MSc International Festival and Event Management

Masters Dissertation

SESSION 2024/25

TITLE

An Investigation into Social Capital Generated or Impacted by Transformational Festivals

AUTHOR

Ryan Webster

40064542

Supervisor: Dr. Ross Tinsley

An Investigation into Social Capital Generated or Impacted by
Transformational Festivals

by

Ryan Webster

April, 2025

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the Degree of
Master of Science
in
International Festival and Event Management

Word Count: 16462

Declaration

I declare that the work undertaken for this MSc Dissertation has been undertaken by myself and the final Dissertation produced by me. The work has not been submitted in part or in whole in regard to any other academic qualification.

Title of Dissertation:

An Investigation into Social Capital Generated or Impacted by

Transformational Festivals

Name (Print): RYAN WEBSTER

Signature: *R.B.W*

Date: 27/04/25

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

This should be completed individually for each student / assignment. Even for group assignments, each group member should complete their own cover page and declaration below.

STUDENT (REGISTRATION) NUMBER: 40064542

---

*Please ensure that you have removed your name from your assignment – don't forget to check both the header and the footer. Please **do** include your student number though.*

MODULE NUMBER: TBS11130

MODULE TITLE: Dissertation

ASSESSMENT TITLE: Dissertation

NAME OF MODULE LEADER: Dr Christina Kelly

DATE OF SUBMISSION: 27/04/2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN ACADEMIC WORK:
(Select all the options below applicable to your submission)

☒	No content generated by AI technologies has been presented as my own work.
☐	I acknowledge the use of AI to generate materials for background research and self-study in the drafting of this assessment.
☐	I acknowledge the use of AI to structure or plan this assessment.
☐	I acknowledge the use of AI to generate materials that were included within my final assessment in modified form.
☐	I acknowledge the use of AI to generate materials that were included in my final assessment in unmodified form. An example of this would be a quote or image produced by the AI output.

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998

CONSENT FORM: ALL STUDENT PROJECTS

I confirm that this project is all my own work. I understand that my written permission is required for the University to make copies of my project available to future students for reference purposes and that my name may be evident. I hereby give my consent to my named work being made available. I confirm that my work is not confidential.

Print name: RYAN WEBSTER

Signature: *R.B.W*   Date: 27/04/2025

FACULTY......Business School

MODULE NO: SOE11130

TITLE...............An Investigation into Social Capital Generated and Impacted by Transformational Festivals

LOCATION IN WHICH TO BE HELD......Room 1/53 Craiglockhart

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to research Social Capital (SC) in Transformational Festivals (TFs), a concept widely researched in the fields of sociology (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000), less so in Festivals and Events (F&E) (Wilks & Quinn, 2016) and to date not at all in TFs. This provided a research gap and rationale for the study. A thorough literature review found SC to be multi-faceted, with scholars disagreeing about key components, though many agreeing it consists of both individual and collective angles (Bianchi & Vieta, 2020; Beilmann et al., 2018), trust (Tuominen & Haanpää, 2022; Putnam, 2000) and socialisation (Bourdieu, 1986). These were all elements found occurring frequently in F&E literature (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Wilks & Quinn, 2016) and in TF research (Lucia, 2020; Van den Ende, 2022) though not under the specific guise of SC. As per prior industry research, qualitative research was utilised in the form of semi-structured interviews, aiming to garner rich insights (Bell et al., 2022). Eleven participants representing three different TFs were recruited through festival forums and interviews conducted and initially transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Thematic analysis identified fifty initial themes which were systematically merged and reduced to the six most important. Findings include high prevalence of SC building at TFs, and substantial ease of forming powerful bonds at speed. However, bonds were sometimes short-lasting but on a mutually grateful basis, and occasionally bonds were not built at all. Higher levels of individualism than anticipated were also found, given TF environments tend to focus on collectivism. Findings also indicated SC is not naturally formed in online arenas for festival attendees (but can be maintained using them), and that TF attendance leads to societal advancement, though opinion divides as to the source of these betterments, with most believing them due to transformational experiences and personal growth, rather than SC and connection building. This research can be of enormous value to F&E researchers as well as TF organisers as for the first time research and findings specific to SC in TFs has been produced which can help festival organisers produce more relevant and memorable experiences, increasing the likelihood of loyalty though repeat visitation. Finally, the findings can be compared to previous studies (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007 etc.), to ascertain similarities and differences between Music Festival and TF attendance.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, the researcher would like to thank the dissertation supervisor, Dr. Ross Tinsley for being an enormous source of guidance and reassurance over the past 18 months during the research proposal and dissertation period. His support has been invaluable particularly at key moments of the research process such as construction of the research angle and objectives, interview design, and recruitment methods.

Furthermore, special thanks are given to Dr. Sarah Snell as the researcher's personal development tutor and programme leader, especially for the practical support provided during more challenging times of the masters journey. Aside from those aforementioned, further thanks is due to all the teaching and administrative staff in the faculty, for their helpfulness and engaging lectures and seminars, most notably Dr. David Jarman and Dr. Constantia Anastasiadou.

Further thanks are given to former academic and close family-friend Adam Perry, for proofreading early drafts of work and offering a neutral-bystanders stance on spelling, grammar and readability in addition to motivational talks, when needed. In a similar vein, the researcher would like to thank Mike Stewart from Theorise for providing a similar service often at a remarkably quick turnaround. Thanks also to Lisa Adams, the University's Disability Inclusion Advisor who applied for the funding that made this extra support possible.

Finally, the researcher would like to extend a deep, heartfelt thanks to all of the 11 participants who offered on average 1 hour of their lives to share in depth their experiences of Social Capital in Transformational Festivals, and all other potential participants who expressed interest in the project.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Transformational Festivals (TFs), emanating from the psychedelic-rave scene, are a relatively new phenomenon in the festival and events (F&E) industry, with the term only emerging in 2012 (Johner, 2015). Kettering (2015) argues with the removal of rites of passage from western society, TFs have evolved to fill this void; enabling attendees to fulfil their purpose and develop psychologically. They may differ or expand on offerings of more commercial contemporary music festivals by emphasising environmental practices, co-creation and mass rituals (Krasnow, 2012).

Social capital (SC) is described as 'the connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam 2000, as quoted by Bianchi & Vieta, 2020). Lin (2002) expands on this, denoting an 'investment in social relations with expected returns', whilst other scholars note the ever-varied, often conflicting definitions of the term detract from its value of a concept within the social sciences (Robison et al., 2002). A founding theorist of SC, Robert Putnam, emphasises it should be viewed from community or societal impacts, rather than individualistic ones stating SC is 'never the private property of any of the persons who benefit from it' (Putnam, 1994). However, SC has also been accused of reinforcing social divisions and limiting collaboration across diverse groups (Wilks, 2011), and in extreme cases being used unethically by corrupt organisations and criminal gangs as means of manipulation and control (Uekusa et al., 2022).

The three main types of SC as theorised by Bourdieu are 'bonding', whereby relationships between individuals with similar values and backgrounds are strengthened, 'bridging', whereby those with similar values but different backgrounds strengthen ties, and 'linking', where bonds between groups from different

1

backgrounds and belief systems are strengthened (Bourdieu, 1986). It is important to note the interconnectedness of economic capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital (**Figure 1** below) but acknowledge that where those related fields refer specifically to the financial worth, education/status, and recognition and rewards one exhibits in society, SC is more focused on relationships between groups, whether in work, community or society settings (Pret et al., 2016).

Figure 1: The Four Types of Capital (Bourdieu, 1986)

1.2 Rationale

Although considerable prior research into motivations of music festival attendance exists, social and behavioural benefits are often overlooked (Neuhofer et al., 2020; Lang & Mair, 2015). Research found evidence of bonding SC amongst attendees of music festivals, but a lack of bridging and linking SC, largely due to the homogenous characteristics of attendees (Wilks, 2011). However, this study focused on Pop, Folk and Opera festivals, meaning results for TFs could differ. Perry (2013) identified

various distinguishing characteristics of TFs including seminars, ceremonies and 'an ethos of community-building', all features which could prelude attainment of greater SC (de Carvalho et al., 2022). de Carvalho et al. noted attending TFs could result in 'Feelings of unity improvement, connection and integration', thus further reinforcing potential for accrual of SC at TFs. Several studies speak of forging of temporary communities and generation of 'communitas' at TFs (Turner, 2017; Rowen 2020; Lucia, 2022), yet none frame it within the established sociological construct of SC, and few investigate whether this strengthening of ties, bonds and community cohesion can transfer outside of the festival space, post-event.

With a background in attending, volunteering and working at F&Es and TFs, the researcher was particularly keen to identify differences in SC accumulation between TFs and other F&Es.

1.3 Primary Research Aims & Objectives

<u>Aim</u>: *To investigate the effect on Social Capital for attendees of Transformational Festivals*

Research Objective 1: To explore social capital in a Transformational Festival and events setting.

Research Objective 2: To critically analyse how TF attendees gain social capital through digital means prior to attending.

Research Objective 3: To evaluate the impact of TF attendees accrued social capital during and following the festival.

1.4 Methodology

Based on similar secondary studies (Quinn & Wilks, 2013; Arcodia & Whitford, 2007) primary research philosophies utilised for this paper were of an interpretivist philosophy with a subjectivist angle, recognising individuals act of their own accord (Saunders et al., 2019; **3.2: Approach (Research Design & Philosophy)**). Qualitative research in the form of semi- structured interviews was deemed most effective, to gain rich insights whilst keeping the interview process on track (Bell et al., 2022). During data analysis, thematic analysis was incorporated as means of sorting, coding and deciphering key themes from the interview transcripts (Saunders et al., 2023; **3.4: Data Analysis**), some of which subsequently became headings for the findings chapter (**4.0: Findings and Discussion**).

1.5 Dissertation Organisation

This dissertation is structured into 5 core chapters, with the proceeding four as follows:

2.0: Literature review synthesises and contrasts prior research in SC, TFs and SC in F&Es, with the dual aims of examining existing findings in the fields and providing scope for new research.

3.0: Methodology expands on the ideas mentioned above in **1.4: Methodology**

4.0: Findings and Discussion is the largest chapter of the paper and provides analysis of primary research findings and discussion of their application, i.e. any new findings of this research and how the findings confirm or oppose existing ones. The chapter is structured by themes, identified in thematic analysis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations outlines a summary of the entirety of the paper, acknowledges research limitations and makes recommendations based on findings for both academic and TF communities.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Social Capital

This literature review will first explore key insights from prominent theorists in the fields of SC and related sociological theories, will then go onto examine these concepts in F&E settings and finally discuss research potential for the application of these theories in TF contexts; the basis of the primary research of this paper (**See 1.3 Primary Research Aims & Objectives**).

This literature review begins by looking at key definitions and components of SC by leading theorists including Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988, 1994) and Putnam (1994, 2000). It then delineates between the 2 major schools of thought within SC: Individualism and Collectivism, and more specifically the individual benefits one derives from SC and the collective benefits the group derives. It then discusses related concepts that often overlap with SC: Durkheim's theories of collective effervescence and collective assemblies (Durkheim, 1915) and the concepts of transformation and transformational experiences (TEs). Finally, this section concludes with potential negative impacts and misuses of SC and current research limitations.

The second section of the literature review begins with looking at SC accrual within a F&E context, and the types of SC that can be found in this setting (Bridging, Bonding and Linking) (Broska, 2021) and introduces key authors within this field (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Quinn & Wilks, 2013). It then looks at both the positive and negative impacts F&E can have on SC, and concludes with an analysis of how Durkheim's theories (Durkheim, 1915) of collective effervescence and collective assemblies apply in a festival context.

The final section of the literature review begins by considering the nature of Transformational Festivals (TFs) and how they differ to traditional music festivals and then looks at some major TFs in more depth. Finally, it discusses how TFs positively

impact SC, and how they detract from SC as well as more general limitations of TFs, backed up by key authors (Schmidt, 2019; Lucia, 2020; etc).

2.1.1 Definitions & Types of Social Capital

In current SC research, there exists such an array of definitions it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly what the term constitutes (Attanasi et al., 2013; Son, 2021). Son believes terminology of SC has become so overloaded it virtually incorporates anything both positive *and* social (Son, 2021). Tuominen & Haanpaa (2022) believe scholars have repeatedly treated SC narrowly, often relegating it to mere social relationships. According to Fukuyama, SC is 'a set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permit them to cooperate with one another.' (Fukuyama, 1996 as cited by Attanasi et al., 2013, p. 237). Lin (2002, p.19) adds it is an 'investment in social relations with expected returns', suggesting individuals may seek to gain it for selfish reasons. Putnam expands on these definitions, describing it as 'the connections among individuals- social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam, 2000, p.19.). Interestingly, although Fukuyama fails to mention trust when defining SC, they acknowledge in writing that trust is crucial (Fukuyama, 2017). High-trust societies built on strong, stable relationships are much more likely to create SC than others (Attanasi et al., 2013). Portes (1998) notes although SC has become increasingly prolific, it's still somewhat elusive, lacking a universally accepted definition. Putnam and Bourdieu (See **2.1.2 Key Components & Theorists**) both believe SC is gained through maintenance or creation of social connections, and relations within a form of community (Faucher, 2018). Similarly, Coleman describes SC in terms of resources inherent to relationships or social networks (Coleman, 1994). What these definitions have in common is connections between networks or communities of people, which can result in tangible, positive benefits.

The 3 forms of SC are 'bonding', whereby relationships between individuals with similar values and backgrounds are strengthened, 'bridging', whereby those with

similar values but different backgrounds strengthen ties, and 'linking', scenarios when bonds between groups from different backgrounds and different belief systems are strengthened (Bourdieu, 1986). Broska (2021) also mentions the three types of structural SC noting some scholars focus solely on this, ignoring relational (trust, social norms, obligations and expectations, identity) and cognitive forms of SC (shared understanding, knowledge, values, beliefs and language).

2.1.2 Key Components & Theorists

Defining characteristics of SC are 'membership', 'trust' and above all 'socialization' (Bourdieu, 1986), and for SC to be reproduced, efforts of socialisation must persist, and effectively be never-ending (Bourdieu, 1986). Instead of defining SC, Coleman proposed various components that form it; social norms and sanctions, trust, obligations and expectations and information channels (Coleman, 1988). Several authors note without trust, SC is practically meaningless (Guillen et al., 2011; Hua et al., 2021), and unlike Bourdieu, recognise trust as the single most important component of SC (Hua et al., 2021). Furthermore Attanasi et al., (2013) found high-trust societies, formed of the same subgroup of stable relationships, are innately socially inclined and more likely to create SC than others. Similarly, when people feel equivalence amongst peers this generates unity (Rime & Paez, 2023). Contrarily, a study examining specific factors within SC and their effect on knowledge sharing between co-workers, found presence of social networks and shared goals contributed to individuals' willingness to share goals, whereas trust had no effect (Chow & Chan, 2008).

Tuominen & Haanpää (2022) treat SC equally as Putnam: a combination of social norms, trust and networks, and their studies show relationships between all three elements of SC and wellbeing. Wellbeing activities often feature at TFs (**See 2.3.1 Transformational Festivals and Key Characteristics**). Putnam distinguished reciprocity into two types- specific, where favours are expected to be returned, and generalised- when somebody helps without any expectation of something in return

(Putnam, 2000). Coleman (1988) describes Putnam's generalised trust as 'obligations and expectations' and the specific kind as 'trustworthiness' (Coleman, 1988). Putnam recognises two types of trust: a 'thick trust' emanating from strong, frequent social relationships, and necessary for building bonding SC, and a 'thin trust,' relating to generalised trust of people, contributing to active citizenship, law-abiding conduct and civic participation (Putnam, 2000). Trust can be garnered by individuals increasing cohesion, mutual appreciation and perceived homogeneity with each other (Bar-Tal, 2000), as well as manifesting closeness, generosity, and cooperation with one another (Pinel, 2018). Bourdieu regards SC as connections developed by groups or individuals within society and the network of social relations binding people together (Gilleard, 2020). Bourdieu also found SC may become more important to individuals in later life, as they start prioritising social bonding more than economic bonds, previously favoured during their working life (Gilleard, 2020).

2.1.3 Individualism vs Collectivism

Individualism in societies can be described as when ties between individuals are loose, and each person is expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. Contrastingly, collectivism describes when people are born into strong cohesive groups and continue to protect 'in exchange for unquestioning loyalty' (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2011, p.92).

SC can be divided into an individual aspect; accumulation of resources within one's social networks, and the collective aspect; whereby a culture of social cohesion, civil society and trust within a community or society persists, potentially benefitting individuals, regardless of whether they contributed to it (Son, 2021). Other researchers agree, believing social collaboration is a force enabling pursuit of both individual and collective aims (Bourdieu, 1986; Bianchi & Vieta, 2020; Beilmann et al., 2018). Some scholars reject this dualistic approach, instead examining SC purely collectively (Chow & Chan. 2008; Ellison et al., 2007), or individualistically (Faucher, 2018; Coleman, 1988). Although individuals benefit from gaining SC, Putnam

believes it should always be viewed from a community or societal perspective (Putnam, 1994). Maffesoli (1996) argues despite other scholars' beliefs we are witnessing a decline in individualism in favour of collectivism, but ultimately SC is 'simultaneously a private good and public good (Putnam, 2002, p.7). Faucher argues online SC is inherently individualistic; being largely fueled by social media platforms and championing competitiveness at expense of collaborative interaction. Chow & Chan (2008) incorporate collective action into their very definition of SC, demonstrating strong preference for collectivism.

In stark contrast to Bianchi & Vieta; Tuominen & Haanpää (2022) criticise Bourdieu insisting he only considered SC individualistically, whereas Putnam considers both angles. Simultaneously, Bianchi & Vieta criticise Putnam, stating he only considers SC individualistically. However, Tuominen & Haanpää acknowledge Putnam originally viewed SC collectively, later revising his interpretation, saying it can be leveraged on both private and public levels (Tuominen & Haanpää (2022).

One study found higher levels of SC in collectives are associated with lower crime and suicide rates, whereas higher levels of SC in individuals is associated with higher life satisfaction, and finding better jobs more easily (Beilmann et al., 2018). Individualism can have negative connotations, such as selfish and egotistical behaviours, but positive traits of individualism such as responsibility of one's actions and self-care to then pursue altruistic goals can positively contribute to SC both individualistically and collectively (Beilmann et al., 2018).

2.1.4 Durkheim's Collective Assemblies

Similar to collectivism is Durkheim's theory of Collective Assemblies (Durkheim, 1915). Durkheim believed individuals periodically commune in assemblies, ensuring their wellbeing, and also their survival (Durkheim, 1915). Although neglected in his own lifetime, modern contemporaries single out Durkheim as a visionary (Rime & Paez, 2023). Durkheim believed when partaking in collectives, individuals display

increased confidence and less health issues in a world where humanity is increasingly isolated. (Rime & Paez, 2023). This supports findings regarding SC collectivism positively benefitting health and happiness (Beilmann et al., 2018).

Durkheim expanded his theory, describing group interactions going beyond mere bonding so homogenous group movements and communal group experiences fuse individual sentiments into one common sentiment, effectively a 'collective consciousness' (Durkheim, 1915). Individuals sharing common beliefs in this fashion naturally increase cohesion, identification and mutual appreciation with others sharing the experience. (Bar-Tal, 2000). Rime & Paez (2023, p.1315) state 'there is hardly any doubt that in a collective assembly, emotions are transmitted from person to person'. They also cite studies finding even without communication, simply experiencing the same affective conditions as others has the power of amplifying the experience. Durkheim believed the purpose of collective assemblies is to reinvigorate participants by re-opening them up to their community (Rime & Paez, 2023). He also believed at the height of collective assemblies, participants experience drastic reductions in differentiation from their counterparts; a source of harmony and capable of eliciting deep joy (Rime & Paez, 2023).

2.1.5 Transformation & Transformational Experiences

Most literature on transformation and TEs is from religious perspectives (Day, 2020; Westerink, 2013; Raman 2019). This conforms with theories of Durkheim who repeats notions of 'sacredness' throughout his theory of collective effervescence (Rime & Paez, 2023; **2.1.6 Durkheim's collective effervescence**). Durkheim also believes that in collective assemblies, transformation takes place, whereby individuals discard personal preoccupations in return for collective beliefs, traditions and ideals (Rime & Paez, 2023). Furthermore, studies show perception of a unified social identity causes noticeable transformations in intimacy levels with co-participants. (Rime & Paez, 2023),

Garbarino (2011) gives several examples of individuals on morally questionable paths who experienced TEs that drastically changed their life. One example was a Tibetan hunter (hunting is very frowned upon in Tibet) who fatally wounded a roe who was giving birth. He was so distraught with the suffering he caused he completely relinquished hunting, choosing instead to become a Monk. Garbarino also describes how trauma is often intertwined with TEs, citing injustice leading to rage and retaliation, but when channeled positively can lead to peace, forgiveness and profound transformation.

Some authors believe multiculturalism is deeply entwined with personal transformation (Fowers & Davidov, 2006). Others cite volunteering leading to personal transformation (Pan, 2017). Much literature on transformation and TEs is from educational perspectives (Daloz, 1986; Pan, 2017), seemingly aligning with TF applications, where attendees are actively encouraged to broaden their minds and deepen their understanding (Van den Ende, 2022; **2.3 Social Capital in a Transformational Festival Context**).

2.1.6 Durkheim's Collective Effervescence

Related to SC, collective assemblies and transformation is Durkheim's other theory of collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1915). Durkheim described collective effervescence as 'high-intensity manifestations' emerging from collective assemblies. Amplification of emotions associated with collective assemblies generates a power surge, causing a transformation where participants are transported out of themselves, accessing a 'world of sacredness' (Durkheim, 1915). According to Gabriel et al. (2020), collective effervescence involves both a sacred component and a sense of connection to others. This contrasts with Durkheim who notes collective effervescence involves a TE and/or unrestrained violent and barbaric behaviour (Durkheim, 1915). However, this contradicts Durkheim's other work describing collective effervescence as a noble community bettering society (Rime & Paez, 2023). Furthermore, differences in scholastic understandings

regarding violence are largely historical. Gatherings of large crowds in the late 19th century and early 20th century (Durkheim's era), were much more likely to signify violent or inhumane occasions than in modern times.

Components of collective effervescence include altered states, whereby energies are over-excited, sensations stronger and passions more active. Individuals are 'charged up' by electricity running through the group, even reaching states of promiscuity or near all-out delirium (Durkheim, 1915). This altered state of consciousness individuals achieve, is commonly known as a dissociative or trance state (Buehler, 2012). In altered states resulting from amplification of emotions, participants are 'lifted' out of themselves, in tandem with their companions around them (Durkheim, 1915). Thus, they can be said to be undergoing a state of 'collective transformation.'

2.1.7 Problems & Limitations

Although a prominent SC theorist, sociologists note limitations of Bourdieu's work, which ties all social action with economic benefit, assuming individuals act socially in their own self-interests, thereby ignoring other social motivators such as solidarity (Alexander, 1996; Bianchi & Vieta, 2020). SC is described as naturally hard to quantify, and therefore less often measured than other forms of capital (Petrić & Tomić-Koludrović, 2021) and consequently a research limitation. It is also multifaceted and impossible to examine from a single perspective (Halman and Luijkx, 2006). Rawlings (2021) notes SC literature is expansive, often contradictory and could benefit from substantial synthesis, integration and refocusing. Bianchi & Vieta (2020) note SC research is too often diffuse, focusing on vague agents of change such as 'growth', 'increase', 'accumulation' etc., and propose studies utilise SC as a framework to interpret elements such as social cohesion and community empowerment, guiding further analysis of phenomena such as trust and collaboration (Bianchi & Vieta, 2020).

Similarly, Faucher lists multiple problems with online SC, such as rejection, loneliness, and cyberbullying (for those lacking), and narcissism, aggression and egotism for those exploiting it as a commodity or form of status. He cites social network analysis as being weaponised for racial profiling, and extreme examples where desire for popularity and attention led to dangerous or fatal consequences (Faucher, 2018).

Durkheim recognised when the collective conscience completely envelopes the entire group, members are completely devoid of any individuality. Furthermore, when group fusion is so strong sense of self is entirely removed, individuals are supposedly willing to sacrifice themselves for the group (Swann et al., 2009). Finally, as highlighted in **2.1.6: Durkheim's Collective Effervescence**, the original definition of collective effervescence included scenarios where groups behaved 'violently and barbarically,' which whilst opposing modern day interpretations is still troubling.

The major SC problem is it tends to be unequally distributed, potentially functioning in an exclusionary way (Beilmann et al., 2018). Field (2004, p.20) echoes this stance stating, 'social capital was an asset of the privileged and a means of maintaining their superiority' (Field 2004, as cited by Petrić & Tomić-Koludrović, 2021). Lack of SC leads to social inequality, lower living standards (Lin, 2000) and occasionally, exploitation (Whiteley, 2000, as cited by Lin, 2000). These conditions of social inequality are often characterised by the F&E industry which can operate in an exclusionary manner (Lucia, 2020; **2.2 Social Capital in a Festival Events Context**).

2.2 Social Capital in a Festival Events Context

2.2.1 Festivals and Types of Social Capital Gained at Them

Quinn & Wilks (2013, p.15), state combining twin research topics of F&E and SC is developing as a research topic with real potential. They believe its application can help better understand 'formation, nature and implications of social connection between various actors in festival settings.' To distinguish themselves, festivals must involve participation and 'an experience that is different from or broader than day to day living' (South Australian Tourism Commission, 1997, as cited by Arcodia & Whitford, 2007, p.3). Earls (1993) reiterates this belief describing them as opportunities for 'unique experiences' and where 'collective wishes and dreams' are fulfilled in 'communal gatherings.' Indeed, as one festival attendee stated, "it's not what the festival does it's what the people who meet at the festival do" (Van den Ende, 2022, p.218). Use of the terms communal and collective is valuable as it signifies a setting where SC could be built, as per Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000). The terms 'gathering', 'and community' are also mentioned by Goldblatt (1997), again emphasizing people and socialisation, as well as 'celebration', cited by many authors (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Schuster 1995; Waterman, 1998) and will be discussed in **2.2.2 Positive Impacts of Festivals and Events on Social Capital and Beneficiaries.**

Studies on SC have conceptually explored how individuals create and develop social relationships pre, during and post F&E (Ahn et al., 2023). Ahn et al. (2023, p.4) found in F&E 'The development of social capital deepens shared values and trust and increases the extent of individuals' commitment to social ties and group cooperation'. A study into SC at community arts festivals, clearly demonstrated evidence of both bonding and bridging types of SC and strongly hinted at evidence of linking SC (Brownett, 2018), findings reiterated in a study of two local folk festivals (Quinn & Wilks, 2013). Conversely, one study found ample examples of bonding SC but a complete lack of either bridging or linking forms (Wilks, 2011). This could be due to sampling methods, with some participants attendees of an opera festival; researchers found they had narrow ranges of socio-demographic

markers and were therefore less likely to interact and socialise with strangers (Wilks, 2011). Contrarily, attendees at the community arts festivals were driven to attend primarily to engage and interact with other community members, irrespective of background, rather than for entertainment offerings (Brownett, 2018). Similarly, many modern festivals focus more on play and immersion rather than presentation and spectatorship (Van den Ende, 2022), and are therefore actively fostering opportunities for social interaction, and subsequently SC accrual. Wilks (2011) cites government policies stating F&E overcome barriers separating people, and Putnam's belief they unite diverse social groups but later contradicts these statements with her own findings. According to Quinn & Wilks (2013) concepts of kinship, pride in place and community are all intricately connected to SC. Similarly, Arcodia & Whitford (2007), believe SC is a result of negotiations between festival organisers and local stakeholders who help event delivery. Therefore, SC accrual is an outcome and key factor in delivery of local and cultural F&E.

2.2.2 Positive Impacts of Festivals and Events on Social Capital and Beneficiaries

Festivals are praised for facilitating environments for SC development (Schuster, 1995; Falassi, 1987), enabling inclusion of isolated groups (Laing & Mair, 2015) and transcending social barriers (Putnam, 2000). Scholars note long-term effects of SC accrual at F&E (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Harris, 2014; Davies, 2015), suggesting communitas and social cohesion generated has real potential to permeate into attendees' lives and communities post-event (see **1.3 Primary Research Aims & Objectives**). This sense of community may also be afforded to performers and repeat visitors who, regardless of geographic location, return to the festival annually, rejoining their transient community (Wilks & Quinn, 2016). Festivals have also shown to not only afford opportunities for bonding SC to take place but also provide platforms for some degree of bridging SC both within and beyond the festival perimeter (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007; Quinn & Wilks, 2013). Communities themselves can also be strengthened with increased

opportunities for collective action as direct result of SC accrual at F&E (Finkel, 2010). Some attendees may even have a shared pre-festival identity because of previous attendance, or a shared belief in the festival spirit and ethos (Brooks & Soulard, 2022).

As mentioned, in addition to social cohesion and participation, celebration is discussed repeatedly regarding SC at festivals. Communal celebrations at festivals generate goodwill, togetherness and community spirit (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007). Waterman (1998) indicates festivals enable celebration amongst groups with shared values, often strengthening existing communal ties (Earls, 1993, p.32), pointing to bonding or bridging forms of SC. Others, however, note potential for unification of people regardless of status and culture in celebratory ways, indicating linking SC is indeed possible in these environments (Salamone, 2000). Regarding environments, O'Grady (2013) believes individuals connect and form bonds more significantly at outdoor festivals or events than indoor or urban equivalents. Individually, participants have a greater meaning of life, due to the celebratory atmosphere of the event (Ahn et al., 2023). Pardy (1991) speaks of celebration in terms of preservation of local culture; something clearly more relevant to localised, community festivals such as Brownett's study (2018), but potentially less relevant to larger, or international festivals with global appeal and attracting diverse groups. Contrastingly, some scholars recognise the creation of temporal festival communities, fostering participation in celebrations (Schuster, 1995; Arcodia & Whitford, 2007), whilst others note these temporal communities may recur annually, in essence continuing the celebrations, and at the culmination of one, already imagining, planning and dreaming of the next (Falassi, 1987). Picard & Robinson (2006) note SC generated by festival communities has potential to 'spill over' into the real world, affecting everyday lives and societies.

In addition to festival attendees, local communities and event staff generate and build SC (Sharpley & Stone, 2014). Use of volunteers in festivals has been highly praised for increasing social connectivity and reintroducing healthy relational aspects to societies (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007), and together with festival

organisers, local businesses and local communities, all these groups help create SC before, during and after festivals, and in surrounding areas as well as within festival limits (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007).

2.2.3 Problems & Limitations of Social Capital in Festivals and Events

Several scholars note F&Es can be exclusionary places therefore denying attainment of SC to individuals unable to attend due to social status, educational and ethnic backgrounds and financial constraints (Brownett, 2018; Wilks, 2011; Ahn et al., 2023). Furthermore, festival participants may completely avoid conversations with strangers, thus limiting types of SC accrual (Ahn et al., 2023). Festivals with mostly bonding SC may be exclusionary in nature, potentially prohibiting individuals not previously a part of the social network from participating (Wilks & Quinn, 2016). Indeed, several authors speak of the 'homogeneousness' of festival communities in comparison to wider society (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Wilks, 2011; Lucia, 2020). These findings tend to contrast with Putnam (2020) but support Bourdieu's stance who said, 'nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.18). Some festivals may deliberately attract certain groups within communities, while intentionally alienating others (Brownett, 2018). Groups already exhibiting strong signs of SC, are much better at engaging in community activities, and therefore easily able to build more at the expense of others without this luxury (Hua et al., 2020).

As discussed, prior research into SC in the field of F&E is limited, largely because it is much harder to measure than other forms of capital, and economic measures. It may also assume a relationship between festival attendance and generation of SC without any empirical underpinning (Attanasi et al., 2013). Topics such as social cohesion and community pride are especially difficult to assess due to their intangibility (Gibson et al., 2011). Despite this, there has been some research success (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007), warranting further studies (Wilks, 2011). As well as broadening the scope of SC studies within festival settings, there is a need to

broaden the range of stakeholders involved in research by contacting performers, organisers and business owners rather than simply attendees and volunteers. (Wilks & Quinn, 2016). Some studies have shown the social benefits of festivals can be greater than economic ones, yet despite this, festival organisers rarely prioritise them (Wood et al., 2006).

2.2.4 Durkheim's theories in a Festivals and Events Context

A study on collective effervescence found festival experiences are positively related to event crowding and clustered around hotspots (Liebst, 2019). Research on collective assemblies found greater crowd density correlates with greater intensity of emotional responses, displayed in forms of noisemaking, animated movement and emotionally exalted dancing at musical concerts (Liebst, 2019). Durkheim equates these emotional exaltations as collective effervescence and transformation (Durkheim, 1915). Driving mechanisms for collective effervescence can be synonymous with electronic music festivals, such as sensory deprivation, repetitive drumbeats, and consumption of mind-altering substances (Buehler, 2012 as cited by Rime & Paez, 2023). Tutenges (2022) argues that achieving collective effervescence is the primary aim of group intoxication. He states several prerequisites required by festival attendees to reach effervescent states. These include being willing to let go, being close to each other physically, and use of physiological stimulants, whether lights and lasers, electronic drum beats or ingestion of intoxicants (or a combination) (Tutenges, 2022). These prerequisites are all likely to occur at TFs and will be discussed more in the next section.

2.3 Social Capital in a Transformational Festival Context

2.3.1 Transformational Festivals and Key Characteristics

TFs such as Burning Man, Boom and Envision, emerged from chill out areas of electronic raves (Johner, 2015) and essentially differ from contemporary music festivals with promotion of environmentalism, community building, social responsibility and utopianism (Leung, 2010; Van den Ende, 2022; Enroth, 2005), are typically a week long (Schmidt, 2015; Ruane, 2017) and are deliberately engineered to induce emotional vulnerability and disrupt identity (Ruane, 2017). Their core offering is typically electronic music of the 'psychedelic trance' subgenre (Krasnow 2012; Leung, 2010) and they often reject corporate sponsorship and capitalist ideologies (Ruane, 2017) instead opting for gifting economies (Schmidt 2015). As well as music they offer a wide range of activities including workshops, communal celebrations, seminars, spiritual ceremonies, yoga, and sound baths (Leung, 2010; Perry, 2013; Lucia, 2020).

Davis (2013) notes the 'Transformational' label has enabled clear distinctions between festivals intended primarily for leisure and those embellishing sacred meaning, with some TFs embracing association with the term and others rejecting it, believing it to narrow or carrying certain connotations. Lucia (2020) talks of attendees demonstrating a desire to 'transform themselves' by embodying collectively agreed values, yet acknowledges typical attendees are white, middle or upper class, liberal and spiritual but not religious and therefore fairly homogenous.

2.3.2 Key Players

With over 70,000 annual participants from all over the world (St. John, 2018) and thousands of volunteers (Chen, 2009), Burning Man has established itself as the largest and most well-known TF and a key influencer on similar events (Robinson, 2016). Occurring annually in the Nevada desert (Chen, 2009), it features a culture of

abundant gifting and generosity (St. John, 2018), huge theme-camps assembled by participants (St, John, 2018), and a 40ft wooden 'Man' set ablaze at the event's culmination (Chen, 2009). Attendees otherwise known as 'participants' (Chen, 2009), otherwise known as 'Burners' (Brooks & Soulard, 2022), are asked to bring all food and drink supplies for the week (Chen, 2009) and adhere to the event's ten guiding principles, including 'radical self-reliance' and 'leave no trace' (Burning Man, 2024).

Other major TFs include Boom (Portugal), Lightning in a Bottle (U.S), Tribal Gathering (Panama) and Envision (Costa Rica) (Doucette, 2016). For the purposes of this literature review two further TFs will be discussed: Boom and Tribal Gathering. Boom festival is a biennial celebration of psychedelic culture attracting 40,000 people from over 150 countries (Martins et al., 2017). At Boom, 'people gather seeking love and peace through dancing, listening to music, yoga, meditation and other artistic expressions' (Diotalevi, 2012, p.1). Furthermore, they may communicate on dance floors solely with facial expressions or gestures sharing in joy, euphoria and exhaustion (Diotalevi, 2012). These experiences appear to conform to both Durkheim's theories of collective assemblies and collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1915).

Tribal Gathering is an annual 18-day festival occurring in the jungle along a Panamanian beach, hosting representatives of over sixty global Indigenous tribes to share their wisdom through ceremonies, workshops and rituals (Van Den Ende, 2022). This forms the festival's first half and includes activities such as natural chocolate making, musical instrument making, sweat lodges, fire ceremonies and entheogenic medicine ceremonies (Van den Ende, 2022). The second half focuses on modern music and dance, especially psychedelic trance (Van den Ende, 2022). It features prolonged duration compared to other TFs, and therefore requires dedication and commitment from participants, as well as offering greater transformational propensity (Van den Ende, 2022).

2.3.3 How Transformational Festivals Generate Social Capital

Previous studies on SC in F&E show clear evidence of Bonding SC and some evidence of Bridging SC with little to no evidence of linking SC (**See 2.2.1 Festivals and Types of Social Capital Gained at Them**). However, in a TF context- guided by principles of community building radical inclusion and creative expression (Bottorff, 2015), it could be said there are abundant more opportunities for bridging and linking SC. Indeed, attendance of TFs has shown to improve feelings of connection and unity (de Carvalho et al., 2022), both terms related to SC. Johner (2015) noted many attendees leave with a renewed sense of belonging and purpose in their lives, likely due to strengthening levels of trust and reciprocation within existing social networks (Lucia, 2020) and attempting to establish new ones (Putnam, 2000).

Lucia (2020) suggests innovation, creativity and problem-solving undergone within the TF arena helps humanity, citing examples such as Wanderlust beach cleanups, and 'Burners without borders' which works on disaster relief, two positive examples of festival-induced initiatives that generated SC and spread beyond the TF, positively impacting external communities. Leung (2013) echoes this sentiment citing repeated TEs in TFs on a personal level, are over time likely to aggregate into societal transformations.

2.3.4 Limitations of Transformational Festivals and How They Limit Social Capital

Faucher (2018) found online SC accrual directly echoes neoliberal capitalism, a concept vehemently abhorred by TF communities yet recognised as being reinforced in their environments (Schmidt, 2019; Lucia, 2020). In stark contrast to feeling trust and reciprocity within social networks of TF communities, one Burning Man attendee described feeling completely abandoned during a period of clinical depression (Lucia, 2020). Lucia also outlines the high prevalence of yoga at such events, noting

its inward-thinking and individualistic nature; therefore, at odds with the sense of communitas and SC TFs attempt to demonstrate.

TF critics note attendees are inadvertently excluded based on wealth, social status, or race (Nickles, 2014; Reff, 2016), despite the festivals embracing principles of radical inclusion and diversity (Schmidt, 2019; Lucia, 2020). A Burning Man ticket now starts at $575, thus instantly excluding large swathes of society (St John, 2018). However, 2024 was the first time in 14 years the event did not sell out (Prada, 2024), suggesting either its popularity is finally wavering, or the admission price is excluding people more than ever.

2.4 Conclusion

SC relates to bonds between individuals and social networks and levels of trust arising from them (Putnam, 2000). Whilst scholarly definitions vary, there exists a consensus SC involves maintenance or creation of social connections within a form of community (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). Whether harnessed on an individual or collective level, SC can be wielded for positive or negative outcomes (Son, 2021; Beilmann et al., 2018; Lin, 2000) and is harder to measure and quantify than other forms of capital, and therefore less often measured (Petrić & Tomić-Koludrović, 2021).

Whilst there is evidence of SC accrual at F&E, it is much more likely the bonding type, whereby bonds between existing friends and family members are strengthened rather than bridging or linking types (Wilks, 2011; Broska, 2021). Celebration repeatedly surfaces when discussing SC in F&E (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Waterman, 1998) and helps break down barriers, encourage more bridging and linking kinds of interactions (Salamone, 2000). Contrarily, F&E attract more homogenous groups of attendees than wider society (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007) and can therefore potentially act in an exclusionary way, with people avoiding them due

to social status, finances, and educational or ethnic background (Brownett, 2018).

TFs differ from other festivals by length (Schmidt, 2015), promotion of values such as community building and environmentalism (Leung, 2010), and addition of offerings such as sound baths and spiritual ceremonies (Perry, 2013). Burning Man is the largest and most-well known TF (Robinson, 2016), with others including Boom, and Tribal Gathering (Doucette, 2016). There may be opportunities to gain all types of SC at TFs (de Carvalho et al., 2022) and TFs are praised for their wider community initiatives (Lucia, 2020). However, TF communities may not always be welcoming (Lucia), and the same problems present in the F&E context in terms of exclusion due to race, social class etc. are also found in TFs (Nickles, 2014).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Aims & Objectives

AIM: *To investigate the effect on social capital (SC) for attendees of Transformational Festivals* (TFs)

Research Objective (RO)1: To explore SC in a TF and events setting.

RO 2: To critically analyse how TF attendees gain SC through digital means prior to attending.

RO 3: To evaluate the impact of TF attendees accrued SC during and following the festival.

3.2 Approach (Research Design & Philosophy)

Research conducted was subjectivist in nature; recognising reality is experienced differently across individuals (Burrell & Morgan, 2019), in line with Bourdieu (1986). It was also from a radical change perspective (Saunders et al., 2019) as TFs themselves embrace idealistic, utopian visions of society (Lucia, 2020), differing from regulation perspectives, and therefore suiting research with this inclination. An interpretivist philosophy, recognising individuals act of their own, unique volition was used with the hope of gaining rich, meaningful insights, an outcome strongly linked to qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2019).

Although event organisers usually prefer quantitative data to evaluate impacts more easily (Getz, 2020), SC is a particularly difficult phenomena to quantify, leading to lack of research within F&E settings (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007). For this reason, and the fact that qualitative research can provide deeper insights with a naturalised, less directive interviewing style (Bell et al., 2022), this study used qualitative research. This was beneficial for the study purposes, allowing for long, uninterrupted

narratives which produce greater depth of results (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003), which is likely why similar methods have been employed in previous TF studies (Van den Ende, 2022; Lucia, 2020).

3.3 Sampling & Data Collection

Getz (2020) recognises although event planners signify preference for random sampling, it is rarely used in event research. Therefore, given TFs represent a small subset of F&Es, and studies have found attendees are not usually representative of wider society (Schmidt, 2015); a purposive form of sampling, whereby participants were hand-selected for perceived study appropriateness (Parker et al., 2019; **Appendix B: Interview Schedule**) was deemed most suitable. All Participants met the criterion of having attended at least one TF in the past 5 years. The reasoning for this criterion is so respondents offer first-hand, and ideally recent insight into TF experiences, which would therefore be more detailed and accurate. Additionally, snowball sampling could generate further suitable research candidates, a particularly useful method in accessing hard-to reach populations; highly relevant for this study (Parker et al., 2019). However, this option was discarded as collecting data from individuals known to one another or who may have attended same TFs simultaneously may have resulted in data being too similar and potential conclusions becoming distorted (Parker et al., 2019).

Similarly to a former study analysing SC in F&Es (Brownett, 2018), this research employed semi-structured, 1-1 interviews, aiming to garner detailed contextualised data on SC within TF contexts. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, enabling interviewers to tweak questioning based on respondents' answers, a more natural conversation where participants are more likely to share, and a structure that prevents the interview from derailing too far off topic (Bell et al., 2022; **Appendix D: Interview Template; Appendix E: Academic Underpinning of Interviews**). In contrast, unstructured interviews would have potentially not elicited responses

relevant to research objective themes (Rabionet, 2011).

In line with findings in **2.2.2 Positive Impacts of Festivals and Events on Social Capital and Beneficiaries,** both attendees and festival staff were interviewed, as both groups can demonstrate significant SC (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007). Interviews were conducted and transcribed using Microsoft Teams, enabling large quantities of data to be processed quickly, but of course error prone (Saunders et al., 2023). Each transcription was subsequently hand-checked thoroughly, and any speech or grammatical errors rectified (**Appendix G: Example Transcript**). Although face-face interviews would provide greater benefits (Saunders et al., 2023), online interviews facilitated interviewer/interviewee comfort, easier analysis through automatic transcription, and removal of geographical barriers, something pivotal given the global nature of TFs and attendees (Leung, 2010). Furthermore, online video conferencing can save costs and eliminate travel necessities (Gray et al., 2020).

3.4 Data Analysis

As an interpretivist philosophy was employed, direct participant quotations were used in analysis, to allow voices of participants to emerge through the data (Saunders et al., 2023), a technique typical of prior TF research (Lucia, 2020; Van den Ende, 2022). During interviews both transcript summaries and interim summaries were employed to aid subsequent interviews and begin identifying early emergent themes (Saunders et al., 2023).

Thematic analysis was chosen for data interpretation. Thematic analysis is just one type of analysis derived from coding data, helping organise and simplify qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2023), again commonly employed in prior TF and SC research. Thematic analysis is the process of analysing qualitative data such as interview transcripts in search for reoccurring themes, which can be used to draw meaningful conclusions (Bell et al., 2019). Deciphering themes from qualitative data is not easy or straightforward and cannot easily be helped with analytical statistics

software such as SPSS which streamlines quantitative data analysis (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2008). Repetitions of words and phrases are the easiest, most common method of theme identification (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), but do not automatically constitute themes, all of which should have links back to the ROs and aim (Braun & Clarke, 2006; **3.1 Aims and Objectives**). Other methods of theme identification include the centrality of a theme or statement (de Farias et al., 2021) and template analysis (Saunders et al., 2023). Themes relevant to the literature on SC may be topics such as social cohesion, reciprocity, and trust, but these themes are unlikely to be discussed by interviewees unless questions are designed in a way to illicit such responses (**Appendix D: Interview Template**).

3.5 Credibility & Confirmability

The criteria of trustworthiness (Credibility, Confirmability, Dependability and Transferability) were developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985) as a means of testing validity and reliability of qualitative research and deemed relevant to this research. Credibility refers to accuracy of study findings (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). To improve credibility of the research, prolonged engagement and peer debriefing were deployed as per Lincoln & Guba (2007). This meant contact with respondents was prolonged (45min – 1hour interviews, with free-flowing conversation) (**Appendix G: Example Transcript**) and the interview process was exposed to a neutral bystander who assisted with the design development (Lincoln & Guba, 2007).

Confirmability refers to how easily others can confirm or endorse research findings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). For confirmability, the authors cite an external audit is necessary. Whilst the researcher acknowledges the benefits of such practice, unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this masters dissertation, and therefore one of several methodological limitations (**See 3.8: Limitations**). Furthermore, it is here where bias plays a part. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure findings are results of participants' experiences and not desires or wishes of the researcher (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

3.6 Dependability & Transferability

Transferability relates to relevance and usefulness of findings to existing and future research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and has been described as 'fittingness', meaning the degree of fit and meaningfulness findings have outside of research contexts (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). In this instance, it was the researcher's responsibility to identify contextual aspects of emergent findings and ensure applicableness to other contexts with use of thick, detailed descriptions (Lietz & Zayas, 2010; 5.0: **Findings and Discussion**). Dependability refers to how good data and data collection methods employed for a study were (Miles & Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2010). As with confirmability, the best means of ensuring dependability is with use of external audits (Lietz & Zayas, 2010), unfortunately unachievable for this assignment. However, an explanatory table linking interview questions to relevant literature, and a sample transcript provide a replicable evidence trail for other researchers (**Appendix E: Academic Underpinning of Interviews; Appendix G: Example Transcript**). These researchers will ultimately judge transferability of this paper, yet there is the likelihood of relevance to other TFs not studied here such as Lightning in a Bottle (**2.3.2: Key Players**).

3.7 Ethical Issues

Participant harm, privacy invasion, lack of informed consent and deception are the four major areas of ethical considerations in primary research with deception virtually impossible to eliminate (Diener & Crandall, 1978). The study aimed to satisfy these four major ethical concerns by employing several measures. Regarding deception, misleading somebody or withholding information is not necessarily deceiving them (Athanassoulis & Wilson, 2009) and certain kinds of deception are necessary in certain situations to gather data (Goode, 1996). Considering this, not revealing critiques and criticisms of TFs to participants who may only have positive associations with such events was deemed appropriate. Informed consent was made

apparent to all participants before undertaking the 1-1 interviews (**See Appendix C: Example Consent Form**), also clearly outlining participants were free to leave the interview at any time, without reason, as per recommendations of Gray et al. (2020). The forms also outlined the nature of the study and requested permission to use audio recordings of interviews and anonymised quotes as well as explaining how data would be stored and disposed of, post-research, thus providing extensive informed consent (Diener & Crandall, 1978).

The intense, emotionally challenging environments that TFs occur within, and strong likelihoods of attendees consuming drugs and alcohol (Ruane, 2017), means participants sometimes shared deep, personal and potentially traumatic experiences, necessitating conducting interviews in a safe and private space, without any possibility of breaching confidentiality (Bell et al., 2022). The researcher had a responsibility to ensure no harm would befall any participants, the most likely form being mental or emotional stress when recollecting events experienced at TFs. It was, however, recognised this risk was minimised during sampling, as participants most willing to contribute to the research, largely aspired to share their positive event recollections. However, risks were not entirely eliminated and were mitigated by changing the direction of questioning if participants seemed at all triggered. All data collected and analysed was completely anonymous, ensuring no possibility of participant identification. (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.8 Limitations

Former research has struggled to produce meaningful findings into SC at F&Es, because components are hard to measure (Gibson, 2011), interview questions have been vague, confusing or meaningless (Matarasso, 1996, as cited by Wilks, 2011) and samples too small or unrepresentative (Brownett, 2018). It was crucial, therefore, to learn from these mistakes when designing interviews and selecting participants. An interview template and academic underpinning table was used (**Appendix D: Interview template; Appendix E: Academic Underpinning of Interviews**), ensuring lines of questioning were relevant to existing secondary

research and identified gaps in current literature and wording shared with the dissertation supervisor to ensure clarity and flow. Despite a small sample, it was anticipated a targeted approach of participant selection would ensure data highly representative of both the research topic (SC) and field of study (TFs).

Despite these measures, clearly there were still research limitations.
Firstly, time constraints resulted in a limited amount of time to capture data, which could have excluded several TF attendees who were unavailable or not answering messages at the time. Additionally, the research in relation to the F&E calendar rendered it difficult to undertake any participant observation or ethnographical approaches which may have provided richer, more current insight. Although semi-structured interviews may produce more meaningful insights than their more structured counterparts (Bell et al., 2022), it was inevitable that the free-flowing nature of interviews would lead to participants detracting from the questions and speaking in-depth about topics less relevant to the interview questions, research aim and objectives (Rabionet, 2011).

Some authors note identification of themes for purposes of thematic analysis can be somewhat ambiguous, leading to categories being misidentified as themes, and they question the validity of thematic analysis compared to other forms such as category content analysis (de Farias et al., 2021). It is therefore acknowledged theme identification in this context was unlikely a perfect process. As previously noted, ideally an external audit would have been carried out to improve both confirmability and dependability of the dataset (Lietz & Zayas, 2010), but this wasn't possible within the research parameters. Finally, in increasing transferability of findings by making generalisations, this may detract from the research credibility. (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Social Capital

Clearly the major theme and most pertinent to all 3 Research Objectives (ROs) was that of Social Capital (SC). This Theme was further split into 3 sub-themes, all of which relate directly to ROs: SC at TFs (RO1), SC Online (RO2) and SC Outside of the TF (RO3). All eleven participants discussed experiences directly related to this theme, even though they were unaware of it as the questions deliberately omitted mentioning SC (**Appendix D: Interview Template; 5.4: Limitations**).

4.1.1 SC at TFs (RO1)

Several participants noted their social networks expanded because of TF attendance, "I don't think… anyone really changed my life, but… they brought more people to my circles" (P1, 99). This proves for many attendees, their friendship circles and networks are growing due to attendance, expanding on ideas of increased feelings of connection and unity at TFs (de Carvalho et al., 2022).

Despite acknowledging increased connections and greater cohesion, which both contribute to greater SC (Son, 2021), several participants noted connections were often temporal, perhaps not even lasting the festival duration:

> chatting on the hammocks when you realise you been there for three- or four-hours meeting people… that's- those little experiences throughout the festival that makes it special. And sometimes it's starts and finishes right there" (P11, 10524)

This correlates with Schuster (1995) and Arcodia & Whitford (2007), who both found evidence of SC accumulation at F&E. Conversely, one participant cited a lack of SC accrual opportunities: "I was really surprised… I didn't make any friends out of the

circle we went with" (P3, 2500), though proposed one possible reason for this: "my boyfriend had this same impression and my friends were just sticking together" (P3, 3082), a reasoning agreed upon by P6 (6042):

> I've definitely been to music festivals where I don't meet anyone new because I'm there with my friends and the purpose of me going there is to spend time with them

These findings prove that although new connections and interactions were easily attained, for some participants, SC was unlikely or even impossible to accrue, outwith the existing social group, in line with Wilks (2011), finding only bonding SC, and Ahn et al. (2023), who found SC accrual may elude those avoiding conversations with strangers.

Finally, some participants echoed the view TFs themselves do not contribute towards accrual of SC but merely provide platforms for increased interactions to occur: "That's what they did, is just provide the space. I don't think they curated it. (The connections and interactions)", (P2, 1552), whereas others believed TFs could take some credit: "all the places in Burning Man are created to interact", (P7, 60972). This shows a discrepancy on attendee opinions as to whether TFs themselves can be credited for facilitating SC accrual.

4.1.2 SC Outside (RO3)

Most participants felt connections and interactions gained at TFs (and therefore SC accrual) had positive impacts on their lives: "Hugely… it's pretty much defined my life ever since" (P5, 3942). This shows not only did SC accrued at TFs have significant impacts on participants' lives, but the scale of impact was substantial, even bordering on profound, and related to the theme of transformation (**See 4.2: Transformation**); confirming work by Leung (2013) who found repeated TEs at TFs led to significant external impacts.

A further observation by some participants was that TF attendance has provided them with a global network of friends and acquaintances:

> He then introduced me to his whole community of travellers… What that means is I can come to Europe and have homes to stay in, have people to meet. I have people now that I know that are in South America or in Brazil (P2, 1569)

This shows some attendees are expanding their networks and engaging with individuals outside of their circles, demonstrating SC of the bridging and possibly linking types (Broska, 2002). It also suggests a diverse attendee base, supported by Putnam (2000) but disputed by Lucia (2020), and a huge impact on their external lives as they gain friends and relationships but also tap into multiple communities in countries worldwide, further strengthening existing ties and providing more opportunities to accrue even more SC.

When asked whether connections and relationships forged benefitted their external communities, participants loosely agreed their communities profited because of their attendance and experiences at TFs, but that it was not SC to thank for this: "the thing I think that has…an impact is not… the connections you do with other people- is the… transformation that goes on within yourself." (P11, 10325). This proves an overwhelming belief that participants' attendance at TFs is benefitting their home communities, but for reasons other than greater SC, including personal transformations and the ethos instilled within TFs. This directly correlates with Leung (2013) but not Arcodia & Whitford (2007), since whilst both scholars agree TF attendance can result in societal change and community building outside of the festival, the interviewees believe this is due to personal transformations rather than collective interactions.

4.1.3 Online SC (RO2)

Several participants spoke of the supportiveness of online TF communities, citing their personal support of newer community members:

"ticket, camp and logistics. That's the three things I help people with or help them to find their way", (P1, 456) or had been supported by more experienced members of the community: "the only real like interaction that I have had in the past with the festival has been through the ambassadors" (P5, 4800). Contrastingly, four participants cited no prior online interactions before attendance, either through lack of motivation to engage: "I was just reading the Reddit Forum, it was mostly to get tips… I haven't interacted.", (P4, 3412), or through believing their TF experience would not be enhanced by prior communications: "I mean I know I will be going anyway, right?", (P10, 9508). These findings show for a sizeable proportion of TF attendees, although they desire to seek and develop connections during the TF (RO1), with some forming lasting bonds and SC as a result (RO3), there is less appetite to interact virtually and accrue SC this way (RO2).

Furthermore, those interacting online mainly focus on giving and receiving of practical TF advice, rather than nurturing friendships or strengthening ties for their own sake. However, this exchange of help is still community-minded and thereby contradicts Faucher (2018), who found online interactions largely individualistic and selfish in nature. One exception is relationships formed during the TF (RO1), but then maintained since, through online mediums (RO2): "we were able to maintain some contacts from 2014, people that we've met there.
Then chatted online afterwards.", (P11, 10198). This shows online SC accrual is less likely to be formed initially, but real-life connections can lead to strengthening and maintaining of SC through online avenues subsequently.

4.2 Transformation

4.2.1 Transformational Experiences

Multiple participants stated they had TEs whilst in attendance of TFs: "It was huge, crazy in a different environment... I wasn't expecting it to be transformative at all… it was a surprise" (P8, 7544), showing regardless of their preconceptions, TF attendees are highly likely to experience something transformational whether

temporal or lasting, as per Leung (2013) who found repeated TEs could have societal impacts (**See 4.2.2 External Transformations**). However, most interviewees agreed TEs were not likely to be attained repeatedly at TFs: "to me transformational suggests a one off or perhaps repeated experience but not an ongoing", (P6, 5675), indicating it is perhaps challenging to achieve repeated TEs, or that in knowing this, TFs who embrace the TF label may largely focus their marketing efforts on first-time attendees.

Finally, 4/11 participants when asked about TEs in the context of SCs, directly mentioned use of psychedelic drugs, despite no reference made to this by the researcher:

> I was starting to experience with some psychedelic drugs. The fact that…
> you can do that in a safe environment with so many- like-minded people that are
> basically… oozing love and peace, will transformate you inside (P11, 10545)

This quote shows for some, use of psychedelics is important in TEs as per Buehler (2012) and Tutenges (2022), whilst reinforcing the interconnected nature of SC and TEs in TF environments. Conversely, associations with drugs and the transformational label may have negative connotations: "I'm talking with people… trying to convince them to go… they're like, 'oh no, that's only for people that like to do drugs and they call it transformational", (P9, 8689) this shows the clear association with transformation and drug-taking could be a huge problem for TFs who may be unintentionally excluding people and consequently denying them opportunities to have TEs and accumulate SC in such settings. Whilst several exclusionary criteria were cited in the literature such as wealth or race (Nickles, 2014; Reff, 2016), aversion to drug-taking was not one of them.

4.2.2 External Transformations

On whether TEs had impacts on the world beyond the TF, participants gave mixed feedback, with some firmly believing they do: "it changes everything and all of these things have ripple effects and inspire other people and… change the way we all live", (P5, 4407), again aligning with Leung (2013), whereas others believed society was so vastly different, that any real-world impacts were nigh on impossible: "Living in the normal society… We get more and more isolated… people are struggling with loneliness and segregation", (P7, 6825), showing a broad consensus TEs occur frequently within TFs, but debate as to whether this transformation permeates into society. One scholar spoke of a TF experience involving loneliness and depression (Lucia, 2020), topics that 0/11 participants mentioned as occurring within TFs, even if they had a bad time.

Several participants identified alternative sources of TEs in their lives ranging from meditation courses, political activism, working in education (as per Daloz, 1986; Pan, 2017), and travelling, indicating an infinite number of potential TE sources, but also that each experience and value derived from it is highly subjective to the individual. Furthermore, participants spoke of TEs inducing lasting behavioural changes such as environmental stewardship: "the leave no trace, when I come back home... If there's dirt on my parking lot, I pick it up", (P1, 332), supporting Lucia (2020) who found evidence of increased environmentalism by TF attendees and conflict resolution: "When I see people fighting or there's an argument, I'm going to try to help", (P8, 7863), indicating although society might not immediately be impacted by attendees' transformations, they are causing behavioural shifts which when aggregated over time could eventually lead to wider scale community impacts (Leung, 2013).

4.2.3 Personal Growth

Multiple participants talked about improving their wellbeing as result of TF attendance: "It gave me confidence… the confidence to try new things… to be less

shy maybe", (P8, 7824), suggesting personal growth is another outcome of TEs, as per Durkheim (1915), who found greater levels of confidence and fewer health issues. Confidence and self-worth were also hinted at by other participants:

> one of the things I analysed about Ozora, was I realised how much props I should give myself to go to a festival alone… make all these connections with people, not feel like scared to go about it alone (P2, 1801)

This quote also addresses SC concepts, further reinforcing the link between SC and TEs, as well as individualism, again suggesting accrual of SC and TEs was greater due to solo attendance, aligning with O'Grady (2013), who found greater propensity for individuals to connect at outdoor festivals.

4.3 Individualism vs Collectivism

4.3.1 Individualism

Several participants expressed preferences to travel to TFs alone: "'this festival looks beautiful. It's my 18th birthday. I want to go to a big festival by myself'" (P5, 3863), with some choosing not to accompany friends: "I had some friends going… maybe I'll just go by myself and it will be an even better experience." (P9, 8327). This suggests despite attending TFs for at least partially socially motivated reasons, some participants do not feel the need for pre-established social networks to have fulfilling experiences:

> There are many people who need to be accompanied… I like to do the full experience on my own, so when it's over… I meet the people, I don't meet the communities (P7, 7166)

This quote shows SC accrual may be easier when attending alone, although in this instance accrual of connections for personal benefit is deemed more attractive than contributing to accrual of SC for the wider collective, a finding at odds with Maffesoli (1996), who found individualism to be declining in favour of collectivism. Whilst this may be true, there are still likely to be attendees favouring individualistic SC. The idea of the relative ease of SC accrual because of solo attendance is also supported by several other participants: "it's a little different because you sort of force yourself to be more out there and make new friends" (P10, 9213), reinforcing the notion that participants are intentionally travelling alone to gain greater SC.

4.3.2 Collectivism

When asked how being a part of gatherings at TFs made them feel, participants were overwhelmingly positive: "You feel a part of this big community, big group of people that have the same intention... a supportive collective of people." (P1, 509), with some using utopian terminology to describe the unity:

> that brings this sense of oneness and connection and that we're not walking this earth alone. And we are together. And there are many things that make us different, but many things that also connect us and that's powerful (P2, 1712)

These quotes support findings by Bourdieu (1986) and Earls (1993), both finding high levels of collectivism in gatherings and celebrations and suggests the sense of unity generated by TFs is so powerful that not only are participants simultaneously accruing and contributing to SC (RO1), but that this collective mindset is likely to influence their SC accrual and contributions beyond the TF sphere (RO3).

One attendee cites collective experiences as the "essential part" of TFs stating without them "it's just individualistic people who take drugs" (P7, 6851). This supports Chow & Chan (2008) who stressed the importance of collectivism more

than most scholars. In contrast, another participant claimed they had no collective experiences at all, which both surprised and disappointed them, but as Lucia (2020) describes is not impossible, finding one participant feeling alone and alienated.

4.4 Ease of Friendships and Intensity of Connections

4.4.1 Ease of Friendships

Most participants agreed it was incredibly easy to make new friends at TFs: "you can go into a space and just like make new friends" (P6, 5237) with some specifically citing the instantaneousness: "from the get go I was making friends" (P2, 1380), and others the sheer volume: "I've met…hundreds of people throughout the years in my attendance at Boom." (P11, 10197), indicating participants are growing their social networks substantially and rapidly, thereby significantly accruing SC, supporting Quinn & Wilks (2013) in a F&E context. Furthermore, three participants used the term 'best friends': "I make best friends all the time, which is something I love about it" (P10, 9230), indicating the strength of friendships is considerable and often lasting beyond the festival realms (RO3): "I met so many amazing people that are still my friends to this day" (P8, 7571). This shows some attendees consider their newfound contacts an important part of their social circles outside of the TF, again supporting Quinn & Wilks and Crespi-Vallbona & Richards (2007). However, that is not always true (**4.1.1 Social Capital in Transformational Festivals**).

One participant believed their strong friendship would not have happened elsewhere: "we just have been talking ever since. And yeah, making music together and yeah, just a real connection just… that wouldn't have happened otherwise, you know?" (P5, 3884), whereas another believed it could have done "I've gone for like… a backpacker tour in Asia… then I also made some great friends… So I don't think it's necessary, it doesn't have to be in a festival" (P10, 9274). This shows whilst attendees are frequently making strong connections or 'best friends', in line with O' Grady (2013), there is mixed opinion as to whether these friendships could have

been made as easily in other environments. Some also believed every single person at the festival had new friend potential: "no one is a stranger there, everyone is just a friend you've never met" (P2, 1627), indicating the highly inclusive nature of such festivals (Bottorff, 2015) and greater opportunities for SC accrual (Sharpley & Stone (2014). Finally, one participant spoke of opportunities to make friends because of volunteering for TFs: "always encourage new Burners to sign up for a volunteer shift because… they're going to be chatting to that small team and making friends there" (P2, 5994), signalling the already bountiful opportunities to gain friends and SC are amplified even further when volunteering at TFs, as supported by Arcodia & Whitford (2007) who praise the SC benefits of volunteering at F&Es.

4.4.2 Intensity of Connections

As mentioned, some connections were so strong they naturally transgressed the festival: "we travelled in his van for two weeks, travelling the Balkans, that was just from meeting him at the festival" (P2, 1383), suggesting the intensity of connections can be great at TFs and attendees form strong bonds very quickly, once again supporting O' Grady (2013). Furthermore, participants spoke of the speed and quantity of connections: "connection with people, *really* hardcore… I don't think I ever… made so many contacts in my life so much at that speed" (P7, 6448), further reiterating both speed and ease of which connections are made but also the intensity of individual relationships. However, one participant described connections being less intense compared to others:

> I don't really feel like…It's as intense as belonging to a family… It's like, yes, I'm going to a place where people have the same… ideas as me, like in terms of gathering and community. But…I feel like I'm going to a place with shared ideas, that's it. (P9, 8829)

Indicating not all TF attendees necessarily form intense connections and friendships and indeed may not seek them, as per the avoidance of strangers described by Ahn et al. (2023).

4.4.3 Ease of Connections

Several participants spoke of easily connecting with others at TFs:
"it's a place that makes connection really, really easy with people", (P1, 140), similarly: "the connections were very organic" (P9, 8352), suggesting interactions were both easy and natural, and likely encouraged by the TF, who attract individuals open to such exchanges. This supports Van den Ende (2022), who found TFs are increasingly prioritising play and immersion. One participant spoke about the different areas of the TF fostering such interactions:

> You have the sacred fire area which is...
> really cool to hang out because people usually are more open to just, quiet down and have a long conversations (P11, 10727)

further evidencing TFs are actively facilitating interactions and greater SC accrual on both individual and collective levels by intentionally engineering spaces to encourage connection. One participant spoke of organic interactions with strangers as being 'amazing', 'fulfilling' and 'inspiring' (P5, 4195), further evidencing chance encounters, even if not developing into friendships, are highly meaningful, and contributing to a greater sense of wellbeing and SC, which supports de Carvalho et al. (2022), who found improved feelings of unity and connection

4.5 Durkheim's Theories

4.5.1 Collective Assemblies

Many participants spoke positively about feelings due to being part of gatherings (collective assemblies): "You feel a part of this big,
big community, big group of people that have… The same intention, and everybody will help you if you need" (P1, 506), provoking themes of unity, shared values and supportiveness (See **4.6.2: Supportiveness**), thereby supporting Durkheim (1915) and Bar-Tal (2000) and suggesting that with large groups of attendees feeling mutually, SC building opportunities will be bountiful. Conversely, one participant described unintentionally gatecrashing a collective assembly: "I tried to persuade them… well it's not a big deal if I'm here- but it was a big deal" (P7, 6709), showing in circumstances where attendees feel excluded, they have lost the ability to gain SC; potentially experiencing dejection and low self-esteem, supporting Beilmann et al. (2018), who described SC being used in exclusionary ways. This suggests despite TFs claiming to be highly inclusive and welcoming; this is not always the reality (Schmidt, 2019; Lucia, 2020).

4.5.2 Collective Effervescence

Most respondents described effervescent states, but contrary to Durkheim (1915), these were often highly internalised, individualistic experiences: "it's just you and the sound and the music, connecting, dancing together, taking you wherever it wanted to go. And that's flow state" (P2, 1905). The term 'flow-state' was used by another participant describing a state of feeling and movement whereby one moves freely and subconsciously, often highly in-tune with their auditory and physical surroundings, and with little regards to others: "not in an unfriendly way because I love people, but when I am in that complete flow state… act of meditation… I don't want people to disturb it" (P5, 4513). This suggests some effervescent states are

largely individual but does not negate from attendees' desire for social interaction otherwise, again completely contradicting Durhkheim's theory of effervescence (1915), stating participants are 'completely devoid of any individuality' (**2.1.7: Problems & Limitations**). Furthermore, this shows despite festival goers intending to meet people and participate communally, opportunities for introspection are deemed important and seemingly respected by other community members, as supported by Beilmann et al. (2018) who embraced individualism.

Conversely, other participants described collective effervescent experiences: "it's a state of high, high presence and high, high... lightness and freedom… you interact with somebody… you feel full of love somehow" (P7, 6923), supporting Durkheim's belief gatherings can become unified and 'charged up' with greater levels of passion, intensity and emotion. Finally, multiple participants mentioned sobriety, and how it did not inhibit them from reaching altered states: "I'm ninety-thousand feet up in the air from the festival, from the environment. I don't need any enhancer or anything" (P1, 608), indicating that for many, use of intoxicants is unnecessary or undesirable in reaching effervescent states. This contradicts Tutenges (2022), who believes intoxicants are necessary prerequisites to effervescence.

4.5.3 Celebration

As discussed in **4.5.3: Social Capital in a Transformational Festival Context** celebration is highly relevant to SC in festivals (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Schuster, 1995), and was found to be occurring frequently in TFs, with participants speaking of various TF celebrations, including opening ceremonies:

> an Archer shoots an arrow on fire into this massive fire pit, and then everyone runs into the mainstage to try and get as close to the front as they can. That's the opening of the main stage. And probably the biggest celebration. Everyone's just like 'RUUUUUN' (P2, 2053)

This vivid description is further complemented by a participant describing the effect of opening ceremonies on participants: "it's infectious… that feeling of... Celebration! And it's just, when you see it, like spread through all the people as well it's, it's special, it's special" (P5, 4604). These insights show not only are celebrations prevalent at TFs, but many TFs are programming celebratory events contributing to revelry and communalism (Leung, 2010; Perry, 2013).

Furthermore, several interviewees spoke of the sun providing celebratory cause: "the sun going down… and in that moment everybody goes crazy and whistles and shouts" (P11, 10822), showing celebratory moments may also be moments of collective effervescence supported by Diotalevi (2012), who spoke of the sharing of joy and euphoria by TF attendees. Similarly, one participant spoke of rain eliciting similar reactions from TF goers: "there was some rain just like a tiny little bit... and the cheers were like monumental… everyone's just like… so surprised and celebrating this completely…natural, but seemingly unnatural thing" (P5, 4646), suggesting natural phenomena such as weather deemed completely normal in the outside world can suddenly elicit deep joy, celebration and kinship amongst TF goers, effectively a collective assembly (Rime & Paez, 2023; **4.5.1: Collective Assemblies**).

4.5.4 Immersion

Several participants used variations of the phrase 'playground for adults', with one stating: "It always draws people together, to play", (P9, 8760) insinuating TFs are deliberately engineered to provide highly interactive, immersive environments, thus supporting findings of Perry (2013) and Diotalevi (2012), who both found high levels of immersion in TFs. One participant described a scenario where physical environment design may intentionally encourage socialisation: "you hang out there and chop up all your veggies… you meet all these other people where you're cooking, which is awesome." (P2, 1979). Conversely, as per St. John (2018), several interviewees hinted that often these playful experiences were initiated by attendees,

not organisers: "this is not an organised thing. This is an organic thing that happens because someone decided to do that" (P11, 10732), suggesting TF organisers and visitors are both responsible for creating immersive experiences leading to SC, and indicating strong evidence of co-creation at TFs. One participant spoke of festival duration as contributing to transformationalism: "the length of time, and the, the immersiveness of a whole week", (P5, 4347), aligning with Van den Ende (2022) and suggesting greater propensity to accrue SC at TFs than traditional music festivals. However, it is difficult to corroborate this claim with no existing SC research specific to TFs (**See 5.4: Limitations**).

4.6 Community

Most attendees believed sense of community at TFs is great: "it's a very welcoming community, so that forges a lot of relationships very easily" (P8, 7575), with some noting this is a huge draw in attending: "Everyone is there for that same mindset, everyone is… there for that same community" (P5, 4584), further emphasising ease of connection making (**See 4.4.3: Ease of Connections**) which can lead to SC accrual, and reinforcing the importance TF attendees place on community. This supports findings by Leung (2010) and Enroth (2005) who frequently highlight the significance of community at TFs. Truly, for some, community was more important than any musical offerings:

> I just love the atmosphere… love the people. Yeah. Not for the music… I don't think I would enjoy any other festival like this because I don't like the music. (P4, 3327)

This proves community is a deciding factor in TF attendance, often outstripping more typical reasons, and in this case (Boom Festival), sense of community is deemed to be greater than at other F&E. Some evidence suggested sense of community is greater (or at least perceived to be greater) at TFs compared to more commercial music festivals: "also the community vibe, because everyone's getting involved, everyone… perhaps, feels some ownership and responsibility to the event, the

community, the people around them" (P6, 5231), contested by Brownett (2018) and Quinn & Wilks (2013) who found high levels of community spirit at locally orientated festivals, but supporting the idea of a greater participatory nature at TFs, as per Chen (2009). Multiple participants spoke of being inspired by other community members:

> Boom is so important because it has inspired so many of the musicians and the producers that are around today…that same inspiration is passed down…. And that definitely builds community (P5, 3974)

There is therefore strong evidence that in addition to feeling part of communities, TF attendees draw inspiration from other community members and take these into the world as a catalyst for personal growth and SC accrual (RO3). This is verified by P6 (5562): "The connections at the Burn definitely influence how we interact with people outside of the Burn" However, in these instances, one was from a performer's perspective, and another from an organiser, therefore this research cannot confidently conclude an equivalent pattern emerges with regular ticket holders (**See 5.4: Limitations**).

Unfortunately, not all TF community experiences were positive:

> other festivals I'm able to leave my bags on the ground, or even walk away and come back… because there's a level of mutual respect among people in the community- could not do that at Ozora, I know people who personally who got their bags stolen (P2, 1494)

Similarly, "Because the community is smaller, the community is more close-knit", (P2, 1746), whereby a participant describes the community spirit at smaller festivals they had attended. Although from one source, these quotes suggest sense of community varies drastically between TFs, especially depending on their size and community values aren't necessarily adhered to universally, or even potentially actively exploited by petty criminals. Similarly, another participant described the relationship between

safety and community at TFs: "if you're going to build that community, everyone has to feel safe there" (P5, 4834), showing safety is a prerequisite to building community, and by extension SC, agreed by Tutenges (2022). Besides TF communities, there is evidence TFs impact neighbouring communities: "I think they have a really good impact on the local community outside of the festival" (P11, 10890), though by their own admission this participant speaks of two separate instances where local community members expressed dissatisfaction with strains on local resources caused by TF attendees, showing that despite best efforts, relations between TF organisers and local communities are not always harmonious and take considerable work to ensure no negative effects on SC locally. This contradicts work by Sharpley & Stone (2014), and Arcodia & Whitford (2007), however their work focuses solely on positive effects of festivals on local communities and therefore mandates further research. (**See 5.3.1: Research Recommendations**).

Finally, one participant discussed relationships between TF communities and the festival site's climactic conditions:

> it's a week in, essentially a desert and you know so is Burning Man… when they're a week long, it becomes a survival fest. So it has to be… a community (P5, 4028)

They proceed stating they believe harsh conditions are chosen intentionally to necessitate greater community spirit and interaction, a radical concept, but one showing TFs as well as attendees actively seek to increase opportunities for collaboration, collectivism and SC, simultaneously creating loyal returnees drawn to TFs for community above all else. Although harsh and challenging conditions are mentioned frequently (Chen, 2009), a direct comparison between communities and SC has until now not been drawn.

4.6.1 Supportiveness

A further sub-theme emerging from the findings organically was supportiveness. It can be loosely separated into two categories; support offered at TFs: "if you're having a bad time someone will notice and offer to help out", (P6, 5233), and practical support, often online, pre-event: "I usually do 3 parts- ticket, camp and logistics. So that's the… three things I help people with" (P1, 506). This shows supportiveness is hugely impactful at TFs, and attendees enjoy being supportive themselves, helping newer attendees with important information for what is a longer, more intensive experience than other festivals (Ruane, 2017). Indeed, as one participant states: "you've got to think about the people that are coming… because you can't have… some transformative experience or some life changing week… If you don't feel safe and supported" (P5, 4824), indicating the necessity and highly interconnected nature of supportiveness, TEs and SC. Interconnectivity of supportiveness and SC is heavily alluded to by Putnam (2000).

Multiple participants describe group scenarios where attendees are emotionally vulnerable: "They wanted to overcome trauma, for example…Whenever they start talking about vulnerabilities… You'll feel more empathy" (P4, 3402), suggesting high levels of openness and acceptance, enabling attendees to interact in deeper, more meaningful and trusting ways (**See 4.6.2: Trust**), all of which lead to greater SC (Ahn et al., 2023). On occasion, this empathy and mutual understanding towards others transcends festival barriers: "when you come out, and the main feeling that people want to help you and people want to be nice to you and whatever you need will be met" (P1, 269), insinuating supportive cultures at TFs encourage beneficiaries to adopt more supportive natures externally, supported by Quinn & Wilks (2013) which aggregated on a larger scale could lead to more widespread SC (RO3).

In-person practical support is also widespread and sometimes essential: "I had a friend who knew somebody…they put me in contact together- an elderly couple 60 years old… without them I could not… , they gave me a bike and tent- I had nothing, nothing, nothing… it's a lot of logistics you need to just go there" (P7, 6655), further reinforcing remoteness, environment or lack of resources makes TFs like Burning

Man intensive, challenging and often impossible without the supportiveness of fellow community members (Chen, 2009). Similarly, support may be more widely required during the TF: "I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed; you can read it in my face and maybe I'm getting a bit teary eyed. Someone can come up to me straight away and go. 'xxxx, are you OK?'… Or vice versa", further reinforcing the intensity of TFs requires greater levels of supportiveness, whilst concurrently showing support offered between attendees is abundant, natural and reciprocated, as per the trust and reciprocity of Putnam (2000).

Finally, from TF crew perspectives, support is important both between colleagues: "people you work with to solve those problems go on to become people who you can…go to for support in life outside of the Burn" (P6, 5506) and when supporting attendees: "you're able to help these people have a, more, deeper experience in the festival and more like enriched experience" (P2, 2191). These quotes show support between TF crew is helping them grow and sustain their social networks, leading to SC both in and beyond the TF, and support offered to attendees is helping them have a better time, with more likelihood of gaining SC and TEs, all supported by Arcodia & Whitford (2007) in a F&E context. However, it would be highly beneficial to validate this research with secondary data from a TF angle (**See 5.4: Limitations**).

4.6.2 Trust

As discussed, trust is highly important in SC (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 2001; Attanasi et al., 2013). Though not discussed by participants sufficiently to warrant its own theme, trust was nevertheless mentioned frequently: "it's community and non-judgement… I got that feeling from everyone at Boom and that… really increases the trust that you have in the people" (P5, 4023), similarly, "what I really like… is the gifting… It connects people… it makes people trust each other" (P8, 7700), again indicating the prevalence of trust amongst TF communities, and building of connections, and ultimately SC, as per Attanasi et al. (2013), who found this occurred frequently in high-trust societies. Others spoke highly of Boom for their

financial transparency: "they're so transparent, all of their finances, all of their plans, absolutely everything is on their website… that's one of the reasons why people trust the festival so much" (P5, 4869). This suggests an unwavering trust and loyalty amongst attendees of certain TFs. Nevertheless, one participant when asked about their interactions with Boom beyond the festival said "Nooo, because…. I don't really trust them" (P3, 3114), indicating trust and faith amongst TF attendees is not universal, as per the attendee experiencing depression (Lucia, 2020).

4.7 Miscellaneous Themes

4.7.1 Diversity

Whilst most participants believed TFs were highly multi-cultural, only one acknowledged their shortcomings: "most people… are white… there needs to be a lot of… work done to… improve the cultural diversity" (P6, 5345) supporting findings by Lucia (2020) and suggesting either TFs are more diverse than previously discovered or participants believe they are more diverse than in reality. This may be because most attendees come from European, North American or Commonwealth countries, with largely white, anglophone residents (**Appendix F: Demographic Markers of Participants)** Contrarily, one participant described people they formed a group with, seemingly contradicting Lucia (2020): "One Chinese-Canadian, one half Persian-American, me, Swedish… an Iranian, an Israeli… one from Morocco, one from Tunisia", suggesting TFs can be very culturally diverse, and that European may differ, compared to America, a potential advantage of this research. However, any definitive statements on cultural make-ups of TFs would require significantly larger samples, and quantitative research (**See 5.3.1: Research Recommendations**).

Conversely, several participants acknowledged attendance costs excluding the majority and therefore only attracting middle-upper class attendees: "There are not a lot of people from very poor backgrounds… I paid €1200.00 just to get in… It's middle to high middle class" (P7, 6512), indicating consensus amongst TF attendees

that attendance is a privilege unavailable to most, thus supporting findings by Nickles (2014) and Reff (2016).

4.7.2 Pull Factors

Whilst many participants return to TFs regularly many choose not to return because of impressions they have of particular TFs: "I will never go to Burning Man. (laughing) this is out of the question... same (reasons as) with Boom" (P3, 3141), high costs of attendance: "I'm not willing to pay that amount of money just to… redo the experience" (P7, 7003), or wishing to return less frequently to maintain a balance and enjoyment of the event: "We decided not to go every edition otherwise it's too… narrowing of an experience" (P11, 11055). These findings suggest one negative experience at a TF can tarnish the reputation of all TFs in attendee's minds, but even fantastic experiences may not automatically equate to repeat visitation, due to financial barriers, the festival intensity resulting in only semi-frequent returns or an experience being so transformational it is deemed futile to attempt recreating. This contradicts Wilks & Quinn (2016) and Leung (2013) and presents a problem for TFs as even happy customers may be deterred from returning and contributing to the greater SC of the event.

4.7.3 Psychedelic Culture

3/11 participants spoke of psychedelic culture (specifically drugs or music), which clearly has strong associations with TFs (Krasnow, 2012; Martins et al., 2017). There is evidence suggesting psychedelic drugs contribute to both TEs: "experience with some psychedelic drugs. The fact that… you can do that in a safe environment with so many people… will transformate you inside" (P11, 10545) and SC: "there's a energy of psychedelics. What do psychedelics create in people? Connection." (P2, 1526), suggesting their perceived importance to many attendees. This correlation between psychedelics, SC and TEs is broadly supported by Collective Effervescence (Durkheim, 1915; **See 2.4: Durkheim's Collective Effervescence**). Conversely, as

discussed in **4.5.2: Collective Effervescence**, participants need not be intoxicated with psychedelics to enact meaningful change: "I don't think I ever… made so many contacts so much at that speed.

And it was all… Without drug substance, on my case" (P7, 6448), suggesting in addition to TEs, connections and SC can be gained quickly and effortlessly without drugs. One participant spoke of the synonymy of TFs with the psychedelic music scene: "the Boom community is also the psy-trance community… it's the same or overlapping", equating with Van den Ende (2022), who found psy-trance at the core of TFs and potentially a primary attendance reason (**See 4.7.3: Pull Factors**).

4.8 Conclusion

This research produced substantial findings, many aligning with existing F&E research, such as SC accrual eluding those avoiding strangers (Ahn et al., 2023) and conversely, bridging and linking SC both being attainable (Broska, 2002). Conversely, some participants contradicted literature, believing societal change attributed to F&E attendance was due to personal transformations and not increased SC. Online interactions (RO2) were shown to be in mostly supportive contexts, in which sharing of practical knowledge was exchanged rather than relationship building for its own sake. Supportiveness was so persistent amongst attendees it constituted a sub-theme under Community.

As per SC, many participants were shocked at how transformational the festivals were, whilst others dismissed the transformational label, yet nearly all agreed the intensity of initial TE at TFs was rarely repeated. Many interviewees contradicted Durkheim (1915) by describing effervescent states as largely internalised, individualistic experiences, despite demonstrating strong preference to interact with collectives at other times. Celebration and Immersion, both key components of SC at F&E (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Van den Ende, 2022), were found to be highly present and unlike other themes such as SC, agreed to be largely engineered by TFs, successfully.

There were also several unexpected findings including solo attendance, which participants believed led to greater SC, the harsh climates which some believed to be deliberately chosen by TFs in order to induce greater collaboration, and the intense, rapid nature of some connections, described as special and meaningful but often not lasting beyond a day, a perfectly acceptable outcome for both parties, and ultimately leading to greater SC despite not immediately expanding social networks.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated SC in TFs, a concept thoroughly researched and deemed valuable in F&E contexts (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Wilks & Quinn, 2016), but not specifically in TF contexts, thus justifying and proving the value of this research.

In order to undertake qualitative research, thorough analysis of existing literature was first conducted, analysing SC theories from leading sociologists (Putnam, 2000, Coleman, 1998, Bourdieu, 1986), and in F&E contexts by those aforementioned amongst others, in order to ascertain the most relevant themes, to be subsequently identified in TF research (St John, 2018; Leung, 2013 etc.). This was achieved by dissecting key SC components (types e.g. bridging, bonding, linking, schools of thought e.g. individualism vs collectivism and related themes e.g. trust and celebration), exploring related topics to SC and TEs such as transformation and collective effervescence and then contextualising all this research into F&E and TF settings.

Next a methodological approach was chosen to best support the research objectives as below. A qualitative approach in the form of semi-structured interviews was determined the best means of garnering rich insights, utilising a more natural, less directive interviewing style (Bell et al., 2022), which is more appropriate when analysing SC, a construct notoriously difficult to quantify (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007).

During data analysis, thematic analysis was employed, whereby all eleven transcripts were meticulously combed for recurring themes, which were subsequently used to draw meaningful conclusions (Bell et al., 2019). With such a large dataset, forty-six initial themes were identified, gradually merged or reduced to thirty-five, and ultimately producing six overarching themes, and a series of subthemes.

5.2 Research Objectives Findings

5.2.1 RO1

To explore SC in a TF and events setting

The primary research proved a strong correlation between gaining SC and attending TFs, due largely to many of the other themes identified such as ease of new connections and friends, and sense of community. Participants were overwhelming surprised as during initial attendance the ease, speed and intensity of interactions was far greater than expected. The research also found whilst most respondents had the utmost respect for TF organisers, there was a pervading belief these interactions and communities were cultivated more by participants than TFs themselves, with divided opinions on whether this ease of forming connections and community could be as easily replicated elsewhere. Finally, many participants intentionally attended alone, often aiming for more immersive experiences, and more opportunities to build SC of all 3 types, with those attending in entrenched social groups severely limited in building SC, and usually only of the bonding type.

5.2.2 RO2

To critically analyse how TF attendees gain SC through digital means prior to attending

Overall, there was little evidence supporting SC cultivation online, prior to attendance, with most respondents utilising online avenues primarily to give or receive practical event-related advice. Some participants expressed little desire to actively forge connections and friendships online, knowing TF themselves are the premier destination to do this, perhaps representing a perceived inferiority of online interactions amongst the TF community. One exception was the ambassador programs whereby newcomers were paired together to connect virtually before

attending. Several respondents maintained relations with TF contacts through digital mediums, but this was post-event, after in-person connections had already been established.

5.2.3 RO3

To evaluate the impact of TF attendees accrued SC during and following the festival

Finally, there was strong evidence suggesting TF attendance impacts attendees' lives, relationships and communities, post-attendance, with many interviewees citing increased confidence, feeling part of new communities and greater humanitarian appetite due to attending. However, there was a greater belief this was due to personal growth and TEs at TFs than any effect of greater SC. Despite these views, this research argues without SC, personal growth and TEs experienced would not be as impactful, and therefore SC accrued at TFs plays a significant role in attendees' lives and communities post-festival.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Research Recommendations

1. The primary recommendation of this research is for further investigations of SC in TFs, which previously, were non-existent. Some participants claimed a greater sense of interaction, immersion, supportiveness and community at TFs, compared to other festivals, which should be explored more thoroughly, as well as comparisons of SC types gained (e.g. bridging and linking). However, the scope of 'other festivals' is so broad it could present a future research limitation.

2. Further analysis of the link between TEs and SC could provide useful data for F&Es but also other fields such as Sociology, Education and Tourism.

3. Further research into the individual/collective paradigm during effervescent states would help confirm or deny whether so many experiences are indeed individualistic and opposing Durkheim's theory.

4. Expanding on the findings weather and climate play regarding celebration and community-building may provide interesting grounds for further research and have inter-disciplinary value in other fields such as anthropology.

5. Ethnographic methods such as participant observation, with researchers personally attending TFs could produce richer insights and improve the credibility and dependability of future studies.

6. The use of much greater samples, selective sampling and quantitative research techniques may provide further meaningful data regarding diversity at TFs.

5.3.2 Industry Recommendations

1. Participants noted the ease of building connections and personal growth due to volunteering/working at TFs. More detailed analysis of SC amongst TF staff and cross-comparison with findings of regular attendees, could benefit TFs.

2. There is a clear link between TEs and SC. Further analysis could provide useful data for F&Es.

3. The biggest barrier to TF attendance is cost. Whilst schemes exist to counteract this, further measures could increase the reach and diversity of TFs.

4. Other TFs could learn from the Boom Ambassador programme, employing similar schemes to support first-timers and aid in their pursuit of SC and TEs.

5.4 Limitations

Clearly, the greatest challenge of this study was conducting primary research into SC within TFs, two topics with substantial published research, but without evidence of prior research combining both disciplines. This was advantageous in justifying a research gap but challenging when comparing SC literature from a F&E perspective, but not a TF one. Another significant limitation was investigating a topic not discussed outright with participants. This wasn't deemed an ethical concern, since most questions included themes pertinent to SC, however since SC is not widely recognised by the public, there seemed little benefit in asking interviewees about their experiences of SC, given they likely had no prior knowledge of the subject. It may have also resulted in forced responses and less of a preferable free-form naturalistic conversation (Bell et al., 2022). The challenge was therefore designing an interview template in such a way that it naturally elicited responses related to SC without mentioning SC, thereby increasing the likelihood of misinterpretations or answering in a seemingly appropriate way that was not relevant to the ROs. The nature of semi-structured interviews whilst useful in enabling rich responses, at times resulted in data which whilst interesting, held little relevance to the research. Contrarily, some participants gave very short answers, without contextualising with examples and despite encouragement by further probing questions.

The recruitment process was more efficient than anticipated, with excellent response rates and high interest levels amongst the TF community, potentially reflecting the open and welcoming nature of these communities. (**Appendix A: Recruitment Script**). Although samples were rather diverse with eight unique countries represented from eleven interviews, they could be more diverse regarding festivals attended, with only three TFs represented. Recruiting more widely may have yielded a greater variety. Furthermore, differences in time-zones were easily manageable for most, with interviewees largely based in Western Europe. However, with only two

non-European participants there is likelihood that the research being conducted solely in English and vast time differences in some countries may have deterred some from participation, further limiting the diversity of respondents. (**Appendix B: Interview Schedule**). A short recruitment window (around 2 weeks) may also have significantly limited the reach of the study.

Participants described intense, highly emotive and deeply personal experiences that therefore involved considerable feelings and emotions. Asking them to draw on these experiences long after they occurred (typically 6 months - 10 years), would reduce the credibility and dependability of data, and the richness of insights, as opposed to ethnographical field research. Additionally, this research produced perspectives of TF crew and regular attendees. Unfortunately, the depth of data from attendees' perspectives was often less thorough, therefore making it difficult to decipher whether they felt similarly to crew. Furthermore, crew identities were quite fragmented including TF organisers, volunteers, workshop facilitators and performers, so data saturation may not be fully realised here.

References

Ahn, Y., Kang, E. M., Kiatkawsin, K., & Zielinski, S. (2023). Relationships between Community Festival Participation, Social Capital, and Subjective Well-Being in a Cross-Cultural Context. *Healthcare (Basel)*, *11*(16), 2361. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11162361

Arcodia, C., & Whitford, M. (2007). Festival attendance and the development of social capital. *Journal of convention & event tourism*, *Vol. 8(*2), pp. 1-18. Taylor & Francis Group.

Alexander, C. E. (1996). *The Art of Being Black: The Creation of Black British Youth Identities*. Clarendon Press

Athanassoulis, N., & Wilson, J. (2009). When is deception in research ethical? *Clinical Ethics*, *4*(1), 44-49.

Attanasi, G., Casoria, F., Centorrino, S., & Urso, G. (2013). Cultural investment, local development and instantaneous social capital: A case study of a gathering festival in the South of Italy. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, *47*, 228–247. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2013.05.014

Bar-Tal, D. (2000). *Shared beliefs in a society: Social psychological analysis*. Sage.

Beilmann, M., Kööts-Ausmees, L., & Realo, A. (2018). The relationship between social capital and individualism–collectivism in Europe. *Social Indicators Research*, *137*, 641-664.

Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2022). *Business research methods*. Oxford university press.

Bianchi, M., & Vieta, M. (2020). Co-operatives, territories and social capital: reconsidering a theoretical framework. *International Journal of Social Economics, 47*(12), 1599-1617. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-03-2020-0135

Bottorff, D. L. (2015). Emerging influence of transmodernism and transpersonal psychology reflected in rising popularity of transformational festivals. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, *17*(1), 50-74.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Bourdieu, P. (1986), "The Forms of Capital", in Richardson, J. G. (1986). *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241–258.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Brooks, C., & Soulard, J. (2022). Contested authentication: The impact of event cancellation on transformative experiences, existential authenticity at burning man. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *95*, 103412. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103412

Broska, L. H. (2021). It's all about community: On the interplay of social capital, social needs, and environmental concern in sustainable community action. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *79*.

Brownett, T. (2018). Social capital and participation: The role of community arts festivals for generating well-being. *Journal of Applied Arts & Health*, *9*(1), 71-84.

Buehler A. (2012). The twenty-first-century study of collective effervescence: Expanding the context of fieldwork. *Fieldwork in Religion*, 7(1), 70–97.

Burning Man. (2024). *The 10 Principles of Burning Man*. https://burningman.org/about/10-principles/

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (2019). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. Routledge.

de Carvalho, J. M. F. R., Gustavo, N. & Afonso, V. (2022). A case study for a transformational festival creation in Lourinhã, Portugal. *European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation*,12(1) 46-60. https://doi.org/10.2478/ejthr-2022-0003

Chen, K.K. (2009). *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Chow, W. S., & Chan, L. S. (2008). Social network, social trust and shared goals in organizational knowledge sharing. *Information & management*, *45*(7), 458-465.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of sociology*, *94*, pp. 95-120.

Coleman, J. S. (1994). *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard university press.

Crespi-Vallbona, M., & Richards, G. (2007). The meaning of cultural festivals: Stakeholder perspectives in Catalunya. *International journal of cultural policy*, *13*(1), 103-122.

Daloz, L. A. (1986). *Effective teaching and mentoring: realizing the transformational power of adult learning experiences.* Jossey Bass.

Day, M. K. (2020). *Catholic Activism Today Individual Transformation and the Struggle for Social Justice*. New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/9781479821419

Davis, J. (2013). *Symbiosis Gathering: The Making of a Festival*. Sol Purpose. http://solpurpose.com/2013/09/06/symbiosis-gathering-the-making-of-a-festival/

De Mooij, M., & Hofstede, G. (2011). Cross-cultural consumer behavior: A review of research findings. *Journal of international consumer marketing*, *23*(3-4), 181-192.

Diener, E., & Crandall, R. (1978). *Ethics in social and behavioral research*. U Chicago Press.

Diotalevi, L. (2012). Random Steps Through Boom Festival 2010. *Dancecult*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2012.04.01.11

Doucette, K. (2016, May 11). *7 Wildest Transformational Festivals.* Rolling Stone. https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-lists/7-wildest-transformational-festivals-68486/burning-man-152342/

Durkheim, É. (1915). *The elementary forms of the religious life: A study in religious sociology*. G. Allen & Unwin

Earls, Z. (1993). First night celebration: Building community through the arts. *Festival Management and Event Tourism*, *1*(1), 32-33.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, *12*(4), 1143-1168.

Enroth, R. M. (2005). *A guide to new religious movements*. InterVarsity Press.

Falassi, A. (1987). Festival: Definition and Morphology. In Falassi, A., (1987) *Time out of time: Essays on the Festival.* Albuquerque, NM: University of New

Mexico Press.

de Farias, B. G., Dutra-Thomé, L., Koller, S. H., & de Castro, T. G. (2021). Formulation of Themes in Qualitative Research: Logical Procedures and Analytical Paths. *Trends in Psychology*, *29*(1), 155–166. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43076-020-00052-0

Faucher, K. X. (2018). Introduction: What is Online Social Capital? In *Social Capital Online: Alienation and Accumulation*, 7(1), pp. xi–xxvi. University of Westminster Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv5vddrd.3

Finkel, R. (2010). "Dancing Around the Ring of Fire": Social Capital, Tourism Resistance, and Gender Dichotomies at up Helly Aa in Lerwick, Shetland. *Event Management, 14*(4), 275-285.

Fowers, B. J., & Davidov, B. J. (2006). The virtue of multiculturalism: Personal transformation, character, and openness to the other. *American Psychologist*, *61*(6), 581.

Fukuyama, F. (2001). Social capital, civil society and development. *Third world quarterly*, *22*(1), 7-20.

Gabriel S., Naidu E., Paravati E., Morrison C. D., Gainey K. (2020). Creating the sacred from the profane: Collective effervescence and everyday activities. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 15(1), 129–154.

Garbarino, J. (2011). *The Positive Psychology of Personal Transformation Leveraging Resilience for Life Change*. Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7744-1

Getz, D. (2020). Event studies. In *The Routledge handbook of events* (pp. 31-56). Routledge.

Gibson, A. (2011). The intellectual origins of social capital. In Katz, J., Pearce, S., & Spurr, S. *Adult lives: A life course perspective*. Policy Press.

Gilleard, C. (2020). Bourdieu's forms of capital and the stratification of later life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, *53*, 100851. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2020.100851

Goldblatt, J. J. (1997). *Special events: best practices in modern event management*. Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Goode, E. (1996). The ethics of deception in social research: A case study. *Qualitative sociology*, *19*, 11-33.

Gray, L. M., Wong-Wylie, G., Rempel, G. R., & Cook, K. (2020). Expanding qualitative research interviewing strategies: Zoom video communications. *The qualitative report*, *25*(5), 1292-1301.

Guillen, L., Coromina, L., & Saris, W. E. (2011). Measurement of social participation and its place in social capital theory. *Social Indicators Research*, 100, 331–350.

Halman, L., & Luijkx, R. (2006). Social capital in contemporary Europe: evidence from the European Social Survey. *Portuguese journal of social science*, *5*(1), 65-90.

Harris, R. (2014). The role of large-scale sporting events in host community education for sustainable development: An exploratory case study of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. *Event Management*, 18(3), 207–230

Holstein, J., & Gubrium, J. F. (2003). *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Sage.

Hua, Y., Dong, F., & Goodman, J. (2021). How to leverage the role of social capital in pro- environmental behavior: A case study of residents' express waste recycling behavior in China. *Journal of cleaner production*, *280*, 124376.

Johner, A. (2015). Transformational festivals: A new religious movement?. In *Exploring psychedelic trance and electronic dance music in modern culture* (pp. 58-86). IGI Global.

Kettering, B.A., (2015). *Bridging the Gap: How Transformational Music Festivals Tend the World Soul* [Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology, Pacifica Graduate Institute].

Krasnow, S.S. (2012). *Transformational festivals*. Reality Sandwich. http://realitysandwich.com/156783/tranformational_festivals/

Laing, J. & Mair, J. (2015). Music festivals and social inclusion: The festival organizers' perspective, *Leisure Sciences*, 37(3), pp. 252–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2014.991009.

Leung, J. K (2010). *Transformational festivals: Jeet Kei Leung at TEDx Vancouver* [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8tDpQp6m0A

Leung, J. K., & Chan, A. (2014). *The Bloom Series*: A Journey Through Transformational Festivals [Video]. Elevate Films, Keyframe Entertainment, Muti Music & Grounded TV. http://series.thebloom.tv.

Liebst, L. (2019). Exploring the Sources of Collective Effervescence: A Multilevel Study. *Sociological Science*, *6*(2), 27–42. https://doi.org/10.15195/v6.a2

Lietz, C. A., & Zayas, L. E. (2010). Evaluating qualitative research for social work practitioners. *Advances in Social work*, *11*(2), 188-202.

Lin, N. (2002). *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action* (Vol. 19.). Cambridge university press.

Lincoln, Y. S., and Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2007). But Is It Rigorous? Trustworthiness and Authenticity in Naturalistic Evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *114*, 15–25. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.223

Lucia, A. J. (2020). *White utopias: the religious exoticism of transformational festivals*. University of California Press.in

Maffesoli, M. (1996). *The time of the tribes: the decline of individualism in mass society*. SAGE.

Martins, D., Barratt, M. J., Pires, C. V., Carvalho, H., Vilamala, M. V., Espinosa, I. F., & Valente, H. (2017). The detection and prevention of unintentional consumption of DOx and 25x-NBOMe at Portugal's Boom Festival. *Human Psychopharmacology*, *32*(3). https://doi.org/10.1002/hup.2608

Miles, B. W., & Jozefowicz-Simbeni, D. M. H. (2010). Naturalistic inquiry. *The handbook of Social Work research method*, 415-425.

Neuhofer, B., Celuch, K. & To, T.L. (2020). Experience design and the dimensions of transformative festival experiences, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *32*(9), pp. 2881-2901. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2020-0008

Nickles, D. (2014). *Festivals, Politics, and Change*. The Nexian. http://the-nexian.me/home/knowledge/128-festivals-

politics-and-change

O'Grady, A. (2015). Dancing Outdoors: DiY Ethics and Democratised Practices of Well-being on the UK Alternative Festival Circuit. *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture, 7*(1): 76–96.

Pan, T.-J. (2017). Personal Transformation Through Volunteer Tourism: The Evidence of Asian Students. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research (Washington, D.C.), 41*(5), 609–634. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348014538048

Pardy, S. G. (1993). *A study of the role of community festivals and events in community development* [master's degree, Arcadia University].

Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). Snowball sampling in *research methods foundations.*

Perry, E. (2013, June 18). Transformational Festivals: Where Ecstatic Spirit and Sonic Celebration Unite. *Redefine Magazine.* http://www.redefinemag.com/2013/transformational- festivals-spiritual-preview-guide

Petrić, M., & Tomić-Koludrović, I. (2021). Bourdieu's Theorization of Social Capital in the Analysis of South-East European Societies. *Philosophy and society, 32*(4), 538–566.

Picard, D., & Robinson, M. (2006). *Festivals, tourism and social change: Remaking worlds* (8th edition.). Channel view publications.

Pinel, E. C. (2018). Existential isolation and I-sharing: Interpersonal and intergroup implications. *Current opinion in psychology*, *23,* 84-87.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: It's origins and applications in contemporary society. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *24*(1), 1-24.

Prada, L. (2024, August 16). *Burning Man Didn't Sell Out, For the First Time.* Vice. https://www.vice.com/en/article/burning-man-isnt-selling-out-for-the-first-time/#:~:text=Photo%20by%20Peter%20Brooker%2FShutterstock,still%20plenty%20of%20tickets%20available.

Pret, T., Shaw, E., & Drakopoulou Dodd, S. (2016). Painting the full picture: The conversion of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. *International Small Business Journal*, 34(8), 1004-1027. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242615595450

Putnam, R. D. (1994). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy.* Princeton University Press

Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster. doi: 10.2307/2657613

Putnam, R. D. (2002). *Democracies in flux: The evolution of social capital in contemporary society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Quinn, B. & Wilks, L. (2013). Festival connections: people, place and social capital, in Richards, G., de Brito, M.P. & Wilks, L. (Eds) *Exploring the Social Impacts of Events* (pp. 15 – 30). Oxon: Routledge

Rabionet, S. E. (2011). How I learned to design and conduct semi-structured interviews: an ongoing and continuous journey. *Qualitative report*, *16*(2), 563-566.

Raman, S. (2019). *The Transformation of Tamil Religion : Ramalinga Swamigal (1823-1874) and Modern Dravidian Sainthood.* Taylor & Francis Group.

Rawlings, C. M. (2021). Review of "Social Capital", *Social Forces*, *99*(4), 21. https://doi- org.napier.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/sf/soaa148

Reff, K. (2016, June 23). *GLC 2016: Burning Man: A HUEman experience explores diversity in BRC*. Burning Man. http://journal.burningman.org/2016/06/philosophical-center/tenprinciples/glc-2016-burning-man-a-hueman-experience-explores-diversity-in-brc/

Rime, B., & Paez, D. (2023). Why We Gather: A New Look, Empirically Documented, at Émile Durkheim's Theory of Collective Assemblies and Collective Effervescence. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *18*(6), 1306–1330. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916221146388

Robinson, R. (2016). *Music festivals and the politics of participation*. Routledge.

Robison, L. J., Schmid, A. A., & Siles, M. E. (2002). Is social capital really capital? *Review of social economy*, *60*(1), 1-21.

Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2015). *Applied qualitative research design: A total quality framework approach*. Guilford Publications.

Rowen, I. (2020). The transformational festival as a subversive toolbox for a transformed tourism: lessons from Burning Man for a COVID-19 world. *Tourism Geographies, 22*(3), 695-702. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1759132

Ruane, D. (2017). Wearing down of the self: Embodiment, writing and disruptions of identity in transformational festival fieldwork. *Methodological Innovations*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799117720611

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field methods*, *15*(1), 85- 109.

Salamone, F. (2000). *Society, culture, leisure and play: An anthropological reference*. University Press of America, Maryland

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th edition.). ProQuest.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research methods for business students* (Ninth edition.). Pearson.

Schmidt, B. (2015). Boutiquing at the raindance campout: Relational aesthetics as festival technology. *Dancecult, 7*(1), 35–54. https://doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2015.07.01.02

Schmidt, B. (2019). *Transformational Festivals and the Enchantment Economy: Performance and Race in Neoliberal Times* [Doctor of Philosophy, University of Minnesota].

Schuster, J. M. (1995). Two urban festivals: La Mercè and first night. *Planning Practice & Research*, *10*(2), 173-188.

Son, J. (2020). *Social capital*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sharpley, R., & Stone, P. R. (2014). Socio-cultural impacts of events: Meanings, authorized transgression and social capital. In *The Routledge handbook of events* (pp. 360-374). Routledge.

St John, G. (2018). Civilized Tribalism: Burning Man, Event-Tribes and Maker Culture. *Cultural Sociology*, *12*(1), 3-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975517733162

Swann W. B. Jr., Gómez A., Seyle D. C., Morales J., & Huici C. (2009). Identity fusion: The interplay of personal and social identities in extreme group behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 995–1011. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013668

Tuominen, M & Haanpää, L. (2022). Young People's Well-Being and the Association with Social Capital, i.e. Social Networks, Trust and Reciprocity. *Social Indicators Research, 159*(2), 617- 645. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02762-z

Turner, V. W. (2017). Liminality and communitas. In *Ritual* (pp. 169-187). Routledge.

Tutenges, S. (2022). *Intoxication: An ethnography of effervescent revelry*. Rutgers University Press.

Uekusa, S., Matthewman, S., & Lorenz, D. F. (2022). Conceptualising disaster social capital: what it is, why it matters, and how it can be enhanced. *Disasters*, *46*(1), 56-79.

Van den Ende, L. (2022). Festival Co-Creation and Transformation: The Case of Tribal Gathering in Panama. *Festival Cultures*, 195–226. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88392-8_9

Vanderstoep, S. W., & Johnson, D. D. (2008). *Research methods for everyday life: Blending qualitative and quantitative approaches*. John Wiley & Sons.

Waterman, S. (1998). Carnivals for elites? The cultural politics of arts festivals. *Progress in Human Geography*, *22*(1), 54 – 74.

Westerink, H. (2013). *Constructs of meaning and religious transformation: current issues in the psychology of religion*. V&R Unipress.

Wood, E. H., Robinson, L. S. & Thomas, R. (2006). Evaluating the social impacts of community and local government events: A practical overview of research methods and measurement tools. In Fleming, S. and Jordan, F. (Editors.), *Events and festivals: Education, impacts and experiences* (81-92). Leisure Studies Association, Eastbourne.

Wilks, L. (2011). Bridging and bonding: Social capital at music festivals. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, *3*(3), 281-297.

Wilks, L. & Quinn, B. (2016). Linking social capital, cultural capital and heterotopia at the folk festival. *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology, 7*(1), pp. 23-39.

Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Script

The following was sent as a public message to potential participants over a variety of social media platforms and groups including Facebook and Reddit (**See Appendix B: Interview Schedule**)

"Hey everyone. I'm conducting some research on behalf of Edinburgh Napier University looking at transformational festivals (e.g. Burning Man, Ozora, Envision etc.) and am looking for some volunteers to talk (for 45mins-1hr) about their experiences attending such events.

The research will focus primarily on the social aspect of such events and the overall sense of community present. You must have personally attended at least one of these types of events to participate. Please feel free to direct message me with any questions or queries.

Thanks so much for your time!

Ryan"

Any parties who responded positively were then sent this follow up message:

"Hi xxxx

Thanks very much for expressing an interest in contributing to the research project on transformational festivals.

The format of the research will be an online Zoom/Teams/Google meet video call and will last up to 1 hour.

If you're still keen, I'll be starting interviews from next Tuesday 11th February but can be flexible on days and times.

Thanks so much for your interest!

Ryan"

Of those who again responded positively, a range of appointment slots were offered and when selected each participant was added to the interview schedule, as shown in the following Appendix.

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Participant (Redacted) & Group Found	Interview Time & Date	Email (Redacted)	Teams link sent/Consent Form Sent/Received (Y/N)
(Burning Man UK-Facebook)	Tuesday 11th February 11:00		Y/Y/Y
(Cool Festivals and Events in Europe-Facebook)	Sunday 16th February 13:00 (2pm Luxembourg time)		Y/Y/Y
(Burning Man UK-Facebook)	Sunday 16th February 10:30		Y/Y/Y
(Boom Festival- Sub Reddit)	Saturday 15th February 12:00		Y/Y/Y
(Ozora Festival- Official Visitor Group- Facebook)	Tuesday 11th February 18:00 (07:00 NZ time)		Y/Y/Y
(Boom Festival- Sub Reddit)	Monday 17th February 17:00 (12:00 Montreal time)		Y/Y/Y
(Boom Festival- Sub Reddit)	Tuesday 18th 19:00		Y/Y/Y
(Boom Festival 2025- Facebook)	Thursday 13th February 19:00 (20:00 Belgium time)		Y/Y/Y
(Boom Festival- Sub Reddit)	Friday 14th February 14:00 (15:00 Berlin time)		Y/Y/Y
(Boom Festival- Sub Reddit)	Wednesday 19th February		Y/Y/Y

	17:00 (18:00 their time)		

Appendix C: Example Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet- 10th February 2025

Study Title: An Investigation into Sociality and Community at Transformational Festivals

Invitation:

You are being invited to take part in research that is conducted on behalf of Edinburgh Napier University, into the experiences of previous attendees of transformational festivals. Before you decided whether to participate it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you so wish. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions or if there is anything you are unclear about. Take your time to decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of this study?

The aim of this research is to establish the degree of sociality and community prevalent at a range of global, transformational festivals, and whether these interactions between attendees occur before and after the event, or in online settings, as well as in-person during the festival itself.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been hand selected as a potential participant due to your previous experiences and your willingness to take part in the study.

Do I have to take part?

No, taking part is entirely optional, even if you change your mind immediately prior to the interview. If you decide to proceed, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you change your mind at anytime during the interview process you are free to stop, without reason.

What does taking part involve?

If you agree to take part you will be asked to meet with the researcher virtually over Microsoft Teams, for a duration of approximately 45 minutes- 1 hour. With your permission the interview audio will be recorded (not video) to aid the research efforts. All audio recordings will be held on secure Edinburgh Napier University servers and then destroyed following the culmination of the study. Interviews will be transcribed and anonymised. You can also have an answer to a question omitted and removed from the recording and transcription if you so wish.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

All information collected and any responses you provide will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). Any information you provide will be depersonalised and anonymised. No names or personal identifiers will be used in any quotations.

Contact for Further information:
If you would like further information about the study, please contact the researcher on 40064542@live.napier.ac.uk

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY

Date: 10th February 2025

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: An Investigation into Sociality and Community at Transformational Festivals

Name of Researcher: Ryan Webster

Programme of Study: MSc International Festival and Event Management

Faculty: The Business School, Edinburgh Napier University

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 10th February 2025 for the above study I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason

3. I recognise that I can refuse to answer a question or set of questions

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

5. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

6.   I agree to the information I provide being used anonymously in publications.

☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

Appendix D: Interview Template

Interview Question	Sub-Topics/Prompts
1. Firstly, (and these questions are entirely optional) could you please give me some details on your background? -Age (or Decade) -Country of residence -Gender identified as	N/A
2. Could you please give me some background on your attendance of TFs? (e.g. Burning Man, Boom, Envision) Which have you been to? How long have you been going to them? What drew you to them in the first place?	• What counts as a TF and what doesn't • Motivations for attendance
3. Thinking of your favourite/most memorable TF, can you describe a time you forged new friendships or connections? To what extent do you think the environment of the TF provided the platform for these connections to occur?	• Music • Place, setting and visual aesthetics • Atmosphere • Values of the TF or attendees
4. Thinking back to these connections you made would you say the individuals you connected with shared similar values to yourself? Were they typically from similar or different backgrounds?	• Demographic makeup of attendees • Relative wealth or privilege of attendees
5. Have these connections enriched your life either during the festival or afterwards? How might they have benefitted others or the community itself? Have you stayed in touch with people you met?	• Post-festival blues • Post-festival inspiration • Strength of connections and TF community

6. Can you recall the values or guiding principles of the TF you attended? Do you think these shaped the way you interact with and trust other members of the festival community?	• Interviewee may need nudging as to what these values are • Assessing the power of the message/vision of the TF and whether this influences attendees and permeates into the festival
7. Did you interact with the TF community online prior to attending? What kind of interactions did you have and how does this help you prepare for/build excitement for the festival?	• Interviewee may not have interacted online prior to attendance, if so steer to anytime they may have engaged online • Festival preparations/pilgrimages
8. Can you think of a time you were part of a collective or gathering at the TF? How did it make you feel? What thoughts and sensations did you experience? How did the experience make you feel towards other members of the group?	• Powerful emotions- joy, elation, inspiration etc. • Specific stories of experiences within the TF
9. How much do you relate to the transformational label attached to such festivals? Have you or anyone you attended with experienced a personal transformation and if so, can you describe it? Do you believe this transformation only takes effect in the festival world or does it have an impact beyond? Have you had transformative experiences somewhere else other than festivals? If so, can you describe them?	• Recollection of deeply personal, powerful experiences • Stories of ceremonies or use of mind-altering substances • The power and belief in TFs to enrich mankind and work towards a more utopian society
10. Can you recall a time at a TF that you experienced an altered state of reality? Whether induced by music, the environment or	• Again, recollection of highly powerful and deeply personal experiences

something you consumed. How did you interact with/feel about others around you in this state?	• Place, setting and environment of TF
11. Did the TF create spaces or opportunities for interaction and play? Can you describe these if so?	• Prevalence of opportunities for Immersion • Opportunities for escapism, freedom and the chance to be more childlike
12. (If attended consecutive years of the same TF): Do you feel part of the TF community returning each year? How does this make you feel?	• Repeat visitation and motivating factors • Assessing the relative power and therefore social capital demonstrated by TF communities
13. Can you recall instances of celebration that you encountered during the TF? Can you describe the circumstances, the atmosphere, the sensations?	• Vivid descriptions of the carnivalesque • Musical performances or ritualistic elements
14. How do you feel towards the festival organisers? How successfully have they curated the experience you desired and how effectively have they provided a platform for people to interact, both strangers and friends?	• Could be positive, negative or neutral feelings • Customer satisfaction
15. Have you interacted with the TF outside of the festival? E.g. online or through warm-up gigs, fundraisers or community action. How did these interactions make you feel towards the festival and your fellow attendees?	• May not be relevant to all attendees- establish whether there would be a future interest • May bring up other avenues of interaction with the TF not known by the interviewer
16. Do you have any plans to attend a TF in the future? Which are you planning on and why?	• May introduce new TFs or events unbeknownst to the researcher • May cover themes of behavioural loyalty and strong emotions attached to a particular TF

Alternative Questions if participant answers 'No' to Question 3	Sub-Topics/Prompts
4a. Thinking of the people you attended with, did your bonds strengthen whilst at the TF? If so, how much is this down to the TF? If no, did they get weaker and why? Were the people you went with from similar backgrounds and share similar values?	
5a. How have these deeper connections with those you attended with enriched your life either during the TF or afterwards? Could these stronger connections have had an impact on others you come in contact with outside of the TF? OR How have these weaker bonds with your group affected your life and other relationships?	

Appendix E: Academic Underpinning of Interviews

Relevant Research Objectives (ROs)	Interview Question	Academic Underpinning	Reasoning for Question
N/a	1. Firstly, (and these questions are entirely optional) could you please give me some details on your background? -Age (or Decade) - Country of residence - Gender identified as	N/a	Establish a profile of participants. Enable more easy analysis between demographic markers.
N/a	2. First of all, could you please give me some background on your attendance of TFs (e.g. Burning Man, Boom, Envision) Which have you been to? How long have you been going to them? What drew you to them in the first place?	Leung (2010) Schmidt (2015) Lucia (2020) *See Section 2.3.1*	Set the scene. Introduce the researcher to the participant's experience of the research context
RO1	3. Thinking of your favourite/most memorable TF, can you describe a time you forged new friendships or connections? To what extent do you think the environment of the TF provided the platform for these connections to occur?	Putnam (2000) *See Section 2.1.1*	Introducing the notion of SC and relationship building.
RO1	4. Thinking back to these connections you made	Bourdieu (1986) Broska (2021)	Ascertaining what types of SC were

	would you say the individuals you connected with shared similar values to yourself? Were they typically from similar or different backgrounds?	*See Section 2.1.1*	developed by participants e.g. bonding, bridging, linking. Exploring the ideas of diversity and social inequality.
RO3	5. How have these connections enriched your life either during the festival or afterwards? How might they have benefitted others or the community itself? Have you stayed in touch with people you met?	Son (2021) Bourdieu (1986) Ahn et al. (2023) Picard & Robinson (2006) *See Section 2.1.3*	Individualism vs Collectivism (RO3)
RO1	6. Can you recall the values or guiding principles of the TF you attended? Do you think these shaped the way you interact with and trust other members of the festival community?	Coleman (1988) Hua et al. (2021) *See Section 2.1.2*	Introducing the concept of trust and ascertaining the perceived relevance by TF attendees.
RO2	7. Did you interact with the TF community online prior to attending? What kind of interactions did you have and how does this help you prepare for/build excitement for the festival?	Faucher (2018) *See Section 2.1.3*	Establishing whether SC is also developed online (RO2)
RO1 RO3	8. Can you think of a time you were part of a collective or gathering	Durkheim (1915)	Exploring the idea of collective assemblies

	at the TF? How did it make you feel? What thoughts and sensations did you experience? How did the experience make you feel about other members of the group?	Bar-Tal (2000) Earls (1993) *See Section 2.1.4*	
RO3	9. How much do you relate to the transformational label attached to such festivals? Have you or anyone you attended with experienced a personal transformation and if so, can you describe it? Do you believe this transformation only takes effect in the festival world or does it have an impact beyond? Have you had transformative experiences somewhere else other than festivals? If so, can you describe them?	Rime & Paez (2023) *See Section 2.1.5*	Exploring the concept of transformation (RO3)
RO3	10. Can you recall a time at a TF that you experienced an altered state of reality? Whether induced by music, the environment or something you consumed. How did you interact with/feel	Durkheim (1915) Buehler (2012) Liebst (2019) *See Section 2.1.6*	Exploring Durkheim's theory of collective effervescence and how this relates to SC

	about others around you in this state?		
RO1	11. Did the TF create spaces or opportunities for interaction and play? Can you describe these if so?	Van den Ende (2022) *See Section 2.3.2*	Exploring the idea of immersion which can lead to interaction and accrual of SC
RO3	12. (If attended consecutive years of the same TF): Do you feel part of the TF community returning each year? How does this make you feel?	Wilks & Quinn (2016) Falassi (1987) *See Section 2.2.2*	Establishing whether repeat visitors feel part of a community that reconnects annually
RO1	13. Can you recall instances of celebration that you encountered during the TF? Can you describe the circumstances, the atmosphere, the sensations?	Arcodia & Whitford (2007) Waterman (1998) *See Section 2.2.2*	Exploring the notion of communal celebration, proven to have strong links to SC in a F&E context.
RO1 RO3	14. How do you feel towards the festival organisers? How successfully have they curated the experience you desired and how effectively have they provided a platform for people to interact, both strangers and friends?	Davies (2015) Arcodia & Whitford (2007) *See Section 2.2.2*	Establishing the impact that festival organisers have on SC, and event satisfaction
RO2 RO3	15. Have you interacted with the TF outside of the festival? E.g. online or through warm-up gigs, fundraisers or community action. How did these interactions make you feel towards	Lucia (2020) Leung (2013) *See Section 2.3.3*	Identifying whether any attendees connect with the TF outside of the festival grounds and how this may translate to SC.

	the festival and your fellow attendees?		
RO1 RO3	16. Do you have any plans to attend a TF in the future? Which are you planning on and why?		Establishing future visitation intentions.

Appendix F: Demographic Markers of Participants

Participant #	Age	Identified Gender	Country of Residence	Country of Origin	Chosen TF(s)
1	67	M	UK	Israel	Burning Man
2	29	F	Australia	New Zealand	Ozora
3	32	F	Belgium	Belgium	Boom
4	35	F	Germany	Turkey	Boom
5	30	M	UK	UK	Boom
6	33	N-B	UK	New Zealand	Kiwi Burn
7	44	M	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	Burning Man
8	44	M	Canada	France	Burning Man
9	31	F	Portugal	Portugal	Boom
10	35	M	Sweden	Sweden	Boom/Ozora
11	41	M	Portugal	Portugal	Boom

Appendix G: Example Transcript

Transcript

February 15, 2025, 12:02PM

WR 0:10
Great. Did you get a chance to see the… consent form I sent to you?

J 0:16
Yes, I thought I sent it back, did I not?

WR 0:18
Oh, maybe you did? My apologies. Let me double check.

J 0:21
If not, I can do that.
I've got it filled out so I can just attach it again if not.

WR 0:28
OK.
Yeah, I can't see anything. I see the… accepting of the, the meeting.
Unless it's in there… no.

J 1:09
No worries, I'll send it again.

WR 1:11
OK. Thank you.
OK. (Muttering) Oh, sorry, I've lost where we are now.
OK. Are you happy for us to carry on then?

J 1:38
Yes, absolutely yeah.

1:39

OK, cool. So there's 16 questions all together. The first one, I mean, they're all optional. The first one is even more optional. It's just kind of some background on… on you. So like, the first part is…

Your age and gender?

1:58

Yeah, I'm 30.

1:58

Yeah.

Yeah. Sorry it broke up then, 30 and?

2:05

Male.

2:06

Yeah, and… country of residence, which is obviously Scotland and country of origin as well?

2:11

Yep.

England.

2:15

England, cool. Thank you very much.

OK, so… first of all could you give me some background on your previous attendance of transformational festivals like Burning Man and Boom?

2:31

So I first went to- well I've been, I've been going to festivals… My family were taking me since I was… seven years old? And but then I first went to boom where- uh- 2012.

2:45
WR Mm hmm.

2:46
J Yeah, that was my first. My first boom anyway, and since then I made it…
A regular thing. (laughing)

2:56
WR Yeah.

2:57
J And eventually, like you know, making the music and then attending…
These festivals many, many a year.

3:06
WR Cool. So you've been to Boom like, pretty much every two years since 2012? Yeah.
And have you been to any others in a similar vein or just, just boom?

3:16
J I mean…
How so? I go to psy-trance festivals, normally one, maybe two a month cause it's
what, yeah, play my music. So, I, how similar are we talking? Like in terms of size?
Or… so I've also done like universal parallelo, I've done…
Yeah, modem. I've done some like, some of the bigger ones like that as well. But
psy-trance festivals in general, I go to many.

3:46
WR OK, cool. And is that just, like all over Europe or all over the world or?

3:51
J All over the world, yeah.

3:53
WR OK, cool.

So you've been going since? Yeah, 2012. And what kind of drew you to Boom in the first place?

J   4:04

I, I don't really know?

It was… It was, honestly, a case of 'this festival looks beautiful. It's my 18th birthday. I want to go to a big festival by myself' and I, and I chose boom, you know, it was… I didn't really know anything about it at the time. You know, I knew, I knew some psy-trance, but it wasn't like, what I was into at the time. I was a drum and bass head. So it was… it was, It was kind of just a random pick for a solo adventure which looked. Cool.

WR   4:37

Nice.

OK, so now we're just going to talk about one…

Transformational festival specifically. So I guess for you it'd probably be boom?

So can you describe or can you recall instances where you made new friendships or connections at Boom?

J   5:01

Oh yeah, absolutely.

Yeah, I mean… there was one guy who I now consider one of my best friends. He's from Germany. We make music together and we were just, we were just sat next to each other just talking and we just discovered… it turned out he was a trumpet player and he played lots of jazz. I was a- I'm a trombone player, I played lots of jazz, so we just started talking about… jazz and brass instruments. And we just…

Got so well and we just have been talking ever since. And yeah, making music together and yeah, just a real connection just…

That wouldn't have happened otherwise, you know?

WR   5:45

Yeah. So you think that connection probably could only really have happened somewhere like Boom? In that environment, like it would have been less, less likely to happen elsewhere. Yeah. OK, cool.

J

5:53
Yeah, absolutely, yeah.

5:59
So yeah, thinking of the connections that you've made at boom, do you think the people you connected with well firstly, are they from similar or different backgrounds? And secondly, do they share similar or different values to yourself?

6:17
I would say…
I would say very different backgrounds. Actually so there'- there's one person in particular, you know, he was he was from Germany, but actually originally he was from Egypt and his family travelled over here.
You know as, as like… looking for a better life as they- as things weren't going well for them in Egypt and you know and that's… a completely different background to what, where I come from, which is, you know, a typical well, actually, it wasn't typical at all. But as you know, always been from the UK, never lived anywhere else and that's er yeah, so it's very different backgrounds and that's the thing about- especially festivals as big and as iconic as boom. It brings people from…
all over the world, like, literally every single corner of the world. And there's… there aren't many things, which are such a universal meeting point as that, but…
I would say that because of the uniqueness and the kind of niche of music and the music scene, that boom is- it brings, yeah, people from all over the world, but, with similar principles, with similar… mindsets and way of life and appreciation of… individual freedom and creativity and also unity. You know I think it's… you don't go to somewhere like boom, it doesn't draw you in unless you already have that, that mindset and that, those morals yourself.

8:00
I mean, you say that, but you, you were kinda drawn in not knowing much about it at all?

8:05
Oh yeah, but I don't think I would have thought it looked like somewhere I wanted to be, unless I already had that…

8:11
OK. That impression? Yeah, yeah, yeah.

8:12
That way of thinking, yeah.
You know like, I, I've never looked at the World Cup in Saudi Arabia and thought, 'yeah, that's where I want to go!' (both laughing)

8:15
Great.
So yeah, these connections you've made at Boom. Do you think you've- they've enriched your life either during the festival or afterwards?

8:34
Oh hugely, it pretty much defined my… it's pretty much defined my life ever since. And, and only for the better, I would say. (laughing)

8:46
And how might they have…
These connections, like benefited others in the community itself, so either the festival community or your own community?

9:00
I think…
You know I've always thought that if we're, if we're talking about like… there's different ways of looking at that question, isn't there? I guess, like if I think about what… what it was for me and…
It was about the music, you know? It was like, I was. I saw. I saw a way of life which revolved around music. And I looked at that and I thought 'that's what... That's how I want to live. That's what I want to revolve my life around'. And that's how it benefited me. But, music is always… about sharing, that's, that's always what it is. You know, there's no point just having music for yourself, making music for yourself, which no one else ever listens to. That's, that's never the point. It's always a communal experience. Like, that's what, that's what it's all about. Whether you're playing folk music in a group of musicians or in a band, or you're… making music by yourself, but for other people to dance to, you know? So it's that, inspiration and that…

92

That celebration of life and that joy of enjoying music and making music is always just passed on. And I think you know, that helps me. And that helped me in my community because I brought that inspiration back and I started doing my own music, working with people that I knew from home, putting on events at home and that, you know, it spreads that, that joy and that inspiration further- and that's.
I don't know. For me, that's… You know, I've always had a very musical life., but for me that was…
What I took away from it and what I hope to spread, and I know that…
Not just my music. I mean, like everyone's music in general. I think a lot of people, one of the reasons boom is so important is because it has inspired so many of the musicians and the producers that are around today. So much of that inspiration comes from boom and they all pass that inspiration on… further, and they inspire other people. And that same inspiration is passed down so that people can enjoy making music and enjoy the music themselves.
And that definitely builds community.
Cause music is all about community and all communities have music around them everywhere in the world.

WR 11:21
Amazing. Thank you.
And you said this, you've met this… Was it German guy or Egyptian guy?

J 11:31
Well, he's from Egypt and lives in Germany.

WR 11:33
Yeah. And you know, other than him have you stayed in touch with a lot of people that you've met?

J 11:39
Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's I, I, you know, I have no more space on my friends list on Facebook anymore because, I've stayed in contact with so many people that I've met. (laughing)

WR 11:52
And, and you know those… interactions beyond the festival?

You know how? How does that take place? Is it meeting again at Boom, meeting at other events or just communicating virtually?

J   12:06
All of those really, you know, is we, we often meet at lots of other events and all around the world. But we are in contact virtually all, all the time, you know, it's that's, the… with everyone spread out so far around the world that's the, the only real way to do it. You know, it's the, it's the only way you can keep in contact and then...
And then you'll meet up maybe once every once a year, two years, three years, four years. But then you see each other again. Excuse me. And it's, you know, it's like you've been chatting all that time anyway, so it's just- it carries on naturally.

WR   12:41
Yeah, cool.
So can you recall?
Any like guiding principles or values or ethos of boom?
And do you think these shape the way you interact with and trust people at the festival?

J   13:02
Yeah, Absolutely. I mean.
I, I think for me.
It's especially… it's community and non judgement. Because that is, and that absolutely is. I got that feeling from everyone at boom and
that… really increases the trust that you have in the people because…
Again, you know, it's such like a, it's such a niche and specific genre of music that these festivals do. You know that no one's there by accident. You know, everyone is there because- for that same purpose. And it's such a survival fest, you know, it's, it's it's a week in, essentially a desert and you know so is Burning Man. And so it's like, you know, a lot of these festivals are… and really like.
Extreme situations. You know? A lot of them are, you know, especially when they're a week long, it becomes a survival fest. So it has to be… a community. You have to be looking out for each other and especially like, you know when people are staying up for days on end and doing whatever they may be doing, you know, you've got to be, you've got to be looking out for each other and there's absolutely that sense, you know that everyone is in the same situation. Everyone is there for the same reason. And everyone knows that everyone else is there for the same reason. It's like- just one big community.

94

Without judgement and that is just…
It's a unique environment and I don't think there's anywhere… else you could really have that.

That's cool. So do you think like, these kind of festivals… deliberately use harsh environments to kind of, you know, increase the, like, resilience and Community Action needed?

14:47
You know I've thought about this sometimes and maybe I should talk to some of the organisers about it because I don't know… sometimes I think sometimes I think yeah maybe they do do it deliberately.
But also you know there's, there's no I know like you know as a, you would look for somewhere… cool to do a festival you want to do somewhere where it's going to be beautiful people want to go to it's going to be memorable of course but like would you want it to be harsh? But people seem to want that you, know like there's this, there's this festival that's happening in the middle of the desert in Namibia.
And I was thinking like 'OK why did they choose to do it there because it's not somewhere that's easy to get to.
And it's an extremely harsh environment. So that's, that's an, that's a deliberate choice. But is that because it will… increase the community values of the people there to make everyone work together?' I think, I think partly, yes. I, I think, I think yes, because otherwise it would just be… making things more difficult for themselves as well. Well, you know, there… There is a positive outcome of doing these events in these locations.
Otherwise they wouldn't carry on doing it. You know- we wouldn't carry on doing it. So I think yeah, it has to be.

16:13
Interesting.
So have you... Did you interact with Boom or do you regularly interact with Boom Community online before you attend and in between attending? And if so, what kind of interactions did you have and how does this help you prepare… and build excitement for going?

J

16:37
Yeah, I definitely interact. I, I mean I, I interact with every, every festival I go to really because it's…
Personal excitement, more than anything, you know? It's like… I, I want to because I, I want to be involved in it because it's the people that make it. It's always like, you know…
Yeah, it's the people in the community which make events. There always is, you know, like even it can be the best music in the world, but if you're not vibing with the people, you're not going to have a great time and it can be the worst music in the world. But if you're having a great time with people… then that's what you're going to remember. You know, I think it's… I think it's always about the people and, like, involving, being involved in the community beforehand.

17:21
Mm hmm.

17:29
It helps *you* know what to expect and what might be different and what people are thinking and also helps *them*. You know, there might be loads of people that are getting involved because they've never been before and they're like,

'oh my God! Spending, spending a week in like, 40° heat in Portugal', you know, like, that's- 'I've never been to Portugal before, I'm coming from… Thailand' or something, you know, like 'what? What should I expect?' And…
It goes back into that, everyone looking out for each other.
You know there, there's a huge element of that we've all got to- no one wants someone to go there unprepared and then have a horrible time you know- no one wants that.
And also, you know, yeah like you said the excitement, the speculation of who's going to be playing, the speculation of like, what the- which artists they're going to have doing the decorations that year and… all of these things that just it builds the hype and it builds the community more as well.

18:26
And so I don't know if I mentioned this but specifically these online interactions.

18:32
Yes yeah.

18:33

Yeah yeah. And what mediums are they through, are they through the website or through social media or other outlets?

18:39

Social media… I think, I mean it's kind of more of a recent thing for me but I think, I think Reddit seems to be…

The best place that I've found for it not, not maybe for like information sharing as you know, obviously the best information comes from the website. You know you can get, you can get the information from their Instagrams from Facebook and all that. That's-that's great. But in terms of like, the sharing of more personalised information between the community and between people going, Reddit seems to be...

A great community like, you know I.

You know, you put up a post on the Reddit, and that's how… That's how I knew about this because.

So that's where the, the grass roots, the grass roots community is, is now you know? Because you don't really have individualised forums like you used to.

19:36

I noticed that I was... (laughing) I was going on different festivals websites and looking for forums which… there used to be and they're not… They're not a thing anymore.

19:43

Yeah, that used to be the way we did it.

No, they've just, they've just all died and every, every single forum is now just a part of Reddit, which whatever. It's fine, you know, the forums are still there. We've still got the boom festival community with like 50,000 people on there. You know, it's, it's great. It's great.

20:00

Yeah, cool.

Can you think of any times that boom that you were a part of…

A collective or a gathering? And how did that make you feel? What thoughts and sensations did you experience?

Interesting… It's kind of…

I think it's kind of different for me.

Especially…

Especially recently, you know being…

Being an artist at these events is different, so like the first time I went to boom, I went completely by myself. So I, I guess that's the…

Probably the best time to think about in terms of your question, because now it's like you know I, I know the other artists that are going to be there. I know people that I've met from… other festivals and I know who's going to be there and I know their music, they know my music. So it's- it kind of works a bit differently in that, in that sense.

For the first time I went, I can remember...

Lots of occasions. You know like, I never went back to my tent once. I just. I just slept at the, the ambient chill out stage for the entire thing. You know, I didn't go back to my tent. So like, I can remember…

Waking up and there being different, groups of people around me and, and at this time I was just… I'd been living in Manchester.

Then I remember I, I woke up and then I was just having some breakfast. And I, I, you know, I recognised some Mancunian accents and started, started just chatting to them and we were just like… and I can't remember their names. I didn't actually keep in contact with them at all. No idea. But I was... It was just that.

It just felt like a group for that moment for those couple of hours, just while we were having breakfast and waking up, It was amazing and.

It's just, yeah, that…

I don't know it… I want to say that feeling of safety, but it wasn't a feeling of safety because there was never any feeling of not being safe. It was just that feeling of…

Yeah, I don't how else to explain it though. Content- safety and contentness, you know, like everything is…

And the same thing again when there was like this…

there was like this automated- they've had it again since, but like this automated, kind of gong bath thing. So they were like triggering random MIDI patterns and it was, like playing these different gongs and metallic objects. And it was like creating these ever evolving, at no point in the week did ever do the same thing. You know, it was really cool and there were...

And there was a group of us that were just sat there and we were... just talking about how they, how they would have set it up, you know, it was just really nerdy, geeky stuff, but I just happened to have been sat in this, this group of people that were nerds and geeks about music production, the same as me, and we just talked about how, how would they set this up, what algorithms were they using to create this ever evolving, these, these patterns and, and it was fantastic in this, that that feeling of…

Being welcome and that feeling of being…
In a space where people understand each other, even if you've never… don't have any other connections at all.
Is.
Yeah, it's, it's amazing. It's fulfilling and.
Inspiring, yeah.

WR 23:43
And.
How do these… these experiences, these interactions with these groups? How do they make you feel about the other members of the group?

J 23:57
I guess.

Don't know. (laughing)
I don't, I don't know.
How do I feel about the other members of the group? I guess…
I don't know. Sorry. I don't know how to answer that.

WR 24:24
That's alright. Like would you? Would you have felt differently?
After having shared that experience with them?

J 24:31
Yeah, definitely.
You know there's.
If you, if you haven't experienced like that with people there's, there's definitely a sense of like connection and friendship which you just wouldn't have… wouldn't have had otherwise you know you can have like, you can and it's such a specific feeling as well which I think is why I don't know how to answer it because you know you can like join a group of people and have some conversations and then you know move on but then you know those 2 experiences- they were conversations I randomly joined but then instantly felt part of a group.
Which is a very different feeling, even though it's the same situation.
There's just that feeling of that, connection and friendship even without knowing the people which is hard to explain I think, but…

25:24
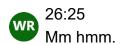And so… I mean obviously you talk about you, you have a kind of different experience now you're performing…
In, in, a sense do you… find that maybe you get that same sense of… camaraderie or new connections with your fellow performer? Or… people involved on the inside of the festival?

25:46
Yes, yeah, but in a in a different way because it's kind of expected.

25:51
OK.

25:52
Whereas, you know like those 2 occasions it was completely… it was- it came about by chance it was just, where you happened to be when you know? Whereas… whereas within like the, the artists and the organisers it's kind of… it's kind of expected and not, not in like a negative way, in a positive way because again you know you're going to have these things to talk about, you know you have similar experiences, you know these things and you kind of know that you're going to see each other… again and quite often probably because it's quite a small scene really so it's…

26:25
Mm hmm.

26:30
Yeah, so it's kind of more expected. There, there is and like, I think there's a real…
There's a really… it's, it's a different bond but it's a really interesting bond between artists especially, I think cause so often when you're going to these festivals you're, you're travelling by yourself you don't know the place, you don't know who you're going to see when you get there apart from, the other artists.
So there's, there's kind of that…
It's kind of a community within a community you know? Like cause we are, we are all there to look out for each other as well you know if someone's getting some hassle from a bad organiser or something you know everyone's… all the other artists know

how that is- everyone's been there themselves and they will look out for that person if someone's having a bad time or, you know it's like- it's a community within a community.

WR 27:22
Nice.
How much do you relate to the like 'transformational' label that's attached to these kind of festivals?
And have you personally had any experiences you describe as transformational whilst at Boom?

J 27:41
Yes, Definitely have. (laughing)
How much do I relate to it? I…
It's, it's hard to des- it's hard to say 'cause,
obviously the experience I have when I was 18 is very different from the festival experience I have now.

WR 28:01
Sure.

J 28:02
At 18 it was hugely transformational.
Like, absolutely… just gave me- changed what I thought I wanted out of my life, changed how I saw…
Changed how I saw my life at home.
Changed my…
Changed my outlook on the universe, You know? Like completely was, gave me a different…
A Completely different headspace to… what I'd been before and you know I'd been to plenty of other festivals but…
Nothing had quite…
Wiped the slate clean and made me rethink everything in my life the same way.

WR 28:48
Mm hmm.

J 28:49

Do I think that? And I find this tricky because you know it's like?
I'm sure something would have done that anyway at 18? You know I feel like that time of my life you know… of everyone's life you know you have those experiences that could be… for some people going to uni but I think...

WR 29:01

OK.

J 29:14

But I think everyone 's life has these trans- transformational…
Points in their lives, everyone's does, for, for whatever reason, you know, some people go in certain directions, and that's great. And I think Boom is hugely transformational for the people that want it to be.
And that's not a negative thing at all, because,
it's, something can only be transformational if you want it to be, whether that's going to therapy or whatever you know? Like it doesn't- therapy only works if you want it to work you know? Boom can only be…

WR 29:50

If you're willing to let it in?

J 29:52

Exactly, exactly.
So, in.
So no, I don't have a problem with it at all. Do I think that it will… it would be that again?
No, I don't necessarily think it would, be but that doesn't mean…
it isn't for other people and that doesn't mean that it isn't- it wasn't for me because it hugely was- it *hugely* was.
So no I don't have a problem with it at all and it was transformational for me and I think I wanted it to be at that time and I think…
millions of people want it to be and that's amazing, and that speaks absolute wonders for… what the festival has done and how the festival has managed to... create that for itself, and that's amazing.

30:43

WR

And that sort of…

You know when you had the… the time you described as transformational- 18 at boom for the first time.

What do you think caused that? Was it the whole experience, was it a combination of factors or can you pinpoint any particular things that…

You know, gave you that platform for some kind of shift?

J **31:04**

Well I don't think it would have been the same at all if I hadn't have gone alone.

I don't think there was any one moment, because I also don't think it would have been the same, you know if any of those moments had happened, but it had only been a weekend, you know, it's the fact that it is, it is so long and so immersive and so…

so unique of an experience that can't be replicated in- at any other point in life you know it's, it just can't- even other festivals, even other, you know and, and that's the same for…

All festivals you know I'm sure but like.

I think- yeah the length of time, and the, the immersiveness of a whole week, like you know for…

Cause again for like a weekend, a weekend festival- if boom was a weekend you'd be like, you'd be trying to cram everything in all your good times in a short amount of time and by the time you got to Saturday evening you'd be starting to think about leaving the next day you know so you never get to have that immersed experience whereas… it gets to Wednesday you've forgotten what bloody day it is, you know like all you are living is that experience.

WR **32:10**

Mm hmm.

J **32:24**

So I don't think there's any one point in particular I think it was…

Ideas, the… the entire thing.

WR **32:33**

Yeah.

And… I guess I already know the answer to this but, do you think this, kind of transformation that people- well yourself and people in general go through…
Do they, just have an impact in the festival world or do they have an impact in the world outside… people's communities outside?

Oh, no, no- it hugely, it hugely impacts the, the whole rest of the world and, you know because you take…
The world is just a collection of individuals and communities and if you take, if you take that community mindset outside into the rest of the world and build that everywhere else, then that that changes everything, you know? The way you work together, the way you see other people, the way you talk to other people, the way you interact with nature and surroundings you know, like… however, however it affects you but…
All your actions that affect the rest of the world, so if you and you know, each year 50,000 people are having that experience and taking that out into the world that's…
that's huge- I mean, you know even just in the case of like, people that I know who have gone to boom and then…
And then bought some land in Portugal.
Yeah, they're like, they, they were that inspired and affected by it,
that they went and like 'right, this is how we should be living we should be…
Buying individual, like… collecting individual smaller communities, being more self-sufficient, interacting with nature and the world and really understanding our own places in the universe', you know they've really, taken that on board and made it their entire lives and in turn, I know for a fact that that has inspired other people to do the same and… and also it carries on, you know? Cause even if you have these experience- my uncle for example has…
Went to music festivals when, he was younger, for him, his transformational festival was Glastonbury- he was going to like the early glastonburys and stuff.
And OK it took him, it took him 30 years but, eventually then he did manage to go and he's now living in Spain… and
has his land and people come to him and they learn how to live off the land from him and they, they work with him to like build the nature and the grounds around it and you know it's like this…
Yeah- it changes everything you know, it changes everything and all of these things have ripple effects and inspire other people and…
Change the way we all live.

Yeah. So you've experienced like, first-hand, people being inspired by these alternative ways of living and then going out and actually doing it?

J 35:24

Yeah, absolutely and helping other people do it who… you know haven't necessarily even been to the festivals but there's… they can get that inspiration from them because they've had that transformational experience and want to inspire other people to try the same things you know, because- music isn't for everything you know? Music festivals aren't for everyone- but that doesn't mean that the inspiration and the…

The community mindset… isn't they don't want that- they want it in other ways and you know, they- people pass these on and inspire other people in different ways to do, similar things.

WR 36:01

Nice.

And… have you had any experiences like this… transformational…. somewhere else? You know outside of the festival world and how does that differ if so?

J 36:18

I don't know, I mean…

In different ways.

I've definitely had experiences…

I think- I do a lot of work with, with disabled children and their families. I do a lot of work with their families and, you know, like there's, there's definitely been experiences when I've been doing that which have hugely changed the way I see humanity and hugely changed the way that I see…

people's interactions with the world and with each other.

And you know, it's… life isn't just one experience. Life is a culmination of…

Well, you know, eventually I hope, nearly 100 years of experiences (laughing) and you know, they're, they're all transformational in their own way. You know, like I had one particular…

I had one, yeah… some particular changes from music events, from music festivals which have changed the way I see my life and changed the way I see my world, but I've had lots of other experiences in different ways, which have also influenced the way that I interact with the world and other people.

But they're all very different, you know? There's, there's different lessons from different places.

37:43
WR Can you think of any times at boom that you experienced an altered state of reality and whether this is induced by music, the environment, or something consumed?

37:57
J Yes. (both laughing)

38:02
WR Can you describe, one of those times?

38:05
J Yeah so I've…

I've actually been…

You know I can, I can give one induced and one natural because I've been sober for the last 3 and a half years well just over 3 years.

And… since going sober I have definitely learned that altered states of reality are…

Especially if you are someone that is taking substances or whatever, you have a very specific idea of what an altered state of… or I did anyway- a specific idea of what an altered state of reality is but…

You know, a at Modem this year I, I, I'll talk about modem as well because it's somewhere I also think is hugely transformational and is also a week long and for me was quite a similar experience in a way.

But it was the… when you are in a state of absolute immersion with...

And this goes, yeah this definitely- boom, modem all of these places is when you're in that state of absolute immersion when…

you're in the middle of the dance floor and you're just lost in it, there's all the…

All the sensory things going on and you're just staring at this beautiful stage just with the lights going everywhere which is like, beautifully designed, you've got best sound systems in the world playing…

Just immersing you in this music and you… it is getting lost in a state of meditation and you do just lose yourself and you can… then, you know the sun starts coming up and you realise that you've forgotten who you were for 10 hours.

Like, and that's, that's, that's an that's incredible and that is an altered state of reality because you know you go through your life constantly thinking about who you are, what you're doing like…. Work, relationships, friendships, whatever like all these things.

And you never get- and there's not very many… occasions to have experiences

where you truly do just… it doesn't matter who you are- you are just being.

And that is a completely different reality from what we experience every other day.

I haven't found any other way of getting that- I know lots of people can get it through meditation, but for me that is, that is how I get there and that is definitely an altered state of reality.

You know and there's, there's also people get that from, from substances you know if you, if you're taking some psychoactive chemicals and you are…- you actually have no idea who you are for 12 hours.

It's, it's how you get there, that's the point. It's that, it's that getting to that state of… not having an ego, not worrying about the things that we do- You know, I'm not saying we shouldn't worry about them. You know, we have to worry about making a living. We have to worry about friendships and relationships, but it's so important to also be able to get rid of that and just experience being…

Just experience *Being.*

WR 41:30
Nice.

And… you know when you've… achieved these altered states.

How do you interact with, or feel about others around you?

Is it any different to normal?

J 41:48
Yeah, I mean I don't know.

I, I don't know whether it's err- I'm autistic and so I'm, I've been thinking- but I only found out like 2 years ago so it's something I've been thinking about quite a lot over the last 2 years is whether this has something to do with that, but, kind of like not in an unfriendly way because I love people, but when I am in that complete flow state…

WR 42:01
OK.

J 42:17
… Act of meditation, I guess, you could call it, I don't want people to disturb it.

Like I can see, I can see people who I absolutely love to bits and…

And like yeah…

OK I want to talk to you, tomorrow (laughing)

42:36

WR So it's much more of an internalised state then?

42:39

J Yeah and it always has been for me like, I, even when I was taking substances you know I can remember being…

I, I've always, always just wanted to, be by myself, not, not talk, just be with myself and I quite often went and just sat by myself, just… for hours, just doing nothing, just enjoying being where I was, thinking what I was thinking…

And yes, so that's, that's kind of always how it's been for me but I know it's different for everyone.

43:19

WR Does boom or modem if you want to talk about modem, do they create spaces or opportunities for interaction and play and can you describe any of these if so?

43:30

J I, I literally always describe them as an adult 's playground.

43:34

WR Yeah.

43:35

J Because, you know like when- when you're a kid, you go to a playground, you've got all your friends there and it doesn't matter if you've ever met them before because everyone's just there, just climbing on the equipment sliding down the slides just running around and that's…

I, I can't think of like anywhere else where adults get the opportunity to do that but you know, you see people at these festivals just rolling around in the mud, having an amazing time, just playing with the water, sliding around and… jumping on each other and it, and just laughing and literally all there is to do is to play, because, you know dancing is playing.

It's, It is- like exactly you can't think of… so yeah, you know it is it is play. It is a playground where there… you are free to do, what you want.

WR 44:29

Thanks.

Do you feel part of…?

You know you've been every year since 20…2012 is it? Do you feel part of the boom community, as a result of returning each year and how does this make you feel?

J 44:48

Yes, but, it's, it's so big that there's no…

You know, it's, it's not- so I used to go to this festival with my family which was… it was a folk music festival and there were only 5000 people and going back there every year it was really like, you were going to see the same people, I was going to see my same friendship groups, and that was… that was great but like, when you go to the, the bigger festivals… it's…

yeah it definitely is a community, but in a, in a different way because you don't know whether you're going to- even if like you know the same people are there you might not see them for the whole week…

WR 45:15

You might not see them, yeah

.

J 45:21

yeah, so it's like- but it's about… like I was saying before you know like everyone is there for the same reason. Everyone is there for that same mindset, everyone is… there for that same community, so it doesn't matter if it's the same people or not because you know that they're…

Yeah it's like returning…

It's like, it's like returning home to a city where you lived when you were younger but you haven't been there and you know, you know you might not know anyone that lives there anymore but you still, you walk through the city centre and you still feel part of that city you know it's…

WR 46:05

Nice.

Can you think of any instances of celebration that you were a part of or witnessed during boom and if so can you describe the… you know the atmosphere, the sensations?

J   46:20

Ahh, it's the, the opening ceremonies every time.

WR   46:23

Mm hmm mm hmm.

J   46:24

That's…

You know as- I'm normally quite adverse to...

Scripted, scripted enjoyment. (laughing)

And I, I always every time, every time, and at all festivals you know whenever there's like some opening ceremony I'm always like 'Oh no get ready for the cheese fest', 'it's going to be like, it's going to be like Christmas where everyone 's like forcing themselves to do the big run on to the dance floor and all these things', but as soon as you're in it and you've got like 30,000, 50,000 people, all just anticipating that moment and then, when it happens, just celebrating the fact that, you know, it's started!, it's started again!, and that- it's infectious. You just can't… You can't escape that feeling of...

Yeah! Celebration! And it's just, when you see it, like spread through all the people as well it's, it's special, it's special.

WR   47:30

Nice. So I mean, obviously you say normally you're averse to kind of scripted, things like that. Have you… not in this case, but have you had, you know, witnessed anything more spontaneous, you know, like spontaneous acts of celebration?

J   47:51

I mean, yeah.

Yeah, I mean I'm, I'm trying to think of one in particular, but yeah, definitely. You know, you see it all the time, people just…

half the time- in fact I would say pretty much, all of the times you don't even know what people- the person is celebrating, you'll just see like a group of friends just like,

110

48:13
WR
Yeah.

48:24
J
'Oh yeah!' don't know what's happening but yes that's amazing!

48:27
WR
OK so even if that's like an enclosed personal celebration it will be… kind of infectious again, and it'll, you know catch on and people will join in?

48:28
J
Yeah, absolutely and another one that I can remember is...
was rain- there was like, there was some rain just like a tiny little bit...
And the cheers were like monumental like the whole, the whole festival, like cause you know it's not just even like one dance floor, like, the whole festival is just like 'Woaaow'.
Just so unexpected and so like… it's…
You know I'm not religious at all, but like I can imagine, that's what a miracle would feel like to people. You know, everyone's just like… so surprised and celebrating this completely…natural, but seemingly unnatural thing, you know? (laughing)
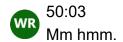
49:29
WR
How do you feel towards the boom organisers and how successful do you think they've been in curating the experience that you desire?

49:39
J
Oh, hugely, hugely, I mean.
It's the- It's a funny one, as well, especially with boom, because...
Normally with like, with most, most festivals…
People are kind of aware who runs them, you know, like there's, especially if you're like, if you're involved in the scene, people know who kind of runs the festival.

WR 50:03
Mm hmm.

J 50:05
And boom is simultaneously like…
The most transparent, but also the most low key organisation.
Because it is like, it's such a big team and they are such a community as well.
There's no like- there's no like one person which people know as the guy that runs boom and.

WR 50:26
So there's kind of a lack of hierarchy then, maybe compared to other festivals?

J 50:29
Yeah, I think so. I really feel that. And even though, you know, like this is, this will be the first time I've played, but like even being like…
In-inside it…
I still don't feel that- like there's any hierarchy at all, like, I'm like the person I'm emailing with is just as important as you know, the person on the gates and the person who is, like, just tending the garden, you know, like, there's no...
like I still have no idea…
Who is at the top? Because I don't think anybody is at the top.
And, but also their so transparent, like all of their finances, all of their plans, absolutely everything is on their website.
Which I don't know any other festivals that do- other festivals might you know?
Say how much they're getting from ticket sales and say like 'This is why we've got to increase our costs' but, I don't know any other festival organisations that put their entire finance spreadsheets on the website for anyone to look at.

WR 51:34
Yeah.

J 51:35
You know, they're, they're absolutely incredible for that.
And, and I think that's one of the reasons why people trust the festival so much because you know like they sell out months and months before the lineup's out.
Actually, I now know that they're sold out even before the lineups decided, you know

112

like, (laughing) people have that much trust in it and it's like, that people trust the organisation and the curation of it so much that they're going to get tickets, it doesn't matter, it doesn't actually matter, their- you're going to buy them. (laughing)

WR 52:07
Yeah.
Or maybe who's playing for them is just secondary really to the experience, of being there? Yeah.

J 52:14
Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, exactly.

WR 52:19
Nice.
So also, how effective do you think boom have been in providing a platform for people to meet and interact- whether their existing friends or strangers?

J 52:34
Very well, I think they know exactly…
They know exactly how intense that festival can be and they know that people are going to be coming from all over the world with…
Who won't speak the language and won't know anyone and I think their ambassador system is fantastic for this I mean even when I was… even the first time I went when I was 18 and I was going by myself.

WR 52:49
Mm hmm.

J 52:59
Even as someone from the UK, I was, I was super worried about it you know it's like I had no idea what to expect and the ambassador system really… before I'd even got to the festival… made me feel like I knew people there- made me feel like I was safe being there, really helped me know what…
know what support was there.

53:24
Yeah, sorry what, what is the ambassador system?

53:27
So for every country they have boom ambassadors.

53:31
OK.

53:33
Who…
You know, are partly there to, help with ticket sales but only as- only completely secondary, because everyone has the Internet, you know, it's more of like a… they are there as support for that country so that they can… so for example for me… They helped me know what to take because I was like well, you know 'can I actually- how much can I take?', you know because I'm going to have to be going on a plane, like what, what should I prioritise they were like 'this is what health support is there, this is what support there is for'… you know for personal things they've got all these… like, welfare tents and things and then they were like 'oh so you're going by yourself? Here are some other people that are going by themselves if you want to, if you do feel like you need some help or you want some company… these guys are also going by themselves, would you be happy for them to contact you if they want any help as well? and we… they were there, I actually I met up with them a few times because they were like you know obviously we want you to be safe and feel like there's someone… you can come to whilst you're at the festival so come meet me get to know me before you go, so that if you're at the festival having a bad time… you already know me. You know they're just there as like…
support- someone who knows the festival, someone that knows the cult- the culture of the country you're coming from and the language so that you've always got, a bit of home, a bit of support with you- before you've even got there.

55:02
Nice yeah and they even give you this, you know opportunity to have a network of people before you even get there?

55:11
Exactly yeah.

55:14
WR
Yeah nice.

Have you… so we know obviously you've- you're quite active on the boom Reddit but have you interacted with boom in other avenues whether it's online or through warm up gigs, fundraisers or Community Action, anything like that?

55:35
J
No not really, I'm, I've, I've gone to a few of the warm up gigs and stuff.

But… No, not really, it's kind of…

I guess in a similar way to what I was talking about with the organisation it's kind of...
Sorry, excuse me- a different kind of interaction and again I think that's why the ambassadors are important, because there's not- whereas smaller festivals you know there…

55:59
WR
Mm hmm.

56:05
J
There might be a lot of interaction with the festival itself.

The size of the festival and the...

The level of international… recognition that the fest- and...

Attendees that the festival has, makes it quite difficult in that way. you know they've got their Facebook, they've got their Instagram and stuff but it's, it's quite...

The, the only real like interaction that I have had in the past with the festival has been through the ambassadors.

56:41
WR
OK.

So how? How does the ambassadors make you feel about the festival and other people that are going?

56:54
J
Well, it, it makes me feel, safe and supported.

WR 56:58
Yeah.

J 56:59
Because.
They've, they've really thought about it, you know, like it's...
So many other festivals can just be like-
'Here's a ticket. This is what you… get your ticket and that's it.'

WR 57:11
Yeah.

J 57:12
But they're like, no, no, no. We're… you've got to think about the people that are coming, you've got to make them feel because you can't have like, as you say, like some transformative experience or some, like, life changing week… If you don't feel safe and supported and secure it just, it just can't happen.

WR 57:34
Yep.

J 57:34
And they, they know that and they really…
Support that and they know that that's, what that festival is about because you know the festival is about community. The festival is about the people, and if you're going to build that community, everyone has to feel safe there.
And they've thought about that every step of the way.

WR 57:54
Nice, nice.
Well, this is the last question.
So it's, do you have any plans to attend transformational festivals in the future? And which and why? Obviously we know you're playing at boom this year…
Are there any others that are on your radar that you're planning to go to?

J

58:17
Going to existence festival in the UK.

58:20
Mm hmm.

58:22
Yeah, there's one in Brazil, which I'm doing in a couple weeks.

58:28
Nice.

58:29
Which is called Aldea… Aldaya 28 which is… I
Haven't been before, but I've heard amazing things about it.
And there's one in Mexico that I'm doing, which is… meant to be amazing, it's all in-
around, like the… it's all around like loads of Mayan pyramids and structures. It's got
a real focus around…
Connection with that, I think I... Yeah, I don't know. I don't know much about that one.
I should probably- mainly because I don't speak Spanish, so I can't understand what
they're saying about it on the website. (Both laughing)
But I've heard, yeah, I've heard amazing things about that. And it's one that people…
that the Mexicans that I know are really…
supportive about because again, it's not just, a party to go and get smashed up, it's
really about connection with the Mexican ancestry and the location with the… with all
the Mayan temples around it.

59:34
Nice.

59:38
Yeah, there's a few, but I think they're the…
They're the main ones.
Yeah, I mean I, I could go through my calendar, but… (laughing)

59:48

Yeah, yeah.

Is it like- is it like a full time job for you then, performing- DJ?

J **59:56**
No, it's it's not full time. It's probably about 50%.

WR **1:00:01**
Nice.

J **1:00:02**
It's- it takes up, it takes up a lot. It takes dedication, but it's what it's what I want to be doing and… I get to experience these communities, I get to see the world and it's, and it's the best thing. And I could never do anything in my life without making music. So it's… (laughing)

WR **1:00:19**
Nice.

Are you playing in the mainstage at Boom? Is that the dance temple? Yeah.

J **1:00:23**
Yeah, yeah.

WR **1:00:26**
Nice. What's your, your dj name?

J **1:00:27**
Yeah, the final night. Sorry?

WR **1:00:31**
What's your DJ name?

J **1:00:32**
Act one.

WR 1:00:34
Act One. Nice, cool.

J 1:00:37
Yeah, I think I think they're announcing the line up on the 27th I heard.

WR 1:00:44
Nice.
All right, Jack. That's really interesting. Thanks so much. You've shed a lot of insight into loads of those questions, so…

J 1:00:53
Which?

WR 1:00:53
Unless there's anything else you want to share or ask me, then then we're done.

J 1:00:58
No, it's all good. It's all good. Are you, are you going?

WR 1:01:04
Boom this year, I'm not going to boom this year, no. No.
Sadly. I'll try and go... Try and go to 20-2027. I think is the next one isn't it?

J 1:01:10
Fair enough.
Yeah, cool.

WR 1:01:15
Yeah. Yeah. Well, I hope it goes well.

J 1:01:19
Thank you.

WR 1:01:19
If can you please do me a favour and send through that form as well?

J 1:01:22
Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I will.

WR 1:01:24
Nice one. All right, thanks again. All the best

J 1:01:27
Smashing.

WR 1:01:28
Cheers xxxx. Bye.

J 1:01:30
Bye bye.