

Consuming the Experience: The effect of experiential stimuli on the contextual self

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## **Abstract**

This thesis develops identity theory in the context of experiential consumption through the creation of a contextual self. This unique feature of identity advances theory more commonly associated with service-dominant logic, under the proposition that experiences are a consumption activity in their own right which are under-valued when treated as a sub-activity of service consumption. Using a music festival as an experiential example, literature is identified based on the interpretive effects of symbolic interactionism. This highlights the importance of objective, inter-subjective, and subjective stimuli, namely the physical environment, the social environment, and the individual environment respectively. This provides a way of understanding contextual identity and subsequent value creation. This is explored using an in-depth study based on interactionist enquiry as a means to understand the lived experience of the festival-goer in their native habitat. Participant observations and in-field interviews with attendees are conducted using a semi-structured process, and analysed along thematic lines as a way to show the influence of existing theory as well as emerging lines of enquiry. Conclusions identify a 'contextual identity' – a unique identity formed by the persuasive effects of objective and inter-subjective stimuli. However, contextual identity only truly exists in comparison to individuals not attending the experience. During the experience itself, the strength of contextual identity diminishes, acting as no more than a primer for more dominant, deep-rooted identity concepts. The result of this experience-primed identity is the 'contextual self', which becomes the dominant behavioural guide during the actual experience. Implications are applicable across a number of contexts and provide not only a better theoretical understanding of identity within the experiential consumption process, but also practical suggestions to improve the consumer's experience.

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this work to my parents who have provided wonderful and absolute support throughout.*

## **Acknowledgements**

Although in no way repaying them for all they have done for me over the thesis process, I hope this goes a small way in showing my utmost appreciation.

I would first like to thank my supervisory team: Professor Gillian Hogg, Doctor Chris Dodd, Professor Kevin O'Gorman, and Professor Adrian North. Although there have been coming and goings over the years, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to all for their guidance, encouragement, and help throughout; without this backing I would not be in the fortunate position I find myself.

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## Research Thesis Submission



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## **Chapter 1 Introduction and Overview**

'Experience' comes loaded with preconceptions as to its exact meaning;

...it is both a noun and a verb and is used variously to convey the process itself, participating in the activity, the affect or way in which an object, thought or emotion is felt through the senses or the mind, and even the outcome of an experience by way of skill or learning for example.

(Tynan and McKechnie, 2010, pg. 502-03)

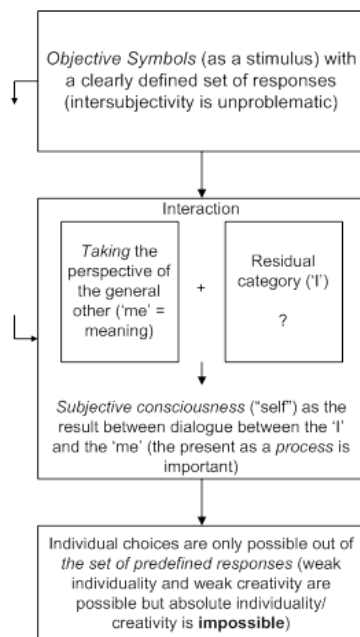
This thesis focuses on the consumption of experiences with an aim to understand the influence external and internal experiential stimuli have on consumer identities and behaviours. To achieve this goal, the research must realign several areas of literature that have become disparate over recent years. Before beginning then, an immediate priority is to better define the boundaries of what is both necessary and relevant within this study. Making this explicit now allows suitable and consistent decisions to be made throughout. This chapter will therefore first familiarise the reader with the philosophical base that will guide the remainder of the thesis.

### **1.1 Philosophical Boundaries**

Claimed by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2008), the best determinant of social science research is ontology and epistemology. Accepting the importance of these philosophical considerations within research, this thesis will make introductions early on. In doing so justification for a number of key concerns are addressed providing the philosophy the authority to frame the entire research.

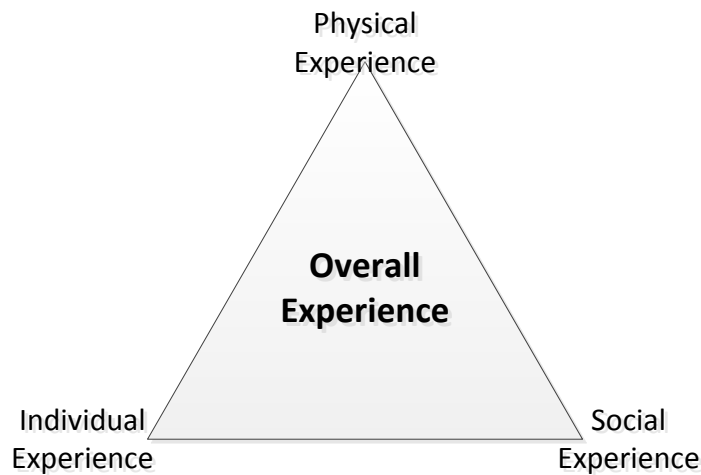
This thesis follows the belief that knowledge is made up of various realities based on stimuli that are capable of adopting and adapting to objective social meanings (Blumer, 1969). Individuals interpret and perceive these various realities as a way to provide the most appropriate course of meaningful action (Gill and Johnson, 2002). These meanings form the basis of the socially created mind as well as the subjective consciousness itself (Wallace and Wolf, 2006). In research-familiar terminology this approach would be described as the interpretivist-inspired ontology of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934).

Symbolic Interactionism is an interactionist theory concerned with understanding how human beings define their experiences by giving meaning to their identities, behaviours, realities, and social interactions (Hewitt, 2000). The self is created as a result of the reflexive process through which an individual perceives and interprets the surrounding socially constructed world (Etzrodt, 2008), making society an indispensable part of the self (Jeon, 2004). Breaking this down, symbolic interactionism proposes that various levels of reality exist, these being objective levels which consists of social facts, and inter-subjective and subjective levels which consist of interpreted meanings (see Figure 1.1). It should be noted that the symbolic interactionist equates “objective” to social facts or social products (Mead, 1934). The concept of the object is therefore constituted by the meaning it has for the person/group. Dynamic in nature, the object changes based on how a person/group is prepared to act toward the object (Blumer, 1969). With this, interactions take place in a way that motivates the individual to continually interpret the symbolic meaning of these social objects (which includes the actions of others) and act on the basis of these imputed meanings (Blumer, 1962). Replacing the basic action-reaction model of behaviour, Mead proposes an action-interpretation-reaction model (Blumer, 1969). This thesis aims to recreate Mead’s ideology coming to conclusions based on the process of identity formation and creation of the subjective identity.



**Figure 1.1: Mead’s Framework of Symbolic Interaction (Etzrodt, 2008)**

Although the ultimate end is examining the subjective self (i.e. the level of reality most unique to the individual) to achieve this aim all levels of reality must be understood. With this, three key areas of literature stand out as unique and representative during experiential consumption, these being: the individual experience, the social experience, and the physical experience (see Figure 1.2).



**Figure 1.2: Contributors to overall experience (Source: Author)**

These individual elements are all co-created before, during, and after the experience and manifest differently depending on the inputs – if one is changed there is a significant overall change of the experience. To examine the consumption of an experience then, we must consider all three areas as one. However due to different stages of evolution, these concepts are often explored from different perspectives and do not currently exist under any one convenient banner. This research must therefore merge a number of literary areas with a shared importance, especially sociological group work (to represent the inter-subjective level) and social psychology work that identifies the individual as part of the group (representing the subjective level). These will be entwined throughout chapters showing important developments and differences between group and individual processes. Although “those who do not espouse such an epistemology tend to find such a formulation unsatisfactory” (Rock, 2001, pg.31), the pragmatism associated with symbolic interactionism encourages literary diversity on the basis that consistent interpretation of extant text and knowledge cannot be assumed. This literature will be used alongside consumer literature readdress and reconceptualise the under-represented idea of the consumer experience (Hargreaves and North, 1999).

## 1.2 Contextualising Experience

In its most simple form, 'experience' can be approached from the point of view of consumption behaviour or even more specifically, the consumer identity perspective. However contextualising the term in this way, it is still not reclaimed as would necessarily be intentioned; even within the more specific consumer identity literature, connotations of the term experience allow it to become buried within a more general category of service consumption activity. As such this introduction must first begin by contextualising the experience and corresponding literature as a consumer activity in its own right.

### 1.2.1 Experience as a Development of Service

Over a number of years, service marketing has evolved beyond a focus on intangibility, heterogeneity, lack of ownership, and time-dependant factors as a way of defining encounters (Kliatchko, 2009). Instead, modern theories select interactivity, connectivity, and the formation of on-going relationships between consumer and organisation as more central to both the academic and practical understanding of service-dominant (SD) marketing (Sheth and Sharma, 2008). Such developments allow the emphasis of the provision and marketing of services to be directed more towards the overall delivery of the service rather than just the service as a unit of output (Wilson *et al*, 2008) (see Figure 1.3).

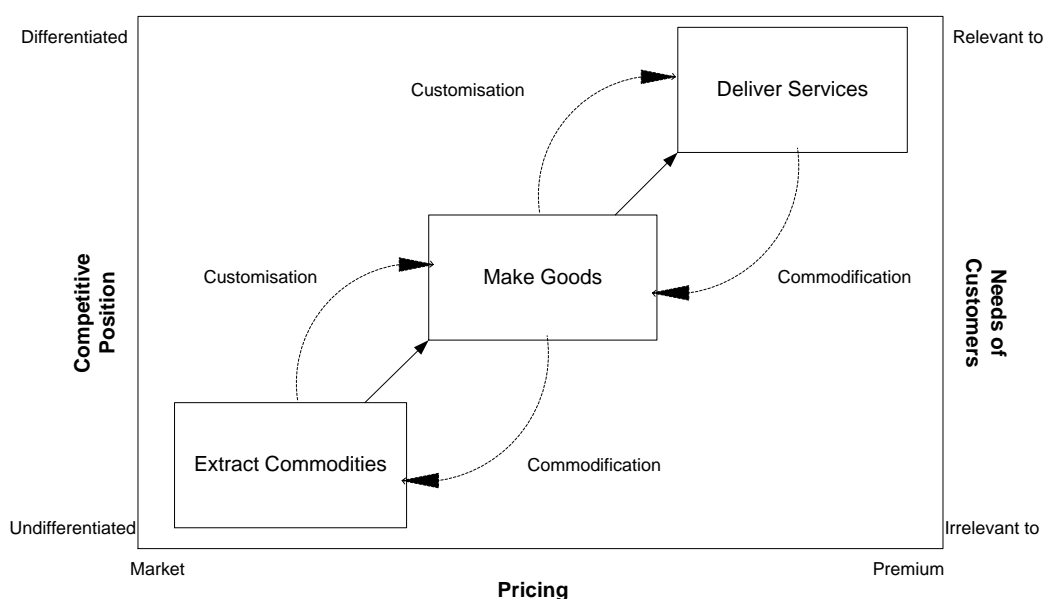
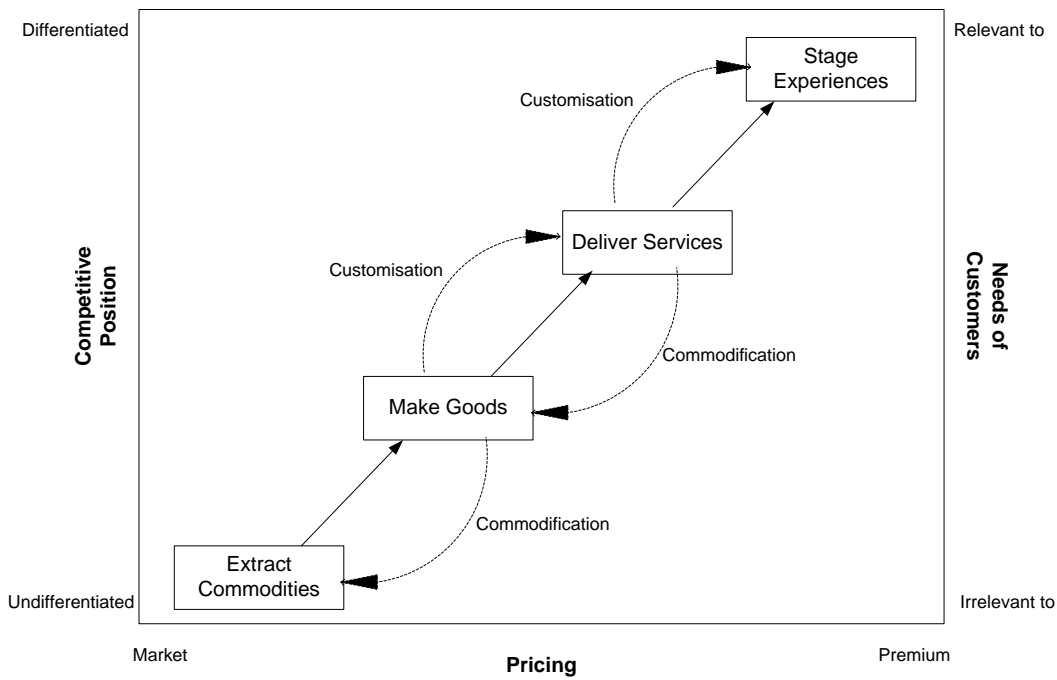


Figure 1.3: Evolution of Services (adapted from Pine and Gilmore, 1998)

At this level of interaction, these service principles balance the unilateral direction of specialist knowledge typically directed at the consumer into a mutually beneficial interaction. As a result, fostering a relationship with consumers is shown to be beneficial as a means of co-creating a value-laden service (Lusch and Vargo, 2006). With the co-creation of services, consumption activities are directed at a level that best represents the stability of the social-individual interface (Dittmar, 1992). It is through this interaction that relationships between the individual and society are realised, allowing meaningful interactions to take place not just between service-provider and service-consumer, but also between other individuals present which help make the service encounter successful and valued. With this broadening of the concept, it is argued that all economies become service economies (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). These latter points also provide the main argument for experiences being adequately included as part of the larger definition of services (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), essentially rendering an experience as nothing more than a type of service offered. This grouping results in experiences being perceived as undeserving of any special categorisation (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). In making such comments, however, the early work of those extolling consumption of experiences is completely neglected.

Holbrook and Hirschman, who first undertook their studies of experiential consumption in the paper 'The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun' in 1982 claim experiences, through the completion of activities (Abbott, 1955) give opportunities to individuals to engage in something above and beyond their everyday lives (Getz, 1998). Thus the experience occurs when '*a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as the props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event*' (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, pg 98). With this, experiences have evolved to be seen as an extension of, rather than component of services (as shown in Figure 1.4).



**Figure 1.4: Evolution of Experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998)**

Although services and experiences do still maintain some similarities, their differences are noticeable and sufficient enough to warrant a separation of the two concepts. For example, value is still an active co-creation between producer, society, and individual (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009), however, the value associated with this interaction changes. Whereas services still predominantly represent the economic rationale of decision making, experiences advocate the consumer as irrational with the economic motive not the main priority during the exchange (Arnould and Price, 1993). Benefits of experiential consumption tend then to be referred to as more hedonic-based, memorable sensations when compared to consumption of pure goods (tangible functions) or services (intangible benefits) (Batra and Ahtola, 1991, Pine and Gilmore, 1998). However, in separating experiences from services in this manner, the question must be posed as to the extent to which extant service literature can be transferred to experiential understanding. Rather than assume the relevance of older theories, this research will break down, re-contextualise and then rebuild theories – the same sociological and psychological theoretical building blocks will be used however, in the context of experiential consumption. This thesis must therefore begin by focussing on the reconciliation of individual, social, and physical literature under the label of experiential consumption. To do so a setting must be selected that meets all the criteria imposed of the experience definition, namely promotion of a distinct and separate place



of consumption as well as a social context for activities to occur away from pressures of daily life. Meeting these requirements, the process will be conducted in the context of the popular music festival.

Annually the United Kingdom hosts over 700 music festivals which attract 3.4 million visitors contributing combined revenues of £546 million. This figure represents nearly one third of the total value of the European Festival market which was estimated at £1.5 billion in 2011 (Intel, 2012). Taken alone this makes for positive reading however, contextually speaking the festival industry finds itself in a particularly challenging period. Despite year-on-year growth, the festival market is currently subject to a variety of negative pressures. Competition from other festivals, a rise in artists' fees, declining sponsorship, increasing production costs, a lack of headliners, and changing legislation are slowly pulling the European festival market, as perceived by festival organisers, towards a state of stagnancy (VirtualFestivals, 2010). With industry-generated solutions proving inadequate, an academic research perspective into causes and alternate resolutions becomes more of a necessity now than in previous years. This is not to say that past academic research has been unsupportive in the practical delivery of the festival event, it is more an acknowledgment that due to evolutionary issues of both academia and practice, divergent paths have been followed. Exploration of consumer identities in this thesis will assist in overcoming a number of these problems by providing valuable inputs and solutions.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives**

With these issues in mind, the aim of this thesis is to examine the formation of contextually relevant identities, behaviours, and values during the experiential event. In doing so, a number of literary areas are uniquely merged so as to demonstrate the various stimuli involved in the consumption of experiences. Objectives to achieve this are guided largely by the three areas of literature identified, these being; the physical place of consumption, those who are present during the consumption process, and the individual's response to consumption. From this point these are referred to as objective, inter-subjective, and subjective stimuli respectively. The thesis objectives therefore become:

- To understand the role of the place and space the experience occupies.
- To explore the relationship between identity, social processes, and the individual's experience.
- To better understand the processes of co-creation during the experience.

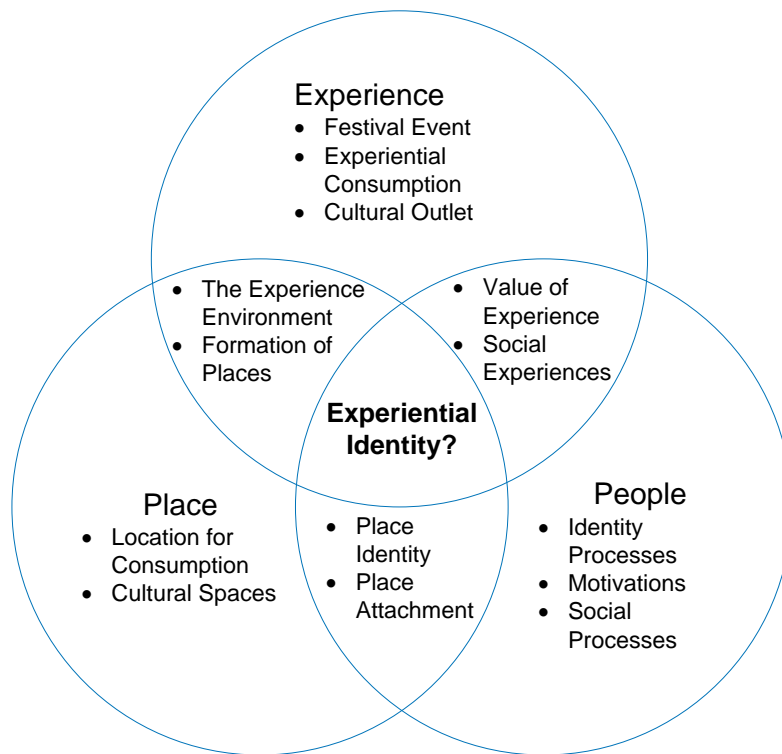
Although recognised as key areas of literature, these objectives are also borne from problematic areas of extant work. To clarify them, the following chapters adopt a structure best suited to explore and understand objectives as a way to show their individual and overall contribution to the aim of the study.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

Following the introductory chapter, two chapters are developed to address each key literary area. Chapter 2 details the importance of the physical location of the experience. Beginning by further exploring the festival as a destination, a detailed examination of the objective physical factors surrounding the experience occurs primarily in relation to the functional elements of the environment. The literature then follows the evolution of the environment from the idea of the place as a physical space to one of aesthetic value and beauty. In doing so, the environment is examined as a co-created habitat of individuals, society, and place-makers, with place more than just a context for consumption, instead becoming an active part of the value experience. With this, individuals are free to develop relationships with places, and in doing so, the areas of place attachment and place identity are discussed. In these latter discussions, much emphasis is placed on the social nature of places, and the social outcomes of the event.

Proceeding under the guidance of identity, Chapter 3 begins by examining what constitutes personal identities (psychological), social identities (social psychological), and sociological identities (group-based). With an emphasis on social identity and categorisation in society, discussions focus on how an individual consumes within a social context, and whether through this consumption any level of social behaviours develop. These are considered alongside theories of social identity theory, categorisation, behavioural interaction, and minimal group paradigm. To contrast these, consideration is also given to various non-biological consumption processes for example, synchronised consumption, entrainment, and social syntony. Liminality and liminal behaviours are also offered as potential explanations for behavioural changes

during the experience event. Figure 1.5 shows the entire literary structure along with key areas and their contribution to literary conclusions. Chapter 4 provides an overall conclusion reflecting all three strands of literature as a means to advance study, justify methodological reasoning, and guide data analysis techniques.



**Figure 1.5: Structure of Literature Review (Source: Author)**

Chapter 4 – the methodology chapter begins with an overview of ontological and epistemological concerns relevant to the thesis. Based on these concerns, discussion answers why the philosophical approach of symbolic interactionism is most relevant for the study at hand. The benefits of adopting interpretive methods are reflected upon, with implications for participant observation, informal interviews, and online engagement discussed. Procedures undertaken within the research are laid out in detail as well as reasoning for sample selection, both of individuals and festivals. The chapter continues with data analysis tools and techniques that are used, highlighting NVivo, open coding, and thematic coding benefits relevant to the study. Provided in this chapter is an outline of the final coding categories which are utilised in latter chapters as a means to analyse and structure debate. The chapter concludes with remarks concerning ethics within the research process.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 make up the data presentation and analysis chapters. These are structured according to objective stimuli, inter-subjective stimuli, and subjective stimuli – categories obtained from thesis objectives, principles of symbolic interaction, and coding structures. Each chapter provides a blend of data presentation, critical data analysis, and relevance to existing literature. To conclude these chapters, literature is further revisited to show areas which are consistent, as well as to highlight those areas in which new findings have been uncovered.

Chapter 8 concludes the entire thesis. Literature and methodology are briefly reviewed so as to provide context for the final findings. The three analysis chapters are combined to show an overall effect on the initial framework as being conducive to the overall identity and behaviour of individuals during the consumption experience. Contributions to theory are laid out, followed by contributions to practice and industry. Also discussed at length are the limitations within the research before future modifications and avenues of extension conclude the thesis.

## Chapter 2 The Festival Experience as a Place Destination

The term 'festival' derives from the Latin word *festā*, which emphasises the features of *'public merriment, abstinence from work and religious worship'* (Falassi, 1987, pg. 2). Early festivals tended to revolve around religion, myth, song or other non-verbal symbolic activities such as dancing and painting, or as a general rite of passage within a community (Turner, 1982). As knowledge and understanding of the world progressed, the focus of the festival changed and despite its inclusion in the original definition of the term, numerous influences besides religion were recognised as justifications for hosting an event (Turner, 1982, Bakhtin, 1984, Mesnil, 1987). Motivated by this, the festival evolved to more closely resemble a carnival-esque encounter, drawing attention specifically to the festivals of the Middle-ages and the associated *'laughter, revelling, dancing, and music'* (Bakhtin, 1968, pg. 66). As well as these entertainment criteria, it is now common for festivals to focus on the perpetuation of local traditions, a means of increasing tourism, the regeneration of areas (both economically and culturally), and the promotion of creativity (Wilks, 2009).

This widening of the festival experience brings with it a definition more suited to what the modern festival is becoming, moving away from the more literal meanings and connotations of the word. For example, Falassi (1987) offers a definition more specific to a social science context – *'a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview'* (Falassi, 1987, p.2). This definition advocates the unique nature of each festival which is bound only by the framing rituals at the open and close of the festival, rituals which allow for modifications of time and space during the intervening festival (Falassi, 1987).

As an academic context, festivals are commonly grouped under the heading of event tourism which originates from the inter-relationship occurring between tourism and management studies, and event management studies (Getz, 2008). Initially an umbrella term, event tourism literature was divided to take account of several major types of attraction, these being: ambient attractions (which include climate, scenery, culture, and wildlife), permanent attractions (which include theme parks, historical sites, and sports facilities), and festivals. Festivals are also grouped as a sub-set of music tourism

(Gibson and Conell, 2005) or cultural tourism (Nurse, 2003), however, they are perhaps most developed within the event tourism literature (Hankinson, 2004) and are therefore treated as an extension of this area for the sake of this study.

Examining the festival from this particular perspective, a new vision ascribing more to the temporary creative space that attracts visitors is also introduced (Richards and Wilson, 2006). This allows for the festival to be better understood as a unique event based around one of several distinct categories: the performing arts (including theatre, concerts, and musicals), the plastic arts (including drawing and painting, sculpture, film and photography, and architecture), and other outlets (provided they offer entertainment and a chance for emotion and fantasy) (Holbrook, 1980) (see Table 2.1). With these boundaries in place, subsequent research into the festival becomes notably divided into three distinct streams of literature each touching on the festival in a different manner, these being: the organisational experience, the tourist experience, and the social experience.

<b>Festival Theme</b>	<b>Festival</b>	<b>Authors</b>
<b>Religious</b>	Buddhist Festival (China)	(Ryan and Gu, 2010)
	Oshun Festival (Africa)	(Idowu, 1992)
<b>Spiritual</b>	Mazu Pilgrimage (Taiwan)	(Shuo <i>et al.</i> , 2009)
	Burning Man Festival (Nevada, USA)	(Sherry and Kozinets, 2011)
<b>Comedy</b>	Comedy Festival Attendance	(Frew, 2006)
	Edinburgh Festival Fringe	(Friedman, 2011)
<b>Cultural</b>	Global Village Multicultural Festival (S. Korea)	(Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2012)
	Colourful Multicultural Festival (S. Korea)	(Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2012)
<b>Film</b>	Global Film Tourism	(Connell, 2012)
	Canada Film Festival	Bell and Kozinets, 2010
<b>Fire</b>	Fire Festival of the Fallas	(Costa, 2002)
	Maleny Fire Event	(Lewis and Dowsey-Magog, 1993)
<b>Folk</b>	Edmonton Folk Festival	(Gordon and Erkut, 2004)
	Sidmouth International Festival	(Mason and Beaumont-Kerridge, 2004)
<b>Food</b>	South Beach Wine and Food Festival (Florida, USA)	(Park <i>et al.</i> , 2008)
<b>Arts</b>	Edinburgh International Festival	(Gratton <i>et al.</i> , 1995)
	Aardklop National Arts Festival	(Cina and Botha, 2003)
<b>Seasonal</b>	Spring Break (USA)	(Josiam <i>et al.</i> , 1998)
	Creole Christmas Festival	(Chacko and Schaffer, 1993)

**Table 2.1: Festival Typology (Source: Author)**

The first stream examines the experience from the point of view of the organisation, providing a model to follow in order to promote and create competitive advantage as a means of providing value and distinction (e.g. CEM Framework and Festivalscape Model), with a particularly strong focus on the economic impact and planning function of the event (Gibson and Conell, 2005). This research often takes the form of impact studies conducted on behalf of festival planners and organisers or local bodies in order to show the value of staging a festival as well as revealing more general demographic data. The second stream takes the perspective of the festival as a tourist destination, with a focus on the cultural and socially-oriented aspects of liminality, escape, and sites of connection (Wilks, 2009). This perspective shares a number of similarities with the third and final grouping which examines the festival as a social event emphasising the experience from the consumer's perspective. It does this by examining the consumption experience as a subjective state of consciousness shaped by both culturally relevant and personally important factors, for example, symbolic meanings, aesthetics, and hedonic responses (Morgan, 2007). Studying festivals from the latter two points of view provides a much needed contrast from the more conventional way of viewing events through economic impact studies, however, to fully understand the experience all three perspectives must be considered (Ginsburgh and Throsby, 2006).

## **2.1 Festival Impact Studies**

Seen as a cultural phenomenon, the commercial success of the festival can be attributed equally to economic, political, and cultural factors, with none of these proving mutually exclusive (Roche, 1994). Having said this, the attraction to study these events from an economic perspective has been the precedent for a number of years, often at the neglect of other more social reasoning behind the festival occurrence (Backman *et al.*, 1995). Festival impact studies are therefore primarily adopted to demonstrate the economic and management implications and impacts of undertaking the festival event (Gibson and Conell, 2005) with social benefits usually seen by organisers to be of secondary importance (Wood and Thomas, 2006).

Acting as a significant source of income, the popularity of the festival has been capitalised on by policymakers at both a national and local level, with festival tourism developed and promoted as a way to make a strategic contribution to the economic growth and development of an area (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Benefits include the

dispersal and redistribution of income and employment through less developed rural areas; a way to raise the profile of an area or brand; a means to attract international visitors; or a strategy to promote additional services, all of which help in the modernisation of the tourist industry (Jowell, 2004). However for organisers to fully understand the event, there is a growing need to incorporate other multiple insights, for example, social, cultural, and environmental impacts as a means of securing a true competitive advantage, (Andersson and Getz, 2009). This is especially the case when considering the impact to the consumer of attending the festival (Crompton and McKay, 1997). With this, consumer studies must be incorporated alongside the more conventional economic impact studies related to the hosting of an event. For these reasons, more subjective areas of the festival encounter, for example motivations are explored as a means to offer a more commercially-driven event.

## **2.2 Festival Motivation Studies**

In a recent large scale survey conducted by Virtual Festivals – the leading European festival-oriented website, it was found that half of the 1,700 festival attendees surveyed ranked the biggest draw to a festival to be *'the general atmospheres and overall vibe'* (VirtualFestivals, 2010). Other factors crucial in the festival experience include *'the music in general'*, cited by 28% of respondents, and 12% citing *'the headline acts'* as the main reason for attending a festival. Conversely, when questioned *'what would put you off going to a festival the following year?'*, 26% cited *'fewer acts or stages'*, 25% cited *'less high profile headliners'* and 22% cited *'a five percent increase in ticket price'* (VirtualFestivals, 2010). From these two questions it appears that a good line-up of artists is expected as a pre-requisite, yet cannot cause consumer delight. Failure to provide a suitable line-up can, however, result in consumer anger. It is therefore necessary to look not only at the more common motivating factors affecting attendance (see Table 2.2) but also demotivating factors in the decision making process.



Motivations according to:	Formica and Uysal (1996)	Crompton and McKay (1997)	Faulkner <i>et al.</i> (1999)	Tomljenovic <i>et al.</i> (2001)	Nicholson and Pearce (2001)	Thrane (2002)
<b>General socialisation</b>	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
<b>Socialisation with friends or family</b>	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
<b>Novelty/excitement/ Thrills</b>	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
<b>Music/music artists/program</b>			✗	✗		✗
<b>Entertainment</b>	✗				✗	
<b>Party</b>			✗	✗		
<b>Cultural exploration/local Culture</b>		✗	✗			
<b>Escape/recover equilibrium</b>		✗			✗	
<b>Ancillary activities</b>			✗			
<b>Local attractions</b>			✗			
<b>Gregariousness</b>		✗				
<b>Variety</b>					✗	

**Table 2.2: Comparison of festival motivation studies (Crompton and McKay, 1997)**

Understanding these issues helps organisers plan festivals that are economically, socially, and individually sound. For example, regional festivals can be created to emphasise the distinctiveness of local traditions and cultures of the region as a way to convey them as the main content of the experience (Yeoman *et al.*, 2005). Organising the festival in this way encourages spending and creates employment whilst also generating publicity for the area (Chhabra, 2004). With this, the latter perspectives of festival research (i.e. the festival as an experience in terms of a destination for tourists, as well as a facilitator of social relationships) become more legitimate headings under which to conduct research. Direction must therefore be amended to focus more on the experience as both an input and output of the festival.

### **2.3 Festivals as Places**

Constructing places in order to meet consumers desires for authentic and traditional experiences has helped to stimulate the regeneration – physically, socially, and culturally, of former spaces of production (Urry, 1995) (e.g. factories, mines, fields) into places of consumption (e.g. museums, galleries, concert sites) (Richards, 1996, Pattison, 2006); '*what was once the city is now a museum and what was once the countryside is now a leisure landscape*' (Cloke, 1993, pg. 55). As such, cultural

expeditions are no longer restricted to just visual consumption, expanding with interaction as its new focus: sampling local delicacies, participating in local events, and simply soaking up the atmosphere (Smith and Richards, 2013). These issues tend to receive attention from the point of view of place marketing as a way to understand wider issues. In doing so, a place is likened to a corporation with a location, history, heritage, and reputation, all of which are potentially manageable facets (Skinner, 2011). In doing this, however, a singular identity approach is also assumed. In reality it is more accurately the case that place marketers should be encouraged to embrace the benefits available from a multiple destination perspective (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011). This bottom-up approach based on co-creation from multiple stakeholders helps in the development of place brand, authenticity, commitment and sustainability (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). Considering this, the destination must be looked at less as a singular context, and more as a social environment that forms part of the experience.

#### **2.4 Social Spaces and Experiential Places**

For an environment to impact the consumption activities that take place within, it must develop as an active part of the consumer's mindset. In doing so it must meet three strict criteria. Firstly it must be a geographic location, that is, a unique spot in the universe that can be differentiated or related to another spot based on locational-commonalities or differences (Sack, 1992). Secondly, the place must have a material form – this can be either manmade or natural (Sack, 1992). As such, places become forced as a result of upstream creative influences driven by power and wealth (e.g. Governments, landowners, property developers) or through the professional practice of employing place experts (e.g. architects, interior designers or landscapers). Locations based on these forces alone are more closely associated with the consumption of goods and services rather than experiences. This does, however, open the debate on virtual places which provide real and influential communal on-line spaces (Laing *et al.*, 2011). Although a growing area of interest, this review will not explore virtual spaces as to do so would be out with the immediate boundaries of this research setting. These highly physical aspects of how a place is made have definite connotations to scientific measures of place making. The third and final condition, however, goes above and beyond any levels of physicality, insisting a true place must hold a degree of meaningful investment from an individual – a sense of place comes not just from the ability to locate things on a cognitive map, but also from the attribution of meaning to a built-

form or natural spot (Walter, 1988). This attribution often comes as a direct result of an individual's first-hand experience (Tuan, 1974).

For the individual, places become spots that they go to for some particular purpose or function. Locations become remarkable because of the unwinding spiral of material form and interpretive understandings which are achieved through either continuous or unique experiences (Miligram *et al*, 1972). Thus, place comes to be as and when people ascribe qualities to the material and social substance gathered there. When people extract information from, or relate it to a continuous and abstract substance, a bounded, identified, meaningful, named, and significant place is created (de Certau, 1984). Conversely, without naming, identification, or representation by ordinary people, a location exists merely as an empty space (Soja, 1989).

From this, the general term 'place' is afforded a much more extensive concept than 'space' alone. Places have the depth to hold physical, geographical, architectural, historical, religious, social, and psychological connotations which can be found spanning several levels of a 'special scale' (Pettigrew, 2007). This scale covers all levels of place, ranging from the physical neighbourhoods which take into account qualities like quantity and proximity of facilities (shops, bars, transport links), weather etc, through to the psychological countries which acknowledge history, national identity, and reputation (Pettigrew, 2007). Places also exist on multiple horizontal and vertical plains of consumption. Horizontal plains consist of a simple geographical and physical span of a place (i.e. the area of a place), whereas vertical plains are concerned with the temporal aspect of places, which allows for the accumulation of memories that focus on one place.

All three of the criteria mentioned (i.e. geographic location, material form, and investment of meaning) are vital in the creation of a place, working autonomously yet at the same time being mutually dependent on each other – if one is forgotten then all are destroyed. Upon meeting these criteria a place becomes much more than a point in space, taking in the meanings which people assign to the landscape through the processes of living in it (Ryden, 1993). This multi-layered approach places more emphasis on the idea that a sense of place remains an emergent property resulting from an interaction between an individual and the environment and, while there will be some mutually shared elements (most likely physical and functional properties), is a

fundamentally unique concept shaped largely by our own individual beliefs and actions (Murphy *et al.*, 2007). For example, we decide what a particular place should function as, what activities will be carried out there, and whether we will involve ourselves in such activities. However, these decisions cannot be considered in isolation, with social influences impacting both the image and shape of the place.

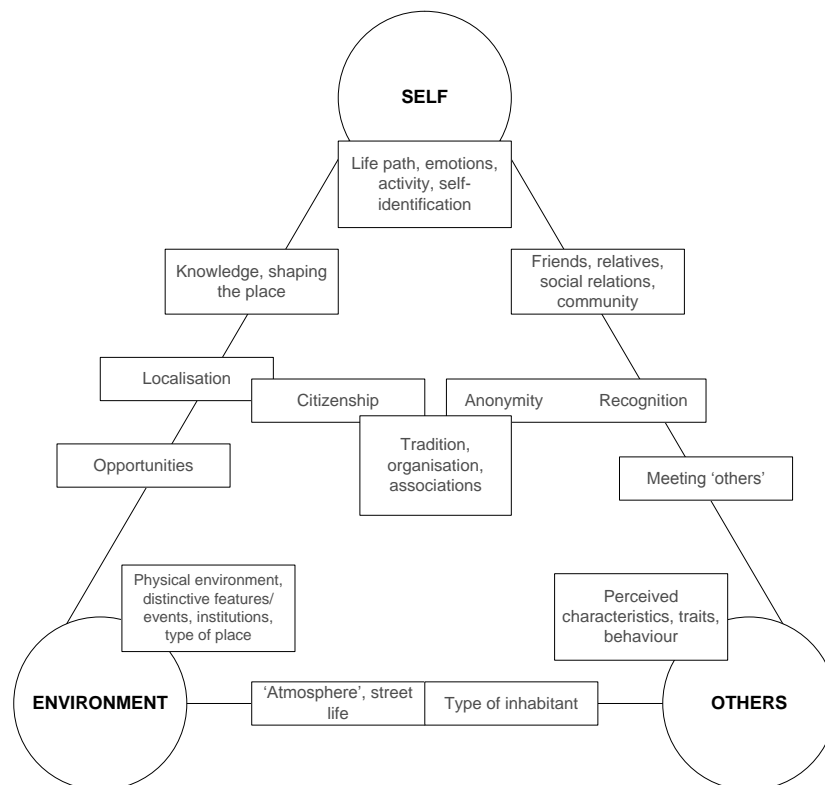
#### ***2.4.1 Sociological Space***

The sociological spatial perspective attempts to identify whether the material world constitutes a significant element of social theory and more importantly if it does, whether it has any impact on human behaviour. The sociological perspective argues that meaningful places are created in a social context and by social relations, they are geographically located, yet at the same time they are related to their social and cultural surroundings which give individuals a subjective territorial identity. As a consequence, although the notion of place implies a geographic setting which becomes the primary attitude object (e.g. home or street), places also act as social repositories within which social relations occur (Kyle *et al.*, 2004). In essence then, if human behaviour occurs in a physical setting, physical structures must be interrelated to the creation, perpetuation, and dissolution of both social structures and society itself. This postulation is confirmed in Durkheim's Social Theory of Space (1968) which concludes the cause of spatial representation is social, with spatial representations mirroring patterns of social organisations. With this, social interactions own partial responsibility for turning empty spaces into meaningful places (Durkheim, 1968). This is achieved through 'special qualities' that social interactions possess, these being: an exclusive or unique character of space (i.e. the way in which a space may be divided into pieces and activities which can be spatially framed there), the degree to which social interactions can be localised in space, the degree of proximity/distance, the possibility of changing location, and consequences of the arrival of strangers (Agnew, 1987). These are reframed to produce three concise elements related to the sociological basis of geographical studies, which are:

- The location – the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction as defined by social and economic processes.
- The locale – the setting in which social relations are constituted.
- The sense of place – the local structure of feeling.

(Agnew, 1987)

A useful expanse on this outlines similarities in the physical environment and associated features of it, the effects of other people in the environment, their actual and perceived traits, and their subsequent behaviours, all alongside the self, including life path, emotions and self-identification (Gustafson, 2001) (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1: A Sociological Overview of Elements of Place (Gustafson, 2001)**

The overall evaluation of a location can be influenced by one, two, or all three of these factors, and can directly influence both meanings associated with places, as well as other relevant social processes, for example group identity formation and intergroup conflict (see Chapter 3). Accepting the sociological argument, the greater the attachment is between spatial discourse and social organisations, the greater the relevance space has as a contextual factor. For example, Durkheim shows that space and place, which were once construed as merely backdrops to consumption, can be seen

as centres of consumption in their own right and studied for their own sake rather than examples of more general processes (Glennie and Thrift, 1996). As such, studies of consumption have become increasingly related to spaces that ‘own’ specific properties which intervene in the construction of ‘difference making’ (Miller, 1998) for individuals.

## **2.5 The Effect of the Social Place on the Individual**

With this development of the physical place our relationships with place become two way, with individuals responsible for creating and sustaining places which then become responsible for influencing thought processes (Urry, 1995). Places therefore become both a product and determinant of social action – people anchor themselves in environments that facilitate and support their consumption projects, while simultaneously exerting influence over their consumption behaviours carried out within. Jorgensen and Steadman (2001) identify four dimensions that make this mutual relationship possible, these being: identity (the beliefs about relationships between self and place), dependence (the degree to which the place, in relation to other places is perceived to underpin behaviour), attachment (the emotional connection to a place), and climate (the atmosphere nested in a place not only objectively constituting a place, but also subjectively influencing the way we experience and remember a place). Of these, dependence and climate are found to be less related in the initial construction of a sense of place than identity and attachment are (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). As a result place identity and place attachment become linked concepts, often displaying similar traits within similar groups of people. From this, there is a frequent overlap between the two concepts, which makes it difficult to determine the relationship between the two. This confusion had led to several contrasting views: place attachment is a part of place identity (Lalli, 1992), place attachment is a multidimensional construct incorporating, amongst other things, identity (Kyle *et al.*, 2005), place identity and place attachment are both part of a larger order holding equal roles (Hay, 1998), and finally they are essentially synonymous concepts (Brown and Werner, 1985). Although these multi-dimensional models prove most popular, much of the resulting theory is rather more scattered and fragmented, lacking any conclusive empirical results (Ramkisson *et al.*, 2012). To avoid incorporating any of these potential weaknesses, this review will adopt the stance of Hernandez *et al* (2007). In their study based on natives and non-natives to an island community they were able to control for factors including place of origin and

length of residence, ultimately demonstrating place attachment and place identity, although interrelated, are distinguishable concepts and must be evaluated as separate entities. Both develop only after a degree of symbolic interaction occurs (Giuliani, 2003), however, place attachment occurs before place identity (Hernández *et al.*, 2007) and tends to be more related to the initial development of a sense of place (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). Treating the two concepts individually will also allow unbiased understanding in a consumer experience context, which has often been overlooked by place-based theorists as too insipid a setting (Debenedetti *et al.*, 2013).

### **2.5.1 Attachment to a Place**

Place attachment refers to the emotional bonds and relationships that individuals form with specific places or sites (Milligan, 1998). Attachment is a process guided by interwoven and interrelated psychological and sociological elements, resulting in interactive and culturally shared processes of endowing physical places with emotional meanings or accumulated biographical experiences. Attachment usually manifests itself as an affective bond or more specifically, a strong tendency of that person to maintain closeness to the place. These bonds form with specific, decommodified, singular places (i.e. places with unique identities) (Kleine and Menzel-Baker, 2004) only after a prolonged interaction, and become stronger as more time is spent in that place (Elder *et al.*, 1996). The degree of attachment is also dependent on the level to which individuals perceive themselves as functionally associated with places (Stokols and Schumaker, 1981). The extent of dependency is a combination of attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, norms, rules and regulations, meanings, and behaviour tendencies, reaching far beyond a purely emotional attachment (Proshansky, 1983).

Developing a strong attachment to a place can be very beneficial to the personal development of individuals and groups. For example, it helps define identity in terms of the place, the individual, and the group, whilst also defining group boundaries. It provides a means of self-continuity, stabilises and contextualises memories, and elicits a sense of security and wellbeing. Combined, these provide the individual with a sense of belonging, purpose, and meaning (Tuan, 1976). More extreme forms of place attachment can assist in altering behaviour, whether it is a ritual inversion of behavioural characteristics, or an intensification of daily behaviour (Lee *et al.*, 2012). Even those places of lesser significance still possess the potential for attachment to

some degree (Brown and Chappel, 2008). For example, if there is a strong association made between the image and brand of a place and a consumer's own personality, a high level of attachment will exist (Murphy *et al*, 2007) with the belief this will encourage intention to travel to the place again in future (Tsai, 2012). However, existing consumer research has yet to fully examine the management and continuity of attachment over time in a commercial context (Zeynep *et al*, 2012). However, it is suggested by Brennan-Horley *et al* (2007) that grafting an image onto a place through the development of an experience, for example a festival, is a key means by which place attachment can be managed. Even if there is no initial attachment, a salient place brand can significantly affect the consumer's decision making process (Trembath *et al.*, 2011). In return, festivals play very important social roles for place-based communities including improving the attractiveness and prosperity of the area as well as boosting local pride (Quinn, 2005). Although the emotional focus of attachment can prove very beneficial to event organisers, attachment alone is not sufficient to address other aspects of the holistic management approach to experience, namely cognitive functionality and symbolic congruity (Tsai, 2012). To more fully address these issues, it is necessary to examine place identity as another process in the co-creation of places.

### **2.5.2 Identity and Place**

Personal identity is a combination of many sub-components of identity, including gender identity, social identity, and cultural identity. When socialising in a physical environment, the development of a personal identity is not only restricted to distinctions between one's self and significant others, and extends with no less importance to objects and things and the places in which they are found (Proshansky, 1983), however, this has not always been so. Early writers were quick to conclude that identification categories already contain location implications thus incorporating necessary alterations to make place an inclusive concept (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). Despite these claims, subsequent examinations of these forms of identity often failed to identify these necessary place implications resulting in identity theories becoming disembodied from the physical environment. In this sense, place is treated as a context-based physical structure. As this is very much based on the physical space only, it is argued that this approach can only account for a part of the relationship between self and environment (Soja, 1989). In actuality, the attachment and consumption process of place can provide a means of self-regulation which is part of developing and maintaining a consistent



sense of self, that is, place can assist in the creation of a personal identity through the construction and modification of a person's environment (Havitz and Dimache, 1997). During interactions with places, people project themselves onto their environments thus communicating to themselves and to others their sense of self (Korpela, 1989).

Following these changes in thinking, the role of place identity has been revised to allow its development freely, without entering into any kind of conflict with alternate identity concepts thus becoming '*a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives*' (Proshansky *et al*, 1983, pg. 59). In terms of the personal identity, place identity is the individual's incorporation of place into their larger concept of self (Proshansky, 1983) meaning environment becomes a salient part of identity as opposed to merely a context in which identity can be developed and established. This identity is influenced by many destination factors, for example atmosphere, cultural context, and event characteristics (Kaplanidou *et al*, 2012). With this, place is afforded the status of a social category in much the same way as occupation, age, or gender can be viewed as social categories, and is therefore subject to the same rules as other means of social identification (Abrams and Hogg, 1998). Place identities are also comparable to social identity as a means of positioning the self within the physical world (Csikszentmihayli and Rochberg-Halton, 1981). These explanations aim to understand the dynamic nature of place, incorporating a mixture of both physical and social considerations. These definitions, however, proved ambiguous to many and as a result accompanying theories received little credit from the academic community (Stedman, 2002). For example, although contributing significantly to the debate on place, Proshansky's (1983) accompanying theory fails to provide any actual links between place and identity structures, struggling to concretely identify the process that guides place in relation to identity (Korpela, 1989). There is also an over-reliance on general theories of identity which, for example, place an importance on factors like self-esteem which claim to be the only principle of identity creation (Abrams, 1992). A final problem occurs due to the infancy of the concept. In regard to many other areas of identity, place is still very under-developed as an individual identity theory and therefore becomes difficult to operationalise thinking as quickly as some may like. These basic problems led many researchers to describe exactly the same phenomena but use different terms to do so, making it problematic when attempting to formalise any kind of connections between similar topics. It is therefore both necessary and beneficial to adopt one common

theoretical framework for research on how personality, behaviour, lifestyle, and social attribution are reflected through place (Hauge, 2007).

## **2.6 A Social Placial Framework**

Breakwell identifies identity as an organism that develops through the accommodation, assimilation and evaluation of the social world (Breakwell *et al.*, 1986). Using this as a foundation, previous models are incorporated for example Epstein (1983) (cognitive experiential theory), Proshansky (1983) (physical world socialisation) and Korpela (1989) (environmental self-regulation) as a way to address a number of previously recognised weaknesses (outlined in 2.5.2). This was achieved by providing a more complete framework as a way to clarify the roles and meanings of emotionally salient places in forming a person's identity (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). Along with this, clarification concerning the extent to which a reinforcing identity can be enforced by a place was sought (Knez, 2005). Breakwell's (1993) subsequent Identity Process Model proposes four components (although he claims that the list is non-exhaustive) each of which receives equal status. The first of these components is distinctiveness, that is, the power to maintain individuality and personal uniqueness. Secondly he lists continuity, which is preserved through either place referent continuity (places act as referents to past selves and experiences) or place congruent continuity (continuity is maintained through characteristics of place that are generic and transferable from one location to another). The third component, adopted from the more general work on identity, is self-esteem, which is the positive evaluation of one's self and feeling of self-worth that comes from being part of a group (Korpela, 1989). Finally Breakwell describes self-efficacy which is defined as '*an individual's belief in their capabilities in meeting situational demands*' (Winkel, 1981, pg. 246). Self-efficacy can only be maintained when the immediate environment facilitates a person's everyday lifestyle.

Originally these categories were used as a way to describe a person's attachment to their home or neighbourhood – one's home usually being the most important location in a person's life and therefore the most pervasive influence on identity (Hauge, 2007). Residents could make decisions concerning a range of positive and negative attributes manifest in a particular location concerning its suitability and value as a place of residence (Pettigrew, 2007). Some of these predictors of suitability include length of residency, number of relationships within a community, home ownership, and scope of

attachment. However, with the reduction in traditional sources of identity formation, for example 'homely places' (i.e. family homes, neighbourhoods, religious sites), these locations hold less symbolism and relevance and can no longer be the sole focus of place identity studies (Hernández *et al.*, 2007). This allows for more socially unique forms of place to impact upon the development of a person's identity. Rather than the tradition of accepting the material aspects of place, this new way of thinking allowed observations to be selected, steered, and coloured by the observer rather than the consensus, giving subjective meaning to what was once considered an objective field of study. This allows places to be examined as spatial representations and images through which people arrange their behaviour and interpretations of the social world (Basso, 1996). Consumption of these "post-modern" places is based on six key conditions, these being: hyperreality, fragmentation of self, reversal of production and consumption, decentring of the subject, paradoxical juxtaposition (of opposites), and loss of commitment (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993), and as a result two proposed consequences can occur.

First, social place can act as a liberatory force with identity fragmentation central to the experience (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). In this situation, sources of fragmentation occur in many guises including consumer markets, media services, and experiences of the self. Such wide scale fragmentation has removed the emphasis from traditional institutions (such as family groups, neighbourhoods, or religious groups). Instead, emphasis is placed on consumption as a means of expressing and constructing identity (Goulding, 2003) thus characterising identities as a function defined by consumption and the experiences derived there from (Firat *et al.*, 1997). Consumption therefore allows individuals a chance to creatively construct and express the multitude of identities that are available to them, allowing them the freedom to experience emotional peaks of association without actually having to fully commit to a permanent unitary state of being (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). Liberation also encompasses a degree of escapism from the ordinary surroundings of the market place (Maclaran and Brown, 2005). This occurs through apparent utopian consumption, that is, consumption that occurs (as a result of hyperreality and juxtaposition) in an idyllic place or setting which draws attention to the gap between what is and what could be (Goulding *et al.*, 2003). As a result consumption activities and settings are in a period of constant change and redefinition in line with the changing needs of society (Levitas, 2001).

The contrary perspective proposes an alienating force, with an individual's identity becoming negatively fragmented (Yalom, 1980). This stems from individuals who attempt to find identity and meaning of self through consumption activities, but are instead faced with simulacra and hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1989). This faux-reality forces the consumer gaze on to superficial and surface realities (Wiley, 1994) resulting in identity confusion and the aforementioned fragmentation of self (Jameson, 1990). Another potential outcome of this process is personal saturation which occurs when individuals become involved in many different societal groups leaving themselves no capacity to create any further identities (Gergen, 1991). A consequence of the alienated self is a lack of depth and substance, with no self beyond that which is displayed.

Acknowledging both of these perspectives, the stance that will be adopted in this research is one advocating fragmentation of identity as a definite consequence of societal life. Beyond this, what occurs depends on the situation and context; if the individual is in a recognised social context that they associate with then the fragmentation will be welcomed, whereas a non-associated social context may result in alienation. For example, although not explicitly concluded, Goulding *et al's* (2002) work on identity in rave clubs shows the necessity of the rave club to be genuine otherwise ravers find the experience inauthentic. Based on this, decisions regarding authenticity come from a collaborative decision made by the wider social group (Siokou and Moore, 2008) with inauthentic contexts leading to inauthentic behavioural changes. Therefore the extent to which a place is unique depends on the physical characteristics of the environment, the affect and meanings (including memories, associations, connotations and denotations), the activities afforded by the place, and the social interactions associated with the place. If a place does not satisfy these conditions then they may be classified as placeless places (Auge, 1995) or non-places (Relph, 1976).

## **2.7 Place and Placelessness**

Placeless places do not fit the necessary components of a place (i.e. singular, de commodified, and specific) and are often a result of commodification of authenticity and erosion of unique cultural identity (MacCannell, 1992). As a result emotionally attaching or identifying with a place become difficult to achieve. Non-places are becoming more plentiful in line with the increase of globalisation and technological advancement. Places are rapidly being destroyed and replaced by post-modern, 'faux-

places', resulting in a loss of diversity and singularity (Fullilove, 1996). The concern that commodification has the potential to destabilise the cultural rituals of a place is also raised with regard to the festival industry, with increasing prices and sponsorship repositioning the festival as more of a commercial venture than a social one (Carver, 2000). For example, the alternative lifestyles traditionally found in festivals such as Glastonbury have become commonplace due to the festivals' routine structures and commercialisation, with the promise of the authentic festival experience being used as nothing more than a commercial ploy by the organiser (Gibson and Conell, 2005). It therefore becomes increasingly important to focus on strategies to maintain the social relationships with places as a means of avoiding social connections. This is easiest to achieve with a focus on ensuring consistency of social elements – although not always possible to fully authenticate places, placelessness can be avoided by focussing on both personal and social needs with careful servicescape management (Zeynep *et al*, 2012)

## **2.8 Summary**

With the increase in commercialisation of both places and experiences common, researchers have started to question how applicable traditional commercial forces are to such a subjective market, or whether these strategies are actually encouraging generic, placeless consumption. It is therefore not enough for place makers to merely commercialise their offering, instead they must seek ways to better design spaces for those who attend so that experiences are maximised, satisfaction is enhanced, and revisits are facilitated in a social environment (Yan *et al.*, 2012). Organisers have the chance to create environments that enhance the experience through a unique setting and individualistic features available within. It is through these channels that organisers can take advantage of an individual's identity with, and potential attachment to a place. From this, satisfaction and repeat attendance become likely outcomes (Lee and Beeler, 2009). Planners must also take advantage of the social nature of the created space as a way to provide a cohesive atmosphere for group interaction. Thus examination and understanding must also be directed towards elements of interaction between consumers and place makers as a means to seek value in the process of experience co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

## **Chapter 3 The Experience as a Social Encounter**

Having discussed the psychological and sociological place in Chapter 2, it can be concluded that social relations are vital in the co-creation of a living place. Therefore, it must next be considered how social interactions develop within the festival environment. To do this, the following sections examine the idea of the individual and social self with identity central to these discussions. However, 'identity', similar to experience is a term bestowed with a multitude of meanings gained from many areas of academia. This chapter examines the evolution of the concept of identity, paying particular attention to how personal and group identities come to be through the processes of identity theory and social identity theory, and the subsequent effects these have on social processes. Liminal behaviours are also examined to show how they affect consumption behaviours, for example, entrainment, impression management, and contagion in the context of the music festival.

### **3.1 The 'I'**

First examined in the latter part of the nineteenth century, two aspects of identity were identified – the 'I', which is the real and unchanging function of the self, and the 'Me'; the part of the self that is known, observed, and subject to change due to the influence of social categories (James, 1890). Furthered at the turn of the century, the reflexive 'I' (or the 'Looking Glass Self') defined the process of identification as seeing reflections of what others think of us (Cooley, 1902). Although a significant starting point, these definitions lacked the scientific rigour that was necessary in the psychology field at that time. In order to overcome these perceived weaknesses, scientists, psychologists, and human relations theorists rejected the idea of competing social identities, instead simplifying individuals as having only one fixed personality. However accepting this severely limits an individual's agency, and in a sense revokes much of what makes every person unique (Baray *et al.*, 2009). Challenging these unitary theories with research reveals 'the self' to actually be a variable and complex structure composed of not just one, but many social elements (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001). Some of the earliest theorists to take up the challenge of better defining identity recognised two entirely distinct entities: the 'I' and the 'Them' (Freud, 1922). Their theses state that different levels of identity and their relevant contents do not impinge on each other in any way, shape, or form – a view which would effectively undermine the dynamic

nature of social life, instead reducing everything to immediate comparative contexts (Condor, 2000).

The 'I' of identity, which has since become more commonly known as personal identity, has often been neglected a concrete definition, instead being a term used to identify the part of the self that refers to cognitions ensuing from one's social ecological positions (Sabin and Allen, 1968). One's personal identity indicates how an individual is aware of their differences with respect to others, something that is unique to each and every individual (Deschamps and Devos, 1998), as well as considering one's definition in terms of personal attributes and interpersonal relations. Personal identity is a concept built around the idea of particularisation, which is the process by which an individual is distinguished from the collective category (i.e. which particular stimulus accentuates an individual as a particular case) (Billig, 1985). Traditional identity conceptualisation (or particularisation) is shaped from the recognition of the self, usually from answering the question 'who am I?' Personal identity is therefore a sub-system of self-knowledge characterised by traits that are simultaneously most characterising of the individual and most distinguishing of others (Markus and Wurf, 1987). However, by implying the notion of others, this basic account of identity described above must be re-evaluated to include 'them'.

### **3.2 The 'Them'**

Research almost exclusively assumes that every individual, no matter how unique, is embedded in a structured society. We can also assume that each individual realises they are a part of this structured society (Semin and Krahe, 1987) leading to behaviours forming on the basis of one's own judgements of the behaviour of others (Baray *et al.*, 2009). This feeling of identity is socially built into every individual and amended a) as a function of interactions (Turner, 1982) and b) by what culture suggests (Hofstede, 1980). Despite the title then, personal identity must be considered a social representation that acts as an organising principle of symbolic relationships between individuals and other individuals, as well as between individuals and groups. This allows competing social identities and potentially antagonistic group based actions to be acknowledged, allowing for a better understanding of the power dynamics and behaviours in social contexts (Haslam *et al.*, 2006). As a result, society can be seen as an indispensable part of the self, with the self created as a result of the reflexive process

in which the individual perceives and interprets the surrounding world rather than merely responding to what is presented in it (Mead, 1934). Acknowledging this, 'them' is replaced by 'me' – an internalisation of the social functions of the societal context. Reality therefore cannot be measured in physical terms, it must be socially defined (Festinger and Hutte, 1954). With this the individual becomes a parliament of selves and a continuous creation of society and in turn, society becomes a creation of the individual, resulting in the social self.

### **3.3 Society's Influence on Identity**

As discussed in section 2.5, when operating in a social context, individuals become inevitably bound in relationships with others forcing a transition from holding an exclusively personal identity to a more social way of thinking. This social transition is recognised as a crucial role within any consumption activity, however, it plays an even bigger role during the interactive nature of consuming experiences (Wood and Thomas, 2006). O'Shea *et al.* (2012) use the example of the festival as a social event, with social group formation central to the experience. It is suggested that the assessment of the social and cultural benefits surrounding the festival, for example sense of community, belongingness, social cohesion (Flint and Robinson, 2008), community cohesiveness, social incentives, and social costs (Gursoy *et al.*, 2004) are more important than a consideration of the economic impacts alone (Williams and Bowdin, 2007). Organisers must therefore treat the social benefits as the most prominent feature in any organisational decisions (Picard and Robinson, 2006).

The individual-social transformation initially entails the individual going through a sequence of developmental stages by which they adopt new cognitive categories and evaluative standards (Ziller, 1964). This happens because of social influences exerted from the environment for example, characteristics of the stimulus situation, the structure of the social environment, individual differences, and cultural expectations of conformity. These can be confined to three principles that may intervene in social movements: the principle of identity (how an actor defines themselves), the principle of opposition (presupposes the naming of an adversary), and the principle of totality (an agreement on general values of society and on the contributions antagonistic groups can make towards common goals) (Touraine and Duff, 1981). There is, however, often a difficulty in the evolution of groups from an identity principle according to which they



have defined social reality to a totality principle, which involves a relational definition of themselves (Touraine and Duff, 1981). Kruse (2010) argues that this transition from identity through to totality is made easier in the specific valued circumstances. Taking music as an example, although it is possible to distinguish one's self, it is also possible to feel a connected bond with those sharing the same musical preferences (Kruse, 2010). With this, the idea of a self-defining group has become a more simple way to study social interactions and identities as part of the experience.

### ***3.3.1 Self-Defining Groups***

Self-defining groups set out clear frameworks for how members should perceive themselves, effectively providing a set of behavioural guidelines for all social contexts, not just immediate group contexts (Haslam *et al.*, 2005). The power of a self-defining group comes from the degree to which it provides whole self-definitions (including social, relational, and personal identity) as opposed to only social self-definitions (social identity) (Baray *et al.*, 2009). Taking religion as a powerful example of a self-defining group, the specific beliefs and teachings dictate how members should live their day-to-day lives – a message that is passed on through philosophy, culture, and ideology (Baray *et al.*, 2009). Despite maintenance of a true collective core, a drawback of the self-defining group can be seen in the argument that extreme groups take members' personal identities hostage, replacing them with hard-line group identities that are seen as threatening or strange from an outsider's point of view. For example, 'Group Mind' develops with individuality becoming less well articulated and self-descriptions becoming less versatile and more indistinctive (Bon, 1896). Having said this, it is argued that self-defining groups do in actual fact empower perceptions of individual strength and self-determination. They do this by providing explicit guidelines, values, and aspirations that individual's believe to be their own, essentially equipping members with a sense of agency, control, and certainty about their present and future situations (Hopkins, 2006).

The self-verification that is provided by the group's ideologies allow for the regulation of not just the social identity of the group, but also the personal identity of the individual. This results in a positive interdependence (and lack of tension) between personal and social identity, ultimately leading to increased group functioning and individual productivity (Ely and Thomas, 2001). This alone demonstrates that members

of self-defining groups more fully experience their individuality because the group epitomises the inherent complementariness of both individual and group values (Billig, 1985). The question of the extent of group strength is not only a result of the cooperation of the individual – the cooperative nature of group itself is a defining factor. In cases of weak cooperation, a situation of low entitativity occurs. With this, group attributes are said to be poorly defined and ambiguous with easy accessibility to the group. This is in comparison to clearly defined, homogenous groups which display high entitativity (Grant and Hogg, 2011).

Examining self-defining groups in the context of music, it can be said that although defined as a temporary affiliation, musical identities remain stable from adolescence onwards (Hargreaves and North, 1999) resisting many common temporal pressures. Music can therefore be seen as a fundamental channel of communication allowing shared emotions, intentions, and meanings. These connect what would be otherwise incomprehensible languages which helps strengthen identity and sense of community in the process (Bourdieu, 1984). These functions of music manifest as: management of interpersonal relationships allowing for social group definition, a regulator of mood mediated by the immediate social environment in which the listening takes place and, its primary social function, allowing the establishment and development of an individual's sense of identity (Hargreaves and North, 1999). At the adolescent stage, music plays a hugely important dimension for inter-group comparisons (Bakagiannis and Tarrant, 2006) especially among males who import music as an important part of their social identity as a way to build strong relationships with their peers (Tarrant *et al.*, 2001). This process carries on into later life, and it is for these reasons that musical identities often override other identities, with Gardner (2004) showing people from a wide range of educational, occupational, and religious backgrounds all coming together under the guise of a bluegrass festival. Listening to music essentially becomes a means of deciding and announcing to others not just who you want to be, but who you are (Cook, 1998).

Individuals are often aware of the social function that music fulfils, using it to create an external impression to fulfil their social needs (North *et al.*, 2000). Such an evolution introduces an inherent need to focus more on how we engage with music in a multi-faceted way, especially with the social aspects of the music, which include examining a means of formulating everyday identity, as well as regulating mood, behaviour, self-

presentation, values, attitudes, and views (MacDonald *et al.*, 2003). This process is often made easier by experience organisers providing objective, physical cues that attempt to align the beliefs and behaviours of the audience (Oakes, 2000). However, such simple classification by genre preference is not always achievable without problems of potential multiplicity within the festival space (Willems-Braun, 1994). This creates the necessity to constantly reconstruct and renegotiate group identities according to experience, situation, and other individuals (Kruse, 2010).

Considering these latter points, it is not always the case that these studies comprehensively understand the processes involved in group formation. Firstly, much of the research into the self-defining group focuses on pre-established groups, overlooking group formation, group development, and the impact of groups on one another, instead examining the group as a final outcome of unexamined development. Secondly, traditional groupings for example religion (Baray *et al.*, 2009), family, or organisation (Hogg and Terry, 2000) have been steadily replaced by more materialistic, temporary affiliations, for example, sports teams, and fashions. With this in mind, this chapter will continue with a more in-depth look at the processes that underlie group formation, namely identification, identity theories and other group processes.

### **3.4 Identification**

One important distinction that must be made before going any further is between the concepts of identity and identification. On occasion these terms are used interchangeably, however, the difference between them is one of great importance. Both identity and identification are root constructs, relating to the ‘what’, or ‘who’ of identity, but that is about as far as their similarities go (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). For where identity is first and foremost a statement about categorical membership used to refer to a person’s expression of individuality or group affiliation (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), identification is the process by which people define themselves, communicate that definition to others, and use that definition to navigate their lives (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). The process of identification provides a perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) which occurs when a person’s self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived group identity (Dutton *et al.*, 1994). The process of identification therefore focuses on the ‘becoming’ of individuals, emphasising how individuals bring attributes of the group’s identity into

their own identities. Identification is a dynamic process incorporating day-to-day and life activities (Abrams and Hogg, 1998) whereby individuals begin to incorporate elements of the collective into their sense of self, capturing the moment-to-moment attempts at becoming a prototypical member of the group and attempting to answer the question: who am I?

In order to achieve a degree of identification, Tajfel (1982) describes a number of necessary components that must be realised. The most important of these is the cognitive component that provides a sense of awareness of membership. Second is the evaluative component that relates this awareness to some specific value connotations. The final component consists of an emotional investment in the awareness and evaluation of group membership (Tajfel, 1982). Over and above these, however, there are additional components that must be present, although these depend on the type of identification sought. It is therefore vital to note the broad types of identification that are recognised. Identification can take the form of either self-referential identification, which occurs when one recognises an affinity towards a collective similar to oneself, or self-defining identification, which occurs through emulating others in order to become more similar to the collective (Pratt, 2003).

Where affinity is found during self-referential identification, congruence to the collective identity is recognised. This relies on the natural process of ‘sense-giving’ – an attempt to guide the meaning construction of others towards a preferred definition of collective reality (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). Over time, sense-giving provides encouragement to continue identity exploration whilst deepening one’s commitment to newly found identity features (DiSanza and Bullis, 1999). On the contrary, emulation requires the individual to change to become more congruent to the collective (Ashforth, 2001). Unlike affinity, this is not a natural or easy process for the individual to undertake and relies heavily on ‘sense-breaking’. This process accentuates the gap between personal and collective identity, motivating the individual to strip down, explore, and then rebuild their identity under a new guise of group identity. Sense-breaking involves a fundamental questioning of identity, challenging the self to fill a void between actual and desired identity (Pratt, 2000).

Another means of creating identity through identification is through sense-making and enacting techniques. Many of the day-to-day struggles an individual faces are as a

result of a continual engagement with the process of forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising identity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Due to this cycle of change, one way of testing and more importantly learning new identities is by projecting them into an environment (i.e. enacting them) and observing the consequences (i.e. sense-making) (Weick *et al.*, 2005). Ashforth (2001) identifies several observable indicators of enactment including identity markers (e.g. fashion sense and style of dress), outcome of performance (both in terms of quality and quantity), and behaviour itself, including conformity to, and acceptance of group norms. Enactment requires full commitment of behaviour, cognition, and affect. It therefore becomes a necessity that individuals receive positive social feedback in order to integrate their new identities into their pre-existing identity.

When enacting an identity, the individual initially feels a degree of situated identification or sense of belongingness to the collective; this is triggered by situational cues. Although this stage is often both temporary and unstable, it is critical in making individuals aware of the potential social categories that exist before they commit to more fundamental connections (Meyer *et al.*, 2006). If favourable reactions are bestowed on the individual, deep structured identification occurs. This is a fundamental, stable connection between the individual and the collective, demonstrating the extent to which one includes the collective as a part of their self-concept. Deep structured identification is strong enough to transcend both situation and context – transcendence which provides a motive of self-enhancement. This is a way of experiencing an identity in a positive manner whilst also understanding the positive growth towards it (Ashforth, 2001). Ashforth also identifies self-knowledge, self-expression, self-coherence, self-continuity, and self-distinctiveness as motives for establishing identification. When fulfilled these self-related motives help provide basic human needs including safety, affiliation, and uncertainty reduction through a deeper understanding of collectives (Hogg and Terry, 2000). These benefits of identification are, however, often criticised as providing only a snapshot of identification, with methodological myopia preventing the application of a systematic process approach in empirical research, which ultimately results in a focus on outcomes at the expense of processes (Kerpelman *et al.*, 1997).

With this, it is beneficial to increase deep-structured identification in early intergroup relations through the power of social myths. Myths (also known as representation

collectives, social representations, or social stereotypes) constitute a crucial part of the background affecting the collective aspects of social behaviour of masses of individuals (Tajfel, 1982). Group myths allow understanding of complex social events through socially shared explanations, positive differentiation from other groups, and justification of actions planned or committed against other groups (Doise, 1988). Incorporating social myths internally, the individual adopts a social self – not yet a subjective state of identity, but a sub-system of self-knowledge. These prototypical elements of social self-help constitute a social representation of the self. This is the first stage in the development of social syntony – a state of social identity dependent on a self-we-others schema (Doise, 1988). Social representations also act as organising principles for symbolic relationships whilst permitting positioning of individuals as significant social objects (Doise, 1988). Acting on these social representations leads to an accentuation of conformity to prevailing norms and superior conformity of the self (Codol, 1975). Even random divisions of individuals into distinct yet arbitrary groups is sufficient to produce perceptions of belongingness to a ‘we’ rather than a ‘they’ group. This triggers responses that lead to positive evaluations of in-group members and conformity to the arbitrarily imposed group norms (Rabbie *et al.*, 1989). This can partly be explained by Balance Theory, which suggests an individual’s perception of cognitive unity and sentiments tend towards a balanced state, including a balance between group think and personal idiosyncrasies (Heider, 1958). There is also a balance between two major thematic lines of identity theory: agency (which concerns power, mastery, and separation) and communion (which concerns intimacy, surrender and union), which govern the relationships individuals hold with each other (Doise, 1988). This is especially true as individuals tend to define themselves in relation to each other referring to representations of their participation in social interaction settings. These thematic lines also overlap when defining groups, with three factors that are common to all relationships: affiliation, power, and formality. From the determination of these factors, questions can be answered surrounding the dimensions of prototypical relationships, for example, are they competitive or cooperative? Are they equal or unequal? Are they intense or superficial? The answers to these questions are used as indicators to create personified and idealised images (Doise, 1988) which in turn can act as the source of positive and desirable outcomes of identity. As a result individuals usually choose to act more favourably towards those they share attributes with even if those attributes are based entirely on arbitrary assignments of identity (Ben-Ner *et al.*,

2009). Affiliation does, however, become stronger as more commonalities and differences present themselves.

Identified in literature are three commonly noted perspectives that allow individuals to differentiate the self from others (Sen, 2006). The first of these is the ‘Inclusive Fit Theory’ which uses shared genes (i.e. family) as a sufficient reason to differentiate one group from others (Hamilton, 1964). The second mechanism is the ‘Evolutionary Theory’, which proposes a steady affiliation to certain groups which are hardwired into some species, for example, for means of physical protection (Wilson, 1978). Both of these theories assume that social groups precede individuals, with the individual simply being born into a structured society and prescribed group affiliations with which they have little to no say in their involvement. Conversely, implying a degree of free will and individual choice as a main criterion – a critical precursor for change and identity display (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008), the final theory commonly cited is ‘Social Identity Theory’ – a proposal that affiliation is based on association of demographic traits (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

### **3.5 Social Identity Theory**

Unlike personal identity, social identity is the aspect of identity that deals with intergroup relations, that is, how people come to see themselves as members of the ‘in-group’ in comparison to the ‘out-group’ and the subsequent consequences of this categorisation (Turner *et al.*, 1987). The value of social identity is therefore derived from the understanding of shared category membership based on intergroup comparison (Onorato and Turner, 2004). Consequently, groups only exist in relation to contrasting categories as identity is gained from comparatively perceiving others to assess their similarity or dissimilarity (Abrams and Hogg, 2006). As a result, groups become a collective of similar persons with unified perceptions and identity, attitudes, and behavioural beliefs. This allows in-group members to see themselves as similar, all in contrast to members of out-groups (Thompson and McHugh, 1990). In order for this to happen the individual must allow their personal identity to give way to social identity, that is, adopting the group mind and thinking of themselves as part of a group – a ‘we’ rather than an ‘I’ outlook (Lewin *et al.*, 1939). To achieve this, the individual displays a number of characteristics that correspond to the group. During the experience these interactions become a chance for groups to celebrate shared values whilst also providing

a mechanism for the symbolic emphasis of social division (Waterman, 1999). This initial stage is made easier during the experience due to the festival site being a ground for social integration, with social and cultural differences reduced to allow for similar characteristics to be adopted as a means of emphasising identity (Crespi Vallbona and Richards, 2007).

Social identity can also provide cues to show when individuality can be displayed in the group and in which ways (Adarves-Yorno *et al.*, 2006). This information is used to influence people as they adjust to their new settings through a process of Referent Informational Influence (Turner *et al.*, 2011). With this, self-esteem becomes bound in the fortune of the group, with out-groups becoming less relevant. Group identity begins to take hold, leaving the individual to go through a process of depersonalisation – the central cognitive process in social identity theory. Self-stereotyping also occurs at this time with individuals seeing themselves as embodiments or cognitive representations of the meanings represented by the in-group (Hogg and Michell, 1996). The individual loses their uniqueness becoming an interchangeable, prototypical model of category (Deschamps and Devos, 1998). This is especially true in cases where no motivational source exists to distinguish the self from others (Brewer, 1993). It is for this reason that social identity does not allow for gradations when identifying with a group – one is either a member of the in-group or a member of the out-group. This is not to say that all members of a group are identical in stature, with an internal structure forming in terms of actual or even perceived prototypicality. The more prototypical a member is, the more liked and respected they will be, however, those who do identify with the group feel a strong attraction to the group regardless of individual attachments within the group (Hogg and Hardie, 1992). This process can be switched on or off in given settings (Hogg and Terry, 2000) with the main source of activation coming from the individual, making the paradigm itself very interactionist in nature. To better understand ‘the social’, one must first understand the psychological definition of ‘the individual’ (Marks, 2005), as well as the various levels of reality in between, for example, the individual, the group, the societal, and the cultural levels (Haslam *et al.*, 2005).

Adopting these into a hierarchy, four clear levels of analysis are shown. The most all-encompassing level is the Ideological level which is concerned with the impact of general social beliefs, social identity, and social behaviour. The next level is the



Positional level. Although resembling the Ideological level, more emphasis is placed on the role or social position (for example status and identity) outside of the immediate situation. Reaching the more individual dimensions, the next levels are the Interpersonal and Situational levels. Located at a local level these are aimed at analysing the social effects of smaller, more exclusive groups. Finally, the Intrapersonal level examines specific situations and specific mechanisms with which individuals most commonly engage (Doise, 1988). Using an over-arching hierarchy of identity in this way, Doise has made it possible to see exactly how society, groups, and most importantly individuals react with identity allowing the theory to retain a certain degree of personal uniqueness.

### ***3.5.1 Social Motivations***

Unlike the Inclusive Fit and Evolutionary Theories, one of the main criterion of Social Identity Theory (SIT) is that the individual has knowledge of, and is consciously aware that they belong to a certain social group or category, as well as recognising the emotional and value significance towards the group as a result of membership (Tajfel, 1982). With this, SIT places more of an emphasis on the motivations and normative influences (i.e. the need for social approval and acceptance) of individuals who choose to join specific collectives (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955) for the main aim of achieving a positive level of self-esteem and self-concept. This goal is first attempted through interpersonal efforts, that is, attempting to achieve positive self-esteem by differentiating from others. If this is not possible the individual will look to social competition between groups as a way to raise their self-esteem, suggesting personal and social identity are placed at two distinct and mutually exclusive poles. Such exclusivity means there is potential for functional antagonism between the activation of individual and group level identities (Turner *et al.*, 1987), although if group ideologies are coherent with personal identity, little or no tension between the two dimensions will occur (Baray *et al.*, 2009).

Social identity is very similar to this with a fundamental need for self-positivity forming the basis for membership (Serino, 1998). Along with self esteem, individuals may categorise themselves to feel competent and effective (self-efficacy related). In fact when depersonalisation does occur the self-esteem motive can be replaced by a collective self-esteem motive, a self-knowledge motive, a self-consistency motive, or a

self-regulation motive. Belonging to a social group is also a necessary condition of individual development, which is itself a deep-rooted aspect of a person's identity affecting the way all social knowledge is reconstructed and filtered (Serino, 1998). For example, individuals respond emotionally to symbolic representations of members of their in-group by exhibiting spontaneous joy or pride (Isaacs, 1975). Having said this, SIT can also have negative effects on the individual. One such example comes in the form of social identity complexity – a term used to describe an individual's subjective representation of the relationship among his or her multiple social identities (Roccas and Brewer, 2002). This may result in potentially discrete and separate identity structures forming across different social groups (Brewer, 2008).

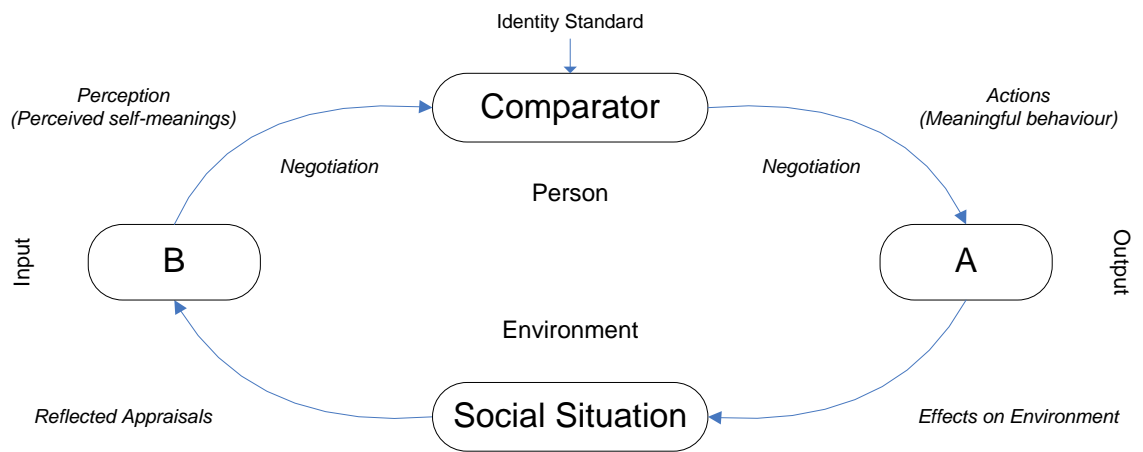
### **3.6 Multiple Identities**

Assuming the goals mentioned above (i.e. positive self-esteem, group safety, affiliation, etc) are one necessity in achieving a happy life, it is only natural that individuals take as many chances as possible to fill these requirements. This raises the question of whether an individual can possess multiple identities or whether they are limited to just one. Identity (and also identification) is often cast as dichotomous, for example, personal-social (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), individual-collective (Triandis, 1989) or dependent-independent (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Contrary to this understanding, casting identification in dualistic terms is often believed to be an over-simplification due to the fact individuals are naturally capable of simultaneously and holistically defining themselves in terms of multiple personas (Postmes and Jetten, 2006). In actuality, the more self-defining and cross-cutting identities become, the more multiple identities a person is said to be capable of having (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). A second reason that multiple affiliation is possible is because identities tend to be positively correlated with one identity often being used to prime another (Apker and Fox, 2002). In many contexts multiple bases for social categorisation can be salient, combined, and used simultaneously (Crisp and Hewstone, 2007).

During a festival experience socialisation can take place at one of three levels: with known people, with new people, and with attendees as a whole (Larsen and O'Reilly, 2008). As an unexpected feature of the event, socialisation with unknown others is seen to be a very important means of cross-cultural understanding (Crompton and McKay, 1997) providing opportunities for potential multiple identities to form (Long *et al.*,

2004). In some situations, however, there is the possibility of multiple identities conflicting – this is usually a result of a divergence between goals, values, and norms (Fiol *et al*, 2009). This dissonance is most likely experienced if the dormant conflict becomes manifest and the individual identifies significantly with each identity (Burke, 2004). If a manifest conflict does arise, the individual can choose to renegotiate identities, enact identities sequentially (based on priority), or in extreme cases commit '*identicide*' by killing off an identity that is seen to impede other more valued identities. Offered as a more rational option, identity negotiation is a means of selecting the most appropriate identity in order to verify self-conceptions (Swann, 1987). Negotiations take place during social interactions, and it is these interactions that inform goal orientation and the role of identity. When taking such an approach, however, negotiation theory pulls more towards role-based identities, placing a much greater emphasis on how the expectations accompanying the role relate to other individuals in the occupying group (Thoits and Virshup, 1997). This somewhat reduces the notion of fluid relationships that occur through positive fragmentation of the self. As a contrast to the individual negotiating identity with others, this research follows the view that identity is more an internal negotiation process than one advocating role-based identities (Jun and Kyle, 2011).

Treating negotiations in this way, an internal hierarchy of identities can be identified based on all the collectives an individual is a member of (Lawler, 2001). Rather than a sole emphasis on negotiation then, individuals can demarcate, compromise, or synthesise which identity or identities become most prominent (Ahuvia, 2005). This entire process is carried out in an immediate environment which also significantly influences the identity most visible in the internal hierarchy of salient identities (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1: Identity Process Model (Burke, 1991)**

### 3.6.1 *Saliency*

When presented with multiple choices concerning identity, the process of selecting the most appropriate identity can prove a challenge in itself. The identity an individual chooses to display at any given time is also known as a salient identity. Saliency pertains to the situational activation of an identity at a particular level, with the activated identity being a function of the interaction between the characteristics of the perceiver and of the situation. These characteristics are more commonly broken down into two categories: accessibility, which is the readiness with which information is activated, and fit, which helps tie categorisation to reality (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). However, although saliency is used to indicate activation of an identity, it is not about the attention grabbing properties of social stimuli, rather it represents psychological significance of group membership, perceptions, and behaviour (Oakes, 1987) which allow individuals to accomplish their personal and/or social goals. Identities are more likely to be made salient if they are embedded in valued relational networks; the more valuable the network is, the more likely the identity will be activated and performed in a given situation. Thus, any categories that the individual perceive themselves to belong to are more likely to lend the individual the necessary cognitive emotions to activate said group identity (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008).

Salient identities do not just occur in the social sphere, with similar rules applying in the case of personal identities. For example, even when an individual associates themselves with multiple extreme groups, personal identities are not necessarily lost (Reicher,

1987); some would say that immersing one's self in a group, thereby sacrificing individual freedom and expression can be highly compatible with, and conducive to a fortified sense of individuality. Rather than being responsible for the loss of identity the content of social identity actually informs or reinforces a subjective sense of individuality (Postmes and Jetten, 2006). Having said this, reinforcement is highly dependent on whether or not the group in question confirms positive self-image and identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), which is again dependent on the type of social structure. Social structures include the experiential social self, the public self, the collective self, the conceptual social self, or the autonomous self, all of which are outlined in Table 3.1.

Social Structure	Group Processes	Translated Belief	Mental Processes	Temporal Dimension	Categorisation
Experiential Social Self	Affects mechanism	'We' As a general collective	Emotional, security, hedonic and affiliation motives	...as long as relationships last	Social groups and categories of memberships
Public Self	Dependance	'We' as a group	Reinforcement, conformity, norms	...until the last person leaves	
Collective Self	Social divisions	'We' as a category	Homogeneity	...as long as cognitive views reflect social reality	
Conceptual Social Self	Cognitive categorisation	Concept of 'we' - 'we-ness'	Mental construct of group	...until the world is better understood, then modified	Beyond social divisions
Autonomous Social Self	Differentiation of two self sub-systems	'Me' as an individual	Uniqueness, personal identity	...as long as the group is relevant	Beyond categorisation

**Table 3.1: Manipulations of the Self (Adapted by Brown and Turner , 1981; Jarymowicz, 2006)**

For simplicity, the above table groups all facets of the social identity, including emotional, evaluative, and other psychological correlates of in-group classification into one (Turner *et al.*, 1987). However, this should not strictly be the case, with such a general grouping representing early thinking on social identity – since then the large grouping has been separated into self-esteem (evaluative) and commitment (psychological) related components, and self-categorisation components (Ellemers and van Knippenberg, 1997). However, these developments are overshadowed by a common criticism of social identity theory – overtime it has become decidedly less

experimental, focussing less on real life instances of discrimination as Tajfel originally envisaged (Brown and Lunt, 2002). For this reason, social identity theory often fails to incorporate modern developments. For example, it often overlooks how categorisation and representation are embedded in a complex process consisting of wider cultural practices and actual material settings (Condor, 2000). As such, latter incarnations of social identity theory explicitly highlight self-categorisation – the process by which a particular stimulus is placed in a general category or grouped with other stimuli (Hogg and Abrams, 1990). Self-categorisation therefore becomes the accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members along with the accentuation of perceived differences between self and out-group members (Hogg and Terry, 2000).

### **3.7 Self-Categorisation Theory**

The basis for self-categorisation is comparison, with the process relying exclusively on intergroup social comparisons that seek to confirm or establish in-group favouring and evaluative distinctiveness between in-group and out-group. As with social identity theory, this is motivated by an underlying need for positive self-esteem (Turner, 1975). However, self-categorisation goes further in that it also shows how the self is conceptualised in intergroup contexts as well as the wider societal context. Before any specific comparison or categorisation occurs there is usually a more general categorisation that is made in terms of psychological (the individual's unity) and sociological (group membership) dimensions. Self-categorisation theory proposes three broad levels of category, from the widest level – the supra-ordinal level (the self as a human being) through the intermediate level (the self-defined as a group member) and finally the most specific level – the subordinate level (the self as a unique being) (Turner *et al.*, 1987). For theoretical simplicity, these are sometimes referred to as interspecies – intergroup – interpersonal categories (Oakes *et al.*, 1999). Unlike the older classification methods, self-categorisation theory allows extensive variation in category structure (Mervis and Rosch, 1981) with categories adopting an internally graded hierarchy with the best representation being known as the category prototype.

At the subordinate level of categorisation individuals only make comparisons based on their own unique personality traits, specifically the presence and absence of features they deem personally critical. During this inter-personal perception the self is deemed

to be the prototype by which all others are measured (Deschamps and Devos, 1998), although at this stage the individual assumes others to belong to the same category as the self, so no formal categorisation will take place (Billig, 1985). Instead emphasis is on comparative aspects of prototypicality only. A more common way of legitimising similarities and differences to the prototypical group member is through consumption practices. In this sense consumption allows individuals to create and maintain both their sense of self as well as their social standing within society (Arnould and Price, 1993). Through symbolic associations between products/services/experiences and group prototypes, individuals are provided both constellations and anti-constellations to assist their decisions (Karanika and Hogg, 2010). When an individual needs, for one motive or another, to invest in a collective, it falls on prototypical consumption (Hogg and Banister, 2001) or anti-consumption (Cherrier *et al.*, 2010) as a means to achieve this. At the intra-group level, the self and others are compared based on the intensity of the traits they share in common (as opposed to any salient differences of features). It is only when one is involved in a collective and opposing forces are detected that this principle will be reversed, with the emphasis placed on differentiating the intensity of shared features. This concept must be emphasised due to its dependence on unstable contexts (Oakes *et al.*, 1991), with changes in context affecting the identity of the individual in accordance with the extent to which they see themselves as categorically interchangeable within their cognitive grouping (McGarty, 2001).

Although providing broad contextual consideration this is still considered a rather grey area, with fixed prototypes often criticised for their failure to reflect the context sensitivity evident in human categorisation, instead providing a caricature of reality (Brewer, 1988). A more persuasive argument against these fixed prototypes comes in the idea of context specific prototypes (Lord *et al.*, 1986) which emphasise context dependent judgements of prototypicality (Brewer, 1988). These modifications have been somewhat adapted into self-categorisation theory by building contextual variability into the definition of the prototype (Jenkins, 2008) making the degree of perceived representation not just a function of properties, but actually basing it on the social context in which the properties are defined (Barlou, 1987). More vocal writers (see Medin, 1989; Turner *et al.*, 1994) have gone as far to say self-categorisation theory is too advanced to even be considered a prototype theory, with perceived similarities and differences being seen as outcomes rather than determinants.

Even with its apparent advancements, self-categorisation is still often perceived as an over-simplistic concept that treats groups as nothing more than objective social categories. A social group should be treated as a unit capable of acting or being acted upon toward or away from benefits and harms (Horwitz and Rabbie, 1982). In essence then, the main criterion of belongingness is an interdependence of fate (Lewin *et al.*, 1939); this being the basis of the Minimal Group Paradigm (Rabbie *et al.*, 1989).

### **3.8 Minimal Group Paradigm**

The Minimal Group Paradigm is a means to measure the minimum conditions necessary for one group to discriminate against another. The optimal conditions for occurrence are when group membership is abstract and deals with irrelevant experiences, thus providing a completely cognitive basis for intergroup differentiation (Tajfel, 1981, Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Original testing of minimal group conditions allocated members based on arbitrary means (acting as a shared fate) and asked them to share rewards between their own group and another named group. Results were interpreted as a compromise between two conflicting social norms which are responsible for guiding subject behaviour. The first of these is the generic social norm of groupness under which in-group members are favoured, whilst out-group members are discriminated against. The second norm is a norm of fairness, under which each group (regardless of in-group or out-group) is given an equal share (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Resulting from this, Turner surmised:

....psychological group membership has primarily a cognitive or perceptual basis....individuals structure theory perceptions of themselves and others by means of abstract social categories, that they internalise these categories as aspects of their self-concepts, and that social cognitive processes related to these forms of self-conception produce group behaviour

(Turner, 1982, pg. 16)

So powerful are these group behaviours that a certain degree of bias is induced even when there is no real utilitarian value to be gained by either the individual or the group (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). However, it is argued that 'tacit coordination' (Scheff, 1967) within a cooperative interaction increases the chances of maximising one's own outcomes through the process of 'reciprocal altruism' (Trivers, 1971). This is



demonstrated in the Prisoner's Dilemma – striving for the long range goal of mutual cooperation maximises the outcome of both prisoners providing the other party can be expected to cooperate (Tucker, 1950). Further theoretical support for the minimal group paradigm comes from the lack of communication and feedback between members in experimental groups – this demonstrates the self, in terms of category membership, provides a powerful source of behavioural uniformity between in-group members (Doise, 1988). Based on this assumption, questions arise as to whether an extreme emphasis on group-ness overshadows and writes off any influence from personal identity?

Despite being social animals, individuals do not live by social identity alone (Ng and Cram, 1988). A complete understanding of the allocation bias found in the minimal group/intergroup context cannot be interpreted solely on the basis of intergroup processes (e.g. group status or social identity) – it must also include interpersonal processes (e.g. personal status or personal identity) (Deschamps and Devos, 1998). Unfortunately, any uniqueness of the individual is largely neglected by an over-emphasis on social identity theory. Personal identity, as a means of strengthening or weakening intergroup discrimination, must therefore play a larger role in intergroup relations than has previously been recognised in MGP. A partial rebuttal of this comes in the form of the Behavioural Interaction Model (Rabbie *et al.*, 1989).

### ***3.8.1 Behavioural Interaction Model***

The Behavioural Interaction Model (BIM) – essentially a reinterpretation of the Minimal Group Paradigm – assumes behaviour is a function of the external environment (including a physical task environment, an internal and external social environment, and an interdependence between the parties involved) and the cognitive, emotional, motivational, and normative orientations (which are in part elicited by the external environment and in part acquired by individuals in the course of their development). Adopting this interactionist perspective helps produce a more personal meaning system regarding the situation.

In the BIM, the main aim of competition is to achieve economic or other tangible outcomes in order to differentiate one's self or one's own group from similar others. This is done in an effort to achieve prestige or positive social identity (Sherif and

Jackman, 1966). Unlike social identity theory, allocation behaviour can be determined by both intra-group cooperation as well as the more commonly recognised social inter-group competition. Also where social identity theory assumes positive identity as the ultimate aim, group theory tends to stress the importance of maximising the outcomes of the group compared to just single individuals (Pruitt and Kimmel, 1977). This suggests a rational link between economic self-interest and the strategy of in-group favouritism. So, although self-categorisation is seen as a crucial pre-condition in producing discriminatory and competitive inter-group behaviour (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), such explicit categorisation is only one of many factors which may contribute to the perception of a bounded social group system. Other factors that must be considered include a common fate, sense of proximity, shared preferences, and shared labels (Rabbie and Wilkens, 1971), all of which are covered more fully by the BIM. Proposing this interdependence hypothesis, the BIM is also more likely to explain the two influential strategies of in-group favouritism and fairness that social identity theory cannot.

Until now, the theories explored have one trait in common – a focus on social group identity gained from some degree of shared identity, belief, or culture. However, social interactions, even those that are low in accessibility and fit, have the potential to alter mood and behaviour in individuals. This is less based on a shared identity and more based on a shared reality, which shows that the experience of reality and meaning is best created and maintained for the individual when it is mutually shared with others (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010). This forces social reaction to be predicated upon and regulated by the establishment of shared reality (Harding and Higgins, 1996) or to put it more simply, going through an experience with someone feels different to going through it alone (Ramanathan and McGill, 2007). The social processes that alter an individual's affective experience and allow for reality to be shared must therefore be explored in greater depth.

### **3.9 Liminality**

In adopting a social perspective, academic research tends to liken the process of identity change to a rite of passage – through moments of self-authentication and communal celebration which tie together the subjective and individual meanings and feelings of the consumer, to a more socially motivated identity (Abrahams, 1981). These unique

feelings are said to be a co-creation of increased levels of emotional intensity (Arnould and Price, 1993) concerning the introduction of a sense of communion (Turner and Turner, 1978). Applying this to an experiential context, it is thought that attendance involves a pilgrimage, whether physical or mental, from a consumer's everyday life to that of a sacred ground that provides liberation, relief, and renewal from daily constraints (Turner and Turner, 1978).

...for the festival goer, the festival becomes a space set apart to which they come seeking an extraordinary experience, which can have an emotional and symbolic significance which they come to associate with the place itself

(Morgan, 2007, pg. 1)

Contrary to previously discussed social perspectives, when adopting the pilgrimage metaphor (van Gennep, 1981) a question of the permanency of the identity change is raised and must therefore be further explored.

The term liminality originates from the Latin '*limen*', meaning threshold, and refers to the transitional phase of a rite of passage during which time social status or rank status is lost; individuals remain largely anonymous whilst showing obedience and humility and following prescribed forms of conduct (i.e. a group identity) (van Gennep, 1981). Due to their temporary construction and acting as sites of fleeting opportunity, the experience acts as a place where individuals gather and then return to their everyday lives, making the idea of liminality especially useful (Wilson, 2006). At the event, existing social structures are said to dissolve along with day-to-day identities of individuals, instead being replaced with alternative values and a more homogenous identity (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010). Adopting this more generic identity has been compared to being accepted into a post-modern tribe (Shields, 1996) which leads to heightened sensitivity and awareness of qualities of the event (Maffesoli, 1996). It also leads to the acceptance of a socialised code which is defined by social interaction (Gardner, 2004). Treating these occurrences as liminal illuminates the symbolic, yet fragmented realm, creating opportunities for people to experiment with new cultural resources and inviting different interpretations that may or may not alter the cultural order (Douglas, 1984). However, this transformation is not always a straight forward either/or identity scenario, with transformation of the self occurring during a three stage process of pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal (van Gennep, 1981).

During the pre-liminal stage, the individual leaves their normal surroundings to begin the pilgrimage. It is during this stage the individual begins to separate themselves from their normal social structure, falling into a state of flux between old and new identity. The second phase – the liminal or ‘limen’ stage is connected to, yet at the same time bracketed from daily life, enabling a temporary segregation from home life. This causes a suspension of everyday activities – cultural goods and possessions that would otherwise bestow status are relinquished in favour of a largely standardised uniform routine (Wilks, 2009), allowing the chance to experiment with new cultural resources in a more symbolic realm allowing for inversion (Turner, 1969) or intensification (Lefebvre, 1991) of patterns of daily life. During this stage, the individual is said to have lost the attributes of the past, but may be yet to gain the attributes of the coming state and may defy classification, making them an ambiguous passenger lacking any status (Turner, 1975). The results of this homogenisation are intense comradeship and egalitarianism, leading to a temporary community (Gardner, 2004) or what Turner refers to as ‘*communitas*’ (Turner, 1974, p.274). *Communitas* acts as a social structure based upon equality rather than any recognised hierarchy in which individuals are socialised to a contextual code, enabling temporary segregation of the attendees from their home-based social ties (Gardner, 2004). The established rules of the experience context are defined by social interaction, leading to the formation of a stable and enduring – albeit liminal, community (Douglas, 1984). The idea of liminality, however, becomes particularly difficult to apply as it is thought that very few experiences actually fall fully in to the liminal category. Therefore, an alternative proposition to the more extreme states of liminal and non-liminal is offered by Turner in his notion of the liminoid state. This refers to those experiences that are optional in terms of whether or not the individual fully commits to the event. In these situations less personal investment is required thus helping to avoid any potential personal crisis to an extent. Possibilities to relinquish identity burdens entirely are possible, however, to achieve this it is often the case that biological processes do not feature in this decision whatsoever.

### **3.10 Synchronised Consumption and Entrainment**

Consuming with another person present (irrespective of verbal/non-verbal contact or communication) changes one’s moment-to-moment reactions and mood to be more in-line with the other person. Sharing experiences can cause coherent emotions and ultimately affect evaluations of the overall situation (Ramanathan, 2005). These

feelings of cohesion are emphasised even more so if the consumers have similar overt reactions to the experience, although for this condition to be met both emotional expression and observation are necessary (Sullins, 1991). Processes allowing for confirmation (or disconfirmation) of thoughts and feelings are known as afferent feedback or mutual gaze. Most typical experiences are measured through a process of moment-to-moment sampling of feelings as well as retrospective feedback. These retrospective evaluations are usually predicted by the peak and end affect alone, with little emphasis placed on the duration of positive or negative feelings (Kahneman *et al.*, 2003). In actuality, experiences of synchrony have an independent effect on feelings over and above peak and end emotions alone. Often these feelings of delight are attributed to the experience itself, however, it has since been shown that they are actually caused more by the social element of the experience. This is due to the belief that most mutual experiences are shared through temporal interactions or ‘mutual entrainment’ at an unconscious level (McGrath, 1991) rather than empathetically at a conscious level (Sullins, 1991). Literature identifies two important means of mutual entrainment – mimicry and emotional contagion (Brown *et al.*, 2006).

Mimicry is a non-conscious tendency to imitate others’ behaviours, speech patterns, words, gestures, postures, and facial expressions (Stel *et al.*, 2008). The link between observed and mimicked activities serves several key functions including social and empathetic development (Bates *et al.*, 1975), fostering an understanding in the therapeutic relationship (Ashton-James *et al.*, 2007), creating bonds between people (Lakin *et al.*, 2003), as well as creating rapport, liking, felt similarity towards others, and increasing the smoothness of interactions (Chartrand and Bargh, 1999). Combined these result in bi-directional feelings of bonding between both the mimicker and the mimicked (Ashton-James *et al.*, 2007). Based on the idea that people are likely to come to personally experience the perceived emotions of others, mimicry requires an automatic and unconscious activation of muscles which provide feedback to the brain evoking corresponding emotions (Hatfield *et al.*, 1993). This process is far from new, with Darwin outlining almost this exact feedback mechanism in his seminal work, ‘Origin of the Species’ (Darwin, 1859).

Mimicry has a temporal element and only becomes active when longer stimulus are incorporated, allowing sufficient time to mimic the target persons emotions (Hess and Blairy, 2001). Becoming more attuned to another person activates a general empathetic

mind-set which enhances pro-social behaviour towards the related target irrespective of the object of mimicry (Stel *et al.*, 2008). Mimicry is therefore motivated by primitive behaviour priming rather than any altruistic or egotistical reasoning with links between mimicry, empathy, and pro-social behaviour coming from the creation of an affective empathetic mind-set (Stel and Vonk, 2010). However, empathy based on thoughts alone can blur the perceptions of a persons' need for help as one concentrates on what the person may be thinking instead of what the person may be feeling (Oswald, 1996).

The second process – emotional contagion, occurs after exposure to an individual expressing positive or negative emotion. This evokes corresponding changes in the emotional state of an observer (McHugo *et al.*, 1985). During this process moods converge and emotional rhythm is shared, essentially allowing expressions to rub off on to another (Neumann and Strack, 2000). This stems from primitive emotional contagion which is the '*tendency to automatically mimic and synchronise facial expressions, vocalisations, postures and movements with those of another person and consequentially converge emotionally*' (Hatfield *et al.*, 1993, pg. 5). Contagion occurs outside of conscious awareness and is a multi-directional process (Zajonc, 1984) ultimately resulting in a change in the receiver's experienced affect (Pugh, 2001).

### ***3.10.1 Impression Management***

Similar to these social processes is Impression Management – another means of enacting identity without committing fully to the group's social processes. Originating from a philosophy of symbolic interaction, which defines social interaction and interpretation as the main basis for meaning derivation (Blumer, 1969), impression management explores how individuals represent their social self (Goffman, 1959). Goffman compares social interaction to a dramaturgical metaphor, with the presented image not necessarily the real self (or real identity), but the self the actor thinks is appropriate for the current audience in the current situation (Goffman, 1971). Unlike the inclusive fit, evolutionary, and social identity theories, impression management uses zero biological processes and can be performed regardless of the mental state of the individual (Marks, 2005). Thus there is rarely a natural basis for identity and group affiliation in impression management. Instead a performance is given relating the individuals 'front' (i.e. their acted identity) to the audiences (i.e. groups) expectations of in-group members. Social mimicry and contagion (as long as they are performed

consciously) can be two such ways an individual enacts this impression, which results in an often unhealthy adoption of a fake social identity (Goffman, 1959). Although exceptions do occur, through impression management and similar processes, groups begin to move away from identifiable collectives, becoming little more than ambiguous collections of people.

### **3.11 Literature Summary**

As discussed earlier, the literature identified as being relevant to the study is rarely treated as one coherent stream. Even examined separately, studies within the context of the experience are not readily available. Despite this, exploration of stimuli is possible from a more general perspective providing a thorough theoretical understanding of the main issues involved in the process of identity creation. However, when attempts are made to apply this understanding to the experiential situation, a certain confusion regarding direction exists

Literary conclusions strongly reflect past identity theories, for example Burke's Identity Process Model (1991) which proposes a cyclical model of identity refined by the individual and the environment, or Ahuvia's (2005) extended self whereby consumption is seen as a person-thing-person interaction with an emphasis on more social elements. Both are equally valid to a degree however, this thesis emphasises the importance and necessity of considering both societal and environmental/physical impact in the consumer identity interaction. In doing so, rather than the more established cyclical model of identity, the literature demonstrates a more hierarchical structure stressing the importance of the addition of interpretation within the process; the traditional action-reaction model is replaced by one of action-interpretation-reaction (Mead, 1934). By making this change, suitable provisions are made to justify inclusion of all three levels of stimuli (i.e. the self, the social, and the physical). Despite all being equal, it is the order in which they occur that distinguishes and defines a unique experiential identity. With this, the self is created by the reflexive process through which an individual perceives and interprets the socially constructed surrounding world (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986). As such, interactions take place in a way that motivates the individual to continually interpret the symbolic meaning of the environment before acting on these meanings (Blumer, 1962).

Accepting the self as a social construct formed through interaction with others, it is logical to accept that a person's subjective consciousness is also the result of a larger objective meaning structure (Charon, 2007). It therefore becomes impossible to attribute the individual or social other as responsible for the social world (Mead, 1934). Although this in itself suggests a more objective ontology, what makes this thinking unique is the argument that rather than significant symbols causing the same reaction in a group, they instead activate a set of different meaningful responses (Mead, 1922). These responses act as catalysts for promoting the same attitude to an object, which activates the 'me' phase of the self – a reflection of the objective meaning structure of the group. The 'me' then acts as a censor – it determines the sort of expression which can take place, sets the stage, and gives the cues (Mead, 1934). Despite this, the individual is still in control of his or her actions – the stimuli sustain the action, but do not define the final outcome of the interaction. This is important to note as it distinguishes this theory from more deterministic existing models (Turner and Stets, 2005). This proposition does not therefore ascribe to any positivist rationale; no assumptions are made concerning content or interpretation of stimuli. Only a loose structure regarding flow and direction of stimuli is suggested through which informants can then dictate the content of the theoretical framework (Thompson and Haytko, 1997).

Further support for this comes from the ability individuals have to construct and maintain identities aided by symbolic resources (Sarup, 1996). These objective symbolic stimuli (including the type of event, event programme, and location) are offered by the experience-maker and other influential bodies (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001) and are accepted as independent manifestations (e.g. values, cultural norms, social structures) which transcend the individual/group yet exert a level of constraint on them (Durkheim, 1982). As shown by Mead (1934) these symbols guide attitudes rather than behaviours. Social groups then form and coalesce around certain constellations based on the dynamics of the group as well as the objectives they have. This social group exists in relation to an out-group (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971), with the in-group identity differing to those who do not share their objective interpretation – in this case the festival group versus the non-festival group. This leads to an inter-subjective identity forming which allows the in-group category to share many similar traits including actions, beliefs, habits, physical appearance, and rules (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).



From this a second level of interpretation takes place whereby the individual selects a more subjective course of action. However, this decision is very much limited by the inter-subjective category with the individual only able to select from a restricted number of actions that are endorsed by the group (Hogg and Michell, 1996). As such, decisions become largely based on the consensus of the converging identity of the group as well as other processes including mimicry or impression management. As this process continues the individual becomes a product of the social category, which is in turn a product of the physical environment, and a unique identity – termed contextual identity, is triggered based exclusively on these higher levels of stimuli (Mead, 1934). As a result the individual incorporates aspects of the experience, namely a degree of identification towards the place and an element of social identity into their own concept of personal identity. For the most part, this identity helps enact similar behaviours and attitudes during the encounter (Blumer, 1969). Although temporal, the transformation is assisted by the liminal nature of the experience as well as attachment to the aesthetic environment (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010). This is all achieved through a dynamic process which is open to continuous interpretation and refinement.

It is therefore suggested that the subjective identity located within the experience is a unique contextual identity only activated during the experience. This identity is based on personal identity and others in the environment, which is in turn influenced by objective stimuli. Due to the limited selections available to them, the identity is similar throughout the entire experience making behaviour and attitudes also similar during the experience event.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

Proposed in the previous chapter is an interactionist summary to help meet the aim of this thesis, that is, to examine the formation of contextually relevant identities, behaviours, and values during the experiential event. In acknowledging a hierarchical structure of how identity is developed, implementation of theory provides a strong foundation from which the formation of contextually relevant identities, behaviours, and values can be explored. Immediately then, it is a necessity that the guide be used to structure methodological considerations. To do so, however, it is important to better define the underlying knowledge that has been leading the research thus far.

This research is guided throughout by the interpretivist-inspired ontology of symbolic interactionism developed by Mead (1934). This follows the belief that the self is created as a result of the reflexive process through which an individual perceives and interprets the surrounding world (see Figure 4.1). Such a stance must be adopted due to the highly subjective nature of the consumer experience with objectives more focussed on understanding why certain behaviours occur during the experience. When adopting any view of reality, it is important that all other methodological concerns are derived from this same perspective, providing a harmonious framework through which to conduct data collection and analysis.

In keeping with this, data collection will revolve around interpretive tools which best fulfil the objectives set out. A three stage field work is followed consisting of participant observation, depth interviews, and engagement with a range of online festival communities. A thematic technique is then used for data analysis. Although this is a regimented means of analysis, its pragmatism gives sufficient leeway to also emphasise emergent categories coming from the researchers' interpretation of the consumers' experience. Additionally, the interpretivist-led rhetoric ensures consistency is maintained and objectives are fully analysed from a researcher-led stance so as to fully contribute to the theoretical field underpinning the practical research.

### **4.1 Ontology and Epistemology**

When defining specific methodological techniques, it is good practice to first establish broader theoretical and philosophical considerations within the research. Outlined by

Bryman (2008) are three levels of knowledge: ontological, epistemological, and methodological, which when combined provide not only a justification for specific methods, but also a paradigmatic framework through which to conceptualise the research (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000).

#### ***4.1.1 Ontological Concerns***

Posing the fundamental question concerning the nature of reality, considerations on an ontological level form the broadest category when questioning how reality is viewed by the world or more specifically, how the researcher chooses to view reality and the subsequent knowledge contained within that reality (O'Gorman, 2008). Ontology is therefore the consideration of being (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000) and questions whether social entities can and if so, should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and again, should be considered social constructions built from the perceptions and actions of social actors (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Within this question, two rival stances have gained significant popularity, these being the objective ontology and the constructivist ontology (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993) which in their purest form are often viewed as polar opposites (Loewenberg, 1965).

Those adopting an objective ontology emphasise the notion that both social and natural realities exist prior to and hence, independently from human cognition (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). As a result, these social phenomena confront us as external factors beyond our reach or influence (Tymieniecka and Backhaus, 2005). However, this viewpoint fails to address any consideration of social impacts on reality, positioning the individual as merely accepting what they see before them without any question of it or influence over it (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000). On the contrary, the constructivist ontology adopts understanding and sophisticated reconstructions of knowledge gained largely from experience (Guba and Lincoln, 2008), thus social phenomenon and their meanings are continually accomplished, produced, and revised through social interactions (Becker, 1986). The underlying notions of constructivism thereby challenge suggestions that categories are pre-given external realities out with the control of social actors (Bryman, 2008); the reality that is confronted by the individual must be the reality that they construe (Gioia, 2003). Reality and knowledge thus become socially constructed and mediated through the subjectivities and inter-subjectivities of

social relationships. Arguing against this, objectivists state that the pre-existence of objects defies the basic foundation and ideology that surrounds constructivism; the existence of objective entities must have existed before society were able to ‘socialise’ them (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). However even with this theory, the objective ontology fails in any attempt to incorporate the social into its status quo, and thus will not be considered an option when explicitly examining the subjectivities of a social experience (Hanks, 1996).

#### ***4.1.2 Epistemological Concerns***

One of the key questions in the epistemological debate focuses on whether the social world can, and moreover should be studied along the same principles, procedures, and ethos as the natural sciences (Bryman, 2008). This question alone goes some way in addressing the issue of whether the ‘one truth’ advocated so strongly by the natural sciences is transferable to a social context. The root of the one truth comes from the belief in reality as a natural and scientific occurrence – a view that exerts obvious dominance over the more traditional sciences (Weber, 2004). This epistemology is more commonly referred to as positivism.

Positivism was first used by Comte (1830) and in its strictest sense refers to the ability to generalise knowledge and reality across situations, resulting in the ‘one natural truth’ (Popper, 1957). The positivist epistemology takes its strength from its deterministic base, providing a scientific means of ensuring reliability and generalisability across results (Neurath, 1959). It is these easily implemented and representative conclusions that made positivism the largely dominant epistemology during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, Kincheloe and Tobin, 2009). However, such a scientific understanding does not lend itself well to all disciplines, with those attempting to conduct social science-based research struggling to adapt to such strict and binding practices (Hirschheim, 1985). Acting on this positivist critique, it was necessary for the creation of an opposing epistemology that was not solely focussed on explaining knowledge, but one that was more interested in understanding it (Schwandt, 2000) and with this the epistemology of interpretivism was developed.

Offered as a direct alternative to positivism and social positivism, the emphasis in the interpretivist epistemology is on social action as being meaningful to actors (Henderson,

2011). These actions only became meaningful after a degree of subjective interpretation – a contradictory force to the more common reductionism of human actions as advocated by the positivist mentality (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Particularly prevalent in this discussion was prominent sociologist Max Weber who claimed social sciences as a means to understand social phenomena in terms of meaningful categories of human experience (Weber, 1924) or more simply, to recognise the nature of subjectivity when studying society (Checkland, 1999).

Weber, through developing the idea of *verstehen* (i.e. how individuals create their own understanding of the social world) argued that the positivist reduction could only be achieved through ignoring the subjective dimensions of human action, for example internal logic and the interpretive processes through which action is created (Husserl, 1964). In contrast, through developments in understanding identity that were also taking place, it was shown that human beings are in fact very capable of attaching meaning to the events and phenomena that surround them (Freud, 1922). The idea of *verstehen* stated that from their interpretations and perceptions individuals can select the most appropriate course of meaningful action, providing sources and explanations of human action (Gill and Johnson, 2002). In understanding this, researchers are then able to understand the world of their subjects – a critical necessity within this research, (Bogard and Wertz, 2006). Due to these considerations it is necessary to follow a philosophical construct compatible with these beliefs. Symbolic Interactionism is therefore selected as the philosophy that will further guide methodological considerations.

#### ***4.1.3 Symbolic Interactionism***

Symbolic Interactionism is an interactionist theory concerned with the understanding of how human beings define their experiences by giving meaning to their identities, behaviours, realities, and social interactions (Hewitt, 2000). Developed by Mead (1934), symbolic interactionism is divergent from other popular theories (e.g. Weber's Interpretive Program and Schutz's Phenomenological approach) as Mead's theory is founded more in traditional psychology and pragmatic philosophy (Etzrodt, 2008). Grounded in interpretivism and pragmatism (Stets *et al.*, 2006) symbolic interactionism attempts to answer the traditionalist's argument; can interpretive accounts of phenomena accurately and adequately capture social life (Parry and Johnson, 2007)? To

do so symbolic interactionism moves past methodological pluralisms, instead leveraging strengths solely from the interpretivist paradigm (Tan and Hall, 2007). Within the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, the emphasis falls on people's common sense thinking, whereas the approach of symbolic interaction treats an individual's appreciation as a result of the process of interpretation (Etzrodt, 2008). It is this evolution that differentiates it from its counterparts, and this is what makes it suitable for the study at hand (see Figure 4.1).

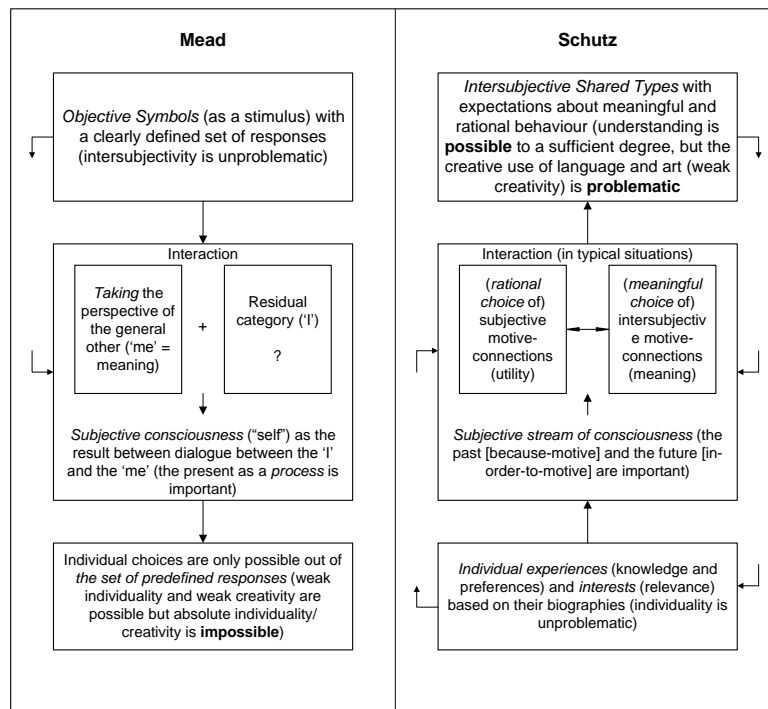


Figure 4.1: Mead's Framework of Symbolic Interaction (vs. Schutz) (adapted from Etzrodt, 2008)

A second distinction of symbolic interactionism made by Mead comes in his attempt to broach the more theoretical debates in the field of psychology, namely that of identity (Porter, 1998). Mead disagreed with the theories that were being most commonly considered and going against several of his predecessors, attacked the issue of personal and other identities that individuals possess. In making these changes Mead attempts to present society as an indispensable part of the self (Jeon, 2004), in other words, key social actors construct social issues through interpretations (Lamertz *et al.*, 2003). This is in contrast to 'me' theories which portray individuals as only being capable of responding to what they are presented with.

Further, symbolic interaction proposes that people live in a world of socially constructed shared meanings which are developed over time and become taken for

granted social facts (MacLean, 2008). These meanings are encoded as symbols which are derived from social interaction and subsequently modified through interpretation (Greenfield and Bruner, 1969) eventually creating lasting patterns of action and structure (Fine, 1992). As such, interactions take place in a way that motivates the individual to interpret the symbolic meaning of the environment and act accordingly (Blumer, 1962). With this, the human mind becomes free to grow and change in response to the quality and extent of interactions (Angrosino, 2007). This is important to note as it is essentially the decisive factor that makes symbolic interactionism non-deterministic, and hence not an objectivist philosophy (Turner and Stets, 2005). This final clause is also shows Mead's complete acceptance of individual experiences, albeit from an identical social core which transmits symbols into the subjective world of meaning and values that in turn directs individual activities (Lal, 1995).

With an aim of understanding the subjective self which forms from two prior levels of interpretation, it is necessary to employ and develop a naturalistic approach of data collection. In doing so, the researcher must be actively engaged in the context of the person being studied (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986). Adopting such an approach, the research appreciates the understanding of reality in its own terms which allows for a rich description of people and interactions in a natural setting (Delamater *et al.*, 2006). The study therefore allows the lifting of veils that cover the area of group life, not by substituting preformed images for first-hand knowledge, but by getting close to the area and by digging deep into it through careful study (Blumer, 1969). With this in mind, studies using symbolic interactionism as a sociological research approach tend to adopt more in-depth qualitative methodologies making the application of symbolic interactionist principles adaptable to many current situations (see Table 4.1). Taking its lead from extant literature then, with a specific focus on identity in leisure environments this study incorporates a selection of these methods as a way to fully explore the complexities of experience (Beavens and Laws, 2008).

<b>Context</b>	<b>Technique</b>	<b>Author</b>
Shopping Experience	In-depth and semi-structured interviews	(Griffith, 2003)
Nursing Community	Grounded theory	(Jeon, 2004)
Sign Value	Self-documentation	(Mi-Hea Cho and Kerstetter, 2004)
Leisure and Identity, Marathon Running	Auto-ethnographic Project	(Collinson and Hockey, 2007)
Construction of sense of fairground space	On-site observation and photo-elicitation guided interviews	(Kyle and Chick, 2007)
Leisure Methodology	CAP – creative analytic practice	(Parry and Johnson, 2007)
Elite athletes and motherhood	Semi-structured interviews	(Palmer and Leberman, 2009)
Marine Settings and Meanings	In-depth interviews	(Wynveen <i>et al.</i> , 2010)
Shame and disengagement	Observations	(Chao <i>et al.</i> , 2011)

**Table 4.1: Studies incorporating the philosophy of Symbolic Interaction**

Engagement in context affords the field worker the ability to use socially acquired and shared patterns of human activity as a means of interpretation and study (Silverman, 2010). Although these experiences are personal accounts, the subjectivities it proceeds from and returns to are collective (O'Gorman, 2008). This makes qualitative methodologies particularly relevant when entering field situations in which social issues or behaviours are not clearly understood (Healy *et al.*, 2007) and prove vital in bridging the duality of the observer and observed (Coffey, 1999). Although this hints towards an ethnographic research, it is recognised that due to the temporal nature of the research context and the lack of fully inductive reasoning, conducting pure ethnographic research would prove methodologically problematic. Rather than risk the integrity of the research, the methodology will not attempt to implement an ethnographic approach, instead following an in-depth interpretive methodology inspired by the strengths of contextual engagement. With this in mind, a structured three stage methodological process is adopted (see Table 4.2). First, discussion concerning techniques for collection of data is presented with validation for methods selected. This is followed by appropriate sampling techniques, in this instance purposive sampling and again, justification as to why this is suitable. Analysis harmonious to these decisions is considered and finally a brief discussion of ethical reflections.



Stage	Name	Purpose
1	Collection	3 stage comprehensive data capture
2	Sample	Purposive selection of sources to achieve a representative sample to underpin the project objectives
3	Analysis	Interpretive analysis of data using NVivo and Thematic Analysis

**Table 4.2: Main Considerations for the Research Approach (Adapted from Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry, 2003; Jayanti and Singh, 2010; Keinan and Kivetz, 2011; Kozinets, 2002)**

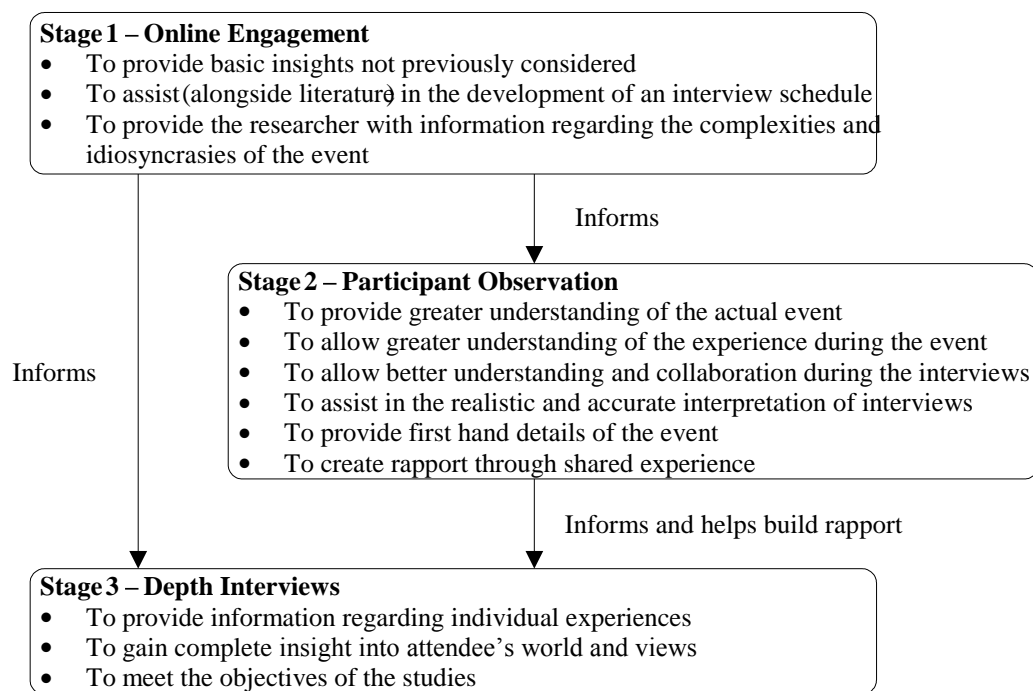
## 4.2 Data Collection

The chosen method should be carefully selected to fulfil the specific objectives of the study at hand, however, it should be noted that using any method independently adds to the difficulty of understanding complexities within the context (Stewart, 2003). To overcome this weakness, Angrosino (2007) advocates using a range of contemporary techniques (see Table 4.3) – a stage not only suitable, but necessary during interactionist research to allow a degree of triangulation (Angrosino, 2007). In deciding which techniques are most appropriate, a number of considerations must be made. For example, due to ethical considerations (see section 4.6.1) it is not possible to implement visual methodologies. Due to time constraints and access to samples it would be inefficient to attempt participant diaries or poetry. Of the remaining techniques, those which are viable include observations/observer diaries, interviews, reflexive essays, netnography/on-line engagement, and personal narratives.

Tools	Authors
<b>Observation</b>	Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Sharpe, 2005; Ezan, 2009; Demant et al, 2010; Boddy, 2011
<b>Interviews</b>	Fincham, 2008; Ayadi and Bree, 2010; Dempsey, 2010
<b>Reflexive Essays</b>	Small, 2006; Bettany and Daly, 2008; Howe, 2009
<b>Poetry</b>	Parry and Johnson, 2007; Kozinets, 2012
<b>Netnography</b>	Saraneva and Saaksjarvi, 2008; Stebbins, 2010
<b>Storytelling</b>	Parry and Johnson, 2007; Mair, 2009; Hooper, 2011
<b>Diaries</b>	Martin et al, 2006; Healy et al, 2007
<b>Visual Methods</b>	Brace-Govan, 2007; McMillan and Ng, 2007; Brown et al, 2010; Valtonen et al, 2010; Pilcher, 2011
<b>Personal Narratives</b>	Ardianto, 2007; Kivel et al, 2009; Schembri, 2009; Hultsman, 2012

**Table 4.3: Use of Interpretive Methods**

Attempting to fully highlight the subjectivities of the festival, three of these tools are selected. The first method looks to online festival community forums – an effective way to identify naturalistic responses to experiences (Kozinets, 2006). Researcher observations are next selected as a means of understanding the consumption context, experiences, and identity construction (Leigh *et al.*, 2006). The process is completed with informal interviews which allow a more structured way to collect reflexive experiences through conversations (Grossberg, 2011). Reasoning for these tools comes primarily from the insight they provide at various stages throughout the data collection process (see Figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.2: Structure and Stages of Data Collection (Source: Author)**

### 4.2.1 Online Engagement

Online engagement is a process that studies and engages online communities by interpreting writings (e.g. blogs and websites) as narratives written to a reflective plot (Alavi *et al.*, 2011). Adopting this tool should not be mistaken as a means of capturing the first-hand experience of an individual or an attempt at performing a netnography, but instead is intended to rearrange experiences in a way as to allow new meanings to emerge or for the authentication of the original meaning (Sandlin, 2007). The importance of these methods in recent years is reflected in the huge amount of data that is universally available through the internet (Fischer and Parmentier, 2010); gathering

data is a faster, simpler, and less expensive way of collecting an otherwise unobtainable provision of verbal and visual materials (Kozinets, 2002) and is also unaffected by the researcher's presence giving a natural snapshot of behaviours and responses (Schau *et al.*, 2009). This goes some way in removing the often large disjunctures between the official story people tell and the actions that they actually demonstrate (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). As such, online methodologies have become common, already used when exploring: the norms that determine social capital (Mathwick *et al.*, 2008), a means to collect experiences (Keinan and Kivetz, 2011), identity-related consumption (Schau *et al.*, 2009), and brand image (Thompson *et al.*, 2006).

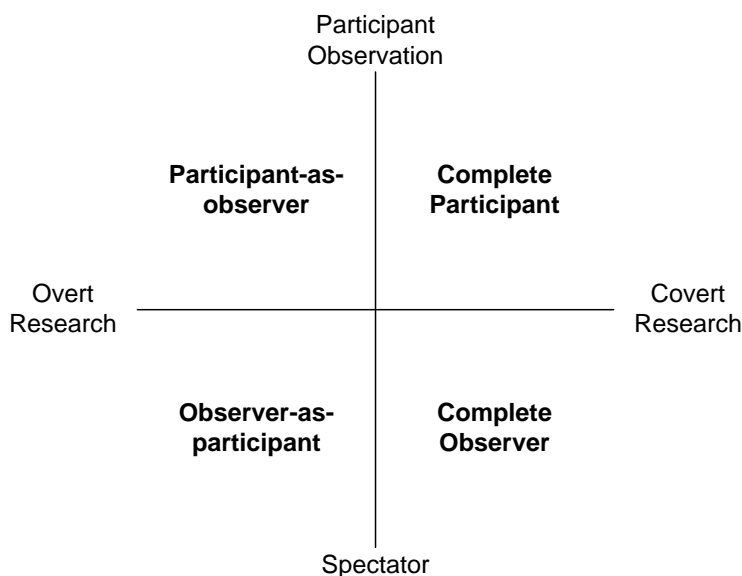
Despite the relative advantages of this technique, the appropriateness and value that can be gained is not always realised. As stated previously, a complete netnography could not be achieved. This was primarily due to a lack of complete and comparative information available across event forums and social media. On more than one occasion a forum did not exist for events, for example due to size and popularity of the festival or due to forum being closed and removed because of negative postings. To ensure consistency then, three popular forums were selected – a nationwide music magazine and the number one and number two festival websites in Europe. Comments and discussions are read with notes taken regarding relevant postings for the past twelve months. Rather than being analysed using in-depth techniques, information is fed into the topic guide for use in interviews. The information also provides the researcher a better understanding of underlying cultures, opinions and behaviours apparent across the festivals.

#### **4.2.2 Participant Observation**

There are several means of achieving naturalistic immersion (Ezan, 2009), however, one of the more commonly accepted methods comes from the researcher acting as a research participant (Hede and Kellett, 2011). This branch of research is regarded as a primary research tool due to oft held beliefs that state the social world cannot be understood by studying experimental simulations (van Der Heijden and Sorensen, 2005) as these only show how people behave in artificial situations (Boddy, 2011). However, when adopting a strictly naturalistic position, one runs the risk of becoming too entrenched in reporting what life in a setting is actually like often at the neglect of examining how people actually create meaning in their lives (Booth, 1880); individuals are viewed as

sources of data rather than having any interpretive capacity of their own (Garfinkel, 1967). With this doubt in mind, one can look to the alternate tradition of ethno-methodology – a process which seeks to understand how social order is created through talk and interaction (Aganoff, 2006). Sharing a constructivist and interpretivist base, ethno-methodology examines the methods people use to construct reality in everyday life, how social reaction is constructed in everyday situations, and how people go about creating meaningful categories for themselves and for others (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). Conversely to naturalism, however, the criticism of ethno-methodological thinking is the risk of losing the topic of analysis by focussing on the processes that create it (Pilcher, 2011).

Taking into account these complexities, the researcher is forced to make a decision based on the extent to which they become involved in the host world. As such, a trade-off occurs between the degrees of participation versus spectatorship which also affects the extent to which covert research can be carried out (Geiger, 2007). The relationship between these elements is mapped using a basic framework advocating four different levels of observation/participation (Gold, 1958) (see Figure 4.3).



**Figure 4.3: Typology of Participant/Spectator Observations (Gold, 1958)**

The position selected depends upon a number of factors including research philosophy, access to sites, and access to individuals. In this study, research is conducted across a variety of sites therefore relative terms and contextual dissonance can pose problems

during analysis of results. As the only constant participant attending all of the festivals it is recognised that the researcher holds an important reflexive position in bridging the gap between the different contexts and the interviewees within (Howe, 2009, Mair, 2009). To fully utilise this fact the researcher will, to a degree, take part in the festival and in doing so make independent observations over the course of the festival period. This helps form a clearer picture of each festival, allowing for relationships to appear concerning behaviours and identities across the various environments (Hede and Kellett, 2011). In Gold's (1958) terminology then, the research best reflects the participant-as-observer stance. In adopting this approach; *'the researcher surrenders to the everyday experience while in the natural setting but, instead of going native, remains latently committed to being a researcher, and comes back to reflect and report upon the experience as a member'* (Gill and Johnson, 2010, pg. 162). It is accepted that during this process it is not always possible to fully catch reality in flight, however, the addition of observations allows the researcher to experience hidden processes and penetrate misinterpretation, fronts, evasions, and lies (Boddy, 2011).

### **4.3 Participation Observation**

Allowing the researcher to record first-person accounts of events assists in the creation of producing a true confessional mode of research (Howe, 2009). With this, the researcher becomes a central player within the story of the community under study, with part of the story told explicitly from the view point of the researcher (Hede and Kellett, 2011). This approach contrasts the two more extreme approaches of the realistic mode (a depersonalised account that objectively renders portraits of an event provided by an emotionally neutral analyst) and the impressionistic mode (an account openly embracing literary devices such as dialogue, character sketches, or flashbacks) of research (Angrosino, 2007).

In total, the researcher spent approximately 300 hours across various festival environments. To record observations, notes were taken in a semi-structured style. Upon entry to the festival, the researcher familiarised himself with the campsite layout and arena layout by walking around the area several times paying attention to the entry procedures, campsite activities, crowd behaviour etc. Notice was also given to festival participants in terms of age, dress, and behaviour, however, special care is given so that pre-established judgements are not recorded in an attempt to avoid any bias. When

using a confessional mode of observation and analysis, it becomes a priority that results are not tainted or biased towards the researchers end goals, for example, through ethnocentric thinking – the belief that the researcher’s own way of thinking and doing is more natural, and thus preferable to the way of others (Boddy, 2011).

Immediately after each festival, accounts of the weekend are written up in more detail while still fresh in the mind of the researcher. A programme from the event and timetable are also used to add accuracy and provide a means of recollecting things that may have been forgotten. Although not analysed explicitly, the researcher’s accounts are used to supplement information gained from the conversational interviews. The observations also go some way in reconciling issues prevalent in presenting pure written analysis. As highlighted by Black (2006), when presenting interpretivist research it is more often the case that the subtleties and nuances of contextually rich, powerful data are lost due to the need of the researcher to conform to traditional data presentation. To overcome this careful and thorough analysis and interpretation will take place to allow ‘more colourful’ observations a chance to shine through.

#### ***4.3.1 Input into Coding Process***

Documenting the festival from the perspective of ‘researcher as participant’, it is vital that this data be used as effectively as possible. Although there is no intention to rigorously analyse the observation outputs, they are still useful as a more informal means by which to guide the process of coding. Adding the observational outputs allows the coding guide to represent not only themes that were sourced in past literature, but also makes new emerging themes more explicit. Although it is acknowledged that observation alone will not identify all new themes – there is still space for themes to develop from interview scripts, it will greatly help in the initial phases of exploring and verbalising their presence during the structured coding process.

#### ***4.3.2 Depth Interviews***

As outlined in section 1.3 this research aims to understand individual’s evaluations as a way to identify specific aspects of the experience critical to the behaviours and perceptions associated with the event. Such thorough objectives cannot be achieved by the implementation of the observation strategies alone and it is therefore necessary to adopt an interview framework as a means of collecting further relevant information.

The interview takes its strength from the belief that conversation is the ultimate context through which knowledge is understood (Rorty, 1979) and that knowledge and the knowledge-maker cannot be separated (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2005). The method is therefore an epistemological process in which qualitative, descriptive data are provided about real-life accounts (di Salvo *et al.*, 1989) with an aim to seek out significant and observable human activity that are sufficiently complete so as to allow some degree of inference about that individual (Wright-St Clair *et al.*, 2011).

In its most simple form, the interview can be compared to a professional form of conversation technique between two or more individuals, albeit with an added degree of structure and purpose (Bowen Jr, 2012). Even as the interview becomes more complex the similarities to a conversation can still be observed (Bulearca and Tamarjan, 2010) however, it must also go beyond the spontaneous exchange of views that exist in any normal conversation (Rindell *et al.*, 2007). Instead the interview must become a carefully constructed process of questioning and listening with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge (Kvale, 1996). For example, unlike a conversation between two strictly equal partners, the interaction is controlled, defined, and directed by the interviewer, the topic of the conversation is introduced by the researcher, and it is also the interviewer who critically follows up on the subject's answers to questions (Bryman, 2008).

The extent of control the interviewer chooses to display ranges from a very structured, formal event to informal, conversation-like encounters – the choice of which will greatly affect the type of data collected (Bussiere, 2009). To better understand these contrasting ideas, it is worth looking towards Kvale's 'traveller versus miner' metaphor, with the miner representing one who is intent on rigid digging in order to find the answers that are sought, whereas the traveller acts as a spontaneous, free-flowing researcher travelling through environment, culture, and subject to arrive at their some end goal (Kvale, 1996). Although useful in their own rights, it is recognised that the interviews at either extreme of this spectrum come with several weaknesses that make them inappropriate for the study at hand. For example, formal interviews, although providing formatted data do not allow for full exploration of the consumer experience (Henderson, 2007). On the other hand, completely unstructured interviews have potential to stray so far from the intended subject that results become so varied, no meaningful conclusion can be drawn from the data (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2009).

With the evolution of methodological knowledge, namely the rise in less positivist traditions, attempts are made to manipulate the interview process to better suit the new end needs (Nuttall *et al.*, 2011). Rather than just being seen as the creation of knowledge by making it explicit, the more modern views place an emphasis on the critical elements of the exchange process with a view to elucidate value judgements (Adoriso, 2008) and show the significance attached to the meaning of the experience (Tripp, 1993). Such expansion has made the interview a particularly useful method to employ to show circumstances of shared patterns among a specific group through shared communications. With this, the interview process recognises that knowledge exists neither inside nor outside of a person, but in the relationship between person and world (including other actors within the world) (Lyotard, 1991). As a result, the interview becomes more a means of investigating inter-subjective and subjective realities than purely objective realities (Kain, 2004).

Adopting a technique that does fully manipulate and utilise the strengths of the interview method, semi-structured depth interviews are used as a means of getting the best from both worlds. Unlike structured interviews which have a rigid frame of reference, semi-structured interviews refer to the situation in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule, that is, common questions asked to all respondents which makes up the 'structured' part of the interview (Bryman, 2008). This goes part way in satisfying those intent on generalisation allowing for some repetition and clear classification of respondent thoughts (Alexandru and Carmen, 2011). However, it also allows the interviewer to vary the sequencing of the questioning, whilst accepting a certain degree of latitude to ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant responses (Nuttall *et al.*, 2011). This is a necessary component of the interview process as it is impossible to freeze a social setting or circumstance (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982); each case is never the same for each individual, especially when interpretations of settings are sought.

By applying a limited degree of structure to each individual interview, complex meanings of themes in the lived world from the subject's perspective are understood (McCormick, 2004) encouraging description and explanation of those understandings. Additionally this structure allows the respondent a degree of freedom to talk about what they see as relevant to the discussion, making interactions between individual and



context visible (Roberson, 2011). Borrowing from the narrative methodology, this particular strength comes from the acknowledgement of the interview as a legitimate form of expression of human sense-making, primarily for its role in placing the respondent in control of the information they choose to share. Narrative therefore becomes not only a description, but an explanation of significant events (Hendry, 2009). Intrinsically social in nature, as a mode of inquiry narratives maintain that there are in fact multiple ways of coming to 'know', with collective identities sharing many constructs but also being replete with contradictions (ESRC, 2012). As such, it is often the case that different individuals within a larger collective will tell quite different stories of how they are embedded within the larger group, conveying the most individualised subjectivities of the experience (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). However, such an approach can only be implemented if the researcher is fully willing to follow the path of the respondent, and in doing so adopting a degree of deliberate naiveté is vital (Josselson and Lieblich, 1995); although the pre-formulation of questions is important, it is equally important to openly accept new and unexpected phenomena that are brought up. As such, each interview can almost be treated as illuminating different cases, for example, each interviewee may be illuminating the separate family, society, or organisation that he or she alone represents (Livingstone, 2005). Adopting an interview lacking rigidity helps in revealing novel descriptions of previously undocumented, first-hand experiences that are free from researcher bias (Serenko and Turil, 2010).

An example of a completed interview script can be found in appendix 1.

#### **4.4 Sampling**

Due to the in-depth nature of qualitative research, in very few cases is it possible to study a population as a whole. Time constraints, cost constraints and in many situations realistic ambitions make it necessary to limit the audience that is studied. Forced to acknowledge this limitation naturally leads to the area of sampling. Discussed previously, qualitative research methods are most regularly criticised for their departure from true scientific analysis (Kincheloe and Tobin, 2009) with many arguments revolving around generalisability; how can a small proportion of a population be representative of a population as a whole? In deciding the method most suitable it is first necessary to consider this natural trade-off that occurs between targeting a wider

audience versus maximising what can actually be learnt (Gwyther and Possamai-Inesedy, 2009). This decision does not come down to a one-or-other scenario with Payne and Williams (2005) advocating a stance of limited generalisation as more appropriate and more pragmatic than a total rejection of, or a total adherence to a statistical sampling technique. However from an interpretive perspective, this trade-off holds a lot less relevance; generalisability and representation should be considered secondary to an in-depth study of a few key cases. Qualitative sampling is therefore appropriate for the task at hand – exploration and understanding (Bogard and Wertz, 2006). Despite this, there are still a number of crucial decision which must be made regarding the most appropriate interpretive sampling approach (Burck, 2005).

In order to choose a method that suitably fits these criteria Wengraf (2001) states the necessity of examining the aims of the research, the central research questions, and questions arising from theory. Taking these three assertions into consideration will not only lead to the most appropriate method of sampling, but will also greatly assist in the formation of questioning material. Based on this, the most acceptable and valuable sample consists of some variety in terms of key characteristics whilst maintaining a relatively small sample size (Hignett and Wilson, 2004). Adopting a sample comprising of a small number of detailed cases would, in Patton's Typology of Randomised and Purposive Sampling (Patton, 1990) which advocates '*information-rich samples*' with '*the logic and power of purposeful sampling lying in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth*' (pg. 169) point towards a purposive method of sampling. This method, as reported by Bryman (2008), is one of the most common forms of qualitative sampling that aims to overcome initial weaknesses outlined above, namely generalisation.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling. This is guided by selection of cases on the basis of illustrating some feature of interest (Silverman, 2010), that is any actor who can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomena. Individuals are therefore selected based solely on their relevance to the research questions being posed (Guarte and Barrios, 2006)

I am stressing the deliberateness with which subjects are chosen...uses prior knowledge of the universe to draw representatives from it who possess distinctive qualifications.

(Honigman, 1982, pg. 80)

Adapting this prior knowledge acts as a set of criteria which distinguish good examples from ones less useful for research purposes (Wengraf, 2001). Such knowledge is applicable at various stages of the sampling process including events, settings, actors, and artefacts (Marshall and Rossum, 2012) and can change between stages. Based on this, sampling will occur at two levels – sampling of the event and sampling of the actor. This ‘Big Net Approach’ (Fetterman, 2010) uses homogenous purposive sampling first to establish a similar cultural base, then maximum variation purposive sampling to understand different knowledge within this culture as advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994, pg. 28).

#### ***4.4.1 Selecting the Festival***

When selecting any contextual sample using purposive sampling, the selection must follow on from research objectives (see section 1.3). Some basic principles laid out by Bryman (2008) suggest selecting an environment comparable to others that have been studied previously but have not been over-studied with minimum gate-keeping obstacles and where the researcher will not provide a burden within the community (Rock, 2001). In this instance the main priority is to seek out festivals that provide a balanced sample of organisations in which issues and processes can be compared, but in which heterogeneity is also significantly varied (Maitlis and Thomas, 2007).

To begin this process, it is necessary to first name the population and unit of analysis (Wilks, 2009). In this situation the unit of analysis is named as the music festival event. Due to geographical, time, and cost constraints this is narrowed down to music festivals held within Scotland during the summer months. Using [virtualfestivals.com](http://virtualfestivals.com), a search was conducted using these parameters with twenty-two festivals identified. The festival must allow camping for a minimum of three nights; it is envisioned that any less time would not be long enough to allow for potential changes in behaviour to occur. This reduced the potential list to fifteen. Of the fifteen remaining several are aimed at a very specific musical genre; as the research does not look to explore cross-cultural identities,

a mix of genres was not sought. Concerns are also raised that these festivals may prove too limiting in terms of the audience they generate thus not allowing variation among actors. The festivals must have been operating for five years or longer so as to ensure organisers have had sufficient time to explore the methods of best practice whilst also giving confidence that the festivals have obtained some kind of reputation and character of their own. The final imposition is that the festivals should accommodate over 10,000 attendees. Applying these conditions, a suitable degree of homogeneity is attained between festivals, whilst also providing some heterogeneity in respondents. This search resulted in the selection of three festivals shown in Table 4.4.

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Musical Genres</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Camping Facilities</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Years</b>
Festival A	Popular music and dance, international headliners	Farmland, Central Scotland	Tents, campervans, luxury camping, pre-made camping	60,000	19
Festival B	Scottish bands, Celtic bands, local bands, mid-range headliners	Farmland, Southern Scotland	Tents, mobile homes	20,000	11
Festival C	Scottish bands, Celtic bands, local bands, mid-range headliners	Country Estate, Northern Scotland	Tents, caravans, mobile homes	10,000	9

**Table 4.4: Festival Samples**

#### ***4.4.2 Selecting the Individuals***

Using purposive sampling to select potential interview candidates allows the researcher significant control throughout the process. Despite possessing knowledge of the festival from both the on-line and observation stages, it is unfeasible or unwanted to provide a sample that accurately represents 60,000 individuals. Narratives and knowledge come into existence not as a product of the individual but as a facet of relationships – the focus is not the individual, but the stories and experiences which all individuals have. Within the event culture, every individual provides a valuable story thus maximum variation sampling can be implemented to select a variety of actors based on surface characteristics (Cresswell, 2013).

Upon approaching individuals, it is necessary to attain three pieces of information. These are: the age of the candidate, the coherence of the candidate, and the length of time the candidate is spending at the festival, all of which determine the candidate's

inclusion in the study. Upon meeting these criteria the candidate is fully briefed on the purpose of the research and presented with complete ethical guidelines. If agreed upon, interviews take place immediately and are recorded using a digital Dictaphone. Interviews last anywhere from a minimum of 30 minutes to 75 minutes depending on the depth of discussion and timetable of the individual. Complete details of the individuals interviewed can be found in Table 4.5.

<b>Given Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Before</b>	<b>Other Festivals</b>	<b>Camping</b>	<b>Attending With</b>
John	22	France/Edinburgh	Student	N	y	Y	Friends
Steven	46	Motherwell	Engineer	y, 14	y	Y	Friends, son*
Patrick	18	Motherwell	Student	y,1	n	y	Friends, dad*
Emma	22	-	Design Intern	N	Other	y	Friends
Laura	24	Newcastle	Student	N	y	y	Friends
Jane	24	Newcastle	Financial Accountant	N	y	y	Friends
Garth	37	Close	Investment Analyst	y, 6	n	y, residence	Wife
Esther	19	Edinburgh	Student	N	n	y	Friends, school and university
Emily	19	Edinburgh	Student	N	n	y	Friends, school and university
Phil	28	Edinburgh	Investment Management	y, 10	y	y	Friends
Greg	28	Edinburgh	Financial Analyst	y,8	n	y	Friends
Claire	21	Edinburgh	Student	y,1	n	y	Friends
Lucy	24	-	Trainee Accountant	y,2	y	y	Boyfriend
Caroline	20	Australia	Student	N	y	y	Friends
Justin	20	Leeds	Student	y, 8	n	y	Brother, girlfriend
George	21	Dunfermline	Retail Manager	y,10	y	y	Friends
Robert	19	Glasgow	Chef	y,1	n	y	Colleagues, friends
Tim	21	Dunfermline	Student	N	y	y	Friends
Randy	22	Dunfermline	Teacher	N	y	y	Friends
Richard	55	Greenock	School Teacher	N	y	y	Friends
Maureen	50-60	Newcastle	Market Researcher	y, 1	n	y, quiet	Family*
Hayley	50-60	Newcastle	Retired	y, 1	n	y, quiet	Family*
Jane	30	Glasgow	Journalist	y,4	y	y	Friends
Mary	36	Musselburgh	Software Engineer	y,4	y	y	Friends
Colin	35	Musselburgh	Post-doctoral	y,4	y	y	Friends

			Researcher				
Hannah	19	Local	Unemployed	y,4	n	y	Friends
Dawn	20	Local	Student	y,2	n	y	Friends
Alwyn	22	Glasgow	Student	N	y	y	Hen Party
Mandy	23	Glasgow	Graduate	N	y	y	Hen Party
Alesha	29	Glasgow	Solicitor	N	y	y	Hen Party
Michael	40	Glasgow	Performer	y,4	y	y, artists area	Friends, band
David	25	Glasgow	Performer	y,4	y	y, artists area	Friends, band
Angela	24	Local	Child Care	y,2	n	y	Friends
Dean	21	Local	Electrician	y,2	n	y	Friends
Stephanie	20	Local	Student Nurse	N	n	y	Friends
Anne	20	Inverness	Student	y,2	n	y	Friends, father*
Harold	48	Inverness	Technical Support	y,5	y	y, quiet	Friends, daughter*
Jill	19	Dingwall	Student	y,1	y	y	Friends
Hilary	20	Dingwall/Edinburgh	Student	y,2	y	y	Friends
Ben	20	Dingwall/Edinburgh	Student	y,1	y	y	Friends
Sam	59	Aberlour	Retired	y,3	n	n	Wife
Gavin	47	Local	Builder	y,1	n	n	Family
Andrea	45	Local	-	y,1	n	n	Family
James	65	England	Retired	N	y	y, caravan	Wife
Gail	65	England	Retired	N	y	y, caravan	Husband
Gordon	39	Inverness	Engineering Consultant	N	y	y	Family
Phil	36	Newton	Consultant	N	y	n	Family
Rita	33	Newton	F/T Mother	N	y	n	Family
Charles	3	Newton	-	N	n	n	Family
Mitch	19	Muir of Ord	Student	y,1	y	y	Friends
Jeremiah	19	Muir of Ord	Student	y,1	y	y	Friends
Carl	23	Glasgow	Mechanic	y,2	y	y	Girlfriend

**Table 4.5: Respondent Details**

During the selection process it is also necessary to strictly adhere to ethical considerations which also restrict candidate choice (see 4.6.1 for full ethical discussion).

## **4.5 Data Analysis: Tools and Techniques**

Upon completion of data collection, a two stage analytic process is adopted. This process is guided by the initial research questions which were in turn guided by underlying theory.

### ***4.5.1 Stage One: Open Coding***

To begin, data is transcribed verbatim from the digital recording on the Dictaphone. It is not necessary to record in-depth idiosyncrasies in the interview, for example, pauses, stutters, breaks, etc. as the latter analytical stages do not require such detail. Carrying out manual transcription essentially replaces the first step of coding (Lofland *et al*, 1995) with initial transcripts read through without taking notes in order to allow the researcher a degree of familiarity with the data without asserting any degree of interpretation on the transcripts. Transcribing takes place as soon after the interview as possible, allowing the researcher to make further notes regarding the context of the interview while still fresh. Notes include details of where the interviews happen, the mood of the interviewee, what they were doing at the time, what the weather was etc., all of which can assist in interpretation.

The second phase in the coding process is to re-read all of the interview transcripts, this time making marginal notes about significant events, remarks, and observations in order to generate an index of all issues that will help in the latter stages of interpretation (Hutchison *et al.*, 2010). According to Charmaz (2004), at this stage there is no need to be concerned with the quantity of codes generated. Conservative coding can often lead to omissions that could prove important later in the process and can also create a dissonance between the actual meaning of the words and the categories that they are forced into (Charmaz, 2004). If excessive codes do occur it becomes necessary to eventually combine similar codes into major groups and sub-groups to allow for efficient final analysis (Blismas and Dainty, 2003). A second reason over-coding is accepted is to allow the context of the words to be considered; a small number of rigid codes will force information appearing at face value to seem irrelevant (King, 2004). In doing so context and potential flow of interviews is removed rendering them a selection of meaningless words (Silverman, 2010). When reducing the number of codes attained, it is important to condense similar codes into singular categories. Codes should partially be governed by underlying theory, although it is necessary to also let codes

emerge naturally from the transcripts. In order for this to happen, the researcher must be willing and able to play with the data, for if it is not fully explored at this stage, it will not be in its most fruitful form when deep analysis comes to take place (Yin, 2003).

As with every other stage of the methodological selection process, analytical methods should be based upon theoretical conceptions of the study (Cassell *et al.*, 2006). This often comes with a degree of added difficulty, with a commonly cited problem of qualitative data collection being the lack of standard method of analysis compared to those that exist in quantitative research (Kvale, 1996). As a way to alleviate this issue there has been much crossover, with many quantitative methods of analysis lending their roots to qualitative analysis. This practice, however, can potentially negate the interpretive nature of the research, somehow managing to reduce what should be subjective conclusions to numerical counts of words all in the name of generalisation (Boyatzis, 1998). Having said this, there have been several successful crossovers allowing rigorous qualitative coding, for example thematic analysis.

#### ***4.5.2 Stage Two: Thematic Coding***

Qualitative, or thematic analysis provides an approach to analysing documents that maintains a systematic and analytical structure without the rigidity of a truly quantitative method (Josselson and Lieblich, 1995). As such, the end goal becomes meaning condensation rather than meaning categorisation, allowing interpretation and initial meanings to show through rather than just the researchers' chosen words (King, 2006). The emphasis is therefore placed on the role of the investigator in creating and interpreting the meaning in texts (Wynveen *et al.*, 2010). This allows the emergence of naturally occurring themes, placing an importance on the meaning of context in which an item is being analysed and the categories derived from it (Parry and Johnson, 2007). To carry out this method of analysis a semi-structured process is adapted to answer the original research questions. Based on this, the researcher must become familiar with the context in which the data was collected (Blum, 1997) – a step already complete through the researcher carrying out observations and first person interviewing at the festival site. The researcher must also become familiar with a small sample of documents chosen at random from which an analytical schedule can be generated. This schedule is then tested by collecting data from a selection of other documents, at which point the schedule is reviewed to sharpen it up (Bogard and Wertz, 2006). This type of analysis



brings with it a high level of inter-subjective reality due to its reliance on the need to clarify categories with a second or third expert in the field (Alexander *et al.*, 2010). However care is taken to not suggest the transcript as the be all and end all of the research leads the path of analysis dangerously close to detaching it from actual lived experiences. It can only be through the researchers' experiences in the field, coupled with observations and first-hand accounts of conducting the research that truly valid results are achieved (Bowen, 2008).

### **4.5.3 Tool: NVivo**

To assist in the coding process the software package NVivo is used. Having recorded and transcribed interviews verbatim, NVivo is used as a way to code, sort, and prepare the transcripts for thematic analysis (Kirton and Healy, 2012). To do this, Nvivo enables a researcher to attach codes and labels to any portion of text (Gordon *et al.*, 2009) as a way of cataloguing and recording images and videos to be used within data analysis (Goh *et al.*, 2012). During the open coding phase, very broad codes are selected (Charmaz, 2004) effectively acting as a primary stage of interpretation (Wallace *et al.*, 2003). These codes are based both on previous literary themes as well as emerging themes coming from the data. The large quantity of codes is easily managed into specific themes using prior knowledge, as well as using specific Nvivo functions to assist in grouping information (see Table 4.6). Importing a basic table of categories into Nvivo allows for execution of queries to show more specific relationships forming between data, codes, themes, and individual cases (Detert and Trevioo, 2010). With patterns produced from the data, it is possible to move from condensing and categorising information to placing it into specific themes.

Based on the interview data initial open coding led to 408 unique codes. During the second phase of coding, duplicates and overly similar codes are either removed or combined to produce 148 core codes. Condensing further, 18 over-arching themes are selected. Finally these 18 themes are placed as part of objective, inter-subjective, or subjective stimuli; as these three levels accurately represent 'reality' it is fair to assume they fit into these categories at one level and therefore a degree of crossover is accepted as a natural occurrence. Due to the structured and informed level of data analysis, codes, themes, and levels of reality are all borne from the study at hand adequately meeting the requirements of a qualitative data analysis.

<b>Open Coding</b>	<b>408 Nodes</b>	
<b>Thematic Coding</b>	<b>148 Nodes</b>	<b>Arranged below</b>
<b>Stimuli Level</b>	<b>Stimuli</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Objective</b>	Musical Stimuli	Musical fit, Musical Variety, Genre-specific festivals
	Physical Stimuli	Accommodation, Amenities, Capacity, Location, Organisation, Pricing
	Reaction to Stimuli	Atmosphere, Organisational changes, Festival definition, Commercialisation, Holiday alternative,
	Uncontrollable Stimuli	Media, Other festivals, Weather, Luxury, Mainstream, Sustainable, Value (money)
	Non-musical Stimuli	Campsite activities, non-musical activities
<b>Inter-Subjective</b>		
<b>Inter-Subjective</b>	Activities	Planning, Taking part, Inclusion
	Atmosphere	Family, Safe, Social, Small festival, Drinking (Atmospheres)
	Audience	Class, Loyalty, Proper fans, Child/Family friendly
	Behaviour	Crowd behaviour, Festival etiquette, Rules
	The Festival	Culture, Lifestyle, Local festivals, Definition
	Information	Hearsay, Word of mouth, Reputation
	Involvement	Community, Locality, Performing, Taking part, Inclusivity
	Celebration	Cultural celebration, Genre-based festival
Social	Group dynamics, Similarities, New socialising, Attending with	
<b>Subjective</b>		
<b>Subjective</b>	Expectations	Pre-festival excitement, Negative expectations, Sources of information
	Experiences	New experiences, Other festivals, False experiences, Unique experiences
	Individual Occurrences	Authenticity, Escape, Exploration, Own festival, Unique identity, Tradition, Memories, Rite of passage, Novelty
	Motivation	Music, More than the music, Changes in motives, Demotivators

**Table 4.6: Summary of NVivo Coding Process**

Using Nvivo for this purpose provides a very efficient and time effective way to deal with large amounts of qualitative data (Miller, 2003). Despite this usefulness, it is recognised that this programme should only be used as a tool for sorting information and producing basic themes. NVivo should not be adopted as a replacement tool for conducting interpretations within the data. Understanding and interpreting the resulting data must be the job of the researcher using the techniques mentioned above (Bryman, 2008).

## **4.6 Axiology**

Set out by Lapie (1902) axiology is a term used to understand the philosophical considerations of value within a given piece of work. This section introduces the two key axiological concerns of ethics and aesthetics within the study.

### **4.6.1 Research Ethics**

A code of ethics sets forth values, ethical principles, and ethical standards to which professionals aspire and by which their actions can be judged. In this instance, ethical issues are dictated strictly by the University's Ethical Code of Conduct. To fully conform to the code it is necessary to implement ethical considerations in the early planning stages of the methodology as a way to avoid any major problems or inconveniences at later stages of the research.

Following the Ethical Code then, it is not possible to entertain any discussions regarding covert operations and the researcher. Although not becoming intentionally visible as a researcher, there are no attempts made to observe any behaviours without full consent of those under observation (Dingwall, 1980) and even then, observation is limited to those willing to take part in the interview process with anonymity assured for all relevant parties. Upon approaching candidates, complete openness and transparency is provided with full explanations given regarding the identity of the researcher, the purpose and general impact of the study, and the sources from which the research is undertaken (Frechtling and Boo, 2012). If agreeing to take part, the interviewee is asked to sign a consent form allowing the recording of their voice for use within the project. Other information presented at the time includes acceptance of the Data Protection Act as well as laying out all the rights of the participant as outlined by Bryman (2008). The

interviewee is left with a copy of the consent form, a copy of the researcher's contact details, and details of how to go about removing themselves from the project at any point in the future.

Candidate choice is also dictated by ethical considerations, with the obvious exclusion of any vulnerable group. To ensure complete adherence to guidelines, anyone under 18 or over 65 is ruled out entirely. Although it is usually possible to judge ages, on one occasion an individual was excluded after being approached. It is also against the researchers' ethical policy to interview anyone who is under the influence of alcohol. Restricting candidates greatly, the researcher made the decision upon speaking to individuals if they appeared too intoxicated. Again, only once did this result in actual exclusion. Further information on ethical practices can be found in appendix 3 and 4.

#### ***4.6.2 Rhetoric: Writing Reflexively***

The fundamental problem when attempting to summarise an interpretive methodology is how to bring the whole of society into relation with history and environment, and then script that towards a general audience (Gans, 2010). Although the style of writing is the author's projected voice – a fact that makes each piece of research truly unique (Wellin, 1996), it is perhaps more important that the rhetorical style, tone, context, message, and purpose is modelled to suit the various philosophical considerations that are made along the way (Fetterman, 2010). For example, it is inappropriate to adopt a formal, impersonal voice to document the highly subjective nature of the festival experience. Rather it is more suitable to take on an informal, personal voice that is in-line with the interpretivist paradigm (O'Gorman, 2008).

Adopting a confessional rhetoric, the researcher becomes a central player within the story of the community under study, with the story told explicitly from the view point of the researcher (Mair, 2009). In doing so, this approach provides a double interpretation of findings, with the researcher providing an interpretation of others' interpretations which are then put into context using theories and literature (Jungnickel, 2013). Despite being written from the view of the researcher, when using a confessional mode of observation and analysis it is still a priority that results are not tainted nor biased towards the researcher's end goals, for example, through ethnocentric thinking (Howe, 2009). Similarly with rhetoric considerations, it is necessary to be aware of personal

reflexivity and the contribution the researcher makes when taking on the role of a subject under study (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Personal reflexivity involves reflecting on the way our experiences, values, interests, and beliefs shape our research (Willig, 2008). It also involves consideration as to the effects the research can have on the researcher (Foley, 2002). As such, the researcher's stance on reflexivity should be in keeping with previous philosophical assumptions and understanding, especially rhetoric style (Fenge, 2010). In this thesis, reflexivity becomes especially important due to the double level of interpretation understood within the interactionist philosophy with comments and observations made by the researcher included in the final analysis. As a symbolic interactionist, it becomes important to accept that interpretation of data by the researcher will differ from the interpretation of others, with differences included but not limited to coding schemes, headings and sub-headings, and the use of data (both selection and interpretation). Although these building blocks may be inconsistent between researchers, it is usually the case that final conclusions are similar making it less about the journey and more about the end destination (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2004).

#### **4.7 Summary**

In conclusion, the methodology chapter has discussed in depth the rationale behind ontological, epistemological, and subsequently methodological considerations made within the study. In doing so, a unique and appropriate data collection approach is adopted to study the festival experience guided by objective, inter-subjective, and subjective reasoning. The chapter further reflects the means by which data sources are analysed, concluding that initial open coding followed by thematic coding is the most suitable means of achieving goals. Themes are very reflexive of concepts already identified within the literature, but are also left open to provide avenues for new themes to emerge. These will be carried forward and discussed in the following chapters.

## Chapter 5 The Physical Experience

To better understand the experience from a physical point of view, this chapter provides a descriptive summary of the experience using the coding schedule identified previously (see Table 5.1). It presents “objective” data relating to the process of attending a festival, especially the location of the event, the organisation of the event, and other physical elements faced during the weekend. It then looks towards the musical stimuli and programme, as well as ancillary activities of the event as factors contributing to the overall experience. These are examined in contrast to the less controllable elements which include other festivals, media involvement, and other individuals who choose to attend. Understanding is initially presented from the perspective of the individual attendee, before being related back to academic theory. In doing this the chapter analyses stimuli in relation to the literature goals identified in section 1.3, in particular the process of ‘becoming’ a place and the subsequent effect this has on the individual's feeling of attachment and identity towards the event as a physical destination.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Physical Stimuli	Accommodation, Amenities, Capacity, Location, Organisation, Pricing
Musical Stimuli	Musical fit, Musical Variety, Genre-specific festivals
Non-musical Stimuli	Campsite activities, non-musical activities
Uncontrollable Stimuli	Media, Other festivals, Weather, Luxury, Mainstream, Sustainable, Value (monetary)
Reaction to Stimuli	Atmosphere, Organisational changes, Festival definition, Commercialisation, Holiday alternative

**Table 5.1: Objective Stimuli Coding**

### 5.1 Objective Festival Attendance

Discussions surrounding attendance at the festival largely focus on the physical location of the event, with the majority of explanations falling into one of two categories: the actual geographic location of the festival, or the appropriateness of the site for hosting the event.

#### 5.1.1 Location

Ease of access and transport links to the festival appear to play a role when selecting the festival that is to be attended. One of the main motivations cited by attendees is the

short travel times and convenient transportation links to the festival. This is especially the case for festival A, which is by far the largest festival in the study. As described by Greg; *'it's the main festival in Scotland, and it's the easiest one to get to'*. Similar comments to this are also made, for example; *'I haven't been to Scotland before...it's nice to come up to a new country and find out what their festivals are like'* (Joseph, A); *'so it was more the fact that it was 'the' Scottish music festival'* (Paul, TITP); *'well obviously it's in Scotland...so yeah, it's your local festival'* (Grant, TITP). When questioned further, Greg claims the distance to be only a minor issue, however, being the closest it is the most logical to attend. His experience of travelling further a field is revealed in his attempts to gather a group of friends to attend Benicassim – a large beach side festival held annually in Spain, however, the organisation and logistics of the trip proved *'too much bother'*, although he insists a trip of around four hours is perfectly acceptable to make. To a lesser extent, this sentiment is echoed even when the closest festival is considerably smaller in size and musical popularity. For example Mitch, who lives approximately twenty-five minute drive from festival C, believes that with the drive factored in, going to a larger festival is *'not worth it'*, singling out festival A as one in particular that he would choose not to attend.

At this early stage of festival interaction, the perceived space is little more than physical, materialistic space (Soja, 1989) that is used as context for the experience – similar to the more basic service-dominant logic of Vargo and Lusch (2004). Although this highly physical aspect – often masked as convenience, appears of little concern at the outset, it very soon becomes a part of the experience itself, with many relishing the journey to the festival, treating it as all part of the experience. Of those interviewed one participant who had travelled from the north of England shows her acceptance of the travel as part of the festival itself:

Maureen: *Last year we came by train but it was a bit of hassle getting the connection. This year we came with the 'Happy Bus' (Coach travel run in association with Festival B direct from numerous cities to the festival site)*

Researcher: *And how was the 'Happy bus'?*

M: *It was really good. My sister hated it but I enjoyed it. I thought it was all part of the experience.*

Agreeing with the positives of travel, another English resident is excited about this being his first time in Scotland, finding it; *'nice to come up to a new country and find out what their festivals are like'*.

These discussions accurately mirror the development of the place from merely a physical location as is the case above, to one of a locale or in more extreme cases one with an actual sense of place as suggested by Agnew (1987). This sense of place is more readily available when by prior experience of the place (Tuan, 1974) or attribution of meaning to the place is achievable (Walter, 1988). For example, unlike Maureen and John, the decision to travel further is accepted, but only when previous experience of the location has been gained, whether from the festival or for other reasons. Examples from Festival A, C, and B respectively acknowledge this:

*Claire: It's really nice. I've been through here before. My flatmate's from just down the road so she's taken me around here before. But it's good to just get away from Edinburgh and London for a bit.*

*Alwyn: I think this festival makes its name on the area. I mean it's a different area but it's so nice and people don't realise unless they come to something like this how nice the place is which is really good for tourism. I mean it's not really a place you'd come, but then you realise how nice it is.*

*Jane: I think the first year we came the thing that attracted us to the festival was the location first of all. It's in a valley and it's a really beautiful setting. I think that was maybe the first thing. Colin also has family who live locally so we were kind of familiar with the area so we knew where we were coming as well...the location seems to set a vibe for the whole place and it creates a really lovely atmosphere.*

Identified by Jane, the notion of an environment's idiosyncrasies in helping create the festival and add to the atmosphere is the second common discussion under the topic of location. There are, however, significant differences between what is viewed as important across the different festivals. For example, having the largest capacity, festival A is more restricted in potential venues, settling for a large fielded area. This is compared to festival C which with a smaller capacity is able to employ an old country



estate as its location. In doing so it incorporates period features making the setting noticeably unique. Gordon sums up these features of festival C; *'the site itself is great...the ruins really make it special. And you just look around...the hills and trees, even the little features like the old walls really add to the event'*.

Not only does this setup prove aesthetically pleasing, it is also functionally beneficial with the original sloped gardens creating a natural amphitheatre-like setting capable of holding thousands of spectators:

Phil (talking about his three year old son): *he gets a bit upset with the loud music, but we're happy to sit back up here. I mean that's the one thing Glastonbury doesn't have... a setting like this. So we'll just sit on the hill all day and we can see what we want and he can do what he wants...everyone's a winner.*

Alison: *...this is a great place...just look at the terrace here. We were thinking if we sat here we probably wouldn't see the stage when it gets busy because folk stand up against that fence but you can. It's just a cracking arena.*

This is not as noticeable at Festival A or B, which use large green field sites with little natural or man-made features in their design. Instead these festivals are dictated by a more functional perspective based on site and capacity restrictions. For example, festival A must accommodate around 35,000 overnight campers and approximately the same again during the day. This results in a total of eight large stage and tented areas for music, ranging in capacity from around 10,000 to 50,000. On top of this bar and food areas, shops, toilets, and fairground rides also have to be included in the arena making planning and layout a particular challenge for organisers. The underlying cause of this functional perspective is difficult to attribute to any one variable, for example, it could belong to an over-focus on service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), a functionally centred place-maker (Haninson, 2004), a lack of stakeholder understanding (Anholt, 2006), or a focus on economic impact above all else (Wood and Thomas, 2006). Regardless of the primary reason, this utilitarianism was commonly noted especially when mixing capacity issues into the debate. One of the more experienced attendees – George has seen these issues play out over the past ten years:

George: *What do I make of this place? It's getting better. It seems to be improving in ways and getting worse in other areas, but the layout this year is by far the best. The way everything is is perfect...the past couple of years seemed to be more and more people and the layout meant you had to fight through crowds to get from one stage to another. I think this year it's much more simple and easier to get from one to another.*

Along with subtle changes regarding layout, a noticeable acknowledgement of festival A's ability to cope with capacity is revealed in the addition of the 'golden circle' situated at the front of the main stage. A means to avoid extreme crushes and people pushing their way to the front, the golden circle is a barrier dividing the crowd, forming a separate front and rear section. Although greeted as a positive by many, it does provide some issues for those wishing to remain at the front for long periods at a time. For example, Emma comments; *'to be honest, I complain but I think it's better than no golden circle – at least you can avoid people pushing right to the front. I was in the tent earlier and had a great spot against the barrier and then these complete dicks just barge through – pushing kids out the way. So I mean it helps in that way and is safer than having 80000 pushing all at once'* (**Entering the golden circle with Emma**); *"see, it's easy now, but I bet in an hour or so you'll have hundreds of people waiting. My friend told me they got stuck in the barriers for about 2 hours last year – they wouldn't let any people through, but there were too many people queuing so they couldn't get out of the back. They would have been stuck there all night but eventually someone managed to unlock the gate and everyone just made a run for it...but she said it was complete chaos – there were people fainting over the place and they couldn't get in or out – just rammed into tiny turnstiles with no water in the baking sun...crazy! She's here somewhere and says the way they laid it out his year is a lot better so I don't think that could happen again'.*

Festival B and C do not employ any such measures. Both festivals operate six different stage areas, accommodating a maximum capacity of around 10,000 people. Despite such numbers these are largely regarded as smaller festivals, with praise for the location awarded as such:

Richard: *I think it's very well laid out yeah. All the facilities are great. I'm really impressed with it. The fact that it's small makes it a bit easier you know.*

*I went to the Connect festival and I find it quite similar to that; a lot smaller.*

*Mitch: Definitely...I think that's one of the things that stand out. The layout and the organisers are all really good. I think it's a lot easier as it's a smaller festival and because it's a community feel it almost self-polices itself.*

It is only at this stage that the words of interviewees begin to resonate with the actual meaning of what a more socially created place represents, that is, beyond the pale of the space to become a lived-in place (Sack, 1992). This is demonstrated with the array of connections that interviewees recognise including physical, geographical, social, and perhaps most importantly psychological connections to the festival (Pettigrew, 2007). Considered further in chapter 6, of immediate concern is whether these early notions of community and citizenship have any bearing on other aspects of the physical environment. To understand this it is important to examine other organiser-based decisions from the perspective of the individual. For example, synonymous with the discussions on locations are comments made about the organisation of the festival around these physical areas. Grouped into the more general heading of organisation, variables discussed include the layout of the arena, facilities, and procedures and processes undertaken throughout the festival weekend.

### **5.1.2 Organisation**

Evolving from service management models, the literature identifies several more advanced models designed to 'create' an experience, for example the Festivalscape model (Lee *et al*, 2008) or Customer Experience Management Framework (Schmitt, 2010). Despite these providing a basic structure for staging an experience, in practice it appears that much of the unique focus (e.g. lifestyle, culture and context) (Park *et al*, 2010) is overlooked in favour of following prescriptive guidelines to the letter.

Easily the most prominent issue discussed as part of the organisation concern is the negative aspects regarding layout and staffing at festival A. Talk is dominated by concerns regarding car park and entry procedures, in particular the 'walk of death' – a lengthy walk around the outer perimeter of the arena to reach the main entrance of the campsite from the car park. This is made especially trying when tents and equipment are factored in. For Emily, the walk proves too much; *'I don't think I'll be moving all*

*night...the walk from the car was a killer. I mean it actually took over an hour to get all the stuff to the gate. And then when you get to the gate you wait an hour and then have to walk another 30 minutes to get to your camp site. It's awful!"* Recognised as a negative point by more than just attendees, a number of stalls have set up along the route to rent out buggies to transport belongings up to the camping area. Along with these buggies, more experienced campers brought with them sledges, wheel barrows, and even wheelie bins to help make the trip more bearable, however, in the heavy mud and large numbers of people these devices often prove more of a burden than anything else; *'Yeah, it took us ages to get up here. One of our friends rented the buggy things but that took them twice as long to get around everyone else. I'm not looking forward to getting back! At least I can leave a lot of my stuff here'* (Claire, A); *'Haha – we had a bit of a trek to get up here; broken buggies and mud and dropping things every 5 metres'* (Caroline, A).

The layout of festival A appears such an issue, it is even mocked by those at festival B and C, who use it to promote the ease and simplicity involved in their walk from car park to arena:

*Hannah: I mean we were talking before about if we were going to Festival A and how we would have to park miles away and everything was going to be so hectic and crazy, you know. Whereas here you're just in the middle of a field and it's really good.*

*Mandy: I mean the area's really nice and it's so much less crowded than Festival A and everything is closer together. You can get from arena to car to tent in like 10 minutes...definitely better than the walk of death.*

Perhaps one reason for such a negative attitude towards the set-up of festival A is the apparent *'illogical and unfair'* rationale, with multiple car parks closer to the main entrance which open in the latter stages of the weekend. This essentially means that those arriving early are faced with the longer walk to the campsite whereas those getting there later in the weekend are privileged with easier access. This is a cause for a great amount of anger from those faced with the longer of the walks, especially when the cost of arriving early is higher (for a Thursday upgrade ticket). This issue of last-come-first-served is also mirrored in the way the camping areas operate. Split into several different

fields, those paying for the privilege of arriving on Thursday are forced to the rear of the campsite, with the camping areas closer to the main entrance sealed off until the following day:

*Phil: I would say there was a bit of discomfort amongst festival goers this year about which fields were open...well there are two very popular fields called blue and red...there's always a lot going on in them and they weren't open yesterday for early arrivals and I think there was a bit of anger over that.*

To justify this, a statement was placed on the festival's official website stating that due to increased capacity it is necessary to fill fields from the back first, and that the fields further away actually give the better choice of camping areas. Although organisers attribute these issues as being necessary, it appears they still fail to meet basic functional requirements of their customers resulting in the anger and frustration that is demonstrated (Kano, 1982).

Despite these well documented negativities, they actually seem to become part of the whole experience. For example, Phil claims that; *'I mean...it's huge. Obviously it was a hell of a walk in with all the stuff. I'm getting a bit old I think for this shit, but it's still good fun. Once you've got yourself set up you're good to go. You've got loads of food areas and a couple of tents to dance in at night. I mean the campsite's absolutely fine'*. In this respect, he views the walk as almost an entry test that must be passed or rite of passage for anyone wishing to gain access to the festival. Although not possible to precisely predict his meaning it may be taken as an early indicator of some kind of inclusive group forming as outlined by Van Gennep (1981). This liminal behaviour is further seen during the *'walk of death'* with a common observation of strangers stopping to help carry things for others, sitting exchanging beers during rest breaks, and generally engaging in singing and light-hearted chat during the walk. This is also reported in interviews, coming across as a common talking point and often used as a conversation starter with strangers. Somewhat positive in relation to uncovering identity-based motives, individuals are reluctant to explore these ideas further, often distancing themselves from many of the other festival-goers. Despite this, discussions surrounding other aspects of the physical environment also hint towards an involvement, albeit at a very basic level, with others in attendance.

### 5.1.3 Accommodation

All of the festivals in the study provide large scale accommodation over the course of the weekend. Accommodation varies greatly between festivals, and even within each festival the choice of lodging is very different allowing maximum accessibility to as wide a customer-base as possible. For example festival B has a general camping area, a quiet camping area, and a family camping area. Festival C includes an area for caravans and campervans, while festival A includes luxury accommodation in tepees and yurts, as well as a pre-constructed camp site meaning campers can arrive to a pre-assembled tent and bed. Of these, easily the most popular option is the general purpose camping with most of the campsites dedicated to this. Due to its popularity, however, there are no reservations, and even fewer rules regarding finding a pitch and setting up camp. A common technique is to arrange a number of tents in a circular formation with a space in the middle for socialising. Not only does this provide some personal space, it also cuts down on the number of people walking through other's camping areas. Claire and her group had managed to achieve this; *'we got here pretty early so got a good place to camp...we've got like 15 tents between us so we've got them grouped round in a little town so it's really good'*. Such tactics reveal clear similarities between the motivation of socialising with known group members at the expense of strangers (Nicholson and Pearce, 2001) which if anything, counters the notion of any kind degree of liminality or common group identity formation. However, to accommodate such a number of tents, early attendance is required especially at festival A where camping spaces become a valuable commodity later in the day. Caroline experienced this when another group pitched up immediately behind her tent; *'it's okay, yeah, although very cramped – I thought there would be more space. It feels like you're camping in someone else's space and when you get noisy neighbours it's horrible'*. Reported as being very common, capacity issues at festival A are consistently used in interviews at other festivals to show-off the festival attended in the most positive light. For example, talking about the general camping at festival B, Mary compares it to A saying; *'it's a lot quieter in the campsite than A in that you actually have a decent amount of room for your campsite. At A if you leave a little space it's gone in no time'*.

Along with the choice of which general area to locate in, there is also the selection of the specific field in which to camp. These are very roughly coded by number or colour so as to make navigation easier. Although all areas have their own advantages and

disadvantages, for example proximity to the arena, number of toilets, whether it is on a hill or not, the choice of area is usually dictated much more by arbitrary reasons with decisions often based on past word of mouth from more experienced attendees. For example, Emily had been told *'red and blue are where all the NEDS go and that indigo I think it is in the main path to the arena so it gets really muddy and smelly and is noisy...but it's where they camped last year. They said it was the best bit because you were close to everything going on'*. Robert also used an arbitrary means of selecting a pitch in his first year that has continued in all of his festivals since. Unlike many, his spot is chosen based on the area closest to the late night entertainment – a very noisy and very busy part of the campsite; *'Aye, it's good. We stayed in the same place as last year. Right next to the boom bus so aren't walking miles at night. It's a bit of a trek to get to the stages that's why I only do it once each day...stay in the arena all day'*. Others chose their camping spot based on their own past festival visits. Although this may point towards some notion of attachment to a particular place within the larger festival (as outlined by Proshansky, 1983), this idea is rather unattainable at festival A due to organisers altering the festival arena and campsite year-on-year. By changing basic geographic markers, it becomes more difficult to recuperate any previous level of attachment that may have been felt (Murphy *et al*, 2007); it is almost possible to term these fields placeless, that is, lacking emotional investment and lack of attachment (Auge, 1995). Greg and his group of friends, for example, have an affinity with one camping area in particular:

Greg: *Well we have a tradition of camping in purple 4, although I think we only did it two or three times. But not anymore as they always change the camping areas around; so where purple was last year is now pink; although we still always try to get a picture with the purple 4 sign.*

When questioned further on his reasons for camping in this area, there appears to be little original motivation – the first year it was a random camping spot, however, since then they have called themselves the 'purple 4s'. As well as selecting areas based on positive factors, it is not uncommon to actively avoid certain areas too. For example at festival A, red and blue are regarded as the more party-based areas. In particular, these areas tend to be a lot noisier as well as acting as the main thoroughfares for people passing. As such the anti-constellation (Hogg and Michell, 1996) identified as *'anywhere apart from red or blue'* seems to be a common criterion for selecting a

camping spot. Other negative issues that discourage attachment include the reputation of the individuals who reside there; *“I’d heard all these stories about the mud and toilets and drunk people and it all sounds a bit nerve-wracking”* (Claire, A). Such negativity adversely affects overall views of festival A, the evolution of the festival from space to place, and also the formation of any common experience-based identity.

General camping aside, there are a number of other accommodation options that can be utilised. Festival C in particular is very versatile in the array of options they offer including general camping, quiet camping, family camping, and campervans and mobile home pitches, with the latter especially useful for older festival-goers and families. In a conversation with Gail and James, a retired couple from England, they give an insight into the caravanning lifestyle. Having always been a keen outdoors couple, both Gail and her husband have become very involved in *‘festivalling’* over the last several years. However, now they have started using a caravan; *‘Yes, we’re here for the weekend so we’re camping. Well ...we used to camp. We used to have a wee tent that we took all over the place, but we’ve chickened out now and we’ve brought a wee caravan, and to be honest we sort of miss the tent, but that’s the way to do it’*. Having attended many festivals they highlight the accessibility caravanning (and campervans and bed and breakfasts) brings to those who wish to attend festivals but are unable to camp; *‘well a lot of the other festivals have a more aged clientele, so you tend to find them staying in hotels and b+bs rather than camping’*. Despite these advantages they are not entirely happy with the atmosphere that is created in the caravan section:

James: *There are certain things that you have to give up and camping is one of those things...the question of when I give up festivals altogether though is another thing.*

Gail: *The campsite is pretty good too. We’re in the caravan section which is a lot different obviously, but we took a walk through the campsite and it’s very uncrowded. I imagined...this is one of the bigger festivals we attend...I imagined it would be much more crowded but it’s large enough that any problems with that are overcome...in terms of crowd, tenting is much friendlier. Caravaners tend to shut themselves away more and they usually have their own little groups and their own little parties, but tenting is much more social. We miss the tenting actually; it is a lot more people-friendly, but I suppose you’ve got to move on at*



*some point*

Again, this is an example of using the boundaries of accommodation to close off the 'outside' social world, preferring instead to socialise with known relations. However, unlike the previous occurrence described by Claire, this example comes from a more community-based festival. From observations, although it may appear to be a very social festival, by segregating accommodation areas in this way, social divisions are also imposed on individuals.

Accommodation-based segregation can be seen again in the more recent addition of glamorous camping, or '*glamping*'. Garth, who has camped at festival A six times previously decided to make use of the yurts – '*essentially just a large tent. It sleeps the four of us quite comfortably...has a heater, has private toilets in the area. It's so comfy in there and warm, but really it's just a lot more relaxed...you don't need to worry about carrying huge amounts of bags and tents and stuff*'. Opting for this more luxurious choice is the only way he could convince his girlfriend to attend, therefore acts as another way of opening the festival up to those who may otherwise avoid it. However, in fencing off certain fields this only serves to accentuate differences between those in different areas almost to the point that two distinct groups form – an us and them (Haslam *et al*, 2006). The essence of these groups comes from both monetary and social perceptions.

Although the intentions of these areas are to provide a safe and comfortable environment to various groups, it is reported that these sections are often mistreated with many seeing any area as a general camping zone. At festival A it is commonly regarded that the 'quiet zone' is actually no different to the normal camping areas. There are very few restrictions in place to stop people entering after hours and a lack of security to keep noise levels to a minimum. Even at the smaller festivals this proves an issue with Michael, a performer at festival B, telling a story about one of his friends:

*... one of the guys in the band is here with his pregnant wife and kids and they're in the quiet campsite but still the tent next to him are having parties every night and he has an issue with it but they're still there. But I mean 'shut up' ...if you're in the quiet area don't go making noise.*

Even after talking with the stewards this situation was not immediately resolved and in the end the family had to relocate to the performer area of the campsite. Although this essentially breaks the social divisions that are created by geographical layout, such divisions are perhaps more than just geographical, making visible deeper-rooted differences in terms of lifestyle, culture, behaviours, circumstances, or even musical preference.

## 5.2 Musical Stimuli

Based on sampling consideration, the festivals selected for the study all operate as general music festivals (rather than promoting specific activities or genres of music), however, the role of music as a stimuli varies across the festivals. Although interpreted differently, every interview involves a very in-depth discussion of the use of music at the festival (Faulkner *et al*, 1999; Thrane, 2002). Conversations with individuals include music as a motivating factor in their decision to attend, their expectations for music in forming a major part in their overall experience of the festival, as well as their perceptions of the festival based on the artists that were performing.

Firstly, in looking at how the music contributes to the entirety of the festival experience, different views are present at each festival. These views are highlighted in the conversation with Phil at festival A:

*Phil: Yes, I pretty much decided to go to A ahead of time before really knowing who was playing (talking about the earlybird ticket). I guess historically it's always a good line-up. There's always a lot of diversity here. You could pretty much get yourself a ticket not knowing who is playing and it wouldn't really matter who you wanted to see...there's such a high amount of music I want to see you literally find yourself running among the stages as the music's so damn good.*

(The 'early bird' tickets that Phil references are made available immediately after the festival has finished. Purchasing decisions may therefore capitalise on the current positive emotions felt towards the festival, appealing to those still in the festival 'spirit'. Although only small quantities of tickets are bought at this time, it does indicate a degree of festival-ness.)

Expanding further, Phil goes on to talk about other advantages of such a mixed programme of musical performers, with variety allowing individuals to experience artists that they otherwise would not contemplate seeing:

*Phil: I'm going to see Beyonce this weekend. There's no chance in hell I'd go to see Beyonce if she was touring normally, but, I'd love to see her live... you know, getting the opportunity in a festival environment to see her really mixes it up....it's just better in this sort of atmosphere. You're seeing it, but you're seeing other things. You're trying different things that you wouldn't normally see.*

Claire also confirms that a lot of the bands she has chosen to see have been bands that she hadn't previously experienced and in some cases not even heard of:

*Claire: ...nothing I'm looking forward too really. I'm really enjoying it, but apart from the Foos we don't really have anything planned. We're just going with flow mainly and there are a few bands that others want to see so I'll go and see them. I think we've lost most of or group anyway so we need to meet them soon anyway and then we'll take it from there.*

*Researcher: So are you getting to see a lot of new bands that others have recommended?*

*Claire: Well not so much. I mean I've heard of most of the bands I'm seeing but I wouldn't really go see them myself. But they've been good so far. It's so sunny I don't mind just chilling out listening to music. And the smaller bands you can just lie down and still get a good view. Even if I don't like the band I still get to work on the tan for the rest of the summer!*

This provides a mutual means for bands to collect new fans in a mass market whilst simultaneously allowing individuals to experience new artists. Such choice appears very beneficial for the individual, with attendees free to move between stages experiencing and indulging in the emotions of each performance without any real commitment to the new artist or crowd (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). This resembles the fragmented identity which allows for liberation from otherwise fixed stereotypes

associated with certain bands and musical genres (Goulding, 2003).

Although showcasing a variety of acts, festival A's habit of relying on music alone as a means to build reputation is recognised as having its disadvantages, as Justin points out; *'I think the music is definitely the main thing. Yeah, I mean every festival needs big headliners or people wouldn't come. But I mean, I think it really depends on who you're trying to attract. I mean A relies a lot on its headliners'*. A common point made, however, is the lack of true headliners that are available within the music industry. Instead of being once-in-a-lifetime headline acts, it is common for the larger bands to do the *'festival rounds'*, that is, playing the same festival every few years as a headline act. For example, the same band has headlined the main stage at festival A in 2007, 2009, and 2012, as well as headlining the second stage in 2004. This band has also played at V festival – a large festival in England in 2001, 2004, 2007, 2009, and 2012. Such repetition appears to be discouraging repeat customers, Mandy at festival B being one of them:

*I gave up on it because I found it was just the same people playing over and over again and now I don't think its music to my taste. I mean I think it used to be a lot more alternative...different bands but now it's just so mainstream.*

Such an emphasis and reputation built around music alone is perhaps not the most appropriate message, especially when the music – which should aim to satisfy hedonic feelings, is actually providing a much less intense emotional response. To understand further, comparisons are made to musical stimuli at other festivals with comments coming from Jane at festival C and Dawn at festival B:

*Jane: You're going to have to accept that a smaller festival is never going to have the big names and it's never going to attract the huge crowds, which is obviously an issue for C and it's always been, well I imagine that it's always been the thing for them that the price of the tickets is low, and with it they obviously can't afford to buy in the big bands and the big names and it's a balance I suppose...*

*Dawn: I mean the line up's not as good as other festivals, but I think the atmosphere is much better. I mean I don't really come here for the music...I*

*mean I come here for the music I enjoy but it's less for the music and more for the weekend...for the whole experience. But the line up, it's not bad; it's just that...I mean it's not really what you come for.*

These points are generally accepted by all, although an exception does appear to occur when excitement is directed at one band in particular. When this is the case, the band is either regarded as a true international level band (rather than a large band that had 'earned their place through lack of alternatives') or the individual is a very big fan of the band. An example of the latter was given by Gail at festival C. Having been to numerous festivals in the past few years as an alternative to holidaying abroad, she had managed to see the same band four times:

*Gail: We saw \*Scraygirl\* at Gurloch and at Ullapool and now we're here to see them. They'll think we're following them. And we're going to see them in Fort William at the end of December as well.*

It therefore becomes problematic for the organiser if music must satisfy both utilitarian needs and hedonic wants of all consumers especially when extant academic and industry literature praises music for its exclusively hedonic-based value that it provides. One means of providing new musical experiences without resorting to 'the same old' headliner has been to book older bands who have reformed and who wish to use festivals as a means to undertake a comeback tour. As Michael at festival B explains:

*I think a lot of bands have got in on the fact that I think because music purchases are down so much, that this is the way bands need to make their cash now and in this festival you'll get a lot more bands that are like...well last night you had the Bluebells, and James, so it's all bands from the early 90s that are seeing the festival dollar in their pocket.*

However Garth, a 37 year old repeat visitor of festival A, questions the reasons behind incorporating so many older, reformed bands into the festival line-up for the weekend:

*That's why I find it strange that they've put on so many older bands this weekend...I mean bands I was listening to when I was 20 seem to be making a comeback but I honestly don't know if they'll have enough of an audience, or*

*enough of a passionate audience to make their set noteworthy. All you need is a little atmosphere, but I can see some of the older bands struggling to get that.*

He goes on to explain the lack of atmosphere often stems from individuals content on remaining at the front of the stage all day:

*I think it hampers the atmosphere to a certain degree. Like I was saying before, you'll go into the arena at 1pm and see against the main stage barrier a group...usually younger girls. Now they'll stand there for 10 hours just to be at the front for the headliner. Now you can't tell me that they enjoy every band that plays on the stage. I could think of nothing worse than trying to play to a crowd and having the front few rows full of mildly interested kids. And it does take a way a little pizzazz from the performance.*

Having previously discussed the idea of the individual liberating themselves using multiple and many bands, the preceding quotes indicate that although liberating for the individual, the 'true fans' are not as happy with the intrusion of non-fans. Although not alienating individuals as suggested by Yalom (1980), it does highlight the clash between opposing social (musical) groups whereby the self and others are compared based on intensity of the traits they have in common. In the above examples, it is the case that individuals sat somewhere on a sliding scale of fan based on conscious and observable behaviours when opposing groups are detected the emphasis is no longer placed on similarities but on actively differentiating the intensity of shared features (Oakes *et al*, 1991). Apart from comparisons between festivals (see section 6.5.2), this was one of the few other examples of true antagonism between groups resulting in an 'us versus them' scenario based on musical participation (Tajfel *et al*, 1971).

Examining this clash from the other perspective – essentially the 'out group', scepticism surrounding older bands (and the associated audience that watches them) is initially shared with some of the younger audience members who are not old enough to have experienced these bands first time around. Only 20 years old, Caroline was at first dubious about certain artists; *'It's been amazing so far. I think there's a really good mix of bands from all types of music, and a good mix of old and new. There are a few I'm thinking 'really', like Blondie, but then again I thought that about Tom Jones and really loved his set'*.

Along with older bands, another means of subsidising these lesser acts and balancing potential entertainment disparity between events, festival B and C place a much higher emphasis on providing a complete experience, with a lack of large names replaced with more variety in non-musical activities. Festival B incorporates many outdoor activities that can be tried, fairground rides, craft areas, as well as a closing ceremony. Festival C has an “alternative” area, a dance academy, a conference and poetry area, a fashion show, and a large area for children to play.

*Gail: Well yeah, but there was some interesting stuff in there. But that's the good thing about this kind of festival; there are always fringe-y bits which you can always go to. There's no craft area, which we're pretty disappointed about. But I don't think that would necessarily be favoured by all the other people here.*

*Phil: Obviously the scale is a lot different and the quality of bands is a lot lower, but when you strip it all back I think the ethos is the same; a community festival that involves...the community. And it has the more unusual aspects...the Heilan Fields, the Tarot Card readers, the burlesque, so the focus isn't the music but the overall package.*

*Mitch: It's a different world entirely! T obviously has the better bands...I mean there are only a couple of bands I care about this weekend, but this place is so much more relaxed. I mean it's not about hopping from stage to stage. All you end up doing at T is waiting for bands to come on...which is fine, but you end up exhausted by the end of the day. Here it's a lot more chilled...you have time to wander around and there's a load more going on...I don't know...festivals should be more than just the music I think. Bella has that. It has the poetry and random bits and pieces.*

Incorporating these into the design of the festival leads it away from being solely based on music. This is in contrast to festival A that largely fails in attempts to provide an alternative programme of events; *'it is reserved as a musical event with the extras as more of a bonus'*.

*Garth: Like I say it's not just about the music anymore...it's about everything else, but unfortunately A provides very little else. I've never been but when I*

*worked down south I was an hour or so from Glastonbury and a lot of the other guys went. They said it was amazing! They have the best music but they have everything else...you could keep yourself busy all weekend without even hearing a note. That's what T's missing and it was fine when it was about the music, but now there are too many idiots that don't care...there must be somewhere to put them that doesn't annoy everyone else...it just lacks appeal to me in anything non-musical. There's the cinema area but that is hardly an attraction. I don't know if this year they'll have anything new, but from the map it looks to be the same Disco bus/disco tent at night.*

*Claire: Well a couple of them had been to Reading and they say there's so much more besides the music. Here it's all about the music; which is fine I guess. I mean that's the main reason I would come, but it would be nice to have something else going on especially at night. My friend, he told me they have like really big comedy and cabaret acts that run on past the music at Reading. And they have the big band too so I think it should be the same here...but just an area that you could go to for comedy, or just something that doesn't involve standing watching a band like you do here. I mean even like a cabaret would be nice...it would be different to the music and would make a nice change. So yeah, I think just something to coincide with the music, not something to distract from the music...I think more things to do. Keep up with the times T. It's not all about the music...that's why it has to keep attracting new people every year or else try something new.*

*Phil: But I think there needs to be more these days. I mean Glastonbury has loads of arts and stuff. And C too; it had loads of other things to do besides the music like dancing and even a tea and cake tent. I think that's what T misses. It's getting a bit better but compared to the other festivals all it has is the music and not much else to do.*

However, due to the high amount of varied music, the fact that additional activities are kept to a minimum appears to be of little concern to some:

*Caroline: During the day I don't think there's time for anything else though. I'm kind of booked up for the rest of the day with bands, and if you're not seeing a*



*band you're moving between stages or getting food or getting drinks, so I think anything else would be wasted on me.*

In centring itself so explicitly as a music festival, the focus of festival A is very much within the control of the organiser who provide entertainment experiences and escapist experiences (Williams, 2006). This is compared to festival B who appear to provide entertainment, aesthetic, and escapist experiences and festival C who provide experience, escapist, aesthetic and educational experiences coming closest to William's (2006) '*sweet spot*'. Regardless of fulfilment of these criteria, it is often the case that uncontrollable stimuli must also be accounted for in the festival equation.

### **5.3 Other Stimuli**

The factors mentioned so far – location and musical programme, are recognised as being largely within the control of the festival organiser. There is, however, much discussion regarding stimuli that are out with the control of the organiser yet still have a significant influence on the consumer's overall festival experience.

#### **5.3.1 Other Festivals**

During discussions, referencing other festivals is a very common occurrence. Including other festivals seems to be done to satisfy one of two outcomes for the individual – as a means of comparing facets of one festival to another (to emphasise social differences), or to demonstrate knowledge and expertise of other festivals (emphasising their closeness to the festival prototype) (see section 7.1).

When talking generally about other festivals, it is common for individuals to include as wide a variety as possible in order to demonstrate knowledge and experience, with physical displays seen as a means of building status. For example, Justin at festival A displays an array of wristbands from previous year's festivals including 3 V festivals, 3 Leeds festivals, a Latitude, a Glastonbury, and a T in the Park. There were also many observations made of individuals wearing clothing from previous year's festivals or from other festivals entirely. Individuals also seem keen to talk about their other festival experiences as another way to almost up their status levels. As these discussions continued, individuals clearly started to display the early stages of a more group-focussed identity, seeing themselves as embodiments of the meanings

represented by the in-group, that is, the festival group (Hogg and Michell, 1996). As the individual begins to associate more with the prototypical model of the category, attempts to self-stereotype grow (Deschamps and Devos, 1998) and with it, attachment to the group (Hogg and Hardie, 1992).

Of all of the other festivals mentioned the most common by far was Glastonbury, regarded by most as the original and biggest music festival in the world. Those who had attended this festival use it as a benchmark of quality against which to judge other festivals, whilst those who hadn't attended still made comparisons based on stories that they had heard or things they had seen on television. Anne for example, has a tendency to finish off sentences with *'you know, like Glastonbury'*, whilst other comments include; Phil: *'I think everyone has to go to Glastonbury at some point. I mean it just has everything. You can't even describe some of the stuff that goes on there...it's just its own little world... to be honest I don't think anything is comparable to Glastonbury'*; Garth: *'I've never been but when I worked down south I was an hour or so from Glastonbury and a lot of the other guys went. They said it was amazing!'* Glastonbury proved so persuasive both Esther and Phil describe watching a performance by Beyonce from Glastonbury on the television as the basis for why they were going to see her at festival A; Esther: *'Definitely Beyonce. I can't wait to see her. I watched her at Glastonbury and she was amazing! I think that will be the highlight of the weekend for me regardless of what else happens'*; Phil; *'There's no chance in hell I'd go to see Beyonce if she was touring normally, but, I'd love to see her live. She looked excellent at Glastonbury a few weeks ago and, you know, getting the opportunity in a festival environment to see her really mixes it up'*.

Watching the highlights of other festivals on the television is a large part of the weekend for Esther, especially at Glastonbury. In her words, watching is the next best thing to being there, describing it as *the* festival to go to, with performances *'you'd only ever get at Glastonbury'*. Even associating in this manner helped individuals construct an overarching festival identity based on Glastonbury which they viewed themselves as being part of. Paddy, who is one of the few who has previously attended Glastonbury, describes it as a step up from other festivals and something that everyone has to do at some point. The influence of Glastonbury is also clear to see in the festivals under study, with Mitch from festival C comparing parts of the festival to Glastonbury; *'from what I've seen and read it's kind of a mini version of Glastonbury, and you kind of feel*

*Glastonbury is the original festival and should be the model for the rest, and I think C has that thing that makes it a festival’.*

This theme of comparing one festival to another is the other main reason festivals are mentioned in discussions. For the most part, other festivals are mentioned to show off their negative aspects in relation to the festival that is being attended – much of the time a ‘we versus them’ type comparison of the physical festival with these characteristics subsequently attributed to the individuals who choose to attend. Although persuasive, such categorisation seems to be trumped by the aforementioned musical in-group/out-group split. This is in keeping with the social norm of groupness identified by (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971) during which time in-group members are favoured and out-group members discriminated against above and beyond any social norms of fairness as literature would suggest (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971).

For example, in talking about the type of person that attends festival C, Mitch says that a lot of ‘*our guys*’ would be offended by the behaviour at the larger festivals, and that these festivals are not suitable for older individuals. In isolating festival A, he goes on; ‘*a lot of what you get now is drunken kids. I mean I have nothing against that – I used to be a drunken kid, but there’s a certain type of festival that accommodates drunken kids*’. The singling out of festival A as a poor example is repeated a number of times throughout discussions, with others mentioning the lack of activities, the poor facilities, the crush of the campsite, the poor reputation it has, and the over-priced tickets. Tom sums up all that he believes is wrong with festival A; ‘*I don’t know what it is. But A just doesn’t have it...it’s more just a big concert than a festival*’. In highlighting their own positives (or other’s negatives), individuals are almost attempting to legitimise their own festival in comparison to other festivals and in doing so, highlight what makes their own festival more special. Although only subtly then, based solely on the festival they attend, individuals already identify themselves at differing levels of festival-goer with decisions based on the extent to which they perceive their festival as being prototypical (Deschamps and Devos, 1998). Having said this, it is not possible yet to show if these group distinctions and associations are driven by actual feelings and experiences or by other more persuasive sources, for example information spread through word of mouth or various media channels.

### 5.3.2 Media

The festivals attended employ very little direct advertising instead relying heavily on word of mouth and publicity on the internet and in press. One source of gathering information regarding the festivals is through music magazines and websites, and specialist festival websites. The majority of people interviewed visited at least one website beforehand to gather information on the festival they were attending. Along with the practical information, for example, ticket information, prices, dates, and location, these websites also facilitate on-line forums for fans to discuss elements of the festival from a general rather than commercial perspective. Of most interest to fans on these forums seem to be information regarding the programme of events, with many forum threads dedicated to guessing the line-up before any artists had been officially announced.

The more popular on-line festival community forums appear on many sites, however, most popular by far were three forums – one on a music magazine website, and the other two on specialist festival websites. Having been an avid reader of the magazine for some time, Emily uses the NME forum; *‘I quite like the forums. I read NME all the time so go on their forum and there’s always some stories flying around. Most of them are complete rubbish but occasionally they get it right...so fingers crossed they got this one right’*. Esther also reads the same forum *‘around this time of year yes. I mean there are always a couple of threads about rumours for headliners and information on tickets and stuff. But a lot of it is individual band threads, which if they end up at a festival turns into a festival thread. I just like it as a way to keep up with what’s going on in the music world and keep up with the people in it’*. Even those who don’t normally take an interest seem to check more thoroughly around the festival time of year, as Greg says *‘it puts me in the mood for the festivals. The more you read about them and see pictures the more excited you get – it helps in the build-up’*.

Making this part of the festival accessible beforehand, certain characteristics of the festival are activated which represent psychological significance of group memberships, perceptions, and behaviour (Oakes, 1987). This accessibility makes the identity associated with the festival more salient and available to the consumer (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). This process is further exaggerated when embedded in valued relational networks; the more valuable the network is, the more likely the identity will lend the

individual the necessary cognitive emotions to activate said group identity (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). Although virtual then, these forums do have a degree of power to facilitate similar relationships in reality. George, for example, still meets friends he met on specific band forum ten years after he first spoke to them.

Apart from as an information source, the majority of reference to media seems to be in a negative light, especially at festival A. This is particularly damaging as many of those new to the area are made aware of previous negative incidents, for example Claire; *'festival A has quite a bad reputation for drunks and bad behaviour. I mean I hadn't heard of it till I came to Scotland and then my friends told me about it and I searched the internet and all you see is bad press'*. Justin, who has travelled from England, commented; *'the only thing I'd heard was the unfortunate stabbing that happened last year. That was the only thing...I'd heard...things like that (the stabbing)...one off incidents do happen you know, and it does get bad press'*. These concerns are not just confined to those attending the festival, for example Alwyn at festival B tells the story of her little brother who wished to attend festival A, but was told by his parents that he couldn't because of the *'violence and drugs and stabbings and all that stuff'*. Again at festival B, Michael is aware of the reputation that festival A had built up, although attempts to defend it as; *'what you'd expect from bigger festivals...not just festival A, although I think it does get a very bad reputation and it's partly because the media pushes isolated incidents through so much...like the deaths and stabbings and rapes'*. Comparing this to festival B, Michael could only think of a small number of articles in his local paper, instead reporting that his festival survived more on word of mouth in the local community than any on-line presence. Embedding the festival message in such a valued network – in the case the community, a consistent, positive, and most importantly salient festival image is promoted (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). This sentiment is also found at festival C. When speaking with Sam who claims the only press he had seen has been generally positive in his local paper; *'it's not one of those things that is kept quiet – in the few weeks beforehand it's the talk of the town, which is much better press than any newspaper could give, although you do get the odd letter from the local busy body complaining about noise and traffic...other than that it's very well supported by the community'*.

Perhaps indicative of how the festival chooses to promote itself, and in turn the promotion the festival receives, the attendees vary dramatically across each festival.

### 5.3.3 Festival Demographics

One of the biggest noticeable differences between the three festivals is in the demographic of those in attendance, with many conversations using perceived demographic segments, for example age, 'class', and musical sub-groups to define participants. From observations, this is reinforced with each festival appearing to attract a very different age of person. Of the festivals studied, the gap was by far the most noticeable at festival A, whose demographic seem to be primarily teenagers and young adults; a fact confirmed by those at the festival, and even more so by those who did not fit into this age bracket:

Garth (age 37): *I'm too old to come here. I think A...in fact I think all music festivals have become mainly directed at the youth generation...so from maybe 18 to 21 or 22. That seems to be the main population I've seen so far. I think a decade ago the main audience would have been much closer to their mid to late 20s.*

Greg (age 28): *Well we're all growing up with jobs and families. Plus there are so many kids here now I do feel really old.*

The view of those at festival A is consistent across the three festivals, with the general opinion that festival A is aimed at a slightly younger target audience, focus for music, and all round direction for the weekend. For example, even Mitch, a nineteen year old attending festival C, likens festival A to being back at university; *'everyone is your age and they're mostly there to get drunk and make a crazy weekend out of it'*. So although not acting as an actual barrier to entry, this perceived stringent demographic does have an overwhelming effect on social groups within the festival experience. Rather than one strong, consistent identity, there appear to be several identities that develop for each age group – behaviours become dictated by the social context of 'age' (Haslam *et al.*, 2005) (see Chapter 7 for further discussion).

Compared to A, festival C was one such festival that benefits greatly from its more family-friendly atmosphere; *'here the people are a lot more varied in age. You have your kids here too, but a lot of them are 16 or 17 so maybe not as drunk as if they were slightly older...but there's a lot more families here too'* (Mitch, C). Festival B is placed

firmly in the middle ground between these two extremes, with an equally wide mix in age ranges albeit with less emphasis on the family element that festival C promoted. As such there is a much more inclusive nature to festival B and C, with little emphasis on the age aspect of those in attendance and no individual reporting feeling out of place.

Along with age as an explicit category, these opinions seem to directly impact thoughts on other demographic traits, with many using age as a link to the type of person in attendance of the festival. This method of classifying festival-goers is based upon a crude form of class, with the three festivals appearing to attract different people through the activities and reputation they offer. For example, festival C endears itself to a *'more cultured'* type of person. Gordon notes; *'you have poetry and ceilidh, music and fashion shows – I think it's attracts a wider cultural audience, and...how to say it without being snobby...a higher class of person...no, a different class of person'*. This appears very important to those at festival C who like the friendly atmosphere that forms from the programme of events. When asked whether he thought festival C would start to attract bigger headline acts, Gordon explains; *'I don't think the organisers are that way inclined. I think the festival lives more off word of mouth and that attracts the right clientele. If it were heavily promoted, or if they did book a major headliner then there would be a worry that kids would see it as another 'festival' which would mean drinking and drugs'*. This reference, as with many others, seems to be directed explicitly towards festival A which is seen as having quite a poor reputation for anti-social behaviour. One consistent reference is to NEDs, or *'none-educated-delinquents'*, as Greg explains; *'NEDS generally tend to overdo it a bit and maybe don't have the same limitations that you or I would'*, or more bluntly put by Caroline; *'they're pretty scummy looking people so we're keeping our distance. Although we did smile at them on the way past and say hello – that was more to hopefully stop them stealing our stuff!'*

Caroline, as with many others interviewed distinguishes herself from the NED element quite stoically although on delving deeper, many of those who have a poor impression of NEDs have not encountered anything themselves, instead basing their opinions more on stories that they hear from friends or see in the news. Although Greg is quick to set himself apart from NEDs, he summarises this point well; *'quite a large element is what Scottish people might refer to as NEDS, but they're generally well behaved'* and George also takes a more positive outlook on the NEDs; *'I generally get the impression everyone thinks A is full of drunken NEDS and junkies and it probably is. Although in*

*10 years I've never really had an issue. I've not got a problem with anyone that comes here'. Despite this, the negative impression is compounded by those interviewed, with festival A generally classified as the worse for anti-social behaviour.*

Festival B and C appear to have far fewer issues with poor behaviour. Being smaller festivals away from the bigger cities, there is generally a community feel surrounding the event, with those who do get overly drunk or loud soon controlled by friends or security staff. This is confirmed by Michael and Danny, performers at festival B, who note that in the years they have been performing and attending, there have been very few incidents regarding anti-social behaviour.

*Michael: A NED per capita count...there are a lot less NEDS here than T.*

*Danny: I've not seen any NEDS here*

*M: There are a couple...you haven't seen the boy in the Rangers shirt yet?! He's a NED if ever I've seen one!*

*Researcher: And what influence do you think NEDS have on a festival?*

*M: I mean a place like this they're outnumbered 10 to 1 so you don't really notice them. I mean I think you would have a lot of people who were NEDS but are too old to be. But here it's fine...they're still pretty respectful of the kids and such so I think are on their best behaviour. But I know like T in the Park there is a lot more trouble...drugs, drink, fighting and stealing, which partly goes with a larger crowd, but I think the NED element definitely makes up for it. Plus it's so big there's no way stewards or police or security can cover even a fraction of the area. But that's just what you expect from bigger festivals...not just T, although I think T does get a very bad reputation and it's partly because the media pushes isolated incidents through so much...like the deaths and stabbings and rapes*

He is also very quick to differentiate the festival from festival C, however, classifying festival C as more highbrow despite efforts from organisers to inject classier activities at festival B.



## **5.4 Interpretation and Discussion of Stimuli**

To best summarise these specific issues, this section will incorporate data collected alongside literature identified in chapter 2 as a way to interpret the effect objective stimuli have on both the festival individual and the festival group. In doing so, however, it is acknowledged that there is a tremendous degree of crossover between discussions throughout this chapter and more subjective and social processes of group identity formation. Although not intentional from the outset, attempts to separate objective stimuli and the associated social processes only serve to weaken discussions. As such, inclusion of these topics will be intentionally omitted from the current conclusions in favour of incorporation within more rounded and complete discussions in chapters to come. This interpretation will therefore deal exclusively with the truly objective stimuli and their impact during the festival experience.

### ***5.4.1 Utilitarian and Hedonic Value***

With the variety of festivals that exist, it is no longer enough for organisers to simply commercialise an offering; instead they must best use the resources they possess to better design the festival so that experiences are maximised, satisfaction is enhanced, and re-visits are facilitated (Yan *et al*, 2012). From the literature review, it is identified that one means of achieving this is through incorporating elements of the physical environment into the festival offering (Horley *et al*, 2007). Based on Mead's Symbolic Interaction, a physical environment is thought to have a substantial effect on social relations that are conducted within (Mead, 1934). As such, the role of physical stimuli does play a major role in the overall success of the festival for the individual attending. Despite this, through the use of interviews and observations it is noted that the physical environment of each festival actually serves very different purposes.

In its most basic form, the physical environment should aim to meet and surpass utilitarian motives and expectations of the consumer (Chitturi *et al*, 2008). From the conversations held, such expectations include providing a suitable venue with effective and efficient organisation and procedures, ample facilities, popular artists, and a logical means of navigating the event. Failure to meet base expectations can cause extreme emotions of anger amongst attendees (Morgan, 2007). These intense emotions become very easy to detect in interviews, with criticisms most prevalent by those interviewed at festival A. Issues regarding the general layout of the area, over-capacity of the camping

area, and poor organisation regarding basic procedures, for example, opening times appear most common. Despite having the most popular acts, there is also some discontentment surrounding the repeated use of bands year on year.

Information gained from on-line sources indicates that organisers are in fact aware of these perceived problems, however, are also very keen to defend their choices as being either in the best interests of its customers, or the only feasible solution to a problem. Despite acknowledgment of this reasoning, individuals are quick to apportion the blame on over-capacity and an over eagerness to attract new customers. With this, festival A fails to fully meet the criteria of what a meaningful place should be (as outlined in the literature, that is, singular, decommodified, and specific (MacCannell, 1992).

Contrary to this, festival C uses its location and physical surroundings as a huge selling point. Through more efficient planning, none of the issues mentioned at festival A are at all problematic. In satisfying these basic needs then, the festival is free to use its location to develop a more inclusive sense of place, identity, and attachment (Jorgensen and Steadman, 2001), and in doing so provides a sense of wonderment not achieved at the other festivals.

#### **5.4.2 *Becoming a Place***

With cultural tourism expanding to take into account those experiences providing interaction as the focus, the consumer now plays a major role in constructing and reconstructing the identity of the place as a site of experience (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). Festival C, and to a certain extent festival B, utilise this element of co-creation during the festival weekend. With the addition of many non-musical activities, the festivals make more of a provision for interaction providing arts, crafts, activities, and even the chance to create music with some of the bands. Festival C also has a strong history of giving local schools and bands the opportunity to perform on stage during the quieter times. In doing so, not only does this allow for the performers themselves to create their own experience of the weekend, but these performances often prove to be the highlight of the weekend for many family members and friends. In doing this, festival C contributes to the development of local traditions and cultures in an attempt to convey them as the main content of the experience (as outlined by Yeoman *et al*, 2006). For example, the festival emphasises the use of locally sourced food and drink, has

close links with the local heritage board, and makes use of local bands that specialise in Scottish music.

Rather than reconstructing or destroying place identity then, festival C contributes to an on-going process of change (Kneafsey, 2000). With this, festival C successfully fulfils the criteria set in the literature of what a meaningful place is. It also meets the criteria set out by which an experience acts as a location, a locale, and a sense of place (Agnew, 1987). This is in contrast to festival A where it is not always clear that these criteria are met fully. Although serving as a location and locale to the extent that it is an area created for the festival, it lacks any sense of a developed place. As such, there is a general absence of enthusiasm towards the arena, campsite, and overall notion of the locality of festival A.

Having said this, creating attachment through the provision of a place can only go so far in making the festival site an actual living place. Rather it is the memories that are bestowed in these places that really make them unique places (as defined by Gustafson, 2001). This is shown in every interview, with discussions surrounding past events that have happened throughout the festival environment. Many of these contexts are very individual-specific, with little relevance or bearing in the course of the actual festival or for the more general population. Instead these places are only made special through these very subjective events that occur. In questioning individuals about these experiences, every person has a different reason as to why it is special to them, with stories about the campsite, the arena, the stages, the forest, and even the toilets holding unique memories. Although these experiences are more socially relevant when occurring at identifiable physical locations, for example the ruins at festival C, or the Wickerman at festival B, for the individual the social relevance of the location is of little concern.

It appears then, for attachment to occur, the strength of association with the place is not so important, as long as there is some amount of incorporation of place into the individual's larger self-concept (Proshansky *et al*, 1983). Attachment in this form is most likely to occur after a prolonged interaction, and is therefore made easier when the idea of the place already plays a part of self-concept, for example, during community-based festivals. Such strong attachment can subsequently assist in altering behaviour, whether it is inversion or intensification of daily behaviour (Brown and Chappel, 2007).

However, it must be questioned to what extent this is achieved during short-term experiences, for instance the festival. As well as being dependant on prolonged interaction, strength of attachment is also influenced by the level to which individuals perceive themselves as functionally associated with the place (Stokols and Schumacher, 1981). This in turn is affected by a combination of attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, norms, rules and regulations, meanings, and behavioural tendencies, reaching far beyond a purely emotional attachment (Proshansky *et al*, 1983). During the festival, attachment appears to manifest itself on two different levels not previously identified in the literature; attachment to the place created by the festival, and attachment to the place used to accommodate the festival.

### **5.4.3 Levels of Attachment**

On a more general level, the location of festival C as a whole seems to be one reason why individuals continue to return. The fact it is in a unique country estate within a smaller community plays a huge role in the decision of some to return year on year. Carl, for example, travelled over four hours to attend the festival for his third consecutive year despite having numerous other festivals within a closer reach. His reasoning for this is; *'the first time I sat on the gardens there was just something that made it different from all the other festivals I've been to...if it were to move from here I don't think I would be anywhere near as likely to travel so far'*. This sentiment of loyalty to a site is only held at festival C. This is partly due to the actual physical features that the arena holds, and partly due to the community feel of the event. Taking place where it does in the north of Scotland, it has a tendency to attract many individuals from smaller rural areas nearby rather than larger cities, which gives it its distinct community feel. The idea of relocation nearer a bigger city was contemplated, but in all situations, individuals feel the small festival atmosphere would be lost. Coupled with the unique location, this results in nearly all of those interviewed at festival C citing the country estate location with a 'small community feel' as one of the reasons that either they were enjoying the event so much and would return, or one of the key reasons they had returned that year.

Using an identity profile that is already in place, in this case the local community and estate, attachment to an additional aspect of that community becomes a lot easier to achieve. As discussed above, it also becomes a lot easier to create stronger levels of

attachment, which can at times help in the altering of behaviour (Brennan-Horley *et al* 2007). It appears that at festival C the common result of attachment is an intensification of daily behaviour rather than any overwhelming change in behaviour (Lee *et al*, 2012). Reasons cited revolve around the local feel to it, individuals not wanting to embarrass themselves in front of family and friends, or not wanting to disrupt the family friendly atmosphere of the festival. By grafting the image of a community onto the festival (as discussed by Brennan-Horley *et al*, 2007), attachment to that place is managed. Alongside this, the physical environment provides the festival-goer with features including old stone ruins or the grand hall in the centre of the festival, allowing people to build a certain affinity with these specific locations. In hosting at this location, the music festival is elevated to become almost a heritage destination, which in turn allows for quicker attachment to form with the more tangible parts of the festival arena.

The second type of attachment that is noted is an attachment to the festival and through this, the place at which it was held. This appears to manifest itself as a degree of attachment to individual places within the festival environment created by the actual festival. This is especially the case at festival A, and is exemplified repeatedly when the topic of the campsite came up. For no reason other than tradition, many individuals insist on locating in the same fields year on year. For example Greg and his friends choose to become the 'purple 4s' regardless of where the purple site is actually located. Attachment to such minor places is mirrored throughout the interview process, with seemingly insignificant spots across the festival holding significant meanings for both individuals and for groups. In this situation, the festival itself is responsible for creating the place and as such, attachment is more concerned with intangible areas which would exist wherever the festival is located – if the festival were to move location, attachment would move with it.

#### **5.4.4 Causes of Attachment**

Both types of attachment discussed bear some similarities to Durkheim's Social Theory of Space, which concludes the cause of spatial representation is social, with spatial representations mirroring patterns of social organisations (Durkheim, 1968). As demonstrated in the interviews it is often the case that the festival society, or at times wider reference groups (for example, the local community) become responsible for place attachment. This fits with the original framework laid out, with objective and

social structures interacting to affect the subjective self. Place attachment is therefore said to be a physical manifestation of a place-based identity (Lalli, 1992). However, to accept such a simple conclusion would be wrong.

As shown in section 5.4.3, attachment can form with either the festival place or the place of the festival. This is no different when contemplating the relationship the individual has with place identity, and the question must therefore be asked; is the identity based on the physical place or the place created by the festival? From the interviews, place identity, which is the aspect of the place that an individual most closely associates with (Proshanky *et al*, 1983) is actually a very abstract concept. It appears that identification to a festival occurs very much before the festival begins, with any allusion to the festival, for example buying tickets, reading forums, the journey there, sufficient to stimulate the adoption of the festival place into an individual's personal identity. However, this adoption of identity may not reflect the true place, rather expectations of the place based on evidence collected from a number of sources. This is compared to attachment which requires a first-hand experience with a particular element of the festival place in order to occur. With this, contrary to the original literature, the link between place identity and place attachment is in actual fact very weak, with either existing independently of the other. Having said this, the highly subjective nature of individual's interactions with a specific place must be remembered, with audiences unlikely to place the same emphasis on shared interactions with places, making much of the interpretation highly unique.

## Chapter 6 The Social Experience

This chapter explores the social festival by through exploration of inter-subjective elements associated with the event (see Table 6.1). Interview data is interspersed with observations and literature to provide a holistic discussion surrounding creation of the social festival and the associated culture, lifestyle, and behaviour. The outcome of this predominantly affects social aspects of the festival, with group dynamics discussed under this heading. Inter- and intra-group relations are explored through a range of dynamic conscious and sub-conscious processes which aid the interpretation and reconstitution of identities during the festival experience. Understanding this socialisation highlights the importance of the ‘generalised other’ in the formation of a ‘contextual identity’. Linked to this is the idea of festival behaviour and its influence on the atmosphere of the festival. These considerations are then examined in relation to categorisation that takes place during the festival, exploring the roles of social identity and self-categorisation theory in this process.

<b>Inter-Subjective</b>	Activities	Planning, Taking part, Inclusion
	Atmosphere	Family, Safe, Social, Small festival, Drinking (Atmospheres)
	Audience	Class, Loyalty, Proper fans, Child/Family friendly
	Behaviour	Crowd behaviour, Festival etiquette, Rules
	The Festival	Culture, Lifestyle, Local festivals, Definition
	Information	Hearsay, Word of mouth, Reputation
	Involvement	Community, Locality, Performing, Taking part, Inclusivity
	Celebration	Cultural celebration, Genre-based festival
	Social	Group dynamics, Similarities, New socialising, Attending with

**Table 6.1: Inter-subjective Stimuli Coding**

### 6.1 Festival Understanding

During interviews many individuals make reference to elements of the festival culture and lifestyle. Not only do culture and lifestyle help clarify to the individual exactly what constitutes a festival socially and subjectively, combined they are also a means of building a socially-oriented feeling of identity (Hofstede, 1980; Turner, 1982).

### 6.1.1 Culture

In speaking with individuals, it becomes clear that the term ‘festival’ means different things to different people. Most often discussed is the notion of the modern festival attempting to replicate and recreate the feelings of the original festivals of the 1960s and 1970s. Conversations almost inevitably led to the Glastonbury music festival as the perfect model for the modern music festival. Phil from festival C has been to Glastonbury previously and is quick in revealing his views on the culture of the festival:

*I think it's the people that really made it special for me. I think because of its history it still attracts the eccentrics who are trying to emulate the original years. I mean they still have the spirit of the 70s in them and I think even though it's dominated by younger generations, all the kids still look to the older guys and take some of the energy from them. It sounds a bit hippy-ish, but I mean that's the vibe you get there.*

This opinion on Glastonbury is mirrored by others, for example Caroline mentions that in her view Glastonbury is the biggest and the best festival with a strong reputation built from its ‘hippy days – free love and all that’. Although having never attended, talking of Glastonbury in such a manner verges on claiming a degree of ownership, or at the very least self-inclusion into the festival community of which Glastonbury is a part. This allows an affinity to develop with Glastonbury which takes the form of the prototypical festival. Talking about it also provides the individual a means of self-continuity and security in relation to their own festival identity (Tuan, 1976). Phil also acknowledges the ethos of Glastonbury, especially its relation to festival C. Although on a completely different scale in terms of capacity and quality of acts, he claims that rather than attempting to recreate Glastonbury, festival C; ‘acknowledges it and acts as a tribute to it as opposed to any attempt to rival it; no festival can rival it unless it has the history and reputation which I don't see any other festival having’.

Without being able to buy history or reputation, the idea of creating a cultural theme is attempted at many festivals, one such example being festival B. Only in its tenth year, with the inclusion of themes and story, festival B portrays to have more history than it actually does. This is noted by Hannah who lives locally and has been attending the festival for a number of years; ‘although a lot of people do just accept it and believe the



*tradition and that the festival is some sort of pagan type ritual. It's nice to put some history to it, but it's all just rubbish really'* – her remarks based on the ritual burning of the Wickerman. In doing so, festival B places much emphasis on a more playful style, spectacle, and above all, hostility towards the more generic festival. This is very much in keeping with Brown (1993) – the outlook creates a certain falsehood surrounding the festival. Perhaps a more extreme example, the goal of creating a faux place is not confined to festival B, appearing to be a very common festival occurrence.

For example, this pretence is noted by Michael and Danny – performers who have played at several festivals, and the way they talk about the style of music their bands play – a very traditional Celtic music largely used for ceildh dancing, or fleadh dancing (the Irish equivalent to a Scottish ceildh).

Researcher: *So before you started playing the festival circuit, did you come along as regular paying fans?*

Michael: *I had come here for 2 years before we started playing at it.*

Danny: *Yeah, I go to music festivals all the time. T in the Park, Glastonbury...have done them all. But we go to a lot of, well I don't know about the Chihuahuas (Michael's band)...they kind of do their own thing, but our bands Irish traditional music so we go to a lot of festivals that kind of replicate that music*

M: *We would call the fleadhs*

D: *Fleadhs...f-l-e-a-d-h-s, just means festivals that have an Irish theme to them. So we'll go to and play more folk oriented festivals like Celtic Connections or things of that ilk. So yeah it's great...B I suppose isn't a traditional festival in that way for either of our bands so it's good that it tries to incorporate it.*

R: *So how does B compare to any other festivals that you've been to...either as a fan or artist?*

M: *I'm kind of older than Danny...I know it's hard to believe, but see like A, for*

*me it's too big. It's far too commercial and you've got your massive big bands which makes it far too expensive. This is my kind of group. It's a kind of mixed group. You've got loads of kids here and that...it's very family oriented, but not too much, so I definitely prefer it to the massive ones*

*D: I'd probably say the same as Mark...the atmosphere's excellent. It's quite similar to the fleadh festivals that we would do as well because it's family oriented and it caters well to everybody's needs...compare that to A and it's a different ball game*

*R: And would that put you off playing or going?*

*D: No, not at all. If someone offered me a gig at A I'd take it in a second*

Talking further about whether he has ever been asked to play the Ceilidh Area of festival A, Michael refers to the bands selected as '*generic folk*' at best, but intentionally repackaged as '*traditional Scottish*' mainly due to the demand of the crowd. Danny also acknowledges that his band would have to alter their style to play at such a festival, but he would still happily do it mainly as it provides a much larger pay package than playing the traditional Celtic festivals.

Even areas as basic as the 'VIP' area provide a very false sense of what they really represent. Again, Michael talks of the VIP area being a nice place to go for the toilets and a shower, but that's about all it is good for, instead being full of farmers from neighbouring land. This is also the case at festival A whereby the '*hospitality*' area merely provides a cash rather than token bar and more toilets. Although these festival spaces are designed to lessen the generic nature of the festival, it is often the case that by creating 'faux-places', there is a loss of diversity and singularity at the expense of commodification (Fullilove, 1996). This has the potential to actually destabilise the cultural rituals which they are trying to save (Carver, 2000). For example, Glastonbury's alternative (and authentic) culture are becoming more commonplace due to a routine structure promising an authentic festival experience, when in actual fact a fake alternative culture is what is actually experienced (Gibson and Conell, 2005).

Although common at many festivals, this culture-for-culture-sake approach is not

always necessary. For example, the culture of the festival in France is described as being a lot different from the UK festivals; rather than losing cultural importance over the years, the festival held in Paris – Rock en Seine, has instead helped in bridging the gap between local communities and strengthening national culture, as told by John:

*We treat it as a coming together of all people. Paris is very divided at times, so for all to come together for one event is a very big thing. But I do not think that was maybe the original festival – I think that has come about because of the trouble in France over the past few years – class wars and other things.*

Cultural motivations behind other foreign festivals also seem to be more common. James from festival C talks about a Celtic festival he attended in Canada for his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Compared to the festivals he has been to in the UK, he saw it as a similar set up, however; *...the people were a lot more excited to be celebrating Scottish culture somewhere other than Scotland*. James describes it as *'an over-emphasis of Celtic culture, although this was warmly received, especially the culture and family roots...I think the deep seeded culture...you know the real history of Scotland'*. Cultural acceptance and motivations seem then to be stronger when associated with more important aspects of an individual's lifestyle; belonging to this larger cultural group assists in the positioning and development of the individual with regard to how they reconstruct and filter the world to become an integral part of their lifestyle (Serino, 1998).

### **6.1.2 Lifestyle**

Lifestyle in this instance is often used to describe the stereotypical festival goer, with aspects of the festival prototype welded on to the person being interviewed. As such, being seen as a committed festival-goer (and thus more representative of the prototypical festival-goer) is considered to be particularly important to the individual (Turner *et al*, 1987). For instance, many of those interviewed have been to only a small number of festivals and are quick to provide reasons why this is the case, treating it as if it is a very negative thing. Richard at festival B relates the problem to having a career as a teacher; *'Well the problem was that as a teacher the holidays weren't at the same time, so I couldn't go. Now I'm going to do them all. It's always something that's attracted me and I suppose that now Scotland has 4 or 5 worth going to it's something*

*that I'm definitely going to work on*'. Andrea also feels like she needs to make up for lost time, having attended relatively few festivals in her youth. In a similar vein, Gavin talks about how the festival craze seemed to skip his generation, leaping from the 70s to the 00s during which time he was out with the perceived correct age group; *'there seemed to be a big gap between the original festivals which were too old for us. The original Glastonbury was before we were old enough to know what a festival was and then T in the Park only started after we were old and married, so we never really got the chance...it skipped our generation'*. In these instances, legitimising closeness to the prototype is based on little more than consumption practices – the more that has been consumed, the closer the individual feels to the festival prototype.

One couple who have only recently increased their consumption and *'adopted'* the festival lifestyle are Gail and James who are both newly retired. Gail talks about this fact; *'I mean we're obviously pensioners now so we've got to think about that but I would say it's one of our few expenditures now, isn't it. Our other hobbies...walking and fishing aren't really that expensive so I suppose this is our most expensive hobby...visiting festivals; it's just a pity the summer wasn't longer'*.

As well as being made explicit in interviews, the idea of being part of the festival lifestyle (primarily by means of conspicuous consumption) is witnessed in many other areas across the festival weekend. The most obvious commonality is in the shared dress sense (with clothing displaying festival or band images), tents covered in writing from festivals gone by and perhaps most visible, the number of wrist bands worn. One individual – Justin, had previously visited Glastonbury, Leeds festival, V festival as well as a number of smaller festivals and tells of numerous encounters he has had which involve strangers approaching him to tell him *'what a festival ledg (legend) I am'* based on nothing more than the wristbands he wears. Such examples show that attending a festival is considered something to be proud of, with more festivals attended leading to a higher degree of festival expertise – a reaction perhaps more indicative of how the individual wants to be seen socially by others rather than their own subjective viewpoint (Barlou, 1987).

## **6.2 Socialising and Social Dynamics**

Of all the individuals interviewed over the festival weekends, over half admitted that

their main motivation for attending the festival is a social one. Although other motivations are listed (see section 7.1 for further discussion) the social context seems to be an especially strong factor throughout, for example; *'it's a social occasion; just a good laugh...well when I saw the line-up it reinforced my decision to come, but primarily social reasons when I first bought my ticket'*. Although acknowledged almost collectively, the emphasis put on the social context does still vary greatly between individuals, therefore must be broken down further.

### **6.2.1 Social Motivations**

The choice to attend a festival appears to be heavily influenced by the immediate social considerations surrounding the decision. Social groups include university friends, work colleagues, romantic partners, and even a hen party, giving individuals a chance to catch up with friends that had not been seen for a long time. With this, the festival seems to act as a substitute for more routine social activities that would otherwise bring groups together for the weekend. However to be successful, these gatherings require significant planning and arrangements, for example, Emily comments:

*We had planned with a group of friends to come here. There were about 25 in total. And then one by one they pulled out for other reasons. I think we were the last ones in but by that point the group was down to like 10. We just decided it would be more fun to go on a holiday rather than come here with half the group.*

In talking like this, Emily makes it clear that the main point of the meeting was social, with the destination of the meeting of lesser importance. Claire makes a similar point regarding the festival versus holiday choice. In her explanation the festival allows her *'to see less close friends...when we go on holiday it's more a small group of the girls whereas here it's a big group; friends from university, friends from home, and just people I see around town'*. This is in keeping with previous work on motivations which highlight new and old socialising compared to gregariousness as primary motivations for those attending festivals (see Table 4.2). George who has been to festival A ten times previously talks of how his social group varies year on year with the first trip being just him and one friend, the second year five friends, and so on until he was part of a group of thirty consisting of work mates, acquaintances through music, friends

from school, and his girlfriend, however; *'as it went on fewer and fewer friends were coming...married, settling down, kids, jobs...there were so many reasons you couldn't come'*, giving some clues to the target age of attendees. Of those spoken to around half are university students (or of that age). The festival provides a chance for them to reacquaint with friends that are home during the summer months. In this respect the festival provides an ideal way to socialise with less close friends. An example of this is given by Mitch at festival C who has been out of the country for the summer:

Researcher: *So what is it that brings you to C this year?*

Mitch: *Well it just coincides with the time I happened to be visiting home. I'm down in Glasgow for uni and I've been away on a voluntary scheme in Africa for the past 8 weeks. I thought it was as good a time as any to catch up with a few friends that I've not seen since the start of summer.*

R: *So was that your main motivation for coming to C?*

M: *I don't think I would have made a whole lot more effort to arrange a group. A few good friends just happened to be home at the same time. So yeah, I mean I know that I'd have fun regardless whether I came with my family or friends or even just one day, but it's good to get away for the whole weekend with similar people.*

In many cases it was these large, more informal groups that encourage and convince others to join in at the festival. For example, Dean only made the choice to go to the festival after being invited by a larger group, while Emma mentions that originally she wasn't going to attend the festival until her friend who attended the previous year invited her to join them:

Researcher: *And is that the main reason you're here...for the music?*

Emma: *Originally no. My friends who were here last year were coming again and invited me. I had no idea what to expect apart from what they told me, so was originally just going to follow them around, but that plan soon went out the window.*

During the interactive nature of festival consumption, these motives start to show the transition from a personal to a more social way of thinking (Wood and Thomas, 2006) so much so, the individual-social transformation becomes central to the experience (O'Shea *at al*, 2012). Indications are that this occurs due to social influences exerted from the environment, for example, characteristics of the stimulus situation, the structure of the social environment, individual differences, and cultural expectations of conformity, all of which occur at two levels – with known groups and with new groups.

### **6.2.2 Known Group Socialising**

Attending with a strong social group seems to make this social transformation a smoother process, and becomes an important part of the festival. Although festivals bring together many people with the same interest, a close social group with similar interests can make for a more enjoyable experience. For example Mitch tells of the assurances he has of going with a close group of friends; *'I know what to expect from them and I know that we'll have a good time. None of them are too crazy or too dull; they're all about right for the weekend'*. Caroline also talks about being on the same *'wave length'* as the rest of her group which makes them a much closer unit, while Garth talks about *'seeing bands with others who wanted to see that band...others who cared about the band'*. This feeling seems to be the consensus throughout, especially when larger groups attend together. For example, George talks about the variety in group size he has been with in the past:

Researcher: *And why do you think your expectations change each year?*

George: *It just depends on the line-up and who I'm here with. I mean in the past we've had a group of 30 odd people. This year it's a lot smaller so I'm still going to have a good time with my friends, but I don't have the choice of sitting around with people who don't want to see much music so it's motivation for me to see more bands.*

The positives and negatives of group size are also pointed out by others – the larger group providing more people to relax with as Claire points out; *'I guess it's good having a bigger group as there's always someone that's happy to do things with you. You're*

*not stuck trailing round after others'*, whilst the smaller group provides more motivation to take part in activities as there may be less choice of other things to do. Even with the smaller group, individuals appear more than happy to remain within their own social group only, as Justin says; *'I may occasionally speak to other people, but it's not like you're going to go make new friends and see any bands with them'*.

Although typical discussions seem to focus more on the idea of socialising with known friends, the festival does facilitate socialising with previously unknown individuals. As part of the more general topic of social motivation, individuals are keen to discuss issues of group dynamics out with their immediate social groups, opening up on their relationships with other festival-goers.

### **6.2.3 New Socialising**

The alternative to socialising with known group members is to socialise with new groups or individuals that have been met through festival circumstances. However, the extent of this socialising differs greatly between festivals, with both positive and negative experiences conveyed. For example, both Emily and Claire mention that although they perhaps make an effort to speak to unknown people, because of the large numbers in their group they always have someone to accompany them places. Claire is quick to differentiate how she would speak to others:

Researcher: *And what about the rest of the people here at TITP? Have you spoken to many of the other festival goers?*

Claire: *Not really. Because we have a big group I don't think we really need to. I mean there's always someone from the group to talk to or do something with. I think at night it's a bit different in the big dance tents. Some of the guys were off with a group of girls they met and it is just like a club and you do talk to randoms but not in a friendly way...more in a social way if you know what I mean.*

Emma explains this when discussing waiting in crowds for bands to start:

Researcher: *And do you find yourself socialising with other people?*



Emma: *Not really that much. I mean you're standing next to people for hours on end so I'll probably end up talking to them at some point – it's quite friendly in that respect, but then you end up bouncing away from them and it's not like you're going to go look for them again. Like my friends were laughing at me for talking to some guy, but everyone's here for the same reasons and this guy...I don't know his name probably had more in common musically than my best friends, so I guess it makes it a bit better...but it's like you...you're some random guy asking people to talk to them and I bet most people are more than happy to chat to you and are interested in what you're doing...I mean, it's pretty cool.*

She quickly follows this up with an admission that musically she probably has more in common with a lot of these strangers than she does with the group she attended with. This discussion at festival A is very much in keeping with the argument put forth by Touraine and Duff (1981) who show the difficulty in transitioning from individual to social – or as they term it, from the principle of identity to the principle of totality (Touraine and Duff, 1981). In this situation individuals do not possess the ability to transition past the agreement that antagonistic groups exist to the point where common goals are shared. This unsocial element appears to be accentuated at the larger festival A.

Contrary to this it appears to be more the norm to speak with unknown individuals at the smaller, more intimate events. This is demonstrated at festival B and C with many acknowledging the friendly nature of the crowd and how easy it is to get chatting to strangers. Angela at festival B says; *'...there are so many new interesting people as well. Everyone's walking through and they'll just stop and talk'*. Hayley regards festival B as; *'brilliant...you just meet people from all walks of life...all sorts of people'*. Gordon is under the same impression at festival C, seeing it as abnormal not to speak with others in the festival setting; *'...we'll happily talk to others and I think it's the crowd that really makes the event what it is'*. It appears that through this new socialisation, emphasis is placed on community and inclusivity as part of the experience. Such specific and valued circumstances become extremely persuasive especially when considering any individual to social transitions (Kruse, 2010). With this, the physical festival becomes so much more than a location; it becomes a social space which allows communities to form within.

#### 6.2.4 Community

Of the festivals studied, festival C is the most community-oriented with substantial links to the local area. The first time Phil heard about the festival was through '*murmurings*' around the town; '*I mean you couldn't not hear about it. So we asked a few friends and they explained...obviously we knew it was a music festival but they explained the type of music and the local connections*'. Part of the reason the community gets so involved according to Mitch is that it provides a spotlight on the local area which is often overlooked:

...well obviously I'm not really here for most of the year, but there's definitely a buzz in the area when just before the festival. I think the spotlight is on the Highlands and this is the biggest festival up here. I personally feel Inverness is overlooked by Glasgow and Edinburgh...even Aberdeen for the big attractions and shows. All the big bands always miss out Inverness even though there are loads of people who would go see them. So it's a case of music fans always travelling elsewhere for the big shows. So to have this here everyone...I guess everyone is quite proud about it and they want to show off as much as possible.

Closely representing the community, the festival is often described as being '*owned by the community*' and it is for that reason that people take pride in it. In this format, the festival closely resembles what literature describes as a homogenised, liminal experience in which a temporary community is formed based around comradeship and egalitarianism (Gardner, 2004), however, to assume this would be incorrect.

According to literature, a decisive factor of a liminal experience is the segregation of the attendee from their home life. In this form, the community feel described is not the result of the festival, rather it exists independently of the festival. This can partially be explained by the small-ness of the surrounding area which already contributes to a strong community spirit. On top of this, community involvement is not just confined to the festival weekend, occurring all year round with much build up taking place in the weeks and months running up to the event as Gordon describes; '*for a lot of people here it's not just about the weekend. There's a lot of build up to the event which a lot of the local businesses are involved in... and then you have all the food stores – lots of locally owned carts. And you know them from the high street in town and you're more inclined to buy from them as you know the money will be kept locally*'. Making use of the local

surroundings, festival C manages to create a thorough sense of place which gives the local structure a degree of feeling (Agnew, 1987).

These sentiments are echoed, albeit to a lesser extent at festival B with many of those attending from towns in the local vicinity. Having said this, the geographical spread of smaller centres means that the location is not particularly close enough to any one town that it becomes a 'home event'. Community does exist, but more in the semblance of a locale in which social relations can occur (Agnew, 1987). Michael, a performer at festival B, seconds these thoughts. Although coming from Glasgow he talks about the noticeable difference when he arrives, having a very local feel to it, and as such compares favourably to the larger festivals he has attended, for example festival A; *'well I always felt it was a lot more like a community event than, say festival A...you treat it with a bit more respect because of that local feel...it's like it's your own local festival'*.

Another way to promote community-mindedness, festival C encourages local involvement in the musical programme, for example, by maintaining strong ties with local schools and bands. Gavin's first experience of the festival was when his son was involved as part of the local school jazz band. It was for this reason only that he and his wife decided to attend for the day, but since then they have become regular attendees. Gordon tells a similar story of his neighbours; *'...and it also promotes a lot of local...or at least Scottish bands and artists. My neighbour's son played last year as part of the school band. And because of that my neighbours and the family came along for the weekend and were part of the festivals. They're back this year too, and they're in their 50s. I don't think they would ever have even thought about going to a festival had their son not been involved'*. Such participation and involvement opens the festival up to a new demographic that would otherwise be unable, unwilling, or unmotivated to attend.

The notion of community sentiment is not only restricted to those in attendance, extending with no less importance to those not at the festival. When questioned about how locals perceive the increased number of visitors to the area and potential increase in traffic, Andrea and Gary discuss this:

Researcher: *And do you find that you get many locals opposed to the festivals?*

Andrea: *I don't know anyone that's particularly angry about it. I think they're all quite accepting of it. I mean in the years we haven't gone we've not been affected by it...a bit of a hold up on the main road, but that's about it.*

Gary: *I mean you hear all about the problems getting in and the roads around the festival are a nightmare, but there are plenty of routes around the festival. I mean there are plenty so you can avoid it quite easily if you wanted. But no, I've not heard anything against it anyway.*

Hilary reaffirms this, talking of the number of roads that can be used to avoid any congestion; *'for the sake of a lot of money and a lot of good publicity coming into the area, they are more than happy to take a five minute detour'*. However, this is largely under the proviso that the festival remains a reasonable size and positively represents the community. The idea of the festival remaining small is not just a desire of local residents, but is also very much hoped for by those in attendance. Rather than growing larger in capacity and possibly relocating to a larger venue, individuals are very positive about the size and *'feel'* of festivals B and C as they are. Amongst other things, the community brings with it a much friendlier feel; *'it has a much more local feel to it – everyone takes pride in this being their festival. It's maybe a tenth the size of the likes of larger festivals, so it also feels a bit more exclusive'*, which Gordon believes accurately and respectfully represents not just the community but his own personal values, both of which are reflected in the behaviour of individuals during the festival.

### **6.3 Festival Behaviour**

A vast majority of discussion concerning festival behaviour incorporates the consumption of alcohol as a necessity of the weekend. This is especially the case at festival A which seems to place a great emphasis on the over-consumption of drink. When talking with Garth, one of the older respondents at festival A, he notes that there's no real convention at the festival, with everyone *'up early with a beer in hand'*. This drinking environment is largely the norm, and to a certain extent is *'pushed'* on those who attend. When questioned about the festival promoting a drinking culture, Greg had these thoughts:

*I would say it does. I mean it's sponsored by a beer. And even though I don't*

*like beer...I stick to spirits most of the weekend, it is pushed on you. And you see a lot of people carrying 5 or 6 cases of beer into the campsite, so yeah, I definitely feel that A is a place where drinking lots is acceptable. But I mean I won't drink till I pass out or anything.*

Normalising the increase in alcohol consumption appears to encourage everyone to take part, even if it is not always necessary. Esther comments; *'I think I could go without drinking, but I think so many other people are doing it, it's a lot more fun if you get involved too. I mean you're up till like 3 or 4 in the morning and by that time you need something to keep you going'*. Such behaviour is a prime example of more objective stimuli (i.e. the promotion of alcohol through sponsorship) penetrating normal behaviour of the social (inter-subjective) group (Mead, 1934).

This behaviour is also the norm at festival B shown in a conversation between Jane, Colin, and Mary:

Researcher: *So do you find yourselves acting differently at the festival than you would normally?*

Colin: *I certainly wouldn't be drinking at 12.30pm on a Saturday afternoon.*

Jane: *I relish the chance to be able to have a pint at 12.30pm in the afternoon. I mean on a Saturday afternoon in I were at home I would probably be trying to find an excuse to go out for lunch but I don't think my behaviour at a festival changes all that dramatically now when I'm at a festival than it does any other time. I think whatever I do here I'll do anywhere else because I mean I see this as something you do over a couple days rather than something you do over a couple of hours back in Glasgow.*

R: *So you all mentioned drinking there...do you think festivals promote a drinking culture?*

Mary: *Yes, well it does in a way but you certainly have the choice between drinking and not drinking. I mean you always have a choice but you are also surrounded by people who are drinking all day so I don't know how that adds*

*pressure to most people.*

*C: I think it is the culture...not just in Scotland but in Britain as well that you drink far too much because you think you have to drink to have a good time so coming away to a festival for a weekend, you're coming away to have a good time.*

*J: I mean the majority of stories you hear about the weekend will be about people who have done something, or something that's happened when they've been absolutely smashed...in fact yeah, I think festivals do encourage you to drink but only to groups of people who are predisposed to drinking anyway. I mean I do drink but I don't drink to excess and I can't imagine actually being at festival and not drinking. The idea is completely alien to me if I'm being honest.*

*C: But I mean sometimes you don't want to drink and waste it. The first time I went to Glastonbury the music was so important to me that I didn't want to be drunk or leaving the stage to go to the toilet all the time, so I just avoided drinking altogether. But I mean I've had festivals when I have been quite drunk...maybe if there aren't bands I'm particularly interested in you are encouraged, especially at festivals that are just about the music and nothing else to spend time in the beer tents or sitting out having a pint.*

This is, as Caroline puts it, *'the times when the rules change for what you can and can't do'*, with many daily rituals apparently substituted for festival versions. Along with Caroline, others also look at the weekend as a chance for them to let their hair down and relax beyond the normal bounds they otherwise would. This change is especially observed for those with more professional jobs who maintain a *'proper appearance'* during their regular working week. Garth for example, a 37 year old investment analyst claims that he won't take his behaviour to any extremes, however; *'it's probably fair to say that if any of my clients saw me this weekend they probably wouldn't be my clients for that much longer'*. Garth's reaction, along with many others, again tends to focus on the increase in alcohol consumption that occurs as part of weekend, for example:

*Phil at festival C: I'm much more relaxed I suppose. I enjoy myself and have a few beers. I mean it's just a time to relax and chill out that I don't normally get*

*during the week.*

Greg at festival A: *I drink a lot more over the weekend than I do normally. I don't drink a lot socially. Em, a lot more relaxed; a bit more easy-going. Obviously with a profession like mine it's quite regulated and serious; that sort of goes out the window for the weekend.*

Rejected previously in the discussion surrounding the formation of community at festival C, the idea of liminality is once again presented, however in this situation there is much more evidence to support the idea. For example, individuals loosely follow a prescribed, standardised routine (i.e. a group identity) (van Gennep, 1981), day-to-day identities disappear (e.g. professional identities) in favour of a more homogenous identity (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010), individuals show acceptance of a socialised code of conduct which is defined by social interaction (Gardner, 2004) which for the majority represents a segregation from and inversion of daily life (Turner, 1969). However, the transition stops short of becoming fully liminal, with no real sense of community or comradeship occurring at festival A, therefore a more realistic appraisal would place it in the classification of a liminoid experience (Turner, 1975). Attempting to find a fully liminal experience, these above discussions are shifted to focus on festival C – a festival which does contain the missing element (i.e. a sense of community) however but in doing so, other issues are encountered.

Although present at every festival, the extent to which alcohol is consumed varies greatly. Contrary to the excessive drinking widely assumed to occur at most festivals, Mitch at festival C talks of his change in behaviour by drinking less during the festival, at least during the day portion of events; *'well like I say, I think I'm a lot more reserved here mainly because I don't want to make an idiot of myself in front of people that know me or my family. So I wouldn't drink as much, well not during the day at least. And you have the kids here too...like really young kids so you don't want to be acting like a fool when you've got these little kids around. I think C has built itself on a family type atmosphere and everyone...well 99% of people respect that and you don't want to be the only one that's ruining other people's weekends and giving the festival a bad name'*. This sentiment is shared by Caroline who is happy for people to relax more than normal as long as they stay *'within the rules for what you can and can't do'*. Rules in this sense are easily categorised into two distinct categories – formal and informal rules. Formal

rules are endorsed through an abundant and visible security force at every festival, with their primary intention being to prevent trouble in the main arena caused by 'gate crashers' and excessive alcohol consumption. John surmises the strict regulations as *'allowing for a more respectful atmosphere in the heavily publicised arena with much media coverage, whereas the camping area is relatively media free'*. Despite his views, the official reason for the presence of security is 'license issues that prohibit alcohol being transferred from one area to the other'. However, these rules are regularly ignored with it being common practice to sneak alcohol from one area to the other. Contrary to this, it appears to be the informal rules which become more prominent and respected during the festival.

Informal rules appear to be created by the consensus, or generalised other (Mead, 1934) so vary significantly from festival to festival. For example, at festival C Mitch talks about his second visit to the festival; *'I think having seen it before I knew what to expect which was good. I knew it wasn't as crazy as A so obviously you come with that in mind and kind of stick to the rules you know are in place here'*. A second explicit mention of festival rules and etiquette arose when talk turned to crowd behaviour. In a discussion with Phil, he recounts the time he was in a large crowd at the Glastonbury festival and was knocked down on the ground:

*...it's kind of the crowd ethos...if anyone's struggling everyone will help out. I remember ending up on the ground at Glastonbury and within a second there were a lot of people pulling you up...it is a case of everyone looks out for each other...at least during the music. I mean I'm not saying that everyone becomes an ideal citizen...I mean as soon as the music's finished everyone seems to go back to normal. Pushing through queues to get out, throwing bottles, the odd fight...but there seems to be a certain unwritten set of rules when you're in the midst of the crowd.*

Even at the smaller festival C, Rita recounts a similar story; *'last night we were in the crowd, quite close to the front and we saw a little girl being crushed. It turns out she'd been near the front with her mum and got separated, and then obviously you're left with the situation of a little girl being jostled about in a crowd of thousands. We tried to find the mum, so in the end I ended up walking out the crowd to the security'*. It is examples like this that make the festival seem more safe – the fact that people are actively helping



out in situations, which is one reason Phil was more than happy to bring his young son, Charlie to the event; *'in that respect I feel safe for us and Charlie...I think if anything were to go wrong the general etiquette of the crowd is to help out. And I know this festival is policed very well...it's stewarded very well, so apart from the major 'what ifs' I have no worries about him being here'*. In many ways, these behaviours act as direct outcomes of the objective atmosphere that is created at the festival.

## **6.4 Creating an Atmosphere**

The atmosphere is considered by many to be one of the more important aspects of the weekend, however it is very difficult to define exactly what constitutes atmosphere due to it being made up of *'lots of different things'*. As such, atmosphere is discussed at length with an emphasis on the variables that help create the distinct atmospheres found at every festival.

### **6.4.1 Family Atmosphere**

One of the more consistent comments revolves around the family atmosphere created at festivals B and C, with festival C in particular aimed at the family market. Not only does it provide more accessible accommodation for families, it also provides free tickets to children under twelve so long as they attend with full priced ticket holders. For Phil, this is the only reason he chose to come with his family as a more unusual family day out:

*Well, it worked out at £60 each for the tickets and Charlie gets in for free...I think all kids under-12 get in for free, which is a really big incentive to bring them along. Obviously we'd be a bit resentful paying a lot for him to come. But to be honest we spend enough on him when we're here, so I think it benefits everyone letting youngsters in for free.*

In placing itself in this vein, it is almost universally accepted that behaviour must be altered to conform to the addition of young children within the festival environment. This behavioural change is not only accepted by others at the festival but appears to be welcomed, with the family atmosphere and addition of children adding extra value to those in attendance. For example, Phil is one of those directly affected as he is attending with his wife and three year old child, Charlie:

*He loves it; he just loves being able to run around outside. The one thing I would say about C is how family oriented it is. I mean Charlie's maybe a bit young to do most of the activities, but he's had his face painted as you can see and we've bought him a little toy...I don't even know what it is but it makes some amount of noise! But he's happy just dancing around, and everyone else is very accepting of the kids. I think...like I said with Glastonbury about the older people making it special, it's the kids that make it special here. And don't get me wrong, we are limited a huge amount in what we can and can't do. We're obviously not drinking and we're limited to where we can see the music from...he gets a bit upset with the loud music...so we'll just sit on the hill all day and we can see what we want and he can do what he wants...everyone's a winner.*

Although not making up a large part of the weekend, the inclusion of children is also a feature of festival B. Colin talks about watching music and seeing some children dancing around and having fun which put a smile on his face, with Mary adding; *'I think it all adds to the really good atmosphere of the place and the vibe that you get when you go to these places. And the kids just get it...they just make you smile. I mean you're always going to have a really good vibe when you see little kids running around and enjoying themselves'*. However, it is not just the fact that children are encouraged to attend that makes it a family atmosphere; it comes from the social acceptance given by those in attendance. Mitch, who has been attending festival C with his family for a number of years attributes this atmosphere to the pride that is shown by locals towards the festival; *'even the folk who are 16 or 17 or 18 are quite proud of the festival and don't want to drive the family feel away...that's what makes it so different to the likes of other festivals'*. At festival B it is also the recognition of families in attendance that make it that bit more special; *'if people see families they're not really going to be too drunk or loud. And I think that's why you see so many people talking to each other, because everybody is quite relaxed and safe and that's just brought about by all the kids running around and the atmosphere it brings'*.

Although children are welcome to attend, there is also much discussion regarding the control placed on these children by their parents in such a crowded environment. Although partially due to complacency in what is regarded as a safe environment, it is still frowned upon for children to be out of control, more so due to ruining the

atmosphere for others nearby. This social acceptance therefore comes from a reciprocated and acceptable level of parental control so that a fair balance is enjoyed by all. On top of this, the choice of the festival is also deemed important for whether children should be allowed to attend or whether there should be more strict age limits. Festivals with provisions for children, for example, B and C are regarded in one position however, in talking about his experience at Glastonbury Phil has certain reservations:

*I think anything larger or for multiple days would be a definite no. I think there's a fine line between involving your children and being selfish. At Glastonbury you do see a lot of younger children who are taken there and made to camp and stay there for the whole five days. I see that as the parent's choice and I don't always think it's in the best interest of the children, especially at a larger festival where drink and drugs are more prevalent. I think day time would be a really good atmosphere for a child to experience, but night time is a different world at these places and I for one wouldn't feel entirely comfortable taking Charlie along.*

The latter points hint at the multiple functions a festival serves with balanced negotiations necessary, for example the balance between freedoms given to children or the balance between the behaviour of others; during the day, the festival is accepted as family-friendly time, whereas towards the later hours it becomes more of an adult time; *'...well we saw a few kids who were a little worse for wear, but I think we miss a lot that happens when night falls. I've got to guess the campsite and dance areas are maybe a little more troublesome later on. But during the day you don't get any of that. There's plenty of security and you see a lot of police patrolling...it just makes for a safe atmosphere'* (James, C). This segregation is further accepted due to the community feel that exists at these festivals, and as such seems to attract a much more 'respectable' crowd of music fans; or as Mary puts it; *'you're never really going to get any trouble with people so it's all good stuff really'*. Those spoken to at festivals B and C are very complementary of the level of perceived safety, with remarks made including; *'I mean there's no sort of aggression at all. You feel like you can say hello to folk you know and you can expect an answer'* (Gavin, C), or *'it's nice that it's a safe enough environment'* (Angela, B). In fact over all the interviews conducted at B and C, the only negative comment regarding safety aspects of the festival was from Jeremiah; *'there are a few*

*unfriendly people, but nobody that makes me worry*'. Perhaps an outcome of this, or perhaps a cause of this is the idea of respect at the festival, with a large emphasis on how respect for the festival and arena plays an integral part of the experience.

One explanation attributes this to the community feel and the fact these festivals are made up of the local population. Believing this, Mitch talks about how it is a community event and therefore; *'you treat it with a bit more respect because of that local feel...it's like it's your own local festival even though it's getting much bigger and loads more people are coming'*. This sentiment is similarly echoed at festival B with Alwyn comparing it to the larger events; *'there wasn't much respect. The place was a mess. Not a festival atmosphere; more of a concert atmosphere where you turn up see the band and then go home you know'*. Making this comment, Alwyn suggests that the concert is absent of something that the festival has, concluding that for her is it the ability to relax with more than just music as an incentive. It is now only Alwyn who feels the festival provides a time and space in which to relax, with many others confirming the importance for them also.

#### **6.4.2 Relaxed Atmosphere**

The idea of relaxing during the festival weekend is a very person-specific and festival-specific concept. For some relaxing is more about taking a break from the working week to do something different. For example, Greg maintains a professional job during the week so sees festival A as a time to lower his guard; *'I'm a lot more relaxed, a bit more easy going...obviously with a profession like mine it's quite regulated and serious; that sort of goes out the window for the weekend'*. However, comments made concerning festival A describe the constant rush between bands and stages as quite a stressful time, with little time to just sit back and relax. This is quite a different story at festival B and C where the relaxing element seems to be not so much escaping a job, but having time to sit and do nothing with the music as less of a focal point and more a backdrop:

Jeremiah: *Well we were in the gardens but just sitting there with a load of friends and the music was on, but we weren't paying much attention...just chilling*

*Alwyn: It's so sunny I don't mind just chilling out listening to music. And the smaller bands you can just lie down and still get a good view.*

Again, this acts as another subtle way these festivals are differentiated on a social basis, and another way that festivals encourage a transition for people from daily to festival life. Comparing this again to the concert atmosphere, it is suggested that the extremely transient nature of the concert is insufficient for a number of things to occur, these being: the time or conditions for a transition from daily behaviour to concert behaviour; a lack of community-mindedness during the concert; or a lack of a properly formed social code. Without further research, it is not possible to conclude which of these is most accurate, however, it is possible to acknowledge that whichever the concert is lacking, the festival is not and therefore a festival transition, festival community, or festival conduct must exist to an extent if this is to be explained.

## **6.5 Interpretation of Stimuli**

This section incorporates the data collected alongside previous literature to interpret the effect inter-subjective stimuli have on the festival individual. Due to their appropriateness, a number of conclusions from the previous chapter are also incorporated into stimuli discussions.

### **6.5.1 Extent of Categorisation**

An underlying topic that appears in nearly all of the conversations revolves around social groups that exist at the festival, and the extent to which the individual sees them as belonging to that group (Turner *et al*, 1987). Such discussions (which are developed independently in sections 6.5.2 and 6.5.3) are based largely around social interactions with existing social groups, however, some of the more telling remarks come from discussion about interacting with new individuals. Albeit very weak at times, there are noticeable instances when individuals feel that they do share some universal characteristics with others, for example, some individuals acknowledge a sense of the group as a 'we' rather than 'them' (Jarymowicz, 2006). These distinctions are very much related to the ideas contained within Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory (Hogg and Abrams, 1990). The idea of the 'we' group seems to be discussed particularly prominently during two specific topics of conversation: when

comparing the festival attended with other festivals, or when the festival attended already held similar values to those who chose to attend it.

### **6.5.2 Festival Comparisons/Self Categorisation Theory**

The first condition highlights comparisons made between the festival that is attended in relation to other similar festivals. This type of categorisation whereby comparisons are made between groups is, according to SIT, one of the two main outcomes of categorisation (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). During comparisons, it is said that self-enhancing qualities are singled out and used to judge out-group members (Sherif and Jackman, 1966), or in this case out-group festivals in a negative light. Individuals making this type of comparison seem to be most abundant at festival B. Notably, nearly all comparisons appear to be made about the perceived negative aspects that surround festival A. For example, negativities regarding accommodation, arena layout, quality of bands, and anti-social behaviour at festival A are common conversation topics. In highlighting these perceived weaknesses, festival B attendees illustrate what they perceive to be favourable elements of their own festival and in doing so, justifying their decision regarding festival choice. Although the critiques originate from physical and social factors, through association alone festival A attendees are equally frowned upon as being an undesirable festival crowd compared to those in attendance at festival B. Although not explicit in their views on a shared festival bond, it becomes implied through such an 'in-group' versus 'out-group' outlook based on little more than festival attendance (Tajfel *et al*, 1971).

Comparison between festivals is also a very common occurrence at festival A. In this instance however, rather than a negative comparison, it is more likely that individuals use a form of positive comparison to promote their festival. The main festival that is used to benchmark is Glastonbury – the largest and one of the oldest festivals in the world. It is not uncommon for individuals to finish off sentences with '*like you see at Glastonbury*'. In making these comparisons it is intended to show the festival in a very positive light, setting apart festival A from all of the other larger music festivals, and promoting their category as one of 'we as a world-leading festival' based on nothing stronger than common attendance.

### **6.5.3 Basis for Discrimination/ Minimal Group Paradigm**

Adapting past identity literature to the festival context, it is suggested that even very small discernible differences between festivals are sufficient to provide feelings of an 'us' (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). For example, considered within social identity literature is the Minimal Group Paradigm – a measure of the minimum conditions necessary for one group to discriminate against another. It is believed that the optimal conditions for group discrimination occur when group membership deals with more irrelevant experiences, thus providing a completely cognitive basis for intergroup differentiation (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Although it is recognised that festivals with specific themes or community values, specific age groups within festivals, or specific musical genre groups within festivals can provide a stronger basis for categorisation, in this instance distinction appears to be based more around attendance at the festival as can be seen in discussions focussing on festival communities, social conduct, and a generally unified atmosphere. This proves more than an arbitrary assignment, but it is by no means deep-rooted categorisation (Meyer *et al.*, 2006). The value of maintaining a social identity is therefore derived from the understanding of any kind of shared category membership based on any inter-group comparisons (Onorato and Turner, 2002).

As a result of shared identity, groups are said to become collectives of similar persons with similar perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours (Ashforth, 2001). This is acknowledged by individuals to differing extents across the three festivals, although seems to be weakest at festival A where categorisation was by more arbitrary measures. As such, the subsequent steps necessary for a deep collective identity are not able to form satisfactorily. For example, SIT proposes that self-esteem becomes bound in the fortune of the group (Turner *et al.*, 2011), depersonalisation takes place, and self-stereotyping occurs, all of which lead to the individual losing their uniqueness (Deschamps and Devos, 1988). At festival A, the extent of depersonalisation is limited to similarities in dress and acceptance of a general set of rules, and apart from a small number of examples, emotions and self-esteem were in no way tied to a group consciousness. The only situation in which enacted behaviour was vaguely similar was when large crowds were involved. Any categorisation at festival A is therefore based on nothing more than attendance at that festival, however, this was still enough to provide a weak sense of 'us'. However, rather than accepting this as a definitive sign of categorisation, synchronised consumption can also be attributed to other social

processes (Ramanathan, 2005), which often proves to be the case when socialisation is conducted mainly with unknown others over a relatively short period of time (Long *et al.*, 2004).

#### **6.5.4 *Synchronised Consumption as Basis for Identity***

During the festival weekend it may be the case that three to four days is not sufficient to build even shallow level bonds with the festival crowd. Affinity is very rarely an outcome of this social interaction – instead emulation is most likely to occur (Ashforth *et al.*, 2001), which accentuates the gap between personal and collective identity and forces the individual to modify their behaviour so as to best fit in. This is made somewhat easier due to the process of shared consumption patterns which cause coherent emotions and overall feelings towards the situation (Ramanathan, 2005). These emotions are said to come from the sub-conscious processes of mutual entrainment, for example mimicry of behaviours, words, or gestures (Stel *et al.*, 2008) which help to create rapport during the interaction. Examples of this are offered by many of those at festival A. In several interviews the practice of chanting during performances is brought up with one chant in particular mentioned several times. When questioned on the reason or origin of the call, the only response provided for doing it was simply *'because everyone else did'*. Similar cases exist with sporadic singing in crowds, dancing, and drinking. Although not necessarily motivated by a need to form a collective identity, such behaviour is shown to assist in pro-social behaviour and creating an affective empathetic mind-set (as discussed by Stel and Vonk, 2008), thus acting as a cognitive component providing a sense of awareness of membership. Despite this, there is still a general reluctance to admit any real feeling of general identity above that of 'we' versus another festival. With this there lacks an evaluative component that relates awareness to a) value connotations and b) any emotional investment in group membership (Tajfel, 1982). Exclusion of these from an individual's mind-set results in only surface acceptance of group involvement (Ashforth *et al.*, 2001) – exactly what is witnessed by those at festival A.

#### **6.5.5 *Value-Based Identity***

Contrasting this, those interviewed at festival C make very little comment of 'us' versus 'them'. It appears that the basis for categorisation stems from something other than the social competition exhibited at festival A (Baray *et al.*, 2009). With this, festival C



seems to better satisfy all three conditions necessary for meaningful categorisation to occur. This is primarily due to the values emphasised at the festival being comparable to the values already held by those in attendance. However, considering the temporal nature of festival C, this outcome is not necessarily achieved solely during the festival weekend. Much information is published regarding the community and family nature that is to be found at festival C which is corroborated during discussions regarding the importance of the physical location. During the interviews with individuals at festival C, there is much agreement that the festival is essentially an extension of the local community. Examples given highlight the use of local businesses, local produce, local traditions, and local artists prominently over the course of the weekend. Maintaining strong ties with the local community, the festival has already created a collective identity built upon awareness, value, and emotion – feelings which are further compounded during the weekend (Lefebvre, 1991). This is shown throughout the interviews with ‘community’ and ‘family’ atmosphere terminology commonly used.

With a degree of categorisation accepted by those in attendance of festival C, identity does appear to become more inter-twined with social behaviours. This manifests as the creation and acceptance of a social code created largely through social interaction (as described by Gardner, 2004). Although both festival A and festival B also present social codes, these are by no means as well regulated or accepted as those at festival C, and it is only with this acceptance that a festival community can form (Turner, 1974). However, one basis for such a social structure is the temporary segregation of the attendee from their home-based social ties (Gardner, 2004) which is not strictly the case. Rather than separation, it can be said that behaviour is actually no more than intensification of home-based social behaviours (see section 7.4.4 for further discussion). Festival B appears to fall into a mid-point in terms of categorisation; although there is an acknowledgment of the community nature of the festival and even an acceptance of similar values of this, there is rarely an emotional attachment within this. As a result there appears to be an equal split between those holding a more community-based level of categorisation and those who were more focussed on ‘us’ versus festival A.

Based on the above discussions, attendance of, or in some cases association with the festival is sufficient to slightly alter behaviour; this becomes apparent differently at each of the three festivals. Whereas festival A allows for a shallow identity using

categorisation as a result of social competition, festival C allows for deeper identity as a result of incorporating existing values and social structures into the festival experience. These have been shown to have an effect on behaviour, but thus far have only been discussed at the inter-subjective group level; chapter 7 will fully explore the relationship these group behaviours have on the subjective self.

## Chapter 7 The Individual Experience

During the festival experience, value is gained from a number of sources – the physical place and design of the festival, cultures and meaning associated with the festival, and social interactions. However value is not based explicitly on these experiential factors, but more on how the consumer chooses to participate in and interact with the experience. The individual therefore becomes responsible for interpreting and reflecting on value by the means most important to them. This chapter examines these processes with respect to subjectivities enforced during the event including loyalty, escape, tradition, and novelty (see Table 7.1). Along with previously discussed conclusions, the festival is examined as a unique and combined experience. Emotional response is measured in relation to high and low positive and negative emotions, with sources of value extracted from this as a means of valuing the overall festival. These are examined in the context of social processes, liminality, and identity hierarchies, which combine and interact to create the contextual identity.

<b>Subjective</b>	Expectations	Pre-festival excitement, Negative expectations, Sources of information
	Experiences	New experiences, Other festivals, False experiences, Unique experiences
	Individual Occurrences	Authenticity, Escape, Exploration, Own festival, Unique identity, Tradition, Memories, Rite of passage, Novelty
	Motivation	Music, More than the music, Changes in motives, Demotivators

**Table 7.1: Subjective Stimuli Coding**

### 7.1 Subjective Attendance

Differing from the physical process of attendance (see section 5.1), subjective attendance focuses on areas of the festival experience from the perspective of the individual. When questioned explicitly on this the most commonly cited reasons revolve almost exclusively around either musical or social stimuli which is very much in keeping with the work of Faulkner *et al*, (2009) and Nicholson and Pearce (2001). However, it became apparent throughout the interview process that a number of other influences are involved in the consumption process, but are masqueraded by more general headings. These include the novelty and thrill of attendance, the chance to

explore cultures and traditions, or as a means of escape from routine life, however, these only appear at a sub-conscious level. Although these factors are partially covered in previous chapters as part of the objective and inter-subjective analysis, to fully understand their impact in the process of identity creation they must now be considered from the subjective point of view. In doing so, aspects of co-creation, behavioural change, and potential identity change are made evident.

### **7.1.1 Musical Programme**

Regardless of any individual differences, musical stimuli appear as one of the major motivations when attending a music festival, however, not necessarily in the way festival organisers portray. Due to the set-up of each of the three festivals, tickets are made available before any artists are actually announced. This is incentivised by allowing individuals to take advantage of early-bird prices (usually the same price as the previous year's festival). Therefore, although most of those buying tickets are aware of the general kind of music and popularity of band beforehand, it is often the case that the headline acts remain unannounced till a later time. Sam, for example, attends festival C for no specific artists '*...definitely the bands, predominantly Highland music, you know. And we like Gaelic singing as well, but anything really that's good. You never seem to get bad acts at these festivals...I've not even had a look to see who's actually playing, so we're always pleasantly surprised*'. This laissez faire approach points towards a degree of entitativity (Grant and Hogg, 2011). Although not possible to conclude whether the entity in question is based around the particular festival or the more general festival culture, partial answers are hinted at when looking at the particulars of the event in question.

This is in comparison to festival A that has built its reputation largely on the quality of music which due to media and competition between festivals, depends almost exclusively on the main headline acts. However in doing this, the success or failure becomes, as George puts it, '*hit or miss*'. Having attended the festival for ten years, he has always purchased the early bird tickets meaning he has little to no idea of the performers:

*Researcher: And how did not knowing who was playing affect your decision to buy a ticket...obviously you didn't know the Foo Fighters would be playing when*

*you bought your tickets?*

*George: I couldn't care less to be honest. I know fine well I'll come here and have a great time with my friends. And to be honest I knew there would be great bands on that I'd enjoy anyway. I'm a very easy going...I have a wide variety in taste when it comes to music.*

Having said this, he is quick to question several choices that have been made in the past in terms of bands that appear more suited to genre-specific festivals rather than a general festival like A. In this situation then, the festival is musically sold on a very small number of high-ranking bands. Entitativity is therefore divided by those who attend for the popular bands, and those who attend for the more general musical stimuli. With this, group identity is immediately diluted (North and Hargreaves, 1999) resulting in some individuals becoming isolated from the more general festival identity. Still, George claims this to be '*part of the experience*', and it is this idea of experiencing "music" that becomes such a strong incentive in attracting individuals to the festival. A specific example of experiencing this is given by James:

*...so we've just been to see the Inverness Festival band which we didn't have on the list because we'd never heard of them before and they were excellent...they were really, really good. So although we've got people we want to see, there are gaps that we'll go around the other stages and, as I say you'll always see good acts, and we won't know a lot of them mainly because we haven't' been living in the Highlands for that long. There was another band that we stumbled across...em...Rhythm and Reel...they were very good; we thoroughly enjoyed that. So that was another surprise.*

This is especially true for first time attendees, with the weekend experience a completely new phenomenon (see 7.1.5 and 7.2.2). Having said this, more is required after that initial excitement has worn off. Although a subjective preference then, musical stimuli cannot be treated as an isolated process and must be considered within the social context.

### **7.1.2 Socialising**

Across the festivals studied, all individuals made very heavy reference to the social

facets of festival life whether with friends, family, or strangers, however although common, social processes play out very differently across the three festivals. For example, Harold only attended festival C because his son was playing in one of the bands, whereas Robert talks about another festival *'somewhere down in Oxford, I can't remember what they were called. Kind of local festivals in Oxford, the only reason I was there was to see my sister'*. As well as attending to experience the festival with someone in particular, some groups have developed more deep-rooted social ties with the festival. Greg, for example, claims that festival A has *'almost become a tradition with my friends...so we basically always come'*; rather than the festival being a one-off social encounter, Greg has built it up to be an annual event. Such inter-subjective social observations are covered extensively in chapter 6, however unlike these, subjective social aspects are less directed at the process of group formation and more directed at the subjective outcomes of this formation which will be discussed next.

### **7.1.3 Loyalty**

One such outcome related to the social festival lifestyle is a sense of loyalty, which in turn evokes a degree of attachment or history. This is particularly noticeable at festival A, with several of those interviewed having attended more than five times. These individuals see this as a special achievement, referring to themselves as *'regulars'*, *'veterans'*, or *'old timers'*. Having become a lot more main stream in recent years, it is common for the more experienced festival attendees to talk of how much better, safer, and cheaper the festival was when they first started attending; *'well it's changed a lot in the past 10 years. It changes every year'*. This history of attending seems to act as a motivator in its own right, for example, George talks about giving up attending

*Researcher: And what about future years. What do you see yourself doing next year?*

*George: Reading (festival) or...well I'm getting to that age where I'm thinking about having a family so. But music festival wise I probably won't be back to A. Well maybe the odd day ticket but I've done my ten years and I've enjoyed it so I'll go out on a high.*

This loyalty is a unique relationship between individual and festival, which is almost protected by opting out of attending other festivals. When talking about why he hadn't been elsewhere Steven comments; *'I was always tempted, especially when I was down south. But I almost didn't want to ruin the memories of A...I mean all festivals are good, but you can have bad experiences that put you off forever'*. Steven's logic is very much in keeping with the idea of memory protection – in this particular case through avoidance of other events (Zauberman *et al*, 2009). This ensures utility derived from experiences and memories is not threatened by inferior experiences (Mather, 2004).

A second source of loyalty towards festival A comes from a sense of national pride. For Phil, who has been attending for ten years, the festival has become *'the Scottish music festival'*, whereas George sees it as *'the local music festival'*. The sense of Scottish-ness is witnessed around the festival with much national paraphernalia on show, none more so that the visibility of the main festival sponsor. With regard to the idea of festivals becoming more commercial, the topic of the main sponsor – an alcoholic drinks company arose, however unlike the negative connotations that exist with certain commercial sponsors, this company is viewed as; *'more to do with being Scottish than just being a company...I mean they sponsor a lot of the football and a load of other music events, so I guess it's more about them taking an interest in Scottish events and having their name heard...I think any business they get selling at A is just a bonus'*. Capitalising on this, individuals very much perceive the location of the event to be Scotland. This notion of Scotland as a singular place creates an association between A and Scotland and provides another source from which identity can be formed (Pettigrew, 2007) – in this case a strong, albeit broad national identity. With this, many overlook the sponsorship, treating it as a positive aspect of the festival rather than any subtle attempt at commercialisation.

#### **7.1.4 Escape**

Attending a festival to escape from daily life and routine is a very common theme found within the interview data. The idea of escape is most often used to describe the ability to disregard work life or other problems faced during day-to-day activities. Garth (Festival A) explicitly mentions a separation from work; *'I guess it lets me escape from the job, which is pretty heavy going at the moment. It's amazing how everything else disappears when you're put in this situation'*. Jane also highlights the appeal of

escaping her work place; *'I think it will be a good weekend. There are a load of bands that I want to see. But apart from that it's just good to get away with your friends and not have to worry about work for a few days'*. Even those who aren't in current employment appear keen to emphasise the difference between their daily lives and the festival life. Laura, a student at Festival A sees it as; *'a chance to get away and chill out with friends and see music, for them it's more a complete blow out – they forget everything about the real world and they completely change into crazy drunken fools'*. Outlined by van Gennep (1981) as the early stages of a liminal identity transformation, this transition phase has varying effects across the three festivals.

Escape as a motivator is most noticeable amongst those at festival A, although festival B and C attendees do stress the importance of *'getting away'* which appears stimulated more by a need to relax than a need to escape. This can perhaps be attributed to the less intense nature of these festivals. Comments include Robert (festival B); *'I like it. The whole atmosphere is quite laid back'*; Maureen (B); *'It's great so far. It's really chilled out...a lot of drinking, a lot of sleeping, and just chilling. We've seen a few bands so it's been really good on the music front, but there's so much else to do here. It's quite good just to wander and see what's going on'*; Carl (festival C); *'I used to think a festival would be such hard work but this place quickly dispels those myths – I've done very little but it kind of feels like I've seen a lot at the same time'*. At the larger festival A, this is not possible due to the layout and capacity of the staging areas. Festivals B and C also provide ancillary activities which act to a degree as motives in their own right. For example, Alwyn at festival B describes her activities; *'We've seen a few bands so it's been really good on the music front, but there's so much else to do here. It's quite good just to wander and see what's going on'*. Although escape can broadly be classified under the heading 'personal benefits' then (Morgan, 2007), these benefits take on different meanings across the festivals; whereas those at festival A are escaping daily life, those at festival B and C appear more to be escaping daily routine through exploration and new experiences. This again echoes inversion and intensification of behaviour (Lee *et al*, 2012) as discussed in chapter 3.

### **7.1.5 Tradition and Novelty of the Festival**

Often discussed alongside the notion of exploration is talk of the uniqueness of the festival and how it creates its own special atmosphere. For example, Gordon talks



about how a stereotypical festival would be bigger than festival C; *'I think as a stereotypical festival yes...it could be made bigger, more commercial, more money, but that would just ruin it. It has its place in the festival market. It doesn't try to be something it's not...it's not trying to be A. It is what it is and for me there's nothing that could be done to improve it'*. By maintaining its position in terms of capacity and target audience, it creates its own place in the overall festival market. Hannah at festival B agrees that each festival should maintain its own unique position; *'I think it has to. I mean if you want to see a better band that's what's going to happen; but not in a bad way. I mean I may not have noticed it as the first time I came I was fairly young but I don't know if it will ever get too big or too much like T in the Park. I mean I think if it gets too big it may ruin it. The way I see it at the moment it's kind of an undiscovered gem'*. In creating its own identity the festival also manages to integrate an element of tradition that carries throughout the experience, providing the benefits associated with a multiple destination perspective (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011). For example, rather than just acting as an outlet for music, festival C successfully manages to pay tribute to a number of different cultures. As noted by Rita at the festival; *'I think it's a huge tribute to the more traditional aspects of Scotland. Obviously we didn't grow up here, so were quite surprised by all the Celtic goings-on'*. Phil also recognises the uniqueness of festival C as more than just a musical event, going as far as to compare it to the Glastonbury festival:

Researcher: *So are you saying C almost tries to sell itself as a miniature Glastonbury...are the two even comparable?*

Phil: *To be honest I don't think anything is comparable to Glastonbury. I think this festival acknowledges that and acts as a tribute to Glastonbury as opposed to any attempt to recreate it. Obviously the scale is a lot different and the quality of bands is a lot lower, but when you strip it all back I think the ethos is the same; a community festival that involves...the community. And it has the more unusual aspects...the Heilan Fields, the Tarot Card readers, the burlesque, so the focus isn't the music but the overall package.*

This is compared to those at A which is seen as *'just another festival'*. As Phil (A) says; *'as nice as it is to be here it could be anyone of the big UK festivals and you wouldn't be able to tell the difference'*.

### 7.1.6 Accessibility

Although lacking novelty, the experience can be made more unique based on some of the more taken-for-granted factors which are not only novel, but also open up the festival to a wider audience. This is quite often seen in accommodation type, Garth for example talks about his girlfriend agreeing to go with him to the festival only if they purchased the more civilised camping option in a pre-made, large tent; *'...so I mean there were other reasons we wanted to come but if that option hadn't been available to us then we wouldn't be here right now'*. This is a similar story told by James at festival C who elected to bring a mobile caravan for the weekend; *'as much as I'd like to stay young forever, it's not always possible. There are certain things that you have to give up and camping is one of those things I can give up'*. Based on these comments, accessibility appears to cause one of two contrasting outcomes.

The first suggests that due to a wider range of audience member, a more tangible measure of social division is accessible, which makes the collective self more explicit and with it a 'we as a group' outlook (Jarymowicz, 2006). For example, we who choose to pay for the premier tickets, we who choose to take caravans, we who are older. These additional social divisions weaken any notion of an overall festival identity in favour of more specific, but often more artificial identities (Hogg and Terry, 2000). The effects of these groups become evident when talking with Harold about other festivals and how the vast majority of those who attend are of the younger age group; *'I don't really care about things like location, price, or type of music, regardless of them there's no way I'd be going, I think it's not just a thing for the younger generation'*. Contrary to this is the experiential social self that positions 'we as a general collective'. In this situation the overall festival identity becomes much stronger taking precedence over the more specific social categorisations. This is best demonstrated when speaking to James (65) and Harold (48) at festival C about the more diverse age group which motivates them to attend the festival; *'coming here...this has all ages and it doesn't discriminate at all. It's great to come here and not feel inhibited in any way'*. Also, the inclusive nature and mixture of all age groups allows James to fully appreciate all the festival has to offer rather than just the day time music; *'I think here because everyone is making the most of it, it motivates us...the older ones to take part rather than just sitting in their caravans'*. These distinctions can be seen in further discussions which although focussed on changing motivations for attendance, reveal a lot of information regarding

the changing nature of group categorisations.

### **7.1.7 Changes to Categories**

For those who have been attending festivals for a number of years, it is common for original motivations to change considerably and for these changes to be actively noticed by the individual. This is partly attributed to the changing nature of the festival itself. For example, George a ten year 'veteran' of festival A notes the festival; *'has changed in the past 10 years. It changes every year. This year it's a lot about the music. The last few years it's been more about the atmosphere...about having a laugh, having a good time with my friends, but now I'm getting to the stage where I think the music is more important'*. The dissonance between what the music has become compared to what it had been was one of the reasons George cited for this being his final year. The changing nature of the music at festival A is also one of the reasons Richard has abandoned the festival in favour of festival B:

Researcher: *So what made you come to B this year?*

Richard: *I really enjoy the festival atmosphere, but A is too busy. I quite fancied this as a wee change.*

Re: *And did you go to A this year?*

Ri: *No, I haven't been for a couple of years now; maybe 3 or 4 years now. I really don't like it anymore....you just get a bunch of young folk going through and getting absolutely pissed, whereas here it's just more of a festival atmosphere you know...well I did enjoy A earlier on...maybe 10 or 15 years ago...I enjoyed A then. It was all about the music. Now I prefer the kind of laid back atmosphere like you get here.*

Perhaps the biggest underlying reason for these changes in attitudes is due to the idea of being 'too old' to still attend festivals. In this case age is often a reflector of other priorities, for example, job, family, or other financial commitments, although it is also used as a comparative factor towards the rest of the 'young kids' at the festival. Being seen as out with the target segment, and hence target identity of the festival is often a

cause for concern for many of those in attendance. As Greg tells; *'I think it knows how to draw in new crowds every year. I mean the kids you see coming are getting younger and younger. But I mean I don't think A does much differently year on year and I think that's part of the reason it attracts such a young crowd. I mean we've been doing this for so long and there's nothing new to make us come back'*.

A second factor responsible for demotivation seems to revolve around the size and capacity of the festival. Those attending festival B and C listed the smaller size of the festival as a main reason for choosing it and one of the main reasons they enjoy it so much. When questioned whether anything would stop their return visit, many of these people almost perfectly describe the reputation festival A has achieved. Anne, for example, describes the risk of festival C getting too big, with James talking about the bad behaviour that would undoubtedly follow; *'too much drinking, fighting and bad language, but we haven't really seen that at all...but I think if the place got a reputation for being pretty rough we would probably avoid it'*. Harold also voices similar concerns; *'I think only if it became a lot bigger – capacity wise that is. It's a nice size...not too crowded or busy. Or if it became a lot more commercial – I think then it may start to attract a different crowd – I think that would put off a lot of people'*. He continues; *'but I honestly don't think it will ever come to that...at least I hope it won't. Even if we're not coming it's still nice to know that the festivals here and I guess representing our community'*. Again, these concerns reflect a disassociation between the festival and group in attendance. Envisioning this situation very much forces the individual to think of 'me as an individual' rather than any notion of a 'we' (Brown and Turner, 1980) and with it, reduces any kind of relationship to the festival. However, lack of identifying with an event is only one possible reason for lack of future attendance, with Jane revealing her belief that expectations and experiences are rarely met when attending the same festival – it is only through taking part in a completely new festival experience that unique experiences can be gathered. It therefore becomes necessary to understand exactly what constitutes and creates a valued consumer experience.

## **7.2 (Co) Creating an Experience**

As discussed in previous chapters, value is a concept made up of a number of different elements including physical stimuli and social stimuli, and when examined alongside

subjective stimuli allows the festival, and subsequent value of the festival to be understood as a complete experience.

### **7.2.1 Combined Experience**

Having examined the festival from multiple perspectives it becomes clear that a lot of those who choose to visit a music festival do so not just to satisfy musical or social needs, but for the value they gain from the festival as a complete experience. It appears that in no case is it one factor that makes the weekend unforgettable, rather it is a mixture of several different things that contribute to the overall experience. This is made clear when interviewing attendees about what their favourite or most enjoyable part of the weekend was:

*Rita: Everything's good...the music's good, the weather's been really good which is important with Charlie here, and the rest of the crowd are all well behaved. So I think everything's contributed to the success of the weekend for us.*

*Jane: I think that the location, the location and maybe price and good people of course. But I think the perfect festival keeps a happy balance between the people and the location and the bands, but at the end of the day you're with your mates so what does it matter if things go wrong really... All the things come together and it just sort of works.*

### **7.2.2 Unique Experience**

Although the experience is made up of a combination of many things, there are a number of unique elements that individuals are keen to highlight as an important part of their festival experience. One aspect that is heavily included is the surreal nature of the experience – the festival must act as something much different from everyday life. At times this is a very simple requirement with many wishing for only a basic change from their daily circumstances, for example:

*Steven: A field...with a beer...and good music....and 100,000 other people. I still find it quite a surreal experience. It's just not quite like normal day-to-day life...in fact it's nothing like normal day-to-day life.*

This becomes even clearer when hearing about the most memorable festival experiences of festival-goers, with nearly all of those questioned choosing their first time at the festival as the most special:

*Garth: I think it has to be the first year...it was a new experience so everything seemed special to me...especially when you compare it with the festival nowadays.*

*Gavin: It was our first time...we'd never been to anything like this so everything combined made it really special.*

*Emily: Yeah, I think as a whole it will be a completely new experience. I mean I've been to concerts but this is so much more...regardless of whether it's good or bad I think it's just an experience that you've got to try once in your life.*

However, these experiences are only truly unique once, with each proceeding year becoming more the norm for the festival-goer. This is shown in those interviews that focus on the '*same old experience*' and use that as a reason for no longer attending or at least no longer getting as excited about attending. A number of these criticisms are aimed directly at the larger festivals, A included. For example, the issue with repeat bands was one source of frustration; '*I mean it takes away from the experience when you know that you can see that band next year at a different festival or even at the same festival in 2 or 3 years...what made it special was when it was a band you'd never had the chance to see before or will see again*'. Colin expands on this, confirming that in his opinion it is not just frustrations about seeing the same band a number of times, it is about experiencing the same thing a number of times that really reduces enjoyment; '*once you've done it a couple of times and once you've done Glastonbury then I think it's hard to find a unique experience*'.

The most common solution to this issue seems to be to sample as many different smaller festivals as possible, as George says; '*even if it's just for a change of scenery*'. Along with George, James and Gail are keen to try as many different festivals as they can; '*last week we were at the Speyfest and then we were at the Trossachs festivals and then we were at Gurloch just a few weeks before that...and in September they have a festival called Blas which is a Highland festival...so we're really looking forward to doing that as well...we're always looking out for new festivals to visit*'. Phil too is most impressed

with a festival he had chosen to visit several years previously; *'you're thinking to yourself – did that really happen. Did I really see someone dressed as a 15 foot giant dancing to the Beach Boys?! Did I really nearly get accosted by a 70year old hippy?! And these are the things that obviously you don't see on the highlights...it's a case of actually being there and experiencing them for yourself...and it's those little things that make it for me'*. This suggests that new festivals are not selected purely based on perceived changes in social categories or memory protection (Zauberman *et al*, 2009), instead revolving more around building and maintaining high levels of experiential capital as detailed in an exchange between Mary and Jane:

Mary: *And it just an excuse to go out and go somewhere with your friends, eh, try lots of different things, talk to lots of different people, enjoy a bit of music which is a bit of a bonus, and chill out.*

Jane: *I think really, the only way you're going to get a completely totally truly unique experience is if you go to a festival that's specifically not to your tastes...not what you'd normally go to or what you'd normally listen to. I mean the people that we've spoken to this morning and the woman who it was her first time here at a festival and it's her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday...her friend was going to a metal festival and I've never listened to metal music and you know it's not because I don't like it, it's just something that I wouldn't regularly listen to. But that's the only way you're going to get a really random, totally unique perspective...a new outlook on something unless you're going to your very first festival of course. But apart from that I think it's difficult for there to be anything niche or unique.*

Thus the association between a unique experience and a valued experience is shown to be very strong.

### **7.2.3 Overall Value Experience**

Despite providing individual moments of delight, there appears to be a general consensus that the music itself is not the main source of a valuable experience. Although the standard of the musical programme is a good means to coerce individuals into attending, during the festival music fails to guarantee an overall positive

experience. However, it is noted by many individuals that a lot of the larger festivals choose to concentrate exclusively on passive absorption (i.e. provision of music) (Williams, 2006), with little emphasis placed on other parts of the experience. Phil, for example, has attended a number of festivals and confirms; *'unfortunately I know a lot of the modern festivals are going down that route...but I think the music makes such a small part of the experience and shouldn't be responsible for making or breaking the festival'*. This is especially the case when it comes to smaller festivals that do not have the resources to compete when it comes to the status and popularity of artists on the programme. Commenting on this potential problem, Gordon notes that the bands at C are good, but not nearly as good as the bigger festivals, acknowledging that the festival has to rely on a lot more to make it stand out:

Gordon: *...like I said – I think the fact it's a festival up in the Highlands rather than in one of the big cities people treat it a little more special – as their own festival, and because of that take pride in it. So I definitely think the fact it's up here makes a huge difference in terms of crowd atmosphere. But the site itself is great...the ruins really make it special. And you just look around...the hills and trees, even the little features like the old walls really add to the event.*

Researcher: *Do you think it is a selling point for the festival?*

G: *Oh definitely. The bands are good, but not nearly as good as the bigger festivals, so C has to rely on a lot more to make it stand out. I think the spontaneous performances, the location, and the way the people react to these things makes it really stand out from a lot of other festivals. I honestly think if more people experienced it once then they would choose it over the likes of T in the park...I really think it's an all-round great festival.*

In this respect, without such a large concern over the musical programme, the festival is granted more freedom to consider active immersive elements which provide the consumer with a truly unique experience.

Looking at the festivals in the sample, A *'is only about the music'* whereas B is *'not necessarily about the music that people choose to attend'* and C *'made a stab at doing both, but still, it's not for the music I come'*. Such pre-conceptions seem to exist for



most festivals even if the individual has not previously attended. The only notable exception to this rule is the Glastonbury festival. This is mentioned by a lot of people, however, is summarised well by Jane who has previously attended; *'I mean Glastonbury in particular is about much more than just the music... you could go to Glastonbury and not see any bands for the entire weekend and still have an amazing time...you know there's any one of a number of things you can do...it's an experience unto itself'*. The successful festival must therefore go above and beyond the provision of a musical service, instead creating a complete festival experience that provides entertainment, education, escape, and aesthetic delight (Williams, 2006).

### **7.3 Personal Reflection**

Having identified where value can be co-created during the festivals, it is possible to show how this is then interpreted by individuals as a more subjective motivation for festival attendance.

The first of these methods treats the festival as *'ticking a box'*, that is; *'I guess it's just nice to be able to say that you've done it once'*. There seems to be stronger reasoning behind this at the larger festival A, with the opinion; *'I often think it's a bit of a tick a box scenario. And people say that if you're going to go to any festival you have to go to Glastonbury or you have to go to T in the Park...you have to go to a big major festival and it does become a bit of a like...I've done it now – probably a bit like bungee jumping or doing a parachute jump. You could probably equate it with that'*. This one-off feeling is also applicable to seeing special artists and bands, with several individuals talking of a checklist of musicians that they want to see at some point in their life, or in some cases just to say they'd been seen. For example Robert talks of one artist; *'I don't like her much but I just came along to see what the fuss was about and to say I'd done it'*. This relates to two other popular reasons for attending – memories and stories, and as a way to demonstrate some sort of expertise or stature.

Due to the social nature of the event the festival acts as a source of stories, memories, and discussions between friends and even strangers for a long time after. For Harold at festival C it is very much a community event, so after the weekend it is still a talking point; *'it'll be in the local papers for the next week or so and someone will always have a story to tell about it. I think if we ever need to make small talk it's always about C as*

*most people have a story or two to tell about it'. For Claire at A it is more a source of social stories; 'my friends were all coming so I thought I should come too...there are always fun stories to tell so you don't really want to miss out on anything'. This perhaps reflects the social inclusion/exclusion that comes from attending the festival, with the festival acting as a symbol of social positioning.*

Similar to this is the idea of attending a festival to demonstrate some amount of expertise or stature. This is demonstrated in different ways for different people. A very visual and quite common way to do this is by keeping wrist bands on from previous festivals. Speaking with Joseph, who has seven other festival wrist bands on, he describes it as *'hard to take them off...to detach yourself from the fact you're not there anymore'*. This is not just noted with wristbands, but also other festival merchandise worn throughout the weekend. The above statements talk towards liminal changes, however this would suggest only a temporary change in behaviour.

A second and even more common way for individuals to show their expertise is through talking about other festivals. With little prompting, interviewees are very quick to mention other festivals they have attended, festivals that they have not attended, articles or programmes that they have watched on festivals, and are quick to offer excuses as to why they had not visited more festivals. This is even more the case for those visiting festivals from further away regions. For example John from France comments; *'in France they will be envious of us because they do know of the big festivals in Scotland and I think they are better than what we have in France, so I will be quick to tell them all of the stories'* or Claire from Australia who thought; *'coming to a festival like this will definitely give me something to talk about back home – it's much bigger than anything my friends have been to'*.

Another area of subjective motivation can be seen in the idea of escape. Mentioned often by those mainly at festival A is the idea of escaping their daily lives, whether it be escaping from work or even something as simple as not having to check emails or Facebook. Garth talks about this and is rather emphatic in his notion of everything else disappearing when you're put in the festival environment; *'it's just a break from normal etiquette...it's as if you resort back to being a kid when you're here'*; Jane tells of escaping from the working world with some good friends; Greg talks about this escape from work as well as *'just having nothing to worry about for a few days'*. On a similar

vein, when chatting with George about the things he dislikes:

George: *Going home. It gets worse every year...going home.*

Researcher: *Why's that?*

George: *It's back to life. Back to work.*

Discussed previously under the guide of liminality, these statements appear to offer a deeper understanding of the process; that it is less about moving into a new environment through a pilgrimage and more about moving away from an old environment (see Section 7.4.3 for further discussion). Regardless of the direction of movement, the boundaries that exist do seem very tangible and important if escape is to happen.

### **7.3.1 Social Inclusion**

Escape also helps promote other festival motivations. For John from France, he feels that due to the overnight orientation of the festivals in the UK, individuals become more included in making the experience what it is; *'you are more a part of the weekend and of the music...I like this camping a lot, I think it makes it a lot friendlier here. You are living with these people and having a drink with them allows everyone to speak and dance and have a good time together...camaraderie'*. Other comments from festival A show similar views, with the festival considered to be quite open in allowing similar behaviours to become the norm. These tend to revolve more around drinking behaviours, for example; *'it's just nice to be able to drink more than normal and know that there are a whole lot of people doing the same. I think I could go without drinking, but I think so many other people are doing it, it's a lot more fun if you get involved too'*. Other ways of fitting in include the choice to see a range of bands; *'a lot of people aren't necessarily huge fans, so you still can see them and enjoy them without feeling out of place'*, or just general daily activities; *'it's my first time so I'll just do what everyone else does and blend in'*.

Although the overnight aspect of festival A makes it more inclusive for some, there are many who feel A discriminates to a certain extent based on age, with the festival reserved for those who are younger. To capitalise on this, both festival B and C

emphasise the general audience appeal as well as the family friendly nature of the festival. In doing so, these festivals appeal to a much wider audience demographic allowing them to feel as though they also fit in, as John mentions; *'we're 65 and nobody bats an eyelid, in fact it's quite the opposite – I think they think we're quite cool'*. These festivals are not only open to families and older generations, but they also do their best to accommodate a mixture of bands, like Michael's more genre-specific band; *'yeah it's great...B I suppose isn't a traditional festival in that way for either of our bands so it's good that it tries to incorporate it'*. These issues compound the already community-esque nature of festival B and C making it a lot more inclusive for all.

## **7.4 Interpretation of Stimuli**

This section incorporates the data collected alongside previous literature to interpret the effect subjective stimuli have on the festival individual.

### **7.4.1 The Festival Self/ Change in Identity**

Throughout the interview process, discussions regarding identity are detected, however, these often appear at a more subliminal level. Although no explicit declarations of identity change occur, individuals do give certain intimations that their behaviour does alter as a result of spending time within the festival environment, however, few are willing to attribute this to any extensive change in identity. Despite lack of current change, it is worth noting that when discussing previous experiences of festivals, nearly all of those interviewees indicate much stronger feelings of attachment to the festival, higher group identity, and more positive festival memories. This is partially explained as experiences being less susceptible to the negativities of time than other consumption activities, therefore positive reinterpretation is likely to occur over time (Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003). Despite the retrospective nature of these interpretations, individuals are open to acknowledging a certain element of past identity change although again, only very weakly in instances when it does occur. Albeit it retrospectively, this indicates a basic basis for contextual identity formation.

Literature suggests that this acknowledgement of a subtle change in behaviour coincides with early stage situated identification (Meyer *et al.*, 2006). This often manifests itself as a shallow sense of belongingness to the social collective which is triggered by a

variety of situational cues (Rabbie *et al.*, 1989) – if we look to the original framework, we can name these as physical and social cues. This first stage of identification is common, with changes often temporary and unstable. Despite its temporal nature, however, this early stage is necessary to make individuals aware of potential connections to social categories which in turn trigger deeper structured identification (Meyer *et al.*, 2009). However, due to the very temporary and brief nature of the festival experience, questions arise as to whether an individual has sufficient time and motive to build even a shallow identification to the social group, or whether there are other processes occurring that assist in the creation of basic feelings of involvement with the generalised festival other (Ramanathan and McGill, 2007).

#### **7.4.2 Social Processes**

With the exception of a couple of interviewees, all conversations point to the social nature of the festival experience as a motivating factor for attendance (Nicholson and Pearce, 2001). Within these responses, there is a large distinction between socialising with known individuals versus unknown individuals. For the most part, there is judged to be more value when staying within known social groups. Although common courtesies are extended to strangers, it is unusual to spend any significant time with those from different social groups (Crompton and McKay, 1997). As inter-group behaviour is very subtle when it does happen, a number of social processes may account for such a display.

Discussed in Chapter 3, the three main relevant social processes identified are entrainment, synchronised consumption, and impression management. However, when discussing these issues with individuals, due to the subtle, often sub-conscious nature of the process it is not possible to accurately identify them as such. There are brief mentions of *'being caught up in the moment'*, again however, it is not possible to attribute such fleeting experiences to a state of synchrony or entrainment without observing the moment first hand. Fortunately, impression management – the third potential cause of behavioural change is a lot simpler to identify.

Impression management is the presentation of an image that the actor thinks is appropriate for a given situation (Goffman, 1971). Unlike previous theories, impression management requires no biological process and can be performed regardless of mental

state (Marks, 2005). Observations show aspects of impression management are used throughout the festival experience, ranging from the way individuals dress to the unofficial rules of how one should behave. The presence of impression management is made more plausible when considering the very general nature of the festival, yet seeing only a very restricted set of surface behaviour amongst those in attendance. This indicates that although perhaps there is no natural basis for identity, the notion of being a festival attendee is enough to trigger a basic need for group affiliation (Gardner, 2004).

When questioned on conscious behavioural changes in the interviews, nobody is willing to admit that they have purposely adopted the practice of impression management. Instead individuals claim that any decisions made occurred made before the festival weekend, and it was the outcome of these decisions that could have been deemed part of an impression management strategy. Decisions are instead influenced by past experiences, speaking with friends, watching past events on television, festival opinions and reviews from music magazines and websites, or from the official guidelines outlined by the festival organisers. Such consistent messages coincide with the notion of festival organisers intentionally providing physical cues that help align certain beliefs and behaviours of the audience (Oakes, 2003). If this is the case, however, it would imply that only shallow, surface attributes of the festival-goer are similar, with actual behaviour at the festival remaining uninfluenced by either situational or social cues.

### **7.4.3 *Liminality***

With synchronised consumption, entrainment, and impression management failing to fully explain potential behavioural changes, it is necessary to look towards other sources of identity manipulation, namely liminal behaviour. As mentioned at the beginning of section 7.4.1, due to a lack of deep-rooted identity, any changes that do take place are much more shallow and temporary in nature (Meyer *et al*, 2006). Such conditions potentially align with the early aspects of liminal behaviour. Liminality overcomes issues presented by theories proposing permanent identity changes, instead outlining a threshold behaviour change stemming from a transitional and temporal change in situation (Van Gennep, 1909). The festival itself acts as a place where individuals gather for fleeting experiential opportunities, providing an ideal situation for liminal identities to occur (Wilson, 2006). It is said that during the festival, existing social

structures and identities dissolve to be replaced by alternative values and a more homogenous contextual identity, that is, a festival identity of sorts (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010).

When questioned on the idea of changing values, there is an even more decisive answer that although small aspects of behaviour may change, values are in no way affected; if anything, underlying values are what stop the individual becoming more of a homogenous figure. Despite the main assumption of liminality being strongly disagreed with, there are other aspects that are much more reasonable to assume, and in some cases accept. For example, there is a definite segregation between the festival life and home life allowing more chance to experiment with cultural resources in a symbolic manner. Although this rarely appears to express itself as a reversal of daily life (as outlined by Turner, 1969), it is acknowledged that during certain points of the festival experience there is an intensification of patterns of daily life (as outlined by Lefebvre, 1991). These intense feelings are made stronger when the festival emphasises values that are already maintained by the individual. However, even an extreme intensification of behaviour does not necessarily equate to a new, unique identity forming, rather it merely acts as a slight modification to an already deep-rooted identity. Examining further, liminal theories also fail to fully explain the supposed output of a situation.

A liminal identity should manifest itself as the creation and acceptance of a social code created largely by social interaction (Gardner, 2004), with adherence to this code resulting in comradeship and *communitas* (Turner, 1974). An example of *communitas*, or a social structure based on equity rather than hierarchy can be observed very specifically at festival C, with lesser examples of such behaviour also noted at festival B. However, when discussing these festivals, they are both commonly perceived to be very community-based, community-friendly events. Going back to the previous point then, *communitas* is actually only an intensification of a social structure that is already in place rather than the creation of any new structure. Rather than context-based social interaction, codes that govern the general festival crowd seem to be dictated more by over-arching festival beliefs that are accepted long before the actual festival event takes place. There is also evidence of social codes being ignored, especially at festival A, which splits the crowd in terms of those finding the behaviours acceptable and those who do not. It is worth noting that festival A is the only one of the samples studied that

is not commonly referred to as having a wide community base, which translates into a lack of community feel during the festival weekend itself.

All of these theories have some merit to them, however, the critique of the theories in the context of the festival weekend invalidates their acceptance as justifiable causes for the existence of any unique identity created during the experience. However, through some modifications using identity hierarchies, there are aspects of each theory that can be used to explain the subtle homogenous behavioural activities that occur.

#### **7.4.4 Identity Hierarchies**

Having examined three potential reasons for temporary identity changes, these theories all display some shortfalls. They are also condemned to a further degree if the idea of role conflict is introduced to the equation. One of the more fundamental principles of identity theory shows that if a temporary identity comes into conflict with a deep-rooted aspect of identity, the individual must disregard their situational role in order to meet their sense of self (Stets, 1995). Taking this one stage further, the dominant identity does not even necessarily have to be a deep-rooted aspect of personal identity, but merely any identity that outranks the situated identity in the individual's inner hierarchy (Postmes and Jetten, 2006).

In selecting the highest ranked identity, it is common for the individual to use the identity that develops stronger affective ties to subgroups in a social system than the system itself. In this instance, the festival itself merely acts as the social system. It is unlikely, therefore, that bonds are formed specifically with the festival, rather they form alongside more specific elements and groups within this system, and decisions correspond to the situational attachment most prevalent from all the collectives an individual is a part of (Lawler, 1992). Of these collectives, it is the identities embedded in value relational networks that are most likely to be made salient and activated in given situations; identities at the top of a hierarchy are more likely to be activated independently of situational cues (Stryker, 1980). In this instance it becomes extremely unlikely that new, temporary relationships made during the festival experience can supersede existing relationships. Instead of the situation having total dominance over the selected identity then, there is in fact a degree of individual choice – a critical precursor for altering the situation (Ashforth *et al*, 2008). Categorisation, which is



inextricably linked to behaviour, becomes a constantly changing variable involving more than just cultural practice and material setting (Condor, 1996), which makes the entire process a more complex affair. Using Doise's (1986) system for categorisation (i.e. Ideological, Positional, Interpersonal, Situational) it is possible to predict more accurately how society, groups, and individuals react with identity based on which level they position themselves in specific situations (Ben-Ner *et al*, 2009). Attempting to combine the noted conclusions, it can be said that there is an explicit acknowledgement by individuals of an alternate identity that is only enacted during the festival encounter. Although shallow at the time, there is scope for the identity to become more deep-rooted as time progresses. However, whilst in the shallow stage of one's self-concept it is possible to overcome behavioural cues exuded from this festival identity, instead acting on those aspects of identity that are more hierarchically dominant regardless of situational or social cues. These ideas both confirm and disconfirm the original conceptual framework proposed, and therefore it is necessary to readdress the framework in line with new themes and knowledge that have emerged from the prior three chapters.

## **Chapter 8 Discussion and Conclusions**

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 discuss findings by substantiating collected data with literature identified as relevant to the current study. In doing so, it is possible to categorise discussions by stimuli – these being objective (physical), inter-subjective (social), and subjective (individual) stimuli. Noted in the summaries of these chapters is the extent to which these stimuli influence overall behaviour and attitudes during the experience. This chapter further develops these sub-conclusions in relation to the overall conclusion of this study.

### **8.1 Review of Conceptual Framework**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the context of the topic being discussed – the process of consuming experiences. Through the evolution of consumption activities, it is possible to trace the development of experience-based logic in relation to its predecessors of good-dominant and service-dominant logic. It is shown that although sharing some elements, experiences and services are sufficiently different to be treated as two exclusive, rather than interchangeable concepts as has been the case in previous research. The concepts identified as most crucial in the advancement of experiential thinking are introduced as the physical and aesthetic aspects that accompany the experience, and the individual and social nature of the experience.

Based on this, the aim of the thesis is to examine the formation of contextually relevant identities, behaviours, and values during the experience event. To achieve this, it is recognised that the areas identified have not previously been studied as one coherent stream or foundationally from the consumer perspective, so objectives must closely relate to these independent areas of literature. As such, the thesis objectives are:

- To understand the role of the place and space the experience occupies.
- To explore the relationship between identity, social processes, and the individual's experience.
- To better understand the process of co-creation during the experience.

Understanding these streams of literature, the idea of a subjective identity is perceived to be an outcome of a double level of interpretation of objective stimuli and inter-

subjective stimuli, which when internalised allows the individual to adopt a homogenous identity responsible for guiding behaviours, attitudes, and values during the experience. This literary conclusion is arrived upon based on the recognition that categories only exist in relation to other categories; in-groups take their identity from being different to out-groups (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Once recognised, the in-group category shares many similar traits including actions, beliefs, habits, physical appearance, and rules (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). From this perspective, groups coalesce around objective, symbolic stimuli provided largely by the experience-makers and other influential bodies (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001). As a result, the social group has only a limited set of actions and constellations from which to choose, and in turn the individual must select an appropriate outcome from these stimuli (Hogg and Michell, 1996). As this process continues the individual becomes a product of the social category which is in turn a product of the physical environment, and a unique identity is triggered based exclusively on the higher levels of stimuli (Mead, 1934). For the most part, this identity helps enact similar behaviours and attitudes during the encounter (Blumer, 1969). Although temporal, the transformation is assisted by the liminal nature of the experience as well as attachment to the aesthetic environment (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010). This is all achieved through a dynamic process which is open to continuous interpretation and refinement. As a result it is possible for the individual to incorporate aspects of the experience, namely an attachment and identity towards the place and an element of social identity into their own concept of personal identity. With this, individuals adopt a more homogenous contextual identity which has the potential to influence behaviours, attitudes, and values during the experience. Combined, this thinking allows a clear understanding based on the nature of the experience and the proceeding facilitation of social interaction.

The application of this concept is addressed further in the methodology chapter, with various ontological and epistemological issues considered in order to provide a complementary research methodology that adopts a symbolic interactionist stance. This interpretivist-inspired ontology follows the belief that self is created as a result of the reflexive process through which the individual perceives and interprets the surrounding world. Such a position is particularly relevant to the study at hand thanks to the highly subjective nature of the consumer's experience during the larger experience encounter. Combined, implementing the philosophy and resulting theory throughout the study allows for the demonstration of areas of consistency and conflict. Demonstration of

consistency and conflict has been thoroughly highlighted throughout chapter 5, 6, and 7, and it is from these chapters that two critical discursive areas arise. Rather than address levels of reality and objectives independently as was done in these analysis chapters, it becomes more logical and valuable to discuss objectives in the context of these themes.

## **8.2 Expectations versus Reality**

Dissonance between expectation and reality interferes in the festival experience at two important identity junctures – during the formation of a place-based identity and during the formation of a subjectively-valued identity.

### **8.2.1 Place-related Dissonance**

From the outset it is clearly demonstrated that the varied festival environments have significantly different impacts on festival attendees. This distinction is most noticeable between A and C with each appearing at opposite extremes of a placial spectrum; festival A takes place across a number of large anonymous fields and festival C is held in the grounds of a country estate. The effect of this is immediately noticeable when discussing geographic territories. The closest festival A comes to securing an actual location is in national terms, consistently being referred to as *'the Scottish festival'*. This notion of Scotland as a singular place creates an association between A and Scotland which results in a very broad identity forming. To overcome any weaknesses associated with such a broad identity, festival organisers focus more on creating relationships with the festival brand (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011). During such experiences, when identifying with and attaching to the festival, it is very much the case that the object of identity/attachment is the place created by the experience rather than the place of the experience. In other words, a strong experience brand possesses sufficient power built through reputation to dictate the place in which it sits, generating a space that facilitates activities and socialising over a temporary period of time. In such situations, there is very little emphasis on any specific geographical location. However, by failing to associate with any distinct town, city, park, estate, etc, questions arise as to the extent to which the festival achieves the specific or singular status necessary to be classified as a place (Kleine and Menzel-Baker, 2004). In such instances, individuals begin the festival experience with a much more abstract idea of what to expect. Although past experience is useful (Elder *et al.*, 1996), even those who

have visited previously are unable to fully identify with the festival location due to minor changes made to the area.

Contrary to this are those experiences that use special places to contribute to the overall positive evaluation of the festival. In such cases, although the experience may be highly regarded, part of this positive attraction revolves around identification with the local place which, already a part of the attendees self-concept, only becomes stronger during the event as it is solidified by the numerous markers that are found throughout. Thus place identity originates from a very strong beginning – identity and attachment that already exist, which are further maintained over the course of the event (Ruback *et al.*, 2008). Unlike the former situation where the strength of the brand invokes place identity, it is much the case that the location assists in making the experience what it is. For example, although bound more by its location – a large country estate, the organisers of festival C achieve stronger levels of attachment by incorporating the natural and man-made features of the estate (including ruins of old buildings, a walled garden area, an amphi-theatre-esque garden stage, and a grand hall) into festival proceedings. Due to these immovable objects, continuity is ensured year on year, allowing individuals to not only identify with the festival location, but also build a very strong level of emotional attachment with specific places. Accepting these discussions, it can be concluded that experiential place identity manifests itself in one of two ways: 1) identity can be based around the place of the experience or 2) identity can be based around the place that is made by the experience – represented by a community versus brand focus respectively. However, regardless of the means by which relations develop, this association with place plays an active and important role in the overall concept of personal identity.

Place, as a meaningful part of identity, becomes most salient when used to differentiate one category from another (Proshansky, 1983) (e.g. the experience place from the home place/work place/social place). Although guided by previous experiences, pre-conceived ideas, word of mouth, and media (Trueman *et al.*, 2007) an individual's idea of the nature of place forms at an abstract level which is active before reaching the event. This identity can be activated by a number of cues, for example seeing images, talking with others, packing, purchasing tickets, or travelling to the event, making it a part of the individual's self-concept. However, actual association and effect of association are strongest during the actual event as it is only at this time that the place

represents an ideal representation of the setting. Thus place identity is at its strongest a) when it is activated by experiential cues, b) when it can be readily compared and favoured to other places and c) before there is any conflict between the imagined place and the reality of the place. However, due to the intangibility of identity, the third condition is not always achieved with perceived place often failing to represent a realistic reality. During the event any disparities between expectation and reality come to be. Any contrasts (even those of a positive nature) result in a weakened place identity, with fit and accessibility becoming somewhat problematic. For example those attending festival A have more abstract ideas of what to expect which does not always mirror the true place. In comparison, because the location of festival C exists year round, individuals are always able to maintain a constant degree of identity, forming a concrete representation of the festival place; at the event this perceived identity closely matches the identity that is experienced. Gaps between place-based expectations and reality become further compounded by the fact that other place-based identities, for example home, work, or social places start to become idealised and compete for position within the self-concept.

One means to overcome a weakening of identity is by creating experiences that are closely aligned with expectations. This becomes easier to achieve for places that have an already-established identity, and which maintain the status of place even when the event is not taking place. This is in comparison to locations that only become places when the event is in progress; while the former place adopts synergistic methods to combine extant identity with additional identity coming from the event, the latter must rely solely on the experience to create an identity. Established places are therefore not only an important aspect of a strong place identity, they also play a role in the formation of attachment (Lalli, 1992) which again can be looked at in the brand versus community examples. Compared to a 'brand place', attachment to a community place initially appears a lot stronger as it does not begin from a zerobase (Hankinson, 2004). As individuals already have experience of the area in other forms, attachment already exists. Having said this, even when there is little identity with the place of the experience, there is still an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the idea of place attachment and as such, the relationship between identity and attachment identified in extant literature must be questioned.

It is demonstrated that attachment only occurs when the individual has direct experience (no matter how arbitrary) with a specific, usually tangible element of the place, making it a completely subjective and independent process. Attachment therefore has very little to do with place identity, and will form regardless of the strength of identification there is to the place; a strong place identity, nor a strong brand, nor even a liking for the place has to exist for the individual to experience a degree of attachment to the place. During the experience places are bestowed with memories no matter how insignificant they appear. Rather than being regarded as the superior process then (as described by Hernandez et al, 2007), it seems that identity can be made salient through a variety of elements whereas attachment requires specific interaction with the place in order to fully form. However, this is not to say there is zero crossover between identity and attachment.

When attachment is experienced, significantly positive reflections are created which can on occasion provide positive anticipations and may assist in the creation of a future place-based identity (Lalli, 1992). This is especially the case with experiences as they often receive positive retrospective feedback (Higgins, 2001). Attachment is therefore more emotionally-subjective, and more lasting in terms of memorability than identity which is activated and deactivated much more superficially. Despite this, attachment on its own is rarely sufficient to facilitate re-visits; rather it is identity that plays a more influential role in intention to attend (Knez, 2005). At the same time, the process of creating the place is very experience-specific, with no two experiences maintaining the exact same position. Although the provision of a functional space is relatively straightforward, attempting to provide a hedonic space is much more problematic. Practically then, although there is little that can be done to guarantee positive identity and attachment, it appears that by treating the place as a design input rather than a consequential output of the experience is one means to improve chances of positive placial feedback.

### ***8.2.2 Identity-related Dissonance***

The second area in which (in)consistency plays a major role during the experience event is in the creation of an inter-subjective and subjective identity. Interactionist theory suggests inter-subjective identity (or group identity) is influenced by various objective stimuli (Mead, 1934). These objective stimuli are actively interpreted by the general

group and assist in providing a consistent collective identity (Pratt, 2003). Objective stimuli vary significantly between events, with organisers attempting to instil unique identities that best display the image and idiosyncrasies of that particular experience (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011). Along with the unique elements that each experience possess, objective stimuli also include general connotations associated with a more prototypical culture and lifestyle consistent across these experiences (Hogg and Hardie, 1992). Through a mixture of these general and more specific attributes a prototypical identity is encouraged, and it is from this prototype that the generalised other find their common identity (Blumer, 1962). Communicating, and more importantly subscribing to this common identity is easier to achieve prior to an event due to the power of the individual believing they are an especially prototypical group member. The real difficulty comes when attempting to sustain these beliefs in the actual experience setting (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996).

During the experience event, these difficulties are caused primarily by the objective stimuli (and proposed identity) being inconsistent with normality, resulting in attempts made to invert patterns of daily behaviour. Although this is possible (Turner, 1969) and is achieved to an extent prior to attending (due largely to self-prototyping against a non-attendee category), once arriving at the event this basis for discrimination is not enough to sustain an explicit and specific identity. With this, individuals are left with a diluted idea of what the festival represents, and dissonance between their more deep-rooted identity and the inter-subjective identity becomes apparent. It is difficult for individuals to abandon their deeper-rooted values in favour of a temporary one (Meyer *et al.*, 2006) causing individuals to revert from the objectively created identity to an identity they are more comfortable with. Accepting this as a conclusion, the notion of any real contextual identity during the experience is swiftly rejected, however, this leaves several examples of social consensus unexplained. Initially, interactions with others are guided by a collective identity (Postmes and Jetten, 2006). If the situation arises that expectations and reality are not identical, the prototypical identity will gradually be replaced with more deep-rooted identities. However, because this change does not take effect immediately, basic actions carried out in a similar manner are witnessed and last until the pre-established group identity is fully replaced (Postmes and Jetten, 2006). Although this explains some of behaviour, again, there are still instances resembling a more common contextual identity.



Contemplating the nature of the experience under study, these additional commonalities can be explained by considering the close social vicinity in which the experience is consumed, with moments of increased emotion or situations of increased interaction common (Brown *et al.*, 2006). During these instances, more primal urges seem to take precedence with evidence of both emotional and physical convergence between individuals (Ashton-James *et al.*, 2007). This is reported as sharing '*the buzz from the crowd*' and taking parts in chants, dancing and jumping '*because everyone else was*'. Although primitive in nature, these displays are often aided by a basic form of impression management (Goffman, 1959), with individuals showing a conscious concern regarding general behaviours. However, this is only experienced under certain conditions, and upon leaving the situation feelings and behaviour return to a more subjective state.

A second explanation for these social behaviours can be attributed to the process of refining group identity. For example, rather than 'experience identity A', reinterpretation may allow for more specific identities to form (North *et al.*, 2000); behaviours witnessed and reported may reflect a refined, affiliated identity rather than any weak general experience identity. This acts as an identity within an identity, so from a broad contextual identity, significant comparison is made to result in a more specific, more valued identity (North *et al.*, 2000). However, due to the sub-conscious nature of the experience, individuals are not actively aware of their actions in such circumstances, only that they are not a result of behaviours activated by the experience.

Although various in nature the above problems can be attributed to one common theme – a gap between expectations and reality. To avoid such complications, a consistent identity must be both proposed and experienced. In such instances fewer issues are faced, with event organisers appearing significantly more successful in efficiently achieving deep-rooted group structures and *communitas*. For example, a community based event taking place in a close-knit community, a common identity is both witnessed and openly reported, with individuals keen to be seen as a part of the community both during the experience as well as in their daily lives. This is not unexpected as the prototype proposed through objective stimuli is very closely related to the more normal, day-to-day identities, resulting in a very strong collective identity. By providing an experience that maintains similar core values with daily life, behaviour changes are very minor and reflect more an intensification rather than inversion of

behaviour (Lee *et al.*, 2012). This allows the identity adopted prior to the experience to be maintained throughout the festival. As such, association with other attendees (through a shared group identity) becomes particularly strong.

For a true group identity to form and be maintained throughout then, it is not simply a case of building a strong objective contextual identity. It is more important to produce stimuli that are consistent with the values of those who choose to attend, therefore knowing one's audience is crucial. If this is achieved behavioural changes are minimal, manifesting as intensification rather than inversion of behaviour (as described by Lee *et al.*, 2012), and as such individuals are more likely to fully embrace both the contextual identity and the experience as a whole. Problems occur when the experience identity conflicts with daily identities at which point neither the individual nor group will fully accept or engage with the collective identity and will not feel a part of the experience. In these circumstances primal factors are relied on in order to alter behaviour from a daily norm (Ashton-James *et al.*, 2007) which proves highly problematic to achieve in such a short space of time.

### **8.3 Contextual Identity**

The aim of this thesis is to consider the formation of contextually relevant identities, behaviours, and values during the experiential event. Preceding data collection, a framework was produced that assumed such a unique identity did exist. This subjective identity is perceived to be an outcome of a double level of interpretation of objective stimuli and inter-subjective stimuli, and it is concluded that by internalising these stimuli the individual adopts a homogenous identity responsible for guiding behaviours, attitudes, and values during the experience. Reviewing objectives, there is some evidence to support this original theory. However at the same time, there is perhaps more evidence to suggest that the idea of a contextual identity does not exist as imagined above, most convincing of which is highlighted in its own construction – '*a dynamic process which is open to continuous interpretation and refinement*'.

Contextual identity as originally presented does not sufficiently take into account the scale of reinterpretation that occurs during the event; the framework presents a relatively static concept prior to and throughout the experience. Such a fixed identity can only exist if there is no conflict whatsoever between a) the experience environment

and the normal day-to-day environment b) the contextual social group and day-to-day social group and c) the perceived value and actual value. Interview and observed data shows this not to be the case with a clear difference between the two. With this dissonance, it becomes near impossible for such a stable identity to exist and from this, the thesis proposes a more experientially-relevant identity theory.

### ***8.3.1 Developing a Contextualised Identity Theory***

Prior to attending an experience, individuals look for cues to direct them in their expectations of the event. Such cues are available from a variety of sources, but many of these influences appear to originate directly from objective sources, for example official websites, television, or general media (Postmes and Jetten, 2006). As dominant points of reference, these stimuli tend to hold much power in encouraging and persuading a specific identity relevant to a context (Solomon, 1983). This is observed with initial objective cues interpreted consistently by both individuals and groups. As a result, shared and common beliefs, expectations, motivations, and attitudes form. Consistent messages allow events to create their own unique identity beforehand that is recognised not only by those planning to attend, but also by those choosing not to attend. However, observation of stimuli alone is not sufficient to make individuals fully ascribe to the identity, rather it merely introduces the idea of homogeneity. The true strength of the contextual identity comes from two other sources: self-categorisation and place identity.

A number of identity theories dictate that identity takes its strength from comparisons against other social groups (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971, Turner *et al.*, 1987, Rabbie *et al.*, 1989). During the pre-experience build up, an experience identity develops strongly in comparison to non-attendees, that is, those who choose to experience the event versus those who choose to forgo the experience. In making this category decision, an individual begins to seek both tangible and intangible ways to make the differentiation more explicit. Albeit unknowingly, the individual starts to subscribe to an identity that better defines them within the experience, that is, based around a prototypical experience individual. Having very little to compare against, the individual recognises himself as the prototype and hence a member of the experience community. Although not maintained at all times, when it is activated through a prime, the identity is enacted

in a strong manner. This clearly sets participating individuals apart from those who choose not to take part in the experience (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008).

When this identity is made salient prior to the experience, a number of other intentions are aroused. One of the most pervasive is the incorporation of the place of the experience into an individual's self-concept (Proshansky, 1983). Due to its more abstract nature, place identity can form with little or no previous experience of the place, based instead on expectations, shared messages, and the organiser's promotion of their own environment. Constrained by the messages they can convey, a more general message is released which pushes individuals to develop similar expectations of their upcoming visit. As one of the few points of reference, place identity plays a significant role in the preliminary reflection of the experience. Resulting from these processes, a very strong identity is built prior to the experience, and it is this contextualised identity that drives individuals in their early interactions with others during the experience. This explains the original observations of similar decisions regarding which event to attend, the commonalities in physical appearance, and the basic behavioural actions during the experience – these are associated with the prototypical attendee and only exist when the individual sees them as part of the larger experiential community. In reality, however, these observations are little more than surface behaviours which are decided on under the influence of the imagined prototype largely before the event begins. It is, however, at this point that the original framework falls down as it assumes such harmonious interactions continue for the entire course of the event. In actual fact, any notion of a homogenous group identity appears to slowly diminish as the experience progresses with meaningful decisions and behaviours based on very different sources to that of the imagined prototype. Rather the main basis of identity, which is different for every person, comes from much deeper-rooted traits – in effect a true subjective identity.

Referring back to the identity literature, categorisation takes place when there is an out-group by which to give a sense of collectiveness to the in-group (Abrams and Hogg, 2006). Although present out with the experience, when attempts are made to refine identity during the event, problems arise. The basis for the original comparison is attendees versus non-attendees, however, due to the lack of non-attendees present as a reference point, the original categorisation is no longer relevant; the experience-goer versus non-experience-goer comparison becomes redundant. Still seeking a new category by which to differentiate from the general group (Turner *et al.*, 1987),

ownership and membership of categories must be based on other traits. However due to the temporal nature of the event, there is little time for a completely new category membership to form. During the event then, it is unlikely that bonds will form with the system as a whole, instead forming alongside more specific elements and groups within this system (Lawler, 2001). Decisions will therefore correspond to the situational attachment most immediately available from all the collectives an individual is a member of (Meyer *et al.*, 2006).

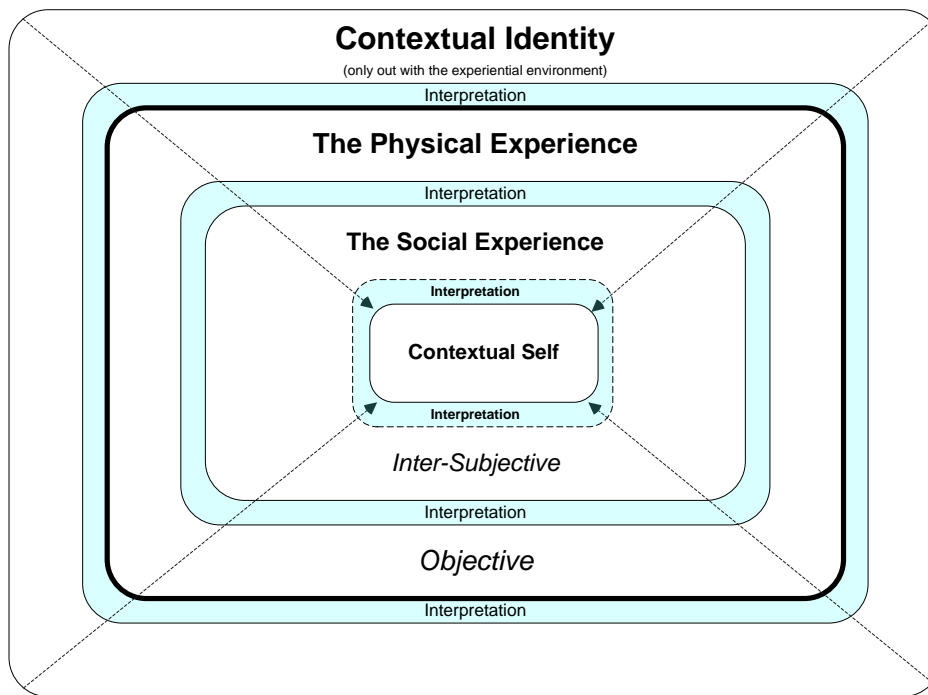
To activate this, the individual selects the highest ranked accessible identity – this is the identity that is embedded in value relational networks that are most salient and accessible (Doise, 1988). This identity must also allow development of affective ties to subgroups within the social system. In this instance, the experience itself merely acts as a social system. This is not to dismiss the initial perceived identity which still plays a role, albeit a secondary one as a ‘primer’ to a more valued identity. This process describes the creation of the contextual self – the way an individual adapts the prime to a more valued identity as a means to direct behaviour during the experience. With this, contextual self and contextual identity can be defined as two clearly different concepts. Whereas contextual identity is shaped more by the prototypical image before the experience, contextual self is merely an experience-primed representation of the subjective self during the experience.

Combining the homogenous pre-conceived identity with the deeper subjective identity, the idea of contextual self is further strengthened by the diminishing power that the place (as a social system) holds. As mentioned above, place identity forms a) out with the boundaries of an event b) with little first-hand experience of the place or c) as an abstract concept. This results in place holding much influence during initial contextual identity formation. During the experience it also becomes possible to experience aspects of place that had only previously been imagined, allowing individuals to attach themselves to specific aspects of the place. Although this may strengthen attachment to place, it does very little to strengthen the role of place identity. In reality any dissonance between expectations and reality only cause a weakening of identity. As place identity is an important overall inclusion in the contextual identity, this too is weakened.

### ***8.3.2 Framework of Contextual Self***

The above can be further explained using the contextual identity/self framework (see Figure 8.1) which makes clear the stages and influences of identity at various times during the experience. As with guide produced to conclude the literature review, this representation is intended to provide a hierarchy and direction of reality. Any interpretation and reaction within are in no way prescribed or determined by the framework. By producing such a loose framework, it becomes easier to distinguish between contextual identity and contextual self, with contextual identity based around a prototypical member of an experientially-homogenous group, and contextual self the result of a deep-rooted identity primed by the contextual identity.

Looking to the framework, the outer area represents the individual prior to taking part in the experience. During this stage categorisation versus non-attendees gives the individual their sense of a unique identity. This is based on numerous stimuli and the outcome largely resembles a prototypical member of the experience group bringing with it a very strong contextual identity. Moving towards the centre of the framework represents the consumption process; as the place of the experience is reached (represented by the thick black line), the power of contextual identity is still very strong. This is displayed in the collective acts of the group as a whole during early interactions. It is not until the next level of interpretation that contextual identity as a guide for behaviour can begin to be dismissed. Interpreting the social experience, the individual actively seeks new means by which to differentiate from the collective identity. Due to the more temporal nature of the event this is most often achieved by seeking more valued identities that can then be enacted in the situation. Although the contextual identity adopted prior to the experience is no longer capable of sustaining prototypical behaviour, it does still act as a primer for behaviour allowing the contextual self to be reached.



**Figure 8.1: Framework of Contextual Self (Source: Author)**

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

When adopting the interactionist perspective, there is a built in significance from the outlook of the individual – a fact that is often overlooked in a number of the more rigid identity theories. Using this perspective, we see that a contextual identity – in the form of a homogenous, experiential identity that guides behaviour, values, and feelings, can theoretically only exist under certain conditions – namely out with the experience itself. During the experience social differentiation must occur, so rather than every individual succumbing to a strict identity, individuals instead adopt personally-valued, relevant, or deep-rooted identifications that are then played out within the setting. This is not to say that previous objective stimuli have no bearing on contextual behaviours – they do in fact play a large role in the experience, but only as a priming tool for valued behaviours (rather than driving behavioural change). Value is therefore derived from the unique experiences of individuals, not the generic moments experienced by the collective. This process, however, does not occur to the same extent across all experiences, with degree of fit between contextual identity and contextual self very important.

Although categorisation is always necessary, if the experience is created with underlying values considered, expectations and reality are of a better fit. For example, the prototype for a community-based event differs very little from the actual attendee at

the community experience. As such the deeper-values sought may already revolve around community-mindedness, essentially creating a community-primed community identity. Therefore, rather than trying to change behaviours, intensification of daily behaviour is emphasised. Although further categorisation does still occur, it is to a lesser extent than experiences advocating a radical change in behaviour (i.e. those with a larger dissonance between contextual identity and contextual self). If an identity is primed which does not correspond with daily behaviours, processes including entrainment, impression management, and syntony are initiated. In these situations a temporary identity comes into conflict with a deep-rooted aspect of identity. The individual is then forced to disregard their situational role in order to meet their sense of self. In such situations the individual must deal with the conflict and balance between contextual identity and contextual self resulting in a negative experience.

Practically then, it becomes very difficult for the experience organiser to provide a consistent offering that is desired by both the prototypical contextual identity and a more tailored offering for the contextually-primed identity during the experience itself. However, this is made easier when both contextual identity and contextual self are similar from the outset, that is, when a positive correlation exists one identity can be used to prime another without conflict. In such instances a very consistent message is displayed both before and during the event, therefore primed behaviour and actual behaviour are similar, identity and the self are relatively harmonious, and the overall experience for the consumer is positive.

## **8.5 Limitations**

Limitations are predominantly recognised in the methods selected to capture data. In conducting an interpretive research project, value is achieved through the exploration of groups within a natural setting over a given period of time. In this instance in-depth contextual methods are used as a means to capture data relevant to behaviour and identity during the experiential event. This does, however, present an inherent difficulty in accurately capturing and interpreting another's point of view. This is especially true due to multiple levels of interpretation involved within the study including the researcher's own interpretation of events that are witnessed during the period of study. Arguments may therefore arise as to the overall reliability and duplication of results if carried out again, or carried out by another researcher. These issues are addressed fully



in the methodology chapter and although not infallible, are still believed to be the most appropriate methods in order to study the highly subjective nature of the experience. Accepting this, a second limitation arises concerning criticisms relating to the relevance and applicability of conclusions to a wider audience. For example, this study is uniquely restricted by the context, relatively small sample size, ethical impositions limiting age and intoxication, and the researcher's need to remain overt which can result in potentially missing hidden aspects of the consumption experience. Despite these constraining factors, they are partially overcome by the complete consideration given to all sampling decisions. Considerations are assisted by the complete immersion the researcher achieves – both from on-line forums as well attending and observing during the experience. These latter points are responsible for ensuring rapport was built very quickly with individuals allowing attitudes, opinions, and behaviours to be explored from a true in-depth perspective.

A careful selection of contexts is also necessary. Festivals are selected based on the amplified experiential features they possess. Although constrained in terms of available festivals, and acknowledging the differences in festivals selected, it is believed that the events chosen represent comparable experiences. As a result, it is envisaged that conclusions are applicable across the popular festival market, that is, multi-day, mixed genre festivals held in the UK. This makes the results appear exclusive to the festival experience, however, subject to further explanatory testing, conclusions may be applicable across other experiential contexts.

The decision to select only one experiential context is also justified when considering the necessary trade-off required in overcoming weaknesses of prior research, that is, the failure to fully examine the experience in favour of providing objective explanatory conclusions stemming from narrow literary foundations. It is perhaps the case then that this research locates itself at the other extreme of the exploratory/explanatory dichotomy, however, it is only at this extreme that the aim and objectives of this study can fully addressed and understood. This allows the research freedom to explore previously disparate areas of literature providing support for final conclusions, reliability, limited generalisability, and perhaps most importantly, applicability to other experiential contexts. As such, limitations should not reflect a negative consequence of the narrow methodological foundation, rather should embrace the potential avenues of future research that are highlighted.

## **8.6 Further Research**

The area of research that will most benefit the contextual identity model will be in examining the theory across multiple experiences in order to produce a true contextual model. Such applicability is assumed due to the focus on experiential, rather than festival literature when devising the framework, with contextual identity and contextual self anticipated to behave in the same way when transferred across experience activities. From a general outlook (i.e. the more traditional goods and service dominant industries) the relevance of the model becomes more questionable, however, in sharing several qualities with the service encounter, it is possible that it would be applicable to the service context also, but only further testing can confirm this.

The second avenue of research looks at testing the model from a more explanatory standpoint – having developed the model it must then be confirmed, rather than followed blindly. Due to methodological limitations, a more structured ethnographic approach taking place over a longer period of time would suffice. The advancement to be gained from the extension of the length of study would provide benefits twofold. The first benefit of this will come from the liminal aspect of the experience. At present it is inconclusive as to whether three to four days is sufficient to fully establish threshold behaviours – in this study there is little evidence to suggest so. Conducting a longer study will better allow for liminality to take effect (presuming it plays a relevant part of group change) as well as giving a clearer idea of any explicit changes in character. For example, implementing a pre-, during, and post- interview schedule will show to what degree behaviours do change. If possible it is also advantageous to continue the study over the course of multiple experiences, whether that is a number of different experiences, or the same experience over an extended time period.

Along with overall conclusions, through the ‘unpacking’ of data, several other avenues of interest are highlighted. The first of these looks at the possibility of matching experiential expectations with experiential reality. The importance of consonance is highlighted in the literature, however, could only be considered at a secondary level due to a lack of original focus on this as an objective. Consonance was shown to be of significance across all levels of ‘reality’, that is an individual subjective identity, an inter-subjective group identity, and an objective physical level. The second key finding that requires further consideration is in the creation of a valued event. It is

acknowledged that this conclusion is more specific to the festival experience, however, the broad concept of value co-creation is more than relevant across all experiences. Further research to demonstrate the applicability of value models from an explanatory perspective in the realm of the festival and from the exploratory perspective in more general realms is called for. By providing a more complete understanding of the sources and effects of experiential value, it is important to further examine these at a more explanatory level. It is acknowledged that this Again, understanding must be across all levels of reality

The final area that follows as a natural progression to this research is the practical implications that can be achieved from implementing the model. Tested in a real context, conclusions gained lend much support to the actual advancement of the festival experience. Consideration to practical examples is given in the conclusions of this study, however, it would be of much greater value to retest these in a pure consumer behaviour study as a means to confirm the relevance of this thesis not just in a theoretical role, but also as a way to improve the consumer's overall experience.

## **Appendix A: Sample Interview Transcript**

**A Interview – File A, 1**

**6.00pm Thursday**

**Gareth**

**37**

**Investment Analyst**

### ***Introduction and Consent Confirmed – Consent Form Signed***

R: So is this your first time at A?

G: No, no. I've been here 6 times in the past 12 years. I first came in my last year of university...so it would have been 2000.

R: And can you remember anything from that first year...why you came, what you did?

G: I think the first year I came it was just something different to do. We decided as we were going into our last year we'd all get away together. There was a group of about 15 of us, and not everyone could afford a big holiday so this was our best option. We had quite a crazy weekend...a lot of drink and a lot of music. But it's changed a whole lot since back then. It was a lot smaller...not so much in terms of the area but the amount of people. Or at least it seemed that way. You could buy your tickets a couple of weeks before the event for about half the price they are now, but you were still getting the big bands...Travis and Iggy were definitely what I remember most from that weekend. But it just seemed different. It's hard to explain. I think back then it was reserved as a musical event with the extras as more of a bonus. So the people who came were a lot more similar in that they were here for the music. Now it seems the music is a consolation and the main reason to come is to get as drunk as you can and sleep with as many girls as you can.

R: So could you see it developing over the last 12 years?

G: Definitely. I did 2001 as well but then moved away for a couple of years for a graduate job. Then 2004 was my first year back. It was still nothing compared to what it is now, but I'm

pretty sure it's increased year on year in terms of both capacity and price. So I was back and forth over the next 6 years...obviously your priorities change and it became relatively low in my list. But don't get me wrong, I love it and I enjoy coming back to it every year, but just in a different way than I used to.

R: So tell me how your trips have changed over the past decade?

G: Well the first few trips were all with friends. So I was still quite young then...I started coming here quite late, so for the first few years I was still acting as if I was a kid....drinking far too much, staying up all night, trying to get with as many girls as possible...don't tell the wife that! Compared to this year I can't believe how much we did. We'd probably see 20 or so bands...down at the front for all of them. Then when the music finished we'd be straight to the Boom bus, which was the Beat 106 bus back then, but pretty much exactly the same. As it went on though fewer and fewer friends were coming...married, settling down, kids, jobs...there were so many reasons you couldn't come. So I would always make the effort but when you're only there with one or two friends, I think you're a lot more relaxed about the whole situation. We'd see the same number of bands but the Boom bus was replaced by chatting at the tents and then crashing out. The past two visits I've come with my wife who I managed to rope into it. Well saying that, last year she was actually the one that had mentioned the idea...there were a couple of bands...Eminem and Muse, Shed Seven and Stereophonics...that she really, really wanted to see. We made it through the Friday and Saturday nights, but Sunday was a pretty horrible day and I think Jane had had enough so we left on the Sunday night after all the music. But that was definitely the most relaxed year I've had. This year Jane agreed to come again but only if we paid for the good camping...the Residence they call it, so we bought one of the Yurts with another couple...one of the original guys I came with. 10 years ago I wouldn't even have considered doing that but you know what...I think at the moment that's the only way I can really enjoy it; music during the day and a decent, quiet sleep at night.

R: So tell me about the Residence?

G: It's essentially just a large tent. It sleeps the four of us quite comfortably...has a heater, has private toilets in the area. It's so comfy in there and warm, but really it's just a lot more relaxed...you don't need to worry about carrying huge amounts of bags and tents and stuff. There's security in the area so you get away without the worry of kids stealing from your tent. It's just a lot more hassle-free. You get access to the hospitality area too, although that's not

all it's cracked up to be. We just use it mainly for the toilets which are a lot nicer than the main ones.

R: So how did the fact that you could stay in a more luxurious setting influence your decision to come?

G: I think that was the decisive factor. There's no way Jane would have come and camped normally, so we were considering coming just for the day but then that rules out even having a social pint. We'd looked at the Residence but thought it was a bit pricey between 2. I threw the suggestion out there and luckily Mark was keen so we thought why not. So I mean there were other reasons we wanted to come but if that option hadn't been available to us then we wouldn't be here right now.

R: And what were those other motivations for coming?

G: I can imagine this being my last year at A for good. I've a feeling that due to personal changes there will be another priority in our lives next year. So I think it's about putting to rest a certain chapter of my life...which is a bit sad when you think about it like that, but on to bigger and better things I guess. But apart from that, for me it's still about the music, and it's even better to share it with Jane. This year's pretty good because there are a lot of older bands...bands that I listened to when I was a lot younger. So Pulp, the Manics, Cast, and the Fools; I guess it's extra poignant that I'm saying goodbye to that part of my life and get to do so with the bands that I started it with and that made that part of my life so special. On top of that I guess it lets me escape from the job, which is pretty heavy going at the moment. It's amazing how everything else disappears when you're put in this situation.

R: What situation's that?

G: A field...with a beer...and good music....and 100,000 other people. I still find it quite a surreal experience. It's just not quite like normal day-to-day life...in fact it's nothing like normal day-to-day life.

R: Could you expand on that at all?

G: There just seems to be no convention here. Everyone's up early with a beer in hand and that's perfectly acceptable. And then you have the music...hundreds of bands on over the

weekend, so you can just walk between stages and there would be another big name band on. There's also always a good contingent of dress up going on, so it may be torrential rain but you have people walking around dressed as batman or some other random creation; and it's not as if the rain bothers people...you just get on with it and it gets to a point when you're wet enough that you just decide enough is enough and you start to embrace the rain. I love seeing the people dancing or jumping about in the mud. It's just a break from normal etiquette...it's as if you resort back to being a kid when you're here regardless of how old you actually are.

R: You included?

G: I won't be taking it to any extremes, but it's probably fair to say that any of my clients saw me this weekend they probably wouldn't be my clients for that much longer.

R: So out with A, do you have experience of any other festivals?

G: I don't. I was always tempted, especially when I was down south. But I almost didn't want to ruin the memories of A...I mean all festivals are good, but you can have bad experiences that put you off forever.

R: Such as?

G: Well I imagine if I went with the wrong group of people or went to the wrong type of festival then I would be left with a bad memory of it. I've always had great times at T, so I didn't want to ruin those memories with bad experiences elsewhere. Do you know what I mean?

R: Not entirely?

G: It's like, I don't know, going to the cinema. If you see a bad film, the next time you think about going to the cinema you always remember your most recent trip...and if it was bad you have that memory and if it was good you have a good memory. But even if you have a bad memory it's only a few pounds at the cinema so you go anyway. I imagine if I had had a terrible festival experience down south, when it came to booking my ticket that would play on my mind. Then you couple that with all the other reasons not to go...price, age, other engagements and the decisions made for you.

R: So what is it that makes A 'the one festival' that you're concerned about?

G: It was my first. It's my local festival. I've had so many good experiences here. I met my wife through a friend I met here. Take your pick.

R: So tell me about your best experience of A?

G: I think it has to be the first year. It was a new experience so everything seemed special to me. Just that whole year would stick in my mind, especially when you compare it with T nowadays. Everything's more expensive, there are more idiots here. Like I say it's not just about the music anymore...it's about everything else, but unfortunately A provides very little else. I've never been but when I worked down south I was an hour or so from Glastonbury and a lot of the other guys went. They said it was amazing! They have the best music but they have everything else...you could keep yourself busy all weekend without even hearing a note. That's what T's missing and it was fine when it was about the music, but now there are too many idiots that don't care...there must be somewhere to put them that doesn't annoy everyone else.

R: Who exactly are you referring to when you say 'idiots'?

G: There is a very large contingent at T of kids...in fact not just kids... who are too drunk. They're obnoxious, fighting, throwing bottles around. They don't seem to care about anyone or anything. They're the people who will push kids out the way to get closer to the stage. And for them the weekend isn't about the excitement of seeing a band; it comes from another source and to be honest I don't know what that is. I've always felt safe at T; there are plenty of security and police around, but you still give those people a wide berth just in case. I think it does spoil it for a lot of other people. They're the idiots I mean.

R: So has that ever put you off?

G: More so now that I'm with Jane. But I don't think it would be significant enough to stop me coming. It just acts as an annoyance more than anything and I honestly think gives the festival a bad reputation.

R: So you mentioned certain other factors in your decision? Looking at these...how does the price influence your decision to come?



G: Em...I mean it used to. But back then when I wasn't working it was a lot more reasonable in terms of price. My first year was...don't quote me on this...about £110. Now that was only for 2 days but the bands were top notch. To double in price over 12 years is a bit extreme. But I mean it's done now...no point complaining or even thinking about it...I'll get to do that when I see the bill!

R: So do you mind me asking how much the Residence works out at?

G: Roughly £500 each. So for that you get a Thursday ticket, hospitality, car park pass and your little home. So we were pretty late on the band wagon and a ticket would have cost us around £250 from eBay I reckon. Then add the tent on is another £50 each. Car park is £20. Thursday upgrade £20. So when you add it all up, for the ease of use, I don't think it's such a bad deal we're getting. But we're in a position now that we can afford it. I think if I were like most people here...I mean the same age range I would be a bit peeved paying in excess of £200.

R: And what about the price of food/drink/merchandise?

G: I'm think I'm passed the age when I can get away with buying a T t-shirt! The food is to be expected, although there seem to be a lot more healthy options in the campsite and I hear the arena has a healthy section too, which is really good. It's still expensive but you feel full in a good way...not in a greasy burger and fries kind of way. Drink is again to be expected. I mean you're on nearly £4 a pint and that's a pint of Tennents, but people just accept it and don't bat an eyelid. I've always thought that Tennents must make enough from all the publicity; they could at least ease up on the drink prices.

R: And you mentioned age a few times as a factor. Can you expand on that?

G: I'm too old to come here (laughs). I think A...in fact I think all music festivals have become mainly directed at the youth generation...so from maybe 18 to 21 or 22. That seems to be the main population I've seen so far. I think a decade ago the main audience would have been much closer to their mid to late 20s. It's almost a rite of passage now...you come to T when you're a kid and I think many people stop when they hit their mid-20s. So you find most things, apart from the music strangely enough, directed at that specific age group. Then you have people like us who are much older than the average and I don't think it even tries to cater non-musically to our age range. I'm not sure what they could really do to be honest, but I

know whatever that thing is they're not doing it.

R: So do you feel out of place here?

G: I wouldn't go that far. Credit where credit's due, most of the kids here are really friendly and they seem to be very indiscriminating about the people here. So you could be in your 60s and I don't think they would look twice. It's more from an organisation point of view...the festival has gradually changed and the target has become a lot younger and has to an extent forgotten about other generations. That's why I find it strange that they've put on so many older bands this weekend...I mean bands I was listening to when I was 20 seem to be making a comeback but I honestly don't know if they'll have enough of an audience or enough of a passionate audience to make their set noteworthy. All you need is a little atmosphere, but I can see some of the older bands struggling to get that.

R: And what about the rest of the people at A...tell me what you make of them?

G: Well it's kids isn't it? I would take a guess at an average age around 21. The one thing that I have noticed in the few hours I've been here is the lack of individuality. When I was young...that sounds bad!...but when I was young you tended to follow a band or at least a genre and you dressed like that and mirrored them. Now it just seems to be a generic genre of festival chic. Ten years ago you wouldn't get half the stuff you do now. I mean I felt like a fraud in the yurt, but you see the girls going in to get their hair straightened and styled...what's happening?! Festivals should be about getting muddy and wet and still enjoying yourself. Now it's about being seen and what you're seen in! So yeah, you notice that people are no longer dressing as their favourite bands do or even dressing in old clothes that can be ruined...they're dressing up as if they're on a night out...thank god I don't have to worry about that anymore!

R: So how does that affect the overall atmosphere of the festival?

G: I think it hampers the atmosphere to a certain degree. Like I was saying before, you'll go into the arena at 1 and see against the main stage barrier a group...usually younger girls. Now they'll stand there for 10 hours just to be at the front for the headliner. Now you can't tell me that they enjoy every band that plays on the stage. I could think of nothing worse than trying to play to a crowd and having the front few rows full of mildly interested kids. And it does take a way a little pizzazz from the performance. And that's what I mean by a very generic genre...the younger generation don't seem to follow bands the same way I did when I was

their age. It wasn't about being in the front row for a band, or getting yourself on TV, but it was about seeing that band with others who wanted to see that band...others who cared about the band. But at the same time, it's always nice to see kids getting involved in the older generation of bands...maybe we can get rid of some of this current stuff in favour of the classic bands!

R: Just going back to what you said before, the line-up this year is dotted with the older generation bands...what are your thoughts on a move like that?

G: It's a great move for people like me. I love seeing Cast and Pulp and the Manics. I even appreciate the fact they've got Tom Jones and Blondie. But like I was saying they may all crash and burn. The vast majority of those there will be kids who didn't have these bands first time around so the love I have for them hasn't formed with the kids that will be seeing them. But yeah, I hope they get a good reception.

R: So do you think that's the right route for A or festivals in general?

G: I think it's the new trend to a certain extent. These are the bands that are reforming and doing comeback tours and really are the bands in demand at the moment. I was reading an article on the BBC about festivals dying out mainly because they are becoming too similar. Basically the amount of headline-worthy artists has dropped in the last few years...well not dropped, but there are no new bands breaking through. So all you get are the same bands doing the same festivals year on year. Every year Muse will be headlining a selection of festivals, then the next year it will be rotation 2, then 3, then they're back to the first rotation. So essentially you'll get the same headliners at the same festival every 4 or 5 years. I guess the promoters are trying to look outside the box and they're finding these older bands and reintroducing them in to the mainstream.

R: So how would you go about improving A?

G: I think there are several changes that need to happen. I mean if thingy Eavis is worried about Glastonbury becoming stagnant, then they must be doubly worried about T. I think musically it works well; it does try to get the new bands and has its breakthrough stage, so come 5 years down the line I reckon it will have a new range of headline bands. It just lacks appeal to me in anything non-musical. There's the cinema area but that is hardly an attraction. I don't know if this year they'll have anything new, but from the map it looks to be the same

Disco bus/disco tent at night. But to be fair I've not been in the arena yet, so I may still be surprised...I hope I'll be surprised. If not it'll just be back to the Yurt extra early.

***Thank you and debrief given. Email address provided and agreement to take part in follow up interview.***

## **Appendix B: Festival Consent Letter**

G43, Mary Burton Building,  
Heriot-Watt University,  
Riccarton,  
Edinburgh, EH14 4AS.  
Tel: 0131 451 3846  
Email: ard7@hw.ac.uk

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a doctoral research candidate at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, currently writing my thesis based on the consumer's experience of music festival events. As such I plan to carry out data collection during the coming months. In order to do this I intend to talk to a small number of volunteer participants in attendance at your event regarding their time at the festival, with a specific research focus on identifying their expectations and experiences.

All relevant parties will be treated anonymously and protected under the Data Protection Act 1998. The research will comply fully with the Heriot-Watt University Ethics Regulations. Also, please be aware I am in no way affiliated with any commercial organisation and I intend to use any information strictly in an academic sense.

If you would like any more information regarding my study, or have objections to this, please let me know in advance of your festival dates.

Kind regards,

Andrew Davis

## **Appendix C: Informed Consent Form**

### **INFORMED CONSENT**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

This form explains your rights as an interviewee. If you have any queries about the project I can be contacted at the address overleaf.

#### **Your rights as an interviewee:**

- 1) Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time.
- 2) You are free to refuse to answer any questions
- 3) Information obtained about you during the interview will be kept anonymous
- 4) Excerpts from the interview may be made part of the final report, but your name will not be included in the report
- 5) I will not pass your name or contact details on to any third party and will keep your data safe from others not directly connected with the project.

#### **I agree to:**

- 1) the use of audio recording during the interview
- 2) Heriot-Watt University storing a printed and electronic record of my personal details in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**I have read and understand my rights and consent to participate in the project.**

**Signature:**

**Name:**

**Date:**

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