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An Ethnographic Account of North Wales Psyculture

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An Ethnographic Account of North Wales Psyculture

i. Abstract

Psychedelic trance music culture is a global dance culture based on psychedelic trance electronic dance music that has a large global following. Psyculture is credited with offering insight into spiritual aspects within electronic dance music culture.

There is a gap in research of psychedelic trance culture at a regional level for most countries that would benefit from investigation. This thesis addresses this gap and provides an illustration of psyculture within the UK specifically in North Wales. The research explored participants' interpretations of the characteristics, beliefs, and experiences of North Wales (NW) psyculture to offer insight and contribute to current research. The qualitative, emic research was based on an autoethnographic reflexive account, fieldnotes, and interviews with participants about their interpretation of global, UK and North Wales psyculture.

The findings suggest that participants believe in the positive effects of involvement in the close-knit NW psyculture community. The findings indicate that within NW psyculture, there is a labyrinth of ambiguities and paradoxes that co-habit in a complementary fashion, revealing a mix of sacred and secular knowledge, experience, intention, and involvement reported by participants.

Keywords:

psytrance, psyculture, trance, spirituality, dance, belonging, culture

ii. Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Psychedelic trance (psytrance) music is classified as a form of electronic dance music that is a repetitive dance style that has a distinct focus on trance elements that grew in popularity in the 1990s from initial origins within disco and earlier dance related genres. There have been a growing range of disciplines interested in psytrance music spanning many topics about its history and origins, its development as a culture, its development as a distinct musical genre and the compositional and production techniques, its connections with drugs, the proliferation of psytrance events and festivals, its subcultural and underground characteristics and associations with rave and the free party scene but particularly it has been investigated as a growing global, transnational musical scene with some coverage at local and national level.

The range of themes explored within psytrance and its culture has covered the global/local, liminality, belonging, exile, transcendence, outsiders, counterculture, the hidden, journey, participation, transformation, return, play, seriousness, religiosity, change, and alienation amongst many other intersectionalities therein. Charles summarises psyculture research as focussed on the 'nomadic nature of the culture and the associated activities of travelling, music festivals, and the ritualised consumption of psychedelic drugs' (2019, p. 33).

Related research has tended to be about specific events or transnational gatherings indicating there is a need for explorations of local psyculture heritage. Slobin (2003) states the genre is still without comprehensive investigation with much of the existing research about transglobal rather than local, country-specific activity. These gaps occur at a global level, as Lindop indicates, there is a need for an examination of this 'world-wide movement which has had comparatively little study' (in St. John, 2012c).

St. John states that ethnographic accounts of the movement, the culture of its events, the aesthetics of its music, were needed (St. John, 2009a, p. 4), as there is a 'paucity of published ethnographies configuring the religious and spiritual characteristics of this global movement' (St. John, 2009b, p. 42). There has been some research undertaken focused on UK psyculture but referred to as English psyculture which excludes other geographical locations such as Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. This research will provide coverage of one UK area by focusing on North Wales psyculture.

Related research has tended to be about specific events or transnational gatherings indicating there is a need for explorations of local psyculture heritage. This research aimed to address a gap in local research by providing a detailed illustration of a Welsh psyculture collective. The purpose of the research was to contextualise North Wales psyculture (NW psyculture) from the participants' viewpoint and examine its position in relation to global psyculture. My argument is that there are commonalities and differences in NW psyculture that reflect those of global psyculture with the chief

draw for participants being a sense of belonging, and that psyculture affects participants' worldviews.

1.2 Research Aim and Questions

The main research question was to determine 'How do North Wales psyculture participants define their characteristics, beliefs, and experiences?' The sub-questions include:

1. What are the commonalities with global psyculture and the distinctions unique to NW psyculture in terms of how it is characterised by participants?
2. What are the different beliefs amongst participants?
3. Were there a range of experiences amongst participants at psytrance events generally and NW psyculture specifically?

This research aimed to update the existing literature regarding the characteristics, beliefs, and experiences of NW psytrance by presenting descriptive and exploratory primary research to highlight homogenous themes within global psyculture at local level.

1.3 Background

The term electronic dance music (EDM) is often used as a shorthand acronym for all forms of electronic dance music (Reynolds, 2012). EDM is a genre that began in the 1980s based on house music that is characterised by a repetitive dance beat made electronically EDM culture (EDMC) research is interested in the cultural debates about its meaning and value, its religiosity, its sense of belonging, and the experience of dance (Charles, 2019). EDM diversified into many but is particularly associated with rave music and the increase of drug usage within most of dance music scenes (Greener & Holland, 2006, p. 398).

EDM and rave music is linked to ideas of identity formation both individual and collective, experiences of community, escape, and transcendence, with ritualistic and spiritual similarities to ancient practices of dance, trance, and shamanism. Even though the spread and influence of rave in its pure form has declined in the intervening years, its beliefs, identities, and ideals have fragmented and hybridized into other dance music genres.

Psytrance music reportedly originated in Goa in the eighties, with historical links to the psychedelic culture and music from the sixties (de Ledesma, 2011, p. 3). The culmination of these influences was instrumental in changing the nature of the music being played on the beaches of Goa that witnessed a growth in foreign visitors in the early nineties due to the worldwide popularity of Acid House music. Goa trance music developed a distinctly oriental flavour and unique sound. As the music itself developed and diversified across different styles and countries, psychedelic trance music or psytrance became the term used rather than Goa trance from the nineties onwards.

Global psyculture events have increased in many countries over the past 25 years. Some of the main events are the European based Ozora, Boom, Psy-fi and Hadra Festivals. There have been many UK events in the past 25 years. There are UK

festivals that have Psytrance areas such as Noisily Festival, Anthropos, Eden Festival, Solfest, Equinox, Glade Stage at Glastonbury amongst others . There are other annual, outside gatherings like Triplicity, Goa Cream, Tribe of Frog, Tribal Sphere, Ravenshaman, Summer Sunset, Butterfly Effect, This is Sparta, and Faeriepirates.

Northern English psyculture scenes have decreased in activity since 2010, a number of event organisers and social media forums have ceased operating, including the Celtic Northern Psytrance. In the North there are club nights such as Sunrise, Noetic Flux, Psychometric Vision, Tynepsyde, Shanti, Kulu, Planet Zogg and Elemental. The Midlands active club scene includes Tribal Sphere and Psyology in Birmingham. Scotland has occasional club nights such as Tripington's Ball and Cosmos. Ireland has a comprehensive club and festival scene including the annual Life Festival.

Many Psytrance event organisers have existed in Wales, mainly in the north of the country since the 1990s, such as Psilocybe Tribe, Northwaliens, and Faeriepirates. Faeriepirates (FP) started to organise gatherings and run a radio station about 16 years ago in North Wales. They organise an annual outdoors Beltane gathering in May, the Blackpearl summer gathering in August and more recently a New Year's Eve event. Blackpearl started in 2013 when the Pearl Festival was cancelled. Initially a small 200 capacity gathering was organised on private land in Wales that has increased in capacity nearer to 700-800 attendees.

Across the UK there have been legal restrictions since the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 to deter illegal EDM and psytrance events. As Charles indicates this led to a decrease in outside events and an increase in legal indoor events (2019, p.82). However, illegal raves still continue to exist, and outside events are often not licensed.

The researcher's background is as an active festival organiser, by being involved in several Northern events, a pro-active contributor at most of these events, a volunteer for PsyCareUK, provider of Jackus Dream and Dance Healing Workshops, the manager of Psynergiser Dance Foundation, the administrator of various social media groups such as Psyculture UK, Global Psyculture, and the Centre for Research in Psyculture and Psytrance.

Within the term psychedelic, the characteristic can be applied to everything from art, to music, to beliefs, to clothing and dance styles with the vague reference to anything associated with consciousness and its alteration (St John, 2010a, p. 4). Psychedelic is used in the sense that we are not only 'referring to a style or a music genre, but to a state of music fruition which stems from varied approaches to human conscience alteration: psychoactive substances, dance, music, light' (Guerra, 2015). By 2000, 'the term psytrance was coined, initially as an umbrella to corral a sector of electronic trance micro-genres which were generically slightly psychedelic' (de Ledesma, 2010. p.103).

Psytrance culture is further defined by the nature of the music as a specific category with unique sonic production techniques using mainly electronic equipment and played by live artists and djs. Its sonic qualities generally include a rolling bassline, a multitude of effects often replacing melodies and becoming the melody themselves in many layers. It has spurned sub genres within in that vary according to musical

elements, bpm, the type of bassline and its purpose as full-on chill out progressive hitech, and psybreaks (St. John, 2010a).

This ethos of psyculture is based on a foundation of experimentalism, exploration, experiencing life beyond the repressive boundaries of mainstream culture with a determined focus on progressive education, spreading knowledge and pursuing advancements in wisdom, technology, participation and within the remit of potentially bringing benefits to themselves and greater society (St. John, 2010a, p. 3). Psyculture is characterised by its links with spirituality, and its altruistic concerns more than other types of EDM. Like EDM culture, psychedelic trance culture has a global culture with its roots in the underground (de Ledesma, 2011, p. 3).

The underpinning nature of psytrance and its culture is notoriously different to pin down because of its diversity and complexity due to its transnationality and underground nature. It becomes difficult to define it as it is neither a movement, nor a scene or culture but a transnational universal belief system based on dancing that continues to defy definition (St. John, 2010a, p. 12).

This difficulty to establish a definition is exasperated by the often clandestine, defensive, and suspicious attitude to outside enquiry, that is reflected in the obscurities within the music and permeates across all aspects of this cultural phenomenon. This is further complicated by the pace of its rate of change, and its constant reinventions, new artists, new festivals, new tribes across and within every country. To attempt to study the culture as a subculture, as a music scene, as a festal industry, as a an underground movement or place of political and societal experimentation is unsatisfactory because it is not class, age or culturally specific to be termed as a subculture, and has led to a blurring of distinctions between different and overlapping interpretations by different disciplines (St. John, 2010a, p. 9).The underground label associated with psytrance events parallels the philosophies and attitudes of attendees and organisers alike in that they are afforded an opportunity away from the repressions of mainstream society which is often treated with derision or suspicion (St. John, 2010a, p. 3).

The terms of scene, crew, tribes, family are often used interchangeably without specific clarification to refer to the community and the member indicating a sense of belonging similar to being part of a tribe, or a neo-tribe, or even a family (St. John, 2013a). The use of the term scenes in EDM, are populated by neo-tribe communities engaged in a social activity. They have permeable boundaries and are not confined by geography. Guerra defends the scene as a space where various music practices are associated but are different from each other (2015). Crew refers to the people who have roles in organising events including the organisers, security, sound engineer, rig owners, lighting, décor, catering, stewards, first aid, scenery, visuals, and production management.

Attendees refer to the community, the family, the culture as a homogenous whole irrespective of whether national or international. Sometimes the terms 'mainstreamer', 'randomer', 'newcomer', or 'outlier' are used to refer to those that are unwelcome, new or do not know the rules of behaviour. The term 'outlaw' is often used interchangeably with 'outsider' defined as a clandestine, a nomadic, a rebel or an activist, however it is more of a conceit of pretence (St John, 2012b).

Many attendees associate a tribal sense of belonging with membership of many EDM dance music scenes along with a sense of community, and alignment with a collective ethos, set of beliefs and experiences (St. John, 2010a, p. 8). This is particularly applicable to psychedelic trance culture where bonds, association, arrangements, events, and groupings into tribes are very strong with attendees being often fervent upholders of psyculture and its culture. There are similarities with spiritual, religious, and other types of social, cultural movements and groups but psytrance emanates round a love of the music and dancing as its defining factor.

There are other terms that benefit from some clarification in terms of definition and specific usage. 'Communitas' is an experience of unity between a group of people in terms of mindset in a specific space and time. This usually occurs in a space between the everyday occurrences of structured society. In terms of variations round the concept of the liminal, St. John, states Van Gennep referring to 'rites of passages in many cultures...with a tripartite processual structure' (St. John, 2010b, p. 225). 'Rave Imaginary' is defined as being a religious experience and a desire for freedom from the 'postmodern quest for personal freedoms, for difference, without seeking essential, or fundamental, difference. significance of liberation and freedom' (St. John, 2004, p. 72).

The 'vibe' refers to the flavour of culture extant in an EDM scene, a combination of the music, visual aesthetic, location, group of people, and the surrounding culture that influences these. The vibe is seen as contributing to a feeling of liberation, a subversive experience distinct from the mainstream world of oppression replaced by an experience of 'nowness' from the alien, mainstream world. The dancers, DJs and music contribute towards this synchronising experience which is seen as central to the collective energy, or vibe (St. John, 2013b). St. John emphasizes the experiential quality of the vibe, which is 'only know through affect' (p. 93).

For the purpose of consistency in this thesis, the term 'participants' will refer to those who took part directly in the research whereas 'attendees' will refer to those who attend psytrance events. 'Organisers' refers to those who organise events, festivals, gatherings, and associated infrastructure. 'Producers' are those who directly produce and perform original psytrance music, DJs are those who play and perform psytrance music whereas the term 'artists' refer to those who produce and provide artwork.

1.4 Thesis Framework

A summary of the contents within each chapter will be detailed. Chapter 2 comprises the literature that has been organised according to three key themes. The framework within Chapter 2: the literature review splits into three sections of characteristics, beliefs, and experiences then by global and UK psyculture and this was continued across all other chapters. The umbrella term characteristics encompasses aspects typical within psyculture including definitions, descriptions, and distinct qualities recognisable across different environments. Beliefs refers to religious, secular, or spiritual concepts that may be personal or shared within a community. A belief can be about answering fundamental questions of philosophy, more metaphysical beliefs that go beyond normal reality, and/or morals and values that give guidance on a way of life. Experiences cover the range of human experiences of situations, life, both internally and externally, that influence a person

through involvement that may lead to change or progress. It is external and deals with activities.

Within each section, the structure commences firstly with a consideration of the writings of the key psyculture theorist, Graham St. John. St. John is one of the major writers regarding EDM, festival culture, psytrance culture with an understanding of the diverse aesthetics, and internal controversies within psyculture. St. John's work is considered first as an organizing frame in the literature review followed by other work by published researchers.

Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology in terms of the overall qualitative, ethnographic perspective and the specific research design choices such as types of data collection techniques such as interviews and autoethnography. This section also contains a discussion regarding ethics, the specific considerations regarding the choice of data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4 comprises the findings from the participant interviews and the autoethnography summarising key findings with selected, representative examples from the data. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings from the primary data comparing similarities and differences with secondary data. Chapter 6 comprises of the conclusion of the overall thesis as well as an evaluation of the project, consideration of the impact and implications and finally recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This research explores existing, relevant literature and has been structured into sections about the characteristics, beliefs, and experiences that have received scholarly interest in UK and global psyculture. The decision was taken to organise the literature review into three distinction sections to provide clarity between these three areas of characteristics, beliefs, and experience to distinguish between how psyculture is described and its distinct qualities, how its attendees contextualise beliefs and spirituality as well as morals, values, and principles. The experiences section is an umbrella term of the physical experiences of dancing, from participation, and from contribution within the scene as well as actual recollections of experience by attendees. The review is further organised by considering St. John's work by theme followed by other related literature. However, this framework itself only provides a cursory attempt at providing clarification as there is so much overlap.

2.1 Characteristics

St. John characterises psyculture as a diverse mix of influences, populations, and scenes in a mix of cultural roots with complex aesthetics and increasing transnationalism (St. John, 2010b, p. 221). St. John provides a comprehensive summary of the defining qualities of psyculture that explore:

> iterated ephemeralities, utopian dancescapes, nonsensical logics, ambivalent reactions, contested liminalities and contradictory responses to local and global conditions. Possessing geographical and cosmopolitan vectors, underground aesthetics, and transnational flows.
>
> St. John, 2010a, p, 3

These aspects will be unpicked within the thesis to attest their accuracy compared to participants' interpretations of psyculture to establish whether the suggested underground, ephemeral, utopian, illogical, and ambivalent liminalities exist at local level like they do globally or not.

Van Veen. in his review of *Global Tribe* (St. John, 2012), summarises a selection of St. John's important ideas such as 'being-in-transit as a means of self-transformation, the 'psycultural exile' (van Veen, 2004, p. 63), and how attendees seek 'belongings by undertaking transformational reconstructions of the self' where attendees abandon 'ethnonationalist constraints, turning instead to the dreamdancing of cosmic community' where St. John is chronicling the beliefs and experiences of 'psyculture's alternate dreamworlds and collective fantasies of ideal belonging contemplating the abyssal search for greater meaning in our planetary-bound existence' (van Veen, 2004, p. 63). He states that St. John emphasises the 'participant diversity of psyculture' as they 'undertake an exodus' in an 'experiential diversity of individuated trajectories' with its political ecological and environmentalist ideals' (p. 64).

St. John stresses the difficulty of applying certain concepts to the scene because of the paradoxical experiences of living in the present moment, and the complexity of the global/local aesthetic inherent in the 'chaos' at the heart of the primary

experience (St. John, 2012a). He indicates that psyculture is characterised by an inherent freedom of choice, an experimentalism with its gatherings as 'cosmic carnivals' where normal world behaviours are replaced by the carnivalesque, the grotesque and the insane (p. 200).

In considering a definition of current psytrance, Rietveld, in 'Infinite noise spirals: The musical cosmopolitanism of psytrance', indicates that the term psytrance is currently preferred to describe modern day psytrance, as distinct from Goa trance, particularly because of its global dispersion (Rietveld, 2010, p. 71). There are influences from global psyculture evident at local UK level where the term psytrance is currently in use rather than goa trance.

Rietveld succinctly characterises the psytrance scene as a 'fluid crossroads in a multidimensional network of musical influences and ideas' (2010, p. 71). Psyculture is both cosmopolitan and complex where there are tensions between the countercultural, resistance, and hedonistic escapism (p. 70). The scene presents paradoxes that are 'once porous and closed, open and protective, embracing and exclusive, explorative yet ring-fencing''(p. 70) showing for example the complexity of global influences played out at a local level which 'contradicts and frays in noisy infinite spirals' (p. 84). Rietveld further indicates the simultaneously occurring in a global/local, liminal 'third space', attempting to combine ancient ritual away from globalisation in spaces that bring a sense of homecoming, where 'attendees feel at home with strangers because of the shared, emotional experience' (2010, p. 85).

Informative clarification of the tensions emerges from St. John's 2012 seminal work, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance* regarding tensions of local versus global, self versus tribe, spiritual versus technological, transgressive versus progressive, roots versus novelty, and commercial versus independent (2012a, p. 115). He describes psyculture as 'transnational, emergent, and labyrinthine having both commonalities while celebrating diversity; with attendees in a search for the spiritual other to overcome the isolation caused by the death of community in the modern world' (p. 16). Elliott, in 'Goa is a state of mind', reiterates this difficulty of defining the indefinable as being caused by the 'ephemerality at the heart of this mythologised genre of social consciousness' that can be 'only to a feeling, a vibe or a state of mind' (2010, p. 38).

St. John notes a formlessness that makes psyculture difficult to pin down due its 'undefinable culture' yet it has evident infrastructure, organisation, and hierarchy (St. John, 2012a, p.334). He refers to it as 'travelling': a journeying that adds a form to this 'indefinable fluidity'; where attendees travel literally and psychologically 2010a). He explains that attendees are 'going somewhere' that attendees belong to a local scene irrespective of how indefinable it is (2010a). This is clear in the travelling to non-permanent sites with NW psyculture where there is a 'journeying' in terms of personal, internal progression and a physical, external journeying to literal sites while it is without form, there is evident structure at local level for the events to occur.

Psyculture has an underground quality, though it is equally difficult to pinpoint whether psyculture is actively countercultural, culturally apathetic or a spiritual experience. St. John suggests that psyculture has a transgressive tendency that in the past may have been politically initiated but is now more about 'suspending obligations' to traditional roles and contexts (St. John, 2012a, p. 253). There are, he

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states, intrinsic characteristics of the underground, such as the temporary nature of contexts, that allow attendees freedom from regulatory, restrictive interventions from authorities, freedom from the conventions of the mainstream population (2010a, p. 232). In ' Liminal culture and global movement: the transitional world of psytrance', St. John indicates that the transgressive nature of psytrance refers to 'feelings' rather than political activism - that the ideology of transgression is more associated with liminality, mobility, nomadic utopian, ecological sensibilities, and a 'radical jovialness' but not as politically proactive anymore (2010b, p. 245). This reflects the position within the NW psyculture where legal concerns exist that can be labelled as underground in nature but without direct political activity.

An important definition of psyculture revolves around the global influences that are reflected in local scenes. Attendees of overseas events are escaping the 'exclusivism, divisiveness and elitism' of mainstream society this 'transnational psytrance expatriotism is ironically being transposed back into local scenes' (St. John, 2010b, p. 22). St. John asserts that there are ambiguities evident in the contradictory conditions of the global/local and to what extent they are adopted (2010b). While global psyculture is clearly influential on NW psyculture, there are other influences and notable characteristics emanating from the regional contexts.

Another key definition of psyculture is regarding liminality and the idea of permanent impermanence. St. John defines psytrance as a liminal movement which incorporates elements of liminality, liminal phases, and aspects of community (2010b). He indicates that attendees are immersed in a world that is liminised because spontaneity and indeterminacy are sought, and the attendees enter sequential phases then return to normal society (p. 244). St. John further suggests there is a continual incompleteness to the attendees' experience where 'they liminalise their lifeworlds, indefinitely' (p. 244) that is different from Turnerian liminality because it extends beyond the temporary space. This blurs the idea of a temporality to the liminal threshold where wholeness is not only not sought but avoided in favour of 'permanent impermanency' unlike during traditional liminality which requires 'a transition to a whole, stable, mature, self' (p. 44). Attendees make the impermanent state the end-product: 'to mobilise cultural transition, the threshold becomes something of a sophisticated career' (p. 244). This is certainly evident in NW psyculture as experiences, contacts, and cultural associations are increasingly continued beyond events.

Furthering insight into the nature of liminality and the global influence, Ryan, in Weaving the underground web: Neo-tribalism and psytrance on Tribe.net, defines psytrance's growth as due to 'utopian visions of an interconnected global community' (2010, p. 13). She calls the liminal space a place where there is a re-visiting of timeless ritual to 'enable experience of a collective connectivity' (p. 17). She characterises psyculture as a desire to nurture alternative ways without rules wishing for a 'collectively imagined world' (p. 14). Within NW underground psyculture there is a desire to re-create an imaginary space of freedom but one that is a result of necessity not choice as will be discussed later.

Another key characteristic of psyculture is the importance of shared sociality but once again with an ambiguity at its centre. Vitos, (in St. John, 2010a) provides seminal reflection on the paradoxes involved: on the one hand there is a changeability within stylistic details, transnational fluidity, and in opposition there are

regular people, regular socialities, and a shared sensibility (2010a). Furthermore, within NW psyculture, there is an ever-evolving global influence and evolving fluidity in aesthetics, but the network of attendees is relatively constant.

Guerra places attendees who travel globally bringing back to their own scene global influences and ties of sociality that become important features locally. She indicates this is more complex than the global/local dichotomy can account for (2015, p. 20). She defines psytrance in Portugal by its 'shared recreational experiences; the importance of the worldwide scene; a preference for outdoor locations; and its underground nature as a way of resisting mainstream scenes' which defines NW psyculture too (p. 20).

Guerra suggests, psyculture can be described by the specificities that concern the individual actors such as collective and personal growth in an idealistic community (2015, p. 21). She comments that attendees are often 'dedicated to the searching for ideals steered to an idealized future, fighting for it' (p. 21). Analogously, Tramacchi, in 'Field Tripping', interestingly defines the scene as a way of social expression in an unconventional manner (2004, p.136). He defines the inherent themes of diversity, a sense of liberation, and regeneration in a liminal expression of togetherness working towards 'becoming more human and more engaged while experimenting with unconventional ways of living' (p. 210). Within this underground space away from state structures, the attendees are seeking alternate modes of consciousness and personal autonomy (p. 204). Thus attached to the sociality are ideals of social expression, and experimentation that are at the heart of NW psyculture.

The importance of belonging to a shared sociality is further discussed by D'Andrea who investigates the context and membership of psyculture (2010). In the contested 'Decline of electronic dance scenes: The case of psytrance in Goa', D'Andrea characterises the scene as a paradoxical interplay between countercultures and leisure industries that needs to be viewed within a larger socio-economic context (p. 52). He describes the main themes as globalisation, status mechanisms of veterans and newcomers, and regional development (p. 52). This transnational mobility becomes part of attendees' lifestyle to avoid repressive morality at home where they live on a global circuit that is both countercultural and paradoxically part of the leisure industries (p. 42). In NW psyculture, there are certainly global interplays as attendees escape and bring back influences but also a distinct local flavour as some live on the regional circuit as well as similar roles, status issues, and fluid mobility of attendees.

There are various terms used to define the people inside and external to psyculture as suggested above such as 'veterans and newcomers', which indicate including 'mainstream' or outlier positionality. D'Andrea provides insight describing the roles within psyculture referring to 'veteran insiders' as those who have an influential position in Goa within the scene as opposed to newcomers (p. 47). Veterans are key to introducing newcomers to psyculture in terms of sharing skills and contributing to the continuation of the scene (p. 47). This is reproduced in the NW psyculture where there is a necessary suspiciousness to newcomers or outsiders that may have a negative influence on the scene. This is a key element in the 'underground' label it incurs but also a form of newcomer induction.

The coverage of characteristics has included an examination of key themes such as the global influence on local scenes, the problematic relationship with mainstream society, an ambiguous political nature, the relevance of viewing psyculture as liminal as well as its organised chaos/formlessness, and resistant indefinability that influence NW psyculture. The next section of the literature review will aim to extend an understanding to the ambivalent nature of beliefs within psyculture.

2.2 Beliefs

Beliefs, as discussed in this section, relate to religious ideas, spirituality, and strongly held opinions beyond the realm of fact, and relate to internalised conceptualisations that develop in attendees' minds. In psyculture, there are beliefs that are quasi-religious with a similar ethos to a standard religion with associated purposes, identities, and practices. This section will discuss religiosity, spiritualities, and key terms such as unreligion, seeker culture, expressive spirituality, and morality.

St. John sets important standards for written representations of EDM, in 'Writing the vibe: Arts of representation in electronic dance music', that EDM is about 'motivating new spiritualities' indicating the 'persistence of religiosity' where there is a profound experience of 'being saved' (St. John, 2013b, p. 2). He states that EDM dance culture is geared to provide the opportunity to modify consciousness to 'facilitate its potential' (p. 3).

St. John, in *Rave Culture and Religion,* further refers to the 'growth of non-traditional desires for religious-type experiences within EDMC' (2004, p. 20). St. John suggests these are 'sites of liberation' are based on future ideals and past nostalgias where multiple truths, beliefs, spiritualities and identities are possible within a framework of 'expressive humanism' (2004). This secular, 'unreligion' is where the attendees set off on a journey from their everyday lives with other 'pilgrims' to perform as their other selves to reconnect with others, nature, and the universe (2004).

Furthermore, St. John, in *Electronic Dance Music Culture and Religion*, locates psyculture within a variety of experiences of the sacred sought by its attendees in what could be described as a 'seeker culture' where the attendees are on a pilgrimage to find hidden truths (2006). D'Andrea, in *Global Nomads*, indicates that the dancefloor space becomes infused with a sacredness that is a safe, positive place for attendees to exist in another self, and return from their transcendent journey which is important in NW psyculture (2009, p. 204). St John confirms that psyculture 'hosts' an '"expressive spirituality" that brings a deep sense of freedom, recognition of others and the self, possibly signifying 'a new gnosis' (2004, p. 36). Heelas and Bowman, in 'Expressive spirituality and humanistic expressivism: sources of significance beyond church and chapel', agrees that attendees are expressing spirituality seeking freedom from 'the contaminating effects of society and culture; (to) seek genuine experience' (2000, p. 243).

Tramacchi considers that 'psychedelic dance music is imbued with certain para-religious qualities' (2000, p. 136). He documents attendees practising 'self-shamanizing' where they become their own healers seeking escape from the alienating, soul-destroying normality (p. 210). He reports that often this approach to spirituality is viewed with a mix of humility, experimentalism, curiosity, and humour (p. 210). Tramacchi locates Australian doofs in the same matrix of other

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religious/spiritual paradigms that has a psychedelic morality along with quasi-rituals, processes, and structures with a pragmatic ethical component of morals though this is rarely expressed explicitly (2000, p. 2009).

In 'Goatrance Travellers: Psytrance and its seasoned progeny', St. John furthers the discussion about EDM and psytrance religiosity suggesting there is a merging of the self with the greater cosmos showing a desire for a return to the source amongst attendees. Within this is an emphasis on reconnection and remembering of a sacred, ancient power that potentially brings greater wisdom and self-improvement within micro-narratives of 'return' (St. John, 2014). St. John refers to a desire to return to such gathering as a factor that brings attendees back; a wish to return because of the experience of belonging and other influential factors such as spirituality, links to ancient, tribal rituals, transformation and freedom of the ego. Larkin, in the fascinating article, *Turn on, tune in, and trance out: The exploration of entheogens and the emergence of a global techno-shamanic ritual* views psyculture spirituality as a redefinition of an ancient tribal ritual (p. 1). He sees trance gatherings as 'bridges between the modern and primitive worldviews allowing for mutual knowledge to be transferred in either direction' (p .45). Along with the death of the ego, Larkin suggests there is a 'rebirth, a change of atmosphere, a sense of love, and solidarity as the sun rises at trance events' (p. 45). A factor in continuing participation within NW psyculture is the passionate intentionality that is a key draw to ensure return by attendees, who are more likely to have beliefs focussed on spirituality than an explicit religious belief.

Whether attendees associate participation with a religious or spiritual intention, they are participating in a culture that has similarities with religion whether implicit or conscious. Till, in his insightful 'Possession trance ritual in electronic dance music culture', describes EDMC as an 'effort by postmodern culture itself to create its own forms of religion, spirituality and meaning' (2009, p. 21). He indicates attendees may not recognise that their activities are religious or spiritual, but it is certainly an escape from life for them which presents as a 'process of re-enchantment' to deal with the problem of their 'homeless self' (p. 12). Whether this process is secular or religious, it provides them with 'somethingism': a connection to something to believe in, somewhere to belong and be part of in a celebration of 'collective effervescence' (p. 23). Attendees may not see their trance activity as religious because it is perhaps implicit, but it is a 'site of escape and transcendence, a sacred space separate from everyday existence, a key focus of community and identity' (p. 184). This is applicable across many genres in EDMC but is particularly relevant to NW psyculture. Within the beliefs in psyculture, there are differences that co-habit in a complementary manner not necessarily separate or in opposition but a mix of spiritual knowledge and wisdom.

2.3 Experiences

This section uses the umbrella term of experiences which range from practical contact, events that have meaning for people, and instances that they have personally encountered that lead to knowledge or gaining of skills for example. There are themes around journeying, the insider, and anti-mainstream dichotomy, transformation and transcendence, intentionality, and the relevance of mundane reality within psyculture. Experiences are embodied activities, externally facing.

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Rietveld suggests with clarity that trance music enables a 'modern version of a tantric-inspired dance ritual' that could enable the attendee to find a way to cope with mainstream life 'where this sensory and emotional shared engagement with universal, transcendent cosmos' occurs (2010, p. 76). She notes this 'experience of travelling'sp repeatedly through an 'endless, spiralling tunnel' into an 'infinite vortex' leading to 'a twisted state of mind' hypnotising attendees into a trance (p. 76).

St. John, in *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*, indicates that attendees are seeking a wide range of experiences at EDM events along with 'enabling disappearance' where they can dance purposelessly simply being in the here and now of the fleeting moment regardless of intended effect (2009a, p. 255). St. John states liminality in psyculture is different because it is multi-dimensional in that events, outcomes and rituality are indeterminate (St. John, 2014). He states the factor of return is possibly more influential than a desire to be in a temporary liminal space for attendees (2014). This focus on return is reiterated by St. John, in *Weekend Societies: EDM Festivals and Event-Cultures*, where attendees return time and again to experience this transition to a state of 'self-othering' where the signifiers of society are 'not shallow but ever-changing spiritual resources available to the self' while being highly relevant to NW psyculture (St. John, 2015, p. 199).

Schmidt and Navon, in the ground-breaking study of Israeli psyculture, 'In dance we trust: comparing trance-dance parties among secular and Orthodox Israeli youth', describes a collective dance experience that activates potential transcendence at Israeli gatherings where the dancers form bonds as a result of mutual dancing in a 'moment in and out of time' (Schmidt & Navon, 2017, p. 1130). This is an effective illustration of the temporary communal hallucination of experiencing change in a better place that is not seen to continue once the party is over.

St. John states that 'trance dance' events are clandestine, experimental and places of freedom for attendees who have travelled, sometimes an extensive distance, to dance with others in hidden places (St John, 2015). He asserts that psytrance events pull attendees in as 'cultural exiles' where they find places where they can reproduce parties repeatedly to keep experiencing the collective transformation that comes from dancing together (St John, 2015). St. John quotes Bromell stating this journey will permanently alter the attendees: 'the person who has seen the mysteries, or just tripped, can never return to the world as it used to be' where the attendee feels they are an exile forever; a key response from NW psyculture participants (cited in St. John, 2015, p. 8).

Another important idea is that of experiencing that which is not the mainstream. In an earlier text, *Freak Media*, St. John notes that they are intentionally separate from the mainstream (St. John, 2012d, p. 437). He indicates that the experience of being together is one of being outside of the restrictions of normal societal requirements (p. 438). He interestingly notes that this sense of freedom experienced by such transgression is a major component in psychedelic trance where the 'outlaw' is a main provider of 'identity, status and sociality' (p. 447).

He defines the necessity of keeping the gatherings secret so as not the attract 'the wrong sort, against being shut down, and potential prosecution' (Schmidt & Navon, 2017, p. 1130). The attendees identify themselves as being different from 'unwanted attendees' who are 'not spiritually, socially or culturally connected to the party crews'

(p. 1131). The organisers create an illusory space away from the mainstream, so the attendees feel different from their everyday world where they have more of a global affinity than an alignment with their own culture (p. 1132). Ironically, Schmidt and Navon state that in their defiance against normal society, they are merely reproducing the same structures - returning to their regular lives with no actual transformation either collectively or individually (p. 1140).

Another noted experience is that of the intentions of attendees – whether it is for play or there is a more serious intention or both within this ambivalent dance space. St. John suggests that the dancefloor experiences have the potential of transformation because attendees' lives are altered by participation, enhanced by contribution, and concreted by increasing networking within a lifestyle reflexivity that leads to a desire for more gatherings (2012b). O'Grady places an underground event as a 'playful arena' providing a space for the transformatory performance where 'mindfulness and creative expression could occur' (2009, p. 87).

Moreover regarding the experience of performance, Vedava, in 'Exploring psytrance as technognosis', effectively explains this experience of performance that occurs on a psytrance dancefloor as 'technognosis (a mix of media, performance and gnosis) that incorporates a spiritual dimension induced by alterations in consciousness, facilitating potentiating changes in thought and action' that may contribute to the 'adoption of participation as the next paradigm in human existence' (2015, p. 13). Thus, indicating that what is experienced within psyculture participation may have potential relevance for the improvement of humanity in general not just psyculture attendees. Ryan sees attendees wishing to create positive energy that leads to a better world and reclaim ancient connections (2010, p. 8). This provides a potential connection with the universal consciousness that 'must be re-discovered if humanity is to survive' (p. 8). Interestingly, this potential for psyculture to provide an exemplar for the benefit of greater humanity recurs within the UK.

On the other hand, de Ledesma, in 'The psytrance party', in the same manner describes the experience as one where the intention is to tap into potential transformation but that this might not be the experience. He indicates that the experience seems to have changed from one of 'experimental spirituality' to 'experiential sociality' (2011, p. 22). He refers to the experience as a 'diluted, affective ordering' where the dancefloor is not so much a place for experiencing psychedelic moments but rather a place to 'pass through' (p. 15). His experience undertaking ethnographic research at *Offworld Festival* rather sees a reality that is everyday than transcendental (p. 127).

In reflecting upon the multiple experiences possible within psyculture, these sources are relevant to understanding how NW psyculture relates to potential change, transformation, growth, conscious alteration, and the potential benefits of progression for wider society. The implications of these ideas will be discussed further by looking at psyculture research specifically regarding the UK.

2.4 UK Psyculture

Within UK psyculture, the same paradoxes exist as in describing the characteristics, beliefs, and experiences within global psyculture along the continuum of global to local, cosmopolitan to regional, playful to purposeful, sacred to fun, collective to

individual. There are aspects of the psytrance identity that are global but also those that are unique to a specific country such as NW psyculture though they have not been adequately researched.

In terms of identifying key characteristics of UK psyculture, Farrell in one of the few UK specific accounts, in 'Exploring psychedelic trance and electronic dance music in modern culture', characterises English psychedelia tends more towards mythological interpretation of a pre-industrial golden age and as a 'colossal act of deliberate amnesia' (2015, p. 283). She cites the important types of Englishness expressed in English psyculture seem to be 'ambivalence' (Farrell, p. 285).

Lindop calls psychedelic trance culture as a 'little culture' as it is detached from other EDM scenes (2010, p. 127). Lindop observes that UK psyculture is both homogeneous and heterogenous in terms of its genre (actual genre and meta genre) with a complex set of aesthetics (p. 129). Another characteristic within UK psyculture is that of cosmopolitanism. Bennett asserts that UK EDMC reflects a cosmopolitan sensibility where attendees are seeking attachments outside of the local (Bennett, 2000, p. 247). De Ledesma acknowledges the substantial influence of the global on UK psyculture (2010, p. 92). Farrell confirms that UK psyculture 're-assembles' psyculture of global psytrance at a local level especially in terms of ambivalence and diversity. Lindop remarks that what is unique is its fragmentary nature which itself binds the contradictory elements together across intersectionality across genres (p. 281).

Moving on to the underground theme, Rietveld states there is a underground characteristic in British EDM scene where collaboration and a communal experience exist within a largely apolitical arena (2010). Others note the apolitical nature of UK psyculture such as Cloonan who describes English Psytrance as ambivalent and apolitical (1997). Charles, in *Psyculture in Bristol: Careers, projects, and strategies in digital music-making*, portrays UK psyculture as underground and grassroots (2019, p. 22). De Ledesma notes how outdoor parties have survived in the UK by a strategic shift to smaller, less public, and remoter parties with a distinct open-air ethos especially in the summer months due to a need to keep events secret for legal reasons which has added to its 'mystique' (2010, p. 99). Farrell consonantly identifies uniqueness in that local neo-tribes developed because of the need to go underground (2015, p. 280).

Along with an underground aesthetic, Lindop indicates that psytrance defines itself as against the mainstream influences that attendees view as false and conformist: 'rejecting the elements that contradict, absorbing those that complement' (p. 128).This hostile approach to outsiders can be viewed either as elitist or as a tactic to protect from negative intrusion or persecution (p. 127). Psyculture is protective of its identity and mindful of outside influence where 'the psy tag was used as a filter to keep things away from the commercial masses' (p. 124). This idea of keeping things away from the masses is recurrent in NW psyculture. This circumstance has been compounded by the protective measures of those within the scene, that the music lies above the comprehension of those outside the scene. Furthermore, the practice of attracting the right people to parties, tallies with being wary of outside influence.

In terms of beliefs and experiences in UK psyculture, Beck and Lynch, in 'We are all one, we are all gods: Negotiating spirituality in the conscious partying movement', discuss how the spiritual is embedded in practices within the UK psyculture that cover experiences of oneness, and immediatism, reflecting global practices (2009). However, de Ledesma indicates that he could not locate any particular 'thirst either for self-expansion or self-destruction' within UK psyculture (2011, p. 72). He advises that everyday aspects in psyculture events are just as important as the seeking of spirituality and transformation. He suggests while there is a still clear shared intent, that this has become diluted and now consists of a sociality rather than the seeking of an intense psychedelic experience (p. 123).

The intended experiences of attendees within the scene are discussed by Farrell noting the play/work intersection where contestation exists between different agendas and meanings (2015). She states that there are differing opinions as to whether psyculture gatherings are spiritual or whether they just include such elements, whether they are pleasurable or a mixture with a humorous critique of the ritualistic structures (p. 288).

2.5 Summary

The results of the literature review show that there are a range of commonalities and diversities when exploring the characteristics, beliefs, and experiences within psyculture and psytrance, which were kept in mind when designing the methodology. The complexities and ambivalences within this intersectional culture provide a complex challenge to investigating the participants' viewpoints about psyculture as discussed next.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In terms of establishing the philosophical foundation of the research, there are three aspects that need to be decided upon such as 'the researcher's view of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows reality (epistemology), the value-stance taken by the inquirer (axiology), and the procedures used' (Creswell, 2013, p. 13). The philosophical research approach taken in this project is a relativist ontology with a belief that reality depends on experience. This led to an emic, interpretive epistemology because of a desire to gain an in-depth insight along with the participants to understand their interpretations of psyculture. In terms of axiological values, there is an aim to seek to improve understanding of psyculture overcoming gaps in research. In terms of a paradigm, the researcher acknowledges a post-structural underpinning that highlights the 'multiple, fragmented, layered and fluid' nature of psyculture that points out a 'looseness of tentative explanations' (Tracy, 2013, p, 61).

The methodology has been chosen as the best fit for the research question about how participants interpret psyculture using a qualitative approach built around ethnography, ethnomusicology, and autoethnography as well as methodological debates within psyculture and St. John's perspectives. The chosen primary research methods included interviews, autoethnographic accounts, and fieldwork. The reasons behind these choices are discussed next including ethics, reflexivity, bias, and saturation. Following this is an explanation of data collection methods including the sampling plan, interview design, participant cohort, and data recording with examples followed by the data analysis choices.

3.2 Methodology

A qualitative methodology is best suited to the goals of elucidating interpretations of psyculture when undertaking ethnographic research. Tracy indicates that good qualitative research gives an understanding of the world the participants occupy because the more a researcher is immersed in a scene, 'the more they can make second order interpretations' where the researcher explains the participants' explanations focussing on the 'lived experience' making sense via a 'phronetic, iterative approach' (Tracy, 2013, p. 12) which is key because of the my long term involvement as a member of the scene. The advantage of qualitative research is that the data is 'rich and holistic' and captures participants' 'local meaning' in order to represent their viewpoints which is vital to this research (Tracey, p.8). Hammersley and Martin state that qualitative methods are suitable when studying natural contexts when data collection is 'relatively unstructured' with a detailed concentration on a small number of cases to interpret meanings and practices that are 'implicated in the local, and perhaps wider contexts' that directly relate to the research question (p. 3).

3.2.1. Ethnography

As a perspective and methodology, ethnography fitted with the aim to understand the participants' viewpoints and their vision of the world (Malinowski, 1979). Ethnography lends itself to a qualitative due to studying people and their perceptions. Hammersley (2018) indicates that within the layers of cultural

knowledge, ethnography helps extract variations in patterns, and helps to understand social processes. Agar suggests that ethnography encompasses a process and a product even though any research will be 'partial, inferential and partisan' which is appropriate for the subjective study by an embedded researcher within the psyculture underground scene (Agar, 1980, p. 37).

As well as principles of ethnography, there are key, relevant elements within ethnomusicology in that this is a study of a culture based on music, it is based on the use of fieldwork, it is from a relativistic perspective involving all the constructs, uses, and conceptions of music because the defining factor in psyculture is the music (Nettl, 2005, p. 244). Ethnomusicology is underpinned by an ethnographic framework based naturalistic framing behaviour; an analysis of belief and culture to interpret the results specifically looking at chosen social phenomena; data analysis that explicitly interprets meaning in context; using multiple data sources and small cohort numbers; an emic perspective; and ethical issues (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011). This researcher acknowledges subjective perceptions: 'it is transparently accepted that findings will be partial and selective' (2011).

In discussing the appropriateness of the chosen methods, autoethnography has been chosen because it is a means of providing rich illustration. The benefit of autoethnographic research is that the researcher's place in the community can engage readers to reflect upon their own selves, interactions with others, and the bigger picture (p. 714). It provides a framework in which the author's insider knowledge can be integrated into the project.

Ortlipp describes autoethnography as a 'self-narrative' that should iteratively critique the position of the 'self with others in social contexts' (2008, p. 710). He indicates autoethnography is the 'convergence of the "autobiographic impulse"' and the 'ethnographic moment' that moves the reader when they are 'enlightened by an illustration that 'represents human action' (p. 727). Methods include reflective journal writing that not only notes the external perceptions but the inner growth of the researcher that details their 'experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings' (p. 204).

The benefits of keeping a research journal are that the 'muddle, confusion, obstacles, and errors' are made visible to the researcher rather than trying to present a 'seamless, neat and linear process' which is important in this research because of long term involvement where the accumulation of 'overlapping and changing reflections could be overwhelming' (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 701). He asserts that the 'autoethnographic text emerges from the researcher's standpoint' as they should be 'continually recognizing and interpreting the residue traces of culture inscribed' on them (p. 701). In autoethnographic methods, 'the researcher is the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns' (Spry, 2001, p. 711). The researcher is the conduit by which interpretation of the participants' viewpoints occurs so the participants varied responses can be given context. Reflexivity will assist with bias, subjectivities, and potential inconsistences without concentrating too much on self-analysis with not enough on participants (Finlay, 2002, p. 212).

3.2.2. St. John's Methodological Approach

Underpinning the research is a consideration of St. John's methodological approach that involves embodied knowledge and the lived experience. St. John suggests a

need for research to make the effort to 'textualise the vibe' of the lived experience within EDMC culture (2012d, p. 76). He states that his research style is focussed on how to transpose lived experience into academic discourse. The sensory experiences of the attendees are important aspects of EDMC research, so is the experience of the researcher and what they bring to the research data by keeping these questions in mind: 'who are these people? And who, for that matter, am I?' - which is the primary focus of ethnography (2012a, p. 8).

St. John indicates there is a gulf between lived experience and translating it into human language with any accuracy. He indicates that finding a way to undertake this transposition with authenticity and truth is his aspiration (2008). Furthermore, exposure to embodied knowledge to experience the same as the participants is a major component that is beneficial to the study of NW psyculture as an underground scene: 'without embodied knowledge and exposure, most researchers would struggle to gain access' (2012a, p. 8). Spry states it 'requires that we view knowledge in the context of the body from which it is generated' (2001, p. 725). This aligns with the researcher's approach in that the language used must be natural to the researcher, even if it appears overly academic.

St. John stresses that it is difficult to employ methods of 'symbolic expression' to encapsulate the lived experience that only an immersed researcher can gain (2012c). Correspondingly, Laughlin states that media external to 'direct experience' cannot adequately represent attendees' experience via written accounts of others or even their own accounts but providing no description at all is not a way out (Laughlin 2012).

3.3 Ethics

The researcher considered the four principles of focussing in respect for the dignity of participants, social responsibility and increase benefit while reducing harm that form the University of Huddersfield Code of Conduct (2020). Other relevant codes of practice and policy that were embedded were from the Association of Social Anthropologists which were observed in accordance with their principles in respect of relationships and responsibilities towards participants, and the research institution (www.ASA.org, 2019).

There are no easy ways to balance conflicts within night-time research where participants may be suspicious, or responses may be affected: 'there are no simple solutions or guidelines for dealing with these issues; such blurring of the boundaries between public and private identities requires vigilance, diligence, and deft writing' (Moore, 2013, p. 12). These were regularly reflected upon in this research. Regarding professional boundaries where the research has dual roles as a researcher and as a participant observer, this blurring of roles and potential issues from positionality will be kept in mind throughout the fieldwork.

In terms of data management, guidelines were adhered to to ensure there were no breaches of confidentiality and participants were kept clearly informed about how the data would be managed. There was individual consultation with each participant to provide a clear explanation of consent forms and an information sheet provided prior to any data collection as well as a post-briefing contact. Code names were used to ensure as much anonymity as possible. Participants had a chance to review the

transcripts to ensure they are happy with the contents. They were also made aware of the limits in terms of confidentiality.

All participants were over the age of 18 and had the capacity to consent. The consent participant information sheet and consent forms indicated the right to withdraw at any time (Appendix E). However, a cut-off date for withdrawal was given. A debriefing letter was sent after the interviews.

The recording device was kept with the researcher at all times during fieldwork. Encryption and password protection were used for retained personal data and fieldwork data using the university secure server.

As there are human subjects involved, there were risks involved because of participants potentially taking substances or alcohol or that may have mental health issues. This had been assessed with actions put in place to avoid risk as discussed below. Consideration was made regarding vulnerability of psychological harm. The writer is a trained festival counselling volunteer with psychological support signposts was offered to participants (www.psycare.uk, 2020).

3.4 Data Collection - Interviews

The primary data collection methods involved interviews and an autoethnographic reflexive account both historical and current. The following section explains the method of interviewing in terms of the type, quantity, sampling plan, type of questions, cohort recruitment choices, and settings.

The design approach is aimed at a small cultural group engaged in a specific musical genre and their interpretations of involvement in psyculture. The methodology therefore sought detailed, contextualised data (Emerson & Sanders, 2001). The intention was to investigate local cultural practices in the light of globally established themes and methods to elicit individual interpretations because in-depth personal responses were sought (Savage, 2018). Regarding the interviewer stance, the preference was to engage participants by limiting researcher input, rather performing active listening to 'honour silence, avoiding reinforcing or immediately commenting upon interviewee's answers' (Seidman, 2013). Interviewing was chosen because it offers a flexible approach that befits the aim to elicit as accurate and natural a response as possible.

In terms of the sampling plan, 'purposeful' sampling was preferred because it complemented the research question, the context, and the participants (Tracy, 2013, p. 82). My background and involvement influenced the chosen cohort due to my embedded identity and the ability to gain access to suitable participants based of established trust and position (Tracy, 2013, p. 24). Advertisements on social media, by word of mouth and emails sent to existing contact were employed to attract a wider cohort with the resultant participants being ones that responded. A semi-structured interview was ideal as the advantages were that participants are likely to be more relaxed as they may more freely express what is important to them as well as to reveal emotions (p. 158). Fourteen interviews were undertaken: six face to face semi-structured interviews in; six face to face interviews at the New Year's Eve (NYE) gathering, and two face to face interviews in (see Appendix A).

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The research aim was to capture the interpretations by participants of involvement in NW psyculture rather than artists, organisers, and production staff. However, as most participants undertaken multiple roles, it was difficult to find such participants, so they were asked to give their impressions as participants not from their role/s. There were a range of ages from 21 to 56; six females and eight males (with no other identified genders) with a variety of backgrounds, employment, and other status.

Details of participants as well as interview timings, and interviewee number as a pseudonym are in Appendix A. Research participants were chosen where they met the following criteria:

- were participants at psyculture events.
- were participants at NW psyculture events.
- were not vulnerable in terms of health, wellbeing, ability, or age.
- were happy to consent to participation in the study.
- were attending the NYE 2019 event.
- had knowledge about psyculture in general.

Questions were selected that would help extract impressions about the three key areas of characteristics, beliefs, and experiences. Informal discussions prior to the interviews acknowledged that participants suggested inclusion of questions about change, progress, and the wider benefits or the future of psyculture. Before the interviews, the participants were informed that they did not have to answer all questions, were free to add their own ideas about what they felt was important. Some questions were about psyculture generally, UK and NW psyculture, while NYE questions were event specific though replies often exceeded these boundaries.

Regarding data collection recording formats and interview settings, Tracy advises that the settings should be optimal with quiet spaces, few distractions, privacy, comfort, with available resources like power (2013, p. 183). Typed notes were taken during the interviews on a laptop using pre-existing templates in a private room at the home of one of the participants, and in the homes of participants. This kept the interviewer busy typing rather than interacting, increased the quality of listening, and reduced the interviewer involvement. An audio recording was taken during the January 2020 interview and transcribed into written notes.

At the NYE event, the researcher's encrypted mobile phone notes software was used to take notes on the prearranged day of 30th December. It was negotiated with the participants to 'catch them on the hoof' when they had a 'spare minute' on the day beforehand when they were not preoccupied, so as not impinge on their enjoyment, and when not many people were around. Interviews were conducted outside the venue in the smoking area, or walking down the track, or in my car due to the continual music inside the venue to provide some privacy and be inobtrusive. I decided to record impressions at an actual event as I felt the responses may elicit a different response to interviews held away from a gathering. I took brief notes on a pre-uploaded questions template in the Notes section on my phone. These were then sent via email to the researcher's laptop after the event as there was no signal.

Due to the circumstances experienced during the fieldwork, no audio recordings of the informal interviews were taken. These circumstances included lack of privacy

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to conduct the interview because of the amount of people who had already arrived a day early, lack of a space where it was quiet enough to record as the music was continually playing, and a lack of concentration from most participants to fully engage with the interview process as they were obviously keen to be part of the event. The consideration that this might have been in case should have been worked out beforehand and an alternate time and place arranged. However, the researcher felt that though the data lacked the same standardisation of procedures, adequate recording of the data and lack of detail compared to the other interview, that it still constituted sufficient relevant data that was important to the study even though it has affected the quality and depth of the research process in this shortcoming.

The home interview in January was unstructured and took the form of an informal discussion based loosely around the three key areas. This format was discussed with the participants beforehand so as to replicate 'normal discussion' over a meal with music playing in the participants' home in order to make them at ease. The discussion lasted over 4 hours (2 ½ hours of which were recorded using an Olympus DM-170 Audio Recorder) and most of the question areas were discussed.

3.5 Data Collection - Autoethnography

In this research, the researcher tried to stick to her usual activities in helping out at the NYE event to avert obtrusiveness where possible reflecting the research stance as a complete participant where I was practising the values and ideologies of the group studied. The Autoethnographic Account was regularly updated, and the contents reflected upon alongside the interviews and the specific event fieldnotes again using the notes section on my phone, which were then later uploaded into the Word document. An encrypted notes mobile phone template was employed, and regular opportunities were taken to extract myself from the event to ensure discretion.

The autoethnographic account fieldnotes are an extensive written account based on the characteristics, beliefs, and experiences framework. A written journal was also kept of my own journey that included my development, my impressions, my background, thoughts, concerns, and interpretations as well acting as a resource bank including photographs, flyers, social media data, training undertaken, and thesis progression.

3.6 Data Analysis

The focus of the research is to collect participants' interpretations of psyculture as befits an ethnographic investigation following an inductive approach to extract meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is like the approach adopted by de Ledesma who applied a mainly inductive approach to fieldwork data based on immersive autoethnographic tools. The data was used to derive the structure of analysis because identifying patterns in the data was the goal. Maguire and Delahunt indicate 'a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it' (Maguire & Delahunt, 2018, p. 3353). The recommended six steps approach suggested by Braun and Clarke from 'data familiarisation, initial coding, theme search, theme review, theme definition, and write up' (2006) provided an analytical framework.

Nvivo data management software was used to code participant data to aid continuity, consistency, and reliability drawing correlations between global and NW psyculture. NVivo aided the researcher in examining relationships amongst themes (Gibbs, 2004). However, as King indicates, it can only help 'in organizing and examining the data' and cannot make judgements though it helps 'facilitating depth and sophistication of analysis' (King, 2004, p. 286).

In terms of thematic analysis, this has been chosen as an efficient method of 'identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meanings' (Braun, Clarke & Hayfield, 2019, p. 297). This non-sequential, iterative 'build up' process of revisiting and reflecting on the data is key as Braun, Clarke and Hayfield note that 'analysis is typically a recursive process' going back and forwards regularly (2019, p. 86). There was a need to be predictive of potential themes to trial interview questions beforehand, and so that the researcher already had knowledge of themes. The researcher revisited the data many times, condensing and narrowing down themes.

The process began through preliminary manual readings of key texts to ascertain the general topics within EDM and psyculture research that were initially loaded into Endnote referencing software to classify after library searches. An initial folder structure was created according to topic areas such as EDM, trance, culture, and dance. Alongside this reading process, manual notes were taken from books not in electronic format which were processed into pdf documents. As it was not always possible to upload books, physical notes were referred to alongside the Nvivo data.

Chapter 4 Findings

The findings section has two parts consisting of the results from the interviews followed by the key themes from the autoethnography (autoethnographic account, reflexive journal, and fieldnotes). This is followed by the discussion section which will provide an analysis of the combined results from primary and secondary sources.

4.1 Participant Interviews

The first part of this section will summarise findings from interviews regarding their interpretation of the characteristics, beliefs, and experiences of psyculture followed by the specific impressions about NW psyculture, and finally about the New Year's Eve 2019 gathering. As discussed earlier, the findings are presented using the same headings as the literature review.

Findings from interviews about characteristics of psyculture, foregrounds its colourfulness, its complexity, and chaos nature, the similarities with global psyculture and the local uniqueness, and the community and belonging.

The general characteristics of UK psyculture are stated by participants as colourful, alternate, complex, and with references to consciousness, spiritual, chaotic, the importance of location amongst others that are similar to global psyculture. Interviewee 3 stated that UK psyculture has similarities to global psyculture: 'all the elements are here at parties in Britain' such as 'the music at parties, the spiritual elements both in the music and the decoration'. Interviewee 11 further describes psyculture by its 'freedom, connectedness, expressionism, experimental, energetic,

and the transcendental'. Another thematic reference was made by Interviewee 4 to its chaotic but complex, organised nature, with its perhaps deliberate misdirection by psyculture participants with its uniqueness existing in its: 'organised chaos; it's complexity, it's intentional misdirection'.

Another theme reported by participants was their sense of belonging where Interviewee 4 noted psyculture involvement provided 'a friendship group and sense of community I could relate to' in a safe space: 'somewhere I could party safely to my heart's content' providing a safe place for escapism. Another interviewee likened membership to a family: 'now I'm like I've got this psyfamily; they are like long lost, aren't they?' (Interviewee 2). Another respondent confirms the importance of community: 'the community ethos and love that the psytrance community has is important for everyone' (Interviewee 13).

Terms relating to how participants interpret beliefs in psyculture are shown to include religiosity, spirituality, values, morals, togetherness, beliefs, and the passionate commitment of the organisers as an indicator of belief in what they are doing that motivate participants to come back. Participants may not directly state a distinct belief system within psyculture but, as one interviewee indicated in a succinct summary: 'psytrance is the only branch of the dance music scene that has openly embraced spirituality as part of its philosophy and ethos' (Interviewee 11). Interviewee 3 referred to psyculture as having religious aspects but stated that there is no defined belief system; that he does not presume to know what others believe. He indicates most people's intentions are to have fun but that they 'should' act upon the spirituality they supposedly believe in:

> that question makes the whole thing sound awfully religious. I wouldn't say there's any kind of shared regimental belief system. Everyone is there to have fun. I know what I believe, but you won't catch me assuming I know what other people believe or presume we share beliefs. I think that psytrance parties and the use of psychedelics attract those of a similar mindset and perhaps similar belief systems and that's what could lead one to believe that the music and the parties are a spiritual thing. In a way I suppose they are for me because I view the connections you make with other people in this life to be very sacred, and what is the dance floor but a meeting of paths and people from all over the place?

In this interesting response, he notes that psyculture may attract people to its spiritual aspects, but participants may not necessarily believe whereas he views the connections he makes with others as being what is sacred to him. Another interviewee, instead of explicit religiosity, described a more philosophical belief in psyculture's associated values of truth and openness:

> I like the psytrance because it's so open and that's always been really important for me, and a constant search for the truth, my truth. When I found psytrance it was like where's it been all my life. I can't imagine my life without it. I'm obsessed with it.

(Interviewee 2)

Another interviewee indicated an implicit religiosity in that psyculture is a major part of their life to the point of obsession. There are references by participants to more secular, everyday beliefs that are often cited as the reason why participants return rather than being bonded by an established spiritual system. Interviewee 1 goes on

to discuss their own and the organiser's passion, determination, which is often cited as a cause of belief in NW psyculture:

> there was so much belief behind what we were doing. What they have created just through an intention and determination is amazing. You feel like you have grown. That's what keeps you coming back.
>
> (Interviewee 1)

He is indicating that participation provides positive change but also that there are consequences for actions that form his personal belief system:

> you really see Karma happening, don't you? I think that all you can do is have a positive light, they can learn from you, you have to communicate what is really important to someone else, otherwise you get stuck in your reality, you have to challenge your view of reality.
>
> (Interviewee 1).

The interviewee is noting that communication is key in that you help others and yourself so that spiritual change, transformation, and progression can occur which indicate religious elements.

There are noted benefits of helping others that form the ethos and the desire to return in NW psyculture. One respondent stated that they feel part of a 'community, kinship through music, with an alternative attitude and threat free' environment where they can 'party safely minimizing risk to my professional registration' (Interviewee 4). Interviewee 11 indicated that: 'nothing compares to the open mindedness, togetherness, love and compassion of the psyscene' (Interviewee 14). While another stated the effects of belonging as: 'it helped me find my courage and enjoy my life' (Interviewee 4) thus presenting opportunities for self-progression, transformation, and change.

However, there are others who indicate that the only belief is about having fun and dancing: 'nothing, just dance' (Interviewee 4). Interviewee 14 defines psyculture by its idealism in that 'it is defined by a strong lack of realism with no touch with everyday life'. This is confirmed by another complex answer indicating that because there is no unified belief system, it leads to fragmentation rather than the beliefs based on peace, love, and unity. Even though he indicated in practice a lack of spirituality amongst the participants, he suggested a need for it. He feels they are a group of people bonded by their need to escape reality with little in common:

> I think psytrance people get separated as the time passes, this is due to the absence of a strong and consistent ideological identity inside psyculture and the psycommunity. We may say peace, love, unity, respect but it is a fact that many psytrancers are not that much loving neither respectful, etc. I view them as a mass that needs to escape from everyday stress and reality and they may be all friends as a party or a festival goes on but if you had them sit together and discuss in their sober state of mind they would have many and huge gaps between their beliefs and many of them would be inconsistent even with themselves. Psytrancers should put in use that 'higher type of consciousness' they always claim to own and face the real problems of life, society, and economy.
>
> (Interviewee 14)

where he suggested that psyculture participants should bring their idealistic beliefs into reality. Interviewee 12 in parallel discussed intentionality with regard to beliefs

in stating that 'psytrance offers an opportunity to take a break from every day busy life and reflect on one's own personal journey' while alternatively Interviewee 13 refers to beliefs as a 'collective communion and transcendence through music'.

Figure 1 NW Psyculture - cauldron

Interviewee 12 affirms that involvement in psyculture not only defines his identity but allows him to be his true self (similar to Interviewee 4) that: 'psytrance is an essential part of my life, it partly defines my identity and provides me an opportunity to keep myself true to myself'. Not only does the interviewee view psyculture as representing a distinct way of life with potential benefits for himself but in relationships as well: 'with this I mean the whole psytrance lifestyle' as well as 'psytrance represents a certain way of living, through the aim to achieve holistic wellbeing and balance in one's own personal life, but also in one's relationships'. Figure 1 shows a cauldron area, which encapsulates a 'melting pot' of ideas, beliefs, and traditions, including witchcraft related themes.

When reviewing the responses about experiences, participants often referred to the importance of a journey, both literal and psychological:

> I go on a journey almost every time I write it or listen to it. If I play psytrance to my dad (for example) he will not experience this effect. He will hate it. There is something within that connects us to it. If you're in the wrong head space or environment it will detract from the journey/experience
>
> (Interviewee 11)

The interviewee stated that there is a journey involved when listening to psytrance music; that it takes a specific mindset to experience this journey whereas Interviewee 13 focusses on this journey via the dancefloor: 'every dance floor is different, and the journey is different, but it is usually a journey of expansion and joy' that moves the individual 'towards an experience of unity with each other and the music' where the 'journey is a communal journey that we take together on the dance floor'. Interviewee 4 also refers to the journey that is travelled with others, with the

music and the people being the instigators: 'it wouldn't be the psy-journey without the psytrance' where this journey is made together and that includes the music: 'they have made the journey, a variety of weird, wonderful, and sometime fucked up people' (Interviewee 4). Another respondent comments on how the experience of psytrance dancing has benefits, brings on the experience of transcendence, and has a positive effect:

> I find I can feed off that energy and it keeps me dancing long after I would normally tire of it and rather than feeling my energy drop down - the more the music lifts and the more energetic the dancing - the more energy I seem to have and the happier I feel.
>
> (Interviewee 9)

Most participants indicated that they have experienced change since being part of psyculture with one saying, '1 million %', and another that involvement 'just changes you a little bit every time'. One interviewee acknowledged they have become 'more concerned about the environment and open minded' because of involvement in psyculture (Interviewee 9). The effects of the community, the unity that comes in the group physicality of dancing, and the music appears to lead to change and growth according to participants.

Moving on to comments regarding mainstream society, participants express concerns about the effect of the mainstream on psyculture, that commercialization or the crossover of psyculture into the mainstream may lead to a difference of opinion between 'those who are more interested in the 'deeper' meaning behind the dancefloor and those who want a 'quick-fix' (Interviewee 12). However, some see there are benefits to wider society because of the positive experiences to be gained psyculture brings:

> We are the keepers of an ancient tradition. One which is essential for humanity. Part of me thinks that at least some mainstream crossover is inevitable at some point. This may dilute the culture, but on the other hand it may have beneficial effects on wider society as more straight people are initiated. The idealist in me thinks that mass exposure to psyculture can only be a good thing for humanity. In fact, nothing else can save humanity.
>
> (Interviewee 13)

Participants referred to the debate about mainstream culture and keeping psytrance pure and undiluted, or should the philosophies and practices be allowed to bring their benefits to greater society: 'we have the ability to positively impact the world with our care for one another and of course for the planet' (Interviewee 14).

One of the key characteristics of NW psyculture participants is chaotic, as found in the title of one of their events: 'Five Days of Chaos', which is the name of the Faeriepirates August gathering. One interviewee indicated it is the 'most chaotic fun you will ever have' (Interviewee 11) and Interviewee 8 confirmed it is 'organised chaos with lots of love'. This term chaotic refers to organisation, structure, planning, and décor when participants describe the characteristics of this NW psytrance collective.

Interviewee 1 indicated that what is an key characteristic is the effort the organisers put into the events infrastructure that is built such as the galley café, the toilets, the chill space and the pirate ship: 'what I'm so impressed with by Saturday night it was

up and running; then there was the Blackpearl going up, then the décor' and 'being particularly happy to being part of it from the start' (Interviewee 1). In the same way, Interviewee 4 commented on the effort that goes into the events: the organisers have: 'got my full respect on how much goes into each party' as well as the beauty of the chosen locations (Figure 2).
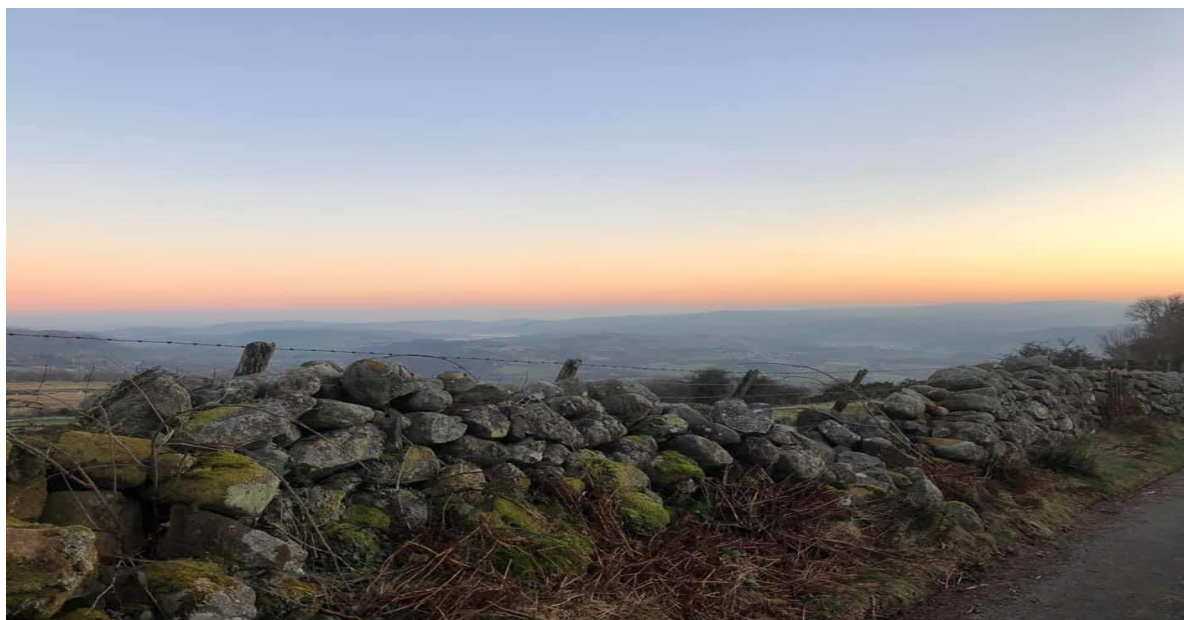
Figure 2 NW Psyculture NYE 2019 - the view

There were implicit indications about spirituality within NW psyculture, but interviewee responses were more about good morals, principles, and an amalgamation of secular or spiritual ideas. Interviewee 10 valued the moral code of behaviour as an example of what they believe in:

> No one is superior to another. We are all equal. We all dance together and celebrate life. But we are also there for each other when times require it. Dancing with a group of likeminded people without judgement, prejudice, or fear of trouble. To be open minded, accepting, helpful, mischievous.

Like in psyculture generally, there was a feeling of safety and an opportunity to have fun on one hand whereas there is a seriousness about looking after each other in a judgement-free space on the other. Other participants focussed on what NW psyculture encapsulates in terms of values in that participation 'requires a person to be open-minded, non-judgemental, and caring for others and the environment' (Interviewee 9). One respondent further summarises values as tolerant, while another cites what makes involvement in psyculture important for them as: 'my beliefs are treating others how I would want to be treated. Just to be respectful and be understanding, open minded and caring' (Interviewee 8).

The experience at a NW psyculture event was described in terms of transformation and transcendence, as one of 'euphoria, with bursts of energy, a relaxed mental state and feeling happy and content' (Interviewee 10). Interviewee 8 said they meet different people and 'finally felt at home'. For them what was unique was the location and that the 'scene itself feels like one as I see lots of the same people all over' as well as complete immersion where they: 'experience a state of flow where time and ego completely fall away and before I know it, I've danced for like 2 hours and hardly even feel it'. This occurs along with a unifying experience of togetherness: 'to have

a group of friends who can live in the moment and share their love for dancing to psytrance' (Interviewee 9). Interviewee 6 asserted that the experience is about helping each other, and being in a likeminded community that is often not understandable to outsiders:

> To be on same side as each other, help and sort each other out. To be part of something most will never experience, know nothing about or even give a chance; ignorance is their loss.

In response to questions about the New Year's Eve Gathering, participants characterised it as super, friendly, excellent, and enjoyable as well as amazing, colourful, and memorable. Others refer to a sense of community and belonging that result in a wish to return, noting 'how close the tribe is, and how everyone knows everyone' (Interviewee 10). Another also refers to the tribal sense of belonging, the experience of togetherness and connectivity indicating that the people who attend make it unique; that it feels 'like being home, tribal', where they feel 'absolutely in the zone and connected!' (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 9 stated they were made to feel very welcome like 'one big family that keeps growing: one friendly close-knit group'. The choice of remote locations that are both beautiful and isolated are key factors in participants' accounts of how it attracts them to continuing to attend such gatherings (Figure 3).

Figure 3 NW Psyculture - NYE 2019 - the location

The interviews show a great deal of insight, and complex subtleties in the their own interpretations of characteristics, beliefs, and experiences.

4.2 Autoethnography

In this section, the autoethnographic account and the fieldnotes are summarised; first giving personal reflections about NW psyculture in general followed discussing the experiences of attending the NYE event. In aligning with the criteria of an autoethnographic approach, this recalls personal experiences of involvement firstly in a general discussion about feelings, emotions, and experiences.

The definition of chaotic has a poignant meaning within NW psyculture because of the way gatherings are arranged: 'the way we put on events is very messy and done in a chaotic way'. Elements of liminality, influences of the global on the local, as well as the motivation of providing a sense of freedom while attending such gatherings, are also significant.

Furthermore, there were a combination of global and local influences evident as well as some unique elements such as references pirates and faeries: 'the pirate ship is the symbol of the tribe' and its aspirations that one day they 'will build an actual ship so that come the revolution we can all sail away'. Along with other pirate motifs, there is the ship's cat who epitomises the experiences of the human travellers: 'Eclipse is the second cat that comes on the Captain's van everywhere they go. It is a unique cat in that it freely wanders off in all sorts of wild and remote locations, happily remembering which van is hers, striding gallantly on top of the van as if it is her ship'. Other features include handmade décor representing the organisers who represent as a faery and a pirate, the cat (Figure 4), and psychedelic colours in the artwork within the Faery décor (such as in Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 4 NW Psyculture - UV artwork

In terms of the characteristics of underground and counterculture, I would say there are links to political activism of the past but in current NW psyculture there are rather practical reasons for being hidden that stem from legal issues: 'I don't think the lack of activist engagement is due to apathetic reasons' but what needs to be considered 'is that there are legal and other reasons why people do not participate'. As a collective, they endeavour to provide temporary places for gathering in secret locations with adequate facilities not out of choice but necessity:

> We have flourished and become more professional in hiding events, keeping a loose lips policy to ensure they remain underground to avoid persecution, prosecution, sabotage and attracting wrongguns. Having gatherings in the woods, remote places, and scruffy clubs is out of necessity not choice.
>
> (p. 18)

'Wrongguns' refers to the wrong type of people from outside or the mainstream world that are not welcome and the loose lips policy of keeping the location secret.

> I feel that I belong to a long standing and close-knit community with a key role as a member. There are different depths of contribution, participation and belonging that do not relate to time on the scene but are about depth of involvement.
>
> (p. 18)

In terms of beliefs and spirituality, psyculture contains elements of the sacred, particularly the symbiotic experience of dance, but I am equally aware that spiritual and transformatory elements are only one part: 'I feel ambivalent towards the value of this spiritual experience, whether it exists' and sometimes 'whether it is just a fantasy like some kind of hippie bollocks. For me it is a complex experience' (p. 7). Personally I in being true to the self and behaving appropriately, rather than an idea of religion. I am joining others who feel persecuted by society; that is what I believe in, which is the incentive or glue that makes me return:

> I have like others chosen to stay true to the real self and take on the consequences of society and will always talk like they do when at a gathering and no longer hide. Mind you its not always about having a positive time and emerging like a unicorn with butterflies and twinkle dust around you.
>
> (p. 3)

As a festival organiser, there is a need to uphold psyculture's beliefs ensure the safety of participants: 'moral personal responsibility is a key principle within UK psyculture' (p. 3). In terms of the experience of shared sociality, the physical act of dancing together to music is planned to achieve the embodiment of the spiritual:

> There is a ritual joining of the dancefloor where one enters, contributes, and spreads energy. There is ritual attached to the planning of playlists with a precision that is understood by the dancers which is the sonic journey. This is what is shared, and it is a physical thing not really spiritual.
>
> (p. 9)

One of the key experiences is the literal and psychological journey through continuing transformations of self. The journey is created by the actual journey to the site, the effect of participation in the event, and dancing that brings on transition, transformation and change where there are many 'different transformations, and the sense of journeying that is being reproduced not the end product of arriving' (p. 6). This is where the physical and metaphoric journey are mirrored by the external sensory environment, in the music, the visuals, and the collective affect in this destabilising space:

> There is a journey metaphor running through each of the sensory inputs, the practical journey of travelling and the psychological journey before, during and after that extends beyond the liminal space.
>
> (p. 6)

There is a collective suspicion and awareness of the mainstream world and an alienation from it to so that there is doubt about sharing ethos and experience with the outside world and the wrong types of people:

> The idea of taking the underground overground for the benefit of greater good taking forth what they have learnt back home with them as influencers in their mainstream lives. Some of us feel attendance is an act of resistance to the persecuting nature of the mainstream world because we are 'different', to reveal the feral inner self without judgement away from 'wronguns', detoxing against the toxic world within a tight knit community is a consensual intention.

> (p. 14)

There are further terms that we use to discuss the mainstream world in particular the types of inappropriate people who may be problematic to the community in terms of prejudicial behaviour, attitude, and actions especially concerns about newcomers:

> If you have just turned up and no one knows you, you are referred to as a randomer. People who do not understand the music are said to 'not get it' like they are not ready to understand psytrance because their minds only hear noise and their consciousness has not been awakened. This idea is from picking mushrooms where if you put just one wrong mushroom in the bag with the rightuns, they all become poisoned. The key is to not put the wronguns in the bag in the first place as they may infect the rightuns.

> (p. 10)

These ideas present a microcosm that reflects the beliefs, morals, and attitudes to maintaining the safety and existence of the community against negative influence. The prejudice and persecution lead to a necessary secrecy even from mainstream family and friends:

> Participants' mainstream family and friends often persecute, punish, exclude, censor, bully or humiliate often to the point of blackmail over seeing children, losing homes and family. Some choose to keep their membership of psyculture hidden from the mainstream world based on seeing how others are treated or the way they are treated themselves.

> (p. 12)

Not only have I experienced this persecution, but many others have also reported similar experiences and there is a strong perceived need for secrecy and a clandestine approach.

The New Year's Eve gathering of NW psyculture is an annual event that I attended in 2019, which was the 13th year of its occurrence. These events are generally indoors but with beautiful locations and outside facilities, along with food, sleeping arrangements, and a variety of communal areas.

The NYE gathering was at a 37-bed hostel in a remote, mountainous venue in North Wales. The participants numbered 130 and were mainly pre-existing participants with some newcomers that had come with established members. It was booked for five days for the three-day event so that the crew could build the infrastructure and pack down at the end.

The chaos of the parking represents the chaos lying underneath the arrangements but also the ad hoc helping of others as an indicator of the ethos of contribution, participation, and involvement:

> The main parking area quickly filled up and even though there was someone on the gate to tell people to park near the turnip field or in the field to the right.
>
> (p. 1)

It may be a chaotic experience, but regular participants know they can work together to overcome issues like stuck vehicles. The themes of contribution, helping, community, participation, and the journey are embedded within returning to be together, welcoming safety and familiarity, and the established ritual of arrival:

> As we arrived, we see some waiting outside the hostel and the organisers near their vans next to the hostel. Hugs all round, jokes and banter then instantly onto the parking instructions.
>
> (Fieldnotes, p.2)

As I drove up to the hostel, I was seen by arrived members who came to greet us and the excitement and emotion was infectious. Once unpacked, I joined the welcoming party to pass on that warm glow. This continued as I helped with food preparation showing the connectedness, togetherness, humour, and involvement:

> Straight away I was told that some of the catering crew weren't coming and we were needed to help out preparing the food, so I joined in peeling carrots, with a big mutual bowl sat on the grass outside.
>
> (p. 2)

I can count on myself, just as others can when it comes to participation. I experienced opportunities this weekend that displayed my values as a key member and contributor. There were some newcomers in our dorm, and I implemented an informal induction offering help and company during the event for them if needed:

> One couple in our dorm were newcomers yet they were fully welcomed into the crew dorm especially when they were honest about feeling hesitant and new. I extended friendship to come and find me if they felt negative and reassured them that by seeing my face that will make them laugh and all will be right again.
>
> (p. 3)

Figure 5 NW Psyculture - Immersive UV decor

The values of looking after each other were underpinned by people being available to act in times of crisis, for example when: 'someone was having a hard time and didn't have their car near to escape to' (p. 1).

Regarding the experience of transformation 'back to our true selves', experiences were in the practicalities of the present moment as this literal transition process got underway - similar to people arriving 'into the Big Brother house' (Fieldnotes, p. 2). To observe the incoming members unloading packing, moving in, assisting, participating, and passing on the rules in the hostel is like: 'watching organised ants working together seamlessly' (p. 1). The excitement at coming together again is evident with a childlike regaining of felt emotion, and relief at the temporary escape:

> I felt awash with the desire to remove the mainstream disguise and use the tools of weirdness to help with the unmasking - to get back to being weird. The surge of feeling about coming together for NYE swelled across me and I was able to feel emotion again like children and show genuine happiness.
>
> (p. 2)

The tools of weirdness is a way to become free of the emotionlessness of the mainstream persona through this immersive environment that disrupts normal behaviour to allow the transformational process to commence.

Figure 6 NW Psyculture - The Ship's Cat

The personal intention at this gathering was to reap the benefits of togetherness on the dancefloor where the physical relief gained through experiencing trance, transformation and transition were aided by the immersive environment:

> The dance space was saturated with UV. It was a disorientating chaos of UV. As I walked through the dancefloor many times during the night, I would gesticulate to the dancers I had to walk through that I was losing my balance because I couldn't see the floor as it was all so topsy-turvy with light, décor, people and this continued with dancers jokingly trying to make me trip up by jumping in front of me when I was carrying cups of tea.
>
> (p. 1)

The humour and prolonged banter with the dancers made me feel part of the group that could be joked with while I was busy delivering refreshments and that I was also having a little dance every time I walked through by people I have known for many years. At one point, I too was immersed in dancing. This environment and the interactions between us dancers bring a unity of physical involvement as we interacted as if one unified whole:

> Us dancers throw energy to each other like a ball, stream up behind each other in a line to share energy, sometimes achieve synchronised movement or I enjoyed dancing with a couple's energy circle who invited me to dance with

them. It is like the Borg having a dance party where everyone can be connected.

<div align="right">(p. 2)</div>

This physical experience of prolonged dancing together is another motivation, or glue, that makes me return because for me it brings a positive effect, a renewal, a reconnection, and actual physical relief. By New Year's Eve night, the communal vibe was well established and we as a bonded group had a no holds barred expression of excitement and shared epiphanies as midnight approached:

> The outside view was the unifying factor of the weekend as most people ventured outside to cool down after dancing, to have a smoke and to talk. We were above the normal NYE shenanigans in the towns below and I had a sense of relief in being here and not there. A proper epiphany time was had at midnight as I ran outside to catch the fireworks at the stroke of midnight, with mad hugs and love, and child eyes of excitement.

<div align="right">(p. 1)</div>

It felt as if we were safe away from the mainstream so we could freely express emotions together. Throughout the weekend the fun, excitement and enjoyment continued with various displays of togetherness, the flow of excitement all aided the sense of transition, we were like adults as excited as children:

> The dorm at the back of the dancefloor had a constant traffic flow of people. It was meant for 8 people, but many sat, laughed, interacted, visited, or crashed there. It was like kids on a scouting weekend away but with adult playthings. The game of Jenga was a treat of hilarity and mischief.

<div align="right">(p. 3)</div>

The high turnover of interaction even in one dormitory was indicative of togetherness, connectivity, and communal journeying that made me feel like I belonged.

This section presented the primary data from the ethnographic findings. The next section will discuss and analyse the findings from primary and secondary data.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This section will draw out and analyse similarities and differences between the literature review, the interviews, and autoethnography. My argument was that there are commonalities and differences in NW psyculture compared to global psyculture.

5.1 Characteristics

Participants characterised NW psyculture as a chaotic, fun way to celebrate life, as a close-knit group with open mindedness, non-judgement attitudes, and multiple opportunities for connectivity with a diverse mix of commonalities and differences. One respondent succinctly defines it as being 'resistant indefinability, intentional misdirection and organised chaos' while another intelligently declares there are no fixed ideologies or beliefs in a fragmented scene that is both homogenous and heterogenous, both global and local. The researcher would agree to a definition of formed chaos reflected in the planning of NW psyculture gatherings. This organised chaos characteristic has a poignant meaning within NW psyculture because of the chaotic nature of gatherings. Rietveld confirms that psyculture is a 'fluid crossroads in a multidimensional network' that is both cosmopolitan and complex (2010, p. 71). St. John analogously describes psyculture as labyrinthine having both commonalities while celebrating diversity asserting how difficult it is to categorise this 'undefinable culture' (2012a, p. 334). Lindop equally observes that UK psyculture is both homogeneous and heterogenous with a complex set of aesthetics (2010, p. 129).

Though not directly identified as global or local characteristics by participants, it was noted that the same elements, themes, and influences exist within UK psyculture as they do globally. The researcher confirmed that within the symbolism, the ceremonies, and the beliefs present, are a combination of global and local influences. The researcher notes the global and local influences akin to St. John's definition of the global being 'transposed back into local scenes' (2010b, p. 22). NW psyculture shares similar characteristics to global psyculture such as 'shared recreational experiences; the importance of the worldwide scene; a preference for outdoor locations; and its underground nature as a way of resisting 'mainstream scenes' (Guerra, 2015, p. 20). Bennett affirms a cosmopolitan sensibility where attendees are seeking attachments outside of the local (2000). Farrell (2015) and Beck and Lynch (2009) confirms that UK psyculture re-assembles global psyculture (2010).

Regarding community and belonging, participants referred to a positive community ethos while some indicated that community membership provided a positive friendship base. The researcher confirmed that there is a valuable sense of belonging, like a family, from participation as well as providing reward from contribution, a sense of achievement and worthiness that keeps her returning.

This sense of community, belonging and participation was clear in the NYE experiences of the researcher who indicated the excitement of going to a family gathering. St. John's assertions similarly align with participants in detailing the draw of idealistic growth potential and idealism in psyculture which is perceived as being missing in a mainstream community (2010a, p. 232). Guerra agrees that attendees'

seek 'growth in an idealistic community' (p. 21). This relates to what St. John describes as the 'glue' of returning to experience repeated belonging (2014).

A participant suggested that the traditions, beliefs, and practices of psyculture as a way of life may provide guidance that could benefit wider society. This fits with Ryan's agreement that attendees seek a better world, and reclamation of ancient connections (2010, p. 8). Vedava agrees that 'adoption of participation as the next paradigm in human existence' is a focus of psyculture members' experiences (2015, p. 170). Guerra in the same way comments that attendees are often 'dedicated to searching for ideals and are steered to an idealized future' (2015, p. 21). Tramacchi also states attendees are 'becoming more human and more engaged while experimenting with unconventional ways of living' (Tramacchi, p. 210).

5.2 Beliefs

As regards beliefs, there was a complex range of diverse interpretations of what beliefs means. One participant interpreted psyculture involvement as a lifestyle choice with a near religious obsession. Another interviewee indicated that psytrance is an important part of their life to the extent that it defines their identity. Another indicated that his spirituality was based on positive personal growth and karma-like payback. Participants stated that spirituality results from dancing and being together rather than a rigid belief system. This succinctly showed that there are diverse beliefs and spiritualities but not one homogenous system. A respondent indicated that psytrance is the only branch of the dance music scene that has openly embraced and made spirituality part of its philosophy. This is their interpretation which is the focus of this research, rather than judging the accuracy of their assessment as other scenes may equally adopt a spiritual aesthetic. There is an identifiable seriousness to dancing in NW psyculture in the way participants approach and participate in a dancefloor experience.

Some of the responses correlate with scholarly considerations. As Till reiterates, attendees may not recognise that their activities are religious or spiritual, rather providing something to believe in (2009, p.12). Tramacchi concurrently indicates psyculture has 'para-religious qualities' (2000, p.136). St. John confirms in this 'unreligion' a wish to reconnect and alter themselves (2004) in a seeker culture to find truths (2006). Heelas and Bowman agrees that attendees are seeking genuine experiences away from the 'contaminating' effects of society that are religious in principle (2000, p. 243).

In terms of morals, values and principles, participants describe a community of open-minded, non-judgmental, and caring people. The researcher confirms that moral personal responsibility is considered key. In terms of shared sociality, the researcher believes that what is shared is a communality that stems from dancing and togetherness; that this is where the spirituality exists.

5.3 Experiences

There was a heterogenous, mutually accepted diversity of intentionalities described by participants. Farrell notes that contestation exists between different agendas and meanings on the dancefloor (2015). She states that there are differing opinions as to whether psyculture gatherings are spiritual or whether they just include such

elements and are not serious or spiritual (p. 288). This reflects St. John's description of gatherings being places for escape with likeminded people while 'suspending obligations' in reality' (2012a, p. 253). O'Grady describes the dancefloor a 'playful arena' (2009, p. 87) whereas Schmidt and Navon indicates that people attend for a temporary transcendence (Schmidt & Navon, 2017, p. 1130).

Regarding experiences of transcendence, transformation and transition, some participants cited dancing as the means of transcendence, energy formation, and physical release through a process of trance that changed their thoughts and helped them reflect on their life in a collective communion and transcendence through music. Some participants and the researcher noted the changes that have occurred in their own lives in a practical manner such as bringing positivity, and techniques to cope with mainstream stress with most having experienced positive change as a result of participation in psyculture. There is usually an altar area at NW psyculture events (Figure 7), which represents a spiritual experience, and shows an amalgamation of local and global spiritual identifiers. The inclusion of the Captain's chest symbolises the commencement of the event (Figure 8) and the top hat with the moon and flowers symbolises the Faery elements (Figure 9), which have come to represent a combination of spiritual beliefs and experiences over the years.
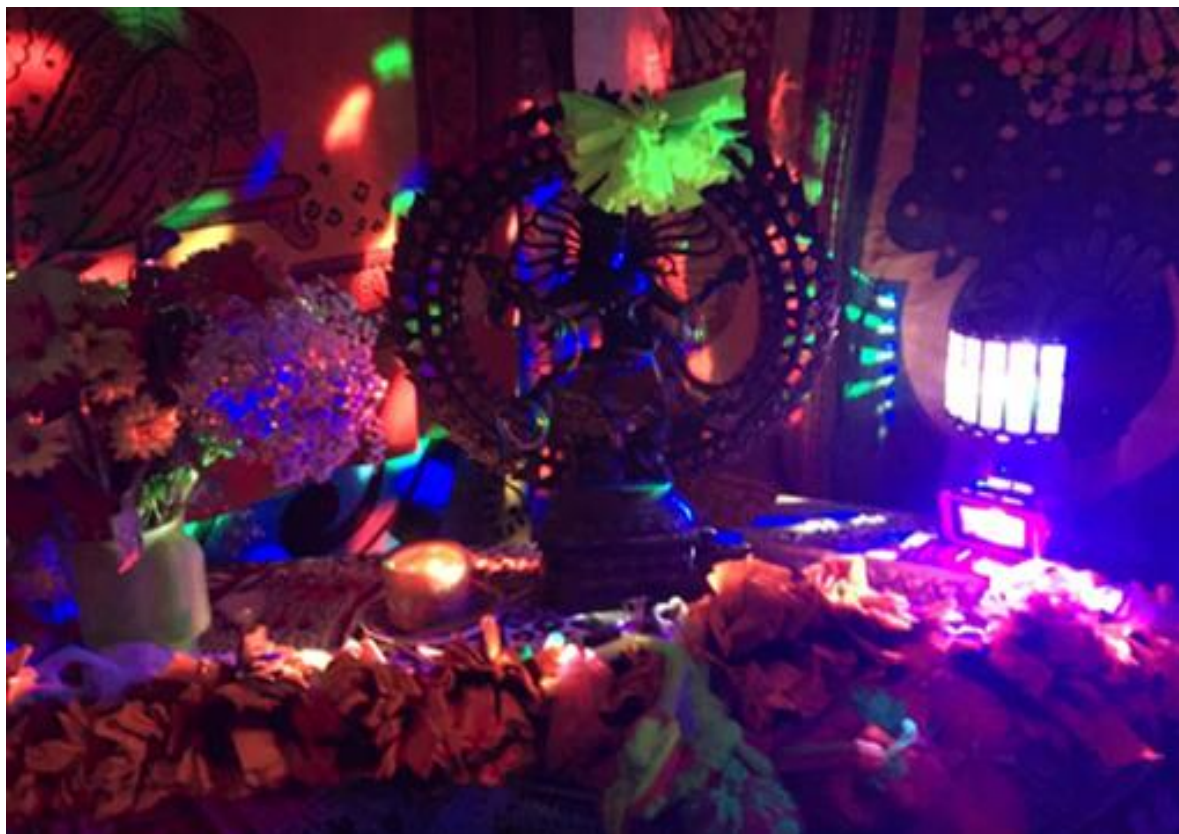
Figure 7 NW Psyculture - the altar

The researcher stated that the experience of togetherness on the dancefloor brings many benefits. This environment and its interactions bring a unity of physical involvement. In the fieldnotes, the researcher reported a 'communal vibe with a no

Figure 8 NW Psyculture - art, symbols and decor

holds barred expression of excitement, shared epiphanies and altered consciousness'. St. John confirms psyculture provides opportunities to modify consciousness (2004, p. 3). He comparably indicates a transformatory potential because attendees' lives are 'altered by participation, enhanced by contribution, and concreted by increasing networking within a lifestyle' (2012b, p. 3). He further affirms the attendees' interpretations by stating that there is desire for a return to the source that brings greater wisdom and self-improvement within 'micro-narratives of return' (St. John, 2014, p. 56).

Figure 9 NW Psyculture - the Captain's chest

'Return' refers to psychologically returning to original/ancient sources of self-regeneration and transformation as well physically returning to more events to revisit this transformatory state of growth. In psyculture, return to the source is perceived as being about returning to ancient, simpler ways of existence, connectivity with self and nature aiding spiritual progression.

Participants referred frequently to the experience of a journey as one of expansion towards a shared experience of unity with each one other and the music. The researcher also referred to a communal journey on the dance floor. St. John closely suggests the importance of sociality within a shared sensibility and a 'travelling' (2010a). In terms of linking ritual, dancing, and shared sensibilities, Rietveld concurs that the music enables a 'dance ritual that enables attendees to cope where this engagement with universal, transcendent cosmos' (2010, p. 76). De Ledesma alternatively indicates that he could not locate any particular 'thirst either for self-expansion or self-destruction' in UK psyculture (2011, p. 72). He advises that everyday aspects of the experience at a psyculture gathering are just as important to attendees as seeking of alterity or transformation. He suggests while there is a clear shared intent that this has become diluted and now consists of a sociality rather than seeking intense psychedelic experiences but while this is clear in the participant responses of NW psyculture they still seek alterity (p. 123).

Participants noted a different experience within psyculture and the mainstream world. The researcher confirmed that being underground is to keep away the wrong type of people and keep mainstream legalities at bay. Thus, the researcher responded that NW psyculture has succeeded in providing temporary, secret locations with adequate facilities not out of choice but necessity. Prejudice and persecution have led to a necessary secrecy sometimes even from mainstream family and friends. St. John equally describes attendees as 'cultural exiles' who have travelled to dance with others in hidden places (St John, 2015). Schmidt indicates attendees see themselves as exiles (2010, p. 437) whereas St. John affirms that attendees differentiate themselves from straight outsiders (2010). Ryan characterises psyculture as a desire to nurture alternative ways without rules and a wish for a 'collectively imagined world' (2010, p. 14). Lindop concurs that psyculture is 'against the mainstream' which attendees view as 'false and conformist' (2010, p.128). St. John notes 'they liminalise their lifeworlds, indefinitely' (2014, p. 46) which characterises NW psyculture attendees who continue the connectivity beyond the temporary, liminal spaces. He states it is not merely a liminal place but rather a 'permanent impermanency' where the community extends itself beyond the liminal space into their everyday lives which is confirmed by the primary data (2004, p. 44). Some participants noted a uniqueness in NW psyculture for example stating there is nothing that compares to these experiences, which represents a unique way of life.

5.4 Summary

In summary, NW psyculture themes are similar to global psyculture while some elements are unique. Unique factors identified by the participants and the researcher about NW psyculture include the setting, the people, and experiences. The passion of the organisers is the persuasive hook that promotes continuation, commitment, and return. The primary research confirms such commonalities and unique NW psyculture characteristics, beliefs, and experiences.

Amongst the selected literary sources chosen that were of potential relevance to the UK and Welsh psyculture characteristics, beliefs, and experiences, not all are appropriate, and they are from such a wide range of theoretical perspectives and disciplines that it is difficult to categorise them, and harder to pin down key characteristics. Those that are cited are from a generalised, global research focus and do provide some insight into UK Psyculture yet there are generalisations, inconsistencies, overlaps and gaps.

This research aim was to address this gap in local research by providing a detailed illustration of a Welsh psyculture collective. There was very little extant, structured research into UK psytrance, none regarding NW psyculture. Previous research has tended to be about specific events or transnational gatherings indicating there is a need for each country to chronicle its own psyculture heritage.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

This section will present main conclusions, an evaluation of the project choices, impact and implications followed by recommendations for future research.

The aim was to represent and investigate local cultural practices in the light of globally established themes. My argument was that there are commonalities and differences in NW psyculture compared to global and UK psyculture with some identifiable unique aspects.

Based on a qualitative analysis of how North Wales psyculture participants defined their characteristics, beliefs, and experiences, it can be concluded that participants believe that there are positive effects of involvement in the close-knit NW psyculture community that may benefit wider society.

The main research question was 'how do North Wales psyculture participants define their characteristics, beliefs, and experiences?'

The results show that there were a range of commonalities and diversities within the participants' interpretation of characteristics, beliefs, and experiences. The findings suggest that within NW psyculture, there is a labyrinth of ambiguities and paradoxes that co-habit in a complex though often complementary manner not necessarily separate or in opposition, but a mix of spiritual and secular knowledge, wisdom, experience, intention, experiences, and involvement reported by participants. The conclusions of sub-questions are given below in an extended discussion.

6.1 Characteristics

The question regarding characteristics was 'what are the commonalities with global psyculture and the distinctions unique to NW psyculture in terms of how it is characterised by participants?' Participants overall described NW psyculture (like global psyculture) as having diverse commonalities and differences that were both homogeneous and heterogenous with similarities to global psyculture but local differences. Though not directly identified as global or local characteristics, participants noted that the same elements, themes, and influences exist within NW psyculture as they do locally: a shared recreational experience; a preference for outdoor locations; and its underground nature as a way of resisting mainstream scenes. Participants did report that there is a uniqueness to NW psyculture focused on symbolism, locations, and people.

Participants described psyculture as a supportive, empathic, and progressive social environment. Some are passionate about belonging to psyculture and the social connectivity it brings that is beneficial to their lives. There is a consensus of being a community that must hide from the mainstream world. Some participants view psyculture as an experiment in communal living that could be an exemplar for the next paradigm in human existence in that it seeks a better world.

6.2 Beliefs

In terms of the question regarding 'what the different beliefs amongst participants' are, it can be concluded that participants hold a diverse range of beliefs while

acknowledging no single system but rather a complex mix of spiritual, moral, quasi-religious beliefs while some hold no spiritual beliefs although most uphold the values of the community. Participants generally believe in the transformatory, and positive effect of psyculture involvement, which is the factor that makes attendees return, rather than a directly spiritual system.

6.3 Experiences

The research question regarding experiences of participants was whether 'there a range of experiences amongst participants at psytrance events generally and NW psyculture specifically?' Participants reported a range of experiences, levels of contribution with participants having varying attitudes towards psyculture in terms of levels of participation, contribution, and dance.

6.4 Evaluation

The chosen structure of the project was effective in the categorising of themes. It was however difficult to categorise overlapping themes because beliefs, characteristics and experiences have blurred boundaries, causing difficulties, a focus on an ideology or concept-based structure is recommended for future research.

The writing style adopted was suitable with intentions of achieving flow, and explicit explanations to connect the various sections with ample signposts and summaries to show the way through. One suggestion is to improve distinctions between registers and linguistic usage when writing observation accounts, academic reviews and autoethnographic reflections.

There were unplanned for restrictions that should have been anticipated as it led to much less detailed responses than expected as there were noise restrictions, lack of privacy, or an appropriate place to conduct interviews. This led to an inconsistency of depth compared to the home-based interviews that took place. There were some issues with availability of information sources, lack of responses, theoretical and practical information sources especially when the library and inter library loan facilities closed in February. There were restrictions regarding interviews due to the Pandemic in that research beyond February 2020 could not proceed. It was decided that there was ample primary data collected prior to this date so that alternative data sources did not need to be considered. This narrowed focus meant it was difficult to provide a wider spread of evidence, but the benefit was a much deeper and richer data.

Regarding the analysis, the ongoing reflexivity, revisiting and adjusting during the research process aided credibility through transparency. The aim to provide clear methodology showing links from aims and objectives through to final conclusions has been met. Reflexive saturation was achieved in the finding section by returning repeatedly to themes and findings to ensure a thorough interpretation, analysis, and critical appraisal of the findings with regular referrals back and forth to confirm the accuracy of the conclusions.

The methodology based on St. John's approach to formulate a research style that aids the translation of embodied knowledge and the lived experience into academic

discourse. This autoethnographic approach has been beneficial in eliciting in-depth interpretations the researcher to illustrate the experiences of the researcher. The autoethnographic methods of an embedded researcher allowed a full body mediation because of the researcher position. However, regular reflection on the blurred boundaries between being a participant and a researcher require further precision in future work.

There are many similarities with other EDM genres with equal passionate belief in their transformatory potential and prospect of change, spiritual experiences, and descriptors of being underground, anti-mainstream and liminal. The purpose of this research is not to make critical comment on the accuracy of participants' statements or indeed to criticise or compare to other EDM genres or any spiritual grouping. What is being chronicled and interpreted is what the participants interpret and believe about what they are experiencing, what they view as psyculture characteristics, and what they believe in whether it is feasible, rational, logical or even true. This is an exploration of their culture not a critique of it; it is a means of capturing a moment in time of what they perceive to be psyculture in this fleeting moment of nowness, that is ever changing, and perhaps consciously misdirectional due to this culture's desire to remain indefinable and hidden.

6.5 Impact

The findings contribution to knowledge in the field in that there are potential areas of impact that could aid the continuation of the culture and perhaps bring its positive aspects into the public eye to improve the public's perception of 'ravers' and establish links with stakeholders and policymakers to elicit changes.

There are resonances within NW psyculture that are similar to the principles underpinning *Burning Man* and similar conscious events (St. John, 2017). St. John indicates this paradoxical event has expanded based on its original neo-tribal sociality to exist in many projects outside of the festival to pursue the principles in reality; as he states a desire to be together has moved beyond its cyclical tribalism to become 'inherently optimisable, its recurrence redesignable, its culture progressive' with a 'propagation of its culture as a transnational and international movement to transform the world' by trying to live the future in the present moment experimentally (2017, p. 16). In this, he states 'we witness the paradox inherent to a liminal civilisation: it takes a Promethean effort to affect chaos' (p. 16). Likewise, NW psyculture within its organised chaos is starting to formulate protocols, principles, and values, behaviour policies, and to purchase land and property to progress towards a better way of living for their tribe which could benefit the wider community in being an experimental way of living.

6.6 Implications

Regarding implications for further research, collaboration and inter-disciplinary research undertaken between academics, writers, and other interested researchers would bring further clarity of categorisation to psyculture. In terms of methodology, it is suggested that a specific research culture that is broadened to involve discrete disciplines underneath an umbrella theory would benefit psyculture research. As St. John indicates, this field needs a team of researchers as disciplinary myopia is 'untenable' (2013b). Within research disciplines, a detailed focus that included

ethnomusicology and musical composition would be of great benefit to offset a current dominance of cultural studies methods. The largely unexplored area of psytrance musical composition, meaning and detailed analysis deserves its own discrete research.

6.7 Recommendations

Other research areas omitted in this study but recommended for inclusion inside this suggested theoretical approach would be harm reduction, entheogens, ideas of embodiment and dance, and a focus on more scientific research based on listening. Country specific research is recommended with a regionalised appreciation of local culture, art, and décor as discrete areas of their own along with an investigation of industry position and practice. De Ledesma indicates there are unexplored themes within psyculture such as investigating material processes instead of grand themes (2011, p. 23) and that there is little research into what creates supposed transformational affects, and why the participants hold such enthusiasms for their culture (p. 24).

6.8 Summary

The thesis has filled a research gap in providing local participants' interpretations of NW psyculture. My argument was that NW psyculture shows commonalities and differences with both UK and global psyculture, with the chief draw for participants being a sense of belonging, and that psyculture is a major and continuing part of participants' identity and lifestyle choices; this hypothesis was supported by the results. Another finding suggested that psyculture participants hiding from the mainstream world was out of necessity more than choice. The findings suggest that participants believe in the positive effects of involvement in the close-knit NW psyculture community. The findings indicate that within NW psyculture, there is a labyrinth of ambiguities and paradoxes that co-habit in a complementary fashion, revealing a mix of sacred and secular knowledge, experience, intention, and involvement reported by participants.

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Appendices

A. Interview Schedule
B. Interview Transcripts
C. Interview Questions
D. Fieldwork notes
E. Participant Information Sheet

Appendix A: Interview Schedule and Consent Table

Interviewee No.	Interviewee Coding	Interview Date, Venue, Time, Duration	Consent Signed	Recording
1.	Interviewee couple 1	21.1.20 (1.30 pm; 2 ½ hours) Home	✓	Audio recording
2.	Interviewee couple 2	21.1.20 (1.30 pm; 2 ½ hours) Home	✓	Audio recording
3.	Interviewee 2	22.12.19 (3.30 pm; 30 mins) Home	✓	Laptop notes
4.	Interviewee 1	20.12.19 (2.30 pm; 30 mins) Home	✓	Laptop notes
5.	NYE Interviewee 1	30.12.19 (12.15 pm; 14 mins) NYE Venue	✓	Iphone notes
6.	NYE Interviewee 2	30.12.19 (1.10 pm; 15 mins) NYE Venue	✓	Iphone notes
7.	NYE Interviewee 3	30.12.19 (1.45 pm; 15 mins) NYE Venue	✓	Iphone notes
8.	NYE Interviewee 4	30.12.19 (2.20 pm; 15 mins) NYE Venue	✓	Iphone notes
9.	NYE Interviewee 5	30.12.19 (3.00 pm; 15 mins) NYE Venue	✓	Iphone notes
10.	NYE Interviewee 6	30.12.19 (3.30 pm; 15 mins) NYE Venue	✓	Iphone notes
11.	Interviewee 1	13.12.19 (4.15 pm; 20 mins) Home	✓	Laptop notes
12.	Interviewee 2	13.12.19 (5.00 pm; 20 mins) Home	✓	Laptop notes
13.	Interviewee 3	13.12.19 (5.30 pm; 20 mins) Home	✓	Laptop notes
14.	Interviewee 4	13.12.19 (6.00 pm; 20 mins) Home	✓	Laptop notes

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

	Interviewee 1 and 2 - 21 January 2020
Int 1	Psychedelics bring up things relevant to you. That experience can be integrated in therapy. Whatever the experience was whether good or bad it was the challenge of it. If you can understand what it meant, you can move forward. If you don't move on, it will happen again. Once you have sorted some issues out the experience can show you something amazing, connection with beauty and nature and the universe, you gradually sort yourself out with it.
Int 2	I don't think anyone has got any right to stop us. I really object to that. How dare you say that we cant express ourselves. We can police ourselves. We aren't doing anyone any harm. (Int 2) 152 bpm? What about 142? I like 146.
Int 1	After Nosily Int 2 said are there any others and I said but it's only been three weeks but there is this other one. and she said let's go so we ended up going to Ravenshaman. First couple were amazing. Everyone on the same level. There was so much belief behind what we were doing.
Int 1	Yeah it's there isn't it, they believe, they are doing it with the right intention. What they have created just through an intention and determination is amazing. How do you get new people in? if you haven't heard it; it how you would know about it at all
Int 1	It was the most underground thing, I was not expecting that, it was fucking amazing. Within seven months I ended up there.
Int 1	It was a great party, I really enjoyed it.
Int 1	It was a lovely site.
Int 2	It just changed you a little bit every time.
Int 1	Its changed now. The first year was a much nicer crowd. It has changed.
Int 2	I've always been a bit weird. I can't do it, too tempted by the weird. I love being different and not run of the mill. Not going to be wearing beige anoraks, its not happening. Its about having a big of being yourself, I think I've never been a conformist, think that's why I like the psytrance because it's so open and that's always been really important for me, constant search for the truth, my truth.
Int 1	It's all about growing and developing. There is so much music it just astounds me.
Int 1	And that's the beauty of the scene – you connect with others, some of the people I connected with, they were actually really nice and you want to see them again. I thought it's a small festival as a first one, maybe that a nice one. bloody hell what a lovely festival for a first one. I'd never played Int 2 psytrance at home. You were absolutely loved out.
Int 1	It was fb that worked for me. you would meet someone and see that they are going. And the next I met M he was one of the first ones I ended up chatting to, on me own again, and then I saw he was attending one in Birmingham.
Int 1	There is something about dancing that, I used to be into music like didn't really dance to that like punk
Int 1	This little thing carried on, just a little tent with some people dancing to a dj. And it was a bit different. There was a difference to this sound. And I looked on the board and the dj's name was Tristan which I thought was the most ridiculous name for a dj. Tried to find out stuff about him after and I never really found anything out. But there was something about the people. And you talked to people there and they were different. You would talk to people there and they were different. There was something really nice about the people, sort of hippy.
Int 2	If you were being a bit much, no one holds it against, like we've all been there, they understand.
Int 1	I had to look after myself but I interacted with people so I had some company.
Int 2	I used to be into that pogoing, I'm quite geeky, who made it, who wrote it and so when I found psytrance it was like where's it been all my life. It was at Nosily. Wasn't it?
Int 1	After Modem, we got back had a few days then went to BP. As soon as we got there everyone was how was your trip, it was so lovely to come home to. Its so hard to come back Feel like you have grown That's what keeps you coming back. Something amazing happened at them that just changes you and you keep coming back, there is always something positive to take from it, and they are all different.

	Interviewee 1 and 2 - 21 January 2020
Int 1	What they do with the recycling, the toilets, just that effort, what I'm so impressed with. We got there Friday night, thinking there would be a camping field, there was no camping, trying to get the tent pegs into granite. There was nothing going on it was really nice and just chilled out with people, as the weekend went on what was impressive, it was so early, it was going dark, they were building it, and it developed, by sat night it was up and running than there was the black pearl going up, then the décor, being part of it from the start, that's amazing.
Int 2	Just see some trodden down grass when we are gone, that's it. I just love it.
Int 2	I love these parties, its my favourite
Int 1	What makes the parties so good are the locations, north wales is beautiful.
Int 1	TS was a gamechanger, I got there and they said do you want a ticket for the after party? I said afterparty? He said you have to get your ticket now as they will sell out. I asked how much and he said £2. (Laughing that it is so cheap). It was like an industrial unit. It was converted into a party space, a warehouse, and a soundproof dance space. I said I will have one and see how I feel.
Int 1	Yes exactly. I think playing it to people outside of that is not going to get them into it.
Int 2	From the minute I went into that arena with that music that was it. No question.
Int 2	They sort of don't get it
Int 1	I think you have to be relaxed in order to get it.
Int 2	I purely got the psytrance, it was absolutely love at first sight. And I hadn't taken anything. And its only been 3 ½ years.
Int 1	Yeah straight away .It will be four years this July.
Int 1	I went to Glastonbury and that just opened my eyes. It sorted of reconnected with something and I saw something there that and especially around what I now know is psytrance. I used to hang out around the Glade and I saw Tristan. Cos I was looking, it was after the main stage had finished,
Int 1	That is what used to happen in the eighties, it was phone numbers.
Int 2	it took me about a year till I was feeling comfortable as I was really nervous about all these people and now I'm like I've got this psyfamily, they are like long lost aren't they?
Int 1	You really see Karma happening, don't you? I think that all you can do is have a positive light, they can learn from you, you have to communicate what is really important, if you communicate with someone else, otherwise you get stuck in your reality, to challenge your view of reality. Everyone has got good ideas haven't they, if you listen to people you learn from them?
Int 1	It was an amazing veue
Int 1	And then I went to one in London about six months later. Had another amazing night, met some people there, who told me, I said is there anything like this in the north, and one of the guys said well yes. Had an amazing night.
Int 1	If you love it, it's a massive difference. I said you are not getting on, just talk to her, this is what happened.
Int 2	I felt that about Noisily. I just wanted to sit on the hill. There is nowhere really to sit that isn't noisy. And you have the circus people shouting at you.
Int 1	Absolutely loved it. It was really gritty and Northern
Int 2	I can't imagine my life without it and obsessed with it. I think I am even more obsessed with it than you are. Now. I find new tracks all the time, can't wait to go.
Int 2	It was lovely. The photographers concentrate on the youngsters and you wonder whether we were there. They need to show that others are there. Photographers are going around taking pictures of others.
Int 1	Never used to listen to it at home
Int 1	Int 2 likes to know and find new music and now she has got new artists. Have a listen to this track.
Int 1	Take pictures of me with me top off. Do not want it on Facebook. Its lovely that the whole photographing of events and they put it up after is really lovely
Int 2	Yeah you get to see what others are doing. You know don't you.
Int 2	I am not keen on hitech.
Int 1	So many different types of it. It was hitech on the first night. And it was really loud as well.
Int 2	I can't see why they have to put it on so late to start at midnight, We are usually in bed by ten. I would try and go out once a month when the children were young. I used to

	Interviewee 1 and 2 - 21 January 2020	
	love the energy of dancing at the Hacienda. I was just too busy working loads and looking after kids.
Int 1	We thought this year would be our last Noisily.
Int 2	I wasn't a massive clubber, Id been a parent for 30 years.
Int 1	I'd been going out for about three months and I thought oh well if its going to be serious, she needs to like festivals and that. You didn't go clubbing
Int 1	It brings up issues, it teaches you something, then you have to learn and understand the lesson before you take it again.
Int 2	You don't want it to get too big. I often prefer I find the Sat too rammed and I don't know half of them and then on the Sunday its all the familiar faces.
Int 1	Everything is there to teach you something. You two are well suited. Its nice to talk about it. At that BP had the most amusing experience, it was bizarre our friends liked going for a walk, we have to take you to this stop, a beautiful dingley dell, so ok we went for a walk. It was fucking miles, at least 20 minutes, It wasn't that great a walk. Then in the forest came across this beautiful dell, sunlight, another couple were there. Then the five of us are suddenly there and they scarpered. The most pained bizarre expressions.
Int 1	I don't know who was there. So come 20 years later, I really liked music, I need to find, so I thought that will be sort of psytrance, I bet that will be interesting. So I went on my own. 6 years ago? Bit of trepidation. I had the most amazing night, chatting to people and I thought oh yeah this is it
Int 1	We seem to have underground and very quietly created a really nice party.
Int 1	Its best heard in the system dancing with other people especially for the first time you get it

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Interviewee 3 22 December 2019

1. What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture?

I think that you could describe it as everything associated with psytrance music, most commonly being social events, spirituality, and psychedelic drug use.

2. What are your experiences of psyculture?

Varied, but for the most part wholesome and enjoyable. I am someone who enjoys an open-air goa trance dancefloor in morning sunshine to, let's say a midnight party in an indoor basement space playing dark psytrance. This is personal taste in music and setting though nothing more. I've met some great people and had lasting friendships that have sprung from both those kinds of places and everywhere in-between.

I guess I'll start by saying that for me it's more about what this kind of music creates in a dance floor setting and the energy of the people dancing to it- rather than the music itself. For me personally I love the sound of a good lead synth and a track that follows a melody, a good goa or psytrance track can have me dancing anywhere at all, alone or out and about- but hearing the same tune out of a large sound system surrounded by other people who love the music just as much as me and are dancing too.. that's when it really has a profound effect on me. The dancing at a goa event always seems to be so much more energetic and positive (obviously depending where you are of course) than what I've experienced at parties for other kinds of music. I find I can feed off that energy and it keeps me dancing long after I would normally tire of it and rather than feeling my energy drop down- the more the music lifts and the more energetic the dancing- the more energy I seem to have and the happier I feel. I've spent whole nights doing nothing but beaming and throwing shapes, loving every dance I get with those around me and meeting new people and friends that last. There aren't many other places in the world where you can get the same experience. Obviously everyone has a genre that they are attracted to, some have many, but goa trance and psytrance is by far the most fun music to dance to and the most attractive for me because of all this and the amount of interaction i end up having both with the people around me, and with the music itself. I could go on this tangent for hours.

I've experienced all sorts of altered states on dancefloors that could probably count- where my body takes the reigns so to speak and I dance without controlling it at all and I am totally absorbed into the music and its direction- it becomes the only thought and sound in my head and where it

goes, I follow. I find I've had some nights where I've been dancing for a long time and the pattern of my thoughts will change, I'll hit an introspective point where instead of externalising everything into my surroundings I think a lot within myself about my life, its direction, the people in my life... maybe some of this answers that question.

3. What would you say are the beliefs in psyculture?

That question makes the whole thing sound awfully religious. I wouldn't say there's any kind of shared regimental belief system that exists between people who go to psytrance or goa parties. Everyone is there to have fun, some people you meet at a party could become lifelong friends and yeah, they might become like family to you, others you won't get on with no matter how hard you try. I have to remind myself of this when I'm out at a rave sometimes: you can't be friends with everybody in life, and just because you're at a party together doesn't mean you're automatically going to be friends and family. You can't be everyone's friend. Some people don't want to be your friend. I know what I believe, but you won't catch me assuming I know what other people believe surrounding the parties and presuming we share beliefs and thoughts just because we go to parties and like some kind of music. Anyone who answers this question with 'psyfamily beliefs' and applying them to everyone at parties should quite frankly be taken with a pinch of salt in my opinion.

I like it, I grew up with this scene and I like to think it's played a large part into sculpting me into who I am today, both socially and mentally. Yes, it's probably altered my perception of things as I've grown older but only in conjunction with growing older itself. It's simply a part of my life not some kind of all-consuming force that I dedicate my body and soul to and i attribute everything to, as this question seems worded to imply that it is. Does it change things? Well in the 90s it certainly changed dance music in a lot of ways, as for whether it still does, I'm not sure. I think modern psytrance has its own niche in underground music and follows its own direction.

In general, I could probably be classed as quite a spiritual person- I believe in a soul separate from the body that is one and the same as the soul in everybody and every living thing as well as in the reincarnation of the spirit after one's death. I think that psytrance parties and the use of psychedelics attract those of similar mindset and perhaps similar belief systems and that's what could lead one to believe that the music and the parties are a spiritual thing in themselves. In a way I suppose they are for me because I view the connections you make with other people in this life to be very sacred, and what is the dance floor but a meeting of paths and people from all over the place.

4. How would you describe UK psyculture?

In general, exactly what I've just mentioned above- although the British parties tend now to lean towards darker sounds from what I can hear at parties. All the elements are here at parties in Britain just the same as anywhere else- the music at parties, the spiritual elements both in the music and the decoration and the drug use among many partygoers. The UK definitely has its own sound to the music coined from what DJs play in a lot of places and what many party folks enjoy, usually full-on to trippy darker sounding psytrance, but it really does depend what party you are at.

5. How would you describe North Wales and FP psyculture?

The setting, which for me is a big part of the atmosphere at a party. A lot more amazing beautiful places to hold an outdoor party than in England. More quiet green space in general

1. What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture?

Colourful, intense, complex, alternative. As a single parent I found an alternate community I could relate to, a complete contrast to the world of nursing and healthcare. Somewhere I could party safely to my heart's content, escapism. Previous affiliation with the new age travelling community and its alternative values and styles, breaking out of a long period of isolation and depression, and beginning to enjoy my life again. I found a friendship group and sense of

community I could relate to. Seeking an alternative from the mainstream cheese that irritated me, helped make some friends at a time when I felt very isolated.

2. What are your experiences of psyculture?

Equality, individuality, community, peace, belonging.

I've had some fantastic times with psycommunity. It helped me find my courage and enjoy my life, I have travelled widely for events. It has helped me meet people and become more sociable, encouraged me to be fearless and travel sometimes long distances on road trips. Afterwards I feel very tired but usually happy and content, ready to face the demands of my job, and looking forward to the next event. It makes me smile and want to dance. It has a positive, motivating impact on me, but it's a bit of a disappointment when the music is dominated by harder edged psytrance .

3. What would you say are the beliefs in psyculture?

Part of a community, trouble free and safe partying.
Mostly Friendly, welcoming. Some great memories and a bond. Get a sense of peace and opportunity to smile and relax. Exciting and full of opportunity, amazing, a chance to smile. Community, kinship through music, alternative, attitude and threat free.
I love the lights and decor, as a professional person i can party safely minimizing risk to my professional registration. It wouldn't be the psyjourney without the psytrance, although as the years have gone, I've grown to appreciate other genres, dub and DNB scene. They have made the journey, a variety of weird, wonderful, and sometime fucked up people have made their way through our lives. I regularly meet people who have never heard of psytrance, I've had amazing nights courtesy of psytrance across the world.

4. How would you describe UK psyculture?

A scene that needs to keep itself moving forward, open, and welcoming and not get drawn into judgment, prejudice and hatred. It's sense of community and smiling faces.

5. How would you describe North Wales and FP psyculture?

It provides a festival feel to a North Wales free party. I've had some lovely nights at their parties. I actually didn't do a huge amount of dancing at these events, choosing instead to socialize around a campfire catching up with friends.

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 5

1.   How would you describe North Wales Psyculture beliefs?

Pure love and healing vibes.

2.   How would you describe a Faeriepirates event generally?

Got my full respect on how much goes into each party that's to everyone involved.

3.   How would you describe this NYE gathering?

Amazing full of love and energy. Everyone was kind and never laughed so much. Music was perfect as was the food. Made us feel very welcome. Met new friends and old. We are one big family that keeps growing.

4.   What do you feel is unique?
The people.

5.   What does it mean to be a part of Faeriepirates?
Loving caring help is everywhere.
We don't like negative vibes.
Be yourself, let go, and have the best time ever.

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 5

6.   What would you say are your experiences including while dancing?

Euphoria, oneness, free, and grateful.

7.   Would you say you have changed since being part of Faeriepirates?
1 million %

8.   If there is anything you would like to add?
Thank you all for being a part of our lives and treating us as family. We are one.

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 6

1.   How would you describe North Wales Psyculture beliefs?
Tribal
2.   How would you describe a Faeriepirates event generally?
Like being home.
3.   How would you describe this NYE gathering?
Absolutely awesome.
4.   What do you feel is unique?
Style of music... The people that attend
5.   What does it mean to be a part of Faeriepirates?
To be part of something most will never experience, no nothing about or even give a chance, ignorance is their loss.
To be on same side as each other, help and sort each other out.
6.   What would you say are your experiences including while dancing?
Absolutely in the zone/ connected but needing oxygen to smash it completely.
7.   Would you say you have changed since being part of Faeriepirates?
Yes
8.   If there is anything you would like to add?
Thank you all for being a part of our lives and treating us as family. We are one.

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 7

1.   How would you describe North Wales Psyculture beliefs?
Tolerant
2.   How would you describe a Faeriepirates event generally?
It was my first time.
3.   How would you describe this NYE gathering?
Super
4.   What do you feel is unique?
Friendliness
5.   What does it mean to be a part of Faeriepirates?
Excellent
6.   What would you say are your experiences including while dancing?
Enjoyment
7.   Would you say you have changed since being part of Faeriepirates?
Yes
8.   If there is anything you would like to add?
No

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 8

1.   How would you describe North Wales Psyculture beliefs?
My beliefs are treating others how I would want to be treated. Just be respectful and understanding, open minded and caring.
2.   How would you describe a Faeriepirates event generally?
Organised chaos with lots of love, a good people.
3.   How would you describe this NYE gathering?
For me, it was the best new year of my life. Met so many people and finally felt at home.
4.   What do you feel is unique?
Locations for me, the scene itself feels like one as I see lots of the same people all over but the locations are beautiful.

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Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 8
5.   What does it mean to be a part of Faeriepirates? Respectful and safe and caring environment. I've lots many items at psytrance parties, and they always come back to me. I would not trust this to happen in other scenes. 6.   What would you say are your experiences including while dancing? Complete immersion. Experience a state of flow where time and ego completely fall away and before I know it I've danced for like 2 hours and hardly even feel it. 7.   Would you say you have changed since being part of Faeriepirates? Yes 8.   If there is anything you would like to add? No

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 5
1.   How would you describe North Wales Psyculture beliefs? The scene requires a person to be open-minded, non-judgemental and caring for others and the environment. 2.   How would you describe a Faeriepirates event generally? An excellent opportunity to dance to psytrance! 3.   How would you describe this NYE gathering? Amazing full of love and energy. Everyone was kind and never laughed so much. Music was perfect as was the food. Made us feel very welcome. Met new friends and old. We are one big family that keeps growing. 4.   What do you feel is unique? Friendly close-knit group 5.   What does it mean to be a part of Faeriepirates? To be able to have a group of friends who can live in the moment and share their love for dancing to psytrance. 6.   What would you say are your experiences including while dancing? It allows me to live in the moment filling my mind with the music. 7.   Would you say you have changed since being part of Faeriepirates? Yes. I have become more concerned about the environment and open-minded. 8.   If there is anything you would like to add?

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 10
1.   How would you describe North Wales Psyculture beliefs? No one is superior to another. We are all equal. We all dance together and celebrate life. But we are also there for each other when times require it. 2.   How would you describe a Faeriepirates event generally? The most chaotic fun you will ever have. Dancing with a group of likeminded people without judgement, prejudice or fear of trouble. 3.   How would you describe this NYE gathering? Amazing, colourful, friendly, memorable. 4.   What do you feel is unique? How close the tribe is, and how we everyone knows everyone. 5.   What does it mean to be a part of Faeriepirates? To be open minded, accepting, non-judgmental, helpful, mischievous. 6.   What would you say are your experiences including while dancing? Euphoria, bursts of energy, relaxed mental state, happy and content.

Faeriepirates Nye Interviewee 10

7.   Would you say you have changed since being part of Faeriepirates?
Yes.

8.   If there is anything you would like to add?

          Psytrance is also awesome. The music itself brings us together in a celebration of life, all that represents freedom and unity.

Interviewee 11

1.What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture?

freedom, connectedness, expressionism, experimental, energetic, transcendental

The uniqueness of psychedelic trance is found in its organised chaos, it's complexity, it's intentional misdirection. It is full of surprises.

2. What are your experiences of psyculture?

 A psytrance track or set should absolutely feel like a journey both to the creator and the listener. A psytrance night or event should also. The most important thing to me is the trance element. the listener needs to be able to relate to and empathise with the music. Starting a track at the busiest, most full on section doesn't enable the listener to fall into a trance while listening. The same can be said for a set or an entire event.
So many. Good, bad, transcendental. I go on a journey almost every time I write it or listen to it.

If I play psytrance to my dad (for example) he will not experience this effect. He will hate it. There is something within that connects us to it. Psychedelics obviously help but I've been sober 10 years and still connect the same, if not more to it. Set and setting are always key with any psychedelic experience. If you're in the wrong head space or environment it will detract from the journey / experience.

3.What would you say are the beliefs within psyculture?

Having been a participant in many music scenes, there is nothing that compares to the open mindedness, togetherness, love, and compassion of the psy scene. There are of course still outliers but on the whole, as a collective, we have the ability to positively impact the world with our care for one another and of course for the planet.

4.What do you think about the future of psyculture?

The music will only get better as the technology and synths and access to information improves. With just a laptop you can now create tracks that will rock the biggest dancefloors in the world. That said, producers from outside genres are increasingly appearing in psy charts - this is deeply concerning. Their music is not psychedelic, it dilutes what we have and what we love. Platforms like Beatport are killing the scene. Artists are not paid for sales or streams and the only way they can make money is by promoters paying properly which unfortunately seldom happens.

Interviewee 12

1. What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture?

Awareness and understanding of holistic way of living through conscious decisions in life in order to find a harmonious togetherness between all beings in the world and the universe (all dimensions and aspects). These to include us (human beings), nature (plants, air, water, soil and so on), animals and other, less visible beings (other dimensions or higher consciousness).

Uplifting, energising, purifying. Psytrance is a way to recharge myself, by dancing for many hours and thus achieving euphoric state (purely through music and movement, no substances such as alcohol, coffee, drugs being consumed).

Interviewee 12

2. What are your experiences of psyculture?

Different levels: social - I have been part of the psytrance community for over 15 years and feel strong connection with those who are part of the scene. Spiritual and emotional - psytrance is an essential part of my life, it partly defines my identity and provides me an opportunity to keep myself 'true to myself'. With this I mean the effect the music, but also the whole psytrance lifestyle.

Music plays a key part of the experience, but it is much more. Psytrance represents certain way of living, through the aim to achieve holistic wellbeing and balance in one's own personal life, but also in one's relationship with all those other beings in one's life.

3. What would you say are the beliefs in psyculture?

Yes. Psytrance offers an opportunity to take a break from every day's busy life and reflect on one's own personal journey. Psyculture, through its more holistic approach in wellbeing for example introduced aspects of yoga, meditation and spiritualism which now have been adopted by the mainstream society.

4. What do you think about the future of psyculture?

Not sure, I assume the music itself will become more varied by introducing more experimental elements. Digitalisation and social media definitely will increase communication between people, thus making the global community more connected. The music festivals, such as Ozora, Boom and Tribal Village will most likely become more mainstream and thus will attract people who might not fully understand the ethos of psytrance culture. This might lead to commercialisation of the festival scene, for example and lead to a division between those who are more interested in the 'deeper' meaning behind the dancefloor and those who want a 'quick-fix' by coming to a party for couple of days and indulging themselves in all what is on offer.

Interviewee 13

1. What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture?

A tribal expression of consciousness shifting vibrations. Trance inducing bass with consciousness expanding sounds. The music and dancing make it special. Yes, but the decor lights and people have a huge impact to. The community ethos and love that the psytrance community has is important for everyone. Psytrance is the now. It is the absolute, unadulterated expression of pure existence manifesting itself from one instant to the next. It beats with the same perpetual rhythm which has been beating out of human hearts ever since Adam split the atom. Psytrance is the only branch of the dance music scene that has openly embraced and made spirituality part of its philosophy and ethos. This on the hole has made going to a psytrance event a very friendly open and deep experience.

What are your experiences of psyculture?

Every dance floor is different, and the journey is different, but it is usually a journey of expansion and joy towards an experience of unity with each one other and the music. The journey is a communal journey that we take together on the dance floor throughout an event. Profound meditations on my own mortality. The realisation that there are forces of both good and evil in this world. Feeling the sadness of the world flowing through me and accepting it as I was crying tears, I knew were not mine. Near spiritual orgasms followed by days and days of deepest bliss. All done whilst dancing!

3.What would you say are the beliefs in psyculture?

Collective communion and transcendence through music.

What do you think about the future of psyculture?

We are the keepers of an ancient tradition. One which is essential for humanity.

Interviewee 13
Hard to say. The music HAS to constantly keep on evolving and pushing boundaries. It will. Part of me thinks that at least some mainstream cross-over is inevitable at some point, this may dilute the culture and the sound, but on the other hand it may have beneficial effects on wider society as more, 'straight' people are initiated. The idealist in me thinks that mass exposure to Psytrance and culture can only be a good thing for humanity. In fact, nothing else can save humanity.

Interviewee 14
1. What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture? Idealism It is defined by a strong lack of realism and no touch with everyday life 2. What are your experiences of psyculture? Being a fan for years, went to parties, trying to produce some track but still in the beginning of this process and have much to learn 3.What would you say are the beliefs in psyculture? Nothing just dance I think psytrance people get separated as the time passes, this is due to the absence of a strong and consistent ideological identity inside the Psyculture and the psycommunity, we may say peace, love, unity, respect but it is a fact that many Psytrancers are not that much loving neither respectful etc., I view them as a mass that needs to escape from everyday stress and reality and they may be all friends as for the time a party or a festival goes on but if you had them sit together and discuss in their sober state of mind they would have many and huge gaps between their beliefs and many of them would be inconsistent even with themselves. I think this is caused by drugs, contempt of common knowledge and facts, irrationality, believing in strange theories about aliens or lizard-illuminati-humans governing the world and stupid conspiracies, also where I'm from most Psytrancers come from economically oppressed classes which creates a huge amount of discomfort inside their minds and view the rave parties as a way to escape and forget which is wrong in my opinion, Psytrancers should put in use that 'higher type of consciousness' they always claim to own and face the real problems of life, society, economy, etc. and they should not let their brains get fooled by theories that say 'Obama is half-human half-lizard alien close friend of the antichrist' and stuff like that 4. What do you think about the future of psyculture? It would be awesome if something like an official basic how to make typical psytrance guide was made for newcomers to take as a starting point. I mean if you want to make baroque music you know the way, if you want to make 50's Jazz you know how and this stuff is taught in many academic facilities but psytrance is something like a subculture, you have to go by ear and gather knowledge from many not so formal sources, you have to be friends with an older producer maybe and make them teach you which is something I certainly do not like I believe a basic but valid guide should be available on the internet for everyone to have an idea of what is going on and develop their skills further.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

One to One Interviews 13 December 2019 x 4

1.	What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture?
2.	What are your experiences of psyculture?
3.	What would you say are the beliefs in psyculture?
4.	What do you think about the future of psyculture?

One to One Interviews 20 and 22 December 2019

1.	What would you say are the characteristics of psyculture?
2.	What are your experiences of psyculture?
3.	What would you say are the beliefs in psyculture?
4.	How would you describe UK psyculture?
5.	How would you describe North Wales and FP psyculture?

One to One Interviews 30 December 2019 Questions x 6

1.	How would you describe North Wales psyculture beliefs?
2.	How would you describe a Faeriepirates event generally?
3.	How would you describe this NYE gathering?
4.	What do you feel is unique?
5.	What does it mean to be a part of Faeriepirates?
6.	What would you say are your experiences including while dancing?
7.	Would you say you have changed since being part of Faeriepirates?
8.	If there is anything you would like to add?

Appendix D: Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes NYE 2019 December	
Beliefs - Nye Décor and Lighting	Most décor items had uv so that it can be readily seen during the event. The dance space was saturated with uv items including the playlist noticeboard. There are multiple Indian symbols such as the Om sign with the purple as a preferred colouring along with faery and pirate symbology. It was a disorientating chaos of uv. The clothing worn is generally uv so that the people become part of the décor too in a mind warping uv environment. As I walked through the dancefloor over the three days I would gesticulate to the dancers I had to walk through that I was losing my balance because I couldn't see the floor because it was all so topsy turvy with light, décor, people and this continued with dancers jokingly trying to make me trip up by jumping in front of me. Metaphorically it is like an inner journeying space inside the self.
Beliefs - NYE Mainstream	The atmosphere was awash with the desire to remove the mainstream disguise and use the tools of weirdness to help with the unmasking: trance and inter dimensionality - to get back to being weird that affected me This means being in a place that is beyond what is normal, and asides are regularly made throughout the weekend to keeping it weird. Weird is often used to describe the psytrance experience and is bandied about all weekend. The surge of feeling about coming together for NYE swelled across me and I was able to feel emotion again like children and show genuine happiness.
Beliefs - NYE Looking After Each Other	One couple in our dorm were newcomers yet they were fully welcome into the dorm crew especially when they were honest about feeling hesitant and new. I extended friendship to come and find me if they felt negative and by seeing my face that will make them laugh and all will be right again. Its like watching organised ants working together seamlessly as people are given space in dorms, shown around the kitchen, told the rules about the shoes, introduced to others. Someone was having a hard time and didn't have their car near to resort to so we offered our dorm space as it was near the dancefloor, drinks were made, blankets given, hugs, shared conversation and happy energy passed on.
Characteristics - NYE Unique Ship's Cat	Eclipse is the second cat that comes on the Captain's van everywhere they go. It is a unique cat in that it freely wanders off in all sorts of wild and remote locations, happily remembering which van is hers, returning with dead mice as gifts and freely participates with the hundreds of members, striding gallantly on top of the van as if it is her ship and she is actually a ship's cat.
Characteristics - NYE Unique the Altar	This altar is often at the front of the rig with its own area that JS will creatively add to before the event starts but sometimes circumstances mean it is not always ready for the beginning of the ceremony. It contains various Indian statues such as Shiva, candles, incense, UV cloth and décor with individual history

	attached to each. For NYE the altar has its own space at the back of the dance area with a full assortment of god knows what that adds up to being a unique altar – some Indian elements, some Welsh, some pagan and the organisers individuality is stamped by added twigs, burning incense, and personalised items that look wonderful.
Characteristics - Nye Décor And Lighting	Most décor items have uv so that it can be readily seen during the event. The dance space is saturated with uv items including the playlist noticeboard. There are multiple Indian symbols such as the Om sign with the purple as a preferred colouring. The environment becomes a disorientating chaos of uv and is often difficult to traverse once flashing lighting and erratically dancing humans commence whether drugs are taken or not. Metaphorically it is like an inner journeying space inside the self.
Characteristics - NYE Unique Location	The NYE gathering was at a hostel in a remote mountainous venue. It was booked for five days for the three-day event so that crew could build the infrastructure inside to transform the temporary autonomous zone. Crew arrive to ensure closer parking for vans unloading and live-in vehicle purposes. Parking was limited. The location was high altitude and remote with a stunning view of the sea, the mountains of Snowdonia and its own Turnip fields.
Experience - 30 December Peeling Carrots	Straight away I was told that some of the catering crew weren't coming and we were need to help out preparing the food so I joined in peeling carrots, with a big mutual bowl sat on the grass outside. By now as more people were turning up, benches were put next to the building for people to sit on and the banter spread out across the new arrivals, the food preparers, the crew who were madly re arranging vans to the right of the hostel for some unknown purpose that we know better than to question but all observed with a loving but humorous eye as the chance of one van going over the cliff was possible.
Experiences – Ambulance - 1 Jan	I had found the exact postcode which I was able to give out to 999. Several of us stayed with her offering support and keeping talking as a means of preoccupying the person. It was a warm feeling to be able to help out, and being part of the contributors, such a reward to be sought for help and succeeding in making someone's experience better.
Experiences - Dancing 30 Dec 2019	Us dancers throw energy to each other like a ball, stream up behind each other in a line to share energy, sometimes achieve synchronised movement or enjoy dancing with a couple's energy circle when they are willing to invite you into to it to share their unique couple energy. It is like the Borg having a dance party where everyone can be connected even when wide awake.
Experiences - Dorm Life 1 Jan 2020	The dorm at the back of the dancefloor was a constant traffic flow of people throughout the event. It was meant for 8 people but many sat, laughed, interacted, visited and crashed in there

	too. The flow across all the dorms was the same, often occupied by different tribal groups so visits were made to each other's tribe areas throughout the weekend. Blow up beds were brought so tribal groups could stay together. It was like kids on a scouting weekend but with adult play things.
Experiences - Excitement 30 Dec 2019	The surge of feeling about coming together for NYE swelled across the members who start to remove their mainstream selves and become able to feel emotion again like children and show genuine happiness about seeing each other. The excitement build as new people arrive, initial hugs are shared and continually new interactions whether spoken, in dancing, in helping people move in, sorting out the rubbish, showing where the toilet is – as people pass the banter happens, jokes made.
Experiences - Nye 30 December 2019 The View	The view was the unifying factor of the weekend as most people ventured outside every hour from the kitchen, the chill out or to cool down after dancing, to have a smoke and to talk. As the midnight hour crept nearer, the sun set over the bay that would be seen down the valley from the Menai straits, eventually with the silent fireworks being seen but not heard. We were above the normal NYE shenanigans over the towns below and there was a sense of relief in being here and not there. A proper epiphany time as we ran outside to catch the fireworks at the stroke of midnight, with mad hugs and love, and child eyes of excitement.
Experiences - Nye 30 Jan 2020 Arriving	As we arrived we see some waiting outside the hostel and the organisers near their vans next to the hostel. Word is said so by the time we pull up to park, others have come from inside the greet us. Hugs all round, jokes and banter then instantly onto the parking instructions.

I arrived early, parked up on site in a position ready to drive off without getting stuck, blocked in or vehicle damage. Forward planning is an elder knowledge. The car gets unpacked and then we went down the track where I can turn around and park in a rare space next to the turnip field. Parking is a premium. |
| Experiences - NYE Contribution | NYE events have been ran for the last four years with occasional inside events before that. NYE are indoors but with generally superb outside spaces. The different levels of involvement is a key trajectory from initial novice experience to an established elder (denoted not by age but length of time on the scene, extent of contribution and involvement and respected for their opinion, beliefs and contribution to learning and development of the culture). |
| Experiences - Parking and Arriving 30 Jan 2019 | Once settled in the new arrivals joined us in making commentary about who was arriving, where they were going to park and associated giggles and banter along those lines while watching the kids playing football in the grass in front of us. It was a great camaraderie and excited spirit like watching who comes into the Big Brother house. Members were identified by |

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Fieldnotes NYE 2019 December	
	their cars and vans and it was a game to be first to say who is this arriving. The main parking area quickly filled up and even though there was someone on the gate to tell people to park near the turnip field or in the field to the right, no one took notice and various stuck vehicles were seen in the steep field with occupants trotting out in dismay, others running to help, some backing out of the field in despair. This went on for some hours and into the dark by which time people had to park up top on the road and we all knew they wouldn't be happy. Having your car near you is like having a temporary home and if its out of the way you have no time out space, can't get resources and well you feel as if you are not part of it.

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

University of Huddersfield
School of Music Humanities and Media

Participant Information Sheet

Research Title:

'How do North Wales psyculture participants define their characteristics, beliefs, and experiences?'

Name of Researcher: Jacqueline Anderson

Contact Details of Researcher: Jacqueline.Anderson@pgr.hud.ac.uk/07762552187

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. May I take this opportunity to thank you for taking time to read this.

1. What is the purpose of the project?
The research project is intended to provide the research focus for a module which forms part of my degree. The aim is to undertake in-depth qualitative, ethnographic research using a realistic framework with a thematic approach to analyse data collected from fieldwork about the beliefs, experience and perceptions of participants at chosen Welsh gatherings between November 2019 and March 2020 with a small, specific community, existing research and the author's longitudinal and current participatory involvement. The aim is to present the voices of Psytrance peoples in a small, close-knit community within the Welsh Psytrance family.

2. Why have I been chosen?
You have been asked to participate because of your attendance and/or involvement at the Psytrance gatherings.

3. Do I have to take part?
Participation on this study is entirely voluntary, so please do not feel obliged to take part. Refusal will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without giving an explanation to the researcher prior to 23 August 2020.

4. What do I have to do?
You will be invited to take part in interview. This should take no more than 30 minutes to 1 hour of your time. This will be in person at your home.

5. Are there any disadvantages to taking part?
There should be no foreseeable disadvantages to your participation. If you are unhappy or have further questions at any stage in the process, please address

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your concerns initially to the researcher if this is appropriate. Alternatively, please contact Professor M. Adkins (m.adkins@hud.ac.uk) at the School of Music, Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield.

6. Will all my details be kept confidential?
All information which is collected will be strictly confidential and anonymised before the data is presented in any work, in compliance with the Data Protection Act and ethical research guidelines and principles unless otherwise instructed.

7. What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results of this research will be written up in Jacqueline Anderson. If you would like a copy, please contact the researcher.

8. What happens to the data collected?
The data will be collected, and an analysis undertaken to ascertain findings. This data will be kept on record at the University in a confidential and secure manner.

9. Will I be paid for participating in the research?
There will be no payment arrangements made and the researcher will be travelling to locations convenient to yourself, so there are no expenses either.

10. Where will the research be conducted?
The research will be conducted at various Psytrance events in Wales and participant's homes.

11. Criminal Records check (if applicable)
The researcher has an up to date DBS criminal records check that covers access to children and vulnerable adults.

12. Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?
Professor Rupert Till - r.till@hud.ac.uk