Exploring the On-site Behavior of Attendees at Community Festivals

A Social Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved May 2013 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2013
ABSTRACT

Empirical and theoretical gaps exist on the subject matter of attendee experiential behavior at community festivals as this action occurs in real time. To acquire knowledge and begin to build theory, attendee behavior was investigated through an interpretive lens to give rise to a socially constructed understanding of this phenomenon in contrast to typical positivist inquiry designs found in the field of event studies used to test theory and determine universal explanations. This ontology was deemed appropriate as human experience at community festivals is multifaceted, relative to social interactions, highly variable with complex meanings, and has a wide variety of consequential implications; all views representative of social constructivism. A grounded theory approach was used in conjunction with a participant observation method to collect data on attendee behavior during fieldwork undertaken at community festivals. Prior to fieldwork, literature was not reviewed nor specific theory preselected to serve as a basis for research, with the researcher's only intent to record attendee's on-site actions with an open mind. Fieldwork notes were systematically expanded into descriptive narratives that were broken down into initial codes to establish robust analytic directions, which were synthesized into categories and subcategories through focused coding. Relationships between categories and subcategories were reassembled with axial coding bringing into view a strong emergent theme on social capital bonding and bridging at community festivals and a second theme that considers the aspirations of event management to program festive experiences. To strengthen the second theme event manager interviews and content analysis of event association newsletters were conducted as theoretical sampling to move data towards saturation. From emergent themes it was theorized, while social capital
bonding is profusely exhibited at community festivals, social capital bridging is minimally displayed unless augmented with programmed festivity to increase physical, emotional, and social engagement of attendees. Literature reviewed in relation to this theory revealed that spirituality, dance, music, the arts, and wild abandonment were important elements of festivity. An implication arising from this study indicates that if community festivals consciously enhance programmed festivity then correspondingly increased social capital impacts within community development might also be achieved.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Betty Ann (Bloxom) Biaett with memories of our parents Vernon Sr., Diana, Robert, and Winn and love for our children and grandchildren Aaron, Bethany, David, George, Olivia, and Samuel.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must acknowledge several people who have helped to bring this study and my pursuit of my doctoral studies to fruition. It goes without saying that every member of my graduate committee has influenced this work with their expertise, suggestions, and encouragement and for this I am grateful. Rhonda Phillip, Wendy Hultsman, Megha Budruk, and Sarah De Le Garza have been the best committee I could have wished for as a graduate student.

In much the same light, I gained invaluable insight from every one of my graduate course professors that influenced my research process. This included Kathy Andereck who first introduced me to the concept of qualitative research methods, but more importantly never doubted that I would succeed even while assigning the maximum number of classes to teach each semester. I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge some fellow graduate students for their always forthcoming assistance, understanding, and, well, just being there for me when I needed them, including Cody, Darlye, Jessica, Dan, Beth, and Mikulas from Arizona State as well as Ivana from Bournemouth University, UK. Finally, from my life before graduate school as a festival and event professional, I must recognize Irene Stillwell and Paula Illardo who allowed me to blossom in my role as a festival manager, International Festivals and Events Association CEOs Bruce Skinner and Steve Schmader who opened my eyes to the possibility that festivals could be world changing, and hundreds of festival and event people in Arizona that I’m positive believed I was just a little bit crazy undertaking this project, but were always forthcoming with their support.
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A CONFESSIONAL TALE

People at a Festival: Experiences?

Uncovering the truth, protecting the truth

People are warm, yet cold

Bridging social capital?

I wonder if it is going on, if anybody cares, if it is and I can’t see

Sponsors, community organizers, event producers

They want to know, don’t they?

All I know is that I’m not sure

Communitas?

One day we will know more

This poem was written as a reflection on a study that explored the experience of visitors at festivals as part of an assignment for a qualitative research class that I took in the fall of 2009 during the second year of my doctoral studies. I decided to start this dissertation with it because it represents a turning point in my life, the time from which my thoughts about this dissertation truly began to emerge.

From 1988 to 2008 I had been actively engaged in both producing and teaching about festivals and events and for twenty years prior to that I worked in a variety of leisure service positions that all included the production of any number of smaller special events. When my doctoral work began I made myself a promise that I would not go down a road of simply re-learning what I already knew and thus had no intention of doing anything with festivals or special events as I considered myself an expert in this field, and, well, knew it all. Right up until the end of my first year of studies I stayed the
course, but never found a subject that got me excited. I’m not really sure how it happened, probably just opening up myself intellectually and emotionally to an academic world I had only previously known from an outsider’s perspective, but the wall I had built up to hold festivals and events out began to crumble.

With the start of my second year of studies the wall I had built completely fell around me as the opportunity to look at festivals and events from new and different perspectives presented itself through qualitative research. At first, as someone who had learned the ‘scientific method’ of quantitative research in grade school and had used it exclusively since, it was not easy for me to grasp the concepts of qualitative research, grounded theory, and inductive methods. I found myself lacking confidence, as beginners usually do, in my ability to conduct this type of research. I remember spending a whole weekend at a festival trying to conduct short man-on-the-street style interviews, never getting past asking questions that were answered with simple yes-no responses or other short answers that provided minimal, really minimal, contextual insight into what was happening. During the semester my professor strongly encouraged me to find and read a copy of The Discovery of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and with that came a true “ah-ha” moment and then a decent effort of going into the field, a priori knowledge and all, and letting my mind be open to the ideas of naturalistic inquiry. From that fieldwork emerged not only my poem, but also a presentation for a graduate symposium that fall, and in the spring of 2010 a presentation at an international conference on mobilities in Victoria, Canada. Then, the study was placed on a middle burner for 18 months as I completed my course work, which included an additional qualitative research course and a course on the sense of place that involved an abundance
of qualitative research thought. There were also my written and oral comprehensive exams, teaching, writing and having published my first single author journal article, and a parade attendance research project in conjunction with the Phoenix Parks & Recreation Department. I say middle burner, because even with everything going on, the study was always in play. I wrote an entry on the subject of community festivals for a new on-line encyclopedia of community development, thinking the entire time this was good practice for and would somehow in part be included in the study. When time permitted I randomly searched data bases and academic journals to get a deeper feel for what research had been done about behavior at festivals as well as discussed aspects of qualitative research with my doctoral cohort and professors. I must admit, however, that for about 12 months I occasionally had doubts and thought about maybe going another direction, but by the summer of 2011 I had completely embraced and settled into the idea that I was going to be researching the behavior of attendees at community festivals. And then there was a wonderful sign of confirmation that I might be headed down the right path. In the fall of 2011 I joined the Travel Industry Management Trinet list serve and the next day received an email from a doctoral student at Bournemouth University in the U.K. who had seen my listed research interests and was pursuing a similar avenue of enquirer. We shared research ideas and resources, including a lead she gave me on a recent dissertation and follow up journal article that seemed to confirm my emerging substantive grounded theory that “Social capital bridging between disparate visitor groups does not always occur at festivals.” The author in an independent study had examined bridging and bonding social capital at music festivals using critical discourse
analysis and had similar results (Wilks, 2011). I tracked down the author, shared my paper with her, and we also began networking. My course of action was set.

And then there was another dip in the road. In early January, 2012, over two years since completing my class project, over 18 months since presenting at the Canadian conference, 6 months after making my final topic decision, and after networking with researchers from the U.K., I discovered myself once again having a twinge of self doubt of how I could in actuality move this preliminary work forward into a full scale dissertation. It’s not that I didn’t have some knowledge and a pretty good feel about contextual experiences, qualitative research, and grounded theory. I was just stressing with how to put all the pieces together in a creative yet also acceptable manner for my intended audience. So, in the middle of struggling to complete my dissertation proposal and schedule a meeting of my committee, by chance, or was it fate, I found myself on the Arizona State Tempe campus after a meeting for a student group I advise and decided to randomly stop in and see if my first qualitative research course professor, who is on my committee, was in her office so I could check with her on available dates. She was, and after talking about when it was possible for her to meet, I let my guard down and blurted out that I was not feeling very confident and, of course, she suggests I read another book. This time a masters degree thesis (Broadfoot, 1995) by one of her former students who employed grounded theory. With the book buried in storage and requiring special effort to retrieve, the whole time I’m thinking that this better be good. Finally the book was available and within thirty minutes of opening the cover I found myself at peace. A plan of how to proceed became apparent to me and I instantly realized there was no reason for
continued fear or doubt. I could do this … and I could do it well. It is time to stop procrastinating and head into the field to discover what is happening.

From the masters degree thesis I was encouraged to read I uncovered a qualitative method, the ‘confessional tale’ (Van Maanen, 1988). This technique has allowed me to deeply reflect upon what has gone on within me and what experiences I’ve had before the actual research process and fieldwork for this dissertation is to begin. It is what you have just read. At the conclusion of the dissertation a second confessional tale is planned that will allow this researcher to reflect on how I may have grown throughout the research process.
A PROLOGUE TO EXPLORATION

The manner in which Americans have come to interact with one another as members of their community, to view their environment, and to engage in leisure has by and large taken a more impersonal and withdrawn direction over the past 60 years. Social capital has noticeably declined as participation in both formal and informal groups and clubs has diminished and meetings with friends have occurred less frequently (Putnam, 2000). It has been theorized that children now suffer from nature deficit-disorder (Louv, 2008) and a lack of self-confidence (Skenazy, 2009) because parents have been afraid to let them play outdoors, and in public settings non-parent adults are afraid to look out for other people’s children (Furedi, 2008). Today the social exchange of ideas, the building of personal relationships, and the use of leisure time has moved toward a function of cyber-space creating a social connection paradox (Anchor, 2010). However, during this six decade period of a retreating interactive lifestyle, Americans have contrastingly participated more and more in a pastime that typically features heightened levels of social convergence, exposure to temporary outdoor places, and actual face-to-face togetherness and interaction … the community festival.

To set in motion a more informed comprehension about this phenomenon the prologue continues with a brief auto-ethnography sketch by the researcher to recount his tacit knowledge gained from a career of producing festivals and events. It then moves on to a succinct discussion of the antecedents of both community festival and event studies followed by a gaze upon some concepts of experience to provide an account of the researcher’s own current stage of theoretical sensitivity prior to undertaking grounded theory research to add knowledge and theory about this phenomenon.
AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC AVOWAL OF TACIT KNOWLEDGE

My earliest memory of event production is that of helping to decorate the high school gym for a homecoming dance, which of course was centered on getting to know the cheerleaders and pom pom girls with no thoughts at all how my efforts might affect the behavior of my fellow students. After working in leisure services and producing festivals and events at the organizational, facility, community, and tourism based levels for nearly forty years it appears that this became an ever present pattern. Not wanting to meet girls so much, but always putting my emphasis on the operational, financial, and marketing production elements of events.

To organize events I created an outline of program planning that consisted of collaborating and communicating with event stakeholders, creating a solid business plan and financial controls, managing staff and volunteers, the logistics of facilities and equipment, and programming activities. The events I produced meet the established goals. They made, or at least did not lose money; they created attention that increased sales and informed people of redevelopment efforts; they kept me employed by satisfying employers, politicians, and other stakeholders; and they were safe and without problems or major incident. As I became more experienced the events I produced increased in size, scope, and numbers. I was asked by professional organizations and colleges to talk and write about, and later to teach about my methods of how I was able to achieve success. I had become an expert in analytical ideas to improve festivals, on how to estimate attendance, event marketing, ways to control and sell food and beverages, management of volunteers, using events to drive downtown redevelopment, and techniques to improve creativity.
At this point in my life I know a lot about festival and events. A million details about operations, how to motivate people to participate and how to measure their levels of satisfaction when they leave, but really not much about what makes their time at community festivals out of ordinary and their behavior contrastingly different from what has been documented about their everyday lives over the past fifty years. I do sense that this type of knowledge could prove valuable to the sustainability of community festivals in the future.

ANTECEDENTS: COMMUNITY FESTIVALS

Community festivals have existed since roving clans congregated into agrarian cultural hearths at the dawn of civilization. These early organic events, which were communal, intervalliac, and spontaneous in nature, emerged in Western, Eastern, and New World societies for reasons of ritual and sacred celebration and became instrumental in creating first a transitory sense of camaraderie, and later, communitas among the populace (Turner, 1982).

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century casual free time became extremely temporal, life was reordered into defined time and space, and structure replaced anti-structure. Community festivals were subjected to new controls and authority as part of the movement to maintain discipline levels required for the new masses of production workers (Malcolmson, 1973) as well as to provide these workers with an outlet for their stress and anxiety (Cohen & Taylor, 1976). They became regulated and defined by boundaries of both time and space (Coalter, 1990) as they transitioned from organic festivity to ever increasing organized and contrived celebration. For Americans, from the earliest days of colonization in the 1600s until the decade
following World War II, community festivals followed this pattern. Events were at first a sacred part of the social fabric that brought individuals and groups together, strengthened their sense of oneness from neighborhoods to nation, and enabled them to closely bond with friends and family as they also bridged new relationships. And then, as people left their rural roots for urban life their community festivals became more irreverent and eventually more commercial (Foley et. al., 2012).

Beginning in the 1950s American’s began to place a newfound emphasis on public relations, commercialism, and technology. For the community festival, these changes did not transpire without controversy as immediately a debate arose that continues until today over the authenticity of what were labeled as pseudo-events that were no longer deemed celebratory but instead being literally manufactured for purposes of generating publicity and media coverage (Boorstin, 1961). Authentic or not, an expanding multitude of community festivals abruptly left their historically sacred and ritualistic roots behind as secular and profane business concepts of professional management, revenue generation, sponsorship, and marketing, all enhanced by new forms of communication and technology, were embraced by event managers. Christmas celebration became the nation’s greatest shopping holiday and the seasonal harvest festival was replaced with the country’s second most commercial holiday, Halloween. Community festivals quickly grew to be powerful engines of community, economic, and tourism development. Including festivals as a strategy for community re-development in rural America dates to the 1970s (Green et. al., 1990; McGuire et. al., 1994; Wilson et. al., 2001). By the late 1980s community festivals had emerged as giants of the tourism industry (Getz & Frisby, 1988) and the number of American events reached 20,000-plus
with an estimated 1,000 being added annually (Janiskee, 1994). By the turn of the century community festivals had become recognized as one of tourism’s fastest growing attractions (Crompton & McKay, 1997; McDonnell et. al., 1999). Community festivals became valued by elected officials, local businessmen, and other community leaders most often for reasons of community and economic development including: 1) the dollars they generated (Jackson et. al., 2005; Long & Perdue, 1990; O’Sullivan & Jackson, 2002); 2) as tools for increasing the social capacity of event planners and volunteers within a community (Acordia & Whitford, 2006; Dunstan, 1994; Fredline et. al., 2003; Remington, 2003; Rollins & Delamere, 2007; Small et. al., 2005); and 3) as useful methods to create brands or identities (De Bres & Davis, 2001; Derrett, 2003; Jamieson, 2004).

Through history, community festivals have evolved from the organic, to the organized, into commercial organisms. With the emergence of a highly commoditized special events industry the need arose for a better definitional framework of what should be considered a special event. From the perspective of event studies Getz (1989) defined the product of special events as five linked perspectives, one of which was visitor experiences, he acknowledged that because of the disparate nature of special events that a universal definition was probably not possible. The same conclusion was drawn by Hall (1989) in an analysis of hallmark tourist events who believed that definitional problems were created because of the numerous research directions that existed in the field. These deliberations were followed by Jago and Shaw (1998) with a project to better understand the conceptual and definitional framework of special events. They concluded their work by prioritizing a hierarchy of key core and qualifying attributes to illustrate the
relationships between various categories of special events, not resulting in a specific
definition, but only an enhanced view of the big picture of what are special events. The
topic of definition was renewed by Getz (2008) as he reviewed the evolution and research
of both professional practice and academic study in event tourism. From the event
perspective he arrived at a definition for event management and later from the tourism
perspective event tourism was explained in terms of both demand and supply. In this
discussion of the event perspective we are informed that

Planned events are spatial–temporal phenomenon, and each is unique because of
interactions among the setting, people, and management systems—including
design elements and the program. Much of the appeal of events is that they are
never the same, and you have to be there to enjoy the unique experience fully.
(Getz, 2008, p. 404)

This leaves us today without an explicit definition for community festival, having instead
only a broad-spectrum of ideas on the subject to consider. Although a definition of
community festival is esoteric, the challenge to delineate exact meaning has lead to the
realization that every community festival is actually a distinctive experience unto itself.

For the purposes of this study the concept of community festival shall remain
undefined, but delimited to special events that: 1) Are open to the public, either free or by
admission, gated or open access, and include either only local residents or local residents
and tourists; 2) Have a primary theme of celebration or festivity and are not with a
primary purpose of sports competition, sales, business or trade, hospitality, marketing,
education, science, politics, recreation, meeting or convention, religion, performing or
visual arts, or marginal events such as riots or flash mobs; 3) Are temporary, infrequent,
As America progressed from the 1950s into the 21st century, especially in the areas of communication and technology, community festivals paralleled this remarkable growth, nevertheless with a significant variance. While social capital decreased and citizens in their everyday life retreated from direct social engagement with each other and their outdoor environments they enthusiastically embraced the temporary social relationships and open spaces of their community festivals. From this conundrum many questions arise, including, “Are there explanations of this phenomenon that might be of value to those who produce and promote events as well as those who attend?” and “Are there implications of this occurrence that might also be transferable to a deeper knowledge of community sustainability?”

ANTECEDENTS: EVENT STUDIES

Event studies represent a young academic field (Formica, 1998) and from the 1970’s through the early 2000’s, research about festivals and events has been primarily of a post-positivistic nature. Researchers have principally employed a quantitative worldview to provide deductive, explicit explanations of the relationships between discreet measurable variables and outcomes. The development of generic scales to measure social impacts (Fredline et. al., 2003), predicting the validity of different approaches to evaluate quality (Crompton & Love, 1995), and an examination of rural economic impacts assessing the spatial distribution of expenditures (Long & Perdue,
1990) are often cited examples of this type of event research. This approach has purported a high degree of generalized objectivity, but from an outsider’s perspective.

Searle (2000) contends that scholars in a wide range of academic fields have undertaken leisure research to supplement theory development in their own disciplines while at the same time a paucity of theory development has occurred in leisure studies; this can be extended to include event studies (Getz, 2008). A critique of tourism curriculum proposals (Tribe, 2001), which includes event tourism, identified three epistemologies for research in the field; the scientific positivist, the critical and interpretive constructivist. Briefly, the scientific positivist design, which has been the most dominate event studies approach, is most often quantitative in nature, deductive, particularistic, and insists on a controlled system approach with no outside influences. Tribe (2001) contends that scientific-positivist approaches have only limited application in the field because of their lack of attention to meanings and values. Interpretive constructivist and critical designs are most often qualitative in nature, inductive, holistic, and predicated on an open system where both the observational context and the researcher are part of the study. Constructivism is a belief that human phenomena are socially constructed rather than objectively real.

Critical epistemology is concerned with inequalities and the disempowered as an ideological imperative. Although examples of this type of festival research are limited, Gamson (1996) used the approach of queer theory to investigate the shaping of collective identity at gay and lesbian film festivals. Wearing et. al. (2005) called for a decommmodified research paradigm in event studies and suggested that researchers could
be informed by the alternative theoretical perspectives of feminism, egocentrism, and post structuralism.

There has been minimal research seeking to embody the complex experiences of festival stakeholders from a holistic, insider, on-the-ground viewpoint (Kyle & Chick, 2007). From a theoretical lens of symbolic interaction, a few examples of research that explores the human phenomena at community festivals has included a gaze into who were the real loggers at a wood chopping event (Kruckemeyer, 2002) and how festival involvement changed the ethnic identities of Louisiana Cajuns (Esman, 1982). Also, a study on the social construction of a sense of place at an agriculture fair (Kyle & Chick, 2007) provided a case in point that constructivist event research can affix contextual dimension and value to the knowledge of events.

The theory of knowledge-constitutive interests (Habermas, 1978) contends that there is no interest free knowledge and that knowledge derived from positivistic approaches serves the interests of finding only practical solutions. The story of community festivals’ atypical capacity for social interaction in modern American society has more chapters to be written than only those of practical solutions. There has been wide acknowledgement that research into festivals and their related social behaviors by recreation, tourism, and leisure professionals has been sporadic with continued research needed (Getz, 2008; Gursoy et. al., 2002); nevertheless, it is not a requirement that this research be only limited to a positivistic paradigm (Ryan, 2005, 2012).

**WHAT IS EXPERIENCE?**

The word experience is derived from the Latin verb experientia that consists of two parts, ex meaning out and periri meaning to try, combined into the action “to try
out.” From the dictionary we know that the word experience is used as both a verb and a noun. As a verb the meaning of experience is the action of what is happening to someone, what they are living through, or what they are feeling. This action can imply the pleasant or unpleasant, the short or lengthy, and the important or trivial. As a noun the word experience relates to individuals with three basic meanings: 1) What is in the process of happening (or has happened) to someone – what this person is visually seeing, physically doing, emotionally feeling – what they are living through; 2) The acts, the states of mind, the occurrences that make up the life of a person – for example, the exploits or accomplishments, the situations or circumstances, the incidents or episodes, or the attachment one has made with a place; 3) The overall knowledge (both erudition and proficiency) that a person gains by living through something by means of observation, participation, or practice. Experience is thus a term of knowledge, occurrence, and emotion. In preparation for fieldwork on the behavior of attendees at community festivals, however, a richer conceptual definition that includes ideas on what is authentic experience, meaningful leisure experience, and place experience seems appropriate.

**Authentic Experience.** Is there value in actually being at a community festival? People can watch entertainment on electronic media, shop for arts and crafts through catalogs and on-line, order a variety of food delivered to their doorstep, and engage in a variety of other activities without leaving their home. They could virtually participate in a community festival in their living room, but, is there something about on-site behavior and face-to-face social interaction that creates a more authentic experience? Along similar lines, Plunkett (2011), in a discussion of virtual tourism, asks if the days of taking
a vacation to see a world wonder are at an end, to which Tavinor (2011, p. 184) replies, “no … the reality of experience still matters.”

Does the reality of authentic experience involve a sense of community? A discussion of what is an authentic event experience begins with the classical thoughts of ethnographer Van Gennep (1960 [1909]). As he dialogues about the human experience and its numerous rites of passage, events that range from religious rituals of marriage and funerals to profane occurrences such as seasonal festivals or the celebration of New Year’s Day, he professes, “All these rites should, it seems to me, be grouped together” (van Gennep 1960 [1909], p. 4). Theorizing about a system to classify these rites he constructs three phases of participation in rites; 1) the pre-liminal, 2) the liminal, and 3) the post-liminal. The first phase can be depicted as when one ventures away from their ordinary routine of their normal life, the second phase occurs with participation in this different sphere of being, and the third phase occurs with one’s return to previous normalcy, but accompanied with knowledge of encounter during phase two. The word authentic appears only a single time in van Gennep’s text, and that only as an adjective without discussion, suggesting that in 1909 all liminal experiences were most likely considered to be authentic experiences. Today, general explanations of special events (deLisle, 2009; Getz, 2007; Goldblatt & Nelson, 2001) include the notions of temporary unique occurrences outside the usual or ordinary scope of activity. One of the fundamentals of event management is to program for the anticipation leading up to an event, participation during the event, and reflection that follows an event, all indicating strong foundational roots to van Gennep’s three phases of activity. Another thought that emerges from van Gennep’s text with potential connotation for the 21st century is that as
less face-to-face socialization and interaction with the natural environment has become increasingly more normal and routine in America it might be this precise sort of engagement that has become the liminal, the different, and the abnormal activity that attendees seek out at community festivals.

Sixty years after van Gennep’s concepts were introduced they were revisited and expanded upon by Turner (1969, 1982) with what is regularly referred to as his theory of anti-structure. He believed that leisure was part of one’s non-routine everyday life, a state of disconnect from the normal. Turner essentially combined and renamed van Gennep’s three phases of participation in rites, identifying the entire transition process from the ordinary into the unordinary as liminality. Turner asserts that during periods of liminality a person develops a sense of autonomy and independence, becoming indifferent to their regular awareness of gender, social and economical standing, and even the level of one’s usual standard of modesty. Although he considered the transforming influence of all liminality to produce an atmosphere of pleasure, Turner (1974) created the more exacting term, liminoid, to describe more secular and profane participant experiences of individuals involved in carnivals and festivals; this was in contrast to van Gennep who had included all religious and secular rituals and rites within the same classification. Turner’s differentiation of liminoid events was later extended with a full classification of profane events by Falassi (1987) which included his four cardinal points of festival behavior; 1) reversal, 2) intensification, 3) trespassing, and 4) abstinence. In all forms of liminality, however, Turner describes people as being friendlier to each other, more open, and with a feeling of being part of a larger group, a term he coined as communitas. According to Getz (2007), communitas at temporary events is a fleeting
and short lived experience, but as pointed out by Deegan (1989, p. 87) when people come together with strangers to participate in festivity they “help us tolerate and give meaning to life.”

As Americans have retreated into less social and more secluded indoor lives, the possibility emerges that they could be searching for the communitas they are lacking in their normal and routine lives in Turner’s liminality of community festival. There are several exemplars of modern research that suggests a link between events and communitas, but there are also critics that do not necessarily agree. Fairley & Gammon (2006) and Satterfield & Godfrey (2011) suggest that a strong sense of community exists at sporting events, with fans often expressing desire to relive the spirit of community they find there. Studies on blues festival tourism in Mississippi (King, 2010) and the relationships of visitors attending food events and festivals in South Korea (Kim et. al., 2010) have produced similar findings. Contrary to these examples Jankowiak and Todd White (1999) reported a lack of communitas when friends and family socialized only within their own group at Mardi Gras as opposed to engaging strangers in acts of fellowship. It is also reported (Wilks, 2011) that attendees at music festivals in the U.K. bond within their groups, but do not display bridging social capital and reach out to embrace those around them they do not already know. In these last two examples, it could be speculated that even though attendees at events may not reach out externally to unfamiliar individuals or other small parties of outsiders, they might welcome and develop an internal sense of communitas as a diminutive member of the entire assembly. While Schechner (2006) and Ellis (2011) speculate that audiences at theatre festivals attempt to conquer individual and social fragmentation through a sharing of the arts, a
study of the nouveau art Burning Man festival (Gilmore, 2010) suggests literally the complete opposite. The latter appears to represent a case of extreme liminality where event attendees have traveled so far from the norm of everyday life that they have lost an awareness of other living beings or physical objects in their immediate presence. Turner’s (1982) original concept included the idea that the successful event experience was related to both the relationship an individual had with an event and the social structure that imparted context to an event. Jankowiak and Todd White (1999) have argued that the ability to evaluate events in terms of communitas has been lost because it is too often applied with a broad brush to events in general and not to more specific contextual situations of single events. The case has been made by O’Dell & Billing (2005) that a state of liminality is distinctive for every individual, based foremost on the foundation of one’s personal life experiences; if this is the case, then could not every liminal experience be an authentic personal experience?

As mentioned above in the antecedents of community festivals, Boorstin (1961) expressed concern with a proliferation of unauthentic events circa 1950. His trepidation that authenticity was being lost, traced back to Veblen’s (1934) apprehensions of conspicuous leisure, expresses uneasiness that contrived attractions offer only indirect and artificial experience. Boorstin was critical of events that were being catered specifically to meet the expectations of attendees primarily for purposes of marketing and sales and were not authentic, designating them as pseudo-events. As he deliberated further on tourist experiences that included events, he reflected that pseudo-events do not necessarily distract from the traveler who works to seek out their own authentic experience, only from the passive tourist who now expects things to happen. What is
unknown is if Boorstin believed pseudo-events contrived only to meet known expectations might have considered them an everyday occurrences, placing them in the realm of normal and ordinary experience, the common place, or the non-liminal.

MacCannell (1973), who introduced the study of authentic tourist experience to sociology, believed Boorstin’s premise to be an overly intellectual approach that did not help to analyze the rapid expansion and development of events. He preferred to think of events as having various stages, a continuum of ever increasing authentic experiences where a person moves from events of lesser authenticity into events of greater authenticity, based on personal need to move past their own level of normal and ordinary. Cohen (1979) takes this a step further believing that there are essentially two sides to the stage for participants; one for those who seek authentic experience and one for those who are satisfied with just pleasure, which of course ties back directly to Turner’s distinction between liminal and liminoid experience. There are numerous additional sociological studies on authentic tourist experience (Brown, 1996; Harkin, 1995; Hughes, 1995; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Redfoot, 1984; Salamone, 1997) that all bring to light the limitations and ambiguity of authentic experience. These studies on authentic tourist experience are encapsulated by Wang (1999) as he discusses research approaches of objectivism, constructivism, and post-modernism that have been used to expose the limits of object-related authenticity. He concludes that existential authenticity, which he divides into intra-personal and inter-personal dimensions, best explains how an event attendee may discover their inner-self while participating in experiences that they determine for themselves to be authentic. The notion that existential authenticity is
fundamental to comprehending the experiences of repeat attendees as festivals was indicated in follow-up research by Kim & Jamal (2007).

With their text on experience marketing O’Sullivan & Spangler (1998) explain by and large what is authentic and what is not as they write on the subject of understanding the dimensions of experience. They suggest that man-made attractions such as a log ride found at an amusement park presents a reduced sense of adventure than natural settings like white water rafting because participants feel safer with a less perceived level of real danger. Along these same lines they believe experience that is more customized for the individual and less produced for the masses, that is more unique and less common place or that is more real or historic verses man-made or replicated, all offer the opportunity to raise the authenticity level of an experience as a marketing strategy. This suggests that every experience is authentic, just that some are more authentic than others.

Additional thoughts to facilitate an understanding of authentic experience were also uncovered in the field of cultural heritage with an emphasis on event tourism. A study on the Applebutter Festival in Grand Rapids, Ohio (Xie, 2003) reported that when surveyed, visitors expressed a strong interest in cultural heritage; they did not, however, rank authentic experience as a high priority as they overwhelmingly financially supported this unauthentic community festival. Tourists and event organizers at the Flora MacDonald Scottish Highland Games in North Carolina, despite the fact that they were all activities were staged, assessed a variety of events as ranking high in authenticity (Chhabra et. al., 2003). Timothy (2011) devotes an entire chapter to the topic of elusive authenticity in his text on cultural and heritage tourism. Recognizing that varying ideas on the subject of authenticity exist, from it being associated with tangible objects and
place, to being linked to intangible visitor experiences, to it not mattering at all, he concludes that what people want, if authentic or not, is a pleasurable occurrence outside everyday settings, a “sense of otherness that people do desire” (Timothy, 2011, p.103).

As fieldwork on the behavior of attendees at community festivals begins, as data is collected, analyzed, and reflected upon, it will be important to keep this idea of authentic experience in mind.

Meaningful Leisure Experience. What could give meaning to the leisure experience of attending a community festival? As a way to begin this dialogue a classic mind game by Nozick (1974) presents an intriguing and still frequently debated question on the subject of actual, verses virtual experience, that also includes an underlying message of how personal action and commitment might affect meaningful experience as well. He presents the scenario asking

Suppose there was an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, pre-programming your life’s desires? What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside?” If you are worried about missing out on desirable experiences, we can suppose that business enterprises have researched thoroughly the lives of many others. You can pick and choose from their large library or smorgasbord of such experiences for, say, the next two years. After two years have passed, you will have ten minutes or ten hours out of the tank, to select the
experiences of your next two years. Of course, while in the tank, you won’t know that you’re there; you’ll think it’s all actually happening . . . Would you plug in? (Nozick, 1974, p.43)

When answering this question the vast majority of people respond in the negative, rejecting the basic premise of mental state theories that insist a person is improved or diminished only by events that have impact on their psychological life; that one is believed to be having a meaningful experience if they merely perceive themselves mentally to be subjectively happy (Kawall, 1999). The accepted reasoning behind the rejection of this machine experience centers upon the argument that people are unwilling to temporarily abandon their current lives and commitments. Nozick contends that people will not chose his experience machine because people value more in life than their experiences and mental states. But a question for this study surfaces of why would people choose to attend a temporary community festival (in a broad sense, an experience machine) and leave behind ordinary everyday life and commitment? Could it be people do not just want the experience of being at a community festival, but rather seek a meaningful experience by attending a community festival; “something more than, or other than, getting the right sequence of mental states” (Kymlicka, 1990, p.14).

In the field of leisure studies there is no universal definition of leisure, only generalities that provide a basis for understanding the phenomenon. With the researcher having adequate a priori knowledge of these concepts, an extensive examination of the subject was purposely not undertaken. Prior to going into the field, however, it was decided a brief review of Neulinger’s (1981) leisure paradigm and Nash’s (1953) ideas
on man’s use of leisure time would be appropriate as a way to keep in mind some of the classic thoughts on leisure experience.

Neulinger employed two variables important to leisure experience, freedom of choice and intrinsic reward, using them to create six states of mind to distinguish leisure time from non-leisure time. What emerges from his model of leisure paradigm is a realization that during fieldwork on attendee behavior at community festivals there will be participants who have intrinsically and/or extrinsically been motivated to take part. This may or may not be something that is possible to observe, but if it can be, it might be observed to affect one’s behavior.

The man’s use of leisure time pyramid (Nash, 1953, p.93) has been used for three generations to instruct leisure professionals about a perceived system of value that can be applied to the leisure experience. At the base of the pyramid, below what Nash refers to as the zero line, are in descending order, first excesses, consisting of acts of detriment to oneself, and second, antisocial acts, that include delinquency and crime. Although not desirable, these activities could occur at community festivals. The first level above the zero line is an area portrayed as passive participation. This section includes, in order of ascending value, the facets of killing time, escape, amusement, and entertainment, and are referred to disdainfully as spectatoritis (Nash 1953, p. 93). They are described as having only minimal positive values such as letting a person forget his worries or fatigue while getting away from reality. The three remaining positive value levels of the pyramid are considered as areas of pure participation. The lower of these is emotional participation. It is here that people, who are still thought of as spectators, would be initially touched by meaningful experience as they are moved emotionally in appreciation.
of their surroundings. Nash (1953, p. 95) informs us that, “A rich background of experience is necessary to be an emotional participant.” The third of the positive value levels, and next to the highest, is active participation. At this level a person continues to participate emotionally as well as begins to interact physically and socially with other beings in a shared environment; these participants become very different than the onlookers of the lower levels. At the top of the pyramid, with the utmost level of leisure experience value, is found the creative participant. Again, people are both emotional and active as in lower levels, but it is at this point people engage in intellectual and collaborative participation as they become the creators of their own and other’s leisure experiences. When man reaches this zenith he is alert, active, receptive, and literally changed into a new person (Nash, 1952, p. 96).

Positive psychology has added to the discussion of what is meaningful leisure experience. There is wide awareness of Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975, 1990) theory of flow. Although popularly associated with being ‘in the zone’ during sports and physical fitness activities, because the theory of flow focuses on both loss of self-consciousness and transcendence from the norm it is important to understand when exploring behavior at community festivals contextually. If attendees’ behavior at community festivals were to demonstrate the four attributes associated within the Csikszentmihalyi theory of flow - a loss of self-consciousness, a merging of action and awareness, a sense of self control, and an altered sense of time - then they would be considered as having an out of the normal and ordinary liminal experience.

Trying to categorize what are meaningful leisure experiences at planned events can be problematic (Ryan, 2012). Based on both individual and group levels of
experience as conceived previously in terms of knowledge, occurrence, and emotion, these meaningful leisure experiences could range from the excitement of being a part of something completely before unseen to the feeling of been there … done that, from euphoria to utter boredom, from active intellectual and physical participation to only passive engagement, or any and all combinations. A leisure experience is meaningful somewhat in the degree to which an individual or group identifies with an event. If attendees know the event organizer, a vendor, an entertainer, or maybe just a security guard, then this personal relationship may be transferred to the event itself and alter the meaning of the experience. The same might be true for the location, theme, stature, or type of the event as all these could add or subtract to meaningful experience. Considering the social nature of event attendees, Ryan (2012, pp. 250-251) adds to this mix that another source of meaningful leisure experience at planned events arises from the ability of festival participants to channel the excitement of the crowd. To summarize what he considers to be the makeup of event experiences Ryan (2012) developed a two axis matrix. The model charts event guest interest along a horizontal axis from the short term/temporary to the long-term/sustained and along the vertical axis from low to high levels of meaning. As would be expected, the template suggests that when moving on a diagonal path from the lower left to the upper right, events with short term interest and low levels of meaning indicate minimal meaningful experience resulting in a lack of repeat visitation and events with long term interest and high levels of meaning indicate significant meaningful experience with attendees converted into serious fans.

Place Experience. Can a place have an impact on the experiences of attendees at community festivals? And vice versa, can the behavior of guests transform a
temporary community festival space into a special place? Event studies have mostly neglected the way in which the human experience of community festival holds the promise to transform ordinary spaces into temporary special places of celebration and festivity. A study of art festivals (Waterman, 1998) offered limited insight from the event studies theoretical lens as it explored the transformation of landscapes related to cultural changes as it focused on art festivals as a contested source of tension in the art community. In a qualitative study on the social construction of a sense of place at an agricultural fair Kyle & Chick (2007) uncovered through extensive literature review that the foundational social behaviors needed to best understand place experience had been ignored empirically in leisure and event studies and expressed that much more remains to be understood on the subject. Research involving four case studies looking at how festivals demonstrated a community’s sense of place concluded, “As a form of tourism, festivals can be examined in relation to their social and cultural contexts” (Derrett, 2003, p. 57) but fell short in providing not a single word on the place experience of attendees at those events.

There has been considerable research into the topic of place from the perspective of natural resources, although a concern exists for this researcher if such knowledge is transferable to the special context of a temporary event environment. From this field we learn a sense of place is a function of socially constructed meanings, physical environment, and people’s experience (Stedman, 2003). Stokowski (2002), in calling for more research on a social sense of place, emphasizes that people’s relations to one another and their environment is elaborated through both verbal and nonverbal communication, while Stewart (2008) believes the best way to understand a person’s
place experience is through their personal stories and narratives. Writing on the social experiences of place Manzo (2008) expressed that there was a robust connection between the experiences of participants and the people they contacted within a place. She went on to say that it was not necessary to invest a lot of time in a place for it to have impact, that sometimes flashpoint experiences of unexpected discovery connected people to place through their experiences. This has probable implications for exploring the behavior of attendees at short term community festivals.

Humanistic geographers (Relph, 1976; Tuan 1974) planted the concept that space and place must be considered in the perspective of experience. They rationalized that an understanding of the intangible essence of place must be authentically created through lived experience. Tuan (1977, p. 141) wrote, “There are as many intimate places as there are occasions when human beings truly connect” but believed that intimate places could not be consciously designed. What Relph and Tuan expressed was that physical space does not create intimacy, but rather it is contextual human experience that creates intimate places. Hay (1998) agrees, reporting that it is in the presence of significant others that most meaningful place experiences happen. Casey (1993) philosophically expounds that it is only when one becomes aware of one’s sensuous and conscious presence in a physical space does one come to know it as a cherished personal place. He asserts that place is a vigorous fusion of self, space, and time arising from personified experience. Along this line of thought, Tuan (1977, p. 6) espoused that “space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.” This idea that intimate, personified human experience can make a tangible physical space, or maybe an intangible temporary event space, into a special place with a unique sense of meaning,
value, and attachment could be a reason for the increasing popularity of community festivals.

To conclude this succinct review of place experience it is important to bring to light the idea of the placelessness. Originally conceived by Relph (1976) to recognize a loss of place identity brought on by modern social mobility and globalization the concept was extended to planned events with MacLeod (2006, p. 232) postulating that a festival’s sense of place disappears as visitors desire only “convivial experiences with similar people converging in the no-space spaces of festival destination.” She conjectures that events without authenticity, local meaning, and culture will provide only spectacular experiences in placelessness.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Community festivals have progressed in the past six decades from the purchase of a product by an attendee to collaborative festivity with participants insisting on meaningful and valuable experiences. Today community festivals are entrenched in what has been described as an experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Although event experience is now considered the nucleus, the core phenomenon, of event studies (Getz, 2007; Pettersson & Getz, 2009) research into attendee behavior has for the most part focused on the pre-event anticipatory motivations to participate and the post-event reflective satisfactions of having participated, primarily with a post-positivistic theoretical lens. One of three strategies proposed to fully understand leisure experiences, the “immediate conscious experience approach” (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, p. 83), entails the observation and scrutinizing of actual behavior as it occurs in real time and space, yet this behavior continues to be a mystery (Getz, 2007) because of minimal, almost non-
existent examination. Most of what is known about the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals comes from sociology, anthropology, and tourism discourses with an identified research and theory gap in the fields of leisure and event studies (Getz, 2010).

The fields of leisure and event studies are both relative newcomers and as mentioned above (Seale, 2000) have been lacking in the development of their own theory. With a desire by this researcher to broaden a priori knowledge acquired from producing, studying, and teaching about festivals and events over a span of more than four decades, the purpose of this study was to conduct exploratory research to gain possible insight and a richer contextual comprehension about the actual on-site behavioral experiences of attendees at community festivals. The study was not an attempt to test or expand upon any existing or preconceived theory, and began with only the general idea that attendees at festivals are having experiences. The researcher was aware that there are those (Schwandt, 1993) who believe that no qualitative study begins from ‘pure’ observation and all conceptual structure is based on theory, but this study had no ‘explicit’ theoretical point of reference. Fieldwork was initiated with this researcher engaged as a participant observer, the primary data-gathering instrument, as a method to dissect the anatomy of the community festival experience with the following research question: What is the on-site behavior of attendees at community festival as it occurs in real time and space?

Because of the emergent design character of phenomenology and grounded theory this study was one that included constant comparison and ambiguity in play from the first steps of fieldwork, continuing as analysis, reflection, and theorizing were undertaken. A
literature review was not conducted until emergent themes and theorizing revealed relationships that required further comparison and critique.
METHODOLOGY

Empirical and theoretical research gaps exist in the study of attendee on-site behavior in real time and space at community festivals. This situation subsists despite the fact that event experience has been recognized as a core phenomenon of event studies and that it is well known that there is a need for contextual knowledge and theory to understand and explain this behavior. The research design for this study began by asking, “What are the best approaches to gain knowledge and build theory to alleviate this situation?”

WORLDVIEW – SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Ontologically, there are both relativistic and realistic approaches that could be considered. For this particular situation the researcher believed approaching from a relativistic view of reality was more appropriate because behavior at community festivals is most relative to the social interactions a person has with others as well as their surroundings. Epistemologically, this dilemma can be approached in either a subjective or objective manner. In this case the researcher believed a subjective manner was the better approach because the behavior of attendees at community festivals can be highly variable with a complexity of meanings that cannot be narrowed into only a few objective characteristics. Selecting a methodology was important in deciding if the approach would be interpretive or experimental in design. Experimentation could have been used to test existing theory, but since there is a lack of theory in event studies on the behavior of attendees at community festivals the approach of interpretive design was more suitable as a method to build contextual knowledge and potential theory. These chosen approaches all have a common thread in the idea that human experience at community
festivals is multifaceted, complex, has a wide variety of consequential implications, and involves social interaction influenced by previous experiences and cultural background. These thoughts are representative of the qualitative research worldview of social constructivism.

Social constructivism is an inductive process and data gathered during fieldwork was used to build general themes based on the researcher’s interpretation of this data. While it was acknowledged that the primary focus of this study would center upon the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals, it was recognized that the personal history, cultural, and experiences of the researcher would also have an effect on interpretations with a high degree of reflexivity required.

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY**

The type and number of strategies available for the qualitative researcher varies from author to author as they explain research design; for example Wolcott (2001) identified as many as 19 strategies and Creswell (2009) included as few as five. Padgett (2008, p. 39) warns us that specifying any number of qualitative strategies risks suggesting that each is distinct and contradicts the true blurriness of their application. With this in mind this researcher has decided that a mixing and matching of phenomenological research and grounded theory into a hybrid strategy creates the best fit to explore the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals.

**Phenomenological Research.** Phenomenology, more than an exclusive qualitative research approach, is foremost a philosophy that expresses the essence of human experience from a participant’s point of view for both quantitative and qualitative research designs (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010).
carefully at a small number of people while attempting to uncover and build upon patterns of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). There are several branches of phenomenology with no one branch predominant in the field of event studies, however, in the closely related field of tourism studies two branches are normally made use of when researching human experience; hermeneutics and heuristics. For purposes of this study to explore the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals, the branch of hermeneutics offers the better option as it relies more on a constructivist and interpretive outlook that addresses individual experience from the perspective of contextual relationships. Heuristics on the other hand takes on a positivistic stance that reduces human experience to a more isolated examination (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Phenomenology puts the focus on deeper meanings through immersion into participant’s lived settings with the researcher aware of, but sidelining personal preconceptions, as they discover what participants experience as well as the circumstances of those experiences. While the rules and conventions of phenomenological research reflect its origins in philosophy and “are among the least explicit” it “is uniquely suited to leave readers feeling as if they have walked a mile in the shoes of the participants” (Padgett, 2008, p. 36).

**Grounded Theory.** Grounded theory is a systematic strategy introduced by Glaser & Strauss (1967), that was repositioned toward a process of verification (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and has also been moved from away from its positivistic roots toward social constructivism (Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2000). It promotes the development of theory through inductive research grounded in data as opposed to deductive research that tests the assumptions of existing theory. This strategy was selected in part because of the scarcity (maybe dearth is a better descriptive word) of knowledge and theory about the
actual on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals. This researcher’s process will begin with fieldwork as a participant observer at community festivals to collect data and proceed with, in the words of Padgett (2008, p. 32), “inductive coding from the data, memo writing to document analytical decisions, and weaving in theoretical ideas and concepts without permitting them to drive or constrain the study’s emergent findings.” As the process advances constant comparative analysis will need to be employed to consider differences across attendee behaviors, social experiences, and physical environments. Throughout the process this researcher will be in pursuit of not only insight and knowledge of attendee behavior, but also mid-range theories on the core phenomenon of event studies. The primary underpinnings of this grounded theory research will come from the work of Charmaz (2006) who has recently adapted it to fit a worldview of social constructivism.

**Strategy.** When Glaser & Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory they encouraged researchers to adapt and use the strategy in their own ways. Grounded theory methods should be viewed “as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages” (Charmaz, 2006). In the discussion of specific methods that follows it is important to remember that they are not presented in order of importance or as a sequential laundry list of items that must be completed in a linear fashion. Instead they are concurrent in nature with the researcher writing continuously throughout the process, going back into the field to collect additional data, and constantly in a mode of analysis, while on the lookout for emerging themes. An idea from the field of mobilities, turbulence, may help visualize this situation. Consider that the methods in this process are individual candles, each lit at different times, but filling a room with smoke. There is
no telling which way the smoke from a candle will travel or how fast or how much it will mix with the smoke from other candles, randomly mixing into unknown combinations that continue to change and intermix with another new stream or combination of smoke, until the candles burn out with the room now saturated with a general theme of smokiness. The following sections briefly highlight how a grounded theory strategy was undertaken for this research project.

**Data Collection.** The researcher began collecting data by purposefully attending community festivals in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area as a participant observer in February of 2012. Attempting to create the same general experience of the average attendee the researcher did not select festivals to attend more than two weeks in advance and attended for a period of between three and four hours. Unlike the average attendee the researcher visited the festivals alone, but dressed casually to blend in, and interacted socially with others as well as the physical environment. During two festivals the researcher purchased and carried around a beer to be more in tune with the crowd. Rather than observing from a fixed location, the researcher wandered freely throughout the festival sites. During one community festival he followed groups of attendees for extended periods of time as they wove their way randomly through the event. As the researcher took part in the festivities he observed the behavior of other attendees and jotted notes of the action that was happening in real time into a small book; these notes also included hand drawn sketches of the festival. At first the researcher expressed concern that openly taking notes might affect the behavior of those around him at the festivals and originally planned to jot these notes in the crowd as unobtrusively as possible, but at times retreat to a secluded area if needed. During the first participant
observation it became readily apparent that openly recording notes was not an issue and did not affect the behavior of participants. During two participant observations the researcher was approached by a known acquaintance. The researcher did not volunteer that he was working and the acquaintances did not ask or even ask why he had a small notebook. At no time did the researcher record notes that could be used to specifically identify other attendees, instead identifying only by generic terms and their appearance or actions. The goal of data collection was to gather detail about the behavioral actions and feelings of the attendees, knowing that it is only with rich data that one can build strong grounded theories. Charmaz (2006, p. 15) warns the qualitative researcher that “methods provide a tool” but “methods alone do not generate good research” and “a keen eye, open mind, discerning ear, and a steady hand can bring you close to what you study.” Having practiced on-site data collection in previous projects the researcher believed he was prepared to accomplish this task adequately, but developed a mantra that helped him keep an open mind of what he was seeing. Continually while in the field the researcher would chant to himself, “What action is happening now?” One time he must have actually verbalized this mantra out loud because another guest commented to him that the next entertainment act did not start for about another ten minutes. Throughout the participant observation data collection process the researcher remained vigilant to the concept that themes could begin emerging from the data.

Within 12 hours of departing each community festival the hand jotted notes were expanded briefly with remembered detail. Beginning with the second participant observation these expansions were done in a different colored ink that helped create even better memories later in the process. Within 72 hours the expanded notes were written
into thick descriptions of the observations, except when they were not. Following the first participant observation the researcher failed to adequately plan enough time to accomplish this task and following another participant observation a family member passed away and he was unavailable. The average time to create a thick description from the expanded field notes was between ten and twelve hours. In one situation this was accomplished in a single day, but after that the researcher always scheduled three to four hours over three days which seemed to create more detailed thick descriptions.

The strength of grounded theory is that it allows flexibility as data is collected. During this systematic piece of the process of expanding data, the researcher was watchful for emerging themes, the need for additional methods, and even the realization that different or additional research strategies could be appropriate. As the data was being collected, coded, and analyzed with categories and subcategories being developed, the researcher was moved toward theoretical sampling to seek significant data to strengthen an emerging theme concerning the aspirations of event managers in providing festive programming at community festivals. “Initial sampling in grounded theory is where you start, whereas theoretical sampling directs you where to go.” (Charmaz, 2006, p.100) It was decided to perform a content analysis of a festival association’s newsletters and also conduct a focus group of event managers to further ground suspensions in data while raising the level of carefulness in regards to potential theory. This strategy was intended to provide comparison between what had previously been observed and recorded in field notes to what might be event manager’s professed image. For this content analysis three years of International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA) weekly online newsletters were examined. This type of extant text is valued by
researchers because it is readily available, unobtrusive, and objective (Charmaz, 2006). The material reviewed included 153 weekly issues and 1,592 short articles which were scrutinized for purposes of providing substantiating evidence as opposed to being an entity of independent analytic study. The newsletters were deemed appropriate as they were written by and for festival and event professionals for the purpose of supplying current knowledge and opinion related to event planning and production.

After multiple failed attempts to organize a focus group of event managers during their busy season this theoretical sampling strategy was adjusted to one of collecting more data with individual interviews. The researcher conducted four, twenty-five to thirty minute interviews with both municipal and non-profit event managers at their work locations. To ensure consistency throughout the interview process an interview consent form and an interview guide were created; the latter included a brief description of the researchers data collection strategy, an introductory statement that was read to each participant, a list of set questions that would be asked of every interviewee, a list of potential probes that might be used to produce greater detail from the participants, and directions to conclude the interview (figure 1). The questions were designed to explore what the respondents had to add to the data collection process. The goal was to get the event managers talking about what was most important to them as they planned and produced community festivals, what type of experiences they provided, and what they understood about the behavior of their attendees. All interviews were tape recorded with succinct notes also taken by the researcher. The recordings were transcribed and prepared for coding within one day following the interviews.

Before going into the field the researcher was not sure how he would know when a point of saturation was reached and to stop collecting data. When would the data being collected no longer add substance to categories and subcategories, nor kindle further
Data Collection Strategy
Conduct interviews with community festival producers from the Phoenix metro area to gather comparative data. Draw from these individuals the motivations and behaviors involved in community festival production. Interviews tape recorded at participant’s place of work are expected to last between 20 and 30 minutes.

Interviewer’s Guide
The researcher will arrive at the interview location at the arranged start time. Individuals will be asked to sign a consent form prior to the start of the interview.

Introduction
Thank you for participating in today’s interview that will explore your motivations and behaviors as they relate to the production of community festivals. Information gathered today may prove to be valuable in helping your organization achieve success in its future endeavors. Let me first explain the interview process. There are five basic questions with no right or wrong answers. You are the expert here and I’d like you to discuss your personal ideas and thoughts about each question; all answers and opinions are important. I anticipate you will be answering every question. If you have a short story or example that helps you to answer please feel free to add it to the conversation. I will be writing a few notes as you speak and may at times ask you for clarifications of what you said or even ask you to expand your answer. Again, there are no incorrect answers; I just want to gather quality data. Also, please be assured that everything that happens and is said today will be kept confidential. Per the consent form, we will be recording the interview today, but at any time you become uncomfortable with this please let me know and I’ll turn it off and only take notes. In addition, you are a volunteer and if at any time you wish to discontinue your participation in this interview let me know and we can stop. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

Questions
1. As a warm up question, “What is your favorite aspect of community festival production?”
2. Moving forward, “Please tell me about the mission and goals of your organization.”
3. Next, “I’d like to ask you to describe any special methods you might employ to enhance the overall festival experience.”
4. Continuing, “Would you please describe the typical behavior of an attendee at one of your festivals.”
5. And the final question, “What types of long-term impacts do you believe that community festivals will have on those who have attended and your community?”

Verbal probes to expand the conversation as needed:
- Free listing with possible ranking and rating
- Ask for justification
- Ask for possible stories
- Request clarification
- Ask for additional points of view, examples
- Say, “can you tell me more about that”

Conclusion of Interview
Thank the participant for their time in providing information to the dissertation project and ask if they have any questions. Within thirty minutes of the conclusion of the interview make a quick review of the process and data collected. Transcribe and code within 2 days.

Figure 1. Guide for Event Manager Interviews
imminent theory? During the final participant observation the researcher made several
notes about not seeing anything new happening. A reflective memo written a short time
after initially coding of the thick description from this event confirmed that no new initial
codes had been written. It turned out this was not a problem and it was evident when it
became apparent that little if any fresh data was being collected.

**Coding the Data.** Coding was the process that orchestrated the jump from the
behavior of attendees at community festivals depicted in thick descriptions of collected
data into potential theory in this grounded theory project. It involved more than the
standard analysis of data, the typical purpose of qualitative coding; it also provided a
unification of data for its theoretical possibilities. The researcher used three levels of
coding with the thick descriptions generated during data collection: 1) initial coding, 2)
focused coding; 3) and axial coding.

Throughout initial coding it was important to stay centered on the data while determining
what distinct action was happening in small data segments. The hardest part of initial coding was
to let the data flow and remain open to what action actually was taking place without imposing
preconceived ideas of what the researcher thought should be happening. Charmaz (2006)
suggests this can be accomplished by working quickly with short, simple and precise codes as
data is compared to data and reminds researchers to make their codes fit the data rather than vice
versa. Word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident to incident coding was employed for purposes of
fit and relevance. The researcher drew out hundreds of short action codes from each thick
description, accomplishing this task on the computer with use of the track changes function. This
technique was very beneficial in that it visually connected and color coded the initial code to the
exact place it came from in the thick description as well as provided each initial code with an
identifying number. During initial coding there was constant back and forth review of what had
previously been written that created a sense of greater consistency among all codes. It was expected that this exacting method would allow the experiences of attendees to come together and fit it to the empirical world and at the same time provide relevance with a sharp interpretation of what was happening. As initial coding proceeded the researcher also paid close attention for *in vivo* codes, special words or phrases that as they appeared conveyed significant meanings. Yet again, it must be stated that this was not a linear process. Not only did the process go back and forth, up and down, in and out, in a kaleidoscopic manner during the initial coding of the first thick description it did so as each new thick description was coded.

In the second phase of focused coding the researcher compared the most frequent and noteworthy codes from initial coding and began categorizing and working his way through large amounts of data. The strategy was to bring the data that had been fractured into single bits of action during initial coding back into logical combinations of categories and subcategories. This was achieved by hand in a meticulous manner, over many hours and days. As they were created the initial codes generated from each thick description were printed and cut into small individual pieces of paper. These initial codes were then distributed onto a large pool table where they were organized and re-organized multiple times into dozens of constantly changing categories and subcategories as data flowed in first from multiple months of observation, and later from the interviews and document content analysis.

Before the pieces of paper were physically moved the researcher would spend time using a clustering technique where a central idea was written on paper and then lines were drawn in random directions to connect it to defining properties and indicate possible relationships. This freestyle technique made it easy to be creative without the physical need to transfer the individual pieces of paper.
Because each initial code had an identifying number it was easy to return to the thick descriptions when needed for clarification and meaning. The researcher was aware of computer programs that assist in organizing qualitative data. This might have saved time and effort, but the researcher found that by completing this process by hand he felt closer and more connected to the data, especially when he could pick up a small piece of paper with a short action code and have it bring back very distinct memories of exactly where and when it was observed. It must be conceded, with a final count of over 1,200 initial codes, the final days of focused coding were long and tedious, especially when large categories and subcategories were being physically relocated around the pool table. The ability to sit back and observe the big picture of the initial codes organized into focused codes of categories and subcategories all at once was invaluable when it came to theorizing.

When the focused coding process stalled at eight seemingly divergent categories with no outstandingly strong themes after addition of the initial coding from the thick description produced from the final participant observation the researcher turned to axial coding. As a way to understand the behavior of attendees at community festivals more fully the researcher used the basic axial coding questions suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1998, p. 125) including when, where, why, who, how, and what consequences to provide much needed coherence to everything. This facilitated the researcher in more fully considering the conditions that form the structure of attendee behavior, their actions to what was going around them, and the consequences of their actions in the formation of substantive theory. The questions were asked of each of the existing focused coding categories and answered by examining the initial data codes as to what they stated, how
they were located in subcategories, what had been written in memos about them, and by occasionally referring back to their origination points in the thick descriptions. The researcher purposefully slowed this process down to allow a vision to slowly bubble up and potential theories to solidify from further analysis.

The researcher used only initial coding and focused coding to analyze the transcripts generated from the event manager interviews. Initial coding was done line-by-line and incident to incident to determine their aspirations to plan and produce programmed festivity at community festivals. Categories quickly emerged from the focused coding and compared to those from the participant observation thick descriptions of attendee behavior to add pertinent data from the event management perspective.

**Memo-writing.** Memos were used to understand the data and to put the researcher in touch with his thoughts about it and were the most critical strategy when it came to writing the dissertation. The researcher used memos to direct the operational process of this study, but more importantly to make comparisons between data, codes, categories, and concepts as well as theorize. “Memo-writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). The researcher wrote memos spontaneously with the understanding that they were not being prepared for an audience and could and should be about anything that helped advance thinking. The researcher embraced the inspirations of Charmaz (2006) who informs her readers that the important thing to do is to get things written and recorded no matter what your style.

The researcher made use of three types of memos that he labeled as operational, coding, and reflective/theorizing. They were not written in any order or specifically at
designated points in the study, but rather as they needed to be written, when something needed to be recorded, when the researcher needed to think. The operational memos were to keep things on track, allow the researcher to essentially discuss with himself what he thought might be issues, remind him of where he had been and needed to do, and record when and how the research process was undertaken. The operational memos written throughout the study proved to be extremely valuable not only with organization, but also the final writing of the dissertation.

Coding memos, a unique term originated by the researcher, were written to discuss and record specific issues directly related to the coding process. They were much like the reflective/theorizing memos, used to stimulate thinking and analyze data. The name, coding memos, is not a term found in qualitative research texts, but it created a sense of order for how things were being recorded for the researcher. They tended to be extensive and usually followed a period of free writing and clustering. Not surprisingly, because of the general nature of grounded theory, a few operation and reflective/theorizing ideas would sometimes slip into the mix. It was these often longer memos that entered the researcher into a process of deep thought about the data. It was easy to look at the data spread out on the pool table and envision what it all might mean and what values it might have, but it wasn’t until these thought were recorded that themes and theories were solidified. It was not uncommon for the researcher to be writing a coding memo and have completely new thoughts on categories and subcategories. The writing of memos was much more than recording thought, it was a place where the thoughts congealed and direction of what loomed ahead began to materialize. What
appeared in these coding memos supplied a major portion of what follows in the next chapter on analysis and results.

By far the greatest numbers of memos were of the reflective/theorizing variety. Most ended up being about one type-written page, but some were only a half page or shorter while a few others were a page and a half in length. These were the memos that really prompted serious analysis of the data every step of the way and provided a platform for the researcher to record which emerging themes had more solid foundations and which ones were more speculative in nature. It was with these memos that holes were found in the data collection and new ideas flickered on filling them. Unlike the coding memos that always followed working with the data spread out on the pool table these memos popped at all times and places, sometimes handwritten on whatever paper was available and then retyped at a later time. These reflective/theorizing memos lead to a boosted sense of the researcher’s confidence that progress was being accomplished. It is a strong suit of grounded theory that from the onset that themes and theories are visualized by the researcher and memos used to move these forward to a conclusion. The difficult part of writing memos was accepting a high level of ambiguity as the researcher’s natural instincts were to want write memos that moved the study from beginning to end, especially as the project appeared to be winding down. The researcher kept reminding himself that he could not write until the whole picture had been explored.

The coding memos and the reflective/theory memos were also sorted to organize and theorize about the studied experiences. Following the process of axial coding the researcher took paper copies of the memos on each of the categories that had been developed by that point with the answers to the when, where, why, who, how, and with
what consequences and spread them out on a large table. The memos were shuffled around and arranged by their titles into what seemed to be logical groups. The categories that ended up in each group were then compared to each other for fit and relationship as a single entity. This process created a sense of balance between the eight categories that described the actual on-site experience of attendees at the community festivals and combined them into clear and comprehensive theoretical statements.

**Trustworthiness.** A trustworthy study is one that is carried out fairly and ethically and whose findings represent as closely as possible respondent’s experiences. From Guba and Lincoln (1985) we are informed that a qualitative study must be; 1) credible, meaning that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures; 2) transferable, the idea that study findings are applicable for a comparison and contrast approach; 3) auditable, indicating that the researcher’s approach is consistent within the research paradigm; and 4) confirmable, a demonstration that a study’s findings are linked to data. The researcher believes that this study was valid and that these conditions were met, but recognizes that his observations and interpretations were undoubtedly in some manner clouded by his preconceptions and personal opinions, especially considering that the researcher worked as a practitioner promoting and producing special events. Specific strategies employed to ensure a high level of trustworthiness in this study included; safeguarding that the thick descriptions contained no obvious mistakes or overstatement of attendee behavior; triangulation by conducting fieldwork at a variety of community festivals, in diverse locations and settings, and that attracted diverse participants; peer review of coded data and member checking by the event managers of their interviews; adequate time engaged in fieldwork.
with the same commitment to preparing rich thick descriptions of the collected data; and
a serious effort toward reflexivity through memo-writing.
RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

In a grounded theory study, analysis is simultaneously carried out with the collection of data which allows continual shaping of the data collection process to enlighten emerging concepts, themes, and potential theory. This is accomplished through successive, although non-linear, levels of systematic analysis. This advantage of qualitative research allows the researcher to add or change pieces of the puzzle at every step of the project with great flexibility. This course of action has been portrayed as that of a photographer changing the lenses on a camera to bring the wider scope of a landscape into an ever closer view (Charmaz, 2006). In this study the collected data consequently created a very large picture representing the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals in real time and space which through analysis was brought into focus in the form of a substantive theory. The previous chapter on methodology detailed the procedures of this analysis as this chapter outlines the results of how a wide array of collected data emerged into socially constructed theory.

SEEING POSSIBILITIES

Beginning with the first ideas of conducting a study on the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals in real time and space and increasing as the time approached to go into the field for participant observation the researcher wondered what might be found along this journey of exploration. It was important to recognize that these preconceived visions could easily place blinders on the researcher and limit the possibilities of what might be discovered. The key to minimizing this affect was to focus on the actual behavior of participants and to begin immediately in visualizing what these observed and recorded actions might mean. During the first participant observation the
researcher allowed his mind to take breaks from scrutinizing the action to thinking about what had been noticed. These thoughts could be considered the preliminary results of this study and made up the essence of the first reflective/theorizing memo (figure 2).

REFLECTION - #1 Tale of Two Cities

DATE: 2/25/2012 – 2 hours after leaving the event

From this event I have some immediate 1st impressions of attendee behavior
Parents seemed over-protective of their kids
People do not like to wait in lines and when they do they are not very engaged with other people or their environment
When music fired up or the song changed people were interested, but quickly lost attention … when dancing was going on as part of the music attention span was longer
There was a lot of bonding but no visible bridging
People became engaged when
  o Someone talked to them
  o They saw/heard something different or unusual

Lots of cell phone usage
Casual, most of the time very casual, dress
Not as many smiles and laughs as I would have suspected
People wandered pretty randomly

Figure 2. MEMO: First Reflective/Theorizing

The results were at best speculative yet amazingly many of these first thoughts can be found woven throughout the analysis. As stated above, the field notes from the first community festival participant observation were not expanded into a thick description so these ideas were not confirmed or expanded upon with initial coding. For all of the remaining participant observation sessions the researcher similarly spend time ruminating about the implications of what was happening while on-site and then within a short period after leaving the festivals recorded these reflections written memos. The detail of all but the final two of these later memos included new action that had been observed. This indicated that the researcher had kept an open mind and was not just trying to observe what he had seen previously as well as evidence of possible saturation.
The later memos, as can be seen in figure 3, also indicate that the researcher was comparing the behavior he was currently seeing to what had been observed before and to categories and subcategories that had emerged from coding.

| REFLECTION National Day of the Cowboy |
| DATE: 7/28/12 |

My immediate thought is that after 4 observations I am starting to see a lot of the same types of general crowd behavior even though every event has been very different for the others. The main things here are:

- Social capital bonding – YES, social capital bridging – MAYBE
- There is a lot of ordinary, everyday activity at events, not so luminal in nature – cell phones everywhere, lots of body language indicating people are bored or at least not really excited
- The number one activity at this event was shopping at stores (which could be an everyday activity) with a lot less interest (in number of people) in eating or drinking or in watching or participating in festival activities
- People seem to be coming to community festivals because it is something to do, rather than something special to do
- When there is something different going on people are much more focused, entranced with what is happening – LOUD is part of this
- There was music at this event, but none that was loud, had a strong beat, got you up and swaying, clapping, or dancing and as a result I did not see the brief flashes of excitement I saw at previous festivals when this type of entertainment happened.
- Like the Irish Festival wear lots of people wore green, at this event lots of people wore western clothes – in both cases it did not seem to affect the behavior of those who dressed or those who saw others who had dressed

*Figure 3. MEMO: Later Reflective/Theorizing*

In the act of writing thick descriptions the researcher also drifted off into periods of thinking about the meanings of what was being typed at which point he would jump to a new document and record his thoughts in short brief outbursts (figure 4). The unpretentious results reported in the memos that generated from data collection and then writing thick descriptions were eye opening as they were being written and referred to often during coding and theorizing.

**INITIAL AND FOCUSED CODE FINDINGS**

The initial coding of thick descriptions broke down the expanded data collected from the field into small units of action. These socially constructed codes provided the
fundamental fit to an empirical world of behavior at community festivals as they were utilized in focused coding to develop categories explaining attendee experience.

Relevance was established as the initial and focus codes formed the framework to give meaning to what was happening.

**Initial Coding Results.** It constantly amazed the researcher as to the types and variety of action codes spawned from thick descriptions. While field notes contained first hand exacting descriptions of what had happened the thick descriptions added tremendous amounts of more generalized action. An average of approximately 400 initial codes was produced from each thick description. At times the action described was short, simple and very to the point with such words as “lady was smiling” or the “couple walked slowly.” Other times they described more complex actions such as “the group leader paid admission” or “people in line were non-confrontational when disturbed by a golf cart.” There were also *in vivo* codes derived directly from words in the text such as “using a cell phone” or “waiting in line.” As codes were created to break down the action there was a great deal of jumping back and forth through the thick description to consistently write similar codes that described similar actions. These initial codes were miniscule bits of information in comparison to the panoramic landscape of event behavior, but resulted in a complete breakdown of the human experience in exacting terms of what was happening as people partook in community festival.

**Focused Coding Results.** As the first thick description was coded the preliminary grouping to develop emergent concepts from the initial codes resulted in 14 categories
with 34 underlying subcategories. As the small pieces of paper with initial codes on them were placed on the pool table and mixed, matched, and sorted, extra labeled papers were placed as temporary category titles. There were probably more than five dozen titles created with some changed as they went, others removed and destroyed, and pieces with arrows drawn on them indicate possible connections between groups. The exact detail of this occurrence, however, was not recorded. The focused codes with their corresponding initial codes sat for a few days before the researcher revisited and after further comparison, sorting, and using everything spread out on the pool table as a visual diagram, a new vision emerged that included the 9 categories with 28 subcategories as outlined in a portion of a long coding memo. The coding memo included other result insights that followed focused coding (figure 4). The use of cell phones at this event was not as prevalent as had originally been suspected with only 13 initial codes specifying their use by attendees. A comment was added that maybe this category should be refigured into the bored and bonding categories. There were also only 7 initial codes that told of attendees taking photographs at the event and it was speculated if the initial codes in this category were better in the parent kid interaction or bonding categories. The memo continued with more comments of the same nature.

Subsequent to the initial coding of the fourth festival came more major change results with expanded comparison of all initial codes to date during focused coding. A coding memo indicated that the collected data was now organized into 6 categories with 15 subcategories (figure 5). When it came to light that every initial code concerned with the action of police or attendees behavior to the police was essentially a display of poor customer service these subcategories were combined and the category of Customer
Service action was carried forward. Two large categories were created when all the loud actions, the more out of the ordinary, luminal type activities, were merged into one titled Animation – Loud while at the same time all the soft actions, the everyday type experiences, people acting bored, the ordinary type activities, were merged into one titled Animation – Soft. A new category entitled Outliers also resulted when action codes concerned with a man carrying and displaying a firearm at an event were held to the side of things as more thinking was needed to determine if it fit with other data. The Social Capital Bonding category continued to be the most promising category with greatest solidarity. The researcher, after the third community festival, had made a conscious effort to keep his mind open and not develop blinders to observing only this type, or lack

### Figure 4. MEMO: Emerging Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Interaction</th>
<th>4. Kids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. With others +</td>
<td>a. Security concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. With others –</td>
<td>b. Wild Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Rude behavior</td>
<td>c. Parent Kid interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Smiles/laughs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Bored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. With activities “loud”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. With activities “soft”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Dress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. With dogs +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. With dogs -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Groups</th>
<th>5. Photos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Leaders</td>
<td>a. Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Bonding activity</td>
<td>b. Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Couples</td>
<td>c. Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. General use</td>
<td>a. Trash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Use in lines</td>
<td>b. Porta-Johns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kids</td>
<td>c. General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Photos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Customer Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. People Moving Around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Facilities &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>a. Formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. With activities “loud”</td>
<td>b. Interruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. With activities “soft”</td>
<td>c. Waiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Dress</td>
<td>d. Quiet Lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. With dogs +</td>
<td>e. Noisy Lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. With dogs -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of, behavior. Still, as the initial data codes were re-examined time and again, more moved into this group and left and it continued to grow.

Figure 5. MEMO: Shifting Categories

Saturation of data collection from participant observation was reached at the fifth community festival. The researcher felt strongly about this while collecting data and taking moments to think about what action he had observed and this impression continued through writing the thick description and initial coding. When the initial data codes were added to the existing mix it was completely evident that this was the case as no new action was noted and all initial codes were easily included in existing categories. It was at this point the researcher spent an intense half day studying the information spread out on the pool table, free writing dozens of handwritten pages, trying to cluster,
sort, and shift pieces of data from one group to another in hopes of better clarification of focused codes that now included one good, but not great, category and five seemingly divergent weaker categories. This resulted in little, if any, changes to the themes that had been developed to date.

**AXIAL CODE FINDINGS**

Having kept an open mind for an extended period of time the researcher was now feeling frustrated with the ambiguity of grounded theory research. It was at this point that he turned to a form of abbreviated axial coding to try and better understand the properties and dimensions of the data as it now existed. Axial coding is normally another way of reassembling the collected data into categories and give rationality to these emerging themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Before completely taking apart the focused coding categories and starting over the decision was made to instead attempt to apply axial coding technique to categories that had previously emerged.

The researcher physically sat in front of all data and categories as they existed on the pool table, began to go through each of the categories and their underlying subcategories, and attempted to answer the when, where, why, how and with what consequences. As the questions were answered hundreds of initial data codes were re-examined in terms of exact meanings, the implications of these meaning, and where they were located on the table as well as where they had come from in the thick descriptions. Nearing completion of this tedious assessment the researcher suddenly had a clearer vision of the emergent analysis and the hint of a breakthrough aha moment. He finished the axial coding, quickly reviewed his handwritten notes and immediately recorded a transformational advance toward possible theory (figure 6). This result came
MEMO: Axial Coding

DATE: 10/26/12

As I am writing this I have moved freely (that smoke filling the room again) into some substantive concepts with everything before transformed into relationships that might be integrated into theory.

1. Festive Atmosphere vs. Commonplace
   a. Luminal vs. Everyday
   b. Loud vs. Soft
   c. Participation vs. Waiting
   d. Active vs. Passive
   e. Excited vs. Bored

   How serious about/invested are event producers in creating a festive atmosphere? How serious about/invested are event producers in good customer service? Are these concepts a conscious part of the planning and production process? What is community festival really all about these days?

2. Social Capital
   a. Strong Bonding occurs
   b. Unconscious Bridging may also occur

Figure 6. MEMO: Axial Coding Breakthrough

about when it became understood that the concepts of social capital bonding and bridging as well as luminal festivity are not only related directly to the attendees of community festivals, but also to those who plan and produce programmed festivity. Constructing an expanded category of Social Capital made sense to include the categories and subcategories of bonding social capital displayed in groups, uncontrolled kid, and dress with that of child security. In the same light, a new category titled Festive Atmosphere vs. Commonplace the researcher brought together the formerly incompatible initial data codes and focused code categories and subcategories of animation – loud, luminal experiences, positive interactions between people, photos, noisy lines, smiles and laughs, people like free things, animation – soft, everyday experiences, negative interactions between people, décor, quiet lines, boredom, rude behavior, customer service issues, and outliers – man with a gun incident.
The expansion of the social capital category to include both bonding and bridging activity, based on the grounded data, was on solid footing. Across all community festivals in the study, people were observed bonding openly within their groups. What the researcher had failed to realize, however, was that although social capital bonding activity dominated its counterpart of social capital bridging activity they are not battling polar opposites. There were subconscious signs of social capital bridging as many people dressed similarly or let their kids run wild, most likely feeling part of the much larger festival crowd community. There were also limited signs of more conscious social capital bridging as people reached out to verbally and visually interact with strangers in luminal experiences as simple as sharing a joint disgust of porta-johns or empathetic complaints that food lines moved too slowly. Beer drinkers, those interacting with a unique costumed character, and those excited by loud music with a strong bass beat all interacted more openly with strangers in their midst. The researcher believed it would be possible to build substantive theory about this category based on existing collected and analyzed data.

The emergent Festival Atmosphere vs. Commonplace theme was one of contrast, all inevitably controlled by event management. Attendees at community festivals were having luminal and loud experiences while at the same time having everyday soft experiences. Attendee behavior included active excited participation contrasted by passive bored waiting. Looking back at each of the participant observations it was recognizable to the researcher that when luminal festivity was present that attendee behavior was much different than when it was not. This category had possibility, but was
in need of theoretical sampling to saturate the category if it was going to lead to substantive theory construction.

**NEWSLETTER CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS**

A content analysis of IFEA online weekly newsletters was completed on three years of issues dating from March 11, 2010 until February 28, 2013. This examination covered 153 total issues and 1592 individual articles and was conducted to ascertain event management professional’s aspirations to plan and produce high levels of unique programmed festivity as a partial strategy in saturate data and build confidence on the weak, but promising emergent theme of Festive Atmosphere vs. Commonplace. This process was time intensive, taking in excessive of thirty man-hours to complete. Individual articles were reviewed for the first six months consisting of 25 issues and at least one, and sometimes multiple, subject matter terms were recorded that classified the primary topic of 248 different articles. In all 268 primary topics were identified with 55 unique subject matter terms. Similar terms were combined to create 20 generic expressions that included a catch all expression of other. The subject of programmed festivity was divided between two expressions: 1) general festival information that included articles about festivals with some detail about the programmed activities that various event managers were producing; and 2) authentic experiences that contained information on unique programmed festivity. The remaining articles were then reviewed for subject matter with the primary topics recorded as one of the generic 20 generic expressions.

The results of this content analysis indicated that while 28.4% of the articles were written about economic/budget/sponsorship topics, 16.0% about
marketing/media/tourism topics, 10.6% about government/politics, and another 9.8% on security/drugs/alcohol that only 5.8% of articles were on the subject of general festival information and an even lower 2.2% of the articles focused on the topic of authentic experiences. These results add substance to the emerging theme that questions the aspirations of event managers to actually program festivity as their newsletter indicate a general trend that places a much greater emphasis on the financial, garnering attention, and safety aspects of planning and producing festivals and events. A chart of this content analysis can be found in APPENDIX B.

**EVENT MANAGER INTERVIEW FINDINGS**

To further saturate the data for the emerging theme of Festive Atmosphere vs. Commonplace, and the aspirations of event management to give attention to the programming of festive activity, four interviews were completed with two municipal and two non-profit event managers in the Phoenix metro area. Questions were designed to produce quality remarks and rich data on the subject of what they considered the most important aspects of event planning and production, what types of experiences they programmed, and what they knew and understood about the behavior of attendees at their events. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded to collect informant data. The focused coding of initial data saw six concepts emerge on themes of the importance of good planning, communication with stakeholders, financial considerations, general operations and logistics, staffing and volunteers, and activity programming. Not surprisingly the largest, strongest, and virtually equal in importance categories were activity programming and communication with stakeholders dominating two-thirds of the total data collection. Most of the initial codes that were constructed about the topic of
communication with stakeholders emerged from the first question intended to be the warm-up question to get the respondents freely talking. With follow-up questions that encouraged the interviewees to discuss the subjects of experience and behavior without pushing them toward specific answers the theme of producing authentic, more luminal or out of the ordinary experiences all four event managers did mention the topic when asked to discuss methods of creating better experiences, but did not expound on the concept or its potential virtues. Breaking out from the larger activity programming category and regrouping the initial data codes concerning festive programming into a new category lead to the discovery of it being the weakest of all categories then existing except for that of staffing and volunteers. An individual examination of each of these initial codes, including a review of where they originated in the transcriptions, reveled that the event managers did not express any sense of excitement on this topic or really emphasize it in any manner. One interviewee spoke of how experience at events seemed to be a lot about standing in lines, but that this was OK because the events were free and the attendee sometimes received something free after waiting inline. This was the perfect match for the contrasting theme of Festive Atmosphere vs. Commonplace, in the free is good and waiting is not good are subcategories, underlying this potential theory. When asked to describe the typical behavior of one of the attendees at one of their events all four interviewees originally drew a blank, hemmed and hawed, and then mostly talked about demographic characteristics or just changed the subject even when prompted by the researcher to readdress the issue.

Combining the event manager interview analysis with the IFEA newsletter content analysis, the researcher believed that theoretical sampling intended to saturate
with rich data the emerging theme that questioned the aspirations of event management to adequately program festivity had been achieved.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THEORY

Quoting Charmaz (2006, p. 133), “Where is the theory in grounded theory?”

Arriving at this point in the study there was only the conception of possible theory and it was time to stop, recap what had emerged, and to spend time contemplating. Two strong socially constructed themes had emerged from this grounded theory research journey of exploration. The first provided an empirical generalization of the notion that community festivals are temporary special places where social capital bonding and bridging can be found, be further developed, and have the opportunity to grow. The second construed that a direct relationship exists between the quality festive experiences of attendees at community festivals, as expressed by their behavior in real time and space, and the aspirations of event management to actually have the where with all and professional knowledge to plan and produce programmed festivity. It appeared these could be combined into a single theory, but should they be merged, or if developed separately would they impart greater meaning and value? To answer these questions and establish a theoretical framework for substantive theory the researcher returned to the library to review literature on festivity and social capital as emergent themes and theorizing had revealed relationships that required further comparison and critique.
LITERATURE REVIEW

In the tradition advocated by the discoverers of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) a literature review was undertaken after completing the analysis of collected data. The purpose of this strategy was to allow the researcher to maintain an open mind during the collection and analysis of data and not introduce preconceived theories or ideas into the study. It must be recognized that every researcher has tacit knowledge and a level of theoretical sensitivity that is without doubt brought into their inquiries. The first and second chapters of this study in part succinctly outlined what was already known about the subject of leisure experiences and social capital bonding and bridging at community festivals. This literature review expands on that knowledge as a critical method to crystallize two emergent themes into potential substantive theory.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND FESTIVALS

In early 2012 an email was distributed by Omar Moufakkir and Thomas Pernecky, two known academics in the field of event studies, through the Trinet list-serve with a call for book chapter contributions on the subject of the social and cultural aspects of events with the purpose of contributing to the identified empirical gap in the events related literature. Previous appeals to do the same have been frequent in recent years (Chalip, L., 2006; Getz, 2010; Hede et. al., 2003; Weed, 2012). This researcher’s review of event studies and other literature indicated that the gap was not completely void of inquiry. From literature outside the fields of event studies and tourism the combination of social capital and festivals topics has only rarely been of interest as a major theme, often included in larger examinations and discussions on social capital in general, but some research was uncovered specific to the issue.
Only a limited number of writings were uncovered in all fields that specifically addressed the issue of the development of social capital at festivals and only one of those had a major focus on the subject of social capital bridging and bonding. In the most dated of these articles from event studies and tourism Acordia and Whitford (2006) conducted a review of previous literature to better understand the synergy between social capital and festival attendance and flush out the assumption that social capital is amplified with festival attendance. In the more recent of the two articles from the fields of event studies and tourism Wilks (2011) collected data at three music festivals that was analyzed using critical discourse analysis to examine their social and cultural context.

The third article, from the field of psychology (Molitor et. al., 2011) and guided by the First 5 Sacramento Commission, with structured interviews and generalized linear mixed modeling analysis evaluated funded Community Building Initiative (CBI) events to study the social capital affects of attendance.

The positive and negative impacts of festivals were positioned by Acordia and Whitford (2006) to be economic, physical (environmental), political, and socio-cultural in order to establish a framework that festivals are truly representative of the community in which they take place. Three distinct social capital results that are associated with festivals were identified; social capital is built through festival attendance by developing community resources, promoting social cohesiveness, and by providing communities opportunity to celebrate publically. The community resources that developed are the social and business networks of the festival organizers. By promoting social cohesiveness there is an increased sense of society multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity lifestyles. Social capital is increased with public celebration when
collaboratively attendees participate in shared activity with family and friends. The authors conclude with an empirical comprehension that festivals play key social roles and that an overzealous emphasis on alternative impacts or a failure to create positive celebration before, during, and after the festival by event managers will detract from influences on social capital. The article provided detail and summary on earlier thinking that had been undertaken on the coalescence of festivals and social capital, yet absent from the discussion was any attention to the on-site behavior of attendees in real time and space with all focus instead on the larger landscape of festival experience. Still, an important implication was the idea that event management must aspire to be concerned with social programming both in the planning and also during a festival.

The article by Wilks (2011) outlined an inquiry that was undertaken with methods that included participant observation, interviews, and screening questionnaires. It was based on pre-existing social capital theoretical concepts and identified many examples of connection/detachment order from the attendees talk across three music festivals as social interactions were investigated. From this analysis it was concluded that bonding social capital was highly present and that bridging social capital was minimally displayed despite evidence of a sense of trust and a feeling of safety. It was noted that Putnam’s (2000) concept of social capital bonding that theoretically brings together those with similar social and culture backgrounds was not observed at the music festivals despite evidence that most of the socio-demographic characteristics of festival goers were homogeneously compatible, and that attendees in smaller family and friendship groups were mostly socially detached. Two implications of interest from this research project were that festivals should be included in an over-arching strategic arts (arts being unique
in themselves) planning process, and that with this process festival directors have opportunity to mold social and cultural aspects of their events. The author’s perspective on this inquiry was one of critical discourse analysis, with its obvious focus on discourse, failed to reveal the bubbling up, unconscious forms of bridging social capital and communitas that most likely may have been present. With the study heavily reliant on social capital theory as professed by Putnam (2000) lead in part to this lesser emphasis on the subtler forms of unconscious social capital bridging.

Research from the field of psychology (Molitor et al. 2011) used interviews with 538 randomly selected parents from a population of 29,607 participants who had attended any community festival in the previous six month period. The data was analyzed with comparisons made in regards to social capital increases between those who had attended at least one CBI event and those who had attended other community festivals. The results showed that attending any community event related to increased measures of social capital, but those who had attended at least one CBI event achieved higher levels of community cohesion and efficacy as well as had accessed more new community resources in the past six months. This study demonstrated that more specific, directed, quality programmed activity could be directly attributed to increased social capital, although it did not mention social capital bonding and bridging in those more specific terms.

In summary, these three articles all addressed positively that social capital in general occurs at festivals and events. The concept of bonding social capital within friend and family groups is confirmed strongly by Wilks (2011) and to a lesser degree by the other authors. More importantly, what emerges from these articles is an idea that the
concept of bridging social capital most likely entails two related, but divergent pictures. The first would be that of heuristic social capital bridging described by Putnam (2000) as a form of reaching out to and connecting with others from dissimilar backgrounds, ethnic groups, cultures, age groups, genders, or lifestyles as expressed with the term “cohesiveness” by both Acordia and Whitford (2006) and Molitor et. al. (2011), but rejected by Wilks (2006) who discounted the effects that music festivals could have on the inter-connections of diverse groups. The second form of social capital bridging would be a more hermeneutic communitas as described in Chapter 2 above by Turner (1974) and Jankowiak & White (1999). All three articles fail to consider this latter aspect of bridging social capital.

**FESTIVE EXPERIENCE**

One of the subcategories to the emergent theme of Festive Experience vs. Commonplace was concerned with the customer service interactions between community festival attendees and event staff including volunteers. In the best-selling book on achieving excellence through customer service one of the first lessons proclaims that everything you do should be built around the concept of creating an incredible customer experience (Tschohl, 2002). The topic of experience was addressed in Chapter 2 of this study but did not directly address the subject of festive experience which is now examined in the literature under the subject matters of festival experience and festivity.

In a case study on the differences between the ways an event is planned by its organizer and the way it was experienced by its guests, Berridge (2012) informs us that event management was not successful in satisfying the attendees. There was serious disconnect between event organizer understandings of what constituted a quality
experience compared to what the guests expected. The event organizer displayed little knowledge of event design and themes resulting in only moderate levels of guest satisfaction and experiential awareness. The aspirations of event management are important to the quality experiences of attendees.

An article about understanding event experiences questioned what it really was that makes a good festival and in a section on consumer experience elements summarized that “the framework for exploring the event experience needs to contain the external management elements of overall design and operational detail and the internal visitor experience of personal satisfaction and meaning” (Morgan, 2008, p. 84). The motivations for attendance and the perceived satisfactions following attendance were examined in details, but there was no mention of the actual on-site behaviors of attendees in real time and space. From the case study of the Sidmouth Folk Festival this author concluded that the key to a successful festival was in the social interactions and personal experiences of the visitors, their shared values of performance, and a sense of communitas with other guests developed during the festival. From this it was implied that success of a festival included the provision of space and time away from everyday life where passionate luminal experiences can be shared with others. This article represented an example of several studies that professed to explain event experiences yet failed to consider what constitutes typical attendee behavior.

A final article that is reported on in this literature review on the subject of festival experience explored the spatial and temporal character of the festival experience at a sporting event in Sweden with participant observation, interviews and photographs (Pettersson & Getz, 2009). The report reminds the reader that festival experiences cannot
be completely designed because different people may have a different experience while doing the same thing, but that certain design principles can enhance social interaction. This creates a paradox and one must wonder if that conflicts or supports the idea that better designed events can be produced so that people can have better experiences. Further, the authors introduce the subject of generic versus specific event experiences. They contend that the majority of attendees are present just because something is happening and they appreciate an atmosphere of fun, relaxation, and the social setting that can occur at all events while other guests are seeking more defined experiences. This assumption supports a theme that everyone attending a community festival is in fact part of a larger bridging social capital element. A dissimilar form of participant observation was employed for the study. A group of 25 participant observers recorded only their own personal behavior as they participated at the event, logging what they believed to be their personal positive and negative experiences, recording on maps and taking photographs of the locations of where these experiences occurred. The data collected was not coded, but rather graded on a 5-point Likert scale that indicated positive experiences occurred during quality programmed experiences and negative experiences were primarily related to poor customer service or event design. These methods, analysis, and results were similar in nature to an earlier event study conducted by Getz, et.al. (2001) at an Australian surf event.

A quick synopsis of the above literature on festival experiences indicates that these more academic articles on the subject have failed to adequately describe festivity, festive activity, and what comprises festive programming. To provide substance to this matter an article and two additional books were reviewed to assist in providing definition
to what is festive experience? In an article from Belle (2009) that appeared in a Canadian theatre journal we are introduced to the term festivalizing which is used to turn the noun into a verb with overtones of fun activity. We are informed that once we stop thinking of festival as a collection of activity, but as activity, that festival is not just something, but does something, it is then possible to examine what they do to their attendees and communities. With this approach one can festivalize the performance aesthetic, or in simpler terms that the programmed activities at an event are not just activity for activity sake, but rather that activities with the ability to do something. Belle (2009) adds that activity that does something is also activity that is never finished and always in a state of creation. Continuing the expansion of this idea, creating festivals in a limited time frame and space creates a community that defines itself by the very act of participant attendance and that those who attend affect each other through the mixing of ideas and interactions. The simple conclusion is that festivals are very complex events. These ideas add relevance and help solidify the theme that programmed festivity is not just a product, but a collaborative tool that builds communitas. We should think of festivity as a verb and not a noun.

While searching the reference lists of articles on festival experiences for possible literature on festivity the researcher came across an almost unknown gem in event studies entitled *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity* (Pieper, 1965) that had been translated from German. This deep philosophical manuscript at first relates festivity to the concept of play and believes that festivity is free activity that is something different and done for its own sake. The heart of festivity is tied to the spiritual act of rejoicing and the author believes that as festivity has progressed through the ages it has lost its
original purpose. Festivity became a tool to control and organize community instead of an act of pure celebration as it was employed by the church, revolutionaries, and commercial interests among other entities, in a corrupt manner. This does not mean that festivity has been lost, however, with hope for it in the pursuit of the arts, where there is believe that pure celebration thrives; festivity today is like a piece of art, never perfect and never finished. This unusual philosophical twist is important to the discussion because it adds a negative dimension that bad management of festivity has consequences and may not produce the most joyful celebrations, but even when bad, festivity, like art, is never finished.

The archaic roots of ecstasy are paralleled with those of dance. In a text on the collective joy of dancing in streets Ehrenreich (2006) traces the relationship of dance and festivity. She contends that dance was the first physical manifestation of festivity and that one cannot exist without the other. Dance is about movement, dance is about the beat, dance is best done as a social activity, and dance and the music that accompanies it may be a key element of quality festive experience. When people are dancing they move away from the base activity realm of spectatorship as they become physically, emotionally, and collaboratively creative as they interact social with those also present. Could dance be the missing element that drives quality festive programming or raises the degree of bridging social capital for attendees at community festivals? The idea that dance and the related performance and visual arts might be used as festive activity and easily employed by event management at community festivals may be a fundamental piece to increased knowledge of what is better festivity. Is possibly the original of rejoicing a solution to increase festivity today?

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SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

The original plan behind conducting this literature review was to divide the subject matter into the separate topics of social capital and festive experiences, but as the review was conducted the topics kept overlapping and crossing over into one another. Social capital bonding was found to exist at festivals and could be enhanced with an emphasis on programming, particularly the arts, and vice versa, when levels of festivity increased there were also higher levels of social capital. Thoughts on social capital at festivals were further expanded by adding an element that social capital bridging could be regarded as both heuristic in terms of attendees using the social interactions of festivals to reach out to new and dissimilar people as well as hermeneutic to describe the contextual relationship of generically being part of a larger sense of communitas in a temporary special place. Although not included in the literature review, a recent study by Zahra & McGehee (2013) that explores social capital bonding and bridging in volunteer tourism introduces a new framework that uses an interactive grounded theory research process that offers potential for research into further research of social capital bonding and bridging at festivals and events.

With a discussion of the arts as a building block for festive programming coming from multiple articles and the believe that festive programming can create better festival experiences as well as increase social capital it appeared these two subjects were strongly linked. Although articles on the topics of social capital at festivals, and festive experiences are rare in the field of events studies the researcher believes that other fields, including those outside the social sciences, offer prospective additions to a full understanding of festivity. Alternative subject titles such as ecstasy, limerence, rapture,
pleasure, frenzy, or other synonymous terms all may add value and meaning to the term festivity from such fields as philosophy, anthropology, history, or languages. The concept of spiritual joyfulness presented by Pieper (1965) opens the door to exploring religious studies for thoughts on true festivity and the thoughts on dance from Ehrenreich (2006) not only indicate a possible window into not only the dramatic and performing arts, but also creative and visual arts with such thoughts of masks and the traditional roles they have played in festivity through the ages. The literature review in qualitative grounded theory research opens an avalanche of possibilities and ideas for continued exploration of festivity.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study began when an empirical and theoretical gap in the field of event studies concerning the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals in real time and space was discovered. With theory on this festival phenomenon non-existent it was decided to approach the problem with socially constructed grounded theory to explore the contextual underpinnings of the experiences of people at special events with the hope of building substantive theory on the subject matter.

Data collection was undertaken as the researcher went into the field as a participant observer at community festivals to record the action of what was happening in real time and space. Data from jotted field notes was expanded into thick descriptions. The data was analyzed by breaking down the thick descriptions into initial codes, which were analyzed in focused coding, using the most numerous and significant of these to categorize and make sense of the collected data. Axial coding was also employed to make further sense of the inherent relationships between the categories. Focused and axial coding put the data that was broken down during initial coding back together and provided lucidity and a solid grasp on the analysis as themes of the studied phenomenon emerged.

This was not a linear process as constant comparison of the data occurred throughout the collection and analysis. The most difficult part of this approach was fighting the constant ambiguity of what collecting data on what was actually happening while trying to keep an open mind to possibilities until saturation was achieved when themes that had emerged from the data pushed the researcher to observe only confirmation. When axial coding created an aha moment and categories were coalesced
into a strong theme with a solid foundation provided from the grounded data and a second theme that was promising but insubstantial, theoretical sampling was employed to flush out the second theme with additional data. This theoretical sampling consisted of a content analysis of a three-year collection of a professional festival association newsletter and interviews with non-profit and municipal event managers. When the data collected from theoretical sampling solidified the second emergent theme a session of critical thinking and theorizing came to the conclusion that a literature review was needed as a further method to crystallize the two emergent themes into potential substantive theory. The literature review provided critical insight from comparable research and other sources that lead the researcher to fuse the two emergent themes into a single substantive theory.

**CONSTRUCTION OF SUBSTANTIVE THEORY**

This exploration has moved forward from finding a research gap, deciding on a research approach, through an extensive phase of fieldwork and analysis, into literature review, and finally into the proposal of substantive theory. Two themes emerged from data collection and analysis and were supported by grounded data:

1. Both festive atmosphere and commonplace experiences exist for attendees at community festivals with concern the aspirations of event management are not adequately focused on planning and producing quality festive programming.
   a. People are more physical, emotional, social, and collaboratively creative when participating in luminal experiences that include exciting, loud, authentic activity. These activities include, but are not limited to, loud music with a strong bass beat, authentic food and beverage, unique
entertainment, engaging costumed characters, and receiving free things. This is evidenced by more social interactions with strangers, smiling, laughing, dancing, swaying, yelling, people watching, and photo taking while partaking in these activities.

b. People are more passive, subdued, and quiet when participating in ordinary experiences that include boring, soft, everyday type activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, waiting in line, experiencing poor customer service or rude behavior, being spectators, listening to background type music, exposure to common commercial merchandise, and interaction with others dogs. This is evidenced by increased use of cell phones, frowns, negative body language, and a lack of visual and verbal social interaction.

c. Event managers emphasis on financial, garnering attention, safety, and government regulations aspects of festival planning and production as compared to that demonstrated for programming better experiences and a lack of understanding and unwillingness to talk about the behavior of attendees.

2. Social capital bonding is openly evident and easily recognizable between friend and family groups at community festivals while social capital bridging also exists, but is less evident and appears in a more subconscious manner.

a. People talk mostly to people in their own group; people avoid visual, verbal, and touching contact with strangers; family groups are directed by leaders who often pay; physical contact is often maintained with children;
groups turn their backs to strangers; people move throughout the event in a group; people in groups smile and laugh more, drink more beer, share food; groups shop together, wait for each other, and sit together.

b. People dress to fit into the crowd; sharing complaints with strangers about poor customer service; mutual disgust of porta-johns; some children run wild; some people open to others when socially engaged; people at authentic activities socially interact with strangers

The researcher wondered if these two themes could be brought together, during literature review the idea was debated and critically examined, and following a session of theorizing it became obvious that the themes were closely connected. The following three part substantive theory emerged from this study:

Social capital bonding is strongly evident and easily recognizable within friend and family groups at all community festivals, but minimal throughout an inflated group of unacquainted peers that share demographic similarities at community festivals featuring low degrees of programmed festivity.

Social capital bridging exists minimally, both heuristically in the form of direct social interaction between strangers with dissimilar demographics as well as hermeneutically by attendees possessing only a sense of primal subconscious generic communitas at community festivals featuring low degrees of programmed festivity.

Event management possessing both the aspiration and knowledge to program quality festive experience has the ability to increase and accentuate the development of social capital bonding and bridging at community festivals.
Having been derived directly from the two emergent themes highlighted above this substantive theory remains socially constructed and grounded in the same data.

**IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study has shown that understanding the on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals is important for both event management and community development professionals alike. It should not be assumed that acceptable and desired degrees of social capital bonding or bridging are being naturally generated by or occurring at these types of special events. It should be assumed that even the best planning and production of community festivals will not provide the best quality festive experiences for visitors unless event management has an understanding of what comprises festivity as well as a mission, goals, the ambition, and a desire to emphasize the concept of festivity in the design process. It is important for community organizers and developers to ensure that community festivals are financially supported and solvent, that they are safe and secure, that marketing, promotion, and communication plans garner the appropriate amount of attention, but these cannot be done at the expense of programming quality festivity. When community festivals are evaluated it is critical that an assessment of on-site behavior is part of the survey toolbox. The reality is that attendees rarely complain about not having a good time at a community festival, but how often are they self reporting a superior luminal out of the ordinary experience.

In Chapter 2, the prologue to exploration, this researcher included an autoethnographic avowal of tacit knowledge. From years of personal experience in the festivals and events industry along with the results of this study it is known that little emphasis has been placed on determining the components of festive activity and that it is
time for that situation to change. While dance and loud music with a strong bass beat may on occasion be included in festival activity programs it should become a new foundation on which to start building a model of better festive experience. Future research should experiment with different forms of activity to determine their effectiveness raise levels of festivity and with it social capital bonding and bridging. Professional festival associations and college programs that offer special event or festival certificate programs should revisit their educational offerings on the topics of program planning and festivity. This researcher will begin revising his course on special event programming immediately. Award programs, locally, nationally, and internationally should begin to recognize outstanding efforts to produce the best festive experiences that bring citizens of communities closer together.

Community development organizations that provide funding for community festivals need to start insisting that quality festivity is produced in an effort to increase social capital. Elected officials, sponsors, and others that provide support and resources for community festivals should also make sure that the biggest bang for the buck is being delivered. And finally, attendees themselves should demand quality festivity. If they are not leaving a community festival with a sense of joyful celebration, fun memories of a novel or hedonistic experience, and without having reached out and socially touched someone new they should be disappointed and insist on future improvements.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study employed a rigorous and trustworthy grounded theory method to socially construct a substantive theory on the subject matter of festival programming and its affect on social capital, but its findings are based on only five community festivals in
and around Phoenix, Arizona, four event manager interviews, and one content analysis of newsletters. The researcher has a recognized bias as having worked in the festival and event industry for many years and at best is a novice in using the approach of socially constructed grounded theory, this being his first major project employing the method. It is suggested that additional research of all types be conducted at events of all sizes and themes, in a variety of locations, with diverse populations to continue to close the empirical and theoretical research gap that exists on the contextual experiences of attendees at community festivals in real time and space.
A CONFESSIONAL TALE CONCLUDES

It has turned out to be quite a journey exploring the behavior of people at community festivals. Somehow I envisioned that it would be easier, faster, and produce more earth shaking results, but I do have a feeling of accomplishment with the completion of the project. Actually, I remember having that same feeling 14 months ago as I was defending my proposal. As I moved forward from that moment it was with a great sense of pride in what I had achieved, but also knowing that a big project awaited,

As I headed out to my first participant observation I looked forward to finally getting into the field. I had been writing about my tacit knowledge and theoretical sensitivity of experience and event studies and my methodology and now I was excited to see it all go into action. I had a small notebook and three pens, just in case, and dressed casually to blend in with the crowd. That was not a problem. My fear that walking around, observing, and taking notes would somehow disrupt the event were soon dismissed leaving me with almost a feeling of disappointment that nobody appeared to cared I was even at the event. I am sure except for a couple of acquaintances I encountered I was invisible to everyone. I scoped out the places to see large areas of what was happening, but it was not that important as there was so much action all the time in my immediate vicinity that I did not spend much time looking across big expanses of the festival grounds. All in all it was a fairly easy first day, except of course I forgot a hat and sunscreen and got a nice sunburn. I got home, wrote a memo of what I had been thinking about and expanded my jotted notes later that night. I knew I had 3 days to write a thick description so I just put everything away for the night. My first big mistake, putting things out of sight and out of mind. Five days later I remembered what I
had forgotten to do – this was bad! I sat with my notes, but the memories I had experienced during the pilot project writing within 72 hours were just not there. Of course I had a quick thought about just faking it, but it faded quickly as I told myself I was in this to learn what I did not know. I wrote some reflective memos about what had happened and what I could remember as I thought they would probably come in handy someday. Of course they did, especially after other festivals were observed and of course as I began to write my report.

Over the next 6 months I observed at 4 more festivals. After the third one my father-in-law passed away the day afterwards, once again it had happened, life got in the way and the notes were not expanded into a thick description. I was planning better, getting things lined up, scheduled, working on coding and analysis, but I had a troubling thought that I was jinxed. Of course that was not the case and I just moved forward.

In the middle of the summer I decided to attend a community festival in Sedona, a little outside my regular range. It was a 2 hour drive and when I got there I was out of sorts for a few minutes as I found parking and got my bearings. This was my fourth observation at this point though and I was amazed at how easily I walked through the crowd from venue to venue, watching what was happening, taking notes and really letting my mind drift off more often to visualize what I had observed and think about where it was all fitting in with what had been already completed. I was keeping my mind open and chanting my mantra to myself, “What is happening here?” It was at this festival though I had the initial feelings I might be reaching saturation as very little of what I was seeing was new. The drive home from Sedona was one of constant thinking about what I had just observed. When I got home within 2-3 hours I expanded my jotted notes and I
was shocked at how much flowed, being glad I had originally written on only every other page. I wrote the thick description over the next 2 days, having learned not to try and do this at a single sitting from a previous event. Again the information just flowed and I was able to record great memories of the observation. When I coded the thick description a few days later, however, I realized that my suspicions were correct on the issue of saturation as I only had few initial action codes that I thought might be new and different from all before – easily less than 1% of the total.

I have referred to my pool table work space in my report but feel I should add some context to that situation. I have lived in my house for a quarter century and the formal living room has been a pool room the entire time, needless to say I rarely use the table to play pool on very much anymore. It becomes a storage area or sometimes a craft area for my wife but this time it became my research laboratory. As initial codes were created from the thick descriptions they would be cut into small pieces of paper and then I would place them on the table into a category that seemed relevant and with fit. For 12 months this table remained a laboratory and still is today. All the codes seem like my friends as I have gotten very close to them these days. I am not sure when I will take everything that has been laid out apart. The beauty of the pool table was that it was dark green and the felt held the pieces of paper in place, except for the one timed I sneezed. I would sit on a stool and had a slight overhead view of everything which made it a perfect lab. Because this room is away and separated from the rest of the house I could go in there for hours and just look at and move things here and there and get a great mental image of the project. You cannot do that when you write everything into the computer and constantly scroll up and down to find the data.
My final observation was at a fiesta in Peoria. I have to admit it was really hard to stay focused between this being atypical unauthentic fiesta and my not seeing a single new thing in my observation that I could remember. Initial and focused coding confirmed my suspicions that a point of saturation had been reached. I got everything written up on time but was delayed in coding as it was the first month of a new semester. In October the coding was done and my big break in really understanding what I was seeing came with a session of axial coding. As two main themes emerged from the data and I realized I needed to complete some theoretical sampling I was astonished how quickly I came up with a solution. I could do a content analysis of the IFEA newsletters I had been saving on my computer for three years, always thinking that I would use them more for the classes I teach than I ever did. Maybe that early jinx had reversed itself. I also figured I would organize a focus group of event managers, how hard could it be? Of course it was right in the middle of the busy festival season and trying to get a group of event managers together in one place for a focus group was comparable to herding cats. Was the jinx back? I decided to switch to conducting interviews and scheduled them well in advance following the holidays.

The content analysis took forever, well over 30 hours. The final results confirmed my coded categories but it seemed like a lot of work for so few rewards. I did really get in touch with the event management profession though. The interviews went perfectly as I had scheduled appropriate time to transcribe and code them creating another feeling of accomplishment as it seemed like the operation things with this project were my biggest stumbling blocks. I was dreading the literature review as I had been actively searching for articles, books, and other resources about on-site festival experiences and social
capital and festivals since the project began with what I believed to be limited results. When I went through everything I had and was able to find a few more articles I realized I had enough and had needlessly worried again.

The report is completed and now my reflection in this confessional tale is also about completed. There have been a few more things in this journey that I need to include just for my own purposes. This time I wrote an acknowledgement – when I wrote my Masters’ thesis 40 years ago I did not and always regretted it. So many people to thank, I hope I did not leave anybody out.

At the beginning of this dissertation is my poem. I have finally outgrown my poem and have not used it for anything in quite a while. Its last lines do ask though, Communitas? One day we will know more. I was ready to declare communitas dead and buried when I completed my pilot project and now I am getting ready to defend that it exists at community festivals in two forms. At the end of the day, had I not completed this project with an open mind I doubt that ever would have happened. It makes me happy to have created a substantive theory supported by grounded data. It makes me happier to know that I learned what I did not know, and hope to continue to do so.
REFERENCES


Dunstan, G. (1994). *Becoming coastwise, the path of festivals and cultural tourism.* Landscape and Lifestyle Choices for the Northern Rivers of NSW. Lismore: Southern Cross University.


APPENDIX A

CODE BOOK
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused Codes</th>
<th>Definition/Explanation</th>
<th>Examples paraphrased from thick descriptions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRESS/DECOR</td>
<td>References to attendees wearing special clothes or event site having a special theme and decorations</td>
<td>3 men dressed in kilts; couple dressed western with boots and cowboy hats, kids examined the cowboy mannequin with red glass eyes, mom directs kid to stand next to statue for a picture</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Irish Festival, Day of the Cowboy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUD ANIMATION</td>
<td>References to attendee’s non-bonded social interactions, increased physical movement, smiles, laughter, and yelling as well as the luminal/ out of ordinary and unique activity, loud music with a strong bass or drum beat, reaction to more authentic foods</td>
<td>people were holding their hands over their ears in anticipation of guns firing …people laughed and crowded closer to the action; when music fired up people were interested, dancing increased attention span; people surrounded folkloric dancers, clapping, stomping feet, yelling</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Day of the Cowboy, Tale of Two Cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>KIDS/WILD KIDS</td>
<td>References to parents social and physical interactions with their children and other’s children</td>
<td>dad helps 3-year old try roping as mom takes pictures; dad makes sure kids are safe on ride, mom lets kid run wild in stage area; man on cell phone and pays no attention to kids running wild</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Day of the Cowboy, Fiesta Peoria, Irish Festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOREDOM</td>
<td>References to people displaying negative type body language as well as people in a dazed type state, waiting in lines</td>
<td>parents waiting in line have arms folded across chest with eyes looking down at ground; spectators leave in middle of western show; ladies stand in shade, talk on cell phones, very zombie like</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Irish Festival, Day of the Cowboy, Fiesta Peoria</td>
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<td>SOFT ANIMATION</td>
<td>References to people engaged in everyday ordinary activity with little excitement, at a slow pace, very little social or physical interactions with others or surroundings especially background type music</td>
<td>large family group not interested in standard pop songs and leaves stage area, guests not interested in commercial vendor booths; attendees do not care about the horses; seniors sat in shade and drank beer</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Fiesta Peoria, Day of the Cowboy</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUIET LINES</td>
<td>References to people waiting in lines who are not social active verbally, physically or emotionally</td>
<td>People in restroom line looked down, did not touch, did not talk; not interested in others, not interested in amusement sights and</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Irish Festival, Cinco de Mayo</td>
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<td>RUDE BEHAVIOR</td>
<td>References to people that display rude behavior and to others who react to it</td>
<td>sounds</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Irish Festival, National Cowboy Day, Fiesta Peoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUPS</td>
<td>Reference to people who interact socially, physically, and emotionally with others that they came with or knew previously</td>
<td>people sat in family groups, talked to others in their group, walked as a group, waited for others in their group, family camps near stage, family stands in shade together, three moms and kids head towards stage area</td>
<td>Participant Observation at all community festivals</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUSTOMER SERVICE</td>
<td>References to both good and poor customer service provided by those working at the events</td>
<td>DJ at radio booth gives pictures to kids, band plays for themselves – does not interact with crowd, vendors sit at rear of booths quietly, AZ Cardinals staff plays catch and ignores crowd; police sit in shade</td>
<td>Participant Observation at Fiesta Peoria, Irish Festival, National Day of Cowboy</td>
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<tr>
<td>OUTLIERS</td>
<td>Reference to unusual security incidents</td>
<td>actor recognizes guest with real gun, police not concerned about guest with real gun; couple with no kids stands off to side staring at children on amusement rides</td>
<td>Participant Observation at National Day of Cowboy, Fiesta Peoria</td>
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**Axial Coding**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE VERSES COMMONPLACE</th>
<th>Definition/Explanation</th>
<th>Description of Activity</th>
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<td>References to Luminal vs. Everyday Loud vs. Soft Participation vs. waiting Active vs. Passive Excited vs. Bored Event management aspirations</td>
<td><strong>Festive</strong> - People are more physical, emotional, social, and collaboratively creative when participating in luminal experiences that include exciting, loud, authentic activity. These activities include, but are not limited to, loud music with a strong bass beat, authentic food and beverage, unique entertainment, engaging costumed characters, and receiving free things. This is evidenced by more social interactions with strangers, smiling, laughing, dancing, swaying, yelling, people watching, and photo taking while partaking in these activities <strong>Ordinary</strong> - People are more passive,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Focused Codes</td>
</tr>
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subdued, and quiet when participating in ordinary experiences that include boring, soft, everyday type activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, waiting in line, experiencing poor customer service or rude behavior, being spectators, listening to background type music, exposure to common commercial merchandise, and interaction with others dogs. This is evidenced by increased use of cell phones, frowns, negative body language, and a lack of visual and verbal social interaction

**Aspirations** - emphasis on financial, garnering attention, safety, and government regulations aspects of festival planning and production as compared to that demonstrated for programming better experiences and a lack of understanding and unwillingness to talk about the behavior

| SOCIAL CAPITAL | References to bridging and bonding activity | **Bonding** - People talk mostly to people in their own group; people avoid visual, verbal, and touching contact with strangers; family groups are directed by leaders who often pay; physical contact is often maintained with children; groups turn their backs to strangers; people move throughout the event in a group; people in groups smile and laugh more, drink more beer, share food; groups shop together, wait for each other, and sit together.  

**Bridging** - People dress to fit into the crowd; sharing complaints with strangers about poor customer service; mutual disgust of porta-johns; some children run wild; some people open to others when socially engaged; people at authentic activities socially interact with strangers | Focused Codes |
APPENDIX B

IFEA NEWSLETTER CONTENT ANALYSIS
## Examination of Document Data
### IFEA Event Insider - digital newsletters

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| TOTAL | 288 | 77 | 20 | 59 | 89 | 123 | 194 | 59 | 153 | 128 | 76 | 22 | 27 | 59 | 58 | 180 | 106 | 40 | 56 | 1833 |
To: Rhonda Phillips
   UCENT

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
   Soc Beh IRB

Date: 02/20/2012

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 02/20/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1202007462

Study Title: The on-site behavior of attendees at community festivals

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Vern has worked in leisure services for over forty years. He is currently a Faculty Associate at Arizona State University teaching classes in special events management, part of a certificate program he helped to establish. In 2004 Vern retired as special events manager for the city of Glendale, a major suburb of Phoenix, Arizona. As part of the marketing department he directed a special events division that produced major festivals attracting 400,000 visitors annually. In addition, the division permitted over 120 non-city events each year, acted as the city’s film office and had responsibility to produce city ceremonies for Mayor and Council. Glendale is home to both the NHL Phoenix Coyotes NFL Arizona Cardinals. Vern was involved in several aspects of these arena/stadium projects including advanced planning for a future NHL All-Star game and the 2008 Super Bowl. Prior to Glendale, Vern spent 13 years with the City of Phoenix. He began as a park district recreation supervisor, but spent the last 11 years in the Office of Special Events. In this position he coordinated various local host committee elements of the 1996 Super Bowl, the Phoenix Grand Prix and an NBA All-Star Game. His primary responsibility was chairman of the Fabulous Phoenix 4th of July which included the Southwest’s largest fireworks show and top country acts like Alabama. Throughout the years Vern has been active as a festival freelance consultant working with jazz festivals in Phoenix, Scottsdale and Riverside and the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. He still manages a stage for the PF Chang Rock & Roll Marathon, works as an expert witness on festival accidents, and provides operations, sponsorship and survey research assistance to a variety of Arizona based events. In the early part of his career Vern was director of recreation at a retirement community, a correctional recreation supervisor, owned and operated an indoor miniature golf course and penny arcade, and worked part time as a lifeguard, intramural coordinator, and after school playground leader. Vern enjoys volunteering having served as a PTA president, Big Brother, as a board member of the Arizona Swimming Gauchos, as a YMCA youth sports coach, and as a city of Avondale Parks & Recreation and CIP Commission board member. Currently he is a member of the Arizona Centennial Special Events Committee. Vern received his Bachelors Degree in History from University of Utah in 1972 and his Masters Degree in Recreation from Arizona State University in 1976. He is a lifetime Certified Festival & Event Executive through Purdue University and the International Festivals and Events Association. As a founding member of the Arizona Festivals & Events Association, Vern served on its executive board for six years, including two years as President. He is a member of the International Festivals & Events Association and served eight years on its Foundation’s board of directors, has presented numerous education sessions at the annual international conference, and written professional articles for the association’s magazine. Also active in the Arizona Parks & Recreation Association since 1972, Vern served as its President in 1990, interim Executive Director in 2008-09, and was named the organization’s Outstanding Recreation Professional in 1988, Distinguished Professional in 1998, and Emeritus Professional in 2012. He currently serves as chairman of the APRA Foundation. Vern has been married to his wife Betty for 40 years, has two adult children, and triplet grandchildren.