

The impact of music festival attendance on young people's psychological and social well-being

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Although the social, emotional, physical and cognitive benefits of engagement in music are well known, little research has been conducted on the psychological benefits of music in the context of music festivals. This paper draws on theoretical constructs from the field of positive psychology to interpret the impact of music festival attendance on participants' psychological and social well-being. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from a focus group and questionnaire survey with young festival-goers aged 18-29 years. Four facets of the music festival experience were identified that were associated with well-being outcomes. These are explored and discussed with reference both to participants' focus group comments and statistical analysis of questionnaire responses. A conceptual model is presented in order to guide further research in this area, and enable both festival organisers and attendees to take optimal advantage of the potential of music festivals to impact positively on young adults' psychological and social well-being.

Over the past two decades, there has been a substantial increase in music, science and health research investigating the potential contribution of the arts in general, and music in particular, to participants' health and well-being (Blood & Zatorre, 2001; Dillon, 2006; Lipe, 2002; Staricoff, 2004). In the United Kingdom, the Health Education Authority (1999, p6) concluded that "the arts clearly have a potential to make a major contribution to our health, well-being, and life skills". Similarly in Australia, Pascoe et al. (2005) highlighted the social, emotional, physical and cognitive benefits that are derived through engagement with music and concluded that music has the power to "exalt the human spirit, transform the human experience and bring joy, beauty, and satisfaction to people's lives" (p. 8).

The health benefits of musical engagement extend across the lifespan (Cohen, Bailey & Nilsson, 2002), with research documenting developmental and quality of life outcomes in childhood (Baney, 1999), adolescence (Laiho, 2004) and senior adulthood (Hays & Minichiello, 2005) and positive impacts on resilience within individuals and communities (Dillon, 2006). Music theorists suggest that active participation in music contributes to identity development by providing a medium for self-expression, mood enhancement, and spiritual functions (Sloboda and O'Neill, 2001), terms and symbols for self-identity (DeNora, 1999) and opportunities to create individual, virtual worlds (Blacking, 1995). Music can also contribute to the development of a sense of place and belonging (Duffy, 2005), help people participate actively in social activities (Davis, 1992), feel accepted, valued and needed (Kahn, 1999), and participate in lifelong learning (Small, 1996).

Previous research on the health and well-being benefits of engagement in music has focussed mainly on traditional modes of musical engagement (such as playing an instrument, and singing in a choir) rather than music participation in a festival context. Music festivals offer unique opportunities for engagement with music that is more active than in other settings. They usually take place over the course of several days, during which many participants actually camp on the festival site and thus become totally immersed in the festival context (Snell, 2005). As well as the music itself, factors such as the thrill of physical proximity to the performer and social interaction with other attendees have been found to be important to participants (Oakes, 2003; Paleo & Wijnberg 2006; Pitts, 2005). The basis of all festivals is public celebration (Getz, 1991), and by definition, the festive spirit implies joyfulness and conviviality. Music festivals often have broad appeal because they typically include activities and diversions beyond the music itself, in line with the theme of the festival (Bowen & Daniels, 2005).

As music-based events are such a popular form of entertainment, more research is needed to understand the nature and outcomes of music festival experiences, and to explore the extent to which the health and well-being benefits of engagement in music (Bailey & Davidson, 2005) might also apply in the music festival context. Previous research suggests that engagement with music in a festival context can contribute to the creation of a sense of community, binding group members together as participants of a larger culture and providing an opportunity to engage in social activities (Frith, 1996; Gibson & Connell, 2005). It has also been suggested that music festivals offer opportunities for participants to engage in identity work – to define, develop or reflect on their understanding of themselves, and cultivate new expressions of self-identity (Karlsen and Brändström, 2008; Matheson, 2005). Pitts (2005) refers to attendance at festival concerts as “the ideal listening experience for many” (p268), due to the unique combination of venue characteristics, the balance of familiarity and novelty, and the social context of the experience. The possible negative outcomes of music festival attendance have also been noted, and risks relating to the use of alcohol or drugs, overcrowding, mob behaviour, and other public health issues have been documented (Earl, Parker, Tatrai, & Capra, 2004; Parker, Capra & Earl, 2005). However, this paper focuses on the positive outcomes, which are important to understand in order to support and facilitate the psychological health and well-being of music festival attendees.

The aims of the study reported here were to (1) explore the meaning of music festival attendance from the perspective of young adult participants, and (2) investigate the positive impacts of music festival attendance on aspects of psychological health and well-being. To this end, a theoretical framework was developed in order to guide the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (see Figure 1). This framework integrates Laiho’s (2004) psychological functions of music in adolescence (interpersonal relationships, identity, agency and emotional field) with constructs from the emerging field of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology, according to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), seeks to identify, understand and build those factors that improve quality of life and enable individuals, communities and societies to thrive rather than merely survive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Such factors include subjective experiences such as well-being, contentment, satisfaction, hope, optimism, flow and happiness which not only contribute to improving the quality of life, but also play a part in preventing “the various pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless” (p5). Given the demonstrated importance of the social experience in music festival attendance, the framework includes social well-being (Keyes, 1998), as well as psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and the more affective dimensions of positive functioning, such as happiness and life satisfaction, which have been termed subjective well-being (Keyes, Shmotkin & Ryff, 2002).

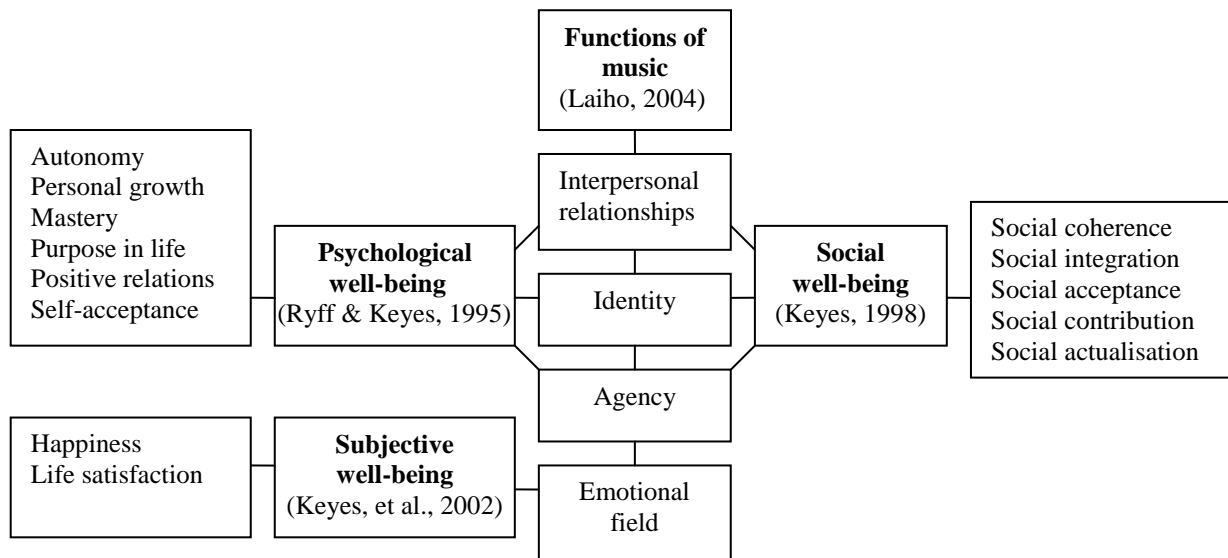


Figure 1. Theoretical framework integrating the psychological functions of music with psychological health and well-being constructs

Method: Overview

As very little research has previously been done in relation to the impacts of the musical festival experience on participants' well-being, the study used an exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2005). This consisted of a qualitative component designed to explore the music festival phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Stage 1 –focus group), followed by a quantitative component (Stage 2 – questionnaire survey) which was informed by the findings of the Stage 1 qualitative analysis, and was designed to investigate the impact of music festival attendance on various aspects of psychological health and well-being, as identified in Figure 1. Because this was a sequential mixed method design, Stage 2 being informed by, and building on the findings of Stage 1, the two stages are presented separately below (Method, Results and Discussion of Stage 1, followed by Method, Results and Discussion of Stage 2). The Conclusion section following Stage 2 summarises and synthesises the findings of the study as a whole.

Stage 1: Method

In Stage 1, a focus group was conducted with ten young people (aged 18-23) who had recently attended a range of music festivals, in order to gain an understanding of the music festival experience from the perspective of attendees, and to explore the ways in which attendance might contribute to personal and social well-being. Snowball sampling, where known members of the target group were asked to nominate others with the desired characteristics, was used to identify and recruit focus group participants. Although the group was quite homogenous in terms of age and festival experience, participants came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels, and most members of the group knew only one or two other members before the focus group discussion commenced. The group discussion, of 68 minutes duration, was facilitated by the authors and took place off-campus, on a weeknight evening, in a relaxed and informal setting chosen to help participants feel at ease. Open-ended questions were used which were designed to encourage discussion without intentionally introducing the theoretical constructs. These questions were:

- What do you value most about visiting music festivals?
- Why is this important to you?
- Why do you usually go to festivals?
- What do you enjoy the most?
- What do you feel you have gained from attending music festivals?
- Has it changed the way you feel or think about yourself or about the world?

Participants were advised of the purpose of the research and completed consent forms before the focus group discussion commenced. They were advised they could withdraw at any time. The focus group discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Participants' responses were coded and sorted in order to identify the major themes emerging from the discussion. This analysis revealed four major facets of the music festival experience that participants associated with well-being outcomes.

Stage 1: Results and Discussion

The focus group interview was designed to address Aim 1 of the study, to explore the meaning of music festival attendance from the perspective of young adult participants. The inductive qualitative analysis identified four facets of the music festival experience that were important to focus group participants, and were seen to support the beneficial outcomes derived from music festival attendance. These were labelled the *music* experience, the *festival* experience, the *social* experience and the *separation* experience. The following analysis describes each of the four facets from the participants' perspective, using illustrations from the focus group transcript, and draws links between participants' understanding of their personal experience and the theoretical constructs included in the Figure 1 framework. (In the discussion below, italics are used for the participants' voice, and single quote marks are used to indicate the theoretical constructs.) Although this analysis suggests ways in which the four facets of the music festival experience might be associated with various well-being outcomes, it is the Stage 2 quantitative analysis that specifically investigates these relationships.

The music experience

Festivals are about celebrating "something" (Getz, 1991), and in the case of music festivals, the "something" is music. Not surprisingly then, the music facet of the experience was integral to the meaning that music festivals held for participants, and provided the common ground that brought them together.

For me it's more about going to see specific bands. All those additional things are a bonus... Music's the main thing.

You wouldn't go if there weren't good acts... It's the reason why you go, but you get a whole lot more out of it.

In the festival context, the shared experience of seeing music performed "live" added an extra dimension, which could not be obtained from simply listening to recorded music or even attending a concert. Participants reported a sense of connection and engagement not only with other festival-goers, but also with the performers themselves. A similar finding was reported by Pitts (2005) in the context of the week-long Music in the Round chamber music festival in Sheffield. Her study of audience experiences highlighted the "social effects of the audience upon one another" (p259) as

well as the feeling of connection between the audience and performer. Thus in both Pitts' study and our own, the music experience in the festival context evoked feelings of unity and belonging ('Interpersonal Relationships', 'Social Integration'). This is further discussed in the section on the social facet of the experience below.

The following segment of discussion illustrates the dynamic interaction between the performers and the audience:

The atmosphere they create... What they do between songs... Yeah, and the reaction... How they connect with the crowd... They appear to be enjoying you being there with them as much as you're enjoying them being there playing to you... It's like Michael Frante, he's just one man on the stage, and he was aiming at the whole crowd... He was just jumping and singing along. That was pretty incredible... I don't know what it exactly is... you can't put your finger on what that is... I think the energy of the person on stage. If they're really pumped up like Michael Frante... I think it's about the energy of the crowd... Yes, how the crowd reacts... It's everything together. If they're doing a good performance that night, the crowd's into it... They go and help each other... I think if the performance is energetic, the crowd will be energetic as well.

Thus, rather than being passive receivers of music, participants felt they played a central role in the music experience, which therefore became a more personalised and memorable experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). This distinguishes the festival experience from other more passive forms of engaging with music. This heightened perception of active engagement was seen to contribute to the positive personal and social impact of the music experience.

For some, experiencing music in the festival context was "inspiring". According to Snell (2005), the music festival context affords opportunities for all participants to engage in unstructured and informal music learning. By inspiring participants to do something new or creative, the experience can thus contribute to participants' sense of 'Purpose In Life' as well as strengthening their 'Identity' and 'Self-Acceptance'.

It can be pretty inspiring. If you really appreciate the music and you're really into it, you get that extra dimension seeing the act live... it just adds that extra depth to it I think.

The festival experience

Although most participants considered the music facet to be fundamental to the experience as a whole, they also spoke of an "atmosphere" or an "experience" in which music was only one ingredient, a part of the whole.

It's a festival. It's not just a music performance. It's the food and the atmosphere and all that stuff.

I go to these festivals I guess primarily for the atmosphere on top of the music. Everything that you get at music festivals.

Just because you wouldn't be there [without the music] doesn't mean that once you get there, the music is the most important thing.

The experience was seen to start weeks, even months before the festival commenced. The anticipation and preparation contributed to a gradual build-up of excitement, and then when the festival was over the cycle started again, with anticipation of the next festival:

Generally you build up to it, because you have to buy your tickets generally [a] month or two before, so there's a lot of anticipation up to it.

When the day happens, everyone's so pumped for it, because we've been waiting a whole year for it really... We always get the bus to the festival and the bus trip for us is almost the best bit, because everyone's singing and cheering because it's finally here, [the festival] is finally happening.

The sheer enjoyment of festival participation was expressed strongly by participants and was so satisfying that they were continually drawn back to repeat the experience. The festival experience appeared to amplify the natural capacity of music to evoke emotional experiences and influence mood (Laiho 2004). It thus contributed to the development of 'Emotional Field', and a sense of subjective well-being or 'Happiness'.

I think it's the atmosphere of the festival in general... it was just this two days of just something I've never experienced before. Anything close to it.

There's like a long time high. I stay on a high and there's like a come down period and I need to go to another festival.

It's good when you're really enjoying yourself and you can turn around and you can see 20 other faces of people who are enjoying what they're doing for exactly the same reasons. It just gives you a bit of a buzz.

The festival experience not only contributes to a transitory state of subjective well-being, but can also become part of the way a person defines themselves. It thus becomes an "emotional framework" within which people construct their 'Identity'. Laiho (2004) discussed the role of music in this regard, as "a means to explore, define and celebrate our sense of self, and to make us feel more fully ourselves" (p54). North and Hargreaves (2008) similarly referred to the role of music as a "badge" that "communicates values, attitudes, and opinions to others" (p218), or a "resource" people use to construct or reaffirm their identity. Karlsen and Brändström (2008) suggested that engagement in music in the festival context allows "a type of construction of meaning that has impact on the audience's actions and understanding of themselves" (p364). Such experiences are likely to have a lasting influence on psychological well-being (e.g., 'Purpose In Life' and 'Self-Acceptance'). As noted by Snell (2005), participants were surprised by the depth of their music festival experiences, and considered them to have a life-changing impact:

I felt something that I hadn't really felt before and I've been chasing it ever since.

I've had some of my most enjoyable times of my life at festivals, and so I try to model the rest of my life around that, and getting the experience.

In some cases, the positive emotional impact of the festival resulted in participants looking at life differently, or being more open to receiving positive messages about life, thus leading to 'Personal Growth'. This suggests that music festival experiences may provide a powerful medium and venue for reaching out to an otherwise difficult to reach group:

So you go away and you get a different perspective ... and then you end up in a really good mood, or you're in a really good mood so you get a new perspective, but it's just good to shake things up a bit.

You have such a good time, and while you're having such a good time there's all these different people around you influencing you... they had lots of 'greenie' things and lots of 'hippie' stuff... But you're having such a good time and you're walking around and these people are talking to you. You kind of take things away from that because you are having such a good time.

Of course, in some cases, this heightened receptiveness may also lead to a greater openness to negative, as well as positive influences. Indeed, participants acknowledged that some aspects of the festival experience might detract from their health and well-being. These mainly involved being exposed to other people's negative behaviours and practices such as drug-taking that were formerly outside of their experience. One participant referred to this as a "loss of innocence".

Everything that makes you feel good about festivals can also be the same things that make you feel bad.

The social experience

The social facet of the music festival experience emerged very strongly from the focus group discussion as an integral part of the experience. As suggested by Laiho (2004), 'Interpersonal Relationships' is one of the avenues by which music contributes to adolescent development, and this appears to be true also for this slightly older age group. Similarly, Pitts (2005) notes that the social element of music engagement is particularly important for young people. Participants' responses revealed the ways in which the social facet of the music festival experience contributed to social well-being, particularly in relation to the 'Social Integration', 'Social Acceptance' and 'Social Actualisation' components.

'Social Integration' is the extent to which people feel they have something in common with others who constitute their social reality (Keyes, 1998, p 122). Music is a powerful means of creating such a sense of belonging (Gregory, 1997). A number of participants mentioned that being with like-minded people was an important aspect of the music festival experience:

It's like being with a bunch of people, your friends, but also everyone around you, you sort of have a common interest I guess. They're all there to see the same sort of thing. A similar bunch of people and you just get to meet strangers.

Even though the people around them were not necessarily part of their social reality at any other time, a new social reality could be constructed for the duration of the festival. Thus musical preferences became a unifying force, or defining condition, that brought together people from otherwise disparate backgrounds (Zillman & Gan, 1997). Sharing the same taste in music led to more positive appraisals of others and the desire to befriend them (North & Hargreaves, 2008):

Well [you can associate with] anybody. If they're into the same act that you're into, if you're singing along and they're singing along... you've got nothing else in common at any other time, you know what I mean? You've got a connection at that time.

Everyone's from a different walk of life, but you're coming together as one.

More importantly, when festival-goers attended with a social group that continued outside of the festival, sharing a common experience helped to deepen relationships and safeguard against social isolation in the long term:

I went away with people I didn't really know, and they happen to now be some of my closest friends.

When you're hanging out with people for several days or whatever, you get to know them better... it may be when you've got into a chat about a lot of things more genuine than other encounters.

That whole connection with the other people thing – it's like there's been a couple of bands that we've all heard together for the first time, and then at a party or something you might hear one of their songs and then that brings the whole group back together again. Or you might go to another one of their concerts all together and it like starts a friendship group by hearing that one band and all liking it.

According to Zillman & Gan (1997), once a group is formed in this way, its members benefit. They attain the emotional gratifications of belonging to an 'elite' group which they themselves define as distinct and different from other groups:

I think you can generally tell someone who goes to music festivals as opposed to someone who doesn't. Even in their everyday life. I know with everyone you can't, but most people I think you can. So I think from that, it means that you have to be taking something away from festivals to be able to do that...it means that festivals would have to give you something, for you to be able to differentiate those people.

'Social Acceptance' relates to holding favourable views of human nature and feeling comfortable with others (Keyes, 1998). This was evident in participants' comments about their acceptance of people who would normally be seen as quite different:

You see old people knitting and reading novels in the middle of a tent or something and that sort of adds to it - whereas if there was just people your age group, and like yourself, it would be a pretty bland thing.

There's such a range of people that go to festivals, you can't say that anyone who goes to festivals is a certain type of person. That's the whole point of them is that there's so many different types of people can come together.

'Social Actualisation' is being hopeful about the condition and future of society (Keyes, 1998). There was evidence that the music festival experience had engendered a sense of optimism in some participants:

You go to a festival and you think the world's going to be okay afterwards. Everything's going to be okay.

I just feel really optimistic about everything... so you feel great and that changes your perspective.

For some participants, the interpersonal relationships developed and deepened in the context of festival experiences not only contributed to their social well-being, but had also created opportunities for 'Personal Growth', a component of psychological well-being:

People that you meet in your life are normally through school and work, and that's for me very responsible things... When you go to a festival, I meet people outside of that square. Completely different people to what I'd normally meet. Which I guess changes you a bit.

Any change I've experienced is because of the people I was with, and conversations that we had... some big, long chats when we're camping of a night or whatever. They're the things that I'll remember in 10 years, not necessarily the acts I saw.

The separation experience

Being able to “get away” to a new and different environment was an important facet of the music festival experience for many participants.

It's more of an adventure and a “getaway” and more of a holiday mood.

By providing a new social context that was removed from the expectations and routines of everyday life, it allowed participants to reflect and re-evaluate their own self-understanding and ‘Self-Acceptance’:

I think it takes you so far out of your normal routine of life that it gives you different perspectives when you come back to it.

I think every festival I go to changes the way I think about myself. The very first festival I went to, I came back from it an absolutely, totally different person... it was a totally new thing, and I just immersed myself so much in it. I came back absolutely a changed person... And I think every festival I go to, the same thing happens.

You go there and you think you've got an idea of who you are and then you see all these other people and you go, wow, I'm so far different in the respect of how other people are... I'm different in this way, but I'm the same in that way. So you see yourself in a different light.

For some, the festival provided an opportunity and a safe environment to try out new aspects of their ‘Identity’, and thus experience ‘Personal Growth’:

I wore clothes that I wouldn't ordinarily wear. I ate food that I wouldn't ordinarily eat, mostly. So I went camping which I wouldn't just go camping if it wasn't for a festival, so pretty much everything was done differently.

I think if I do act differently... it's like a good change because it's probably more what I would like to be in my everyday life.

Attendance at the festival often required social and organisational skills that were not necessarily part of participants' everyday repertoire. Thus for some, the festival provided an opportunity to exercise a different set of skills, leading to an increased sense of ‘Agency’, ‘Mastery’ and ‘Autonomy’:

It's like an adventure going to a festival because you are staying in a house with a whole lot of other people for a couple of days.

I think the organising of it all adds to it as well. Like having to organise the accommodation or your tent and stuff. It adds to the experience of the festival.

It makes you think about who you are more, because you haven't got your job, or your car, or your study to rely on. So you can't say I'm a lawyer or something. You're just a person that's there at that moment.

Summary

The four facets of the music festival experience which emerged from the inductive analysis of the focus group discussion are illustrated in Figure 2. The music experience provides the common ground on which both the social experience and the festival experience are built. It facilitates a sense of connection between participants, between audience and performers, and between those who celebrate and the object of celebration. The separation experience distinguishes the festival event from everyday life. It provides a sense of disconnection which prompts festival attendees to reflect on their lives and their understanding of themselves. Together, the four facets of the experience have the potential to impact positively (or in some cases negatively) on psychological, social and subjective well-being. While some of these potential impacts were suggested by the qualitative analysis, they were explored more specifically in Stage 2 of the research.

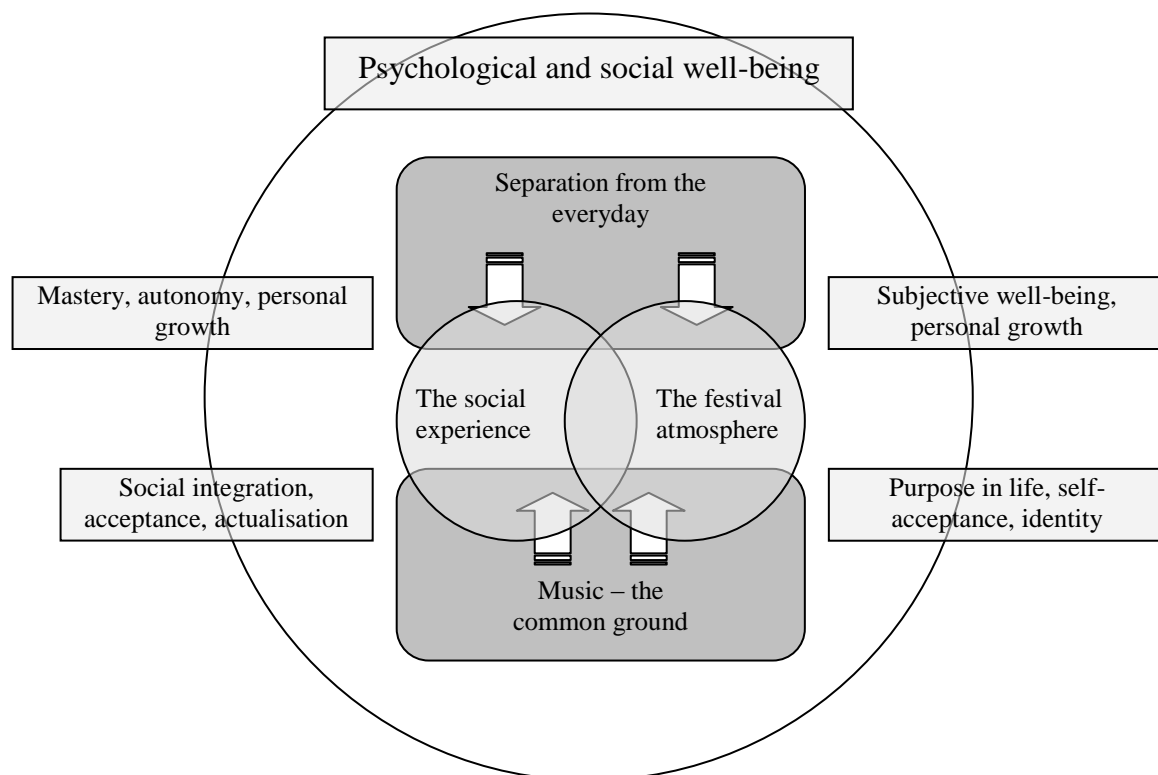


Figure 2. Conceptual model of the four facets of the music festival experience

Stage 2: Method

In Stage 2, a questionnaire survey was used to further explore the four facets of the music festival experience identified in Stage 1, and investigate their relationship with various well-being outcomes (identified in the literature review and illustrated in Figure 1). The four facets were measured using

16 items (four per facet) each rated on a 5-point scale. Well-being outcomes were measured using 23 items, each rated on a 5-point scale. The 23 items covered Laiho's (2004) psychological functions of music (12 items); Ryff & Keyes (1995) dimensions of psychological well-being (5 items); Keyes (1998) dimensions of social well-being (5 items); and Keyes et al. (2002) subjective well-being (1 item). Questionnaires were administered to festival attendees immediately after a two-day music festival on the east coast of Australia. Young people were approached at leisure sites in the vicinity of the festival, during the day after the festival had finished. They were asked if they had attended the festival, and if so, if they would be willing to complete a questionnaire. Those who agreed were provided with information about the purpose of the research and contact details for the researchers and ethics personnel. They were provided with a clipboard and pen, which they returned to the researcher on completion of the questionnaire. No personal or identifying information was collected on the questionnaire. Responses were obtained from 130 participants. Those aged over 30, and those who had attended with a family group, were eliminated from the analysis, leaving a sample of 100 (47 males, 51 females, 2 with gender unidentified). The majority of respondents (56) had attended the festival with a group of friends; 23 had attended with one other friend or partner; and 21 had attended alone. Respondents were evenly divided between those in paid employment (45) and students (45), with 8 unemployed and 2 engaged in home or other duties.

Stage 2: Results and Discussion

The questionnaire survey was designed to further explore the four facets of the music festival experience identified in Stage 1, and to address Aim 2 of the study – to investigate the impact of music festival attendance on aspects of psychological health and well-being. To this end, the four facets of the music festival experience (the music experience, the social experience, the festival experience and the separation experience) were compared in terms of their importance to participants, and their contribution to explaining psychological and social well-being outcomes (as identified in the theoretical framework in Figure 1).

Four facets of the music festival experience

Four items were used to measure each of the four facets (a total of 16 items – see Table 1). Participants were asked to rate each item on a 5-point scale according to how important it was in contributing to the overall festival experience. Factor analysis confirmed the four-factor solution, although the loadings of two items were not as predicted. These items (noted in Table 1) were excluded when subscales were calculated for each of the four facets. Cronbach alphas for the music, festival, social and separation experience subscales were .78; .84; .83; and .79 respectively. Subscale scores indicate that the music experience and festival experience were most important to participants, followed by the social experience, and finally the separation experience (paired comparison t-tests results are presented in Table 2).

Table 1. Subscales measuring the four facets of the music festival experience (each expressed as an average score out of 5)

The music experience	Subscale Mean = 3.66
Seeing my favourite bands or performers	Loaded on <i>festival</i> experience – excluded
Seeing some new bands or performers	
Being inspired by live music	
Feeling a personal connection with the music	
The festival experience	Subscale Mean = 3.75
Experiencing the festival atmosphere	
Being in a stimulating/exciting environment	
Being in a peaceful/ relaxing environment	Loaded on the <i>music</i> experience – excluded
Being in a different environment from normal	
The social experience	Subscale Mean = 3.29
Being with friends or family	
Getting to know my friends on a deeper level	
Meeting new people	
Being around people with similar interests	
The separation experience	Subscale Mean = 3.11
Doing something adventurous	
Doing things I wouldn't normally do	
Trying new foods	
Staying overnight	

Table 2. Paired comparison t-tests between facets of the experience

	Festival	Social	Separation
Music	t (92) = 1.04, p = .300	t (92) = 3.50, p = .001	t (92) = 5.03, p = .000
Festival		t (92) = 4.05, p = .000	t (91) = 6.36, p = .000
Social			t (91) = 2.07, p = .042

Those who came with a group of friends placed more importance on the festival experience, $t(95) = 2.95, p = .004$, and the social experience, $t(93) = 3.56, p = .001$. Older respondents (20-29) placed more importance on the social experience than younger respondents (under 20), $t(93) = 3.28, p = .001$. Those with a university education placed more importance on the festival experience, $F(4, 91) = 2.60, p = .041$, and the social experience, $F(4, 89) = 6.02, p < .001$, than those with a secondary or technical education. None of the other demographic variables (gender, frequency of festival attendance, occupation) were found to have an impact on the relative importance of the four facets of the experience.

Well-being outcomes

Respondents were asked to rate, on a 5-point scale, the extent to which they felt or experienced a range of outcomes as a result of attending the music festival. The 23 items were designed to assess all of the constructs in Figure 1 (see Table 3). Respondents' endorsement of the items ranged from 78% to 95% reporting that they had experienced the item, and from 8% to 20% reporting they had experienced it a great deal. The items most strongly endorsed were "*I feel happier with myself as a person*" (given highest rating by 20%); "*I feel I have grown/developed as a person*" (given highest rating by 15%); and "*I feel my relationships with others have grown/developed*" (given highest rating by 14%).

Table 3. Measures of theoretical well-being constructs

	% experienced	% experienced a great deal
Functions of music		
Interpersonal relationships <i>I feel a greater sense of belonging within my group</i>	88	9
<i>I feel more valued by those around me</i>	84	12
<i>I feel my relationships with others have grown/developed</i>	89	14
Identity <i>I have a greater understanding of who I am</i>	86	8
<i>I am more like the person I would like to be</i>	88	11
<i>I have a greater understanding of what is important to me</i>	90	11
Agency <i>I feel I have accomplished something</i>	92	12
<i>I have more strength to stand up for what I believe</i>	80	11
<i>I feel inspired to do something new or creative</i>	91	13
Emotional field <i>I have a greater understanding of my emotions</i>	79	10
<i>I feel better able to cope with stresses in my life</i>	84	12
<i>I have a greater understanding of the importance of music in my life</i>	92	13
Social well-being		
Social coherence <i>I am more able to make sense of what is happening in the world</i>	78	10
Social integration <i>I feel I have more things in common with others</i>	91	9
Social acceptance <i>I feel more positive about other people</i>	91	9
Social contribution <i>I feel I now have more to contribute to the world</i>	84	8
Social actualisation <i>I feel more hopeful about the way things are in the world</i>	83	10
Psychological well-being		
Autonomy <i>I feel a greater sense of confidence/control over my life</i>	84	10
Personal growth <i>I feel I have grown/developed as a person</i>	89	15
Mastery <i>I feel better able to deal with the demands and responsibilities in my life</i>	82	10
Purpose in life <i>I feel a greater sense of purpose in my life</i>	83	11
Positive relations (as for Interpersonal relationships)	89	14
Self-acceptance <i>I feel happier with myself as a person</i>	84	20
Subjective well-being		
Life satisfaction <i>I feel more positive about my life</i>	91	12

Factor analysis indicated that the 23 items could all be represented by one factor. A composite “outcome” variable was computed as the average score across the 23 items (Cronbach’s alpha = .97), and used as the dependent variable in a stepwise regression analysis, with the four facets as independent variables. The best predictors of the overall well-being outcome variable were the music experience (explaining 27% of the common variance) and the separation experience (accounting for an additional 8% of the variance). This supports the model as illustrated in Figure 2, where the festival experience and the social experience are seen as a function, to some extent, of

both the music experience and the separation experience. This is not to say that social and festival experiences do not contribute to well-being outcomes, but rather that their contribution adds little beyond that explained by the music and separation experiences. To demonstrate the relevance of each of the four facets of the experience to well-being outcomes, bivariate correlations were performed between the individual items in Table 1 and the composite outcomes variable (see Table 4). Seven items were found to be moderately correlated with the outcome measure (with r from .28 to .49, $p < .01$) – two each from the music and separation categories; one each from the social and festival categories; and one of the items that had been excluded because of unclear loadings (see Table 4). Thus, all four facets of the music festival experience were represented among the items that correlated with well-being outcomes. Of these, the strongest was the social experience item “Getting to know my friends on a deeper level”.

Table 4. Individual items with moderate positive correlations with the outcome measure

Category	Item	Relationship with well-being outcome
Social experience	Getting to know my friends on a deeper level	$r (n=85) = .48, p < .00$
Music experience	Feeling a personal connection with the music	$r (n=86) = .47, p < .00$
Music experience	Being inspired by live music	$r (n=84) = .44, p < .00$
Not categorised	Being in a peaceful/ relaxing environment	$r (n=87) = .44, p < .00$
Separation experience	Trying new foods	$r (n=86) = .41, p < .00$
Separation experience	Staying overnight	$r (n=87) = .39, p < .00$
Festival experience	Being in a stimulating/exciting environment	$r (n=86) = .28, p = .00$

The only demographic variable that was associated with well-being outcomes was frequency of attendance at music festivals. Those who attended once every couple of years reported a greater level of well-being outcomes than those who attended either less or more frequently, $F (3, 63) = 4.16, p = .009$.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to explore the music festival experience from the perspective of young adult participants, and in particular, to investigate the extent to which the theoretical constructs of psychological, social and subjective well-being resonate with the ways young people describe and give meaning to the experience. It thus contributes to giving a voice to an important audience for music, whose experiences and perspectives, as noted by Pitts (2005), are worthy of further investigation.

Four distinct facets of the experience – the music experience, the festival experience, the social experience and the separation experience – were identified in the focus group discussion and confirmed in a questionnaire survey. While this finding supports Bowen and Daniels’ (2005, p163) conclusion that “creating a fun and festive atmosphere that offers ample opportunity to socialize and have new and non-musical experiences” is just as important to festival goers as the music itself, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data in the present study provides a deeper level of understanding of the ways in which these four facets support and build upon each other. The music experience was seen to provide the common ground upon which the other experiences were built. It facilitated connections between attendees (the social experience) and provided the focus for joint celebration (the festival experience). The separation experience provided a context within which attendees could disconnect from their everyday lives, and thus become open to exploring new

relationships, new ways of understanding themselves, and new ways of perceiving the world. In most cases these were positive experiences, although the potential was also there for more negative influences to hold sway. The separation experience was thus similar to what Falassi (1987) referred to as “time out of time” – time that is perceived as being outside the normal or routine. Such times not only provide space for people to think, feel and behave differently, but also stimulate self-reflection and re-evaluation. The findings of this study suggest that one of the most important functions performed by music festivals is to provide a time and space where young people can experience personal growth and self-discovery.

The theoretical model which guided this research (Figure 1) suggested a way of integrating the psychological functions of music in adolescence identified by Laiho (2004) with aspects of psychological, social and subjective well-being identified in the positive psychology literature (Keyes, 1998; Keyes, et al., 2002; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The most commonly expressed psychological and social well-being outcomes related to issues of identity, self-acceptance and positive relationships with others, which were consistent with Laiho’s interpersonal relationships and identity functions. Hargreaves and North (1997) similarly note the important social functions of music and its potential contribution to processes of communication and the development of social identity. Participants in the present study reported feeling more positive about themselves, others, and life in general as a result of attending a music festival. Indeed, for some participants the music festival experience was not only meaningful in itself, but gave meaning to the rest of their lives. Less important in the music festival context, although still present to some extent, was Laiho’s agency function, and the associated well-being outcomes of autonomy and mastery.

People come to a music festival with a sense of anticipation. They engage actively, and feel part of the performance, more than mere spectators. Sharing the experience with others provides a sense of belonging and social integration, which can often continue beyond the event itself. The end of the event then becomes the beginning of a new cycle of anticipation for the next event. It is possible, however, that over-attendance may detract from the impact. In this study, for example, it was those who attended music festivals only once every couple of years who reported the highest level of well-being outcomes.

This study has provided preliminary evidence regarding the impact of music festival attendance on participants’ psychological and social well-being, and has proposed a conceptual model that can be used to guide future research. Better knowledge of the music festival experience will enable festival organisers, performers, attendees, and concerned community groups to take optimal advantage of opportunities to enhance psychological and social well-being through festival attendance. This is particularly important as music festivals provide a venue that positively engages sections of the population who are otherwise difficult to reach. The “extraordinary appeal of music to adolescents” (Zillman & Gan, 1997, p162) can thus be harnessed to create positive well-being outcomes. Further research regarding the possible negative outcomes of attendance, such as exposure to antisocial behaviours and drug and alcohol abuse, is also required in order to enable preventative measures to be designed in this regard. It is possible that the positive aspects of self-acceptance, personal growth and social integration highlighted by participants in this study might be incorporated in such strategies.

Further research is needed into the ways music festival experiences can be tailored to optimise their positive outcomes and mitigate their negative effects. Such research can inform the development of strategies and support mechanisms that help young people to make positive choices that lead to healthier, more productive, and fulfilling lives. Festival-goers themselves may also benefit from a deeper understanding of the music, festival, social and separation facets of the music festival experience, in order to build and personalise a transformative experience that has an enduring and positive impact on their lives.

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