

## Research Conference Proposal:

This project investigates how music festivals are dynamic sites where alternative senses of community and enhanced modes of bodily experience are cultivated. Through an ethnographic investigation of the Electric Forest, Camp Bisco and Catskill Chill music festivals, this project examines why and how young adults participate in such events in order to understand the creation of sacred space at music festivals, and how the self is inserted into that space to reflect values of the temporary and imagined society. Sound, especially music, is a key means through which people engage in ritual practices, which further produce pilgrimage sites (and music festivals) as sacred spaces. Through the performance of ritual and the creation of sound in space, music festivals produce alternate conceptions of self and community that articulate collective worldviews. My analysis centers on how a group of young Americans brings together conceptions of sound, the environment, and the body to produce a utopic micro-community in order to reflect values and self-conceptions.

In my PRESENTATION/POSTER I will discuss the role of music festivals as a social phenomenon, one that serves as a growing form of New Age spirituality in contemporary popular culture and takes the place of organized religion for young Americans. I examine how participants at these festivals constitute a “musical subculture” that serves the same purposes as religious communities by creating a cultural identity, shared worldview and performing communal rituals. This research contributes to an understanding of the interrelationships between space, sound and the formation of subcultural communities to examine how music festivals serve as a model for a utopic cultural whole in the context of the contemporary United States.