattern and emotion as demonstrated during the interview. I took notes to serve as cues to ask further follow-up questions, as well as to

provide prompts for questions I should direct to specific individuals. The note-keeping was integral to collecting the most detail in answers and emphasized the emotional component of each individual's story. This method of data collection permitted a greater understanding of the specific meanings each participant had for the band, their music and fellow fans. The interview process allowed me to explore the relationships of fans with others, including those in the band. In most cases formal relationships did not exist, and the connections were merely perceived strictly through the music.

### ***Participant Observation***

I engaged as both a participant and an observer during the duration of this study. As a participant, I engaged in the construction and maintenance of relationships with fans, as well as interacted in the social activities that accompanied the concerts. This included hanging out before and after a concert, eating meals, lodging, and traveling together when possible. As an observer I documented fans' practices and behaviors in and around the concert setting. This included social exchanges during concerts, and perhaps more importantly, the moments of bonding that took place before and after concerts, especially at the festival-like events that occurred over multiple days (often in the same location). It was often during one-on-one interactions with fans outside of the interview setting where I received some of the most interesting details of their relationship with the music. In some cases these exchanges took place before an interview was scheduled, but frequently they would occur after an interview had transpired and we would go out to grab food, a beer, or check out the town. These

informal settings created an even more low-key atmosphere than the informal, in-depth interviews.

### ***Data Analysis and Interpretation***

Data analysis was conducted following conceptualization of Charmaz's (2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1999) grounded theory. Understanding of the phenomenon relied on an inductive process which was reflective of the experiences of those participating in the research. Analysis continued through the use of primary and secondary coding that began with multiple readings of the interview transcripts and field notes. I assigned primary codes as part of initial coding. I grouped primary codes into specific categories through the process of focused coding (Tracy, 2013). Data management involved organizing participant quotes and personal observations into themed categories which were prioritized on the applicability to the research question (Saldaña, 2012). Themes emerged that demonstrated the salient features of the phenomenon. These data provided the foundation of my paper exploring the ability for musical performers to affect fan sentiment through their charismatic qualities. Additionally, four fans (two participants and two non-participants) read the manuscript to act as a check on the accuracy of my representations.

## **Findings**

### ***The Reverend Jerry Joseph***

I first met Joseph and his drummer, Steve Drizos, when they played a small music venue I managed during my master's program. We often talk at the concerts I attend, but rarely has much contact occurred outside of that. On a couple of occasions I

have hung out with Drizos and the bassist, JR Ruppel, before or after concerts, mostly because they are the more social members of the group and appear to like to interact with the fans. However, it is far more likely that most fans do not have much, if any, significant contact with the members, especially Joseph. Nevertheless, this does not impede the fans that I have spoken with from having, in many cases, outright affection for Jerry Joseph as a performer, and this often extends to the fans considering him as more than simply a musician on stage.

***Music and Identity: Relating to the Reverend***

A significant draw for fans was the content of the lyrics. Typically received as both highly intellectual, and reflective of messages that were applicable to their lives, some fans went as far to use the lyrics as mantras to live by. The lyrics of other groups in the jamband genre were mostly dismissed by fans of Jerry Joseph as “inane” (Phish) or “basic” and “feel-good” (Widespread Panic). Since it was evident to the participants that Joseph’s songs were reflective of his lived experience, it allowed for fans to relate to not only the music, but Joseph as well through creating parallels to their own lives.

Though he doesn’t consider Joseph to have any special charismatic qualities per se, Kevin (8/21/2013) said this about Joseph: “The best thing about Jerry Joseph is that he’s been writing songs about me before he ever knew me.” What this statement does is establish a direct connection between Kevin and both Joseph and his music. Kevin implies that he feels the music speaks to specific qualities about himself, and that because of this, he is profoundly affected by the music and the performance of Joseph.

Kevin mentioned that after the first time he saw the Jackmormons (Joseph's band) he knew they were his new favorite group. I asked him to explain why, to which he said:

[It's] the lyrics; he's very articulate, very passionate, thought-provoking music, not bubble gum. He has something to say... Jerry definitely wears his heart on his sleeve and gives 110%. There's gotta be something said about that; to watch a band play to 20-50 people and give the same exact energy level as he would if it was a packed house.

For Kevin, Joseph and his bandmates embodied the emotional, powerful expression that he looks for in music. Joseph's willingness and ability to give his all, regardless of the size of the audience, caused Kevin to have a level of respect for Joseph as an artist that he has for no other.

Jack (6/28/2014) said that he also felt common ground in the lyrics with Joseph. And while he was quick to say that Joseph did not have a lot of "happy songs," he felt there was something that could be taken from all of them that had a glimmer of "hopefulness." He went on:

He says things that I'm like, that is the way that I think about stuff. This is the perfect expression of what I feel that comes out in way more words; that's one of the amazing things about [Joseph], the way he can encompass so much, specific and general, into like eight words and say everything; that's how these feelings in us get produced, he's bringing that out of us by finding that common ground.

Jack went on to speak about one song in particular, *These Gray Days*, and while many might see the song's content as somewhat dark, Jack said he still found something positive in it. He commented that:

Everyone goes through hard things, and they might not be sunny days every day, but they're days. If they're gray, at least you got them. I think maybe for his perspective, and I have no way of knowing if this is true or not, everything he's gone through, that's kind of the way he felt. He went through a lot of stuff in his life, the drug addiction, and maybe there's a lot of wasted time in there. Learning to appreciate what he has now as much as he can, that's all any of us can focus on. Dwelling on the past is not productive.

Others were also eager to comment on specific songs, especially what the lyrics meant to them. Dave (7/24/2013) was talking about the song "Mohawk," and mentioned the line, "I put my heart on the table." He went on to say that the experience of attending Jackmormons' concerts was "like going to a church. He [Joseph] can be very emotional; I can be emotional at times, I happen to be a very sensitive person. That's why I like Jerry in that he's sensitive and he's not going to back off from showing it." Here we see how Dave related to not only the musical content, but the experience that was created by participating in the musical event as led by Joseph. Dave identified with Joseph in that they are both emotional people unafraid to showcase their feelings, and for this, Dave greatly appreciated Joseph's musical talent and ability to act as orchestrator of the "common catharsis" shared by the fans.

Sitting along the banks of the Willamette River in Portland, Oregon, Kent (6/18/2014) and I were talking about how he perceives Joseph, and if he does so any differently because of his status as a musician. Kent, a professional painter, said that he saw him as a fellow artist, and that he:

Respects his longevity, his ability to change. He's changed who he is, but still sings the songs with the same conviction. That's powerful. Every time I've tried to change, I've had to move away to change my identity. That power to say, this is who I am, and I've grown, but I'm still going to be true to myself. He still sells it. It's honest. It's pure truth.

Here we see Kent being almost praiseworthy of Joseph's ability to be true to himself in his personal development, but still maintain the willingness to sing songs he had written years ago with the same conviction. Kent was currently trying to make his way in the art world full time, and found that Joseph's triumphs over significant odds were motivating. We were talking about whether or not Joseph had any message through his music since much of his catalog has overtones of social critique. Kent felt that Joseph's message was all about "the human experience. To experience life and live life with passion and don't back down to fear. That human experience that so many people want to hide from; don't hide from it, live it."

### ***Gaining Insight from the Reverend***

Jerry Joseph is quite open about his struggles with addiction. In fact, a significant portion of his songs are about living with the dark side of his substance abuse, or his many failed attempts to get clean. Joseph did become sober on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008, and

has remained so since. He still plays the songs that are representative of his racy past, and some songs he writes these days still revisit the theme that captivated much of his life. He is, if mostly indirectly, staunchly against substance use and abuse, and that is common knowledge amongst the fanbase. Most fans that indulge make sure to do so out of the sight lines of Joseph. There are a significant number of fans who have also faced hardships related to substance abuse, and many credit Joseph's triumph, and his music, with being a significant aid in their process of recovery.

When I asked Dani (12/28/2013) if she had any sort of relationship with Jerry Joseph, she mentioned that they were both in recovery, and that for them to share something like that was "huge." I asked Dani if she perceived him any differently because he was a musician, and she responded, "He's kind of my hero. I kind of look up to him and respect him." When I asked what there was to respect about him, she replied that he is "incredibly talented" and that she "[has] to look up to that. How he carries himself, how he writes his music." Dani was not the only interviewee to refer to Joseph as a 'hero.' In fact, many were extremely grateful for his presence in their world, and often thanked him for the positive effect he had on their lives.

I sat down with Keith (6/18/2013; 6/29/2014) on two occasions; the second installment came at his request. He called me on his one-year sober date; he had made the decision to clean up the day after our first interview. Keith had been immersed in the scene since roughly 2002, and had managed to become one of the fans that developed some sort of relationship with Joseph. At the two-day Telluride festival that occurred the weekend before our first interview, he was noticeably struggling with his addiction at the

event. During our first interview he talked at some length about how much happier a person he was when he was clean, and almost serendipitously he had an exchange with Joseph the following day where Jerry indicated that Keith needed to get his life in order. Keith took this as a call to action, thus leading up to that celebratory call one year after our first interview.

In our follow-up I asked him if any of his friends in the Jackmormons' scene (which he referred to as family) were especially helpful in his attempt to become and stay clean. He said that, "Everyone here really cares and tells me they're very proud of me. Jerry tends to tell me he's proud of me when he sees me." I asked him if it was significant that Jerry would say something like that to him, to which he responded:

Yea, it is. He's one of my heroes. It's a shot in the arm. He's one of the people, besides my mother, father and son, he's one of the people that I feel like I would really let down if I started [using] again. (6/29/2014)

Janet (6/15/2013; 7/31/2014) was another one of the participants who was evocative about the role Joseph played in her life. I conducted the first interview with her in Telluride, Colorado at her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party that featured the band. Janet said that, "This music is what I'm here for. The one thing in my life that's worked is going to shows and letting this [the music] go in me and through me." She said that the "gift" of the music to the fans allowed for her to "become a part of everyone in attendance, and feel a shared connection." I asked her what role Joseph played, to which she replied, "Jerry's music give me balance. To me it's love. Each song can bring me to tears, or give me the biggest smile that lasts for days." I asked her if she felt a specific connection

to him as a person, and she responded, “I love him, what he’s saying. He’s speaking to me. He’s my family.”

The reason behind conducting two interviews with Janet, similar to Keith, was because she had successfully managed to become sober over the course of the year since our initial interview. We met back in Telluride, though she no longer lived there, and while she was there specifically to see the band play, she was also collecting her six-month chip from Alcoholics Anonymous. We sat down before this ceremony to talk about her current relationship to the music. We were speaking about Joseph’s sobriety and I asked her if she found the music helpful over the last several months as she attempted to live a clean lifestyle. Janet said, “What he’s writing about is what I’m living. Now I’m plugged in. Because he’s sober, he’s inspirational to me” (7/31/2014). I asked her if what she was getting from the music had changed now that her focus in life was clearer. She responded:

I feel like I’ve fallen into a big pool of love. That’s why he’s playing. Whether it’s hard to hear or not, (crying) it’s there for me to have. It’s his passing on what he’s been through. There’s another side. I thought I was going to be in pain my whole life. There is good to get to. Jerry shows me through the music that he was dead and now he’s alive.

For Dani, Keith and Janet (as well as many others), Jerry Joseph was a role model for overcoming addiction and staying clean. These fans looked to him as someone they could emulate. Even after becoming sober, Joseph was able to stay true to his craft and work in a world where the temptations of his past indulgences were still abound. Keith

may have said it best for those fans who were attempting to live a clean life: “Music is such a part of my life that of course it’s going to be a part of my recovery. It’s nice when you have your favorite musician singing about sobriety.”

### ***Acknowledging His Fans***

For many of the fans there was a sense of mutual respect that was shared between them and the band, partly because so many of the fans had been devoted followers for such long periods, but also because the scene surrounding the band was relatively small and intimate. By knowing that Joseph appreciated his fans on a personal level, even if never directly stated, it was meaningful and showed that Joseph possessed an innate ability to relate to and understand them. This fact may have been best illustrated by Mickey and Mallory (8/23/2014), a husband and wife, when they responded to my question about whether or not they had any sort of relationship with Jerry. Mallory said:

Our first very personal interaction was when our daughter was sick. [A fan] arranged a benefit concert for her so we could take her to Paris, because that’s what she wanted to do [before she died]. So we brought her to the first set and I introduced her to Jerry in the sound booth. After a while it was like I wasn’t really needed, you know? I left and came back like twenty-five minutes later. I could tell by the look on her face that she was smiling and laughing, they obviously got along. He saw something in her.

Mallory was telling Jerry that her daughter wanted to bring her boyfriend to Paris with her, but that the family didn’t have the money. Jerry responded that she should be able to and that maybe he could help them raise the money. After their daughter had passed,

their family took a trip that included a Jerry Joseph show, and he asked them “What would she want to hear?” He then immediately said, “I guess that doesn’t matter now. What do you need to hear?” Mallory said, “He saw something in her. He cared. You’ve got to appreciate that when someone sees that in your kid.”

The preceding passage is representative of the respect Joseph has for his fans. In an interview I conducted with Jerry Joseph (8/16/2012), he said that, “I have lived and died on my relationship to my fanbase... I’m pretty aware that I’m only here, or make a living, because of my fans.” This is significant. Because Joseph has not attained a level of popularity or economic success that would afford him the typical ‘rock star status’ we typically ascribe to our favorite musicians (huge paydays, tour buses, sold-out concert halls), he has to stay grounded in reality that he is a workingman’s musician. He metaphorically has to punch the clock just like the entirety of his fanbase. And while he must continue to tour simply to make a living, his job involves giving people an outlet for release, recharging, catharsis and joy. On stage he becomes the conduit and messenger for the individual needs of his fans. Towards the close of our interview, Joseph had one last parting comment about his fans:

If the axiom ‘every generation gets the president they deserve’ is true, the same could be said about getting the fans you deserve. I may not have thousands of them, but the ones I have are smart; they all seem to be able to hang out in some weird country [Joseph and his band frequently play in exotic international locales] and get along.

## **Discussion**

The quality of the music of Jerry Joseph and its ability to affect fans in extraordinarily meaningful ways, both personally and socially, highlights his charismatic qualities through the act of his fans' devotion. This idea is reinforced through Yano's (1997) account of charisma and fandom in Japanese enka music. It is through the devotion of the followers, said Yano, that the charisma of the musician is defined. Jerry Joseph serves as a reference point and an orchestrator of fans' needs and desires. The representation he constructs for himself through his musical prowess and insightful writing ability allows him to serve as a conduit for his fans to address many issues in their lives. Additionally, for some fans, he also embodies aspects of role model in terms of his own personal triumphs and his excellence in his craft. And while lesser known public figures are not often referred to as charismatic individuals, the very fact that Joseph moves his fans to such a level of commitment while affecting them directly with his gifts establishes the importance of understanding the power of one person to sincerely and positively impact others' lives through their 'exceptional qualities' (Weber, 1978).

### ***Musical Message***

Dow (1969) said the best representation of a charismatic leader would be that of an individual who can inspire belief in his or her message, not because of particularly facilitating conditions, but in spite of tremendous odds. Joseph would aptly fit this designation. The operative word in Dow's description may be 'message.' While the topic of whether or not Joseph had a message came up occasionally, it was always

indirectly attended to on an individual level through each interview I conducted. Each participant I spoke with had different, and sometimes multiple, reasons for their involvement, but each one was specifically able to speak to what it was they sought from their involvement, as well as express what they were able to take away from their interactions.

One point that Weber (1978) made in his treatise on charismatic relationships that I found to be especially apropos to the phenomenon that encompasses Jerry Joseph is that charisma can only be “awakened or tested, not learned or taught” (p. 249). In my interviews I would explore how people came to hear of Joseph and his music, and most of those responded they first heard about him through a more well-known band, Widespread Panic. Upon hearing Joseph’s music in a live setting, most were immediately captivated, as if they had realized something for the first time they knew would be instrumental to their lives. When fans had their first encounter, it would be accurate to say that they were indeed “awakened.” The component of being “tested” could be best exemplified through the fans’ level of dedication; every show they are “tested” on their devotion to the music which leads to their decision upon whether or not to return. Though small in numbers, “the faithful” as they sometimes refer to themselves, do return, time and time again, for years, and in many cases, decades.

### ***Awe & Inspiration***

Musicians possess the ability to captivate audience’s attention and sway their emotional affect to such a degree that the fans can be said to become ‘followers,’ thus attributing to the performer a level of profound respect and great appreciation for the

service or guidance they provide (Adams et al, 2014). And while Joseph perhaps does not reflect the prototypical definition of a charismatic leader, he possesses many of the merits that you would attribute to one, such as inspiring awe and devotion, the ability to make people think about their part in the world and serving as a role model for those attempting to overcome hardships like substance abuse.

Joseph is not the first musician to have been written about as possessing charismatic qualities; Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead (Adams et al, 2014; Barnes, 2011; Pearson, 1987), Bruce Springsteen (Cavicchi, 1998) and Lady Gaga (Gellel, 2013) have all received academic treatment in regards to their unique ability to affect their audiences. One thing these three musicians share is mass appeal. Each one of their careers involved untold numbers of fans and countless more millions in revenue from ticket sales, merchandise sales and appearances. Jerry Joseph does not have these accolades on his resume. Joseph has certainly paid his dues as an artist, constantly touring since the early 1980s, recording frequently and even writing for other more well-known musicians' albums, but he has not reached the popular acclaim that many of his contemporaries have. While Joseph may pale in comparison to juggernauts of music like Jerry Garcia or Bruce Springsteen in terms of recognized success or revenue earned, it could perhaps be said that Joseph is equally fitting, if not more so, of being recognized as a charismatic leader due to his perseverance over his career and his character to always give "110%" as described by his fans. In spite of tremendous odds, Joseph has maintained a presence and ability to transcend hardships and serve as an orchestrator of

his fans' devotion. After all, it is if and how he affects people, not the number of people he affects, which determines whether or not Joseph reflects 'charisma.'

### *Enhanced Identities*

Each fan on an individual level spoke to their hopes for outcomes, and it was overwhelmingly noted that they were participating in a unique musical environment, lucky to be part of something they felt others were missing out on. Most felt as if a debt of gratitude was owed to Joseph for his musical ability and willingness to share it, as well as his role in providing an outlet for personal expression, identity maintenance, friendship building and coping with the tribulations of daily life. Weber (1978) said that the charismatic grounds of a person are established through acts of 'heroism' or a profound sense of character that becomes established as pattern when dealing with those who act in deference, praise or appreciation to what the charismatic figure provides. For those who participated in this study, Joseph was a figurehead worthy of their respect, and someone who played an integral role in their striving for having happy, meaningful lives. This sentiment was reinforced each time the participants had the opportunity to interact in the music scene, and for many, the decision to do so was of utmost priority in their lives.

Weber (1978) said that charisma "constitutes a 'call' in the most emphatic sense of the word; a 'mission' or 'special duty'" (p. 244). Whether the 'call' is seen from the vantage point of the fans as an invitation to be part of "something small, but special" (Tom, 12/30/2012), or from the perspective of Joseph himself as the embodiment of a gift to create music that moves people physically, emotionally and cognitively, there is,

as evidenced by the participants, a 'mission' to self-discovery, meaning making and personal fulfillment that is led by The Reverend Jerry Joseph.

### ***Conclusion***

Our modern culture is one that embraces the star. This is evidenced by the pedestal we place public figures on and the extraordinary amount of attention they garner from media which is then eaten up by us as consumers. Americans are a people that *need* to be entertained, so it seems. But just as often as we adore someone in the limelight, when they fall, our consumptive society is quick to turn our collective backs on the downtrodden, and we forget that they once held lofty ideals or captured our devotion. Popular figures such as Lance Armstrong, Mark McGwire, Pete Rose and Brian Williams are just a few of the iconic figures of our society that fell hard and have been swept under the rug, seemingly as if they never captured the public eye.

America, however, is supposed to be the land of second chances. Whether or not any of the aforementioned figures will redeem their dignity in the future remains to be seen. But what about our 'heroes' who fail in front of us and are open about their struggles as we watch their lives unfold in the public arena? Jerry Joseph, as flawed as he may be, is an artist who has lived his life on stage through performance and narration of his many oftentimes sad and destructive experiences. But he does so, perhaps unintentionally, as a reflection of the collective imperfection of our humanity. When people find something that is essential to their lives, that provides meaning and insight, helps them to grow as individuals, it follows that they should embrace it. To recognize that the orchestrator of their self-discovery, quest for personal triumph and catharsis is

also a flawed being is to acknowledge the spectrum of the human experience, and that sometimes the object of great attraction is a reflection of the self we strive to overcome and aspire to be. Where there needs to be further investigation is how significant figures in our lives can affect us in a positive manner; to become better versions of ourselves. This study was an exploration of how cultural performers affected fan thought and sentiment, and how this led to the fans holding the performer in highest regard for the meaning he brought to their lives. Future research in this area should examine if the increase in positive affect received from a performer by fans extends into other social domains and encourages the recipient to take an active lead in impacting others' lives for the better.

CHAPTER VI  
INTERLUDE III

I've never been a fan of crowd interaction at sporting events or concerts. It always feels forced, and I am of the opinion that I am the one who paid to be entertained, so why should I have to do anything? You certainly will never catch me doing 'the wave.' I also don't consider myself much of a patriotic person (don't worry, I still pull for the USA in all international events), but every time the national anthem is played, I cannot help but be moved. I cannot quite put my finger on why, I know it has nothing to do with the state of affairs today, but I think it is rooted in an emotional connection to our shared history that is comprised of sacrifice, uncertainty, setbacks, triumphs, ugly moments, and perseverance. Every time I hear it I get a lump in my throat and occasionally the ever-so-brief welling of tears in the corner of my eyes. I think a big part of that resides in hope for the future, and some strange element of pride, that even though we as a nation have made some very poor decisions in our history, we seem to always be trying to do the right thing, for better or worse. So I know every time I hear *The Star-Spangled Banner* in the future, I will get that bubbling up of emotion, and I will tie it to the hopes of our collective future. Hearing it played will provide a sense of positivity, even for a moment, that things might be okay.

But I don't listen to *The Star-Spangled Banner* outside of televised sporting events or the few times a year I go to a live game. However, that doesn't mean that I don't get moments of uplifting emotion from other forms of music that last beyond the

duration of the song. When I moved to DeKalb, Illinois to start my master's program, I lived in an isolated cornfield detached from social familiarity. One of the saving graces for me was the house I lived in had significant character, and one element of that charm was a slow-moving train that passed by my backyard twice a day during the week, at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. At that time (2006) I was listening to a lot of Widespread Panic, and one of their songs, *Counting Train Cars*, seemed especially apropos to my situation. I would often time the playing of that song with the passing of the train and would daydream about the future when I would be able to return to my beloved Colorado. The combination of those acts allowed me to create a store of positive emotion that I could work towards as I completed my master's degree.

Also at that time I would listen to Widespread Panic's version of the song *North*, originally written by Jerry Joseph. There was a North Street in my neighborhood, and while I was latitudinally 'north' of Colorado, I somehow was able to embrace the song as a reminder of my desire to return 'home.' Ironically when I moved to Texas, I also lived near a North Street, and the song once again became a reminder of my desire, and an incentive to complete my goal of completing my PhD and returning to Colorado (even if only briefly). However, this time I was listening to Jerry Joseph's version (he wrote the song originally). My reliance on the music that was most meaningful to me allowed me to deal with the mundanity and stresses of my life, and it was through the playing of certain songs that I was able to retain positive energy that allowed me to look to the future and the successes and joys that lay ahead.

## CHAPTER VII

### “I’VE GOT A FEELING, ANY FEELING, IT’S WHAT I LIVE FOR”: POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND PASSIONATE LEISURE INVOLVEMENT

*June, 28, 2014, Dixie Mattress Festival (DMF), Tidewater, Oregon: It had been raining mostly nonstop since before the festival began yesterday; not exactly ideal for an outdoor concert series. Today, though, the rain was more intermittent; it seemed as if nature was testing our dedication. I had made plans to sit down with Jack, Arlo and Tracy to conduct our interviews that day, and though I hadn’t planned on a focus group, that is what I got.*

*Huddled under their rain tarp with the three interviewees, word had really spread about my research in relation to the band and its fans. Just as we were getting ready to have our chat, five or so others found their way to the shelter of the blue tarp and pulled up seats, all seemingly awaiting a performance. I was at one end of the gathering, with everyone else forming a “U” around me. As I clicked on the recorder, those there out of curiosity wound down their conversations and turned their focus to me; then we jumped into the interview.*

*At the conclusion of the nearly three-hour long interview, I left the festival grounds for a few hours and returned just before Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons were to go on. As soon as I walked into the periphery of the venue, Catie ran up to me smiling, and grabbed my arm, directing me on a walk back to the campground. She said to me, “It was so awesome watching you conduct your interviews. It was like church. You were*

*leading the discussion about this thing that is so important to each and every one of us. You were so welcoming to those of us who wanted to watch and listen, and hear what our dear friends have to say about this band. I really feel as if we all shared a special moment there. Thank you.”*

### **Introduction**

The learning process about our personal interests is typically a lifelong undertaking. As we age and develop, both cognitively and emotionally, we are continuously exposed to new activities, social outlets, and objects of potential attraction (or lack thereof). There is an infinite amount of possible endeavors and interactions for us to undertake, and it is often through trial-and-error or sheer luck that we navigate towards the objects of greatest affection. And in the event where we are fortunate enough to find something that is meaningful, it follows that we would likely want to increase our involvement in that leisure outlet (Kashdan & Silvia, 2011). And when we engage in activities that allow us to feel good about ourselves and generate positive emotions, it will undeniably affect our sense of self and our level of esteem (Hewitt, 2011). When our level of self-esteem rises through our participation in leisure that consistently provides opportunities for self-verification resulting in positive emotional outcomes, it is probable that our hope for future happiness will increase as well (Rand & Cheavens, 2011).

Lloyd and Auld (2002) said that the objective measure of leisure (e.g., attending concerts with close friends) is one of the top predictors of quality of life. Immersion in passionate leisure consumption serves to help people assimilate into social networks that

are rich grounds to create meaning and share identity (McCormick & McGuire, 1996). Further, leisure possesses the potential to provide a safe space for exploration of the self and the desired trajectory of one's life (Schmidt & Little, 2007). Barbara Fredrickson (2003), a pioneering figure in positive psychology, said that people who regularly feel positive emotions go on an "upward spiral" of continued growth and flourishing, and that this expansion of positive emotions and growth into all sectors of life can greatly diminish the hold negative emotions have on the mind and body (p. 335).

For countless people, the discovery of music, whether it is a favorite genre or a specific band, is integral to their quality of life because it provides opportunities for the fan to engage in an environment where they feel most like themselves (DeNora, 2000), be it in at a concert or in the confines of their home. For many, the attraction to music often begins early in one's youth (Clay, 2003; Hakanen, 1995), and is essential to their developmental process, both emotionally and socially (Laiho, 2004; Ruud, 1997a). For some fans, this attraction to music that developed in their youth continues to be meaningful for them as they grow older, specifically as it relates to the music's ability to positively affect their attitude, identity, and outlook on life (Bennett, 2006; DeNora, 1995; Lewis, 1983; Kotarba, 2005). However, the specific focus of the majority of research to date has been undertaken on the role of music involvement within youth and adolescent age brackets (Arnett, 1995; Bennett, 2008; Clay, 2003; Epstein, 1994; Frith, 1981; Gellel, 2013; Hakanen, 1995; Laiho, 2004; Larson, 1995; Rentfrow, McDonald, & Oldfellow, 2009; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003; Selfhout, Branje, ter Bogt, & Meeus, 2009), with far less research having been conducted on adult

music fans, especially between 30 and 60 years old. Outside of a few notable scholars' efforts (Bennett, 2006, 2013; Davis, 2006; Kotarba, 2002, 2005; Taylor, 2010), the literature investigating the use and impact of music on people's lives is particularly void of work documenting its role in middle-aged audiences. This stage of the lifecycle is particularly important given the potential occurrence of a number of significant life events (e.g., career development, marriage, family, oftentimes illness, and retirement). Of the research that has been conducted on adult audiences, Bennett (2006, 2012) and Davis' (2006) treatments are specific to the punk genre, Kotarba (2002, 2005) focuses on the baby boomer generation, and Taylor's (2010) account comprises the role of aging 'queers' and their relation to music, leaving a wide breadth of genres untouched in terms of scholarly research on the impacts of music on quality of life, maintenance and expression of identity and positive emotions in middle-aged audiences.

In this investigation, I explored the role of music in the lives of the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons, an internationally established jamband with great critical acclaim, but a rather small following of devoted fans. The fans of the band are a predominately older audience as compared to other bands within their genre. This appears to be so because the Jackmormons are often discovered through a more well-established and affiliated band, Widespread Panic. The majority of the individuals I spoke with spent their younger years involved with Widespread Panic, and then eventually found the Jackmormons at an older age. Therefore, a significant number of the band's most dedicated fans fall in an age range from thirty to sixty years old, thus making them a worthwhile cohort for examining the phenomenon of passionate music

fans and positive emotion retention in the midlife age bracket. The primary research question guiding this chapter was how do positive emotions generated from participation in the Jackmormons' music scene affect quality of life outside the concert setting?

The objective of this paper was to examine how the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons use the music scene as a place to make and maintain friendships, as well as to highlight the prominence of the band's music in their personal lives in affecting quality of life within, and beyond the concert setting. This paper draws from the work of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in the area of positive psychology, and specifically the broaden-and-build theory as developed by Fredrickson (2001) which states that positive emotions broaden the thought-action repertoires of people leading to a store of enduring positive resources for future benefit. This paper will demonstrate how fans create stores of positive energy through their involvement that allow them to lead higher quality lives outside of the concert experience; and in the instances where fans have negative outcomes associated with their involvement (e.g., alcohol and/or drug abuse), the research will display how those adversely affected rely on the friendships made within the music scene, and the music itself, to cope with the negative ramifications of their involvement.

### **Theoretical Framework**

When examining participation in any leisure activity that is pursued with a high level of passion, we often look at the benefits that are derived from one's involvement. What is it about the activity that brings one back? What do they receive from their participation? Because Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory looks at the

takeaway of involvement and how positive stores of emotion are accrued and possess the potential to counteract negative feelings or situations, it makes sense to look at the concept in conjunction with the construct of enduring leisure involvement.

In the enduring involvement literature, involvement primarily focuses on participants' emotional attachment to leisure activities (Kyle & Chick, 2002). Along with this is the role of commitment, which includes the subjective and behavioral components that help form consistent leisure patterns. Consistent leisure behavior, in many cases, is maintained because of others who are involved in the same activity (Kyle & Chick, 2004), thus making the connection to the phenomenon stronger. Because both enduring leisure involvement and positive psychology consider the accumulated effects of participation, interaction and meaning making, it follows that linking the two concepts could allow for a better understanding of long-term implications of involvement in a leisure activity, in this case participation in a music scene.

### ***Positive Psychology***

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) stated that positive psychology is about valued subjective experiences that involve all periods of the life timeline. Positive psychology focuses on the study of well-being and satisfaction from past experiences, hope and optimism for future experiences, and a sense of happiness for experiences in the present. Writing about eudaimonic experiences (living in accordance with one's perception of their true self), Waterman (1993) suggested that these experiences of subjective individual potential are most powerful when one is engaged in the activities that allow them to feel alive and authentic, a sense that gives rise to a feeling of "existing

as who they really are” (p. 679). Carruthers and Hood (2004) said that these experiences of authenticity can lead to the good life when one becomes completely absorbed in them. People can then find meaning through the pursuit of their most important ambitions, leading to the ability to “comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives” (Steger, 2011, p. 682).

It is this positive emotional capital that one builds through their personal engagement in passionate activities and interactions with meaningful others that Fredrickson (2001) spoke of when she developed her broaden-and-build theory. Fredrickson (2001) said that positive emotions broaden an individual’s momentary frame of mind, and by doing so, helps to generate a store of enduring personal resources. She posited that engaging in activities that yield positive emotions has the potential to undo negative emotions, and that even though the positive emotions are often short-lived, they possess the ability to have “deep and enduring effects” (p. 333). Further, when the experiences of positive emotions occur in union with others, there occurs not only an instance of mutual enjoyment, but also the creation of “enduring alliances” that become further resources for individuals to draw on in times of need (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 311). Through engagement in positive experiences in the present, individually or with others, it allows us to “sample the rewards of the future” now (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2011, p. 21).

Music can then be a significant source of the authenticity that Waterman (1993) spoke of, in that the discovery of meaningful music can help individuals build personal narratives of their identity through feelings of what life should be like (Ruud, 1997b).

Music can also be pivotal in building important relationships with compatible others (Lonsdale & North, 2009), and following Fredrickson (2001), allow for the construction of interpersonal and intrapersonal resources for future benefit (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). It is then that we see the characteristics of music appreciation interpreted and used as methods of coping with life (Schäfer & Sedlmeier, 2009). This coping does not necessarily imply that the affective power of music can only be used in times of melancholy or grief, but rather these stores of positive energy gained from one's appreciation and involvement in music can act as a bridge to building and strengthening other relationships (Fredrickson, 2001).

When one is further able to address the ever-present and ambiguous conditions of life it can allow for positive energy and expectations to take hold and add to our ability to maintain an optimistic outlook (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Music, as a significant form of leisure, offers the opportunity to “explore not only what one does, but who one is” (Schmidt & Little, 2007, p. 225). And when done in tandem with likeminded fans, music fulfills social-psychological needs such as being together, supporting one another, experiencing catharsis, and providing a safe outlet for release (Percy & Taylor, 1997).

### ***Subjective Well-being and Quality of Life***

When Diener (1984) first began writing about subjective well-being, following Coan (1977), he stated that there were three categories in which well-being and happiness could be grouped. The first was defined by external criteria such as virtue, and was described as a normative definition because it is something that is desirable. The

second involved how individuals' evaluate their lives in positive terms. This includes a self-measurement of experiences, relationships and personal evolution and extends into social relationships as well. The third, and final, grouping involves a higher disposition of positive affect as opposed to negative affect. This includes the consideration that life will not always be "good" but that the good times outweigh the "bad" times in terms of quality and quantity. By engaging in meaningful leisure on a consistent basis, participants have the opportunity to create meaningful, positive experiences for themselves. The latter two groupings are of most significance to this study.

As Diener (2006) continued to research and write on the subject of well-being and quality of life over the following decades, he developed a piece on the tenets of subjective well-being and ill-being that sought to establish uniform definitions that could be applied globally in hopes of making research and service foci clearer for scholars and providers. He described subjective well-being (SWB) as, "An umbrella term for the different valuations people make regarding their lives, the events happening to them, their bodies and minds, and the circumstances in which they live" (p. 398). From there he laid out definitions for positive and negative affect, happiness and life satisfaction, ending his collection of classifications with quality of life (QOL). He said of QOL that it refers to "the degree to which a person's life is desirable versus undesirable, often with an emphasis on external components, such as environmental factors and income" (p. 400). This designation of QOL fits the third grouping Coan (1977) established for SWB that Diener (1984) adhered to in his earliest work. Diener (2006) stated that some scholars often merge the definitions of SWB and QOL to include both life circumstances

and individual perception and feelings which was confirmed in later work done by Camfield and Skevington (2008).

It should be noted, though, that there are aspects of participation that resulted in negative outcomes, primarily due to substance abuse. These issues of an individual's substance abuse were not reliant on the band, their music, or the scene exclusively, and occurred throughout the entirety of their daily dealings. Additionally, those who were facing these struggles were often reliant on the music and the friendships established through their participation to deal with the reality of their addictions. Those that displayed signs or expressed concern for their substance abuse issues still relied heavily on the band and its music for offering a positive outlet in spite of their disease.

### **Methods**

The research relied on Gonzalez' (2000) Four Seasons approach to data collection. The Four Seasons include: pre-ethnography, ethnography proper (immersion in the subculture participant observation, and semi-structured interviews), thorough analysis of jottings and field notes, and the reflexive process of writing. The Four Seasons approach has four principles: (a) natural cycles: ethnographic research involves a preparation, growth, harvest, rest series which ensures that opportunities are not missed, only postponed; (b) consciousness of the linked associations of all that transpires within the music scene is relevant data; (c) the authentic reporting of the actions, interactions and discussions (this often includes letting the participants take the lead of the interview); and finally, (d) representative balance, or the necessity of showing the differences or dualities that take place within the music scene. This methodological

approach was appropriate because it allowed for repeated observations of fans' interactions with the band and its music, as well as conversations, both formal and informal, about the meaning and value of the music to their lives. In order to cultivate the richest data, I often had to rely on repeated interactions with the participants to capture meaningful moments that were not remembered during the interview, or to follow-up on thoughts and experiences that transpired after their further involvement in the music scene, or based on specific incidences where the music was used outside of the concert setting to their benefit.

### ***Study Participants***

The data collection methods deemed most appropriate for this investigation were in-depth interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis. Gatekeepers (influential people involved in the music scene) were influential in establishing connections to those deeply immersed in the subculture. Snowball sampling was generated through the endorsements of established participants (Tracy, 2013). The initial participants were chosen through purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) and based on my pre-existing knowledge of individuals who had extensive involvement with the band; this was based on their longevity or frequency of involvement, if not both. There were thirty-one participants, and two of those were interviewed twice. Most interviews lasted one hour, but several went for as long as three hours. Pseudonyms were assigned to all informants. If those involved in the music scene were to read this paper, they might deduce fans' identity based on responses due to the size and closeness within the music scene. The participants were dispersed throughout the country, with most living in the

Western states. The fanbase is older in terms of the average age of those usually affiliated with touring rock and roll bands (Hunt, 2008). At the time of interview, the youngest participant was twenty-eight years old and the oldest was fifty-eight, with an average age of forty-two years.

The purpose of this paper was to establish that one's passionate immersion in a music scene can be beneficial to establishing stores of positive emotion and energy to be called upon for future use. And while there were some negative accounts of participants' involvement (Janet and Keith, drug and alcohol abuse), there were few attempts on the investigator's part to dive into other areas of potential negativity surrounding the fanbase. In interviews fans sometimes made mention of specific negative incidents, whether it was a disagreement with another fan, complaints about the song selection, or dislike for a venue or city, but these complaints were not investigated in full. While participants' responses in regards to their involvement were overwhelmingly positive, it might serve the readers to know that this music scene did not exist in a state of utopia.

### ***In-depth Interviews***

Before the start of my research period, I constructed a list of open-ended questions that were used as a template to prompt participants to respond to their personal involvement with the band and the music scene. Since that inception, the questions became more refined so as to not only address specific issues I believed to be most important, but also were loosened so as to allow the maximum expanse of feedback when speaking to their subjective experiences with the band and its music. I encouraged fans to elaborate and introduce relevant topics that were not mentioned in my interview

guide, and I built off their responses to ask further related questions. I kept notes during the interview to prompt further questions, document physical or emotional reactions or emphases displayed by the interviewee, and to act as indicators of what questions need to be further adapted or expanded. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participant. This method of data collection was especially fruitful in capturing the sentiment of the positive emotions fans received from their participation. Most had never extensively talked about their history or involvement with the band, so when given the opportunity to do so, overwhelmingly people were eager to share about what the band and its music meant to their lives; in the past, present and in the future.

### ***Participant Observation***

I undertook this examination as a participant as well as an observer. I engaged in concert events, social gatherings associated with the event (such as pre-parties, get-togethers at fans' homes or lodging facilities, and post-concert events or after-parties), participated in the concert event as a fan which includes mingling, dancing, or commenting on the performance, and generally behaving in the manner as any friend would when in the company of other friends in "special" atmospheres like the concert setting. In my role as an observer, I made mental notes, and when possible jottings, field notes, or verbal recordings of the concert experience, which included how fans interacted with each other, themselves, and the band and its music. In the festival-like atmospheres where the band played multiple shows in the same location, I paid particular attention to the way the fans interacted with each other in forming or strengthening friendships during the periods of downtime between concerts. The act of

observations was integral to actually seeing how people acted out their self-described connection to the band and its music. Individual interaction with the band, and often other fans, captured the reality of their devotion and happiness while engaged in the music.

### *Textual Analysis*

An un-moderated email listserv dedicated to the band exists as part of a Yahoo! Groups option. Over the course of the last year I have read the often-daily postings and selected entries that contain material that would be beneficial to this research. However, I have kept a record of relevant posts (serendipitously) since I first joined the group in March of 2011. While the commentary is often just postings of setlists, or links to sites to download live shows, occasionally fans speak about the meaning the band or its music has for them. This often occurs after the festival-like runs when people have extended involvement with other fans and multiple days of music. In many instances the posting fan will comment on the unique atmosphere that surrounds the fanbase, the level of emotion they feel in the presence of the concerts, or the significant interactions that occur throughout the duration of the event. Babbie (2010) stated that textual, or content, analysis involves who says what and why, and to what extent it has an effect on others. The listserv not only acts as a forum for fans to speak to the meaning they associate with the band and its music, but also serves as a place to inspire that sense of sharing in other fans, as well as to prompt memories of meaningful experiences. The fan discussion board, therefore, allowed for fans to speak of the band and the meaning their music held

for them outside of the concert setting. This showcased the positive affect received from the music in the days between each member's opportunities to attend live shows.

### ***Data Analysis and Interpretation***

The foundation of data analysis was grounded theory as demonstrated by Glaser and Strauss (1999) and Charmaz (2006). An understanding was reached through an inductive process which captured the realities of those participating in the research. The analysis process involved the use of a primary and secondary coding technique which commenced with multiple, thorough readings of the interview transcripts, field notes, and selected excerpts of fan postings on the internet discussion board. Information deemed important based on its relevance to the research objectives was highlighted. I assigned primary codes using, when possible, in vivo terminology (the language of the participant) as part of the initial coding process. Subsequently I grouped primary codes into specific categories through focused coding (Tracy, 2013). The data was managed by first establishing which content speaks to the research questions, and then delineating hierarchically the most appropriate material. Once the categories were created, themes emerged that displayed the context and content of the phenomenon being considered (Saldaña, 2012). These data provided the foundation of this paper exploring how fans interact individually and socially to establish incidences of positive emotional output, and the effects of participation beyond the concert setting in their everyday lives.

## Findings

### *Creating Stores of Positive Emotion through Music*

*The first time I saw Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons was in 2002 outside Denver, Colorado. I was attending a Widespread Panic concert and there was a side-stage with bands playing before the main event. Simply killing time, I walked over to see who was playing. Not quite sure what I had stumbled onto, I found myself immediately absorbed into the sounds that rained down from the stage. I walked over to a guy who was recording the show and said, "Who the fuck is this guy?" He responded, "Jerry Joseph. He's amazing, isn't he?" I nodded yes, uninterested in speaking anymore or perhaps unable. The rawness of the emotion and the heaviness of the guitar cut through me as if it were allowing for my soul to soak in the truth. I was simply overwhelmed by the passion that seemed to radiate from this man and his guitar. I had always considered myself in the know when it came to finding high quality music that grabbed me, but on this day I was being served notice that I had just found something special.*

I have always been curious about what people hope to get by attending a Jerry Joseph concert, so I often try to have that be the last question of the interview. After they have talked about their history with music, the friends they have made along the way, their favorite songs, and how they use the music outside of the concert setting, I want to know why it is, time and again, they keep coming back for more. To date no one has set a number on how many Jerry Joseph shows would be enough. I think most cannot fathom a time when they would no longer be able to see him perform. The following

excerpts highlight the power of the music for these fans, and why it is this particular band and its music are so meaningful to their lives.

### ***Positive Emotions***

It was commonly stated by the participants of this study that the music of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons was rife with emotion and covered the spectrum of the human experience. Coupled with this, it was unanimously reported that the energy and passion exuded on stage by Joseph on stage was something that was largely unparalleled in other bands' performances. For these reasons, fans reported that they were able to "get into a groove" with the band that allowed them to focus on the moment, where the only important thing was the music. If there was a particular issue in their life they were dealing with, for some, the forum of the concert experience allowed them to block it out and revel in the experience of the moment. For others, the concert was the exact place where they were able to work through the tribulations of their lives.

I asked Dani (12/28/2013) about her first time seeing the band and what she remembered about it. She responded that, "It was a feeling of being so alive that I don't know if I'd ever experienced that before." I was taken aback by that powerful statement of her sense of emotion at the time, so I asked her if that feeling only occurred the first time, or if it was something that persisted, to which she replied, "[Those were] my exact thoughts even at last night's show. How alive it makes me feel. I know when I'm there that there's no other place in the world where I'd rather be." Towards the end of our interview when I asked for closing thoughts, she had this to say:

I feel very fortunate to have this in my life. I never would have pictured in my earlier years that this would have been something that was so important. It's a priority in my life. I'm okay with that. I think the music, the people, the friends, are all kind of separate from the rest of my life; it's like a completely different relationship that I don't really incorporate in my everyday life, although it's always in my brain. It's always there. And I don't ever picture that going away.

### ***Overcoming Hardship***

As mentioned in the introduction, there is an air of hedonism that surrounds the band (though, this could be said about many rock and roll bands) which makes the concert setting an easy and acceptable place to indulge in the use of alcohol or drugs. Oddly enough, due to Jerry Joseph's sobriety, most fans are careful to not be blatantly open about their indulgences as a simple respect to Joseph. While he is certainly aware of what transpires in the music scene surrounding his band, it is well-known that it is not something he condones. Janet (6/15/2013; 7/31/2014) and Keith (6/18/2013; 6/29/2014) were two participants who I had the serendipitous privilege of interviewing both during their period of addictive indulgence and after they had been sober for quite some time (Janet, seven months; Keith, one year).

While there was a degree of pride felt for their desire and ability to overcome their addictions on my part, it was also very interesting to see how they responded to certain questions both before and after attaining sobriety. It is interesting to note that for both, the music and the scene was not only of utmost importance to their life during their period of addiction, but that it remained so even after they had successfully become

clean; in some ways it had become more important. In my first interview with Janet (6/15/2013) I asked her if she saw her involvement as a method of escape. She responded that it was not the music but the drugs that were the escape. She went on to say that, “Music [is what] I turn to in order to come back to life; to hold on to. [The Jackmormons’ music] allows me to hold on to life.” Janet started talking about themes in Joseph’s music, specifically death, a subject that she had discussed earlier due to her father and husband’s passing from cancer, and she said of Joseph:

When he sings about something that I’ve gone through, then it’s ok that I’ve been through it. When he talks about ‘put your fingers into my wounds’ [a line from the song *Radio Cab*], dude, whether you’re probing, or putting them in there to stop the bleeding, that’s it for me. The music goes inside those wounds and is somehow holding it together.

For Janet, while she still enjoyed the music and the scene during her period of excess, she found that her involvement was almost another form of addiction. Not only was it an acceptable outlet for using, but she found it difficult to take away positive experiences into her life outside the concert setting, and was constantly looking towards her next “fix” of shows. Upon becoming clean she was able to actually relate to the music in terms of a personal message of triumph, and both the music and Joseph himself served as a guide in her new life of being clean, happy and aware. She said that now she had “slowed down enough to pay attention. It fills my soul. And I like that” (7/31/2014). Janet had reached a point of clarity in her life that she had never had before. She was

adamant that for her to reach this summit in her life, the music of Jerry Joseph was integral to her positive growth as an individual.

I first spoke with Keith (6/18/2013) in the days following a two-day event in Telluride, Colorado, which is where I conducted my first interview with Janet. At his suggestion we met in a park near Denver, and we sat next to a tree in the shade, overlooking a lake and numerous people out recreating. He was not in a very good state of mind, as evidenced by his opening statement; “I’m in a really fragile state; it might be good for the questions, you know?” Though clearly somewhat depressed, in large part due to his addiction, he was very hospitable and forthcoming throughout the interview. We were talking about how often he listens to the band’s music, and he said that he listens to the Jackmormons “everyday” and that he could not “seem to broaden [his] horizons.” He went on to say that, “it all seems to fit my life, I guess that’s how everyone feels.”

Because I was well aware of his substance abuse issues, and his depression was staring me in the face, I was a bit taken back by this assertion. Predominately everyone I had talked to up to that point said the same thing, but they were all in much happier mind states. And while those participants frequently stated even though Joseph had a lot of ‘dark’ music, they often felt it was delivered in a healthy balance and was all reflective of the spectrum of emotion that everyone faces simply through shared humanity. But for Keith, it was not presented in that manner. He was connecting to the darker songs and lyrics because of the state of his life. In addition to his substance issues, he was also

facing a messy romance on the skids that involved a young son. Life for Keith was not good by any standard at this point.

As the conversation unfolded, we started talking about those favorite songs (at least as they were at that moment while he was immersed in melancholy), and he brought up the song *Oil*. He said, “It is like the ultimate song. It will make me cry. The way I interpret it, he just wants to turn to oil so that all the pain is gone. Be done with it.” I asked him how that related to his life at this specific moment, to which he answered:

Lately it gets me because of the line (singing, referring to his son) ‘picture of a little boy who looks a lot like me.’ And then he says something about ‘I hope that he finds love and is loyal, I guess I’ll find out on the day I return to oil.’

The following two-days were to feature the Jackmormons in Denver, Colorado. After we had finished our interview, we parted, and the following day he called me. He told me that he had spoken with Jerry Joseph and that he (Keith) was given the direction to clean up his act. Joseph was concerned about Keith’s health and his ability to tend to the needs of his young family. Keith took this as a moment for action, and chose to begin his life of sobriety on that day, June 19, 2013; he did not attend either concert in Denver.

A year later, on his one-year clean date, Keith called me and was justifiably happy. He said that he would like to do the interview again, as he felt he would have different answers to some of the questions. I, of course, obliged and we planned to do so at the Dixie Mattress Festival (DMF) in rural Oregon ten days later. We also happened to be sharing a house together with other fans as well.

Keith was in a much happier state of mind, and the life and color had returned to his face and personality. And while he had some issues on the first night of the DMF due to his past involvement of always being inebriated in some form at the festival, he was able to overcome the anxiety of his presence through the help of a few close friends. We sat down to chat after the second night of the festival and Keith reflected on the course of the last several years, and especially so on the last one for which he had been sober. He said, “Music is such a part of my life that of course it’s going to be a part of my recovery. It’s nice when you have your favorite musician singing about sobriety.” For Keith, the music retained its significance, but changed in that he was able to appreciate it more when he was clean. It was still a part of his daily life, something he felt was integral to his happiness and identity, and he was proud to say that he was a fan, and thankful to both Joseph and the ‘family’ for their support. The music “lets [him] know that [he’s] doing what’s right.” He stated about the previous night’s show that, “I felt about as good as I can possibly feel. That feeling of euphoria. And I’m glad I feel that now that I’m clean.”

### ***Reflection and Future Benefit***

Just as there are/were fans who struggled with various issues, there were many who seemed to lead lives they viewed with clarity. Being that the fanbase is a predominately middle-aged crowd most had established their place in life professionally, personally and socially. So when other participants responded to what they hoped to get from the music or how the music affected them outside the concert experience, it was

often from a foundation of sincere appreciation unclouded by negatively impactful external filters such as drugs and alcohol.

After the 2012 shows in Tulum, Mexico, a fan posted to the email listserv, “What a great fucking time. A beautiful setting, and once again another slice of the planet that I was exposed to as a direct result of Jerry's music and the "family" that has grown around it.” This fan went on to talk about all the little things that transpired to make it such a memorable event. He continued by talking about the setlists and the specific songs that were played, and one comment he made in regards to the song *Beautiful Child of God* jumped out to me. He said:

I love when bands make a "statement" with their set opener whether it's with a fast hard charging song that gets asses moving or a slow one that forces you to listen, contemplate and buy into the vision... *Beautiful Child of God* can accomplish the latter by serving notice that you're getting a front row seat for a few minutes of blessing in church before the rock show starts. (4/25/2012)

This allusion to religion and spirituality from this fan's posting illustrates a theme that was almost ubiquitous to participants' responses and a focus area previously documented in related research (Harmon & Dox, in review). And while not every fan described their involvement as spiritual, whether in a traditional religious context or not, every fan indicated that their involvement was unique in providing emotion they got nowhere else and was a source of profound enjoyment that significantly contributed to their quality of life. The enjoyment came from being able to interact with close friends identified as family; the music and the structureless environment gave them a safe place to recharge

or work through the issues of their life; and it was also a place to re-center themselves and reinforce their identity and sense of self.

I asked Kurt (7/29/2014) how he felt in the days following a show, to which he answered, “The day of I get excited and I’ll be trying to skip out [of work] by 2pm. I’ll start to get pumped up. After the shows, I’ll be able to store positive energy for weeks, months, maybe even years.” I was somewhat caught off guard by that, and I responded, “Really?” To which he rejoined, “You’re creating memories and stories you can tell. And you’re doing it with your friends, your family. What could be better than sharing something like this with the people you love?”

Bella (8/3/2014) also spoke to this notion when she said that, “There’s definitely something retained. Being able to go back to that place and that moment. It’s like the cumulative effect of the more shows you see, the more experiences like this you have, it just opens something up and you carry that with you every single time.”

While speaking with Jack (6/28/2014) I directly asked him if he could store positive emotions from his involvement to draw on in the future. He pondered this question for a moment and then responded:

There is a definite afterglow. You think about what you saw and relive it, acclimate yourself to work, which does suck to go back to. I spend most of the day doing that for a while, thoughts just pop into my head. It improves my quality of life immensely. Everyone needs a release; this is our release. Everyone just has to find what works for them... Music is so inclusive and develops links between people. People can reach so much understanding from music with one

another, it promotes peace. Worldwide there are examples of how music has brought people together. When you find your thing, like we found ours, the message is to do your best to make it the best it can be. Don't take it too seriously, but have the most fun. Make it a better experience for everyone. That's part of it. Find the love and the peace, and do it well. That is what we do here, and that is why we keep coming back. Our involvement is so important to our well-being, and I think I can speak for everyone here; we are both happy and lucky to be a part of it.

### **Discussion**

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) said that our “quality of life does not depend directly on what others think of us or what we own.” Instead it comes down to “how we feel about ourselves and about what happens to us. To improve life one must improve the quality of experience” (p. 44). McIntyre (1989) outlined four elements that are integral to understanding an individual's leisure association as a form of enduring involvement: significant importance to the participant's life; a high level of enjoyment derived from participation; the activity is an outlet for self-expression; and one's participation in the activity is central to their lifestyle. The ability of the fans to alter their quality of life for the better through their lengthy, passionate immersion in the music scene surrounding Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons has been demonstrated throughout this paper. And while some accounts shed light on the negative aspects of participation, these realities were countered by the sheer value of the music and the

dependence on friends made through involvement to those who were dealing with serious personal issues.

For most participants, however, their participation was not clouded by significant problems, and the outlet of the music scene surrounding the band was a place for release, reinvigoration, bonding and happiness. This is not to say that there were not issues in their 'regular' lives that caused concern or needed attendance, but that the music scene was a place where the fans could interact with themselves and one another and develop positive experiences that could affect their mood and disposition beyond the concert setting. This idea that fans could create stores of positive emotions through their involvement that could later impact other experiences, interactions and relationships for the better is what Barbara Fredrickson (2001) called the broaden-and-build theory.

### ***Broaden***

Fredrickson (2001) theorized that the creation of positive emotions can help people look at the episodes of their life in a broader context, therefore diminishing the impact of a negative incident and help to put things into perspective. The fans who participated in this study all spoke to their personal truths of the powerful and positive experiences they had through their interaction with the music. In addition, the friendships they formed, often referred to as 'family,' were of utmost importance (Harmon & Kyle, forthcoming), and for many these relationships had lasted years, if not decades. The ability to share not only a love for the music but mutual appreciation developed over time caused many of the respondents to feel as if they could call on their friends in the fanbase in times of need. Fredrickson (1998) said that:

Shared experiences of positive emotions create not only mutual enjoyment in the moment, but also enduring alliances, friendships, or family bonds. These social relationships become enduring resources that individuals can draw on later in times of need. (p. 311)

Carruthers and Hood (2004) stated that people can train themselves to “cultivate, notice and savor the positive experiences in their lives” (p. 230). For many, the relationships formed were just as important as the music, and when coupled together, made for an experience that was largely positive on their lives.

### ***Build***

Fredrickson (2001) said that “finding positive meaning triggers positive emotions” (p. 223) and that “experiences of positive emotions can build enduring psychological resources and trigger upward spirals toward enhanced emotional well-being” (p. 224). For many of the participants, their past involvement in other music scenes was still important to them in terms of maintaining friendships and relating to a personal history of connection to and development through music. Much as Kotarba (2005) said in his work on middle-aged fans, in this music scene there was importance in having a concrete assurance of ‘who they were’ for the participants, and this was equally dependent on their past as was their present involvement. This connection to personal music history is integral to Fredrickson’s (2001) broaden-and-build theory in that it is the very building on people’s personal and social resources that allows “positive emotions to transform people for the better, giving them better lives in the future” (p. 224). And while positive emotions and the ‘broadened mindsets’ they produce are

ephemeral, they can still have significant and long-lasting effects (Fredrickson, 2003). This sentiment was captured in Kurt's (7/29/2014) statement that he "would be able to store positive energy for weeks, months, maybe even years."

Fredrickson (2003) said that "community transformation becomes possible because each person's positive emotions can resound through others" (p. 335). Essentially the fans built on each other's positivity in the exchange of reciprocal sentiments garnered through engagement in the music scene. For the fans who participated, their involvement was meaningful on a personal level because of the role the music played in their lives in terms of identity maintenance, meaning making, and creating moments of happiness. The fact that it was shared with people they truly cared about added to that sense of positivity. That they got to look forward to future interactions with their 'family' and the music created further reason to be happy, and provided a positive foundation for which to draw from in their personal lives should the need ever arise.

For the participants of this study, their involvement was integral to their quality of life and the events were often looked forward to and planned for far in advance. The mere knowledge that they had events scheduled months in advance, for some, was enough to provide a daily boost of positivity, even if they had been removed from the music scene for an extended period of time. The time leading up to and immediately following the concert events were of profound significance to their state of mind and level of positivity, and often possessed a feeling they wanted to hold on to and looked

forward to capturing again. In short, they were working on developing and maintaining their own authentic happiness through their passionate connection to leisure.

### ***Conclusion***

The important question that is asked more and more in scholarly leisure research these days was put forth by Grybovych and Dieser (2010) in their ethnodrama on happiness and leisure: “What is happiness, authentic happiness, [and] how do we achieve it [through leisure]?” (p. 33). Following Aristotle, Kingwell (1998) said that happiness was in friendships. When a person interacts in close social networks, forming and strengthening ties, the result is the most genuine form of happiness. Carruthers and Hood (2005) voiced the same opinion, stating that leisure is a setting for “initiating, maintaining and rejuvenating social relationships” (p. 33). The positive effects of participation, especially when done through shared interaction, will enhance positive feelings in one’s daily life and lead to the potential to have better lives, personal growth and “a never-ending spiral of personal evolution” (p. 32).

For the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons, a predominately middle-aged crowd, their involvement in the music scene allowed for them to engage in meaningful interactions with the music, themselves and other close friends to build stores of positive energy to bring to their ‘everyday lives’ outside the concert experience. The focus on middle-aged participants in leisure, however, has not been developed to the extent that is necessary. Understanding the personal threads of involvement over the life course is important when attempting to understand how past leisure choices affect future leisure choices and how involvement in a leisure activity affects other aspects of one’s life away

from the activity. By exploring the importance of one's development and growth through leisure we can build an understanding of how leisure can be called on when faced with tragedies or traumas. The process of identity is always in flux, so when there are sure footholds in leisure to anchor oneself to, it follows that these associations can be integral to understanding the development of the self, and may provide comfort when faced with hardships. Finally, understanding the emotions of leisure involvement is fundamental to the leisure industry when it comes to providing leisure and recreation services, and how to adjust those offerings as patrons grow and age.

## CHAPTER VIII

### INTERLUDE IV

Judging from the setlists, the Jackmormons played three amazing shows August 14-16, 2014 in Oregon (two in Bend, one in Portland). Two days before I was to leave for the band's Montana run (I would be catching four of five shows, including the 10<sup>th</sup> annual "Bandito's" three-day run in Virginia City), on August 18<sup>th</sup>, I got a text from Dave (a pseudonym and participant) that there was a 'rumor' JR (the bassist) was leaving the band. It supposedly came from a reputable source, but I was hopeful it was just a rumor. The following day that thought wouldn't leave my mind, so I reached out to a few folks in the scene that had deeper connections to the band than I. As I feared, the rumor was indeed true. JR's final shows with the band would be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Bandito's run in Virginia City, Montana. There had always been tension between JR and Jerry, but they had managed to weather it – for the most part – since 1995 when the band formed. JR had left the band before, so there was hope it was only temporary, but truth be told, it looked like personal issues in JR's life might prevent the Jackmormons from being 'the Jackmormons' ever again.

I texted Dave back after I had confirmation, and we went back and forth mulling it over. He hoped it would only be a temporary split, maybe they just needed some time apart. I hoped so too, but reflecting back on some very recent animosity shared between the two on stage in both Telluride and Denver (July-August, 2014), maybe JR had finally had enough. Jerry is well-known and often reviled in the jamband world because

of his temper, irritability and quickness at lashing out. He has a song called *Fury*, and though I haven't heard of him playing it in years, perhaps it still speaks to the fire in his stomach. The song opens, "I woke up this morning, all I could feel is rage; it's like this every day until I go to bed." Maybe he doesn't play it anymore because it is still true. Maybe he doesn't want to feel that way and that song brings those feelings back. I don't know.

As we wrapped up our commiseration via text, Dave said, "Relationships can be tough. A community is counting on them." He closed with this text; "[We] just have to let the process play out. The decision is bigger than both of them" (8/20/2014). What these last two snippets from Dave did was to capture the essence of the scene. The fans love JR; the most involved and knowledgeable are all well aware of the tempestuous relationship between him and Jerry. But every time Jerry does band introductions at the end of a show, when he says, "On bass guitar, Junior Motherfucking Ruppel," the crowd goes nuts and flicks their middle fingers up towards the stage; don't worry, this is a very loving gesture shared between the bassist and the fans. His commanding presence (standing around 6'3), thundering bass lines and falsetto backing vocals are all very much an important part of the Jackmormons. Tom (a pseudonym and participant) may have captured it best when he suggested a bumper sticker for the band that would read, "You can't spell Jackmormons without JR" (7/2014, phone conversation).

Getting back to Dave's comments, in a way he was truly speaking for the most committed and passionate of the fanbase. They do view their involvement as a community, and as has been indicated through my interviews, more often than not, a

family. And this necessarily extends to the members of the band and the band member's family, too. Many times during interviews the participants would comment on how they hope the best for the band members; whether it was for Jerry to maintain his sobriety, Jenny (the wife of the drummer Steve) to ward off any future bouts of cancer, or for the band as a whole to gain more popular acclaim and make more money. The band and its music is integral to the livelihood of those I spoke with, so I knew this news would be hard for many of them to bare. And when Dave said "The decision is bigger than both of them," he meant that JR and Jerry needed to consider the fans' needs and how much the fans cared about the band as people. The connection had transcended the music, this was a family issue. It likely would not play out in a family meeting, though.

I would be traveling with Bella (a pseudonym and participant) that monumental and potentially sad weekend, so I texted the news to her. She was taken aback and asked if I was certain, and then mentioned that we would be "witnesses to the end of an era." Her closing text to me said, "I think I'm going to have leave work early today" (8/20/2014). I didn't feel sick about the inevitability of the restructuring of the band (Jerry and Steve would no doubt forge on), but I felt a very strong sense of remorse. I had some interactions with JR over the years, hanging out with him on a few rare occasions, but we never had any significant exchange. But I felt this urge inside that when I saw him in Butte the following day I wanted to say "thank you." He was for me, just as he was no doubt to those I spoke with, a very important figure in a very important aspect of my life. He would be greatly missed.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION: “THE ROAD YOU TRAVEL IS THE ROAD YOU’RE FINALLY ON”

This dissertation research focused on the role of music in benefitting quality of life. Music preference varies as much as any other human predilection and how people use music in their lives is equally diverse. For many, music is not a priority in life, but simply a backdrop for their daily experiences. In casual conversations I have learned that there are a significant amount of people who do not have a favorite band or song, and many of these people have never been to a live concert either. Admittedly, these revelations are surprising to me. Adorno (1973) said that music is the building block of consciousness and social structure, and we are socialized into a world where music is valuable, if for no other reason than to serve as a cultural marker of our upbringing. But for many others, music does matter, and it matters very much. And just as we develop tastes for food, clothing, and friends, we also can develop a taste for ‘our’ music. The participants who have participated in this dissertation research are the type of people who music matters to very much. For the majority of the respondents, they have shown that music has been of considerable importance for the entirety of their lives. Just as DeNora (2000) said that music is a resource for the production of one’s autobiography and self-narratives, it can also be integral in “articulating and stabilizing self-identity” (p. 158), developing meaningful friendships (Lonsdale & North, 2009), having moments

of elation (Cross, 2001), and addressing one's personal spiritual needs to create a sense of calm or to acknowledge that they are on the right path (Gellel, 2013; Yob, 2010).

## **Future Research**

### ***Future Research: Community & Family Development***

Music appreciation and involvement has recently begun to be looked at from a life course perspective in that there is a continuity of music use and importance for many people, and it necessarily ties together many aspects of their lives (Adams & Harmon, in press). For aging music fans the realities of growing older bring with it disease, lessened mobility and physical ailments, the necessity of others to aid in attending concerts, and of course the loss of friends who used to share that music with them (Adams & Harmon, 2014). But preempting all these conditions that impact us as we age is the reality of the importance of music and the accompanying friendships we make along the way. This music and these friends can be very integral to maintaining a high quality of life as we age, especially when it comes to our reliance on both for a positive outlet which can be very beneficial to maintaining an optimistic outlook. Establishing these connections and passions at younger ages may allow for us to have significant stores of helpful memories, experiences and relationships which provide us support in the future.

Many of the participants have been involved in the music scene for years, if not decades. I am therefore interested in developing this study longitudinally. Since the core members of the fanbase are primarily middle-aged, it would be interesting to see how both their level of involvement and connection to the friends made within the scene evolves. As some eventually make the decision to start families (in the traditional sense)

or get nearer to retirement, how will their connection to the music and the friends change? As the fans age, will they look for alternative offerings of community or family closer to home? Will the aging process necessitate that they abandon their involvement due to the difficulty of travel or health issues that often affect us as we grow older? And if fans that were once deemed central to the scene reduce their level of involvement or abandon it all together, what happens to the quality of the relationships formed amongst their friends in the fanbase? Will they still consider the closeness of their relationship to be 'family'?

Using Atchley's (1989) concept of continuity in aging would be an especially apropos theory for further research related to the role of this aging fanbase. Identities are always in a state of development and constantly changing in response to our interests, environments and relationships, so as those components become altered, further investigation in this area can help to establish the role of meaningful experience in maintaining relationships.

### ***Future Research: Charismatic Performers***

Jerry Joseph will be fifty-four at the time of this dissertation's submission (2015). And while he surely has the ability and motivation to continue playing live for years to come, there will inevitably come a time when he chooses to stop performing, or that choice is made for him due to health reasons. For the fans that still maintain a high level of involvement at that future time, it would be interesting to see how their sense of self and relationships are impacted by Joseph's physical departure from their lives.

Several participants spoke of others who used to be intimately involved in the music scene, and who attributed Joseph high levels of respect and devotion, but who are no longer involved in the subculture. Looking at those who have chosen to disengage from the scene, as well as those that might in the future, can help us learn more about the role of burnout and dropout in relation to leisure behavior and immersion. What are the reasons behind someone's choice to discontinue participation in any leisure activity, especially when it was once held in high regard in their life? Some fans spoke of their or others' negative interactions with Joseph (and other performers as well). When our artistic 'heroes' do not live up to our expectations how can that drive sentiment towards the activity and our desire to be involved?

Jerry Joseph is also well-known for finding and promoting bands that eventually go on to make it big (in some cases bigger than him: Widespread Panic; Drive-by Truckers). These bands that open for him also have the fortune of falling into a deeply devoted audience. It has often been said that if Jerry Joseph supports a band, his fans will too (such as Walter Salas-Humara; Richmond Fontaine; Jeff Crosby & the Refugees). So what capability do charismatic performers like Joseph have in being able to steer fan interest? Is devotion so high for Joseph that his fans are eager to heed his word and consume other artists' work?

Joseph is a well-traveled performer who has recently begun getting involved philanthropically (Rock School Kabul, 2014). How do performers (artists, athletes, authors) involved in charity events drive fan sentiment? Will fans be more like to support the organization in question? In the context of Joseph specifically, do the

charismatic qualities ascribed to him by his fans carry over to those he helps through his philanthropic efforts? Does his engagement in philanthropy bolster his charismatic qualities amongst his fanbase at home? Actors, musicians and athletes are all frequently referred to as role models, whether or not that is an accurate or fair assessment to make. But if that designation is even partially accurate, understanding how the person in question's choice to make the world better may lead to a ripple effect that drives fans' interest in giving back also.

### ***Future Research: Positive Psychology***

We all face hardships in our lives, but hopefully those are few and far between. We of course will all have to suffer minor setbacks and mundane periods in our lives as well, and incidents like these might be where the fans called upon their experiences in the music scene to offset the feelings of dread, boredom or misery that they are faced with. Most of the fans that participated were not currently involved in any serious setbacks in their lives. Some were working through overcoming their addictions, and one fan, Tom (12/30/2012), was dealing with the serious illness of his mother. Tom's mom eventually passed away, and while speaking to him by phone shortly after her passing, he mentioned that he felt extremely lucky to have many of his friends from the fanbase. He commented that those within the music scene were often more supportive than people he had known since childhood.

And this is a potential direction for future research: how can the relationships we form in passionate leisure activities be drawn on in serious times of need? I am interested in how people with terminal diseases use their lifelong involvement in various

leisure activities for coping and identity maintenance when they are faced with an incurable diagnosis. While I hope this fate does not befall anyone in this music scene, it inevitably will. Because I plan on my research being longitudinal in regards to this participant pool, eventually one of the participants will be faced with a disease, much like Tom was with his mother. In that moment when the ‘new normal’ sets in, how will those afflicted by disease use the music and the close friendships made in the scene to affect their sense of positivity and outlook on life in the face of dire illness?

### ***Conclusion***

Each of the participants has their own subjective views on how their involvement in the music scene surrounding Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons affected their lives; the common theme amongst them is that they felt they have been positively impacted by their participation. In closing, I will leave you with a final statement from one of the participants to emphasize the power of the band and its music in the lives of the passionate fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons. I asked Becky (8/15/2013) if music played a significant role in the formation and maintenance of friendships, to which she replied:

[It is] valuable in even establishing any connection. Music has that ability that we don’t necessarily have to talk about the past and what formed us; we just kind of skip it – [it is] implied. I think that’s why you sometimes have closeness with someone just because you have a shared music experience. Jerry Joseph has an ability to put words to emotion and feeling that otherwise you haven’t been able to do, so to experience that [with another person] brings you closer. There’s a

closeness implied just by being moved by the same thing. You're moved by it,  
okay, me too [that connect us].

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## APPENDIX I

### AFTERWORD

I have gotten different reactions over the last two years when I told people about what it is I have been studying for my dissertation. Most people find it intriguing, though others have seen it as indulgent or petty. Even those who have favorable reactions didn't always seem to grasp the potential that resided in this research beyond the reality that it considered what mattered to people and how individuals' involvement seemingly led to positive outcomes. So why was this study important? And perhaps more importantly, where do we go from here?

Sonny Kleinfield (2004) wrote an article for the New York Times a decade ago documenting the experience of one man's attempt to give back. The scenario involved a man, Lew Grossman, who was in hospice and nearing the end of his life, and another man named Bill Keating who wanted to spend some time with Lew and provide him any comfort he could. Their relationship evolved over the course of nearly two years, far longer than the six weeks expected for Lew to live when the pair first met. A significant medium for bonding between the soon-to-be close friends was music. You see, some of Lew's fondest memories were of his time singing in clubs and bars, and later when he worked in retail, singing impromptu songs about his merchandise to his co-workers. Now, as a man nearing death, music was a connection to his past. It was a tool to lift his spirits, and it was conduit to establishing and maintaining a very important friendship. It was in fact integral to the existence of the last friendship he would ever have.

Music marks our personal timelines in many ways, not always in our mind's current considerations, but when we decide to reflect upon our past, music often dots many of our most precious and memorable experiences. The fans who participated in this research have all had long-established relationships with music. For the most part, music has been important from the earliest stages of their lives, and has shown no signs of abatement as they have aged, their goals have changed, or their families have grown. This research is important because I am attempting to understand what it is that is of paramount interest and importance to the participants, to better understand how the music has become to be used in their lives in a multitude of ways. By attempting to understand what it is that motivates an individual and makes them happy, we may gain insight into what would be beneficial when they're faced with instances of tragedy, trauma, or hardship. If music is integral to their well-being in good times, can it be so in bad times as well?

And as these fans continue to age, their level of involvement in the music scene may change, but the music itself could potentially remain an ever-present and valuable asset in their lives. Inevitably, many of these fans will be faced with the unfortunate reality of disease or losing someone close to them. How will the music be used then? Will it be a shoulder to cry on? Will its lyrical content provide words of insight that allows for them to better cope with their situation? And in the event where one of these fans is diagnosed with an incurable disease, will the music be a steady reminder of happier times and its source as the foundation of the development of many friendships

through their involvement? Will the music be helpful in their attempts to regain and maintain some semblance of positivity in their lives?

I hope to continue my involvement in the music scene surrounding the band as a researcher for the foreseeable future. In my conversations with the participants, I have always stressed my desire to conduct follow-up interviews, to see how their level of involvement has changed, as well as their level of appreciation for the music. By attempting to conduct a long-term study, we can learn more about the role of music as it is intertwined with the development of the life course. Music has been studied in various age cohorts, cultures, and applications, but it has seldom been looked at as a source of continuous involvement. Tentatively I hope to re-interview the original 31 participants (assuming they are still involved in the scene) in 3-5 years. While I will draw from some of the original questions from the interview guide at this future date, each interview will be tailored to the individual based on their initial responses. I am most interested in the development of thought in regards to friendships, meanings of lyrical content, emotions felt while interacting in the concert event, and whether or not their participation remains at the same high level as it did upon first examination. I would also be interested in a third wave of interviews further into the future, perhaps a decade from now. I believe it will also be beneficial to interview new participants with the original interview guide at both of these future dates. This could provide some valuable insight into the evolution of connection to music in this particular scene, as well as if meanings and attractions are consistent amongst the fans drawn to this band. As the project continues over the course of the next several years, we will see the scene change through the influx of new fans,

the exit of some old ones, and perhaps the development of meaning for the fans involved, and why this leisure outlet has become, or continues to be, such a source of positivity in their lives.

## APPENDIX II

### THE ENCORE

*The charmed life, best I've ever seen. The good life and every place I've been.*

As is the habit after festival runs surrounding the band, there are posts to the fan listserv about how much fun the weekend had been. The above subheading is a line from the song *Pumpkin Time*; it was the penultimate song played by the band to close out the weekend and the closing line from a fan's post to the discussion board after the 10<sup>th</sup> installment of the Virginia City run. It was also one of the last songs played with JR Ruppel in the band.

This weekend of shows (8/20-8/24) marked not only the changing of the guard for the band, which was overly emotional for many, specifically at the final show Sunday night (8/24), but it also marked the close of my data collection for this dissertation. I wish JR had not made the decision to leave the band for numerous reasons, but the timing was eerie because I knew I would be dedicating this last section to the final weekend. Sort of a mix between gallows humor and the serendipity I referred to in my acknowledgments section.

The classic lineup of Guns n' Roses' final recording was a cover of the The Rolling Stones' *Sympathy for the Devil*. There had been significant turmoil in the band since the beginning, most of it due to the ego and control issues of the lead singer Axl Rose. In guitarist Slash's autobiography (Bozza, 2007), he said of that last recording that it was "the sound of the band breaking up" (p. 480). I was listening and watching for that

‘sound’ all weekend, and I didn’t witness it. In Butte, Montana on August 21<sup>st</sup>, the first set had JR looking a little aloof and there was minimal interaction between he and Jerry on stage, but come the second set, it appeared as if Jerry took backseat and featured JR’s bass playing. The three nights in Virginia City, Montana displayed what appeared to be focused and reciprocal engagement between JR and Jerry, and there were numerous smiles exchanged between one another. The final night of that run, it actually appeared that JR was a little emotional, as he wasn’t hitting his backing vocal cues like he typically would. Everyone hoped this would just be a temporary split, but judging from the emotional reactions on that final day, it seemed like many knew this might be the last time they would see him in the band.

### ***Fingers up and tears shed***

As the second set came to close on that last night in Virginia City and Jerry was going through his band introductions (there were also two guest performers that night), he paused a little longer than he normally does before he got to JR. Jerry had to step back into his on-stage persona with his guitar and jam a little; I’m pretty certain it was because he had to wrangle his emotions. When he came out of the guitar lick he said, “On bass guitar, one of my best friends for nineteen years, Junior Ruppel!” Typically the crowd yells and throws their middle fingers in the air, and they did this night as well, but they also broke into a loud round of applause coupled with flowing tears. Admittedly when Jerry gave this intro I was caught in an emotional moment as well. Even though I had no real relationship with JR, all you had to do was look around the venue to see how much he meant to the fans; you couldn’t help but get caught up in the feeling. After the

show had come to a close, Kelly (a participant and pseudonym) came up to me and gave me one of the biggest, longest hugs I've ever received. We didn't talk during or after the hug, and parted ways. The next day we exchanged emails and she said, "I think right when I saw you it all hit me that it was the end (for now) and I needed that hug too, so thank you as well" (8/25/2014).

### ***Life's Just Bitchin'***

As I sat in the old ghost town of Virginia City this past weekend to write up my observations from each of the previous nights' events, I had what I felt were some pretty interesting insights that came in the form of questions. The first was, are we our most authentic selves in the ephemeral moments of our lives? Because we are necessarily an accumulation of our experiences, and therefore literally constantly changing, is it these moments of personal expression, enjoyment and gratitude that we are "ourselves" completely before yet again changing due to that ephemeral experience? We can only find future moments of personal truth and never really live that previous moment of truth again due to the natural process of experiential evolution. That is not to say that these fleeting moments aren't always occurring in our everyday lives and periods of mundanity, but we are only most aware and "alive" when we're in the moment. This is what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described as 'flow' decades ago, and this is what appeared to take place in my twenty-one months of observations surrounding the band and its fans.

While speaking with Mickey and Mallory (8/23/2014) this last weekend of my formal data collection, I asked them about how they would describe their friends in the

fanbase. Mallory said that when “you get on the dance floor and share a glance” you can tell “how happy they are. You and me, we’re right here together, sharing this moment.” I asked if there was a connection even without speaking, to which she responded, “Oh, absolutely! Last night was so good for that. Everywhere I looked everyone one was loving it!”

I believe that it is these moments of elation that we have, as evidenced through the fans’ participation in the music scene, where we are able to find what is most important to our lives. Now these moments of fully engaged experience are not the only times where there is importance in our lives, but they may be the fullest recognition of the beauty, hardships and joys of life. Having said that, it is these fleeting moments where we may also respond to issues from our bigger picture; sometimes consciously, sometimes not. While speaking to Catie (12/28/2013), we were talking about how music is therapeutic for her. She said that she goes to shows to work on issues in her life. By “moving energy” and dancing she is able to block out all distractions except for what is important to her at that time. She said that she “works through a lot of stuff” at Jackmormons’ shows.

Dave (7/24/2013) said that going to Jackmormons’ shows allows you to:

Optimize what you want to do, release what you want to get out, whether that’s some internal drama or tension, or shit you’re working through. There’s basically a path towards self-identity and realization and understanding who you are.

He went on to say about his experience in the music scene that, “as long as I can go there and get what I need, that’s good enough for me.” I asked him what he needed, to which

he responded, “I need to be with my community. We share a common bond of release. It’s like group therapy” (7/24/2013).

This thought led to my second question; does community only exist in these moments of ephemeral and absorbing experiences? Do people want these experiences in their daily lives, or would they lose their specialness? Is the absence necessarily strengthening in that it allows you to filter out the ‘noise’ that comes with daily or frequent interactions? Do these fleeting moments of passion and togetherness allow you to focus only on the good, in both yourself and in others?

Dave had a fitting response to that thought as well. He said:

That’s one good thing about this music scene is that you have this reinforcing factor that happens on a cadence, an interval basis. You can pretty much count on seeing the same folks 10-15 times a year based on similar musical tastes.

(7/24/2013)

On the second day of the Virginia City run, I was hanging out at one of the communal houses shared by seven fans. This is where I conducted my interview with Mickey and Mallory, as they were staying there as well. I got dropped off about ten in the morning before anyone had come out of their rooms. I walked into the house, not odd at all in this circle, and sat down at the kitchen table to write up my notes from the night before. Matt (a pseudonym and participant) strolled into the kitchen and we proceeded to have a conversation the way any friends would. Slowly others came to and made their way to the shared space in the house and I went into the living room to conduct my interview. Everyone else huddled in the kitchen all chipping in on making

brunch. We all ate together, broke off into smaller conversations and one by one people would go to their rooms to take a nap or leave to go check out the town. I decided to grab some much needed shuteye on the couch. After an hour or two, people reconvened, either from their bedrooms or from their various outings, and it was time to make dinner before the show. Once again everyone chipped in, and everything was freely shared. I felt a little bad because I hadn't brought anything to the house when I arrived, yet I proceeded to stay there all day until it was time to leave for the show around nine at night.

But that was okay. It wasn't just this isolated incident where it was cool to drop in, hang out all day, and rely on others for sustenance and company; this practice was repeated throughout my entire period of observations and occurred in every shared house or campground that dotted the Jackmormons' tour route. On Sunday, the final day of the Montana run, there was a cookout and pool party held at one of the other compounds. Food was in such excess that you were practically required to eat. People freely moved around the area, engaging in conversations with one another, show related or not, mostly just building or strengthening relationships. Then it was time for the final show.

After the closing notes had been played, the fans gathered on the deck outside the Virginia City Community Center (fitting title) to say their goodbyes and look forward to the next time they'd meet. Because of the solemnness of the event due to the departure of the band's bassist, tears and hugs were in excess. The band would look very different the next time any of the fans saw each other. But at least they knew they would see their friends again, even if it wouldn't be for months. The relationships that had been brought

on by personal interest and involvement in the music scene had led to very real connections that were sustained through intermittent and geographically and temporally spaced interactions. But those interactions had been cemented in real experiences and exchanges, and while they would fade away for a little while, they would ultimately come together sometime and somewhere down the line.

As I walked by myself into the dark of the ghost town's night, I allowed myself a quick reflection on the entirety of my experience as a researcher within this music scene. My involvement had allowed me to meet so many genuinely good and generous people, allowed me to connect to the music on a higher level through the shared experiences, and to consider very important questions about life in general. I always thanked my participants at the end of my interviews for their time and insights, and it was almost always that they thanked me for the opportunity to talk about something that was so important to their lives. One last time I would like to properly thank all of those I spoke with, either formally or informally; not only for their stories, but also for their ability to remind me that we can all be better people if we focus on what is important – our shared humanity – and that we can do so through the music.