



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

# **Interaction Ritual Chains at the Fringe**

**Katey Warran**

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Edinburgh

School of Social and Political Science

2021

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself, not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification, and, except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Katey Warran

June 2021

## Abstract

‘Measuring’ or ‘capturing’ cultural value is a key endeavour for those who seek to justify the provision of public investment in arts and cultural activities. This approach is commonly manifested in the literature exploring the ‘impact’ of arts festivals, emphasising their transactional ‘benefit’ to individuals and host cities.

In this thesis, I explore an alternative approach to value, analysing it as a meaning-making process in the context of the world’s largest arts festival: the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Using Randall Collins’ (2004) theory of Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs) as a theoretical framework, I examine data collected through ethnographic observations, researcher reflections, documentary analysis, and two-stage focus groups with 18 small groups (production companies and community groups). Grounded in this fieldwork, the study argues that groups are able to derive meaning from Fringe experiences when they align with a shared morality, such as believing in the intrinsic value of art objects and the importance of preserving the Fringe as an ‘open access’ festival. For groups who share this morality, the Fringe acts as a ‘sacred site’ at which to annually ‘perform’ and reaffirm shared beliefs in a public setting, and where meaning is cultivated before and continues after the period of attendance. Further, an emotional contagion effect for ‘believers’ within and across groups is created through successful IRCs, which buttresses and maintains the sacred status of the Fringe.

The thesis concludes that the cultural policy focus on ‘capturing’ cultural value is fruitless because there is no ‘objective’ cultural value. Rather, meaning-making is an on-going and interactive process that extends outwards from art objects and is connected to shared emotions, morality, and beliefs. The major implication of this research for arts organisations and policymakers is that this new way of approaching value can be used to explain why one-off transactional encounters with art objects have only short-term effects. The thesis recommends a shift in focus from individual transactions to group processes, and from short-term funding models to ones that have the potential to facilitate deeper engagement with meaning-making across time and contexts.

## Lay Summary

Those who work for the government or for arts organisations are interested in measuring the value of culture, supporting with decision-making regarding the allocation of public funds in the UK. Policymakers, researchers, and organisers working in the field of arts festivals are also part of this endeavour, in particular exploring what festivals contribute to host cities and how they benefit tourists and local communities.

In this thesis, I propose an alternative way to explore value using the language of ‘meaning-making’ in the context of the world’s largest arts festival: the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. At this festival site, I carried out observations, researcher reflections, documentary analysis, and two-stage focus groups with 18 small groups (production companies and community groups), underpinned by Randall Collins’ (2004) theory of Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs). Drawing on this fieldwork, I argue that groups are able to derive meaning from Fringe experiences when they align with a shared morality, such as believing in the arts as important in and of themselves and in the Fringe as an ‘open access’ festival. For groups who share in this morality, the Fringe acts as a ‘sacred site’ to celebrate shared beliefs and to meaningfully and emotionally connect with one another, where meaning is cultivated before and continues after the period of attendance. These emotional experiences maintain the sacred status of the Fringe and foster feelings of solidarity for groups.

The thesis concludes that the current focus from policymakers and arts organisations on measuring the value of culture is fruitless because there is no ‘objective’ value to capture. Rather, meaning-making is an on-going and interactive process that extends outwards from art objects and is connected to shared emotions, morality, and beliefs. The major implication of this research is that this new way of approaching value can be used to explain why one-off encounters with the arts have only short-term effects. The thesis recommends a shift in focus from the impact of the arts for individuals to group-level arts experiences, and from short-term funding models to ones that have the potential to facilitate deeper engagement with meaning-making across time and contexts.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities for providing the funding for this project and for the academic support services provided throughout its duration.

I would also like to thank my academic supervisors: Dr Lisa McCormick and Professor David Stevenson. Together, you have provided me with an incredible fusion of knowledge and passion that has enabled me to execute an interdisciplinary and intellectually stimulating project. I am grateful to you both for your continued support and willingness to engage in my work and its development.

I am also grateful to have had an industry supervisor – Lyndsey Jackson. Thank you to you and to all of the staff at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society for your advice, support, insights, and openness to this study. Thank you to Lyndsey McLean, Julie Laerkholm, Kevin Kimber, Matt Lord, and Ellinor Fristorp in particular for your on-the-ground help in the empirical parts of the study.

I would also like to thank the participants who gave their time to participate, as well as the people in my academic circles who have provided motivation and guidance throughout. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Laura Wright, Dr Daisy Fancourt, Dr Katie Overy, Kath Bassett, Lisa Howard, Poppy Gerrard-Abbott, Eva Duncanson, and Dr Alexandra Burton. Your intellectual stimulation has been invaluable.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family. In particular, I would like to thank my partner Luke for continually telling me that, ‘a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step’. Thank you for believing in me and for being there every step of the way.

# Contents

|                                                                    |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Declaration .....</b>                                           | <b>i</b>   |
| <b>Abstract .....</b>                                              | <b>ii</b>  |
| <b>Lay Summary .....</b>                                           | <b>iii</b> |
| <b>Acknowledgements .....</b>                                      | <b>iv</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>                               | <b>1</b>   |
| 1.1 Introducing the Edinburgh Festival Fringe .....                | 5          |
| 1.2 A note on interdisciplinarity .....                            | 10         |
| 1.3 Outline of the thesis .....                                    | 11         |
| <b>Chapter 2: Positioning my research .....</b>                    | <b>16</b>  |
| Part one: The literature .....                                     | 17         |
| 2.1 Contemporary festival research .....                           | 17         |
| 2.2 The language of the cultural & creative industries (CCI) ..... | 20         |
| 2.3 A transactional frame .....                                    | 22         |
| 2.3.1 Cultural production .....                                    | 23         |
| 2.3.2 Cultural consumption .....                                   | 25         |
| 2.3.3 Cultural value .....                                         | 27         |
| 2.4 Cultural Sociology and the new Sociology of the arts .....     | 32         |
| Part two: Theoretical underpinnings .....                          | 35         |
| 2.5 Durkheimian Sociology .....                                    | 35         |
| 2.6 Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs) .....                         | 39         |
| 2.6.1 A sociology of situations .....                              | 44         |
| 2.7 Summary .....                                                  | 46         |
| 2.8 Statement of research questions .....                          | 47         |
| <b>Chapter 3: Methodology .....</b>                                | <b>49</b>  |
| 3.1 Ethnography .....                                              | 49         |
| 3.2 Research site: The Fringe .....                                | 51         |
| 3.2.1 Small groups .....                                           | 53         |
| 3.3 Methods .....                                                  | 54         |
| 3.3.1 Participants .....                                           | 55         |
| 3.3.2 Production companies .....                                   | 55         |
| 3.3.3 Community groups .....                                       | 57         |
| 3.3.4 Focus groups .....                                           | 59         |
| 3.3.5 Observations and fieldnotes .....                            | 61         |
| 3.3.6 Operationalising Interaction Ritual Chain theory .....       | 62         |
| 3.3.7 Negotiating being an 'observer' .....                        | 64         |
| 3.3.8 Observer as participant .....                                | 64         |
| 3.3.9 Participant as observer .....                                | 65         |
| 3.3.10 Documents and media .....                                   | 66         |
| 3.4 Analytic procedure .....                                       | 67         |
| 3.4.1 Coding frame .....                                           | 69         |

|                   |                                                            |            |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 3.5               | Ethics .....                                               | 70         |
| 3.6               | Researcher reflexivity .....                               | 71         |
| <b>Chapter 4:</b> | <b>Theorising meaning at the Fringe .....</b>              | <b>73</b>  |
| 4.1               | Constructing a theoretical model: IRCs at the Fringe ..... | 73         |
| 4.2               | Moral community of the arts .....                          | 77         |
| 4.2.1             | Revering the arts in and of themselves .....               | 77         |
| 4.2.2             | Striving for excellence .....                              | 79         |
| 4.2.3             | Transformative experiences .....                           | 81         |
| 4.3               | The Fringe Tribe .....                                     | 83         |
| 4.3.1             | Origin legend .....                                        | 85         |
| 4.3.2             | Open access .....                                          | 86         |
| 4.3.3             | Other memberships .....                                    | 88         |
| 4.3.4             | Arts festival community .....                              | 89         |
| 4.3.5             | Venue membership .....                                     | 91         |
| 4.4               | The Fringe as a sacred site .....                          | 92         |
| 4.5               | Conclusion .....                                           | 94         |
| 4.6               | Towards case study analyses of small groups .....          | 95         |
| <b>Chapter 5:</b> | <b>Exploring a chain of socially successful IRCs .....</b> | <b>97</b>  |
| 5.1               | About Collective Whispering .....                          | 98         |
| 5.2               | Ritual ingredients .....                                   | 99         |
| 5.2.1             | Group assembly and mutual focus of attention .....         | 99         |
| 5.2.2             | Social density and ritual intensity .....                  | 101        |
| 5.2.3             | Shared mood .....                                          | 103        |
| 5.2.4             | Rhythmic entrainment .....                                 | 105        |
| 5.2.5             | Vulnerability and sacrifice .....                          | 106        |
| 5.3               | Collective effervescence .....                             | 108        |
| 5.4               | Group challenge .....                                      | 110        |
| 5.5               | Ritual outcomes .....                                      | 113        |
| 5.5.1             | Deepened social relationships .....                        | 113        |
| 5.5.2             | EE in the individual .....                                 | 115        |
| 5.5.3             | Group identity and group solidarity .....                  | 117        |
| 5.5.4             | Embodiment of group identity .....                         | 119        |
| 5.6               | Group self-reflexivity .....                               | 120        |
| 5.7               | Conclusion .....                                           | 122        |
| <b>Chapter 6:</b> | <b>The Fringe and “the imbalance of expectations” ....</b> | <b>123</b> |
| 6.1               | About Attractive Figures .....                             | 124        |
| 6.2               | Fringe expectations .....                                  | 125        |
| 6.2.1             | Expectations of their venue and of the Fringe .....        | 127        |
| 6.2.2             | Sources of expectations .....                              | 129        |
| 6.2.3             | ‘Performing’ their expectations .....                      | 132        |
| 6.2.4             | Unmet expectations .....                                   | 133        |
| 6.3               | Finding a group dynamic to continue at the Fringe .....    | 139        |
| 6.4               | Changing ‘emotional resonance’ .....                       | 140        |
| 6.5               | ‘Fun’ and feelings of ‘survival’ .....                     | 143        |

|                    |                                                                   |            |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 6.6                | Conclusion.....                                                   | 147        |
| <b>Chapter 7:</b>  | <b>Challenging experiences can foster group solidarity</b>        | <b>149</b> |
| 7.1                | Background to Gig Buddies and 9 to 5.....                         | 150        |
| 7.2                | Setting up the challenge: why 9 to 5?.....                        | 152        |
| 7.3                | Charismatic leadership and group imagination .....                | 154        |
| 7.4                | Trust and friendship.....                                         | 159        |
| 7.5                | Going ‘through something together’ .....                          | 161        |
| 7.6                | Excitement and feeling ‘ready’ .....                              | 162        |
| 7.7                | Frustration .....                                                 | 164        |
| 7.8                | Clubbing and collective effervescence .....                       | 168        |
| 7.9                | A shared sense of “we did it” .....                               | 170        |
| 7.10               | Sustaining positive emotions .....                                | 171        |
| 7.11               | Conclusion.....                                                   | 172        |
| <b>Chapter 8:</b>  | <b>“It’s not for us” – feelings of exclusion .....</b>            | <b>174</b> |
| 8.1                | About the Citadel and New Spin.....                               | 175        |
| 8.2                | Contextual factors influencing IRCs .....                         | 176        |
| 8.3                | IRC’s at the sacred site of the Citadel .....                     | 177        |
| 8.4                | New Spin at the Fringe .....                                      | 183        |
| 8.5                | An incomplete ‘day out’ .....                                     | 192        |
| 8.6                | Group reflexivity and Fringe Society staff connections.....       | 194        |
| 8.7                | ‘Leithers’ need active participation in the Fringe .....          | 197        |
| 8.8                | Conclusion.....                                                   | 199        |
| <b>Chapter 9:</b>  | <b>Understanding meaning-making at the Fringe .....</b>           | <b>201</b> |
| 9.1                | Key ritual ingredients at the Fringe: exploring question two ..   | 203        |
| 9.1.1              | Pre-existing group solidarity.....                                | 203        |
| 9.1.2              | Charismatic leadership .....                                      | 206        |
| 9.2                | Situations and IRCs: Exploring question three .....               | 208        |
| 9.2.1              | Overcoming challenges .....                                       | 208        |
| 9.2.2              | How challenges can be overcome .....                              | 208        |
| 9.2.3              | When challenges cannot be overcome.....                           | 210        |
| 9.2.4              | Optimum emotional arousal .....                                   | 212        |
| 9.3                | Why emotional flow is important: Exploring question four .....    | 215        |
| 9.3.1              | ‘Performing’ at the sacred site .....                             | 219        |
| 9.4                | So, what can make the Fringe a meaningful experience?.....        | 221        |
| <b>Chapter 10:</b> | <b>Implications and conclusions.....</b>                          | <b>223</b> |
| 10.1               | Implications for the Fringe Society and for cultural policy ..... | 223        |
| 10.2               | What does this research mean in the context of COVID-19? .....    | 236        |
| 10.2.1             | Absence of group assembly (bodily co-presence) .....              | 237        |

|                           |                                                 |            |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 10.2.2                    | No opportunity to meet at the sacred site ..... | 239        |
| 10.2.3                    | Digital participation.....                      | 240        |
| 10.3                      | Final reflections .....                         | 241        |
| <b>Bibliography .....</b> |                                                 | <b>243</b> |
| <b>Appendices .....</b>   |                                                 | <b>257</b> |

### List of figures:

|                                                                                                                                                                 |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Figure 1. Collins' (2004, p.48) emotional-entrainment model .....</i>                                                                                        | <i>40</i>  |
| <i>Figure 2. How Collins' (2004) model was translated into focus group questions .....</i>                                                                      | <i>61</i>  |
| <i>Figure 3. Interaction Ritual Chains at the Fringe. ....</i>                                                                                                  | <i>76</i>  |
| <i>Figure 4. IRCs at the Fringe with ingredients and outcomes for Collective Whispering, developed from Collins' (2004) model. ....</i>                         | <i>98</i>  |
| <i>Figure 5. IRCs at the Fringe with ingredients and outcomes for Gig Buddies, developed from Collins' (2004) model. ....</i>                                   | <i>150</i> |
| <i>Figure 6. Map showing where the Citadel Youth Centre is located.....</i>                                                                                     | <i>181</i> |
| <i>Figure 7. Key ritual ingredients and emotional feedback loops that construct meaningful experience at the Fringe. ....</i>                                   | <i>202</i> |
| <i>Figure 8. How a challenge can be overcome by carrying over high EE from previous IRs and reinvesting it in future IRs that are socially successful .....</i> | <i>210</i> |

### List of tables:

|                                                                   |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Table 1. Production companies recruited .....</i>              | <i>56</i> |
| <i>Table 2. Community groups recruited .....</i>                  | <i>58</i> |
| <i>Table 3. Number of participants per focus group .....</i>      | <i>60</i> |
| <i>Table 4. How IRC theory was adapted for observations .....</i> | <i>63</i> |
| <i>Table 5. Example of coding frame .....</i>                     | <i>69</i> |

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Why are the arts important to individuals and to society? What value do they have and how can we articulate this value to improve cultural policymaking?* Understanding the ‘value’ of ‘arts experiences’ – a term used broadly here to denote any experience of artistic phenomena, whether participatory or receptive across music, visual arts, performing arts, or literature, to just give a few examples – is central to cultural policy and practice, both for policymakers and academics. Namely, seeking to explain why it is justified in the UK to fund the arts, for example highlighting their ‘positive’ benefits, such as to individual wellbeing, or to improving education and healthcare, and answering these questions of why the arts matter has been at the forefront of research over the last 30 years (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016, p. 4). Furthermore, these questions have particular relevance for arts festivals because of their perceived potential to benefit host cities, contributing to urban and cultural regeneration, bringing in economic income and having a ‘social impact’ such as providing opportunities for communities to celebrate and affirm a shared identity (Crossick, 2019; Langen & Garcia, 2009; Li et al., 2017).

In view of these questions, the term ‘cultural value’ has been used as a way to understand and optimise arts experiences, denoting a broad conception of ‘value’, from the instrumental value of the arts to society through to the intrinsic value of the aesthetic experience (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). A key publication highlighting this emphasis is the 2016 report from the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s (AHRC) Cultural Value Project aptly entitled *Understanding the value of arts & culture* which brought together 70 research projects to ‘explore why the arts and culture matter’ and to ‘capture the effects that they have’ (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016, p. 4). Understanding and justifying the value of arts experiences has also been high up on the agenda for arts organisations to ensure equal access, seeking to provide and demonstrate inclusive opportunities where anyone can derive meaning from engaging with their offerings. For example, Hamilton et al. (2007) in their evaluation of the Highland Year of Culture, which included festivals as one of their biggest ‘successes’, reported that organisers had experienced ‘benefits’ in relation to the social capital of the Highlands and Islands throughout the festival year, including the increased

involvement of young people in community life, and a stronger sense of collective achievement and potential.

Despite the prevalence of research in this area, these questions, justifications, and the language used to talk about 'cultural value' is highly contested: there is 'no single, cohesive articulation of cultural value' (Oancea et al., 2015); it has been described as a 'construct of policy' (Holden, 2004) making it problematic to employ as a term outside of policy debates; and, the obsession to 'measure' or 'capture' cultural value has led to a questioning of whether researchers have lost sight of 'the actual experience' of the arts (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2014, p. 120). Further, these disputes exist within the landscape of evidence-based policymaking in UK cultural policy, whereby the best way to capture 'value' is viewed within a cause and effect frame of 'robust' evidence regarding the 'impact' of the arts (Jancovich & Stevenson, 2021; Sanderson, 2002).

Within this context, questions have been raised over whether it is even possible to talk about the arts as having a 'value' that can be measured at all, and whether it would be better understood as a process of valuing (Stevenson, 2013; Sutherland & Gosling, 2010). There is an ongoing 'cultural value debate' within which policymaking has been described as 'calcified' and 'wedded to the same types of structures, routines and interventions that have been employed for decades' (Stevenson, 2017), with little hope of alternative approaches to understand why the arts are important that can resolve this impasse.

This research problem of how to move beyond this gridlock of 'capturing' cultural value is core to the endeavour of this thesis, seeking to provide a new way to explore and examine why the arts matter, both epistemologically and methodologically. It seems to me that the questions asked in relation to the 'value' of the arts, and the language and concepts employed to explore and answer them, are what has led to this problem in cultural policy. There is much we can learn from the discipline of cultural sociology and a conceptual language of processual 'meaning-making', in contrast to 'value', which can begin the process of moving away from the research obsession with capturing, measuring, and articulating an objective 'cultural value', towards a more nuanced approach that can account for the complexity of experiential processes in the context of the arts.

Firstly, we need to stop talking about the arts as if our encounters are cause and effect transactions with static art objects because how people interpret arts

experiences ‘comes from the meaningful world around them’ and it is ‘constituted by other people’ - it is ultimately something shared and co-constructed (Reed, 2017, p. 28). Value is not static but rather connected to the social processes of meaning-making – the group-level is an important and missing analytic level on this topic. As Durkheim argued:

The group thinks, feels and acts entirely differently from the way its members would if they were isolated. If therefore we begin by studying these members separately, we will understand nothing about what is taking place in the group (Durkheim, 1895 [1982], p.129)

Thus, to understand the value of the arts and their potential role in holding society together (as per the language of ‘social impacts’ in cultural policy), we must recognise that collective experiences are important. This is a widely recognised level of analysis within the field of cultural sociology where unpacking the meanings of social interactions and group memberships has been important to exploring shared beliefs, foundational to understanding where meanings come from and how they influence what we do (Spillman, 2020, pp. 1–2). Given the core focus on ‘why arts and culture matter’ therefore, it is surprising that very few policymakers and arts organisations have sought to analyse the ‘group’ level. There has been some tendency to talk about the importance of the arts for ‘communities’, but the ‘methodological collectivism’ embedded in Durkheim’s quote above, is entirely absent, with ‘methodological individualism’ given centre stage.<sup>1</sup> Namely, even when cultural policy documents state that they seek to explore the ‘value’ of the arts for communities, they stay focused on ‘value’ at the *subjective*, individual level (Arts Council England, 2018; Creative Scotland, 2016; Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016; The Scottish Government, 2020).

Secondly, and interconnected to this emphasis on subjectivity, there has been a dominance within cultural policy research in recent years on exploring the ‘beneficial’ or ‘positive’ aspects of arts’ experiences (see Jancovich & Stevenson, 2021). This has been, to some extent, because of the need for UK arts organisations to prove that they are worthy of public funding, seeking to position themselves as important contributors to society. To this, I respond: Isn’t there something to be gained from going through conventionally perceived ‘negative’ or ‘challenging’ experiences within arts contexts?

---

<sup>1</sup> Methodological collectivism is a commitment to acknowledging that ‘social phenomena cannot be explained solely in terms of individuals and their intentional states’ (Tollefsen, 2014, p. 86).

It seems to me that there is something about going through a shared experience with others – whether emotionally positive or negative – that is the bedrock of meaningful human experience. As Collins & McConnell (2015) argue:

...often the pathway towards a successful encounter is to start with a strong emotion that is easily shared. It need not be a positive emotion. Very strong negative emotions, like grief, can produce successful attunement... strong emotions like fear can bring people together (as they typically do in a disaster or threatening situation).<sup>2</sup>

Focusing only on the psychological component of what is ‘positive’ about the arts overlooks an understanding of the shared meaning-making processes that give art such strong associated meanings. There is a more nuanced picture of why arts experiences are important.

Thus, if meaning is co-constructed *with others* based on our participation in different *shared emotional experiences*, whether this be social interaction on a micro-level such as between two friends, membership of a small group such as a theatre company, or slightly larger collective experiences such as engaging with crowds at an arts festival, then we need to understand how meaning-making operates at these ‘group’ levels of analysis. This is the endeavour of this thesis. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork carried out at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2019 and collaborating with the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society (a charitable organisation that acts as the custodian of the Fringe), I explore meaning-making processes at a small group level in the context of the world’s largest arts festival, asking the following lead research question:

---

**What makes the Edinburgh Festival Fringe a meaningful experience for participating groups?**

---

Answering this question provides an opportunity to construct an understanding of meaning-making at a group level in the context of an arts festival, in contrast to individual or societal ‘cultural value’. Further, I propose that Randall Collins’ (2004)

---

<sup>2</sup> Whilst someone may experience in-the-moment ‘negative’ emotional states such as fear, hate, or rage, rituals are ‘emotion transformers, and can turn negative emotions into positive ones’ (Collins, 2004, pp. 92, 129). *Emotional sentiment can change across situations* and this will be explored in greater detail throughout the thesis (see particularly pp.167, 208-214).

theory of Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs) is a suitable conceptual tool to unpack these processes, recognising that an approach that accounts for interactions and emotions *across situations* is important to moving beyond the notion that only ‘positive’ experiences are important. That is, we need to examine all kinds of in-the-moment emotional experiences (whether perceived of as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’) in view of the wider chain of interactions that surround these emotions to understand better whether they have any kind of meaning for groups beyond a momentary interaction with an art object. However, before explaining why IRCs is an appropriate theoretical foundation for this research; first, I introduce the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and then provide a brief outline of the thesis and the chapters within it, before moving on to position my work within the literature relevant to this topic.

## 1.1 Introducing the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe (Fringe) is the world’s largest annual performing arts festival that currently runs every August in the city of Edinburgh for three weeks, bringing together a range of different performance genres including cabaret and variety, children’s shows, comedy, dance, physical theatre, circus, music, musicals, opera, spoken word, and theatre (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018c).<sup>3</sup> The history of the Fringe cannot be explained through only ‘what happened’ when it was conceived and as it developed because it is also characterised by the changing beliefs and debates regarding what the Fringe represents and who it is for. Throughout this section, I briefly outline the historical context of the Fringe and explore these meaning struggles as a way to introduce my fieldsite.

The Fringe was initially set up in reaction to the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) which was formed in 1947 to ‘reinstat e civilised values, promote peace’ and ‘bring people of the world together’ following the austerity of the war (Bartie, 2013). In general, the post–World War II era has come to be viewed as a pivotal moment in UK cultural history where, following the war, the Arts Council of Great Britain was conceived, and attention was given to generating and growing arts and cultural engagement across the UK (Arts Council England, 2020c). John Maynard Keynes

---

<sup>3</sup> Whist the Fringe has taken place annually in the city of Edinburgh since it began in 1947, for 2020, the in-person festival was cancelled due to COVID-19, with an online festival taking its place. I discuss further the implications of this in chapter ten.

(Chair of the Committee for Encouragement of Music and the Arts which the Arts Council formed out of) is considered one of the key players in the developments of this time (Sinclair, 1995, p. 45). His policy focus was on artistic excellence, supporting 'quality' work, and privileging the views of the 'intellectual elite' which influenced how decisions were made regarding the distribution of arts funding (Upchurch, 2016, pp. 116–117). Namely, policymakers prioritised the provision of support for professional artists, with amateur artists and issues of accessibility falling by the wayside (Upchurch, 2016, p. 118). As this was an economically difficult time for government, the Arts Council also leaned towards funding work that was mainstream, and based in London, with an emphasis on 'safe' works to ensure audience engagement; the West End was considered 'unadventurous', with the cultural scene 'dead', and has since been interpreted as a time representative of right-wing orthodoxy (Bartie, 2013, p. 45). It was against this post-war mood that the EIF was formed by Rudolf Bing (General Manager of Glyndebourne Festival Opera), also sparking the productions that have come to be viewed as the start of the Fringe, with the EIF and Fringe coming to have very different symbolic meanings.

Explaining further, Bing decided that he wanted to 'pay tribute to Britain's struggle during the war', as well as seek to solve financial problems that Glyndebourne Opera were experiencing through hosting an international arts festival (Bartie, 2013, p. 23). However, Edinburgh was not his first choice and he considered numerous English cities before eventually deciding on Edinburgh, with 'legend' arguing that he chose Edinburgh because of its picturesque setting and the castle which 'had a Salzburg flavour' (Bartie, 2013, p. 24; Bing, 1972). Thus, the physical landscape of Edinburgh as a beautiful, historic city played a bigger role in the choice of city for the EIF than Edinburgh's performing arts traditions (Shrum, 1996, p. 64). This led to somewhat of a controversy amongst local residents in Edinburgh, with the EIF perceived as a 'high art' elitist imposition from England (Shrum, 1996, p. 66); as highlighted in media at the time, there was a 'demand for a great increase in the Scottish element' of the festival to present local artistic talents in the line-up (Heaton, 1947).

The EIF was viewed as an 'interpreter of the arts', made up of decision-makers who decided what artistic work was worthy of being programmed and, naturally, this caused outrage amongst artists who sought for greater accessibility, particularly Scottish artists who felt mis- and under- represented in the official EIF (Bartie, 2013).

Accordingly, in the first year of the EIF in 1947, eight theatre groups turned up uninvited and unannounced (six from Scotland and two from England), seeking to stand up to the elite and carrying out a political agenda of nationalism, Scottish identity and inclusion (Bartie, 2013; Shrum, 1996, p. 65). The significance of six of these groups coming from Scotland is also clear; these initial Fringe groups, in part, wanted to represent Scottish artists and to claim the city as their own. Moreover, these groups were amateur companies and it's been suggested by Moffat (1978 p.15) that the first Fringe may have been a showcase of 'the strength of amateur drama in Scotland', with it also seen by some, such as the Glasgow Unity Theatre, as an opportunity to provide theatre to the masses, rather than to the elite.

Initially then, those who participated in the Fringe had activist motivations to provide a platform for amateur and Scottish groups to perform for Scottish and international audiences and positioning themselves against the perceived elitism of the EIF. To this day, the essence of this initial Fringe formation as a progressive arts festival is present, to some extent, within the language used to describe the Fringe. As it grew and became more organised, there was a need for a 'complete programme of all the events' and for an information bureau and box office to sell tickets and so the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society (Fringe Society) was founded in 1958 as the custodian of the Fringe (Moffat, 1978, pp. 43–44). The Fringe Society's website today states:

Its [The Fringe Society's] constitution was written in line with the ethos that brought these theatre companies to Edinburgh back in 1947; that: the Society was to take no part in vetting the festival's programme. To this day that policy remains at the core of our festival and we're proud to include in our programme anyone with a story to tell and a venue willing to host them.

These connotations of the Fringe as 'for everyone' and as 'open access' are what has made it so attractive for performers and audiences since its inception, and the Fringe Society continue to advocate for inclusion and do not curate the festival, rather supporting performing companies, audiences, and community groups in Edinburgh to engage with the Fringe (such as community centres, youth groups and charities).

The beginnings of the Fringe are complex however, with it hard to identify the exact moment when the words 'the Fringe' began to have a unique meaning; as Shrum (1996, p. 67) notes, these words came to represent 'all styles, genres, and sub-genres', a particular 'approach' to performance rather than just simply being

productions not included in the EIF, but exactly when this happened is unclear. Nonetheless, these early years can be seen as the foundations for why the Fringe is advocated for as 'at the centre of a global movement' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a) and 'fantastically important' to those who engage in the performing arts, as stated by comedian Stephen Fry (The Newsroom, 2019). The Fringe is constructed as having a special quality that sets it apart from the mundanity of everyday life and revered, also representing an ideal image of artistic freedom in contrast to conceptions of 'high art'.

However, whilst this 'open access' principle is maintained and advocated for by the Fringe Society, this is a complex picture because the Fringe has also come to be viewed as exclusory, prohibitive, and reinforcing social inequalities as well, meaning that whilst on the surface it is open to 'everyone' with anyone able to register a show in the Fringe Society's programme if they can find and afford a venue, only certain groups feel welcome (Jamieson, 2004). So, how did this happen?

One of the key developments of the Fringe that helps to explain how these exclusory narratives gained prominence is what Shrum (1996, p. 106) describes as 'supervenues' which were introduced at the Fringe throughout the 80s and 90s when there was also a rapid growth in the number of shows put on, growing from 120 in 1970 to 1,237 in 1995 (Shrum, 1996, p.90). These are organisations that have multiple venue locations all branded under the same organisational umbrella who curate their performance programmes, seeking to provide 'quality' in amongst the mass offerings that the Fringe as a whole provides. The clearest example of the supervenues is what has come to be known as 'The Big Four'; a term used by Fringe performing companies and audiences, as well as reviewers and the media. 'The Big Four' venues of Assembly, Gilded Balloon, Pleasance, and Underbelly have a reputation for presenting professional work, and also for holding a greater potential for 'making it' in the industry, particularly in the genre of comedy (Shrum, 1996, pp. 107–108). These four venues even have their own combined programme (physical booklet and app) called 'EdFest' which is separate, and supplemental to, the 'official' Fringe programme produced by the Fringe Society, branded 'the best Comedy, Theatre and Entertainment at The Edinburgh Festival Fringe' (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Through curation of 'quality' work at the Fringe via supervenues, the 'myth' of 'discovery' also gained prominence; the notion that one might be 'spotted' at the Fringe and acquire fame and fortune (Shrum, 1996, Chapter 5). Whilst there have been cases

of this happening at the Fringe (for example, Phoebe Waller-Bridge who allegedly made her name via her 2013 Fringe show 'Fleabag'; see Jones, 2020 and Wood, 2020), these individuals are the exceptions rather than the rule, acting like symbols of 'discovery' and providing stories of fame that encourage excitement in newcomers and emerging artists.<sup>4</sup> These four supervenues are not the only organisations viewed as 'professional' and thereby also feeding this myth; in the genre of theatre, the Traverse Theatre and Summerhall for example have come to be associated with curating quality work, and the introduction of awards, such as The Scotsman Fringe First Award in 1977, provide a marker of artistic success at the Fringe. Moreover, the 'comedy boom' of the 1980s where comedy rapidly burgeoned across the UK surely had an influence on how the Fringe came to be viewed as a place for comedians to be spotted, where the Fringe was viewed as an ideal site for commercial operators to trial new stand-ups and gain critical and commercial attention for their work. The supervenues have, nonetheless, come to represent success, viewed as professional powerhouses that present quality work, provide networking opportunities and potential career success for artists.

The 'supervenue' and 'curated' development of the Fringe provides an interesting and complex addition to what 'the Fringe' might mean for groups and individuals who participate in the festival. As argued by Shrum (1996, p. 106), these venues depart from 'the overall Fringe policy of nonselectivity' and are 'criticised as not representing the true spirit of the Fringe', creating tensions amongst groups who attend the Fringe. For example, concerned with the rising elitism of the Fringe, and the rising costs associated with participating, PBH's (Peter Buckley Hill's) Free Fringe was developed in 1996, with other Free Fringes emerging later, such as Laughing Horse in 2004. A new sense of 'Fringe' identity formed through these free venues which sought to position themselves against the perceived inequalities of the supervenue programmes which were viewed as exclusory.

As documented in the media as the Fringe got bigger and the focus shifted away from Scottish and amateur work, residents also expressed their feelings of exclusion, with communities in Edinburgh to this day arguing that the Fringe should have a greater focus on 'Edinburgh people' and 'ordinary people', as represented in

---

<sup>4</sup> Suggestions of people becoming 'known' or making 'fame' at the Fringe can also be contested because much more has gone into achieving critical and audience acclaim than the Fringe show alone.

the local media (Gourtsoyannis, 2014; Shedden, 2019). Whilst this language of 'ordinary people' is somewhat nonspecific and it is difficult to determine exactly who the 'local people' of Edinburgh are, and how they wish to be included, this rhetoric is symbolic of the meanings associated with the Fringe, where residents may position themselves against the Fringe, and other Edinburgh festivals, viewing the Fringe as representative of a 'Disney-fication of the city' (Shedden, 2019). This is complicated to unpack as residents are the largest ticket-buying audience and many do report enjoying the Fringe but, on this view of anti-tourism, resident groups may also be viewed as uniting over a shared aversion to aspects of the Fringe.

In view of the lead question of this thesis concerning what makes the Fringe meaningful, this backdrop of the Fringe as associated with multiple meanings of both open access and exclusion, different kinds of group and organisational memberships, and the potential tensions between local residents and those who visit Edinburgh for the Fringe presents multifaceted social conditions that require in-depth analysis to unpack. However, as the Fringe has a complex social structure and there are multiple groups (of varying sizes) who engage with the Fringe in a range of ways, this thesis primarily focuses on two kinds of groups and their meaning-making processes at the Fringe – production companies and community groups. This shall be justified further later in the methodology. In sum of this section, what is important to this thesis is how the structure of the Fringe provides different opportunities for these groups to have meaningful experiences, how meanings are created, and what unites those who choose to engage with the Fringe.

## **1.2 A note on interdisciplinarity**

A note on the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis is important to understanding its style and execution.

Abbott (2004, pp. 113–120) argues that 'search heuristics' are a way to innovate and 'get new ideas', with one way of doing this described as 'borrowing a method'. By this, Abbott (2004, p.113) means borrowing a 'whole apparatus of analysis' from one discipline and applying it to another to create new knowledge in a way that has never been done before. This is the foundation of how this thesis seeks to move forward the cultural value debate; by 'borrowing' analytical tools, concepts,

and ways of thinking from cultural sociology, it sets out to explore and unpack meaning in a new way that provides a unique contribution to knowledge.

However, innovating in this way comes with its own unique challenges. As noted by Gray (2010, p.226), combining disciplines and methodologies can result in 'ontological and epistemological concerns' as well as 'an element of incompatibility between disciplines and approaches'. The language of cultural sociology that is used in this thesis (underpinned by Collins' (2004) theory of Interaction Ritual Chains) will likely be new to those from cultural policy and the significance of why the group-level is important to understanding the 'cultural value' of the arts in cultural policy may seem less obvious to cultural sociologists who have been analysing meaning-making processes for decades. Nonetheless, this is an opportunity for a mutual knowledge exchange. For policymakers and arts organisations, the thesis can provide new tools and language from cultural sociology to develop innovative ways of thinking about value within current positivist evidence-based approaches; and, for sociologists, it can develop theory that has tended to remain in the academy, operationalising theory and applying it.

At this starting point of the thesis, I ask the reader to embrace the breaking down of disciplinary boundaries that may at first raise some of the concerns stated by Gray (2010), and embark on the search in this thesis to find a meeting point between cultural policy and cultural sociology to answer the question of what makes the Edinburgh Festival Fringe a meaningful experience for participating groups.

### **1.3 Outline of the thesis**

*Chapter two* positions the research within the relevant literature, highlighting that the dominant approach within festival research is to explore economic and social impact, with this literature underlined by wider trends in cultural policy founded upon a transactional cause-and-effect frame of value, limiting our understanding of why arts experiences are meaningful. The chapter then explores how literature from cultural sociology and the 'new sociology of the arts' has been better able to identify the key processes of meaning-making, acknowledging an interrelationship between social and artistic experiences, rather than viewing value as something static and 'achieved'. Part two of the chapter positions the thesis within its theoretical framework of

microsociology and Durkheimian perspectives, arguing that Collins' (2004) theory of Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs) can be used to answer the lead question of this thesis regarding what makes the Fringe a meaningful experience. The chapter concludes with a statement of additional research questions, seeking to unpack meaning-making processes using the language of Interaction Ritual Chain theory; exploring ritual ingredients that may increase socially successful IRs (i.e., high ritual outcomes across a chain of interactions) for small groups (question two), how IRCs succeed or fail at the Fringe (question three), and what social conditions may maintain and develop shared meanings for small groups at the Fringe (question four).

*Chapter three* justifies and outlines the methodology and methods of the thesis, arguing that ethnography is a suitable approach to take. It outlines the research site of the study, presenting the project as a studentship that involved working with the organisational partner of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, with their operations setting the stage for a focus on three conceptual areas of study (the Fringe Society and their organisation as a whole, the work of the participant services team and the small groups who they support, and the work of the community engagement team and the small groups who they support). The chapter explains how Collins' IRC theory was operationalised in the research, such as through ethnographic observations and focus groups before describing the suitability and application of using case studies to explore the IRCs of the small groups included in the thesis.

*Chapter four* begins the process of theorising meaning at the Fringe through drawing on the project's fieldwork, developing theoretical concepts which are used throughout the rest of the thesis (moral community of the arts, the Fringe Tribe, imagined communities). Through the presentation of a new theoretical model ('IRCs at the Fringe'), the chapter argues that beliefs at the Fringe circulate across different social levels (micro and meso), whereby meaning is constructed within a shared moral frame. In so doing, the chapter establishes how and why the Fringe may be viewed as a 'sacred site', whereby the beliefs that circulate are heightened at the Fringe because those who share in this morality (such as revering art objects and believing in the importance of 'open access' at the Fringe) gather together in-person and create emotional feedback loops that sustain the Fringe's important status. The 'IRCs at the Fringe' model is then presented as a useful backdrop in which to situate the case studies that follow.

*Chapter five* presents the first case study of the thesis - a student production company called *Collective Whispering*<sup>5</sup> - to explore a chain of socially successful IRCs, with the purpose of highlighting that meaningful arts experiences happen *across* situations and cannot be reduced down to one-off encounters. It shows how meaning-making processes at the Fringe begin before arriving at the Fringe, with the group able to build upon their pre-existing group solidarity in a meaningful way through their Fringe experiences because they already had a strong group dynamic. Further, the chapter proposes that part of what enabled the group to have a meaningful Fringe was that the group's imagined expectations of it aligned with their group identity, which may not be the case for every group, as shown in the next chapter.

*Chapter six* engages with the case study of production company *Attractive Figures* to argue that expectations of the Fringe ahead of attending play a vital role in how IRCs happen at the sacred site. Charting *Attractive Figures'* relationship with staff at their Fringe venue, the chapter presents an example of what happens when expectations are not met: a risk is posed to meaningful experience. Exploring how the group navigated their unmet expectations through IRs of fun and constructing a shared group narrative of 'survival', the chapter shows how this risk can be mitigated if a group has strong pre-existing solidarity, but ultimately argues that arts organisations should take seriously the expectations that they allow to form through their organisational practices.

*Chapter seven* uses the case of *Gig Buddies* (a community organisation) to counter the dominant narrative in a range of research seeking to measure the 'positive impact' of the arts, arguing that in-the-moment challenging experiences that may prompt 'negative' emotions can be viewed as meaningful and contributing factors to group solidarity across IRCs in the longer-term. The chapter concludes that challenges are not intrinsically 'bad' and that arts organisations should consider how they can provide support for community groups to allow them to build upon their pre-existing group dynamics to increase group solidarity and overcome so-called 'barriers' to arts participation.

*Chapter eight* explores the case of community organisation the Citadel Youth Centre to show that not all community groups will be open to building upon their pre-existing group solidarities as per *Gig Buddies* because of preconceived conceptions

---

<sup>5</sup> Pseudonyms are used here and throughout the thesis for production companies.

of the Fringe. Through examining how members of a group named 'New Spin' at the Citadel have a group identity based on their connection to their local district of Leith in Edinburgh which positions them in opposition to 'the Fringe', it analyses how a constructed identity of 'outsider' makes it difficult for IRCs to happen at the Fringe in a meaningful way. However, through examining my role as a researcher and analysing staff-to-staff connections between the Fringe Society and the Citadel, I argue that increased bodily co-presence between the Fringe Society and service users of the Citadel may hold potential to transform the current 'it's not for us' narrative that is held by New Spin members.

*Chapter nine* synthesises empirical insights from the case studies presented to answer the thesis' research questions. I argue that the ritual ingredients of *pre-existing group solidarity* and *charismatic leadership* can increase the potential for a meaningful experience. I explore 'overcoming challenges' at the Fringe, arguing that it's possible for challenges to be viewed as opportunities to increase group solidarity if a group has appropriate social and emotional resources. The chapter then explores how collective effervescent experiences across groups – where heightened emotions flow between people across various situations – maintain the sacred status of the Fringe, creating an emotional contagion effect. I argue that the Fringe is meaningful through an interplay of collective, group, and individual-level emotional flow, whereby those who attend are pumped up with emotional energy (EE), creating ritual ingredient feedback loops within IRCs, thereby maintaining the Fringe as a sacred site.

*Chapter ten* argues that the thesis has major implications for policymaking and arts organisational practice, helping us to move on from a 'calcified' policy-making process (Stevenson, 2017), through showing how arts experiences are much more than momentary 'transactions' with art objects: they are embedded within pre-existing social relations that have a moral dimension. The chapter suggests that the thesis provides the alternative language of 'meaning-making' for arts organisations to discuss their 'value' and calls for policymakers and academics to take seriously microsociological approaches as ways to better understand why the arts are important. Finally, the chapter explores the implications of the thesis in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, arguing that the pandemic has reinforced the thesis' conclusions in relation to the importance of physically sharing arts experiences at sacred sites. It is suggested that a direction of future work could be to explore further the implications

of cancelling the Fringe in 2020 and the impact of removing the opportunity to gather at the sacred site of the Fringe.

## Chapter 2: Positioning my research

Over the last two decades, academics and policymakers have been increasingly fixated on the question of measuring or ‘capturing’ cultural value. In turn, this way of viewing value has also become prevalent within arts organisational practice and evaluation, with arts festivals being no exception (Snowball, 2011). However, this is arguably a ‘fool’s errand’ because there is no ‘absolute’ cultural value (Stevenson, 2017), but rather meaning-making processes, whereby arts experiences are meaningful in and through social interactions. As this chapter shall demonstrate, one of the reasons that cultural policy tends to adopt transactional conceptions of the arts as cause-and-effect encounters is because perspectives from sociology (e.g., that of Adorno and Bourdieu) have informed cultural policy literature and cultural policymaking (Oakley et al., 2010). Similarly, there is a large literature on contemporary arts festivals that has adopted ‘transactional logics’, without questioning the implicit assumptions that this makes about what is meaningful within festival contexts. The aim of this chapter is to unpack these perspectives and highlight how the current literature that examines contemporary arts festival experiences is unable to adequately articulate and explain meaning-making processes at the Fringe.

In part one, I review the literature exploring contemporary arts festivals to highlight that the dominant approach to understanding their value has been to explore their economic and social impact, before moving on to highlight how this literature is underpinned by perspectives from cultural policy. I chart the implicit theoretical assumptions of key concepts and associated terminology relevant to this topic, including the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), cultural production, cultural consumption, and cultural value, before arguing that the ‘transactional logics’ dominant within this work are inadequate when considering questions of meaning. Next, I explain how literature from cultural sociology and the ‘new sociology of the arts’ has been better able to identify the key processes of meaning-making than the language of cultural value, providing relevant theoretical tools and language that account for the interrelationship between social and artistic experiences, relevant to exploring meaning at the Fringe. Having adopted a language of meaning-making and ‘the arts’, part two of the chapter then positions the thesis within an alternative theoretical framework: microsociology and Durkheimian perspectives. Through explaining how Collins’ (2004) theory of Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs) can be used

to understand meaning-making processes and exploring how previous literature has applied this theory, I argue that this is a suitable theoretical approach to unpack meaning at the Fringe and to move forward the debates regarding the value of arts festivals. Bringing together the reviewed literature and theoretical framework of the thesis, the chapter concludes with a statement of three additional research questions that will be explored to answer the overarching question concerning meaning at the Fringe as outlined in the introduction.

## **Part one: The literature**

### **2.1 Contemporary festival research**

Studying contemporary festivals is a relatively new area of research, burgeoning within the last 20-25 years and focusing particularly on festivals that showcase a range of artistic or sports events and activities. This is in contrast to research exploring traditional, religious festivals, where approaches from anthropology and topics such as ritual and kinship have taken centre stage (Kaplan, 2008). Contemporary festivals have been studied from a range of different perspectives, including applying some of the theories, methodologies and analytical tools from anthropology (Frost, 2016), as well as combining these approaches with critical theories; for example, in the field of sociology (Delanty et al., 2011). However, the dominant approach has been to view contemporary, post-traditional festivals through the lens of commercialism, with research tending to focus on economic returns, economic regeneration, and commodification (Sassatelli, 2011).

Delanty, Giorgi & Sassatelli (2011) aim to reveal the significance of contemporary festivals as just as important as traditional festivals, taking inspiration from Habermas and the 'public sphere' to create a conceptual lens termed the *cultural public sphere*, exploring politics and the public through aesthetic modes of communication (McGuigan, 2004; Delanty et. al, 2011). Relevant to exploring meaning-making processes, they explore festivals as sites of collective effervescence, which has also been acknowledged by Niekrenz (2014) and Bennett, Taylor & Woodward (2014).

Bennett et al. (2014) also explore the construction of culture, community and identity in contemporary festival contexts, exploring how the festival event 'spills out beyond its temporal and spacial boundaries' (Duffy, 2014). The team examine the relationship between cultural capital and identity in light of collective meaning, how festivals may facilitate the formation of cultural values and communities and the emotional ecology of festivals as enabling affective responses. Wynn (2015) explores meaning too, but in relation to placemaking at music festivals, analysing how different kinds of organisational patterns influence the distribution of resources, thereby shaping the meaning associated with a festival city. This focus on meaning also complements a larger body of qualitative, interpretivist approaches taken within festival studies, such as those employing grounded theory (Black, 2016), participatory methods (Finkel & Sang, 2016) or qualitative case study (Andrew Jones & Navarro, 2018).

A few studies have been conducted in the context of Edinburgh's Festivals as well, examining themes such as cultural production, cultural consumption, and power; for example, in relation to exploring cultural taste (Friedman, 2014), how street artists negotiate the use of public spaces (Munro & Jordan, 2013), and 'the festival gaze' (Jamieson, 2004). In relation to the latter, this concept is constructed by Jamieson (2004) to theorise how festivals provide a safe space for 'the freedom to play', establishing an 'illusion of trust and power' and a fictionalised equality (Jamieson, 2004).

It is clear that contemporary festivals are increasingly being recognised as complex social phenomena which may be able to tell us something about contemporary society. Nonetheless, it has been suggested that the *meanings* attached to contemporary festivals and events have not been fully explored, with the primary focus remaining on their 'impact' or 'value' for individuals and cities; for example, Holloway et. al (2010) call for future research to explore further the 'social and emotional world of event participants' having reviewed a range of ethnographic studies (two of music festivals, two of dance festivals, one of a business event, and six of sporting events).

This dominant 'impact' focus pervades work undertaken by researchers from the fields of tourism, business, and event management in particular. Such work often highlights the positive contribution that contemporary festivals make to host cities and to society, in particular in relation to their economic impacts (Crossick & Kaszynska,

2016, pp. 89–90; Getz, 2010). Such research is particularly appealing to festival and arts organisations as it can be used to justify public funding in the UK, showcasing that the money given to festivals results in a multiplier effect through generating a range of positive externalities including providing jobs and increasing income for local businesses. Notable examples of such research include Burns, Hatch and Mules' (1986) study of the Adelaide Grand Prix including a cost-benefit evaluation, Myerscough's (1990) statistical analysis of Glasgow's cultural landscape, and the development of economic impact methods by Dwyer et. al (2000) and Brannas and Nordström (2006) (see Getz, 2010).

Economic impacts remain of interest to those seeking to evidence the value of the arts, particularly in relation to securing public resources from funding bodies. However, it has been recognised that it is problematic to 'capture' economic impact, with a need to also consider other non-monetary effects associated with festival activity. Namely, it is a 'non-trivial matter' with problems of validity and reliability, particularly in relation to researcher bias as 'the process is often driven by... subjective and naïve approaches or political pressure' (Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2015). Thus, there has been an expansion in the range of impacts that have been considered by researchers. This is evident in literature reviews within the fields of festival and event management and tourism, from a focus on economic outcomes between 2000-2003 (Getz, 2000; Harris et al., 2001; Hede et al., 2003) to the inclusion of social impacts from 2007, with 20% of 224 studies reporting social impacts in Sherwood's (2007) review and 30% of 132 impact studies in Getz's (2010) review. The change can also be viewed in evaluation reports, for example those conducted by BOP Consulting for Festivals Edinburgh where the reports from 2005-2006 focused primarily on 'economic impact', but reports in recent years also include an interest in social and cultural impacts (e.g., how festivals bring communities together and improve individual wellbeing), alongside economic ones (Edinburgh Festival City, 2016).

However, social and cultural impacts are notoriously difficult to measure and studies focusing on more 'holistic benefits' suffer similar criticisms to economic studies, including the need to 'prove' the value of festivals. Researchers have tried to combat problems by developing validated psychological scales, for example a study by Gursoym, Kim & Uysal (2004) who followed procedures by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991) for developing a standardized survey instrument in addition to working with '5 expert judges' to generate 24 socio-economic impact items for their survey

used for a festival in Virginia (e.g., focusing on community cohesiveness, economic benefits, and social incentives). Nevertheless, although there are some benefits of using standardised measures such as large sample sizes, discovering trends and producing statistical data; ultimately, the endeavour of trying to ‘capture’ or ‘prove’ the value of a festival is one caught up in a political agenda of justifying the worth of these events to society. This is problematic as it buttresses festivals as commodities and ignores the experiential components of festival experience which are essential to the processes of giving an experience ‘value’.

To better understand why a focus on impact and value has gained such prominence within the study of festivals, we need to explore the wider landscape of the literature on the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), cultural production and cultural consumption. This literature informs the research that has been carried out exploring the impact and value of festivals because it presents a language and an analytical frame that positions the arts as objects that can be transacted (a language of cause and effect).

## **2.2 The language of the cultural & creative industries (CCI)**

Similar to the festivals ‘impact’ literature, the language used to articulate the role of the arts in society within cultural policy has undergone major developments over the last 20 years to try and accommodate for ‘social’ factors alongside economic ones. However, despite these attempts to broaden out the language of cultural policy, these shifts have taken place within the same view of how cultural production and consumption work – in a transactional way. Through exploring the debates over how to articulate how the CCI works and what analytical concepts should be used, this section lays a foundation to explain the problem of this transactional perspective when considering questions of meaning.

Despite circulation, development and use within cultural policy, the roots of the language of the CCI are found in Adorno and Horkheimer and their chapter first published in 1944, ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’ (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944 [2016]). In this work, they focus on what they perceive to be the problems of mass culture, commodification and capitalism, such as the shift from ‘use value in the reception of cultural commodities’ to ‘exchange value’, stressing how mass

culture is founded upon legitimisation by the consumer, where no art 'object has an inherent value' (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944 [2016], p. 103). As has been mapped out by Oakley et al. (2010), Adorno's perspectives on the culture industry were critiqued in UK cultural studies throughout the 60s, 70s, and 80s and, by the early 1980s, 'cultural industries' (plural) was preferable to 'culture industry', better able to recognise the 'complex structure' of these industries which are made up of multiple kinds of cultural production (Oakley et al., 2010, p. 26). Within policy, this language quickly became associated with economic values and the money that these industries could provide for cities and for society at large. However, by 1997 when New Labour came into government, politicians wanted to extend this celebratory narrative of what culture could provide by also including digital technologies, aligning with an emerging 'information' or 'knowledge' economy, leading to the formation of the term 'creative industries' (Oakley et al., 2010, p. 51). Thus, this new language was used in the UK by politicians to advocate for the creative industries as a booming industry that supported the economy through providing jobs and money, supporting a 'positive narrative' that existed internationally (Scharff, 2017, pp. 11–12).

This economic advocacy narrative has persisted within policy documents nationally and internationally within recent years (e.g., Raufast et al., 2015). However, there is also a large literature arguing that the structure of the creative industries are unique because other kinds of capitals are important to critical acclaim and 'making it' (i.e. social, cultural and symbolic capital; Belfiore, 2015; Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Bourdieu, 1993; Oakley et al., 2010), and because the services and goods they provide are 'multidimensional, incommensurable, and of uncertain quality', creating a climate where valuing is a difficult task (Karpik, 2010).

Scharff (p.12) has argued that the broader term of 'cultural and creative industries' (CCI), compared to just 'creative industries', can provide some 'critical distance' to 'overly celebratory policy discourses', with the CCI able to pay closer attention to working conditions through a critical lens, which also includes these other kinds of capitals. However, the language of the CCI is also contested, with some scholars and policymakers preferring the recent 'creative economy', seen as encompassing the creative and cultural industries within it. Drawing on the definition set out in the Nesta Manifesto for the Creative Economy (Bakhshi et al., 2013), the term 'industry' indicates the cultural sector, whereas the term 'economy' is broader and denotes any 'creative talent' whether this is from within or beyond the cultural

industries. Nonetheless, whilst the language of 'creative economy' has been employed in a way that is meant to be less constricted, its connotations are still that of work and jobs, with Nesta stressing that both the 'creative industries' and 'creative economy' refer to creative activities that are used for 'commercial purposes' (Bakhshi et al., 2013).

The purpose of including this short review of conceptual development here is to highlight that the way in which cultural policymakers and researchers currently talk about the field in which arts festivals are seen to exist within is limiting, with meaning viewed exclusively in light of politicised notions of what the CCI contributes to society. This is the transactional frame of cultural production and cultural consumption which underpins cultural value in policy, as shall be explored in the next section.

### **2.3 A transactional frame**

As previously noted, Adorno is one example of a scholar who was troubled by culture having 'exchange value', arguing that when music became commodified under capitalism, it became fetishized (Adorno, 1938). He believed that music was becoming alienated from society because of the processes of musical production and consumption (Adorno, 1932 [1986]). McCormick (2012, p. 2) conceptualises this functional way of viewing music as framed in the 'production/consumption paradigm' - a lens which sees art as made and consumed in a transactional way, often viewed in economic terms. This is particularly relevant within the context of contemporary arts festivals, where the dominant literature has used positivist, quantitative approaches to examine economic development and consumer behaviour, as previously discussed. Whilst the language and associated theoretical perspectives of cultural production and cultural consumption are useful to examine structural inequalities, mass production and consumerism, it is less fruitful in answering questions in relation to the meaning of arts experiences outside of a frame of either economic gain or an absolute 'cultural value', because these terms cannot account for social processes which are inseparable from arts experiences. To explain this further, we need to unpack the underlying principles of cultural production and cultural consumption and explore what implications this way of viewing the arts has had on conceptions of 'value' in cultural policy.

### 2.3.1 Cultural production

In addition to roots in Adorno, the language of cultural production is notably tied to Pierre Bourdieu and Howard Becker, with their ideas understood as fundamentally shaping analysis of cultural production up to the present day (De La Fuente, 2007; DeNora, 2010). Within the seminal works of Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982), they theorize art as a synecdoche, representative of a total social experience to be deconstructed to reveal aspects of social structure and process (Zolberg, 1990). However, Becker argues that their approaches are markedly different:

The basic question of an analysis centered on the idea of world is this: Who is doing what with whom that affects the resulting work of art? The basic question of an analysis centered on the idea of field seems to me to be: Who dominates whom, using what strategies and resources, with what results?... they ask different kinds of questions and look for different kinds of answers and are not reducible one to the other. (Becker & Pessin, 2006, p. 285)

Becker's theory is one of collective action involving people ('all artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people'; Becker, 2008, p. 1), whereas Bourdieu's is concerned with power struggles, dominance and forces (a work of art exists by virtue of the collective belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art; Bourdieu, 1993). Becker's work has enabled deeper understanding of cultural production *as work*, answering questions about the nature and processes of creative labour,<sup>6</sup> and Bourdieu's work has shed light on structural inequalities in the arts and on the legitimisation of taste as influenced by social and cultural structures, such as the class structure (Bourdieu, 1986; Johnson, 1993). Bourdieu's work in particular has both implicitly and explicitly influenced cultural policy, and the language used within policy, such as valuing 'success' in the field of cultural production in terms of symbolic capital and networking as a means to gain social capital (Brook et al., 2018; Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). Interrelated to this, Bourdieu is the most common sociological foundation in a range of academic work

---

<sup>6</sup> The word 'labour' has been used here to denote the neoliberalisation of artistic careers in terms of a language of 'jobs', in contrast to the alternative 'cultural work' which has tended to encompass a broader understanding of 'work' outside of an economic frame of reference only. See Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011b; McGuigan, 2010; Scharff, 2017b, pp. 13–14.

seeking to analyse the ‘field of cultural production’ and how it operates (e.g. Friedman, 2009; Heise & Tudor, 2007; Lopes, 2000).

Since Bourdieu and Becker’s publications, alongside the expansion in size of the CCI in the UK, there has been a tendency within the last 5-10 years for the cultural production literature to be dominated by questions concerning careers such as how to ‘make it’ in the arts (Gerber, 2017), the precarity of artist careers and the lack of clear roots to success (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Smith & Thwaites, 2018), low paid or voluntary work (Brook et al., 2020b; Duffy, 2017), dominance of privilege, and inequality of access to career opportunities due to class, race and gender (Brook et al., 2018, 2020a; Friedman, 2018). This literature has been important in answering macro-theoretical questions concerning the reproduction of social inequalities, marginalisation and changes to social mobility among those who work in the CCI. However, there are two key shortfalls of this literature in view of a discussion concerning meaning.

Firstly, one key problem is that this literature engages academics in somewhat of a ‘zero sum game’, where the only conclusion can be that ‘culture is bad for you’, as per the title of a recently published book by Brook, O’Brien, & Taylor (2020). This feels unsatisfying when many who work in these industries report deriving a deep level of meaning from their experiences (Gerber, 2017, p. 58). By adopting an understanding of value grounded in economics and career ‘success’, there has been little discussion concerning what the arts might provide beyond money or consecration as understood by Bourdieu: ‘artists don’t always talk about the value of the things they do in terms of dollars and jobs’ (Gerber, 2017, p. 58). Whilst a response to this may be that the subjective representation of meaningful experience is a mere delusion, ‘pushing self-exploitation to excess’ as Banks (2017, p. 128) states, this argument doesn’t answer how and why this sense of meaningful experience may be constructed and the structuring role it plays in people’s lives, beyond a narrative of jobs and work.

Interrelated to this and secondly, emotional experiences are underexplored in any account of ‘value’ within this fixation on jobs, careers, and structural inequalities. Emotions seem only to be viewed as an ‘outcome’ in the cultural production literature, such as Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2011a) who analyse the emotional responses (e.g., pleasure, enjoyment, anxiety) of cultural workers in relation to their working conditions. This is again a cause-and-effect conception of reality, whereby working conditions in the arts create individual emotional responses. Whereas emotions – which include

collective emotions as well as individual ones – are embedded within the whole ecology of the CCI, where emotions connect to motivations to work and to stay working in the arts, beyond the reason of financial gain. Additionally, part of the issue is that economic attainment and career success have been presented as if these pursuits are rational and transactional (focusing only on gain and rewards); whereas, emotion plays an active role in rationality. As Turner (2009, p. 343) argues, the philosophical dichotomy between rationality and emotionality is flawed, and ‘one cannot maximize utility without the ability to load options with affect. There needs to be a greater understanding of what constitutes a meaningful experience in the arts, and the role of emotions in these experiences to understand better why people continue to work in the arts despite precarity.

### 2.3.2 Cultural consumption

Bourdieu is a notable founding thinker in the development of the concept of cultural consumption as well, particularly in his work on taste (Bourdieu, 1986). In his publication *Distinction* (1986), which he describes as a ‘social critique of the judgement of taste’, he argues that taste cannot be acquired through learning, for example a universal concept of ‘good art’ which can be taught, but a long process of inculcation from class systems and domination – the opposite of the Kantian aesthetic (Bourdieu, 1986; Johnson, 1993). Taste is created through socially constructed social and cultural systems which are passed down through the generations via family and education systems, resulting in the legitimisation of social differences (Bourdieu, 1986). This conception of how taste is reproduced has led to an understanding of cultural consumption as tied to social division, whereby how people consume culture replicates wider patterns of inequality (O’Brien, Allen, Friedman, & Saha, 2017, p. 3). Thus, within cultural policymaking, this acknowledgement of the potential inequalities in relation to who consumes culture has led to a focus over the last 30 years on ‘equalising’ opportunities for consumption (Stevenson, 2013a), emphasising the need to provide greater ‘access’ through enabling individuals to gain the ‘cultural competence’ necessary to be able to interpret and understand cultural experiences (Bennett & Silva, 2006; Dubois, 2011). This aim is also present within the language of arts organisational operations in relation to ‘audience development’ including the

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, who emphasise inclusivity as a core focus in their strategic plans (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a; Hadley, 2021).

Against this backdrop, attention within cultural policy has been given to what consuming culture can ‘do’ for individuals, communities, and for society, often referred to as the ‘instrumentalism of culture’ (Belfiore, 2012; Gray, 2007); for example, the language of ‘social impact’ which rose to prominence towards the end of the 1990s, whereby a range of academic and policy papers sought to show the potential for cultural consumption to support social outcomes such as individual and personal development, social cohesion and community empowerment (Matarasso, 1996), in addition to suggestions that culture can raise awareness and support action regarding ‘social issues’ (Williams, 1997). Of relevance to this thesis focusing on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, this way of thinking is also prevalent within the festivals’ literature with a focus on the ‘impact’ of festivals, as explored at the start of this chapter.

One of the key aims for policymakers and arts organisations has therefore been to engage ‘communities’ with the arts, such as in ‘participatory arts’ programmes (language widely used from the 1990s) (Bishop, 2006; Matarasso, 2017).<sup>7</sup> One of the criticisms of these approaches is that they often categorise communities – such as by public agencies who provide the funding – as having common problems, often poor health (Matarasso, 2017). This has further supported the ‘transactional logics’ of the arts and their outcomes (instrumentalism), whereby the arts are viewed as a way to ‘fix’ problems, particularly in relation to supporting cohesion for ‘vulnerable’ communities. Within this frame, communities have been discussed as if they are already-formed, bounded groups: a dominant rhetoric of the arts *for* communities (see Arts Council England, 2018; Creative Scotland, 2016). Arts Council England speak of ‘creating more cohesive communities’ (Arts Council England, 2018), Creative Scotland of building community cohesion (Scottish Government, 2018), and the British Council state that the creative industries are a source of community cohesion (British Council, 2014).

---

<sup>7</sup> Although ‘participatory arts’ programmes gained prominence in the 1990s, they were a reimagining of earlier community endeavours. ‘Community art’ emerged in the 1960s when artists began to create work that emphasised the collective, producing arts activity that was mostly ignored by established arts institutions including festivals, creative play, radical writing and new media, and creating art that was public and accessible (Matarasso, 2017). Throughout the 60s and 70s, this art came to be known as the Community Art Movement, with artworks often rooted in political motivations or facilitating artwork with and for ‘everyday’ people and ‘less privileged audiences’ (Bishop, 2012).

One of the core problems that I see with this rhetoric is that, whilst this view of community-building accepts that communities develop, it speaks about communities as if they are something identifiable and constant, rather than in flux. That is, it isn't necessarily the case that once a community group has formed, it will stay intact or unchanged. As outlined by Summers-Effler (2007), whilst there might be an apparent stability within a social system, it will also be made up of considerable variation. Communities are constantly forming, becoming disrupted, changing and re-forming, making it problematic to speak about a linear relationship between cultural encounters and how they might 'build' specific communities. This view is incompatible with a transactional conception of the arts and 'impact', and a new way of understanding 'communities' that can account for their fluidity is needed.

### 2.3.3 Cultural value

The instrumentalism of culture is often connected to Matarasso's (1997) publication *Use or Ornament?* which appeared in the year that the UK new Labour government was elected (Oakley & O'Brien, 2017). At this time, there was a perceived need to *defend* arts and culture within policymaking in order to secure funding because of the lack of agreement concerning art's place within society (Belfiore 2012; Oakley & O'Brien, 2017). Social scientists were asked to uncover "what works and why" as part of evidence-based policymaking' (Blunkett, 2000; O'Brien, 2014), viewing cultural experiences in terms of 'efficiency, effectiveness and economy' (O'Brien, 2014; Parsons, 2002). Although the term 'cultural value' was not used until 2003, it grew out of this governmental debate concerning instrumentalism (O'Brien, 2014), used to justify the contribution that arts and culture make to society and their associated public expenditure, with a focus on measuring or 'articulating' the effects they have (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). Further, arts organisations instrumentalized themselves to protect and gain funding (Belfiore, 2012; Gray, 2007).

To explain the rise of cultural value further; evidence-based policymaking that sought to justify cultural investment (Holden, 2006), such as that supporting the 'social impact' narrative, was heavily criticised in scholarship, with Holden (2004) arguing that 'evidence' is often confused with advocacy ('the advocacy problem'; see Oakley & O'Brien, 2017, p. 12). Thus, 'cultural value' was used by policymakers and academics as a way to transform this problem into a discussion about 'value' rather than 'impact'

(O'Brien, 2014; Oakley & O'Brien, 2017). For example, Holden (2004) wanted to place emphasis on the creation of a culture confident in its own worth, rather than 'dedicated to the production of ancillary benefits', recognising the 'affective elements of cultural experience, practice and identity, as well as the full range of quantifiable economic and numerical data' (Holden, 2004); essentially, wanting to include the complexities of the cultural experience and to pay more attention to public reception in policymaking (Holden, 2004). However, despite a shift to 'social and cultural' impacts; the literature consistently sought to 'prove' the 'value' of the arts by arguing for their contribution to society and their value for individuals, also evident in the continued use of the language of 'impact' in the festivals literature (Edelman & Šorli, 2015; Langen & Garcia, 2009; Neil et al., 2014).

Explaining further, cultural value grew out of public value which, although a disputed term, essentially centres around ideas concerning what the values of the public are and how these ideas connect to policymaking and distribution of public resources (Moore, 1995; O'Brien, 2014). Whilst the notion sought to find a more multifaceted approach to value, in particular accepting the limitation of monetary valuations, the term has continued to be consistently used in contexts that seek to measure or articulate culture in the frame of what it 'contributes' to society or to individuals. An example of this can be seen in the AHRC's (2016) report from the Cultural Value Project (CVP); despite stating that the AHRC do not support a 'blanket advocacy for public funding' (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016, p. 4), the emphasis throughout the document is on *measuring* value and on adopting a language of *evidence* in support of public investment, with little exploration of the complexity of art's meaning as constructed via social interactions. Namely, the CCI are seen in terms of what they can do for society (i.e., economic income, urban regeneration), as if they were independent from, and secondary to social processes, rather than as embedded within and interconnected with them.

The challenges of 'impact' have been acknowledged within scholarship (Belfiore, 2012), and the Arts and Humanities Research Council have sought to fund 'ambitious research projects' to 'advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement' (Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2013 in Walmsey, 2016). In so doing, there has been an increased focus on the phenomenology of arts engagement, focusing on individual subjective perceptions. For example, Walmsey (2016) carried out a phenomenological study using methods from anthropology with

participants (as co-researchers) of a festival promoting the arts for mental health, where they conclude that there are 'limitations of language' in how cultural value is discussed, stating that 'instead of striving to *understand* and *rationalize* the value of the arts, we should instead aim to *feel* and *experience* it' [emphasis in original]. Nonetheless, whilst this qualitative shift recognises the aforementioned limitations of 'cultural value' and is fruitful to add nuance to our understanding of value, it places individual, subjective experiences at the core, not recognising the role that group-level meaning-making may play.

There is what I call a 'problem of individualism' (underpinned by methodological individualism) within discussions concerning value: the idea that value is something created by and for the individual, rather than negotiated within social processes and co-constructed. This can be further explicated through examination of the foreword of the CVP report:

"The project has sought to put the experience of individuals back at the heart of ideas about cultural value, arguing that *it is only once we have started with individual experience that we can then work outwards*, and understand the kinds of *benefit* that culture may have for society, for communities, for democracy, for public health and wellbeing, for urban life and regional growth. By *working outwards from the individual* in this way, we quickly realise that we need a wider and more subtle repertoire of methodologies if we are to talk about the concept of cultural value, and evaluate it meaningfully." (p.4 [my emphasis])

The overarching perspective is that value is cultivated at an individual level and that seeking to change this value will have a beneficial impact on communities. This suggests that value is understood, again, within a cause and effect model, rather than as something cultivated and negotiated "'between' the heads of a group of people" (Grant et al., 2004).

Understanding value in this way also makes a normative assumption about an art object as a benefit to individuals, and therefore as something inherently 'good'. As Adorno reflected on Greek philosophy (1938) 'the function of music has been handed down... as a major good' (p.288), and there has been little exploration of *why* the arts are viewed as 'good', how this valuing happens through and with other people, and what this means for policy and for arts organisations. Viewing the arts as having beneficial impacts makes what DiMaggio (2002) describes as a fallacy of homogeneity, whereby the arts are viewed as always having the same effects regardless of the population being studied, and a fallacy of linearity that assumes

benefits will increase in line with the amount of arts engagement (see McCarthy et. al, 2005).

Part of the problem is that an understanding of what is 'good' within policy seems to have largely taken a psychological understanding of emotions as what is subjectively felt as 'good' for the individual (see Mirza's 2006 critique), rather than determining the conditions or situations under which individuals experience and express these emotions (Turner, 2009, p. 343).<sup>8</sup> Whilst this approach can answer questions in relation to subjective wellbeing, it is less able to understand *why* certain situations and conditions enable positive experiences and, accordingly, which situations prevent what is perceived as 'beneficial' outcomes.

In particular, previous research has focused on *what* cultural value is and not *how* it is created; but understanding the processes of value creation is important because arts organisations are interested in contributing to these processes. For example, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society seek to foster what they describe as 'spaces' that provide opportunities for meaningful engagement, such as spaces for marginalised and underrepresented voices to be heard, professional development for artists, and for learning (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, pp. 3, 5, 7, 10). They seek to maximise the 'cultural value' for various stakeholders:

... the Fringe Society needs to remind local, national and international stakeholders of the value of the Fringe platform, both as a *space* for artistic growth, and to be invested in at all levels of government. (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a) [my emphasis]

They have an interest in 'situations' and *how* to optimise these situations for meaningful emotional experience, not just in the individual experience itself and *what* their values are. In addition, in my view, one of the further key problems with the psychological view of art as what is 'good' for the individual is the failure to understand how situations that cultivate uncomfortable emotions – such as fear, anger and sadness – can have meaning.

---

<sup>8</sup> The way in which questionnaires and psychological scales are used to measure impact in the arts are examples of this. On the Arts Council England website, they have a 'measuring outcomes' section where they outline how to evidence impact and evaluate, providing toolkits to support in creating questionnaires and carrying out interviews that, for example, measure individual attitudes and values, and how much they enjoyed engaging with an arts activity (Arts Council England, 2020b). The Public Health England *Arts for Health and Wellbeing Evaluation Framework* is another example, whereby validated psychological scales are suggested to measure the impact of the arts on individual health outcomes (Daykin & Joss, 2016, pp. 12–14).

Some of these issues relating to cultural value as a static concept have been raised before, with suggestions that it is futile to try and capture or measure some kind of 'absolute' cultural value (Stevenson, 2013a; Stevenson, 2013c). In view of this, the problem of focusing on value as a noun has been raised as implying a 'mythical absolute' value where everyone values culture in the same way (Stevenson, 2013). Thus, there have been a small number of scholars advocating for the use of value as a verb – 'valuing', employed as an active concept to explore the processes of giving culture value (Stevenson, 2013a; Sutherland & Gosling, 2010). These criticisms lean towards the argument presented here that 'cultural value' is wedded to a transactional frame which ignores the complexity of arts' experiences, showing promise in advancing the cultural value debate.

Nonetheless, what these processes of 'valuing' are have been overlooked and the language of 'valuing' remains inferior to the more dominant circulation of 'cultural value' within academia and cultural policy. This is reflected in the recently formed national research centre based at the University of Leeds entitled 'The Centre for Cultural Value' (funded for 5 years from 2019-2024). Their aim is to build 'a shared understanding of the differences that arts, culture, heritage and screen make to people's lives and to society' (Centre for Cultural Value, 2020), questioning, 'how do people define culture and its value to them, and how does that impact on our society; the way we learn, play, grow, live and interact?' (Walmsley, 2020). There is some understanding of complexity here, as articulated through building a 'shared' understanding and focusing on the 'value to them [people]' which suggests recognition of value being different for different people. However, the language is still embedded in causal assumptions of the arts *impacting* upon people, further placing emphasis on *subjective* perspectives in relation to how people 'define culture', upholding the problem of individualism. This sees the processes of 'valuing' as separate from social processes, such as social interaction and co-constructed group beliefs, rather embedded within them which is an essential consideration to understand how and why arts festival experiences are meaningful for those who participate in them.

Drawing together the literature reviewed so far; the language of the cultural production and consumption is underpinned by macro-level foci (i.e., structural inequalities) and/or 'transactional logics', with this conception of reality pervading the festivals literature and policymaking. Whilst there has been a shift away from instrumentalism and impact to a language of 'cultural value', this term is limited

because it is politicised and focuses on individualism, with attempts to acknowledge 'valuing' processes in the minority. We therefore need a language that can better account for complexity that sees beyond a transactional view of culture as my thesis seeks to construct, with literature from cultural sociology a starting point to achieving this.

## **2.4 Cultural Sociology and the new Sociology of the arts**

Cultural sociology is generally considered as having two dimensions: 1) sociology of conventionally cultural phenomena, such as arts activities, or 2) sociology of the 'cultural' in a broader sense, viewing culture as any aspect of human life whereby culture is relatively autonomous and not reducible to social structure (see Inglis & Almila, 2016). The first of these is relevant to this thesis which is interested in particular phenomena – arts festivals. However, the language and analytic assumptions of the cultural production and consumption framework has also tended to sit within the first of these, examining cultural institutions and employing sociological analytical tools to understand, for example, power, cultural capital and exploitation, such as Bourdieusian analysis (see Inglis & Almila, 2016). Such approaches have been criticised for how the art object or an art form itself is theorised. That is, the art form has been absent as a kind of 'black box'; viewed either deterministically with an inherent meaning leading to predetermined action, or indeterminately, whereby the meaning of the artwork 'emerges from its subsequent mobilization in social interaction' (Acord & DeNora, 2008). Thus, there has been a commitment within the 'new sociology of the arts' to "examine how specific features of artistic forms *emerge* as meaningful and consequential within interactions - the 'inside' of culture" (Acord & Denora, 2008; De La Fuente, 2007). Rather than reducing art to a product of social structure, meaning can occur through social processes within cultural forms and artistic forms can be viewed as influencing social structure (Inglis & Almila, 2016, Chapter 5). This notion comes from scholars who have criticised the idea of having a 'sociology of' culture as this implies that it is social structure that determines art's meaning (Inglis & Almila, 2016). Jeffrey C. Alexander and supporters of the 'strong program' at the Yale School have argued that culture (in any domain of life such as politics, economy, and art) can have a relatively autonomous power which can shape

social life, aligning with the second dimension of cultural sociology (Alexander, 2003). Thus, this idea is reflected in the language of the sub-disciplines of the new sociology of the arts such as art-sociology and music sociology (see De La Fuente, 2007, p. 416).

Within this domain of cultural sociology that is positioned within the new sociology of the arts, recognising how the arts exist ‘within’ social interactions and not separate from them, the language used to understand what is typically called ‘cultural value’ in cultural policy is one of ‘meaning-making’. This lens can be used as a conceptual tool to be more specific about the processes of ‘cultural value’ because meaning-making is distinguished from ‘value’ and ‘evaluation’, seen as part of the process of *creating* values and *making* evaluations (Spillman, 2020, p. 4). That is, rather than focusing on value as a static concept which links to a language of ‘outcome’ or ‘impact’, cultural sociologists are interested in the processes of evaluation, such as the interactions that are relevant to how moral judgements are made; for example, how certain groups align with particular styles of music which contribute to group identity formation (Spillman, 2020, p. 4). The language of meaning-making is consciously used in a way to disassociate from individualism because it’s used to understand how we *co-create* meanings with others in and through our social interactions (Spillman, 2020, p. 1). Thus, what’s important is that the concept of meaning-making is *active*. It’s about what meaning-making *in action* looks like and how social *interactions* shape meaning (Spillman, 2020, p. 49). This nuanced approach which seeks to unpack the complexity of social relations and how these relations play a role in the construction of arts’ meaning is mostly absent from cultural policy where the emphasis has tended to be on ‘art’ as a fixed and unchanging object that can *do* something.<sup>9</sup> This is why the language of meaning-making is so crucial to developing research in this area, recognising that ‘meaning is an essential component of all human groups and human action’, beyond the narrow scope of cultural production and consumption (Spillman, 2020, p. 14).

In order to distinguish my work from the ‘cultural sociology’ of the Bourdieuians and to step away from the language of the CCI that uses ‘culture’ as a politicised term,

---

<sup>9</sup> Whilst the policy literature focusing on co-creation and co-curation may be viewed as considering social processes (see Miles & Gibson, 2016; Walmsley, 2013), these have been viewed in light of the co-creation of an art object, rather than in the ‘co-creation’ of meaning and how social processes underpin meaning-making processes.

this thesis adopts the term of 'the arts' to recognise a closer alignment with the literature from the 'new sociology of the arts' and to position its focus as an analysis of arts festivals as phenomena to be examined through the lens of meaning-making. This also aligns with the language of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society who describe themselves as supporting the 'world's leading *arts* festival' [my emphasis] (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2019a). The suitability of this language shall also be justified further in chapter four when discussing the moral underpinnings of belonging to an 'imagined community of the arts'.

However, one of the primary foci within the 'new sociology of the arts' has been on the 'aesthetic properties' and 'affordances' of art objects and their relationship to human agency, following Latour (Inglis & Almia, 2016). This analytic emphasis on 'the artwork itself' (De La Fuente, 2007, p. 420) has been important to respond to sociologists such as Becker who acknowledged a 'blind spot' when it came to 'specific artworks' (Becker et al., 2006, p. 3; De La Fuente, 2007, p. 420), shifting the focus from 'art worlds' to 'arts-in-action' (Acord & Denora, 2008). It is a way of 'bringing the arts back' (Zolberg, 2005) into sociological analysis and to treat art as art (De La Fuente, 2007, p. 417). This approach is therefore important in answering questions about the relationship between actors and art objects and how interaction with an art object is a process of meaning-making – it is a 'materially and interactionally mediated' view (Acord & Denora, 2008, p. 234). However, this focus on 'aesthetic objects' (Acord & Denora, 2008, p. 234) is less suitable to examine a context such as an arts festival where so much of the experience entails socialising and interactions outside of immediate interaction with a material 'object'. Despite the notions of 'interaction' and 'affect' taking centre stage within this new approach, the meaning of the social interactions themselves – the social processes of meaning-making – have been left undiscovered.

To examine meaning-making in the context of arts festivals therefore, we need an approach that can also recognise the 'living' dimension of festivals, acknowledging that they entail 'involvement rather than contemplation' (Karp & Levine, 1991 cited in Sassatelli, 2011 p. 17). Namely, there is a need to understand a 'space-time frame' within which an 'art object' cannot be extracted because they are experiential (Sassatelli, 2011, p. 18). Whilst it could be argued that all artistic experiences have a social element – whether there is a material object or not - festivals require a *different kind* of sociability that is 'active rather than passive' (Karp & Levine, 1991 cited in

Sassatelli, 2011 p. 17). Sassatelli (2011, p.21) draws on Simmel (1986) to take this perspective as a starting point to argue that contemporary festivals have 'a specific form of authenticity' that can reorganize urban places, where aesthetic modes of communication are crucial. This approach is useful to challenge what Sassatelli (2011) describes as the 'master narratives of modernity' in relation to the afore mentioned dichotomy of research exploring either traditional festivals as 'authentic' and contemporary ones as 'commercial'. Nonetheless, this 'living' dimension of contemporary festivals is underexplored in relation to meaning-making processes at a microsociological level (e.g., face to face interactions and the small group level), and more research is needed to examine more specifically what these meaning-making processes are and how they work. One way to further this work is to examine these micro-level processual experiences in a contemporary festival context using Collins' (2004) theory of Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs).

## **Part two: Theoretical underpinnings**

To lay the foundation for why IRCs is appropriate, we must explore the Durkheimian foundation of Collins' work, also shedding light on the role that festivals may play social integration. This is what I construct as the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis.

### **2.5 Durkheimian Sociology**

How to interpret Durkheim's work has divided scholars, with Lukes (1985, p. 3) highlighting that, throughout history, he has been labelled a 'materialist and idealist, a positivist and a metaphysician, a rationalist and an irrationalist, a dogmatic atheist and a mystic', and the list goes on; so, how is it that there are so many 'Durkheims'? This is a complex question and experts have been grappling with it for decades (see Smith & Alexander, 2019), but one of the reasons is that his work changed quite radically in his later life. In his earlier works (e.g., *The Division of Labour in Society* [1893], *The Rules of Sociological Method* [1895]), Durkheim is commonly interpreted as arguing that social-structural factors can shape cultural phenomena (i.e., that division of labour dictates culture), whereas in his later works (notably that of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912]), his ontological foundation shifts to seeing culture (in a broad

sense of the word) as *sui generis*, with the power to influence social life and the actions that individuals take (Inglis, 2016, pp. 60–63). Thus, this later work is what is most exciting when considering how to move on from the ‘transactional logics’ of cultural policy as charted throughout part one of this chapter because it offers a way of understanding cultural phenomena (in this case, groups who engage with arts festival experiences) as having their own situational dynamics that provide opportunities for meaning-making. To unpack this further, this section introduces Durkheim’s ‘religious’ ideas and their relevance to the foundation of this thesis.

The reason that ‘religious’ has been included in inverted commas here is because the extent to which Durkheim was actually talking about specific religious practices in *Elementary Forms* is also a point of division for scholars, with some, primarily those within the academic discipline of religious studies or anthropology, claiming that this work is specifically about religion, religious life, and religious experiences in society (a sociology of religion) and others, notably from sociology, seeing ‘religion’ as an analytical tool for how culture, at large, functions (a cultural sociology) (Inglis, 2016; Smith & Alexander, 2019). It is this latter view that is relevant here. On this view, Durkheim’s religion is not about one specific belief system within an overarching social structure that controls how this belief system is constructed but, rather, ‘religion’ is a metaphor for the cultural coding of all of social life, with the language of what is sacred, ritualistic, or symbolic applicable to how meaning can be analysed in any social context (Smith & Alexander, 2019, pp. 10–11). Durkheim states his definition of religion as follows:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden— beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. The second element which thus finds a place in our definition is no less essential than the first; for by showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from that of the Church, it makes it clear that religion should be an eminently collective thing. (Durkheim, 1912 [2016], p. 38)

On this view, religion here is not tied to one specific religion but rather it refers to any moral belief system held by a group, where the collective practices of engaging in rituals separates sacred things from profane things, expressing and maintaining certain belief systems and offering a means to hold society together (social solidarity) through meaning-making practices.

It is clear from this interpretation of Durkheim's 'religious' sociology that he was concerned with understanding social integration, seeking to explore the components that enabled individuals to be members of society. Further, one of his important theoretical contributions to this understanding, relevant to the study of festivals, was established through his notion of 'collective effervescence'. Outlined in *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim used collective effervescence to demonstrate how religion is a 'symbol of the group's collective life' (Cladis, 2001, p.20), explaining that collectivity in the context of communal, ritual practices 'generates a kind of electricity' which results in 'an extraordinary degree of exaltation' (Durkheim, 1912 [2001], p. 162). This exaltation is especially present within crowds who are 'moved by a common passion' whereby a sharing of beliefs results in a kind of unity, raising the individual above one's self enabling 'feelings and actions of which we are incapable [of] on our own' (Durkheim, 1912 [2001], p. 157). In this sense, social systems such as religion can function as a means to bind people together via a 'collective consciousness' (Durkheim, 1912 [2001], p. 200). Through shared symbols, beliefs and collective representations as well as rituals that lead to collective effervescent experiences, a moral community is created that can fulfil human 'needs' (*besoins*), enabling integration into society (Fields, 1995, p. xviii).

Within this Durkheimian frame, festivals have been viewed as an 'intensification of the collective being' (Sassatelli, 2011, p. 13); however, this has primarily tended to be in connection to 'traditional' or religious festivals where the festival is understood as 'sacred' in contrast to everyday life as the 'profane', with *contemporary* festivals largely left out from sociological analysis. However, contemporary festivals have been argued as revelatory of the *modern societies* that they emanate from (Sassatelli, 2011). On this view, contemporary festivals can provide sites for collective effervescent experiences, but the meaning-making processes of this collective consciousness are grounded within modernity; this could include aspirations for creative freedom or globalisation, to give a couple of examples, rather than the shared meaning of religion as in traditional festivals. These meanings are deeply interwoven with contemporary festivals and their morality (as I shall explore in chapter four), but they are less immediately apparent than in traditional, religious festival contexts. Although contemporary arts festivals primarily exist without any specific religious function, arts festivals in their inherent nature as large, shared group experiences with

roots in traditional religious rituals and festivities also have the potential to operate as a means to bind people together (Getz, 2010).<sup>10</sup>

Durkheim's work has also been connected to contemporary arts contexts by neo-Durkheimian scholars (Riley et al., 2013) and, more specifically, to arts festivals by Fabiani (2005, 2013). Whilst it has been argued that 'a sociological aesthetic was unthinkable to Durkheim' (Gephart, 2000 in Fabiani, 2005), as Watts Miller (2013, pp. 17, 41) highlights, the issue of art is *implicit* in *Elementary Forms*: collective effervescence is key to 'all kinds of things, not just society and religion, but art, symbolism, conceptual thought and science'. Fabiani (2013, pp.61, 69) stresses this, noting that the physical assembly of people inherent to festivals - where they take place in public life - is important to setting up the conditions for effervescence which can lead to social solidarity through feelings of connection. Further, he acknowledges the moral element of collective life which Durkheim raised, stating that:

...such events [festivals] have important moral effects in that they maintain a collective belief in the necessity of public culture... we are witnessing every day the recess of shared emotions vis-à-vis cultural objects... festivals of any kind help to revive the importance of public participation in the arts... they rebuild and recharge a community by regularly performing rituals... (Fabiani, 2013, pp.74-75)

Arts festivals are therefore foundational in celebrating the arts in society and in binding those together who share in this celebration.

Nonetheless, Durkheim (and indeed neo-Durkheimian scholars applying his work to the arts), haven't put forward a specific understanding of how these important, complex mechanisms of solidarity operate - these meaning-making processes – which I argue can be analysed and understood at the small group level. Explaining further, as well as larger sociocultural systems such as religion, Durkheim suggested that 'a nation can be maintained' if there are 'secondary groups' (Durkheim, 1893 [1997], p. liv) such as occupational, educational or family groups, which can serve integrative functions. In contrast, lack of association to 'secondary groups' (i.e., small groups), and therefore loss of sense of community, could result in emotional exhaustion and precarity. I argue that this micro-level of analysis is important to understanding how

---

<sup>10</sup> The Fringe in particular is an interesting example of the connection between religion and arts festivals because it began in response to the Edinburgh International Festival in 1947 which was, in part, connected to organised religion. As explained by Bartie (2013), the church ran drama groups and spoke at the opening of the first official International Festival, but the status of churches declined as the festival developed as a part of the liberalisation of the arts.

integration operates (or fails to operate) at the Fringe. This is particularly relevant in view of the expectation that arts organisations should 'build communities' and create 'community cohesion' through their work (see pp.26-27), where *how* organisations do this is underexplored. Collins' (2004) theory of Interaction Ritual Chains provides access to this *how* through providing specific theorisation of the mechanisms of such 'cohesion', operationalising Durkheim's social solidarity at a micro-level.

## 2.6 Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs)

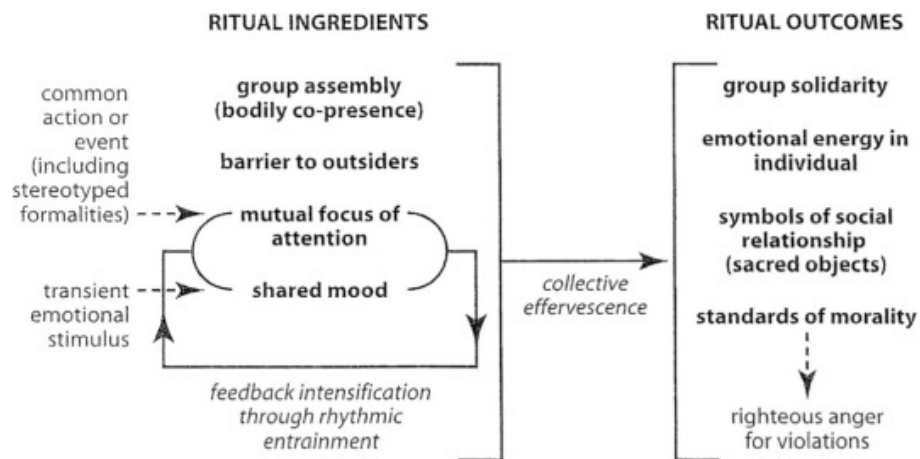
Randall Collins' theory of Interaction Ritual Chains combines Durkheim's cultural sociology with Erving Goffman's (1922–1982) microsociology, arguing that:

Ritual is a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership. (Collins, 2004, p.7)

Collins' sees 'rituals' as *interaction* rituals (IRs), drawing on Goffman to argue that ritual can be found in 'one degree or another throughout everyday life', and there is a 'fluidity' to them – *any* situation can be viewed as an opportunity for an IR (Collins, 2004, pp.7-8). To explain this further, Collins (2004) constructs his 'emotional-entrainment model' to underpin his theory of Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs), with this model able to unearth Durkheim's mechanisms of solidarity through identifying the ritual ingredients that lead to 'collective effervescence'.

Explaining this model; when two or more people are assembled with a sense of who is included and who is excluded in the ritual, affecting one another by their bodily co-presence, together with a mutual focus on a common object or activity and a shared mood, 'collective effervescence' is created which can lead to ritual outcomes such as group solidarity (understood as 'a feeling of membership'), emotional energy (EE) in the individual such as feelings of confidence, enthusiasm or initiative in taking action, the shared construction of 'symbols' that represent the group, as well as feelings of morality that are reinforced across 'socially successful' ritual situations in a chain (Collins, 2004, p. 49):

**Figure 1. Collins' (2004, p.48) emotional-entrainment model**



Whilst EE is something that occurs at an individual level, it is socially produced, considered as a kind of 'interpersonal variable' (Heider & Warner, 2010, p. 91) which exists on a scale; at the low end of the EE scale are feelings of 'depression' and not being 'attracted to the group', and at the high end are feelings of 'confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action' (Collins, 2004, p. 49). However, EE should not be confused with 'ordinary usage' of emotions which Collins labels as 'sudden' or 'dramatic' (Collins, 2004, p. 105). Sudden emotions are transient; whereas, EE is something that builds up and can be long-lasting, playing a part in the 'underlying tones or moods that permeate social life' (Collins, 2004, p. 106). They are meaningful emotions of attachment to a group identity, leading to 'emotional coordination' at a group level (Collins, 2004, p. 108).

IRs can also be understood as a 'set of processes with causal connections and feedback loops among them' (Collins, 2004, p.47). This process can be viewed as a *chain* of ritual ingredients and outcomes which feedback upon each other, thereby providing the potential for a build-up of shared emotional experience across IRs resulting in group solidarity. These notions of 'feedback loops' among the ritual ingredients (such as through rhythmic entrainment, understood as synchronization) and reinforcing ritual outcomes in 'chains' of interactions are vital to understanding meaning-making because they stress that meaningful social interactions do not exist in isolation but, rather, they have been 'primed' as socially successful within *previous* interactions. Meaning-making happens in a chain and 'symbols' that embody shared

meanings constructed within IRCs have been constituted ahead of a ritual situation. This is why I prefer the word 'experience' or 'experiential' in the context of discussing arts festival contexts, rather than focusing on the art object, because experiences are processual and active, connecting more readily to a language of 'chains' which denotes a series of interactions, rather than one cause and effect encounter.<sup>11</sup> This will be a recurring theme in this thesis.

Collins' (2004) theory of IRCs also makes an additional development to Durkheim's 'collective effervescence' which is vital to the conceptual underpinnings to this thesis too. Whilst Durkheim's effervescence is understood as a collective generation of 'a kind of electricity' which results in 'an extraordinary degree of exaltation' (Durkheim, 1912 [2001] p. 162), Collins (2014, p.2) posits that this 'emotional intensification' is not just excitement but '*any* intensification of a shared mood that occurs when certain micro-processes of social interaction take place in everyday life' (my emphasis), and this includes 'negative' emotions. This is important because it departs from the positive and celebratory narratives of the CCI in cultural policy, understanding the arts as rich, complex, and socioemotional experiences, where uncomfortable emotions can still be meaningful across a chain of interactions. Thus, if all kinds of shared emotional experiences (not just 'positive' ones) can lead to longer-term feelings of group solidarity then, once again, the importance of a conceptual lens that can account for what happens across chains of situations is essential.

However, ritual outcomes will not be present following every IR and there are different kinds of rituals. There are successful, failed, empty and forced rituals, with 'socially magnetic ritual situations' at the successful, strong end of the ritual spectrum and 'a flat feeling unaffected by the ritual' or even depression or a 'desire to escape' at the other, failed, end (Collins, 2004, pp. 50–52). In the context of arts festivals, shared emotions do not automatically denote unanimity or a 'lack of differentiation', and this is also affected by participants' resources which can be unequal (Fabiani, 2013). There is therefore a *potential* for IRCs to create group memberships and meaningful symbols within a festival context, but IRs may also promote division or

---

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that when I use 'experience' I do not use it in a way that connects to literature relating to 'experience economy' within tourism (see Bryman, 2004, p.16). Rather, my meaning is closer to a philosophical conception, such as William James' description of religious experiences which are meaningful and have a living dimension, as per festival contexts (James, 1985).

isolation. It is possible that rituals may fail whereby groups fall apart, and strong group memberships may result in boundaries that lead to barriers for newcomers trying to break in. The challenge is understanding the kinds of rituals that exist, whether they succeed or fail, and what leads to this success or failure.<sup>12</sup>

Application of Collins' model to the arts is sparse, but there are a few studies relevant to the discussion here, including one from Collins himself in a study with Benzecry (2014) exploring opera fanatics using ethnographic data of opera practices. One of the key takeaways from this study is that collective effervescence was fostered amongst audience members watching opera, creating feelings of close resonance with others and thereby contributing to group solidarity amongst attendees. In this sense, the social level of the 'collective' (the audience) is important because the feeling of being connected to others in a shared experience of group assembly – amongst those who may have never even met – can be viewed as important to meaningful, shared musical experience. Nonetheless, and interestingly, Collins & Benzecry (2014) found that opera fanatics were actually 'anti-Durkheimian' in view of this audience analysis because, for them, the music was not a vehicle for group solidarity because they saw the experience of the music itself as a higher experience, when compared to the enjoyable audience interaction. Enthusiasts are interested in something else: bodily self-absorption in the musical experience. The authors therefore conclude that the experience of opera for fanatics is akin to religious mysticism because it is an individualized and internal style of music consumption (Benzecry & Collins, 2014). This study is therefore interesting in view of the study of festivals because it raises questions around what the important ritual ingredients are for those who attend large arts events such as the Fringe that include an array of diverse arts experiences: the fanatics may be 'festival' fanatics, rather than those interested in a specific artform, where the experiential aspects of the experience take centre stage.

Another application of IRCs in the field of music is a study by Stige (2010), contributing to the literature on music therapy. Through reflecting on observations of music workshops as part of a 3-day intensive festival for adults with intellectual

---

<sup>12</sup> A ritual as 'socially successful' (i.e., having high ritual outcomes, such as high EE and strong feelings of membership) does not denote an 'end point' of solidarity – it is not 'achieved' or 'static'. 'Social success' is a quality of an IR and it is an ongoing process of maintaining high ritual outcomes in future IRs, whereby solidarity needs to be upheld. A socially successful IR could indeed be followed by a failed IR, and solidarity could dissipate. IRs happen in a *chain*, whereby EE needs to be 'reinvested and reinforced by subsequent interactions' to maintain ritual outcomes (Collins, 2004, p. 140).

disabilities which focuses on the themes of cultural participation and inclusion, Stige (2010) argues that the workshops produced high EE and feelings of solidarity in the adults who took part in them, and that these ritual outcomes can also be viewed as therapeutic outcomes. Thus, this study suggests that participation in 'intense' arts experiences – those that require extended periods of time with others in group assembly - may be important to socially successful IRs. However, the observations of these workshops were only in-situ of the festival itself, raising the question of whether the situations leading to participation in these workshops were important in providing the EE needed to engage, as well whether the EE lasted longer than the festival itself. Ultimately, there needs to be further research exploring the *chains* aspect of IR participation for those with disabilities to understand what primes participants for socially successful IRs as part of arts festival experiences.

A larger range of studies have applied Collins (2004) model to the study of religion, drawing on Durkheim's conceptual tools to explore and explain the meaning of religious experiences (Collins, 2011; Herrmann-Pillath, 2018; Wellman, Corcoran, & Stockly-Meyerdirk, 2014; Wollschleger, 2012). One study that pivots between the study of the arts and religion is an exploration of Sacred Harp singing by Heider & Warner (2010). Originating as Protestant Christian music and drawing upon sacred songs, hymns and odes, the singing style uses 'shape-note' notation, where singers congregate together in a choir-type arrangement to sing in bodily co-presence, including some 'all-day' gatherings of musical (singing) and social (eating together) experiences – 'the Sacred Harp Ritual'. The authors observed Collins' (2004) ritual ingredients when choristers sang together and explored that shared musical experiences resulted in feelings of group solidarity for choristers. However, one key development of the model that they discuss is in relation to the construction of a shared identity. The Sacred Harp ritual included a wide range of people from different backgrounds ('evangelicals, atheists, and Jews, with a significant presence of gays and lesbians') and singing together constructed an emergent shared identity whereby all members felt a sense of association with the Sacred Harp group, bringing cohesion amongst potential conflicting identities. This has relevance for arts festival experiences that bring together a wide range of different people from different backgrounds, raising the curiosity of whether a shared group identity is an important ritual outcome within meaningful festival experiences.

Finally, a few studies from tourism and event studies have also occurred in recent years applying Collins' (2004) emotional-entrainment model (Gordon, 2013; Sterchele, 2020; Zuev & Picard, 2015). One study by Sterchele (2020) of The Mondiali Antirazzisti (Antiracist World Cup and non-competitive multi-sport tournament) is of particular note as the author develops IRC theory to include an understanding of the mobility of event format and connection to place. The study argues that the organisational features of the event (e.g., multifocal structure, economic affordability, sport-based social mixing, and self-refereed matches) are reproduced and re-enacted by some of the attendees in their home communities when they return after the event. This enables dissemination of the event's meaning beyond its immediate locale to future interactions in different geographic areas through recollection of experiences at the Mondiali Antirazzisti, explored through the author's theorisation of 'trans-locality'. This development – absent from studies applying the model to arts experiences – is important to understanding the meaning of arts festivals because it suggests that recollection of a meaningful experience could be important to sustaining its meaning, with the role of memories important to group solidarity. This stresses the appropriateness of IRCs as an analytical approach to broaden out from the transactional, individual experience with an art object to unpack further the social processes of meaning-making which exist across time and place.

### *2.6.1 A sociology of situations*

An extra note is worth mentioning here in relation to the criticisms of adopting a Durkheimian approach as applicable to micro-interactions across situations as per IRC theory. Smith & Alexander (2019, p.8), along with those who follow the cultural sociological approach of the Yale 'strong program', argue that Collins' microsociology fails to 'theorize a cultural realm that could regulate', thereby reducing moral sentiments and social emotions to 'merely emergent properties of individual level behaviours'. What they mean by this is that microsociological perspectives do not account for culture as having a relatively autonomous power which can influence social structures. This connects to Smith & Alexander's (2019) proposition that there are a range of different readings of Durkheim which denote different sociological approaches. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the 'structural Durkheim' of the British

anthropologists who focused on 'gathering social facts', Parsons' 'cultural Durkheim' which explored the non-rational components of social life (p.4), the 'conservative Durkheim' of the Third republican critics which focused on the 'ideals for the construction of a good society' and the 'radical Durkheim' of the College de sociologie which drew out the components of effervescence and transcendent ritual from Durkheim's work. Microsociology rejects a 'structural Durkheim' in favour of focus on everyday life and face-to-face interaction in the spirit of Goffman but, in so doing, adopts a 'mechanistic and often cynical model of human interaction and emotion', ignoring a cultural realm and placing too much emphasis on persons' emotional need as constrained by social structures (Smith & Alexander, 2019, p. 8).

In view of this criticism, I argue that Collins' commitment to emphasising the importance of *the situation* within his microsociology is a vital analytic frame to understand group-level processes which is the focus of this thesis, enabling a shift away from the problems of the dominant macro theoretical positions charted in part one of this chapter. Further, it is particularly relevant to analysis of small groups because it is underpinned by Goffman's work which focuses on face-to-face interactions at an intersubjective level. Collins' 'mechanistic' reading of Durkheim can be used to understand how meaning-making processes are constructed at a Durkheimian 'secondary group' level and shared through flows of emotional energy, offering an alternative approach to 'transactional logics'.

Collins' (2004, p.3) assertion is that social interactions occur within situations, where the situation is conceived of as a 'momentary encounter among human bodies'. These bodies are not individuals that respond to structure as 'cultural dopes' as per Bourdieu (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 68–75) or independent individuals with full agency, but they are 'moulded in a chain of encounters across time' (Collins, 2004, p.5). Drawing on Goffman, Collins (2004, p.4) recognises that the aim is to 'discover the social sources of the cult of the individual', and this is one of the emphases of this thesis: uncovering the situations that foster IRs resulting in different levels of EE (e.g., self-confidence, enthusiasm) in individuals who make up 'secondary groups' at the Fringe and understanding how these IRs create meanings associated with arts festival experiences.

## 2.7 Summary

Bringing together the literature reviewed in this chapter, it can be summarised as follows:

---

There is a dominant focus on ‘capturing’ value in the existing cultural policy literature, also mirrored in the research analysing the impact of arts festivals. There is a dearth of research on the processes of ‘valuing’, and we need a language and theoretical approach that can better unpack and explain these processes.

---

Durkheimian approaches offer a different theoretical foundation to the dominant ‘transactional logics’ of cultural policy, with his work in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* particularly useful to understanding why social solidarity is important – it holds society together.

---

Collins has developed Durkheim’s approach to further unpack the complex mechanisms of how social solidarity operates. In so doing, he puts forward his emotional-entrainment model to argue that meaning-making happens across a chain of IRs, also emphasising that IRs happen within situations.

---

Relevant application of this model is sparse but there are some important insights in the previous literature such as: the potential for collective effervescence amongst audience members; the importance of ‘intense’ arts experiences to solidarity; the relevance of a shared group identity to feelings of membership; and the role of recollection and memory in sustaining the meanings of event experiences.

---

Based on these conclusions, there is rationale to explore whether meaning-making at the Fringe may happen in a chain as per Collins and how identifying the ritual ingredients and outcomes at the Fringe may build on this previous research. Within the overarching question as presented in the introduction, three sub-questions are therefore posed in the next section.

## 2.8 Statement of research questions

To restate the lead question of this thesis to remind the reader:

---

**Question one: What makes the Edinburgh Festival Fringe a meaningful experience for participating groups?**

---

As we saw from the previous literature, certain ritual ingredients may be important to meaning-making, but it isn't clear what specific ritual ingredients lead to socially successful IRs at the Fringe. This is important to unearth because it explains the mechanisms behind *why* the Fringe is particularly important for some groups and the processes of 'valuing', relevant to building on the cultural value literature. This rationale forms the basis of the first sub-question of this thesis, exploring how to optimise group interactions at the Fringe:

**Question two: What specific ritual ingredients may increase the potential for socially successful IRs for small groups who experience the Fringe?**

Analysing interactions at the Fringe through the lens of IRCs is a promising way to understand meaning-making processes at a small group level. However, IRs are not always socially successful; thus, it is important to identify why IRs succeed or fail at the Fringe:

**Question three: What can make IRCs succeed or fail for small groups participating in the Fringe?**

Within a Durkheimian conception of reality and following Sassatelli (2011), I argue that contemporary festivals can also be viewed as revelatory of modern societies with contemporary festivals considered as 'sacred' sites that transcend the mundanity of everyday life. However, the meaning-making processes behind why this is the case and, more specifically, why the Fringe might be a sacred site that enables shared meanings for small groups is unknown. This provides the rationale for the question four of this thesis:

**Question four: What are the conditions that maintain and develop shared meanings for small groups who experience the Fringe, upholding the Fringe as a sacred site?**

In the empirical chapters and discussion of this thesis, four case studies and wider insights from fieldwork will be drawn upon to address these research questions. However, before presenting these case studies and discussing their relevance; firstly, the methodology that underpins the study is outlined to show how its theoretical approach became embedded in the processes of how the study was carried out.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods of the project and how decisions were made. It begins by justifying ethnography as a suitable strategy to analyse IRCs at the Fringe. Next, the chapter presents my research site as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, justifying three conceptual areas of study (the Fringe Society and their organisation as a whole, the work of the participant services team and the small groups who they support, and the work of the community engagement team and the small groups who they support). The chapter then describes the project's methods and analytic procedure, and the suitability of the following methods employed: focus groups, observations and fieldnotes, documents, and media. The chapter ends with reflections on ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity.

### 3.1 Ethnography

At the heart of IRC theory is the acknowledgement that interactions are linked in a *chain* where EE is 'reinvested and reinforced by subsequent interactions' (Collins, 2004, p.140). Thus, Collins (2004, p. 140) argues that, from a methodological perspective, it is preferable to 'follow people's experiences across a chain of interactions', and to observe people in 'natural conditions'. This need makes 'ethnography' a suitable methodological strategy for this research as it evolves and develops throughout the research procedure and draws upon a diverse set of methods to capture *processes*.

The suitability of ethnography as an approach to operationalise Collins (2004) theory of IRCs was also informed by Benzecry & Collins' (2004) and Heider & Warner's (2010) ethnographic work. These studies had particular relevance for my project as they sought to understand IRCs within the context of the arts, with Heider & Warner's (2010) work also focusing on small groups as per this thesis. Benzecry & Collins (2004) drew upon 18 months of ethnographic research on opera practices, much of which involved ethnographic 'hanging out' on the upper floors of the Buenos Aires' Colón Opera House and other opera houses in close proximity, attending performances, standing in lines with opera fans, and travelling up to 400 miles with fans to visit opera houses away from the city. Further, open-ended interviews and

informal conversations were drawn upon to augment observational data. Not only was it important to observe opera fans in the context of the prestigious opera houses of Buenos Aires city as they watched performances, but they wanted to understand these audience experiences within the wider *context* of participants' experiences. Namely, rather than quantitatively measuring the transactional 'impact' of watching opera, the authors explore the relationship between opera fans and the opera content that participants are 'obsessed' with, analysing the 'bodily character' of opera appreciation (Benzecry, 2013b).

Some learnings here in the context of capturing IRCs at the Fringe are: the suitability of ethnographic observations to capturing micro-observational detail and the way in which observations of experiences outside of the immediate moment of interaction with an art object were important to constructing an understanding of IRC processes. Even though 'opera' was the focus of study it was observed as a 'practice' that was embedded within wider social interactions. This is important to acknowledge because the meaning of arts experiences are constituted in a chain of IRs, and not in a momentary encounter. Thus, to understand meaning-making processes at the Fringe, a similar inclusion of analysing experiences across time needed to be made.

Although Heider & Warner's (2010, pp.80-81) description of their methods is brief, they also make a case for why ethnographic methods are appropriate to operationalising Collins' (2004) IRC theory. They drew upon observations of Sacred Harp participants across a long period of time (since 1986), carried out interviews with participants, and reflected on their own participation in singing, where researcher reflections were important to understanding the social world of Sacred Harp singing. Further, they analysed documents and media (tunebook, websites, documentaries) to understand the tradition of Sacred Harp in greater detail and to complement their observational and interview data. This triangulation of methods, Heider & Warner (2010) argue, enabled them to understanding 'not *that* the tradition [of Sacred Harp] has value, *per se*, but *how* it affects those who deem it valuable, above all its participants'. In this sense, the team move away from seeking to capture objective value (that something is valuable), and rather focus on processes of valuing (how something comes to be valued). Again, this study provided inspiration for exploring IRCs at the Fringe through emphasising the importance of ethnographic methods, moving away from momentary transactions with art objects, to exploring and unpacking meaning-making processes embedded in social relations.

### 3.2 Research site: The Fringe

Beginning the ethnographic process at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe was somewhat problematic because the boundaries of the festival are hard to define due to its scale: 438,982 people booked to attend productions in 2019.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the 'way in' to analysing IRCs at the Fringe for this thesis was the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, with this organisation informing the construction of this project's ethnographic strategy.

Explaining further, this doctoral research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of their Creative Economy Studentship programme, which brings together academic organisations and 'creative economy' industry partners with a student to carry out research. The industry partner for this project was the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society (a registered charity). Thus, whilst the context of my research was 'The Fringe' at large as outlined in the introduction, this context was viewed through the organisational practices of the Fringe Society. This meant that some of the problems of gaining organisational 'access' as is common to ethnographic work (see O'Reilly, 2009) were removed. Whilst I didn't have access to every aspect of the Fringe, my affiliation to the Fringe Society meant it was easier for me to communicate with the groups who they work with in an 'official' capacity which would have been harder to achieve as a lone researcher. Further, I was able to have access to organisational documents and to communicate with staff on a regular basis and with ease.

As noted in the introduction, the Fringe Society was founded in 1958, with the organisation described as the 'custodian' of the Fringe (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a). This language is important because the Fringe Society *do not curate* the artistic content of the festival, but rather support and advise people who want to be involved with it. They have four strategic objectives, seeking to:

1. Support, advise and encourage everyone who wants to participate in the Fringe
2. Provide information and assistance to help audiences curate their own Fringe experience
3. Promote the Fringe and what it stands for all over the world
4. Ensure the Fringe Society is sustainable, utilising its resource to the greatest benefit of the Fringe and its constituents (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a)

---

<sup>13</sup> Data provided by the Fringe Society.

To deliver their work and seek to meet these objectives, the Society have 30 members of permanent staff who work year-round for the organisation, and a further 95 members of staff who work on fixed-term contracts during the summer months to support the delivery of their work in the lead up to and during the festival itself. The Fringe Society have a wide offering of support, but the key areas in which they deliver are categorised as: participant services (broken down into two strands of 'venues and companies' and 'industry development'), operations and finance, community engagement and access, street events, and marketing, PR and sponsorship. As part of this research, I sought to engage as much as possible with each of these different areas of the Society's delivery to understand, in depth, how the Fringe Society operate and the role that they play in the formation of small group interactions. Notably, having a broad view of their work enabled me to form an understanding of the 'social world' of the Fringe and to understand meso-level constructs, such as organisational beliefs.

However, to answer my research questions, it was necessary to hone-in on specific small groups to analyse. Decisions needed to be made regarding where to allocate my time in a way that would provide both meaningful data to answer my research questions and fit within the core remit of the Fringe Society to ensure that the study would be of relevance to their work. Through discussion and collaboration with Lyndsey Jackson (Deputy Chief Executive, Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, and Industry Supervisor for this research), two core aspects of their delivery were identified as key foci: 'participant services' and 'community engagement'. The former team (participant services) provide advice and support for anyone who the Society view as actively involved in participating in the Fringe, including production companies and artists, producers, venues, and arts industry professionals such as critics and agents. Within this strand of work, the Society aim to provide 'meaningful professional space' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 3) and networking events at Fringe Central – 'a home from home' in the city during the summer (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018b) – and an exclusive online hub called the 'arts industry area' which 'connects' participants through providing company touring information, professional contact details and provides web links to meeting spaces (Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2018). The latter team (community engagement) focus on inclusion and 'removing barriers' to the Fringe, such as working with local community organisations to 'help new, often marginalised local audiences take part in the Fringe and the arts in general, introducing many to potential creative careers' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society,

2019d). This includes a range of activities including running their 'Fringe Days Out' (FDO) scheme for those 'who would otherwise not be exposed to the arts', facilitating workshops and exposing young people to 'skills training' that may support career development (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 36).

### *3.2.1 Small groups*

Whilst it was clear that I would need to explore small groups who were connected to the work of the 'participant services' and 'community engagement' teams, what constituted a 'small group' for this purpose was complex to define because the levels of 'group' analysis from a microsociological perspective vary. Fine (2010) argues that small groups can be broken down into 'primary groups' such as families or 'interacting small groups' such as clubs, teams, and cliques, with small groups that are connected together through ongoing interactions viewed as 'a system of interlocks', where linkages create 'networks'. Whilst all of these levels of analysis are relevant to this thesis - as IRs are not static and individuals move between different situations as well as belong to multiple groups - the decision was made to focus on what Fine describes as these 'interacting small groups' as this was closest to the kind of groups that the Fringe Society engage with.

In the context of the groups who the participant services and community engagement teams interact with, they can be viewed as small groups who meet multiple times and have what Collins describes as low 'social diversity' (Collins, p.116-117). There are strong barriers to outsiders and strong reified symbols amongst those participating in the IRC due to the same people meeting in-person in an aggregate chain of situations (Collins, p.116-117). The most obvious way to explicate this is to draw upon how small groups at the Fringe describe and categorise themselves as groups: for production companies, nearly every entry in the Fringe programme is listed as a named group, where the members of each group will likely all be present in Edinburgh for the summer together, physically co-present, and defining themselves as members of their named company. Further, each community group that the Fringe Society works with also has a name for their organisation which typically has a physical building associated with it where members physically meet and interact on a fairly regular basis. Whilst social diversity may be looser for community groups because

community organisations may have different people attending their buildings or events each day (or another regular interval depending on their community offering), their organisations also typically have smaller groups within them who do have a low social diversity. Small groups can be studied as ‘closed systems’ (Fine, 2010), but it will also always be possible to view how a small group is connected to other groups, or how they are connected to wider belief systems. Thus, whilst my primary focus was on ‘small groups’, I also sought to theorise their relationships to other groups and contexts.

The research therefore focused on three areas of study: The Fringe Society and their organisation as a whole, the work of the participant services team and the small groups who they support, and the work of the community engagement team and the small groups who they support. Within these areas, there existed multiple physical sites of interest. For example, the Fringe Society reside in offices, the performing companies who are supported by participant services perform in venues and socialise in pubs and bars (temporary and permanent), and the community engagement team support community organisations in Edinburgh who tend to have their own buildings where people who use their services meet. The next section describes which methods were chosen to embark upon analyses of these foci.

### 3.3 Methods

Collins (2004, pp.133-140) outlines methods for measuring EE in empirical research, viewing EE as fostered across chains of IRs (‘a strong steady emotion, lasting over a period of time’, Collins, p.134), relevant to understanding the mechanisms of IRCs at the Fringe. He lists and discusses the relevance of a range of methods, but emphasises that combining observational methods (participants’ body posture and movement, eyes, voice) with participant self-reports (interviews, focus groups) are useful to examining IRCs (Collins, 2004, p. 139). Further, he argues that ‘the level of EE should always be studied in relation to the kind of situation that is occurring at the moment, and within the chain of situations from the immediate past’ (Collins, 2004, p.139). These insights were especially influential in designing my study because they set the stage for including these kinds of methods, with Collins’ (2004) emphasis on the ‘past’ indicating that the study would need to have *multiple data collection points* in order to understand flows of EE across IRCs.

Nonetheless, the decisions over when to first make contact with participants, what to observe during the Fringe festival month itself, and when to withdraw were challenges that needed to be addressed. In part these decisions were made due to logistical considerations such as there being just one Fringe festival summer where it would be possible for me to collect data due to the length of the project's funding. Further, I needed to work around the timetables of my participants and when they would allow me to observe their interactions. Considering these factors and wanting to 'follow' small groups across 'chains of interactions' (Collins, p.140), I collected data across the periods of 'before', 'during', and 'after' the Fringe of 2019 (August), beginning fieldwork in March 2019 and ending in October 2019. This involved working with 18 small groups (nine production companies and nine community groups) and undertaking the job role of Projects Officer for the Fringe Society on an informal basis for 7 months, as well as being immersed in the environment of the Fringe. In relation to the latter, this included going along to Fringe productions, talks, and events, as well as following relevant social media accounts, making researcher journal entries and collecting relevant documents and media articles.

### *3.3.1 Participants*

### *3.3.2 Production companies*

I worked with Kevin Kimber, Participant Projects Manager at the Fringe Society, to purposively recruit participants who would represent the variety of production companies attending the Fringe. Working for the Fringe Society in various capacities since 2010 and leading on the management of the venues and companies who attend the Fringe since 2016, Kevin was a key informant for my research, able to provide me with knowledge and expertise about production companies at the Fringe (Given, 2008a). I had regular communication with Kevin, and we worked collaboratively on selecting companies to approach to be involved. Initially we put together a spreadsheet of the identifiers used to categorise those who register to perform at the Fringe, including venue, genre and country. We then discussed what other information could help to ensure a wide spread of participants and put together our final list of: venue, genre, type (amateur, professional, semi-professional, student), number of

times as a participant at the Fringe (first timer, up to 5 fringes, more than 5 fringes) and country where the production company would be travelling from. In relation to country, through analysing registration data from the last 7 years (2011-2018), I found that the majority of those who attended the Fringe came from the UK, representing 82% of those who attended, with the USA being the next dominant country (6% of the total), then Australia (3%), and the remaining 9% coming from 90 other countries across the globe, and I aimed to represent this split within those who would take part in my research.<sup>14</sup>

Following putting together these criteria of sampling, Kevin viewed them in light of his knowledge gained over many years working at the Fringe to identify production companies that would represent a broad spread of those who attend each year. This resulted in a list of 34 production companies of various sizes which I reached out to initially via email in April 2019 and followed up via additional emails and telephone communication up until June 2019. From these companies, seven consented to take part in my research. As I was aiming to match the number of community groups I was recruiting (nine in total) and I wanted to also represent the USA which was absent from the list at that time, I further reached out to production companies through my own networks, recruiting another two production companies, one from the USA and one from England. Whilst this element of my recruitment fell closer to a form of convenience sampling, it was also important to ensure the diversity of my participants and to include those who had registered for the Fringe who weren't necessarily using the Fringe Society's services as directly as the other groups who had been identified. (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Production companies recruited**

| <b>Production company</b><br>(pseudonyms used) | <b>Country</b> | <b>Genres</b>                       |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Let's Do this                                  | Scotland       | Comedy, Cabaret/Variety and Theatre |
| Attractive Figures                             | Canada         | Comedy                              |
| Orchestra Time                                 | Russia         | Music                               |
| Candy                                          | Scotland       | Cabaret/variety                     |
| Madness Productions                            | Scotland       | Theatre                             |
| Sophie and Alexi                               | Russia         | Cabaret/Variety                     |

<sup>14</sup> For context, 3,170 production companies in total participated in the Fringe in 2019.

|                       |         |                  |
|-----------------------|---------|------------------|
| Sea-salt Air          | England | Theatre          |
| Flow with It          | England | Theatre          |
| Collective Whispering | USA     | Physical Theatre |

### 3.3.3 *Community groups*

The Fringe Society work with 29 community organisations in Edinburgh as part of their Fringe Days Out (FDO) scheme; an initiative funded by the Fringe Society providing funded ticket vouchers to see any show in the Fringe programme of events, bus tickets to travel on Lothian buses, and support with navigating the Fringe via e-mail, telephone and in-person. For Fringe 2019, a commitment to facilitating connections between artists in the Fringe programme and the community was also made, seeking to not only provide communities with the resources to visit the city centre Fringe events, but also to have the option for artists to visit community premises to host workshops. In relation to Fringe Society staff, this work is managed by Lyndsey McLean, Community Engagement and Access Manager, and developed and supported by Julie Laerkholm, Community Engagement Officer. The scheme has been running since 2017 and provides £50,000 worth of Fringe tickets (vouchers) to community organisations.

Lyndsey McLean and Julie Laerkholm fed into the strategy for recruitment. It was discussed that it wouldn't be appropriate to send out an email to all of the groups asking them to participate as many of the organisations respond better to face-to-face communication or via telephone. The decision was therefore taken that an announcement would be made by Julie about the research at the FDO Launch event which took place on 1 May 2019 at a venue in Edinburgh (Out of the Blue Drill Hall). This announcement briefly explained the project and invited organisational representatives to come forward if they were interested in joining the study. At this event, connections with nine organisations were made and followed up via telephone and email communication; of these, seven consented to take part in the project. In addition to attending this event, I also went to the Fringe Programme Launch event on 5 June 2019 at another venue in Edinburgh (The Biscuit Factory) where Julie introduced me to two organisations who were not present at the launch, one of which decided to follow through and consent to the project. Finally, Julie put me in touch with one further organisation who had not attended the events and we had a meeting where

they decided to consent to the project. In total, nine community organisations took part, as detailed below:

**Table 2. Community groups recruited**

| Organisation                           | Short description                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Citadel Youth Centre                   | Organisation providing community-based youth work in Leith since 1980.                                                             |
| Dads Rock                              | Charity aiming to support and inspire dads, children and families throughout Edinburgh.                                            |
| Gig Buddies                            | Befriending project in Midlothian, linking music fans who have a learning disability with volunteers.                              |
| Lothian Autistic Society               | Charity providing services and support to individuals on the autism spectrum, and their families and carers.                       |
| Lyra                                   | Community organisation in Greater Craigmillar providing performing arts programmes for children and young people.                  |
| North Edinburgh Arts                   | Community arts centre based in Muirhouse offering a diverse range of cultural activities and support for people of all ages.       |
| Score Scotland                         | Organisation seeking to break down barriers to the full participation of minority ethnic communities in all aspects of civic life. |
| Space (formerly The Broomhouse Centre) | A community development trust run by local people, supporting community-led development in Broomhouse, Parkhead and Sighthill.     |
| Sikh Sanjog                            | Community organisation helping Sikh women through providing advice, support and encouragement.                                     |

As I was depending on the Fringe Society to introduce me to groups, I also faced the methodological challenge of having to navigate the Society's priorities for who they would want to be included in my research. Importantly, this could not be 'overcome' as such but rather incorporated into my reflexive processes, recognising that the 'trade off' for the increased access I had to participants and the ease in which I could make relationships needed to be considered in light of any potential organisational

motivations on the part of the Fringe Society. One example of this is that many organisations included in the research were groups who regularly engaged with the Fringe Society (as they came to the events described); whereas there were certain groups who I was less able to communicate with as they engaged less often. This was a limitation of the research.

### 3.3.4 *Focus groups*

Focus groups were chosen because they were a ‘way in’ to analysing group interaction. They are particularly suitable for research that seeks to explore *meaning* within group contexts, examining the ‘negotiation of meanings through intra- and inter-personal debates’ (Cook & Crang as cited in Liamputtong, 2015). Further, they allow access to observation of ‘different communication forms’ in real-time; this could include ‘joking, arguing, teasing and recapturing past events’, viewed as a form of ‘meaning-making in action’ (Liamputtong, 2015a; Spillman, 2020, pp. 49, 63).

As the research was principally interested in how interactions change and/or develop across time, two time-points of focus group engagement were included for production companies and community groups: before and after the Fringe of August 2019. This enabled exploration of group dynamics across time, as well as provided opportunity for researcher-participant rapport, entering into a ‘process of trust building’ across a period of several months, with participants displaying ‘relative ease of exchanges’ towards the end of the data collection period (Given, 2008b).

For all of the production companies, I carried out an initial focus group between April-July 2019, and then a follow up focus group between September-November 2019, either online for international participants or face-to-face for those based in Scotland. For the nine community groups, I carried out an initial focus group between June-July 2019, and then follow up groups between August-October 2019. For both production companies and community groups, a selection of people were interviewed as representatives of their organisation or company. This selection was guided by recommendations made by Liamputtong (2015b) regarding the ‘ideal size’ of a focus group, where I aimed for between four and ten people; however, responding to the availability of participants and logistical limitations, some of the groups were smaller in size (see Table 1). Nevertheless, within these small groups it was also easier to

explore questions in more depth, leading to ‘relevant and interesting data’ (Liamputtong, 2015b). Also due to availability, the second focus groups, on some occasions, included different people than the first; nonetheless, despite different people being present, the participants were able to easily continue the discussions from the first group, indicating that their group identity could remain intact with different sub-sections of their overarching organisation or group. See Table 3 below for a detailed breakdown.

**Table 3. Number of participants per focus group**

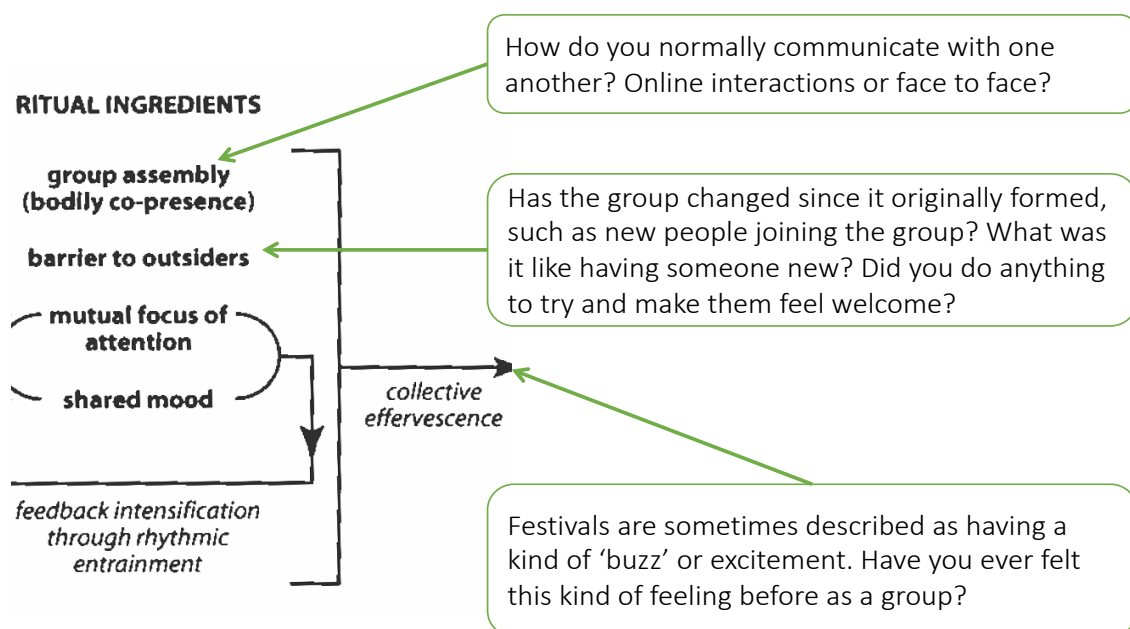
| Group name<br>(Pseudonyms used for<br>production companies) | Focus<br>group 1 | Number dropped<br>out ahead of<br>focus group 2 | Number of new<br>people joined for<br>focus group 2 | Focus group<br>2 | Total<br>participated |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Production companies</b>                                 |                  |                                                 |                                                     |                  |                       |
| Let's Do this                                               | 3                | 3                                               | 0                                                   | 0                | 3                     |
| Attractive Figures                                          | 4                | 1                                               | 0                                                   | 3                | 4                     |
| Orchestra Time                                              | 3                | 0                                               | 0                                                   | 3                | 3                     |
| Candy                                                       | 5                | 2                                               | 0                                                   | 3                | 5                     |
| Madness Productions                                         | 6                | 3                                               | 1                                                   | 4                | 7                     |
| Sophie and Alexi                                            | 2                | 0                                               | 0                                                   | 2                | 2                     |
| Sea-salt Air                                                | 2                | 0                                               | 0                                                   | 2                | 2                     |
| Flow with It                                                | 2                | 0                                               | 0                                                   | 2                | 2                     |
| Collective Whispering                                       | 4                | 1                                               | 0                                                   | 3                | 4                     |
| <b>Community groups</b>                                     |                  |                                                 |                                                     |                  |                       |
| Citadel Youth Centre                                        | 7                | 3                                               | 3                                                   | 6                | 10                    |
| Dad's Rock*                                                 | 3                | 3                                               | 7                                                   | 7                | 10                    |
| Lothian Autistic Society                                    | 6                | 1                                               | 3                                                   | 8                | 9                     |
| Gig Buddies                                                 | 6                | 1                                               | 0                                                   | 5                | 6                     |
| North Edinburgh Arts                                        | 8                | 5                                               | 0                                                   | 3                | 8                     |
| Score Scotland                                              | 7                | 1                                               | 0                                                   | 6                | 7                     |
| Lyra                                                        | 6                | 0                                               | 0                                                   | 6**              | 6                     |
| Sikh Sanjog                                                 | 2                | 0                                               | 2                                                   | 4**              | 4                     |
| Space                                                       | 4                | 1                                               | 2                                                   | 5**              | 6                     |
| <b>Total participants</b>                                   |                  |                                                 |                                                     |                  | <b>98</b>             |

\*Dad's Rock did not have a group of people who would be meeting before and after their FDO. I interviewed 3 members of the organisation ahead of the summer who were going to be using funded Fringe tickets from the Fringe Society, but not attending the FDO. I then spoke to a selection of willing participants after their FDO in the summer.

\*\* split across two focus groups due to availability.

With regards to conducting the focus groups, a semi-structured approach was taken, using questions and prompts based on the study's research questions and theoretical framework, seeking to elicit both direct responses to questions and spontaneous discussion. In this sense, I was a *moderator* of the group discussions, seeking to *facilitate* 'lively collective interaction' between those present, rather than dictating how participants should interact or respond (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 150). An example of questions deduced from Collins' (2004) emotional-entrainment model is shown below in Figure 2, and an example full interview guide which was structured with guidance from Kvale (1996, pp. 129–131) can be found in Appendix 3.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 2. How Collins' (2004) model was translated into focus group questions**



### 3.3.5 Observations and fieldnotes

Observations were vital for this project to follow participants' experiences across IRCs, providing opportunities for researcher reflections between the two focus group data collection points. Contemporary research tends to acknowledge that it isn't possible for the researcher to be able to have objective access to people's life experiences through observations, and that the researcher will always play an interpretative role -

<sup>15</sup> Throughout the empirical chapters of the thesis, the focus groups shall be referenced using the acronym 'FG'.

the 'emic perspective [is] filtered through [the] researcher's etic perspective' (Creswell, 2013) and assumptions may be made about the 'observed' (Atkinson et al., 2001); however, the level of involvement of the researcher and the role of theory within the process varies considerably.

One way to articulate this level of involvement has been put forward by Creswell (2012, pp. 166–167) who suggests that observation can be categorised into four types: *complete participant* (fully engaged with the people observed); *participant as observer* (participant role more salient than researcher role); *nonparticipant/observer as participant* (outsider observing without direct involvement); and, *complete observer* (researcher neither seen nor noticed). It may be more fitting to think of these categories as on a spectrum as the role of the observer varies greatly from moment to moment across different contexts and time points within research, but these categories can be useful in describing researcher intentions. For this study, due to the access I had available and the settings I wanted to research, my role primarily fell into the categories of 'participant as observer' or 'nonparticipant/observer as participant', with observations carried out either through engagement with the Fringe Society or with the production companies and community groups recruited for the focus group interviews. Observations were recorded using the notetaking app *Evernote* and this acted as a researcher journal throughout the project (creating a total of 79 journal entries).

In addition to the observations of focus group participants and Fringe Society staff, I also took part in Fringe activities where I made researcher journal reflections of my own experiences and what I observed. This included attending performances, events at Fringe Central, performing as part of the Fringe Street Events, and socialising. This was important to understanding the landscape in which group-level meaning-making processes were taking place, and how the interactions of my participants may influence and be influenced by the wider context of the Fringe.

### 3.3.6 Operationalising Interaction Ritual Chain theory

An observation schedule was used to guide observations, constructed using the study's theoretical framework (see Appendix 4). I drew upon Collins' guidance on 'measuring EE' (Collins, 2004, pp.133-140), and combined this with language from the

emotional-entrainment model to ensure that I was looking out for different kinds of behaviours that could represent ritual ingredients and outcomes. For example, Collins (2004, p.135) notes that EE is expressed via *bodily postures and movements*, such as high-EE being observable when someone shows confidence or initiative in relation to other persons, whereas low-EE may be observed when participants withdraw. Observing participants' eyes can also be fruitful in identifying solidarity, whereby people who make strong eye-contact with each other are considered as having high attunement, and low EE manifested in a 'dominating or avoiding gaze' (Collins, p.136). The style of participants' voices can also be telling, whereby a shared rhythm in speech may denote a situation of solidarity, whereas 'rhythmic instability' such as interruptions, pauses, or struggles may indicate low solidarity or conflicts; observing who sets the rhythm of speech and who follows can also be helpful to understand one's position within an IR, such as who has initiative (high EE) (Collins, p.136-137). Based on this, I constructed questions for myself as prompts to help me to 'look out' for different behaviours that may represent situations of solidarity, and signs of IR failure or low solidarity. One example of this is provided below and the full list ('observation schedule') is included in Appendix 4:

**Table 4. How IRC theory was adapted for observations**

| <b>Group assembly/ bodily co-presence</b>                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ⇒ <i>How are people communicating with one another? Which forms of communications seem to show signs of connection?</i> |
| ⇒ <i>How do people gather in groups?</i>                                                                                |

This schedule allowed me to "filter out those elements of the perceptual world that [were] not central to concern in a given moment, and... 'filter in' those elements that [were] relevant" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 79). In other situations which were more spontaneous or it was inappropriate to be making notes in real time, notes remained 'head notes' until it was possible to sit down and make a note of initial impressions, emphasising what was interpreted as significant or unexpected (Emerson et al., 2011). For example, when I participated in group activities (e.g., knitting with the Knit and Natter group at North Edinburgh Arts), it would have interrupted the flow of a situation if I were to make notes in-situ. As a general reflection, I found it easier to make notes in real-time observing in the context of production companies where I couldn't actively participate (e.g., watching technical rehearsals),

and more difficult when engaging with community groups where the kinds of activities I was observing involved active participation (e.g., eating lunch together). In these more difficult contexts, I ensured that I had a digital photograph of Collins' Interaction Ritual Chains model to hand (stored in my mobile phone), enabling quick access to a visual prompt where it wasn't possible to sit down and use the observation schedule.

### *3.3.7 Negotiating being an 'observer'*

There was significant overlap in my role as a participant and a nonparticipant, where I was often observing and participating in activities simultaneously. It was an ongoing process of negotiating when to participate, when to observe, and when to make notes, and it was a 'lived' learning process where, as I built rapport with participants, I was able to negotiate deeper levels of participation. However, there were certain circumstances where my 'researcher role' was more salient and other times where my participant role' took centre stage.

### *3.3.8 Observer as participant*

I worked in the Fringe Society offices for at least 1 day a week from April 2019 to October 2019. Primarily this was based with the Participant Services department, but, on occasion, it was also possible to work with the Community Engagement team. This was the maximum access available, given the logistical circumstances of desk space and to engage in other aspects of the fieldwork. Year-round, the offices for both of these teams are based just off the High Street in Edinburgh's Old Town (in the same building but in separate rooms), but for the Fringe during the month of August and just before it, both teams combine into one room and move to Appleton Tower, a university owned space which is rebranded as 'Fringe Central'. Fringe staff were always aware of my role as a researcher, and staff consented for fieldnotes to be made in relation to their activities. Accordingly, although I tried to be as involved as possible with office activity, there was also an element of recording data 'without direct involvement with activity or people' as someone viewing Fringe activities (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

Observations of the participants recruited for focus groups were also made. For a few of the groups, a meeting prior to the first focus group to explain the study took place, with fieldnotes beginning from then, but in most instances, the first observations

began on the day of their first focus group. In relation to the community groups, most of the people included were met 'on site' at their community organisations for both focus groups, so it was possible to observe their interactions in-situ in the context in which participants knew one another before and after the focus groups. This included participating in activities such as helping prepare rooms and refreshments, group games, meetings and informal discussions. I also accompanied groups on their FDO, including in most instances travelling with them into Edinburgh centre from their community organisations, where I took part in the day's activities such as having lunch with the groups and watching performances. The community participants were informed of my role as researcher, but I took part as much as I could. Similarly, observations of production companies were made by watching technical rehearsals, performances or engaging in a social activity, such as going for a drink with the group. Thus, there were elements of researcher participation in these contexts, but my role as a researcher was more prevalent than as a 'participant'. This 'hanging out' with my participants was also vital for building rapport and gaining access to how EE flowed in IRs before, during, and after Fringe engagement in chains.

### *3.3.9 Participant as observer*

Creswell (2013) defines the participant-observer as participating in research activities in a way where the participant role is 'more salient' than the role of being a researcher. My main role in this capacity was through engagement with the Fringe Society. In addition to sitting in the Society's offices to observe staff, I took on an administrative role under the job title of Projects Officer. My two main responsibilities were leading on the coordination of the Performer Showcase Opportunities Listing on the participants section of the Fringe Society's website and supporting the administration of background music licensing.<sup>16</sup> In these roles, I exchanged emails with members of production companies who were not participating in my focus groups to support them in their experience at the Fringe. In my email signature I noted that I was also a researcher, but my primary role in my email exchanges was as Projects Officer. Although unintended, I provided a level of support for the community organisations I

---

<sup>16</sup> The Performer Showcase Opportunities Listing is an online page that lists opportunities for performers interested in extra stage time to market their show. It can be accessed here: <https://www.edfringe.com/take-part/showcase-opportunities>

was working with as I acted as an easy communication channel for groups to ask me questions about the Fringe which I either answered if I was able to or passed on to Julie Laerkholm (Community Engagement Officer). This added a layer of authenticity to my role and helped to foster trust with my participants. For example, the manager of the Citadel (community group) stated in relation to me attending their FDO; 'I'm seeing you as an extra member of staff... an extra pair of hands' (telephone communication, 19 August 2019). I was also invited to the Citadel Annual General Meeting (23 October 2019), as well as approached to lead a singing workshop for the group after my primary data collection period was over (21 February 2020).<sup>17</sup> I saw this as a reflection of the rapport and trust that I was building with my participants and, as an insider, I was able to gain a deeper level of understanding.

### *3.3.10 Documents and media*

In addition to carrying out focus groups and ethnographic observations, the inclusion of documents and media were important to further understand the social world of the Fringe and the way in which the beliefs of small groups may circulate beyond in-person interactions, exploring the relationship between micro-interactions and meso-level symbols (e.g., organisational practices). Namely, concentrating only on spoken word and human action could potentially limit understanding, whereas including written text could elucidate further the Fringe structure, organisation, and operations. Nevertheless, because documents require 'contextualized interpretation' (Hodder, 2012), it was also important to view them alongside focus group and observational data to interpret them.

Documents were collected from a range of different sources, including: organisational documents (e.g. strategy documents, meeting minutes and annual reviews), internal email communications and marketing materials from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society; marketing materials associated with productions (e.g. flyers); information and marketing materials from community organisations (e.g. activity brochures and timetables); and, newspaper cuttings including production reviews and editorial. As well as news media, social media data was also collected. For each week

---

<sup>17</sup> Through my time getting to know Citadel staff, a member of the team learned that I had experience of running choir workshops and invited me to lead this singing session.

of the Fringe (2019), I used the Ncapture feature of the software NVivo to capture tweets that mentioned the Fringe Society's twitter handle (@edfringe) or their slogan for 2019 (#MakeYourFringe). Relevant social media posts were also saved manually, as were quotes from the websites and social media channels of those included in the focus groups. From these data, I was able to analyse the IRs of the small groups included in view of wider, shared narratives and beliefs, as well as explore how the Fringe Society and my participant groups 'performed' (as per Goffman, 1956) in an online, public space, such as exploring notions of public group identity and self-image.

### 3.4 Analytic procedure

I began my analytic procedure adopting a thematic analytic approach, which can be either deductive and theoretical, or inductive and open (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As this study was driven by Collins' (2004) theory, a deductive approach seemed appropriate to analyse data in view of Collins' emotional-entrainment model, using this as a framework to interpret and make sense of data. Nonetheless, as I also wanted to be open to new findings and to understand individual, emotional sentiments (e.g., EE, mood) in view of sociological, group-level constructs (e.g., group solidarity, collective effervescence), I also sought to move between data, theory, and interpretation, engaging in a process akin to Timmermans and Tavory's (2012) abductive analyses which combines deductive coding with inductive coding processes, using a theoretical framework but also coding sections of the text that don't fit the framework to construct new themes and develop new concepts in a process of analytic theorising.

I carried out thematic analyses across the data for all of my groups; however, through my reflexive processes, it became apparent that the approach was losing an important element of the fieldwork reflections that were vital to this study: processes across *chains* of interactions. Notably, the thematic approach had collapsed the very specific micro-interactional processes unique to each group which could explain the nuances of meaning-making across different situational contexts into homogenous themes that lacked the depth of insight that my fieldnotes and journal reflections offered. What was important was to 'follow people's experiences' (Collins, 2004, p. 140) and to represent the 'story' of each group to unpack the micro-details of meaning-making that could illuminate why the Fringe was meaningful for some groups and not

for others. Thus, in order to reinvigorate my thematic analysis with the contextual factors that were unique to each group, a 'case study' analytic approach was adopted to analyse in-depth a selection of the groups in the study and to operationalise the IRC model in a way that would allow the reader to see how EE flows *across* situations, recognising the importance of IRs before and after the Fringe, as well as during it.

To embark on the case study procedure, it was important to select a smaller number of the groups included in the study for a deeper level of analysis, as it was deemed beyond the scope of the project to carry out a case study analytic approach for 18 different groups. Thus, using the themes deduced from the original thematic approach (see Appendix 5) combined with insights from my fieldwork, I selected four contrasting cases that I felt told different stories in order to elucidate different kinds of IRs at the Fringe (two production companies, two community groups). I also considered the amount of data I had for each group which was dependent on the access available to collect data, as well as the size of the groups, as some of the groups had included drop-outs from the research which made it more difficult to analyse interactions across time.

A note on the use of the word 'story' in the explanation of this case study approach is worthy of note here too. I aimed to reconstruct, in written form, the IRCs that I observed, which involved piecing together different aspects of the data for each group to present a written picture of what happened. In a sense, this was a form of telling the Fringe story of each of these groups, with the importance of this approach articulated by Summers-Effler (2010, p.4) in view of her research into social movement groups. She explains:

I suggest that when a social scientist's goal is to convey emotional and embodied experiences, stories are a particularly effective form of analysis and representation. Bateson argues that "logic and quantity turn out to be inappropriate devices for describing organisms and their interactions and internal organization" (2002, 19). As a solution, he offers up stories as an alternative, pointing out that a story is a complex of connectedness.

This perspective informed the analytic approach adopted here – to represent the data in a way that told the Fringe story of the four groups included to convey to the reader a rich, complex 'ordered whole' (Summers-Effler, 2010, p. 4), also drawing upon insights across all the groups to position the case study 'stories' within the diverse range of experiences that the Fringe provides.

### 3.4.1 Coding frame

To embark on this case study approach, I revisited the data for the four groups one at a time and sought to focus on exploring the way in which IRs unfolded across different contexts, paying attention to the linear time of each group. To do this, rather than using NVivo, I coded the data for each selected case study separately using the Microsoft Word comments tool; this enabled me to look across all of the data for one group at a time and to focus on the whole ‘story’ of a group. That is, labelling sections of the text with analytic comments, coding sections of the data with insights from Collins’ theory, and making notes about anything else that seemed relevant, as well as comparing parts of the data with other parts by reading and re-reading interesting sections. I also had a notebook to hand and used pen and paper to ‘map out’ different themes and to explore ideas about how meaningful interactions unfolded across different situations.

Once I had completed in-text comments across all of the data for one focus group, I then organised and explored the data further in view of the key themes that I had drawn out from Collins’ model and my earlier thematic analytic processes. This involved constructing a ‘coding frame’ (Mason et al., 2018) using thematic headings, using the table tool option in word to list the key ‘code names’ on the left and then cutting and pasting relevant sections of the data documents into the right to highlight key extracts that represented each code. A short example of this is shown below for a small section of coding for one case study:

**Table 5. Example of coding frame**

| Code name                              | Data extracts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Group Assembly<br>(bodily co-presence) | “Both shows changed a lot. Because we were meeting early every like, probably three hours earlier than the show was supposed to happen. So we had three hours of marketing and then also we did a fight call or flight call, for Chris's show, so that we could like practice our lifts and everything. So within that time period we were constantly talking about, what do we need to figure out now so that we won't have to figure it out on stage.”                                                      |
| Mutual focus of attention              | “But we had a similar language that we could respond to. And also we had a similar drive. Us six having a drive to make a certain kind of work or, or really just to show up and be there and work hard.”<br><br>“..it was nice to have that moment in the beginning of [inaudible 00:25:55] where we all just have to sit and turn and breathe together and for me that was another version of a check-in. We're all here, we're all breathing together, are we okay? We're alive. That was what it became.” |

Once this analytic process had been completed for one case study, I then used the framework to write up the analysis for that particular group, also constantly referring back to my earlier memos and thematic analysis to revisit and develop ideas throughout. Following completion of one case study, I then began the case study analytic procedure again for the second, third, and fourth case studies.

### 3.5 Ethics

The main ethical consideration that I had to deal with for this research was the inclusion of community group participants who were considered 'vulnerable', such as children, young people, and those with autism. In view of this, I was never alone with vulnerable groups, and ensured that an employee from the community organisations with specialist knowledge and training was present for data collection to ensure researcher and participant safety. I also needed to consider participant anonymity. It was feasible to pseudonymise production companies as so many people participate in the Fringe each year; however, this was a challenge for the community groups as the Society only work with 29 community organisations, making it possible to identify these groups, even if they were pseudonymised. With this in mind, the decision was made to ask for consent for the names of organisations to be used in the research and for pseudonyms of individual names to be employed. At the end of my fieldwork, I also arranged with the Fringe Society box office team for my ticket booking account to be anonymised so that there was no lasting record of the productions I had seen.

The study was approved by the University of Edinburgh's School of Social and Political Science's Research Ethics Committee, with the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice (2017) also drawn upon throughout the research. All those participating in focus groups read an information sheet and signed a consent form before taking part (see Appendix 6). Staff at the Fringe Society who I was interacting with on a regular basis also gave informed consent. For the rest of the staff at the Fringe Society, an email was circulated about my research with an option for staff to get in touch if they didn't want to be observed. In addition, as many fixed-term contract staff joined the Society for the summer, information about the research was provided in all new-starter staff information packs for Fringe 2019. Some observations in public areas where it wasn't possible to gain informed consent were

made; in these cases, I either attained verbal consent if it was possible or I did not get consent. This approach was included in the ethics application for the study and approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

### 3.6 Researcher reflexivity

As outlined by Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012, p.79) 'interpretative researchers see the research world and the researcher as entwined'; thus, acknowledging my positionality, biases, emotions, and the role that I played in the construction of my research and my findings was vital to my process. I recognised 'knowledge as constructed rather than found' (Bank et al., 2007, p. 112), and that I - as the 'research instrument' with my own 'particularity' - was a key player in this construction (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 80). I was not outside my study, but deeply embedded within it and a part of my analysis (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 80). As Goffman, (1989) notes; as a researcher you are:

*...subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation... [my emphasis]*

Recognising the key role that I played in the construction of the design, implementation, and analytic processes of the research, it was important to engage in ongoing processes of self-reflection. This involved reflecting on my positionality (my relation to the social and political context of the study) and how this positionality affected the research process, as well as reflecting on the 'researcher-researched relationship' within the study to think through power relations between myself and research participants (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). To engage in these processes, I kept a researcher journal to reflect on my own in-the-moment perceptions of engaging in my fieldwork, as well as making voice memos on my mobile phone on occasions where it was hard to put pen to paper in-situ. These processes enabled me to recognise what I brought to the data. In particular, as someone who had previously worked in the professional theatre industry and also produced two productions to the Fringe as a student, I acknowledged that I had my own experiences of being a participant at the Fringe: in some ways this made it easier to see the world through the eyes of my

participants, but I also recognised the importance of seeing every group as unique to the situations in which their Fringe experiences developed, seeking to move beyond subjective perceptions and enter into a process of analytic theorising through triangulation of different kinds of data and ongoing reflexive processes.

In sum of this chapter, this study was a qualitative study that drew upon ethnographic methods to operationalise Collins' emotional-entrainment model, with the aim of using this approach to unpack meaning-making processes for small groups who attend the Fringe. However, before delving into the micro-interactions of the small groups themselves, the study first constructs an empirical backdrop in which to situate these case studies, theorising how meaning may operate at different social levels at the Fringe, and how meaning-making processes are underpinned by a shared morality.

## Chapter 4: Theorising meaning at the Fringe

This chapter establishes a backdrop to explore meaning-making in the case studies that follow. To do this, the chapter presents a theoretical model constructed out of my fieldwork and analytic processes, showing how beliefs at the Fringe circulate at different social levels which are interconnected: the micro-level of small group memberships (primary realm of rituals) and the meso level of surrounding networks and larger collectives (secondary realm of rituals). Using this model, the chapter argues that small group beliefs and memberships are constructed within the shared frame of the imagined moral community of the arts which may buttress a sense of affiliation to what I call 'The Fringe Tribe' (the community of people who meaningfully participate in the Fringe), and potentially other communities connected to the festival, such as feeling a sense of belonging to a particular performance venue, thereby setting up small groups who hold shared beliefs for socially successful IRs at the Fringe. Further, these beliefs are heightened and maintained through participation in, and public performance of, IRs at the Fringe – what I theorise as a 'sacred site'. Ultimately, the feedback loop of beliefs and symbols across these different social levels at the sacred site provides the potential for a meaningful experience at the Fringe.

The chapter begins by providing an overview of this model before examining each component in greater detail, concluding by arguing that it is important to further explore the mechanisms of IRs for small groups to better understand how meaning-making happens. The 'picture' of the Fringe theorised moves away from transactional conceptions of art objects and impacts and opens the door to seeing Fringe experiences as IRCs whereby meaning is intimately connected to relational processes that extend beyond the festival event itself.

### 4.1 Constructing a theoretical model: IRCs at the Fringe

Chapters two and three have gone some way to describe the micro-level of in-person interactions using Collins' emotional-entrainment model, but the beliefs that underpin these interactions at the Fringe and how they connect to meso-level beliefs and symbols is yet to be explored. The relations between the beliefs circulating at different

social levels should not be over-simplified; there is an inherent plurality to the sociocultural ecosystem at the Fringe where micro and meso beliefs feedback on one another. Collins (2004, p.98) theorises this relationship through the lens of 'realms'; on this view, the small-group interaction level is the 'primary realm of living rituals' (i.e., in-person IRCs), but there is a 'secondary realm' where 'symbols become circulated in the IRs that make up the surrounding social networks' (Collins, 2004, p. 99). However, I also extend this theorisation beyond the circulation of networks which still have a bodily component into a conception of an imagined community which underpins the beliefs circulating at these micro and meso levels.

The notion of an 'imagined community' stems from Benedict Anderson's (1983) work on nationalism, where he argues that nationalism is essentially a social construct. There is no 'scientific definition' of the nation, yet it exists as a cultural artefact, and to be a nationalist is to be part of an *imagined* political community. From this point of view, nationalism is not viewed as an ideology akin to notions of liberalism or fascism, but as something closer to a belief system such as a 'religion' or 'kinship' (Anderson, 1983). Nonetheless, the creation, development and interconnections of imagined communities and groups across primary and secondary realms at the Fringe is complex. Theorising this, this chapter presents the *Interaction Ritual Chains at the Fringe* model (Figure 3).

Explaining this model, a powerful imagined community relevant to the Fringe is what I conceptualise as the imagined 'moral community of the arts'. It is an imagined community because membership of it transcends the Fringe, with members also expressing their affiliation to it within other contexts, whereby members will not have physically met everyone who has affinity with this community. Instead, it is the shared belief in the moral code of the community that unites members. There is an element of universality to the beliefs that members adhere to, such as belief in the importance of art objects and advocating for art as a universal 'good'.

Connected to the morality of this imagined arts community is 'The Fringe Tribe'. This is the community of people who attend and passionately believe in the value of the Fringe. It has a strong bodily component in that swaths of people physically attend the Fringe, many of whom may engage in IRs with one another and move across different IR situations, engaging in interactions with large numbers of people; however, it has an imagined dimension in that many will not have physically met, with 'the Fringe' holding symbolic meanings for members.

However, whilst those who attend the Fringe often speak in a language of all participating in the same, one 'Fringe', there are multiple levels of belonging at play, and 'the Fringe' can mean different things to different groups of people. There are a range of different communities (with both imagined and in-person elements) at the Fringe, many of which also extend beyond the Fringe itself, with groups who attend experiencing a multiplicity of group memberships based upon shared interests, venue membership, or shared locale, to just name a few. As Delanty (2010) argues, it's possible for groups to experience 'multiple, simultaneous identities' constructed through a diverse array of group memberships; for example, those who attend may also belong to 'the arts festival community'. This community is largely one of shared interests, where members believe in the importance of festivals and tend to derive enjoyment from going to them, attending a range of festivals throughout the year alongside the Fringe (e.g., the Adelaide Fringe). The boundaries of the arts festival community are fluid, where people move in and out of IRs across contexts, where meanings circulate in the secondary realm too.

At the primary realm of IRCs at the Fringe (the micro-level) exists in-person relations (IRs) as part of membership of small groups who meet regularly face-to-face and attend the Fringe together, such as production companies and community groups, akin to Fine's (2010) 'interacting small groups'. However, small groups are not static and people within these groups may move between different situations and engage in IRs with others outside of their immediate group, whereby beliefs circulate in the secondary realm. For example, a production company (small group) may feel a sense of affiliation to a particular supervenue at the Fringe and also to the larger professional artist community that transcends the Fringe context.

The beliefs circulating at these different social levels do not have to align and there may be tensions; indeed, the theoretical model presented here shows how these different community memberships *may* align to create meaningful experience and not that they always will – this is a contingent picture. Nonetheless, when there are 'matchups of membership symbols and emotional energies', there is a potential for heightened levels of meaningful experience at the Fringe (i.e., high ritual outcomes) (Collins, 2004, p.166). Further, meaning-making is heightened at the Fringe because the festival setting is a 'sacred site' for members, whereby the shared emotions within and across IRCs at the site create feedback loops. There is an emotional contagion effect, reflecting Durkheim's 'contagious' nature of the sacred (*contagiosité du sacré*;

Durkheim, 1912 [2016], p. iv), where members feel a part of something greater than themselves. The rest of the chapter delves deeper into the *IRCs at the Fringe* model.

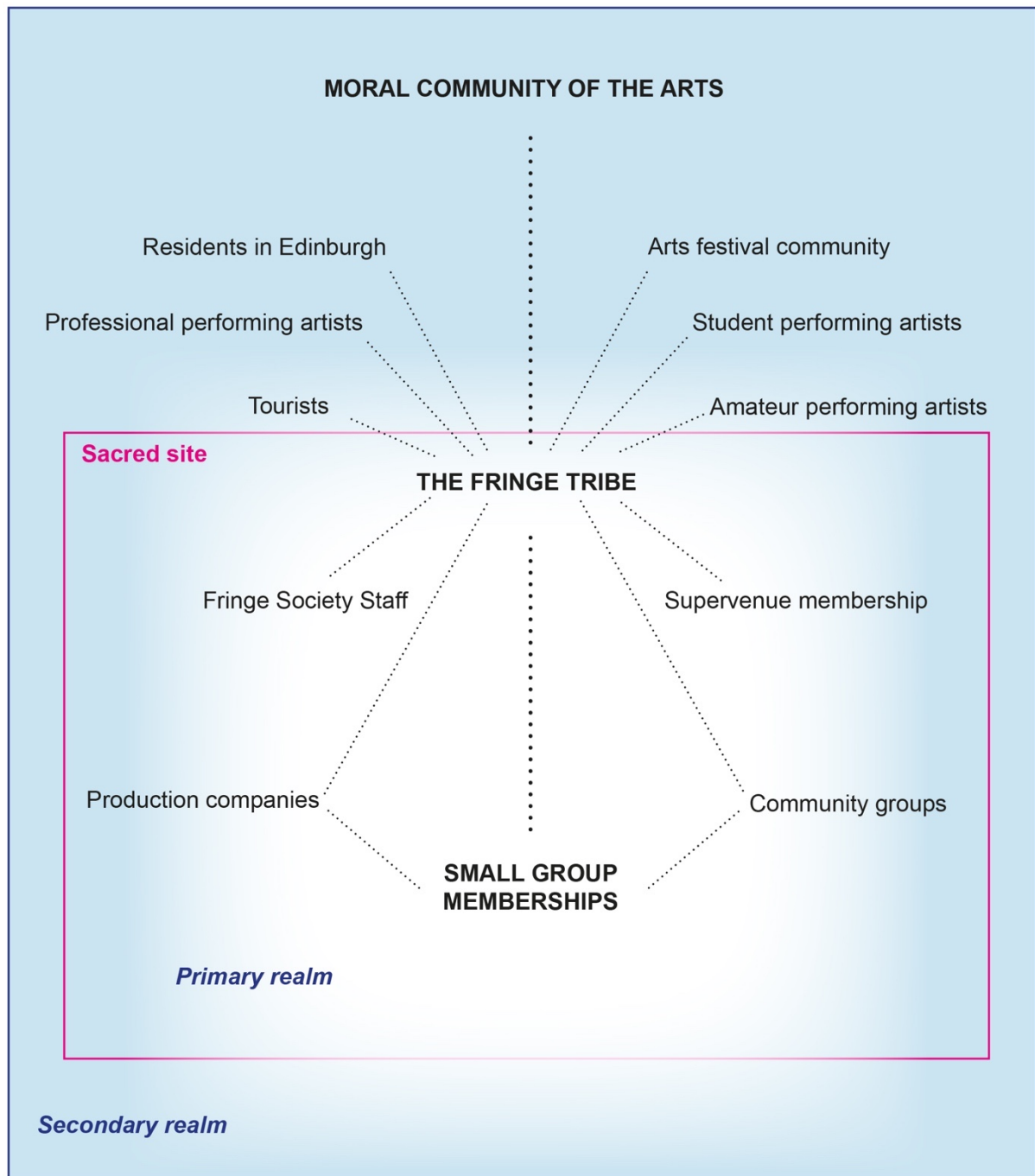


**Figure 3. Interaction Ritual Chains at the Fringe.**

White indicates in-person IRs (primary realm), with blue representing larger or more fluid memberships such as networked relations (secondary realm) and imagined communities. The fade of colour expresses how memberships may have both in-person and imagined dimensions. Dotted lines are used to represent that the connections between these communities are contingent on socially successful IRCs. Communities shown are examples and not representative of every possible membership affiliation at the Fringe.

## 4.2 Moral community of the arts

This thesis theorises the moral community of the arts as a ‘system of beliefs and practices’ as per Durkheim, with membership evident in those who share an affiliation to certain ‘sacred’ things in contrast to ‘profane’ things. Sacred and profane things are ‘always separate genera’ with nothing in common, whereby what is deemed sacred is protected and embodies ‘a set of beliefs and rites’, with what is profane tending to be considered mundane (Durkheim, 1912 [1995], pp. 35–38). Nonetheless, this moral community of the arts does not adhere to a ‘unified system’ in the same way that a religion does where there is a written code of what is morally right or wrong. What is moral in the arts is negotiated and debated through artistic practice, and embedded within social interactions, with different small groups constructing their own image of what is ‘sacred’ within ‘the arts’ through IRs. It is as an imagined community where members live in the ‘image of their community’, constructing an ideal of what is sacred with others who share similar beliefs (Anderson, 1983). This section spotlights three key beliefs of this moral community that I observed in my fieldwork: revering the arts in and of themselves; striving for excellence; and transformative experiences.

### 4.2.1 *Revering the arts in and of themselves*

Whilst affiliation with ‘the moral community of the arts’ may mean different things to different people, one of the key beliefs is the notion that the art object itself (including performances) is sacred and should be revered and protected. Those within the community need to understand, negotiate, and debate what is art and what is not art, and to advocate for the meaning that art objects provide. As an example, the most recent Culture Strategy for Scotland, which embeds the arts within in, states:

Culture in Scotland is valued in and of itself. (The Scottish Government, 2020)

This statement advocates at a government level that the arts are to be valued ‘in themselves’, justifying public investment through positioning ‘culture’ (which includes arts activities) as an intrinsic ‘good’ (connected to the transformative potential of the

arts, as shall be explored in the next section).<sup>1819</sup> Further examples can be seen in campaigns such as 'I value the arts' led by The National Campaign for the Arts in 2010, encouraging the public to contact their local politicians to express how important the arts are to them (National Campaign For The Arts, 2010), and the response to the government's 2021/2022 plans to cut government funding for arts subjects in English universities by nearly 50%. The Public Campaign for the Arts are spearheading a campaign to stop the funding cuts, and artists and musicians have publicly expressed their criticisms of the government's plans (BBC News, 2021; Public Campaign for the Arts, 2021). The arts are intrinsically important and worth defending.

The grand language that is used in organisational mission statements also stresses that engagement with art is emotional and meaningful, appealing to those who share the belief that the arts are intrinsically valuable. The National Theatre of Scotland describe themselves as a 'creative catalyst', the Royal Court Theatre in London state they create 'restless, alert, provocative theatre', and the Fringe Society state that the Fringe is an 'explosion of creative energy from around the globe'. Further, this is mirrored by those who attend the Fringe, where the Fringe is a public celebration of this value. A participant from Madness Productions supported this, noting that the Fringe is 'purely for theatre and performance and I don't think there's anything else like that. So, to see that is really inspiring' (Focus group 1). It is the belief that the Fringe 'purely' focuses on the arts that is attractive, where art objects are at the centre of the Fringe experience.

Nonetheless, there are many different dimensions to the moral community of the arts, with some advocating for the arts as entertainment (e.g., comedy clubs and musicals, particularly relevant at the Fringe where these forms are widespread), and others as reflection or disruption (e.g., the aptly named series of productions 'Disruption' presented at the Fringe in 2019 with a vision to create political and

---

<sup>18</sup> Although it could be suggested that government-level advocacy cannot be used to argue for what members of the moral community of the arts stand for (e.g., artists, audiences) because it comes with a political agenda, the point made here is that these different social levels (including political levels) all involve IRCs which feedback on and influence one another. This is not to say that there may not be tensions and beliefs that need to be contested and negotiated at these different levels, but it's to say that beliefs circulate and become manifest in the language that is used by those representing different groups and institutions.

<sup>19</sup> Whilst it may seem that a policy document expressing the intrinsic value of the arts counters the argument presented in the literature review of this thesis that the dominant policy narrative is transactional, this language needs to be viewed within the context in which it sits. 'Value' is still presented here as a static concept and within a document that sees the arts as 'transformative' (see pp.81-83), whereby the arts can 'do' things in a transactional cause and effect way.

provocative work), but ultimately whichever art form or group of people one chooses to express their artistic views within, the overriding belief that an art object is intrinsically important remains, as does the commitment to debating what constitutes 'art'.

The Fringe is characterised by artistic and social *experiences* (i.e., immersive performances, participatory street events, and socialising) which seems to contradict an argument that groups at the Fringe draw upon this wider morality of an art *object* as being sacred. Nonetheless, this is not the case because social experiences at the Fringe are embedded within the meanings attributed to artistic encounters; one of the ways I learned to 'fit in' at social occasions with production companies included in my research was to talk about performances I'd seen and to engage in sharing stories with my participants about which artistic objects we perceived as important during the Fringe 2019. Socially successful IRs here relied on affiliation with the moral community and the important status given to artistic experiences.<sup>20</sup> That is, *participating in the Fringe is also a commitment to the moral community of the arts because it is an expression of the meaning of the arts*. This sounds cyclical because it stresses a point that Durkheim and Goffman made that sacred symbols are 'already constituted' ahead of sacred rituals (see Collins, 2004, p.17). Belief in the importance and uniqueness of the arts has already been cultivated ahead of attending the Fringe, and it is celebrated and affirmed with others through artistic and social experiences in Edinburgh. As a staff member from community group Sikh Sanjog explained, their 'young people really love arts, and there's ways that we can tie in so much of what *they already love* into things that happen at the Fringe'. [My emphasis]

#### 4.2.2 *Striving for excellence*

Closely interconnected to the intrinsic value of the arts and the need to debate this value is the shared construction by moral community members of what makes 'quality' or 'professional' artistic work, and the belief in the value of this quality artistic work.

---

<sup>20</sup> Whilst Bourdieuan scholars (i.e. Schwarz, 2013; Varriale, 2016) have also recognised the importance of these social foci, they have done so in a way that emphasises social structures and social reproduction, resulting in the social structural issues as outlined in chapter two. Bourdieuan recognition of the 'social' also tends to use the term at a macro level, ignoring the small group level of meaning-making which is crucial to understanding how arts experiences become meaningful, as is explored in this thesis.

Whilst academic debates in sociology have sought to dismantle notions of there being an objective 'excellent' through social means (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986; Hennion, 2007), the practices of those who are members of the moral community of the arts suggest that *judging* quality and is very much at the forefront of concerns, with belief in there being an 'excellence' to *aspire to* part of moral community membership. This is not to say that all those who engage with the arts have the same conception of what is excellent and what is not-excellent, but it is *engaging in the process of seeking to* achieve excellence that is the marker of belonging to the community. It is the commitment to critiquing and discussing what makes 'quality' work in IRs that is key. As Arts Council England state:

We do not believe that certain types or scales of creative activity are inherently better or of greater value than others: excellence can be found in village halls and concert halls, and in both the process of participation and the work that is produced. We are committed to backing organisations and creative practitioners of all ages who have the potential to excel at what they do, as well as supporting those who are already at the top of their game. (Arts Council England, 2020a)

The sentiment here is that excellence varies and can be found in different contexts, but the endeavour to achieve it is important. Major arts organisations also seek to position themselves as 'the best', telling others within the community that their artistic work is to be revered. For example, Scottish ballet state they 'strive for excellence' and to 'present ballet at its best', the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre in London that they seek to produce 'world-class theatre', the Young Vic Theatre in London that they present 'work of the highest quality', and Edinburgh's Scottish National Portrait Gallery that they present 'the nation's exceptional art collection'. These flagship organisations are recognised by those within the moral community of the arts, with their practices and artistic work acting as symbols of quality for many.

Further explaining using my fieldwork; I met with the Artistic Director (Niles) and Producer (Talia) of production company Sea-salt Air for coffee after one of their productions, and they told me about the importance of striving for excellence at the Fringe:

Niles talked about Fringe Firsts (awards) acting as 'markers' for production teams when producers take a step back and leave the show to run, as they give the team 'something to aim for' which supports with 'pulling them through'. Boldly, he stated that 'all people aim for Fringe Firsts' at the festival. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 2 August 2019)

Their artistic practice at the Fringe was all about a shared commitment to *aiming* for 'the best'. Seeking excellence was at the heart of why they attended and participated.

Part of this striving for excellence involves engaging in artistic practice to reach a sacred or 'transcendent' experience that is set apart from the mundanity of everyday life. It is about seeking a 'higher good' which may entail risk-taking, aesthetic experimentation, or pushing boundaries. There are different kinds of risk-taking, whether this be financial risks such as engaging in a career in the arts rather than taking on stable or higher-paid opportunities, health risks such as taking drugs in order to reach 'highs' of creative experience (e.g., musicians taking drugs to reach altered states), or emotional risks such as engaging deeply with difficult or traumatic content for the pursuit of great art. There are countless examples of artists taking risks, such as writer Aldous Huxley who believed mescaline (a psychedelic drug) could provide 'purely aesthetic' insights (Huxley, 2010 [1954]), or the Canadian artist Taras Polataiko who intentionally exposed himself to radiation in Chernobyl to create an artwork including radioactive blood (Hosein, 2020), to name a couple. However, risks aren't always at these extremes; one example from my fieldwork at the Fringe was a participant from company Let's Do This who noted that he knew he could make more money performing at 'one-off weddings and conferences' rather than a 'full run at the Fringe' but he was willing to make the financial sacrifice for his art. Ultimately, artists embrace risk to some degree to achieve 'excellent' work, and it is the commitment to continual striving for such excellence which is a marker of community membership.

#### *4.2.3 Transformative experiences*

Another key belief of the moral community of the arts is in the potential for engagement with the arts to be 'transformative'. This belief is grounded in the notion that the arts are an objective 'good', whether this be at an individual level of experience, such as in relation to catharsis or wellbeing benefits, or the societal level of social and economic impact. Once again, these beliefs are evident in the Culture Strategy for Scotland which states 'transforming through culture' is a priority ambition for Scotland, emphasising the power of the arts to be transformative in the context of health and wellbeing, the economy and education, as well as playing a role in 'reducing inequality and realising a greener and more innovative future' (The Scottish Government, 2020).

This kind of language is echoed nationally as well, such as through the language of the arts as ‘promoting healing’ and being ‘a means of empowerment’ (The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, 2017, p. 20). The arts are viewed as having a kind of ‘power’ to make change, with access to the arts a ‘universal human right’ (Tate, 2020).

An example of how this belief is manifest at the Fringe can be explored through the SIT-UP Awards. These awards ‘reward and support theatre to achieve greater social impact’ at the Fringe, identifying and celebrating productions that ‘make a difference in people’s lives’ (Leadbetter, 2018; SIT-UP Awards, 2020). The founder of the awards David Graham reports on their website that it was a particular production of the National Theatre of Scotland’s show ‘Adam’ at the Fringe that caught him ‘off guard and captured his imagination’ which spurred him to want to ‘do something’, leading him to set up the award scheme (SIT-UP Awards, 2020). He describes this transformative experience in a range of media platforms, including in The Herald (Scottish) newspaper where he states it was a ‘very powerful and moving show’, with the journalist noting that ‘nothing in his background had prepared him for the impact that Adam would have on him’ (Leadbetter, 2018). This Fringe experience changed his thinking which, in turn, led him to create an award scheme as a symbol of the potential that Fringe shows have to construct such experiences – a public expression of his commitment to the moral community through this belief in the transformative power of the arts.

One of the production companies I spoke to also talked about the importance of their work in achieving social change:

Jessica: ...Leon and his company stand for things... life's too short not to work with people that you want to work with that have got some kind of kindred spirit in terms of either the productions that you umm.. that you do together or, you know, just like-minded individuals, I guess really. And you know, I mean, obviously you know Leon's a great advocate for a lot of social change...

Neil: ...it can make you feel like you're part of something that can help make a positive change as well. (FG1, Let's Do This)

Jessica and Neil state the importance of their productions standing for positive, social change and their commitment to this ethos, aligning with a belief in the transformative power of the arts. Further, they connect this to being ‘like-minded individuals’, where this ethos isn’t just about their productions and what they represent, but it is about how they see themselves as a group of people who have something in common (their group

identity). Their shared morality in relation to the power of performance is what unites them, creating a commitment to work together to publicly express this at the Fringe.

This belief is mirrored within the language used to talk about the Fringe Society's Fringe Days Out (FDO) scheme. One participant (a young person) from organisation Sikh Sanjog noted that their experience changed their opinion of the Fringe, meaning they had a 'great feeling' about it, 'good emotions', 'memories and stuff that help my opinion of it' and a newfound 'positive association' to watching Fringe productions. This was further reiterated by a staff member at their organisation as well who noted that their 'perception' of the Fringe had changed from being 'mayhem' to 'fantastic' through FDO. A participant (a young person) from community organisation Lyra similarly noted that the Fringe had changed their 'perspective', prompting them to think more deeply about theatrical productions. This belief in the power of the Fringe to create change through these organisations is also publicly advocated for on the Fringe Society's website through a quote from a representative of North Edinburgh Arts:

It might be their [local people's] first creative experience which can open up their worlds, create new ideas and enthusiasm. It can create magic. (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2019b)

This language stresses that there is something special about a 'creative experience' than can create change to someone's lifeworld.

#### **4.3 The Fringe Tribe**

As highlighted in the above discussion about the beliefs associated with the moral community of the arts, the Fringe can be viewed as a kind of vessel for these beliefs, where members come together in the knowledge that they will be surrounded by others in their community at the sacred site. However, just like a religion such as Christianity has different denominations (Catholicism, Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy etc.), so too are there different 'denominations' within the moral community of the arts. I theorise this as there being a 'Fringe Tribe' (a 'denomination') which exists within the overarching frame of the moral community of the arts (the 'religion'); within which, there are multiple different communities and groups of different sizes who may align to different aspects of the moral community and the Fringe Tribe.

I learned about the language of 'The Fringe Tribe' through my ethnographic work at the Fringe Society, where Fringe Society staff described the tribe as consisting of performing companies, audience members, media, arts industry professionals and alumni, further stating in organisational documents that those who participate in the Fringe are a 'Fringe family' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a). Further, the notion of 'tribe' takes this momentary feeling of connection to others and extends it beyond these 'high holy days' in Edinburgh, connoting that the emotional experiences of the Fringe are able to build up to construct longer-term group membership outside of August. This membership is upheld through social media narratives (e.g., on Twitter) where many Fringe participants talk about the Fringe year-round, particularly in relation to excitement in the lead-up to the event or, as another example, by year-round staff members at venues or the Fringe Society who have the potential to buttress the meaning of their associations with the Fringe at year-round networking and publicity events. One example of the latter is the Fringe Society 'Meet The Venue' events which normally take place twice a year outside of the month of August (in London and in Edinburgh) to provide opportunities for interested performing artists and companies to meet venue providers.

Caution should be taken when using language from organisational staff and strategic documents; from a sociological perspective, it would be unwise to assume that how the Fringe Society present the attendees at the Fringe is how they perceive themselves. Indeed, this language of 'The Fringe Tribe' appears absent elsewhere beyond Fringe Society internal communications. Nonetheless, the choice to use it here is because of its connotations; this language echoes that of Durkheim's 'unity of the tribe', and it is fitting because it stresses Durkheim's point that members of the Fringe community become filled with the spirit of the tribe, leading to collective effervescence and a sense of connection to other tribe members (Durkheim, 1912 [2001], pp. 209–210). Analogously, many of those who attend and value the Fringe become filled with a sense of belonging to the Fringe when participating in Fringe activities in Edinburgh during the month of August and this creates a feeling of connection to others who are also present, reaffirming their beliefs. Not everyone who attends the Fringe will feel this sense of connection and belonging to one another where they can derive a deep level of meaningful experience, but those who are able to are those who I theorise as tribe members. Thus, the language of the 'tribe' helps to explain the *character* of the Fringe as a sacred site where members of the moral community of the arts come to

collectively express their shared emotional sentiments, which also have resonance beyond the sacred site year-round for those in the tribe who feel more deeply connected to Fringe. Nonetheless, whilst the Fringe Tribe may draw on the beliefs and practices of the moral community of the arts, there also specific beliefs that make it distinctive, two of which are interconnected and highlighted here: the origin legend, and open access.

#### *4.3.1 Origin legend*

As noted in the introduction, the Fringe began at a particular cultural moment of regeneration after the war, and in response to the perceived elitism of the EIF. This history is part of Fringe Tribe membership, but it is less about the linear narrative of events, and more about what it represents. The people I met at the Fringe who knew the exact details of what happened in 1947 when the Fringe began were in the minority (mainly those who worked for the Fringe Society); whereas the general knowledge that the Fringe began in response to the EIF and has come to represent liberal values is widespread. The historical events have a mythological characteristic that is carried by members of the Fringe Tribe, where the story isn't always recounted with exactitude, but its meaning underpins how IRCs are manifest at the Fringe. The situations constructed at the Fringe allow members to express their commitment to 'open access' where anyone can put on a production, and to diverse forms of art which may be activist or 'radical' in view of more traditional artforms. These beliefs are founded upon a shared narrative which has been maintained through IRCs, despite many members of the community not being conscious of where they have come from.

Furthermore, as 'the first' performing arts Fringe festival, the model of the Edinburgh Fringe has been emulated elsewhere, with its origin legend and commitment to open access feeding into that of other Fringes. This hasn't been a formal process, but it is evident in how other Fringes are organised, such as the Adelaide Fringe which is the second largest Fringe and also open access, and in the networks created across these Fringe contexts. The networking and advocacy initiative 'World Fringe' (set up by The international Fringe Festival Association) celebrates the importance of the 'Fringe' model and was formed by Holly Payton-Lombardo who, alongside managing the Brighton Fringe, was previously Director of a

venue at the Edinburgh Fringe and worked for the Fringe Society. The initiative was developed through events at the Edinburgh Fringe and also hosts the The Fringe Festivals Around The World Event each year in Edinburgh (a discussion event advising on engaging globally with the Fringe circuit), as well as partners with the Fringe Society to run the bi-annual World Fringe Congress (event for Fringe festival professionals from 49 Fringes) (World Fringe, 2021). The central presence of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the development and continuation of Fringes at large highlights how it represents 'the best Fringe' for other Fringes to aspire to and the original template to replicate and build on. The Fringe is like a site of pilgrimage where people from other Fringes around the world visit to see where the original Fringe was 'born'.

This status of the Fringe as important in a global landscape was also referenced in my focus groups. One participant from Madness Productions stressed that they had 'never been involved with a Fringe show before' and that was 'obviously a huge pull', where the intrinsic experience of the Fringe itself was alone the draw to take part, and another that they wanted to put their show on 'as big a stage as possible'. Further, a participant from Sea-salt Air expressed that 'the scale' of the Fringe is 'extraordinary' because it is 'one of the largest'. It was also considered unique in comparison to other arts experiences (Let's Do This) and viewed as 'a massive open stage' (Madness Productions). Importantly, this knowledge is acquired through membership of the moral community of the arts and maintained in social interactions between Fringe Tribe members, as one participant noted:

You need to have been taught about it [the Fringe], and when you work for this organisation and you participate in it. It's incredible to think that it's really not that well known. (Leon, FG1, Let's Do This)

Its 'well known' status is fostered and maintained through participation in IRCs at the Fringe, underpinned by its origin as 'the first' and flagship liberal arts festival.

#### *4.3.2 Open access*

You may have heard us mention that the Fringe is an open-access festival, but what does that actually mean? Well, for one thing, it means that unlike most arts festivals, no-one's in charge of deciding which shows get to take part.... The Fringe was founded on a very simple ethos: anyone with a story to tell and a venue

to host them is welcome... everyone is welcome at the Fringe. That 'open access' ethos also extends to our audiences. (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2020)

Drawing on the foundations of the origin legend, the Fringe Tribe have a shared belief in the importance of 'open access' where anyone can participate in the Fringe, publicly spearheaded through Fringe Society messaging as highlighted above, and the diversity of art forms where any kind of 'art' is welcome, covering a range of genres. As noted in the introduction, this open access doesn't necessarily have to be a lived reality as there are many debates around how 'open' the festival really is; rather, it is the advocacy for and belief in open access that is a marker of Fringe Tribe membership. Namely, members standing up for upholding its open access status when there are risks to this through curated programmes and debates around structural inequalities is a telling sign of how important 'open access' is to the Tribe.

Engagement with the open access debate and the belief in striving for better is an important part of the ethos of the Fringe. One of my participants noted that open access at the Fringe is 'problematic' and another that it is a 'massive problem', further stating that 'there are community groups that can't afford a venue but won't host a show in the back room of a pub because they don't want to be associated with alcohol either', believing that the Fringe needs more 'safe spaces' (Leon, Let's Do This). The Free Festivals at the Fringe are also key symbols of this commitment to hold onto the original foundations of the festival as open access, offering free spaces to artists and companies, seeking to break down financial barriers.

This is a complex picture as 'open access' can mean different things to different people and it is often underpinned by activist or political moods or agendas which are cultivated and maintained within IRCs at the Fringe. These political sentiments tend to be framed within a left-wing politics; campaigns such as 'Fringe of Colour', 'Fair Fringe' and the 'SIT-UP Awards' highlight the shared activism for equality, diversity, and empowerment through the arts that exist among those who participate.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, whether 'open access' is discussed in relation to economic barriers, curation and programming, or racial inequalities, the fundamental commitment to the *ideal* of 'open access' remains at the heart of the Fringe Tribe. Further, the openly anarchic character of the artistic work itself is evident, with those participating upholding their shared

---

<sup>21</sup> Fringe of Colour is an initiative dedicated to supporting Black and Brown people/People of Colour at the Edinburgh festivals, as artists, workers and audience members (Fringe of Colour, 2019). The Fair Fringe is a campaign aiming to end exploitative working conditions at the Fringe (Fair Fringe, 2018).

support of freedom of speech and artistic expression, often aligning with particular activist agendas such as LGBTQ+ and women's rights, to give a couple of examples. Willems-Braun (1994) supports this notion through his analysis of Canada's fringe festivals, noting that there is an expectation of a certain kind of politically motivated artistic work at fringe festivals which may construct a legitimated plurality where certain representations of difference are rejected if they do not meet the dominant 'radical' point of view. Fringes exist to express 'solidarity within groups', allowing 'distinct social, cultural and political groups to constitute themselves' (Willems-Braun, 1994, p. 100). This characteristic of the Fringe is therefore connected to the value of 'festivals' at large; however, the Fringe Tribe's commitment is more distinctive because it is *the* place to express these values (connected to the origin legend).

As a further reflection, the 'open access' principle of the Fringe also brings to the fore a potential tension with the beliefs of the moral community of the arts in relation to striving for 'excellence'. Curated programmes such as from the Big Four and a selection of government-funded artistic work known as *Made In Scotland* which presents 'world class, music, dance, theatre' exist in the same landscape as the 'open to everyone' narrative. Thus, IRCs become a process of negotiation between these competing commitments for those who align with both the moral community of the arts and the Fringe Tribe.

#### 4.3.3 Other memberships

The Fringe Tribe is not just one 'community' and the people who align with the beliefs of the tribe may also have other affiliations, some of which connect to communities within the moral community of the arts and others which are more specific to the Fringe context. These memberships may be to a range of different sized groups and communities and can include both real and imagined dimensions, with varying levels of connection to the Fringe Tribe. For example, both production companies and community groups may unite with others who share a particular activist interest such as in relation to inclusion in the arts which may connect with the beliefs of the moral community of the arts but come to the fore in the Fringe context as a site to express these views at the sacred site. Or, community groups may unite through their geographic locale such as identifying as residents of certain districts of Edinburgh,

such as Leith, or unite with others who have a shared demographic such as being 'young people', 'parents', or 'women'. These different affiliations may be interconnected, overlap, or contradict, with potential conflicts between memberships. They may also have varying levels of strength in relation to the structuring role they play within the situations of group-level IRs, with some memberships only fleeting and others enduring. One might feel a strong sense of membership to the supervenue 'Gilded Balloon' one summer at the Fringe, and the following summer feel a greater affiliation with 'Underbelly' – these memberships are fluid and emotions flow across the secondary realm as people move quickly between different IR situations with different people who belong to the same venue. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to list every possible other membership affiliation, but a couple of examples are provided here: the arts festival community and venue membership.

#### 4.3.4 *Arts festival community*

This thesis theorises the arts festival community as characterised by those who identify with enjoying engaging with arts festivals, whether this be as an audience member, performer, staff member, or other association, or a combination of these. This is connected to notions of community as tied to self-identity because members define themselves in terms of what they have in common with other members (Delanty, 2010; Walkerdine & Studdert, 2015).

The authenticity of festival engagement comes from the experience of enjoying a range of 'intense' social and artistic experiences: they lend themselves to collective effervescent experiences which are unique and able to transcend the mundanities of everyday life. The marker of membership to the arts festival community is going to festivals and identifying as someone who enjoys engaging in these 'intense' experiences; thus, similar to the moral community of the arts where the art object itself is revered, it is the *festival experience* which is at the core of beliefs for this community, with engagement with this experience viewed as 'good'. In the context of the Fringe, it is seen as 'good' to have a Fringe experience that blurs the boundaries of personal and professional life, to attend exclusive bars and parties, and to hand out production flyers on the Royal Mile (a key IR I observed at the Fringe); for audiences, it's watching as many productions are possible, eating and drinking in pop-up bars and restaurants,

and watching street performances, to just give a few examples. The combination of experiences and rituals are different for different groups, but there are certain kinds of experiences that are characteristic of festivals and going through these rituals are indicators of a 'good' Fringe. These 'good' experiences will of vary somewhat from festival to festival but the underpinning of them within a belief in the intrinsic value of the 'festival experience' remains as characteristic of festivals at large.

Further examples of the arts festival community can be found through analysis of the experience of temporary venue staff. In my fieldwork, I spoke to a staff member from one of the supervenues who told me that in their induction to working at the festival, their manager told them they should 'have fun' and 'enjoy' the festival, as well as watch as many shows as they could. It was communicated as a 'good' for the community to engage in the festival experience, where 'working' should also be about their social experience. Further, a whole host of temporary staff told me that they worked on 'the festival circuit', moving from festival to festival across the globe and working in venues in a range of capacities, from bar and catering staff to technical, administrative, and production staff. This group engaged in a range of in-person IRCs as they would often meet with the same people in different locations and engaging in socialising or, even in some cases, live with others who they had met through their work. A selection of people told me how they would work for the Adelaide Fringe in the winter and then for the Fringe in the summer, where they would reconnect with others who they had previously worked with. For these individuals, festivals are their whole lifeworld, where membership of the arts festival community is who they are, buttressed through their active in-person engagement in IRCs across different festival sites. Rather like seasonal pilgrimages, their annual calendar is demarcated by their engagement in and commitment to the arts festival community. Thus, whilst the arts festival community transcends the Fringe, it also exists within the larger belief system of the Fringe Tribe.

#### 4.3.5 *Venue membership*

Performing companies may identify with being part of a community of ‘professionals’, ‘amateurs’, or ‘students’, which are memberships that transcend the Fringe, or they may feel a sense of membership to a particular venue which is specific to the Fringe context. This latter point is particularly important because it can be harder to get into the programmes of certain venues (the curated ones) compared to others (the ones that aren’t curated), and there is a sense of being ‘chosen’ for these venues. The process of production companies and artists choosing a venue to perform at for the Fringe is much more than just selecting a space that will meet the logistical needs of a production company. Whilst it isn’t officially documented, there is a kind of hierarchy of venue companies at the Fringe, with the supervenues and established theatrical companies with year-round buildings (e.g., the Traverse, Summerhall) deemed as ‘better’ in relation to prestige, and professionalism compared to smaller, emerging venues which are viewed as for amateur or student companies. It’s an unwritten code that one only becomes aware of through actively participating in IRCs at the Fringe.

Venue membership is fostered through distinct, colourful branding; examples include the ‘Big Four’ organisations of Pleasance, Assembly, Gilded Balloon and Underbelly who have a different colour each to represent their organisations (yellow, red, pink, purple) used across printed and online marketing materials, staff t-shirts and lanyards, together with a language of ownership used to re-brand public spaces, evident in terms such as ‘Pleasance Courtyard’ and ‘Assembly Gardens’. These different brands are used as signs of membership to each venue, with the colours of these sub-festivals operating as markers of membership for performers and audiences who engage with these venues, publicly expressing which venue they belong to.

Whilst many venues at the Fringe use coloured branding (not just the ‘quality’ ones), the colours of the larger venues have greater presence. On the one hand, for those who ‘belong’ to one of these ‘quality’ venues, there is a strong potential for meaningful experience through venue membership which is a privileged access only available to those selected to be members. However, on the other hand it can reinforce frustrations amongst those within the Fringe Tribe seeking to stand up for the ‘open access’ principle that is seen as important within the community because it creates exclusory opportunities. The venue membership groups that exist have a

characteristic akin to a kind of 'clan' in that they are all sub-groups within the tribe, but there are boundaries between the sub-groups created through venue affiliation.

#### **4.4 The Fringe as a sacred site**

All of these different memberships, beliefs and practices that operate across micro and meso levels at the Fringe come to the fore because the Fringe is considered important within the moral community of the arts. Just as the majority of those who go to Mecca are already Islamic, the majority of those who attend the Fringe are already part of the moral community: the history of the sacred site and the stories people tell about it are important. Mecca is a fitting analogy to stress the role of the Fringe as a sacred site too because it is a physical place which believers go to, where its sacrality cannot be replicated elsewhere. It is because it is separate from the profanity of daily life that its sacred status can be upheld, and the commitment to the beliefs of the moral community are cultivated well in advance of attending. In relation to the Fringe Tribe, small groups may already be members of this community if they attend annually, or they may become members through engagement, if it's their first time visiting. In relation to the latter, there may be a process of negotiation in IRCs at the sacred site regarding what it means to belong.

The Fringe is conducive to being a sacred site because its public setting allows members of the Fringe Tribe to gather in large numbers. Members create and experience art with others who align with the beliefs of the moral community of the arts, 'performing' as per Goffman their commitment to the community in public space and maintaining and strengthening this commitment within in-person IRCs. The Fringe Society advocate that the Fringe is 'an explosion of creative energy' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2019a), 'the world's greatest platform', 'the premiere meeting place', and 'at the centre of a global movement' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a), playing a key role in fostering excitement and a 'buzz' about the site of the Fringe in the lead up to and during the festival. They do this through their marketing materials and strong brand, notably visible through the large distribution of the Fringe programme brochure and the Fringe app which lists all of the shows that are on throughout the festival, as well as through their use of slogans to engage participants and audiences. For 2018, their slogan was 'Step Into The Unknown' (also used as an

online hashtag), implemented and repeatedly used to create excitement around the Fringe as a 'a place where new discoveries wait around every corner' (BBC, 2018). Once again, whilst the Fringe Society have organisational and promotional goals which suggests that this language is how the organisation wants to be seen, it presents an image of the Fringe for participants ahead of attending – particularly newcomers – which acts as a public expression of aligning with the moral community of the arts, where artistic experiences are revered at the sacred site of the Fringe. This is a form of 'performing legitimacy' which allows interested performing artists and companies to recognise the Fringe as a site that is for them to express their group solidarities in view of the beliefs that they hold, and share with the Fringe Society, in relation to their artistic practice (Larsen, 2016a, 2016b).

The public setting of the Fringe also provides conditions for collective effervescent experiences:

Katey: And what parts of the experience of The Fringe do you like?

May: Just the whole vibe of it, you know, the coming together to people, you know, people come from all over... all countries of the world... Everybody seems to enjoy most of it. (FG2, Space, Community group)

Mickey: So yeah, certainly being a part of it, I think it's a big factor, just the whole community and the festival vibes. That's what festivals are, isn't it? You just want to be there, you got major FOMO [fear of missing out] if you're not. (FG2, Flow with It, Production Company)

There is an emotional feedback loop at the Fringe because when groups become aware of others going through similar experiences, and therefore of their shared interests and beliefs, this leads to heightened collective emotions, buttressing commitment to the moral community of the arts and to the Fringe Tribe. These connections between people at the Fringe are *emotional*, with a *felt* sense that everyone is 'in it together'. Festival participants are able to 'latch onto' this emotional flow that exists across people who attend and participate because they hold a shared belief that the Fringe is of 'ultimate importance' as per what is 'sacred' within religious rituals (Stephenson, 2015). By its nature as involving large numbers of people in relatively small spaces (e.g., cramped hotel conference rooms that have been transformed into theatres, or the Royal Mile which is approximately 1.81km long but

sees millions of people walk it during the Fringe),<sup>22</sup> the Fringe creates opportunities for high levels of social interaction, whereby this energy contributes to maintaining its sacred status.

The sacred site shows the connection between moral community and Fringe Tribe membership. Members of the moral community of the arts are compelled to attend the Fringe because it is known as place where ‘believers’ go within their community. These members are able to ‘tap into’ the emotional flow of the Fringe through engaging in socially successful IRCs. Through this meaningful engagement, groups learn about the beliefs of the Fringe Tribe (e.g., open access) and they become part of their own group beliefs, thereby becoming inducted into the Tribe. Through this process of ‘becoming’ a Tribe member which acts as an initiation, groups come to view the site as sacred and further buttress its status, also giving off emotional vibrations for others to feel (both at the site and beyond it), creating emotional feedback loops.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Beliefs are constantly being negotiated within IRCs at the Fringe, as beliefs circulate and feedback across different social levels. Through my fieldwork, I found that when small groups aligned with the beliefs of the moral community of the arts and the Fringe Tribe – even if there were tensions and nuances between beliefs across groups and individuals - they were more easily able to derive meaning from their experiences because the site of the Fringe had a sacred status. One might counter this argument by suggesting that many people attend the Fringe for tourism, or to socialise in the many bars and restaurants that appear in the city during the month of August; however, whilst people *can* attend the Fringe and not adhere to the beliefs of the moral community of the arts, their potential for meaningful IRCs that uphold shared symbols as per Collins (2004, p.48-49) is likely to diminish because of this. Aligning with the beliefs set out in this chapter sets people up for socially successful rituals; without this, groups cannot derive the same *heightened* level of emotional experiences at the Fringe. They may buttress their meaningful friendships or association with Edinburgh

---

<sup>22</sup> The Royal Mile is also a symbol of the busyness of the Fringe with this road referenced in the media as a marker of ‘quiet’ during August 2020 when COVID-19 meant the festival was cancelled. As was noted by a restaurant manager in the BBC News, “It’s certainly not a ghost town now, but normally it’s chock-a-block on the Royal Mile with 50,000 people and now there are just a few thousand” (Brown, 2020).

city, to give a couple of examples, but the Fringe would not hold the heightened meaning. This is why 'community engagement' or 'audience development' initiatives are so problematic because deriving meaning from arts experiences is more than being given a free ticket - it's about being socialised into a whole new moral code as will be seen in chapter eight.

Thus, for groups who share this morality, the Fringe is a 'sacred site' to annually 'perform' and reaffirm shared beliefs in a public setting, whereby there is an emotional contagion effect for 'believers'. This view breaks down the notions of cultural production and cultural consumption because the meaning of Fringe experiences comes not from whether one is an audience member or a performer, but from the extent to which one ascribes to a shared morality with others in a shared community, thereby deriving of a sense of belonging to 'the Fringe'.

#### **4.6 Towards case study analyses of small groups**

Within this landscape of beliefs circulating within and across the moral community of the arts and the Fringe Tribe, small groups engage in IRCs at the sacred site, whereby emotions from IRCs (i.e., EE) feedback on one another:

The primary groups that make up the crowd facilitate and amplify the effects of the larger crowd as the focus of attention and emotional entrainment. For members of these little groups, the larger crowds cheering or other emotion becomes especially significant because they feed it back and forth among each other (Collins, 2004, p. 378)

The meso and micro are interconnected levels of analysis as this quote from Collins identifies – small groups exist within larger groups and emotions feedback between and within small groups and larger groups, drawing upon collective meanings where many members will never have met other members of their 'community'. Whilst the beliefs circulating at these levels are connected, it is ongoing face to face interactions that uphold collective beliefs.

Thus, the small group level is incredibly important when it comes to understanding how the Fringe as a sacred site is constructed and maintained because it is where in-person interactions occur. The next four chapters spotlight four of the different groups who I followed for this research to further unpack the mechanisms of

IRCs at the Fringe to explore and explain what makes the Fringe meaningful for production companies and community groups who participate. Rather than telling the 'whole story' of the Fringe for each group, I hone-in on key elements to illustrate the different dimensions of meaning-making that I observed throughout my fieldwork, showing how: 1) a chain of socially successful IRCs works at the Fringe (*Collective Whispering*); 2) unmet expectations are a risk to meaningful experience (*Attractive Figures*); 3) challenging experiences can foster group solidarity (*Gig Buddies*); and 4) short-lived feelings of 'fun' at the Fringe are not enough to create meaning when pre-existing group identity is one of 'outsider' in view of the Fringe (*Citadel Youth Centre*).

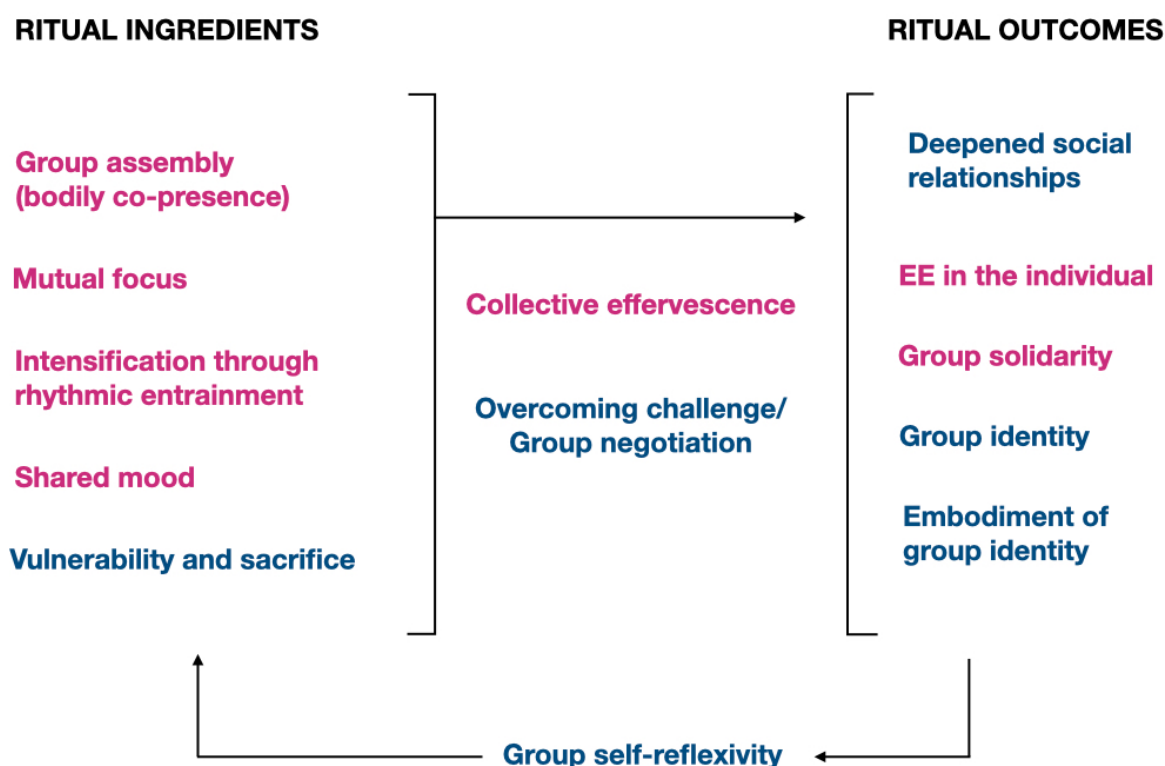
## Chapter 5: Exploring a chain of socially successful IRCs

Collins (2004, p.3) states that his theory of IRCs is one of 'momentary encounters among human bodies charged up with emotions and consciousness because they have gone through chains of previous encounters'. In view of this, the purpose of this chapter is to understand the *chains* of encounters at the Fringe that may 'charge up' groups in a way that makes their Fringe experiences meaningful. Using production company *Collective Whispering* as a case study, I focus on how this group's IRs at the Fringe strengthened five key ritual outcomes: deepened social relationships, EE in the individual, group solidarity, group identity, and embodiment of this group identity. In so doing, this chapter shows that meaning-making processes at the Fringe begin before arriving at the sacred site, where the mechanisms of group solidarity for this group were negotiated in previous IRs and then developed and reinforced at the Fringe. This development was only possible because the group already had a group dynamic that worked for them, with the ritual ingredient of 'mutual focus of attention' high on arrival at the Fringe because they had previously made the commitment of putting on their production together. This builds on the foundational argument of this thesis that 'cultural value' is not 'gained' through transactions with art objects, but that meaningful arts experiences are intertwined with social processes across *chains of interactions within situations*.

Starting with background information to *Collective Whispering* to frame the case study and explaining the IRs explored, the chapter then outlines the key ritual ingredients and outcomes of this group before arguing that a key mechanism of socially successful IRs was group-level self-reflexivity. The chapter ends by concluding that the Fringe was perceived as a meaningful experience for this group because their experiences were integrated into their identity and prolonged beyond their in-the-moment experiences at the sacred site. The key ritual ingredients and outcomes of IRCs at the Fringe for *Collective Whispering* that will be explored are shown visually in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. IRCs at the Fringe with ingredients and outcomes for Collective Whispering, developed from Collins' (2004) model.**

*Collins' components are shown in pink text, with CW's additional ingredients and outcomes as identified at the Fringe shown in blue text.*



## 5.1 About Collective Whispering

CW are a production company of students and professors from a private college in North America offering graduate and postgraduate education, specialising in media and arts subjects. At the core of the company who came to the Fringe were six people (Chris, Julia, Phoebe, Tina, Grant, and Lilly) who knew one another from a 2-year postgraduate training course focused on devised performance, including training in physical theatre, movement, improvisation, acrobatics and visual performance, as well as business skills training. The course entailed spending their first year at a performing arts college in Europe where they trained alongside international students, and then returning to America for their second, final year. This group of six 'separately [from their course] applied to the Fringe' (Phoebe) at the end of this second year of training as they wanted to set up their own professional company, but their college also gave them the 'opportunity to have students' (Phoebe) from the wider college such as from

arts marketing courses to support with production administration, in addition to receiving extra training and support from two of their college professors. Accordingly, 12 people visited the Fringe as part of the CW group: six performers, four who supported with production administration, and two professors. This was their first time visiting Edinburgh together for the Fringe.

Whilst all 12 visited Edinburgh together under the banner of their company name 'Collective Whispering', they did not always do everything together at the Fringe as a whole group of 12, with the six performers spending a lot of time together rehearsing and preparing for their performances without the rest of the wider CW group. Supporting this, Chris described the six people outside of their performing company as like 'another cohort', suggesting that they viewed their smaller performing group as a subset of a larger group. This 'subset' of six performers is the primary focus of analysis here and will be referred to as the 'group' throughout the rest of this chapter; of this group, two had directorial roles (Julia and Chris), and they acted as what Collins names 'sociometric stars' at the centre of their group of six (Collins, 2004, pp. 116, 150). They were the two who took on the most responsibilities for their productions, facilitating in other members of the team commitment to their group, and generating high EE in the form of enthusiasm through their IRCs.

CW produced two productions at the Fringe in 2019, both of which were developments on projects that the group had worked on during their postgraduate training. One was directed by Julia and it drew on inspiration from Bouffon clowning, employing 'high comedy', storytelling and masks to explore a feminist narrative. The second piece was directed by Chris and was an Acro dance piece; a 'non-linear' (Julia and Phoebe) artform with 'hardly any text' (Chris) that drew on techniques from physical theatre, dance theatre and partner acrobatics to create a 'visceral experience' (CW Fringe programme notes, 2019).

## **5.2 Ritual ingredients**

### *5.2.1 Group assembly and mutual focus of attention*

The first ritual ingredient that Collins (2004, p. 48) identifies is group assembly (bodily co-presence). The level of 'affect' from this bodily presence varies depending on the

amount of mutual focus of attention among those co-present because focus of attention builds awareness of bodily co-presence. Being physically assembled together does not entail a successful IR, but it sets the stage for it.

An example of how bodily copresence and mutual focus of attention feed into one another can be seen in how CW rehearse and, in particular, through analysis of a rehearsal for their Fringe production which took place in a university rehearsal room in Edinburgh which I observed (called 'Fringe rehearsal' for the rest of this chapter). This was their last opportunity to run through their Acro dance production, and they had been in Edinburgh for three and a half days before it. The rehearsal began with their 'check-in', described in their first focus group as something they do 'every time [they] go to rehearsal' - a routine that became a 'practice' during their training (Julia). The repetitive nature of this 'practice' is characteristic of meaningful IRs because it provides an opportunity for meaning to build-up in chains of interactions across different situations, and it also draws upon the traditional 'script' of what a theatrical rehearsal looks like, as many rehearsals start with exercises to get into the mood of rehearsing (Collins, 2004, p. 271).

Everyone participating in the 'check in' started on the floor in a loose circle in different, relaxed positions, and they each, one after another, shared how they were feeling, both generally and in relation to performing at the Fringe. Chris explains further:

It [the check-in] helps us to be aware of who's in the room and how they are feeling and what they're bringing to the table. And to know... I shouldn't push that button, or you're really open to play with. I'm just going to play with you and having that level of connection to start the rehearsal just allows us to dive in deeper much more quickly. (FG1)

Through articulating their feelings, the members of the group declare their presence to one another, allowing each person in the room to acknowledge, understand and be affected by the presence of everyone else in attendance. This moment of the check-in also functions as what Collins (2004, p.64) describes as a 'signal' to 'confirm a common focus of attention and thus a state of intersubjectivity' – it is a form of preparation for the rehearsal to set the tone for artistic practice. The 'check-in' is also followed by the Director (Chris) running through the schedule for the rehearsal and what needs to be achieved, showing how the declaration of presence and readiness has been heard. As described by Julia, even if those in the group do not know the full 'details' of how a member of the group is feeling during their check-in, what is important

is to have 'someone hear you'. This provides insight into their group dynamics because of the nonspecific nature of 'who' is listening – anyone in the group can validate presence.

The way in which bodily presence is linked-in with focus of attention in this example also adheres to a modification of Collins' emotional-entrainment model which he uses to discuss sexual intercourse: the importance of shared focus of attention and bodily presence feeding into one another as part of an IR. It is not only the 'check-in' where members of the group are aware that they are assembled together; this flows throughout the whole of the Fringe rehearsal ritual, and also their performance rituals, and it is heightened due to the level of physical touch required. Their Acro dance performance, for example, includes movements such as lifting one another up, catching performers as they fall from height, and embracing one another. As Collins discusses in relation to sex; it 'needs to be considered against the background of normal social interaction, in which persons rarely touch each other' (2004, p.234). In the case of CW, their physical interaction provides a very different kind of intensity compared to sexual relations, but the characteristic of it going beyond 'normal social interaction' (p.234) is similar.

### *5.2.2 Social density and ritual intensity*

The way in which bodily copresence and mutual focus work together to feedback on one another for this group can be understood further through Collins' notion of 'social density' which builds on a Durkheimian understanding of 'moral density' (see Collins, 2004, p. 117). 'Social density' is 'a quantitative matter' in relation to the proportion of time 'people spend in each other's physical presence' (2004, p.116). However, it isn't just the density of bodily copresence over time that is important to successful IRCs, but also 'the density of ritual performances in time' (Collins, 2004, p. 404); namely, ritual intensity which can be upheld through mutual focus. When there is a build-up of high social density and ritual intensity amongst a group, ritual outcomes are prolonged across time in IRCs, and the Fringe is a context conducive to this because it requires IRs to be repeated (i.e., production companies perform many times together over a short time period), as well as engage in social rituals such as socialising, and often living together. CW spent more time with one another than 'normal' through engaging

in social and performance IRs (high social density), but this time also involved a chain of social IRs which built up EE at the sacred site of the Fringe (ritual intensity), further heightened by being surrounded by other members of the Fringe Tribe engaging in similar experiences.

Thus, CW's ritual ingredients of focus and presence could manifest in another location but at the Fringe they are heightened. One example of this can be seen through analysing the group's evening together on their third day in Edinburgh – three days before the opening of their production and the night before their Fringe rehearsal – where a member of the production team from the wider ensemble who was new to the group made dinner for everyone, resulting in feelings of closeness:

She [member of the production team] just said "I love making dinner for everybody so I'm going to do it... She made a bunch of enchiladas, we drank probably too much wine and I drank probably too much wine and it was really fun. It was also... for street marketing... Sara and Poppy and one of the others in [Collective Whispering] spent hours making these beautiful banners... and so we walked into the kitchen, we were just oo'ing and aa'ing over the banners and we were like, "Where's Poppy. She's at the store getting ingredients for food. It's 9:45. Who cares. Like we said we were going to do it so like we're having this freaking family dinner," and it was like 10:45 at night when we ate. But it was really fun. I mean it was... Yeah we got to know each other's senses of humor a bit better I think. (Julia, FG1)

This situation is out of the ordinary: those present are staying up very late working together and building up emotional energy (EE) in one another as they get excited about their street marketing materials for their production, which they will have heard is a key IR at the Fringe. Explaining further, The Fringe Society provide resources and run information sessions about 'selling a show' where they talk about street marketing, stating that, 'you can expect to find yourself spending a lot of time [on the Royal Mile] ... the perfect place for publicising your show' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2013). This gears groups up for the Fringe, telling them where the 'high EE' locations for flyering are, and builds excitement in rituals in the lead up to flyering such as this one. This example is a social ritual which the group will have engaged in before (making dinner together) but framed in an exciting context (anticipating the Fringe), and it is through this combination of high social density and ritual intensity manifest within social IRs at the sacred site that their solidarity increases. It marks their arrival in Edinburgh as something special, in contrast to mundane experiences.

Another example can be seen in their three live performances.<sup>23</sup> The group would meet ‘three hours earlier than the show was supposed to happen’ where they would market their show and then have a ‘flight call’ to practice choreography that included lifts (Phoebe). In this case, their IRs of street marketing acted as the ‘signal’ to set the focus and to confirm group assembly, becoming attuned into one another and each drawing EE from the group, preparing to enter their performance space with the ability to ‘listen to the room’ (Chris). In this ‘room’, they ‘read each other’ to ‘initiate’ alterations to their choreography (Chris), using physicality to ‘figure out’ changes ahead of their performance so that they didn’t have to ‘figure it out on stage’ (Phoebe). Thus, their copresence was not just about becoming aware of each other’s presence, but this awareness was also used to channel their focus in IRs in a chain, where social density and ritual intensity built up to create high EE experiences.

### 5.2.3 *Shared mood*

Mutual focus is also intensified by shared mood; as Collins (2011, p. 2) explains, there is a ‘cumulative feedback’ between mutual focus of attention and ‘a shared emotional mood’ which is essential to successful IRCs.

Firstly, the ‘check-in’ is an important ‘practice’ to generate this shared emotional mood. Whilst it may be that individuals come into a rehearsal or performance space feeling all kinds of different emotions, it provides an opportunity to create an intersubjective emotional energy with the others in the group. This is a kind of ‘collective consciousness’ whereby the group provide a space for themselves to become tuned into one another, finding a place of ‘mutual entrainment of emotion and intention’ (Collins, 2004, p. 49). For example, Chris shared that he felt ‘a little over tired’ but also ‘excited’ and glad to have ‘a space together’, Julia stated that she had ‘nervous energy’, Phoebe that she was ‘inspired’ by seeing two shows at the Fringe and therefore in a ‘creative mode’ but also ‘very sensitive’, Grant shared that he felt ‘in a funny place between an old self and new’ as well as a ‘little fragile’ and Tina stated that she felt ‘excited and a little overwhelmed’. The shared mood here is one of feeling ‘frazzled’ (Julia) whilst at the same time being excited; they’re anticipating the Fringe

---

<sup>23</sup> Whilst there were three performance slots, each slot included both of their productions, performing each production a total of three times to a live audience (six in total).

and feel overwhelmed by it, whilst also looking forward to it. Through the check-in which requires shared attention (listening to one another) and emotional expression, they become attuned to one another's moods and find a shared focus to bring them into the space of the rehearsal to prepare for the Fringe.

The Fringe also provides an opportunity to focus on a 'common object or activity' (Collins, 2004, p. 48), but there are different levels of activity focus here; on a micro-level, the group focus on rehearsing, travelling, street marketing, performing, organisation, coordination, and living together, but there is also an overarching focus which has an emotional element: performing at the Fringe. This is part of their aim to 'continue to drive forward together', and to create a 'platform to push [their] work out' into, and they feel an 'emotional pressure' (Julia) in relation to performing at the Fringe because it is important to them. This pressure also manifested itself as stress in relation to preparing for performance, and this was not felt equally among the group. As Julia explains:

I know that if I don't pick up this thing or if I don't do this thing then no one else will and that's a little hard and I'm trying really hard not to bring those feelings into rehearsal and just be in rehearsal and be in the moment because that's when we're successful, like, when we're in the moment I feel. (FG1)

Julia feels a greater burden of responsibility, but she understands the importance of staying in-the-moment with the others in the rehearsal room (mutual focus) to buttress the motivation, trust and energy required for their time at the Fringe to run smoothly. She plays the role of an emotional regulator, an important component of their group dynamic:

It comes back to what Phoebe was saying about feeling like we're family. What I hope is that the next time that we go up for this [the Fringe]... we can figure out a way to equalize the whole thing... it feels like there is a bit of an imbalance, for me at least, but we'll see if we can figure out a way to make it more manageable so that doesn't drift into the creation room. (Julia, FG1)

I feel like I am completely responsible for everyone on this trip's emotions and whether or not they have a good time here... But also logistically. (Julia, FG1)

Julia believes that there is an imbalance and that there is a need for the pressure to be distributed equally. This could be a risk to mutual focus as Julia identifies here – she is worried that these stressful emotions may 'drift into the creation room' which she recognises is a space where they all need to be emotionally present. Nonetheless, another interpretation could be that this imbalance of responsibility is part of what

makes this group socially successful. She is performative here in a Goffmanian sense, presenting herself as the 'busy director' which may heighten the emotional intensity of their interactions, making others in the group pick up on her EE and become enthused and focused themselves. Thus, although an imbalance may mean order-givers and order-takers entailing 'ritualistic assent' and therefore a power imbalance (Collins, 2004, p. 113), in this case, the 'imbalance' is likened to a 'family' structure. Julia has a *responsibility* for others within the group and keeps them focused. The group build up shared emotion because the imbalance does not manifest itself in a way where members of the group are *coerced* into activity – as they might be in a 'power ritual' as described by Collins (2004, p.114) – rather, one of their sociometric stars (Julia) takes on a protective role.

Another dimension of Julia's emotional regulator role is to be a kind of channel through which knowledge of the sacred flows. Julia describes preparing more for the Fringe than the others, noting that she 'listened to all of the podcasts' produced by the Fringe Society to ensure that she knew what to expect, learning about press, marketing, and events at the Fringe. The Fringe Society played a role in constructing IRs at the Fringe through communication with Julia who shared information with the rest of CW, equipping herself to take on the role of an emotional regulator, and learning what makes a 'good' Fringe. Namely, she became aware of how art objects are revered at the Fringe (inciting a sense of emotional pressure), alongside an understanding of the high EE required for successful IRs at the Fringe, using this knowledge to emotionally prime others in their group ahead of and upon arrival at the sacred site.

#### 5.2.4 *Rhythmic entrainment*

Shared focus and mood are intensified through rhythmic entrainment, with Collins noting that 'rhythmic synchronization is correlated with solidarity' (Collins, 2004, p. 76). Movements employed in physical theatre can be seen as facilitating this kind of 'rhythmic synchronization', with dance techniques in particular viewed as a means to draw people into the motions of others' bodies (Ehrenreich, 2008, p. 25). Namely, when people move in sync they get caught up in the movements of other people around them and this creates a 'feedback cycle', intensifying the IR (Collins, 2004, p.

233). In the case of CW, their use of devised performance techniques, combined with nonverbal communication through their bodies was a mechanism for becoming 'entrained in each other's bodily micro-rhythms and emotions', a 'process of rhythmic coordination' which was 'felt rather than thought' (Collins, 2004, pp. 47, 74), manifest in the group's Fringe rehearsal:

As I observed from the side-lines, I couldn't identify when the rehearsal 'started' after the group's 'check-in'; they all stood up and began spontaneously moving, with some light chatting between them which seemed very casual, and I thought at first that everyone was just warming up on their own, but gradually the group started to get in sync. There was what seemed an effortless shift into the beginning of running through the start of their production. I, as an outsider, was unable to identify the moment that the first sequence began, but those within the group could feel a natural pull into it. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 31 July 2019)

Moments like this happened several times throughout the rehearsal where the group navigated the space with their bodies and seamlessly moved between conversation and movement, becoming aware of what each person in the group was 'doing and feeling' and becoming aware of this awareness, leading to a more intense feeling of shared emotion (Collins, 2004, p. 48).

This rhythmic synchronisation was also routinised as movements were negotiated in the rehearsal space and then used and repeated in their public performances at their Fringe venue, such as all tapping their feet whilst moving around at the same time, all lifting their heads together, jumping together, and all putting their hands on their hearts at the same time. The movements became unconscious and intensified in a chain of IRs, meaning that the group were able to *anticipate* the sequence of movements, rather than react to them, therefore creating rhythmic *entrainment* across IRCs (Collins, 2004, pp. 77–78).

### 5.2.5 Vulnerability and sacrifice

Another key ritual ingredient for this group was vulnerability, with Julia expressing that 'part of how we work is vulnerability in a space'.

Further analysis of the rehearsal can be used to elucidate this point. The 'check-in' paves the way for members of the group to be 'emotionally, spiritually, physically' and 'mentally' vulnerable (Chris); it is a personal disclosure that allows those partaking in the ritual to know who is included and who is not included, akin to Collins' (2004,

p.48) ritual ingredient 'barriers to outsiders'. If someone is not open to vulnerability, then rehearsals 'can be difficult' because it feels like 'walls are up' (Julia). Phoebe explains this in relation to what happens when someone is late for a rehearsal, even mentioning the word 'energy' in relation to their emotions:

...we've checked in but one person has been late and didn't get to check in. We kind of started to call out that being, "Oh it's not because I don't like you. It's not because I don't like working with you but I do feel a weird energy because I shared something really personal and you didn't get to be a part of that and I'm also holding what Julia shared with the group and you didn't get to be a part of that so now I feel like I'm way more likely to want to interact and move with Julia because we shared something together," And even if it was, "I'm very hungry right now." But it's still something that I shared with you and that you shared something with me and then having the person come in that's not... that becomes the outsider of the room... (FG1)

The 'check-in' is a way to show commitment to the group and a willingness to be vulnerable together, with the one who does not participate treated as 'the outsider'. Further, there is something sacrificial here, whereby individuals sacrifice themselves for the group through emotional disclosure, displaying to other members a commitment to giving their time and energy to rehearsing. As another example of this, at one point during their Fringe rehearsal, the Director made a suggestion that part of the movement could be cut which would entail Tina not being in that particular sequence anymore; there was a pause and then Tina said, 'I don't feel like if that sequence is cut, I'm cut. If it's not working, then it's not working.' She sacrificed her own physical involvement in the sequence for the sake of the group – her role was to be absent. Again, this is performative in the Goffmanian sense as well; making public to the rest of the group that she is willing to be 'cut' for the greater good of their group.

These instances, in turn, stress the importance placed on the overarching aim of putting on a production at the Fringe; for example, Julia stated at their rehearsal, 'I feel like I have nervous energy, but I don't feel nervous – it's like champagne fizz. I wanna be here.' While she feels nervous, it is nervous excitement, and she *wants* to give herself to the rehearsal because preparing for the Fringe is important to her. By contrast, as explained in the quote above from Phoebe, when a member of the group places importance on the profane - 'something [else] that came up' – it is difficult to feel a connection with that person. Since Julia was willing to be vulnerable, physical barriers are broken down and she finds it easier to 'interact and move' with her. These individual behaviours of being willing to make a sacrifice are also characteristic of

symbols of commitment to becoming part of the Fringe Tribe. Within my fieldwork at large, many Fringe participants told me about how much they had to 'give' to the Fringe, with this acting as a kind of metaphorical badge of honour, evidencing their commitment to the Fringe.

Social density and ritual intensity also increase the amount of sacrifice required through demanding an exposure of self to the group, thereby sacrificing components of personal life. By living, socialising and working together at the Fringe they 'saw every ounce of every single person' (Chris). As Phoebe notes:

I think something... for me that was really different... was I had never spent mornings waking up, walking in and eating breakfast with these people. (FG2)

As is characteristic of the kinds of IRCs at the Fringe, the IRs of CW living together entailed a new level of exposure of self to the group, committing to the overarching aim of performing at the Fringe above all else and sacrificing elements of their personal life such as their evening time. The focus required is not just in-the-moment, but it is an all-consuming amount of attention. As Phoebe explains, when the production is over, they will be 'able to focus on... personal things' which they were unable to do throughout their preparations for their production.

### 5.3 Collective effervescence

The Fringe fostered situations that provided opportunities for heightened ritual ingredients because being at the Fringe was important to CW, enabling two levels of collective consciousness to develop. On one level, CW created a group level consciousness between themselves and, on another level, they felt part of the collective consciousness of The Fringe Tribe. Namely, there was a 'feeling of being brought out of oneself into something larger and more powerful' (Collins, 2011, p. 2).

The idea of becoming part of a collective consciousness relates to Durkheim's notion of *collective effervescence* - there is a kind of unity, raising the individual above one's self (Durkheim, 1912 [2001], p. 157). There were feelings of excitement in the lead up to being in Edinburgh, and in their first few days at the Fringe before their opening performance; Sara explains that she was 'so excited about it [being in Edinburgh]' and Julia that she thought the Fringe was going to be 'extremely exciting'. Whilst this language of excitement may be part of the 'script' of what performers should

say in the lead up to the Fringe as adopted through their understanding of the Fringe as sacred, as acquired through Fringe Society marketing materials for example, these emotions also play a vital role in maintaining socially successful IRs. Julia's expression of the group's excitement is particularly interesting as it is the prospect of *future* excitement that generates in-the-moment excitement as a form of 'micro-anticipation' and 'priming' for a successful IR (Collins, 2004, p. 119): the imagined *idea* of what the Fringe will bring plays an important role in generating collective effervescent experiences.

However, the chain of IRs at the Fringe for this group also generated a *range* of intense emotional experiences, moving from excitement in the lead up to the Fringe through to frustration and 'panic' (Chris) as challenges occurred, and then back to excitement and feelings of accomplishment as they overcame these challenges. Thus, rather than there being one, uniting feeling of excitement or exaltation, the uniting feeling for this group was that they experienced a *range of intense feelings* across IRCs, and they went through these changing feelings *together* at the sacred site. An example of this can be seen through the group's collective emotions on their last performance day where they had to make changes to their production because Tina was 'exhausted', and Phoebe had 'lost her voice' (Julia):

Katey: What kind of emotions were going on at that time?

Chris: Panic, fear, worry. There's a slight sense of morbid thrill too.

Julia: I think for me I was feeling optimistic about the performance. But anything leading up to that was kind of making me panic a little bit. (FG2)

What is interesting about this extract from CW's second focus group is the paradox of emotions seen in 'morbid thrill', and 'optimism' alongside 'panic'. Collective effervescence here was represented by a sharing of extreme emotions: they were brought together by going through these different, contrasting emotions together. Moreover, although not mentioned directly by CW, the notion of collective, mixed emotions at the Fringe was something that many people talked about being conscious of at the Fringe. This occurred in many discussions throughout my ethnographic work with Fringe staff, local residents and production companies, whereby people became aware of other people engaging in the same IRs as them and experiencing a similar flow of mixed emotions across Fringe situations. CW were not alone in their collective

effervescence as represented by a range of extreme emotions; it was also generated and sustained in the people and situations around them at the Fringe. Through these shared, heightened emotional experiences, they became part of the Fringe Tribe. As Chris noted when talking about the ‘acquaintances’ that he reconnected with in Edinburgh; he feels more ‘connected’ to them as a result of the Fringe ‘because [they’ve] shared an experience’. CW’s experiences will have been markedly different to their ‘acquaintances’, but they feel connected by the experience of being at the Fringe with others engaging in similar IRCs.

#### 5.4 Group challenge

One of the contributing factors to the range of emotions felt by CW was going through challenges together. Challenges at the Fringe may be a result of the context (e.g., parallel activities which may provide tensions; see Wynn, 2016, p.281), but challenges may also be set up by small groups themselves to be overcome – the Fringe is meant to be a ‘big deal’ so that groups can show they ‘survived’ it. In both cases, the group needs to negotiate *together* how to overcome challenges. Reminiscing on a previous rehearsal where they had to work through a difficult section of movement, Chris noted that they were improvising and ‘before [they] knew it, an hour and a half had gone by’; namely, they were in a group immersion, ‘in the moment’ together.

Challenge was experienced at a within-group level in private contexts such as the challenge of ensuring their production was ready for performance in the rehearsal room, and at an inter-group level when engaging with the general public in street marketing. In relation to the former, the group can get ‘easily frustrated’ in a way that ‘a family might’ (Phoebe). There were several moments throughout their Fringe rehearsal ritual whereby the movement of the group stalled, and they had to work out particular parts of the production where the choreography wasn’t working. At one point, dialogue and movement were used together to problem-solve, as I observed:

*[All performers stopped their movement/choreography and, still standing, began speaking to one another in a loose circle]*

Participant: “The fight’s not working – shall we cut it or find different quality to it?”

Participant: “I like it - what don’t you like?”

Participant: “It’s just not hitting something” *[pause]* “Keep the same for now”

Participant: "I think I know what you mean. Either sped up or slowed down"

Participant: "Could we collect into a line?" [*holds hand out to signal a straight line*]

Participant: "If I just circle around I can make it back to middle" [*starts to circle around others in the group*]

Participant: "Yeah and then you -" [*signals another performer to come into the movement*]

Participant: "But we are gonna walk through this..."

Participant: "Yeah"

Participant: "Or shall we go in a straight line first?"

Participant: "And then we all turn off into different directions - is that right?"<sup>24</sup> [*all start turning out of the group*]

Then at this moment, the speaking stopped, and the challenge was overcome as they ran through the new sequence that they had just created through their dialogue and movement. After this moment of movement, they began speaking again:

Participant: "Come in close..."

Another participant opened her mouth about to speak, but just as she was about to she uttered 'sorry' under her breath, sensing that it may not be the time to speak; however, the other person looked straight at her and communicated non-verbally that she could speak, going on to finish each other's sentences as they communicated verbally with the Director:

Participant: "Right now, can you tell us moment by"

Participant: "Moment. Because we are gonna lose it. Review it"

(Ethnographic fieldnotes, 31 July 2019)

They then worked through the movement until they were happy and moved onto another part of the rehearsal.

There are several interesting reflections here. Firstly, there is clear respect and trust within the group, highlighted particularly through the apology before speaking to one another, and then putting trust in the Director (Chris) at the end when the two performers ask for further direction. Secondly, there is a confidence that anyone within

---

<sup>24</sup> These extracts were recorded via ethnographic observations; as the pace of this conversation was quick between the participants and not recorded, it was not possible to identify from fieldnotes who delivered each line as part of this negotiation. The conversation bounced between members, and all seemed to contribute to the discussion.

the group can speak to make suggestions to work out the movement as they all interjected into the discussion. Thirdly, and most importantly, the rhythm is maintained which heightens the energy of the experience. They spoke at speed, using both their bodies and their voices to communicate with one another until they overcame the challenge and moved on.

This 'going through something together' is represented through this rehearsal example in a private space, but it was also experienced in public spaces at the Fringe, such as in street marketing IRs. A core IR activity at the Fringe is handing out flyers in public spaces to passers-by, but the situations of these IRs are not always conducive to successful interaction. There may be an opportunity for within-group meaning making if the flyering activity itself can foster group solidarity through high ritual ingredients resulting in EE (often wandering the streets of Edinburgh, you can see groups laughing together and taking photos of their experience, for example), but the experience of trying to get others (passers-by) outside of a small group emotionally attuned may also be draining. In this case, whilst there is bodily copresence, the other ritual ingredients tend to be low. To bring a passer-by meaningfully into an IR, shared focus needs to be created, such as through sustained eye contact and two-way dialogue. However, this is very challenging when there are large numbers of people all with their own motivations - taking part in their own socialising IRs for example - where colliding with a marketing IR would be a disruption to their own inter-group emotional flow. Phoebe explained that the group recognised this challenge, and described how they implemented a 'trial and error' process to optimise their street marketing IRs:

I think one challenge because we've never experienced it was the street marketing and like not really knowing where the best places to street market, what the best time in the day is to street market. And as we continued to do it, we learned, and so we would change our things. We also learned that like I said, it's not sustainable for me and Tina to be in costume all day street marketing and then to perform nonstop for an hour and 45 minutes. (FG2)

There are two layers of challenge at play here; on one level the street marketing IRs are failing because members of CW have not been able to emotionally attune to passers-by and they cannot draw EE from the situation. They are, rather, exhausted and 'stressed' (Phoebe) by the IR. However, on another level, this emotional challenge was *shared*, and this shared experience further bound them, as a group, together across IRCs at the Fringe. They had to learn how to negotiate challenges amongst

themselves and this negotiation acted as a mechanism for improved IRs in the future, with the group learning how to put themselves in the best position to keep their solidarity intact.

## 5.5 Ritual outcomes

Collective effervescence is only ‘a momentary state’ and in order for it to have ‘more prolonged effects’ it needs to be carried over by becoming ‘embodied’ in sentiments of group solidarity and individual emotional energy – ritual outcomes (Collins, 2004, p. 36). Some ritual outcomes have already been mentioned as part of describing CW’s core ritual ingredients, such as changed social relationships through high social density and ritual intensity, fostering trust in one another through vulnerability and personal disclosure, and strengthening solidarity through problem-solving. Throughout this next section, these outcomes will be expanded upon and enriched, arguing that the chain of socialising, rehearsing, performing, and street marketing IRs strengthened solidarity for this group, enabling them to continue to work as a company, transforming their identity from students to professional performers; ultimately, creating a meaningful Fringe experience.

### 5.5.1 *Deepened social relationships*

As a result of IRCs at the Fringe such as living together, street marketing and performing together, the group experienced a deepening of their relationships with one another:

We got to know each other on a deeper level, on a different level than we have. Even in [European city], we'd show up to the studio at 9:00 AM every morning, but we still had that time in the morning to collect ourselves and this time I feel like there was nothing to hide. There was nowhere to hide. (Chris, FG2)

You could feel the momentum building up in us, and you could tell that just doing the shows over and over, was bringing us together more and more as a company, and as a group of friends too. (Chris, FG2)

This group had already spent two years working together, but their experience of the Fringe entailed an exposure of self to the group that brought them closer together in a way that other experiences had not. The mechanisms of this deepening of relationship were, further, that they were doing things together that were normally reserved for

personal contexts, as previously explained. Their relationships changed throughout their artistic process because they had to take on new roles within the group. For example, Chris explains that Tina took on the role of 'the peacekeeper', 'a side of her [he] had not seen in school'.

Deepening of relationships were therefore interconnected to an *awareness* of the others within the group. Julia stated that they paid 'more attention' to one another and Chris stated that the experience of the Fringe 'opened up my eyes a little bit to see personality traits'. Whilst Chris attributes these changes to personality, what they were seeing was how individual behaviours changed as a result of new situations and ritual participation. As Collins (2004, p. 350-351) notes, personalities depend on different dimensions of an IR such as the degrees to which individuals experience ritual centrality, ritual intensity, social density, and IR repetitiveness. Because each of these elements were high, such that each individual within the core six felt crucial to the group's identity - the mutual focus was consistently strong, physical closeness was core to their group dynamic, and they took part in a chain of IRCs across an intensive 6-month period - an environment was constructed that enabled them to be more open and social, which led to noticeable changes in self-expression: their 'new' personality traits were 'socially produced' (Collins, 2004, p.350). As a further example: back in their home city, Julia describes that each of them 'do run in slightly different social circles', but at the Fringe they became 'more confident in *our* social circle' [my emphasis]. They created a new social circle, and it became part of their group identity to socialise together. On one occasion they all agreed to meet in a bar in Edinburgh and everyone came:

And I think if we were in [our home city] prior to this experience, I would be like, "Ah, so-and-so's not going to show up. So-and-so doesn't probably doesn't care to hang out with the group," but we all did and I felt confident that we were all, I wasn't... I didn't have anxiety about like, "Oh, maybe someone actually doesn't want to be here." I was like, "Oh no. Everybody that says that they're coming, they actually want to be here." And that was a really different feeling. (Chris, FG2)

Not only did being at the Fringe provide a deeper social dimension to their group dynamic, but the EE drawn from the group entailed an individual confidence in the commitment from others to socialise.

### 5.5.2 *EE in the individual*

One clear sign of accumulation of high EE for members of CW can be seen in the Fringe rehearsal ritual; each member of the group was able to take initiative and 'set the direction' (Collins, 2004, p. 134) of the rehearsal, rather than feel dominated. Their trial and error process of improvisation as they overcame challenges showed confidence within the members of the group and a sense of inclusion in the decision-making processes, also expressed in their body postures as they moved with conviction, 'firmly and smoothly' as they took part (Collins, 2004, p. 135). This is a 'creative' initiative as each member of the group felt able to contribute to the making of their productions; through distributing creative autonomy, each individual left with a sense of purpose and shared ownership of their productions.

There was also a 'shared rhythm in speech' ahead of their check-in which is characteristic of high EE (Collins, 2004, p. 136); when they engaged in conversation, they spoke with pace and fluidity, building up their shared mood ahead of their rehearsal. Two members of the group shared their excitement about being in Edinburgh for the Fringe:

Participant: Pleasance was so popping today /

Participant: I want to see some shows at Summerhall /

Participant: Do you wanna go see comedy with me?

(Ethnographic fieldnotes, 31 July 2019)

And then they continued to talk about the shows they would like to see and how they could get tickets. As Collins (2004, p.136) notes, signs of EE in voice are less about the content of talk and more about the style of it; here the participants very slightly overlap in their speech, able to anticipate the speed and style of talk of the other person, suggesting that they are becoming 'pumped up' (p.164) with EE. Moreover, whilst this excitement could be viewed as an instance of short-term emotional excitement, it is EE that has been carried over from previous interactions, showing signs that these short-term emotions are being transferred into long-term EE. That is, they expressed feelings of excitement upon arriving in Edinburgh, and this was reinforced at their social dinner, and now the feelings are reinforced again at this Fringe rehearsal ritual. The energy is channelled into the rehearsal, building up their

feeling that the Fringe will be exciting and leaving the rehearsal with their stores of EE 'topped up' (Heider & Warner, 2010, p. 91), ready for their next Fringe experience.

EE is therefore generated in an IR and is used to set the tone of future IRs, operating in a chain, and an example of this can be seen in how EE was drawn from their performance rituals. Chris explains that he 'felt like it was nice to have the couple of shows that we did, and then to explode out into the festival to go explore', further saying that as well as performance responsibilities; 'I am here to enjoy, and to watch theatre'. Thus, their performance rituals generated confidence and excitement in Chris, leading him to enter into audience spaces with high EE. Further, Chris states, 'the show is meant to work on the audience and it just turned around and started working on us.' Whilst they were performing, they were 'in that moment' (Chris), immersed in the experience and energised together.

Collins (2004) also asserts that the 'amount of EE generated per person will depend on an individual's location within an IR'. As explored earlier, the directors within the group take on a more central role akin to sociometric stars; those who are 'always most intensely involved in the ritual interaction' (p.116). In this case, the directors needed to draw out more EE from their IRs because of their added responsibilities. Whilst everyone takes EE from their IRs, it cannot be equally distributed because the sociometric stars need more to have the energy to lead on other aspects of the production's organisation, this can be seen in the example above where Chris describes becoming energised by the show that he directed. Collins & McConnell (2015) describe this kind of EE as characteristic of IRCs that have sociometric stars, such as in the case of Napoleon and Steve Jobs, whereby these key figures at the centre of groups get so 'high' on EE 'they don't sleep'; rather than being exhausted, they are energised. This is particularly relevant for the Fringe context because sociometric stars are needed to give confidence to others in the group to overcome challenges together.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> There are elements of Julia and Chris' sociometric roles that could be likened to Collins' conception of 'charismatic leadership' (see Collins, 2020; Collins & McConnell, 2015), such as the way that they take greater responsibility for their production and lead others. However, whilst they play a motivating role in the group and have some traits of a charismatic leader, they don't quite have the full dominant presence that a charismatic leader often has (which will be elucidated in chapter 7). Charismatic leadership as important to Fringe IRs is discussed on pp.154-159, 206-208.

### 5.5.3 Group identity and group solidarity

As argued by Collins (2004, p.36-37), markers of group identity are 'group emblems', interconnected with the ritual outcome of group solidarity because it has connotations of 'group membership' – each member of the group feels that they belong to 'Collective Whispering', and 'Collective Whispering' represents who they are as a group. Overcoming Fringe challenges becomes a part of who Collective Whispering are (a symbol of their identity) and it also reinforces their strength as a cohesive membership group to keep overcoming challenges (their group solidarity).

This core group of six had already constructed a shared identity during their previous chain of IRs as tied to their two years of training; however, the Fringe gave them an opportunity to enrich and build upon this identity, including giving themselves a company name, thereby strengthening their group solidarity. As Collins (2004, pp.91) states 'maintaining collective identity is an ongoing activity, an IR chain'; namely, identity needs to be *continually* upheld through IRs, otherwise the strength of the group will waiver. Thus, although this group of six had performed together for two years prior to this, they consciously and unconsciously constructed new components of their identity unique to the Fringe context which helped to maintain their previous identity and build on it, including taking these new facets into their future work.

Their identity was previously associated with being students, but their experience of the Fringe allowed them to evolve into a 'collective' to give their shows 'a professional life' (CW Website, 2019), providing a bridge between a student identity and a professional company identity. They picked out the key things that they felt represented their work (such as drawing upon physical theatre and dance, and a name that had connotations they could associate with; see p.119) and then shared them in a public setting (the Fringe), providing an opportunity to construct their public identity, both during the Fringe and in the future as a professional company. For example, they consciously reflected on their work during rehearsals, taking a metaphorical step back and 'looking at it and going, "what is that really about?"' (Chris), further enriching their knowledge of who they are as a company and how their work aligns with their group identity.

The translation of this identity into their public representation can be seen in the category that they chose to list their show when they registered with the Fringe Society to perform at the Fringe, choosing to be listed under 'Dance, Physical Theatre and

Circus', as well as in their street marketing. They flyered in their colourful, extravagant costumes and acted as their characters, also including photographs of themselves in these costumes with exaggerated facial expressions, including tears, smiles and sticking tongues out in their marketing materials. Their public representation of themselves was as an experimental physical theatre company, and this was reinforced via their rituals of performing, both in public spaces as part of street marketing and on stage in their venue during their Fringe productions. Moreover, the Fringe gave members of the group the confidence (EE) needed to believe that they could thrive in other festival contexts, with festival work also becoming a part of their ongoing identity formation. Through learning at 'the extreme' [at the Fringe] (Chris), they translated their experiences into two smaller festival contexts back in their home city, continuing to perform under the banner of 'Collective Whispering' as a professional company. Further, they consciously externalised their identity which was cultivated at the Fringe through their website, stating that their company was 'established' in Spring 2019 – the time that they started to rehearse for their Edinburgh productions.

Experiencing the Fringe together also enabled the group to strengthen their commitment to the moral community of the arts through developing the meanings they attributed to performing; they had committed to train in devised performance, but the Fringe was an opportunity to share their passion for this work in a new, international context:

We decided, coming towards the end of our time at [drama school], we wanted to continue doing this work. We wanted to continue working with each other and make a platform to push that work out into... and then spread our fingers... Since we're starting to become familiar with that community [at home] who is reaching for devised theater, physical theatre... we want to also help facilitate that and start to work with those people as well and give them our knowledge that have come from overseas. (Chris, FG1)

They believe in the importance of devised and physical theatre, and they were committed to sharing their work abroad at the Fringe, and to bringing their learning back to their home city. This is also reflected in how their group identity was stored in their name, understood by Collins as a 'symbolic emblem' (Collins, 2011, p. 2). They chose their company name – which is a new name for their Fringe productions – because of its connotations of 'darker themes' that cannot be 'ignored' (Julia), 'diving in deeper and grabbing what's underneath', 'secrets' (Chris) and 'the shadows' (Julia). For them, what they want to do is to expose what is normally hidden, and this was

enacted through their IRCs which entailed vulnerability and personal sacrifice for the group. Moreover, their company name became more important for the group as ritual intensity increased throughout Fringe experiences. As Phoebe explains when asked about choosing their Fringe company name;

I feel like every step we take the more it feels correct and the right name for us. And even we kind of had said, "Oh yeah maybe we'll change it when we're done with Edinburgh," but I feel like that doesn't feel right anymore... (FG1)

Every IR – or every step in the words of Phoebe – bolsters the meaning they associate with their name.

Connected to this, the way in which the group learned from others about the operations of the Fringe, taking on behaviours and adapting accordingly, highlights how the group took on ritualistic practices from others in the Fringe Tribe (copying common behaviour codes) and integrated them into their group identity. In addition to practical behaviours such as learning how to flyer, these behaviours included the norms of the Fringe lifestyle such as long working hours, and the merging of professional and personal spheres: as Chris states the Fringe brought them 'together more and more as a company, and as a group of friends too.' It became part of their identity to both work and socialise together. The Fringe was an opportunity for the group to 'settle in as a company' (Chris), whereby they operated rather like a 'well-oiled machine'.

#### *5.5.4 Embodiment of group identity*

The construction of a group identity also became a part of each individual member's identity, and this can be understood through analysing how the group's 'check in' evolved throughout the company's time spent in Edinburgh, demonstrating how their chain of interactions led to routinised and embodied preparatory action. To explain: the company already had elements of non-verbal communication ahead of the Fringe showing signs of attunement, but their 'check-in' also included verbal communication to each 'be heard' by the others in the group to signal readiness to rehearse and find a place of shared focus. This changed during the Fringe:

...when it comes time for a higher stress situation, we weren't checking in with each other as much when it came to the days of shows. And the check-in was more distilled down to; we would come together before the first show and we would hold

hands, and just have a breath and make some eye contact... I was really proud of us for at least finding that one moment to say "Okay. Inhale, exhale, eye contact, let's move." So the check-ins really became distilled down to that after the rehearsal period... (Julia, FG2)

Whilst the tone of this extract implies that the group perceived the lack of time for the 'check in' as a problem to be overcome, this problem prompted them to find a new group dynamic which was more aware and focused than their former 'check ins'. Under the high stress situation of the Fringe, the group had to negotiate a new way to check in with each other that was quick but would still enable them to reach a strong level of emotional entrainment where they could be 'heard'. They did this by making it a bodily, almost-non-verbal routine, which included rhythmic breathing together, handholding and eye contact, all of which display core elements of a successful IR; notably, bodily copresence, rhythmic entrainment, and intimacy (Collins, 2004, pp. 135–136). Moreover, their eye contact is particularly revelatory of 'a situation of high attunement' because their 'mutual gaze is longer and more steady' than lower EE situations (Collins, 2004, pp. 135–136).

This new-found bodily check-in displays an internalisation of group membership, whereby their personal identity is constructed through their group identity, communicating nonverbally that they know and understand what it means to belong. As a result of a chain of high EE pay-outs, they establish 'a *pattern* of rhythmic coordination' (Collins, 2004, p. 135) [my emphasis] and this pattern is their routinised, bodily check-in. This is similar to the smooth-flow that occurs from the micro-rhythms of conversational interaction, whereby the high solidarity generated by the conversation enables each participant to pick up the same rhythm, but here it happens at a deeper, bodily level (Collins, 2004, pp. 120–121).

## 5.6 Group self-reflexivity

Bringing all of these ritual ingredients and outcomes together, a question emerges regarding how CW can collectively negotiate and manage their emotions in light of challenges, alongside the evolution of their group identity, as these mechanisms will not be present for every group at the Fringe. The answer to this lies in a group form of self-reflexivity, the processes of which had been cultivated in their previous IRs ahead of the Fringe (e.g., the check in), forming part of their group dynamic. Reflexivity is what fuels IRCs for this group, holding their group intact during turbulence: they know

their limits. As Phoebe explains: “we know our greatest strengths and our greatest weaknesses, and we can see... I don't know.” Phoebe finds it hard to articulate what they ‘can see’ but, although in-part indescribable, as a group they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses through their reflexive processes. Moreover, the fact that this group understanding is hard to put into words reinforces the notion that much of their self-knowledge and awareness is embodied: they can feel their limits during in-the-moment experiences, even if they can't always describe them. As Phoebe explained in relation to their Fringe rehearsal check-in, their ‘senses’ were ‘really on during that moment’ which allowed them to ‘kind of feel where things are’.

In other cases, their reflexivity was made explicit, and an example of this can be seen in their experiences of street marketing. On their first day flyering in Edinburgh, the group flyered for extended periods of time several times throughout the whole day, but then then realised that it was hard to be in ‘that mental state’ (Phoebe) for such a long period of time, so, ‘after the first day we decided to limit our street marketing to certain times’ (Phoebe). Phoebe explains that ‘all of us realized’ and there was a mutual understanding that the group were going beyond their limits. They ‘learned’ that it was not ‘sustainable’ to flyer all day; Julia described this as a process of ‘listening’ to each other which led to this ‘realization’, highlighting how self-reflexive awareness was a mechanism for negotiating the emotional boundaries of their group.

The group also managed their limits through the number of performances that they committed to do at the Fringe. As Phoebe states:

Three nights was the limit of nights that we could probably do without, maybe not harming our bodies, but to where we would be exhausted. (FG2)

They explain that ‘it was the perfect time to end’ (Phoebe) and that they had a ‘good optimal timeframe for their first time’ at the Fringe, understanding that if they had done another show, they would have been ‘quite close to burnout’ (Chris). Reflecting on their experiences as a group post-Fringe, they also described that they felt equipped to come again to the festival, in addition to potentially translating their learning into other contexts, as noted earlier. Further, they described an upcoming Fringe ‘debrief’, planned to ‘figure out what we can do better as a company and what we can do if we want to take our show again to another festival or the Fringe’ (Phoebe).

Whilst challenge can become too much, for CW, 'it was nice to get put through the trials as a company' (Chris) because they were reflexive enough to know how much challenge was sufficient to be motivating and rewarding, fuelling their IRCs, but not too much to result in burnout or group dissolution. CW's IRCs were socially successful because they were continually proactive in their reflexive endeavour.

## 5.7 Conclusion

CW shared on their social media page after the Fringe that they found the Fringe, in summary, to be 'fantastic' and 'fulfilling' as well as 'demanding', and involving sleep deprivation, but they viewed it as a 'total success' because they went beyond their limits as a group and they learned what it meant to be present in Edinburgh at the sacred site of the Fringe, noting that they 'survived' - language characteristic of groups who have endured the Fringe. CW interpreted their Fringe experiences as a success because they contributed to their ongoing processes of negotiating who they are as a company and who they want to be, with 'surviving' the emotional journey of the Fringe a core part of their growth as a group and of the meaning that they derived from their Fringe experience. Thus, part of what enabled the meaning of the Fringe to have longevity for this group was that their Fringe experiences were able to take on meaning beyond their in-the-moment experiences at the sacred site.

This case study therefore highlights how meaning-making at the Fringe *happens in a chain across situations*, whereby previous experiences and group dynamics play a key part in how situations at the Fringe are perceived and navigated as a group. This emphasises the importance of moving out from the art object within research in cultural policy to understand the complexity of how arts experiences become meaningful in and through social relations. Nonetheless, most of this group's expectations of the Fringe were met, with their perceptions of the Fringe aligning with their group identity and a delicate balance of challenge and accomplishment. One can imagine that Fringe experiences may not be so easily integrated into a group's identity if larger conflicts occur between the imagined conception of the Fringe and the reality – this shall be explored in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6: The Fringe and “the imbalance of expectations”

If part of what makes the Fringe meaningful is how it is perceived ahead of attending, with this perception playing a role in understanding why going to the sacred site is important, then the problem of what happens when these expectations are not met is a clear dilemma in understanding what makes the Fringe meaningful. It seems plausible to consider that unmet expectations could lead to disillusionment, thereby resulting in failed IRs.

The aim of this chapter is to address this problem and to understand whether the Fringe can still be meaningful if Fringe expectations are not met. Using the case of *Attractive Figures*, the chapter argues that when the reality of the Fringe is different to the imagined, a risk is posed to meaningful experience. It is a risk because, as this case study will show, it is possible for groups to negotiate these conflicts and to engage in IRs of fun in a way that mitigates full social failure. Namely, because *Attractive Figures* had strong group solidarity from previous IRCs ahead of the Fringe, they found a group dynamic to collectively align their preconceptions with the reality of their Fringe experiences and to seek out situations that would buttress their group solidarity. Nonetheless, whilst the chapter concludes that socially successful rituals are possible when expectations are unmet, it argues that their integration into the Fringe Tribe was weak in comparison to *Collective Whispering* (see chapter five).

The chapter begins by providing background information to *Attractive Figures* and then explaining how the group's Fringe venue choice and communication with their venue played a key role in setting up their expectations of the Fringe. It then moves on to use the example of their technical rehearsal to show how their expectations were unmet and how this experience was a catalyst for changing 'emotional resonance' (Collins, 2004, p. 168) in relation to their understanding of 'the Fringe', shifting their shared narrative of it as a site for 'art for art's sake' (aligning with the beliefs of the moral community of the arts) to one of 'corporatism'. Following this, it explains why this group were still able to engage in socially successful IRCs because of the feelings of 'fun' and 'survival' which they derived from their experiences. It concludes by arguing that unmet expectations can result in feelings of frustration and anger that could ultimately lead to rituals that socially fail, with this an important consideration for arts organisation who emit constructions of what the Fringe will be like via marketing materials and communications with production companies. If these

organisations want to foster meaningful experiences for groups, they should take seriously the expectations that they allow to form.

## 6.1 About Attractive Figures

Attractive Figures (AF) are a Canadian 'comedy troupe' consisting of four performers: Emily, Marcus, Allegra and Ramon. They met through the comedy community, specifically through The Second City Theatre in Toronto, and are all performers as their main profession, alongside a range of teaching, producing and writing work for theatre and/or television. AF began with Emily and Marcus in 2008 – a couple who later married – and then expanded to include Allegra and Ramon in 2017. This was their first time at the Fringe, but they had performed at other festivals together before, such as the Toronto Sketch Comedy Festival, and toured together internationally. Emily also has a friend who works for The Fringe Society in Edinburgh who she had previously worked with in Canada, and she 'reached out to him' specifically when they first 'started to do [their] research' regarding putting on a show at the Fringe. In addition, Emily had previously directed a comedy duo at the Fringe remotely via Skype in 2018, with AF deciding to share an apartment with this duo for Fringe 2019. They also shared their apartment with two other people (a couple) who were investors in their production, meaning that eight of them lived together throughout their time in Edinburgh.

Emily was the sociometric star of their group – she was the most connected to the others in the performing group, with Marcus her married partner and Allegra her 'best friend', and had strong connections outside the group, having directed at the Fringe before and a friend working for the Fringe Society. Moreover, Emily acted as the producer of their production at the Fringe, taking on the most responsibility for the group, with Allegra stating that 'she's the reason any of this happens', Ramon that she has a 'super power' and Marcus explaining that she does 'managerial and producing and administrative stuff... better than all of us' and that they are 'happy to concede most of those responsibilities to Emily'. From my fieldwork interacting with AF, I also observed that Emily set the tone for most interactions, leading conversations, speaking more, and creating energy amongst group members – she had qualities akin

to a charismatic leader as per Collins (2004, pp.150, 146), pumping up the group with EE, with members following ‘willingly in her trajectory’.

## 6.2 Fringe expectations

Attractive Figures performed at one of the supervenues at the Fringe, with the venue company name labelled ‘Discovery’ for the purpose of this chapter.<sup>26</sup> Ahead of the Fringe, AF indicated that they believed Discovery to align with their passion for comedy and performing, and their belief in the importance of ‘professionalism’. They noted that in their choice of venue they wanted to make sure that ‘they [the venue] love their job, and they love what they do’, as well as stating that ‘the [professional] reputation... does matter’. Further, AF ordinarily performed in what they perceived to be the best professional circles in Canada, and they wanted a venue that would build on their pre-existing group identity as professional performers. ‘The Fringe’ was much more than a place to perform for this group, it is connected with who they are and who they want to be:

...And give an imprint of the festival, like, put your imprint on the festival and get the imprint of the festival on you because you know it's fleeting; it's not the luckiness that you have at home - it's like, this isolated time. (Emily, FG1)

The Fringe exists in contrast to the ‘profane’ which is represented here by the mundanity of ‘home’; there is a sense of *carpe diem* in the way that time is described in relation to the Fringe because it is special. AF acknowledge that they are visiting a sacred site, and that they will have limited time there, with the Fringe able to ‘actualize’ the sacred because of its ‘fleeting’ temporal dimension which is characteristic of festivals (Sassatelli, 2011, p. 13). Further, the Fringe also has meaning for this group because they see it as aligning with who they are as a company - their group identity as professional performers and members of the moral community of the arts. The ‘imprint’ that they want is one that will buttress their identity as comedians who are part of ‘the best’ professional performing circuits. This is the ‘prestige’ (Emily) of the Fringe for them – the symbolic resource that they view the Fringe as providing, which will support in maintaining, and building upon, their conception of themselves as a

---

<sup>26</sup> The name of the venue company has been given this pseudonym to preserve anonymity of participants.

professional comedy troupe. Making this point clearer: they believe that all of the best comedians perform at the Fringe; they see themselves as a group who represents the best comedy; they want to go to the Fringe to be seen as part of the best performing circles and to, in turn, develop who they are as a group in relation to their group identity as a professional performing 'comedy troupe'. This sense of what they want to gain from the Fringe is inherently linked to their venue choice because they wanted a venue that would represent professional comedy, enabling them to derive meaning from their experience and to position how they viewed themselves alongside a venue company that shared their ideals.

In a similar vein, their Fringe show held shared meaning for them, particularly in relation to their aesthetic tastes, and it was an expression of their group identity.<sup>27</sup> They wanted to find a venue who shared and represented these aesthetic tastes, where audiences who enjoy comedy would go. Marcus notes that their show was 'tailored to our tastes and comedy, with Emily stating:

I mean, we have to do it 30 times; so, it's stuff that we - messages that we want to put out there - or things that make us laugh, or things that give us a sense of play, or, whether it's a strong political point of view, or an emotional feeling that we enjoy sitting with. I think, we designed this show - and we continue to design all of our shows - with what we want to do, and what we want to say in mind. (FG1)

Their show represents their aesthetic preferences and it also reflects their group identity and how they want to present themselves. Thus, when they were looking for a venue, they stated that they wanted a company 'that would hire you on, and you'd work collaboratively with them', actively not wanting to 'find [their] own venue' – they wanted to be selected, showing an awareness of the unwritten codes at the Fringe, whereby being part of a curated programme is more prestigious than an uncurated one.

AF's endeavour in finding a venue was therefore primarily about meeting these needs – to be selected for a particular venue at the Fringe where they would feel that they belonged in view of their group identity, 'matching' with a venue who would symbolise for them a reflection of their own ideals. This explains why, when they did get selected for a supervenue, they felt that 'they were very lucky and very blessed to

---

<sup>27</sup> The word 'show' is used here rather than 'production' as this was the terminology used by the group to describe their performances at the Fringe.

be included in their programming' (Emily), reinforcing the notion that being part of a curated programme is both a sign of finding a venue that has similar aesthetic preferences and is something special because it doesn't happen to everyone – it happens only to those who meet high professional standards.

### *6.2.1 Expectations of their venue and of the Fringe*

Interconnected to these aspirations, AF had certain expectations of how the staff connected to their venue would behave and what being accepted into a supervenue programme would mean for them. For example, they had actively chosen a venue that was professional, where they would acquire certain social resources through their membership such as 'contacts' that would support them in 'getting [future] work', and would come with 'production help'. Emily notes:

...you wanna make sure that, you know, if you're hearing that the tech directors don't show up for their job or, like, how can you - being an international performer - with no contacts there, no contacts, how can you set yourself up for success? (FG1)

It was a priority for them to choose a venue that had a good reputation for reliable working practices.

Related to this, through their initial communications with their venue, Emily described that they had 'a great relationship with Discovery' and 'they're [Discovery] fantastic and super professional, and so helpful, they've been really great, and I can't wait to meet them in person'. The language employed here is telling of how the group perceive Discovery because Emily talks about the venue as if it were an entity beyond the people who work there; they feel that they have a great relationship with 'Discovery' not just with the *people*, suggesting that the venue is a symbol for them – it has meaning associated with professionalism, success, and passion in comedy – and they can 'invoke it' in their conversational IRs in a way that everyone in the group will understand what it means, increasing the possibility of 'a high degree of focus' around the venue symbol (Collins, 2004, p. 151). Emily also stresses that she 'can't wait' for a situation of bodily co-presence at the Fringe with 'them', reinforcing the importance of future group assembly at the Fringe in maintaining the meanings that they associate with Discovery.

In view of these expectations, AF stated that they were 'bringing their best show' to the Fringe, and that they were feeling a 'bit more pressure' because 'we gotta do this for them [Discovery]'. It was important for them to bring a production that they felt aligned with the beliefs of prestige that they associated with Discovery. For them, bringing a show to the Fringe was entering into a partnership with a venue who shared the same moral code.

Another expectation in relation to the Fringe at large, which their venue choice was viewed within, was that it would be a 'fun' and 'enjoyable' experience where they would network with other comedians, as well as engage in tourist activity in the city:

Emily: ...Firstly, the tourist stuff after we've done the work, and we're gonna flyer, we're gonna do all that stuff involving the show, and network, and all that kind of stuff, but definitely going out for drinks with other performers and comedians. You've got a Primark there so that's where Allegra and I will be! [Laughs] And just like, we, we're fortunate enough to have a house with another performing act um... and so there's a long table that we can decompress and have a cup of tea, and have like a Sunday dinner together.

Marcus:... I think, going in expecting to just accept that this is gonna be a really fun experience umm... and yeah, if we're to get a fun review from somebody - great - but mostly its going to live in Scotland for a month and do what we do best which is umm... irritate each other and second best, comedy. (FG1)

These quotes represent 'typical' experiences at the Fringe – the IRs of flyer-ing together, networking, seeing the tourist sites in Edinburgh, sharing a house with other performing artists and eating with them, and anticipating emotional experiences that are 'fun'. They have grasped exactly what the Fringe experience should look and feel like, highlighting their membership to the moral community of the arts where this information would be commonplace. They look forward to the Fringe as 'an incredible adventure' where memories are made (Allegra), a place to be a tourist, network with others, have fun and perform comedy. Interestingly, Marcus puts their social experience above their performing comedy experience as well, stressing the importance of having a 'fun experience' at the Fringe. They recognise that the Fringe is perceived to be a place which is both fun and an important professional development experience, where social networking could lead to extended professional networks. As shown on the Fringe Society website in relation to networking:

Effective networking is all about building a network of contacts relevant to your industry that can help you achieve your goals or develop your career.

However, also part of the unwritten code of the Fringe is that certain venues will provide greater networking opportunities when compared to others. Part of venue choice is choosing somewhere that can provide such enjoyable and professionally meaningful experiences, ensuring that these imagined ideals of the Fringe can and will come to fruition, which AF believed to be the case in their venue choice.

### *6.2.2 Sources of expectations*

Relevant to explaining how the 'emotional resonance' (Collins, 2004, p. 168) of the meaning of 'Discovery' changed for AF is unpacking *why* AF had these initial expectations in the first place. This helps us to understand whether the group were unintentionally misled in some way by Discovery, or perhaps by another organisation such as the Fringe Society, or whether they had created their own false assumptions, such as constructing their ideals based on what they wanted the Fringe to be like. In the case of AF, their expectations seem to have been created across this spectrum, but primarily that of the former: they did 'research', they spoke to people who had been to the Fringe before and to the Fringe Society, suggesting that they were making an 'informed' decision as they described it, but they also constructed their own image of what the Fringe would be like through interpreting what this information would mean for them. In relation to the latter, they also augmented their interpretations through building emotional excitement amongst their group by drawing on memories of a previous Fringe visit that Allegra and Emily had shared. This provided further experiential knowledge of what the Fringe at large would be like for them, as well as experience of the unwritten venue 'hierarchy'. Summarising these points, Emily recounts:

When [Allegra] and I went [to the Fringe previously], I do remember seeing their [coloured venue] logo everywhere, splattered on posters, and then when we were doing - we must have done about 30+ hours of research before even applying because you wanted to have an educated and informed decision - and with the Fringe podcast that the Fringe Society put out, it was this... the people who we had spoken to who had performed at

Discovery were like, yeah, like 'they're great, they're great' and so it was a no brainer for us. So, reputation, yes... (FG1)

Emily and Allegra's previous experience of being at the Fringe showed them that Discovery were popular– this set the stage for choosing their venue because they already had some sense of their reputation.

Further, AF did 'research', such as listening to the Fringe Society podcasts, raising the question of: what information did they receive ahead of the Fringe via the Fringe Society, or perhaps from Discovery, that may have played a part in constructing their venue expectations? This isn't completely clear from AF's focus group; however, looking to the information that the Fringe Society share, and the information provided on Discovery's website, it's possible to theorise the kind of details that they were provided with. Firstly, in relation to the Fringe Society, they have a 'policy of impartiality' meaning:

We [the Fringe Society] can't recommend one venue over another but we can help you work out what will be best for your show and how to approach venue managers. (Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2020)

It's the Fringe Society's policy that they will not share their 'opinions' on whether a certain venue may be 'better' than another – they do not articulate the unwritten hierarchical venue code. Explaining this further, through my time working as Projects Officer for the Fringe Society where I worked in their offices, I overheard numerous phone calls between staff and potential Fringe performers, whereby Society staff would explain that they were unable to recommend specific venues, rather offering support services such as their online 'guide to choosing a venue' which provides 'tips' regarding what to look for such as exploring capacity, stage dimensions, financial models, technical facilities, programming policies, and marketing support, to name a few (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2019e). A member of Society staff in the programming team further explained to me that their role in performers choosing a venue is 'providing information for people to go and work things out for themselves' with the staff member further stating that 'often when people call you can hear they are disappointed because they expect to just call us and register, but there is a lot more that they need to go away and work out for themselves' (ethnographic fieldnotes). Thus, the information that AF would have received from the Fringe Society

was likely to be around these logistical considerations and policies, rather than emotional and symbolic associations, such as reputation.

One way that AF did this ‘work for themselves’ was to ask people who had previously performed at Discovery who reinforced the group’s conception of them having a good reputation (‘they’re great’). However, it’s also very likely that they would have visited the Discovery website, as this is necessary to pitch a production to Discovery for programming in their spaces. Although specific information from the Discovery website cannot be shared in order to preserve anonymity, the information that they share is one that buttresses them as one of the best and most professional venues at the Fringe, particularly for comedy. They list famous names of comedians who have performed at their venue, and they note their international reputation and artistic prestige. All of this information, together with the word-of-mouth recommendations, likely fed into their expectations of Discovery.

These expectations of the Fringe were given positive emotional sentiment through Emily and Allegra’s previous visit to the Fringe in 2018, with Emily stating that ‘Allegra and I fell in love with it [the Fringe] and... it’s been on the list of the things to do as a professional.’ Emily had directed a comedy duo over Skype, and Allegra and Emily decided to fly over to Edinburgh to surprise the duo for the weekend. They went as audience members, but they also recount networking with other professionals from their comedy social networks, thereby experiencing the collective effervescence of the Fringe. Emily described their experience in their first focus group with a smile on her face as she reminisced on a particular Fringe story of first ‘going to the wrong venue’, and then only ‘making it [the show] by the skin of [their] teeth’, laughing that the venue thought the ‘paparazzi were coming’. Emily and Allegra had shared previous IRCs at the Fringe where they ‘picked up’ on the heightened emotional experience of it, leading them to feel that it was important for them to perform there. Moreover, what is interesting is that they shared their excitement in relation to the Fringe with the other two members of AF when they returned to Canada, pumping them up with EE to get them excited about the prospect of performing at the Fringe in the future. Allegra notes that following their weekend visit, ‘Emily and I... were like ‘we have to come here! We have to do this!’ This moment of ‘affective recall’ as they described their experience of enjoyment at the Fringe also aligns with Fine & Corte’s (2017, p. 67) notion that ‘memory of fun... allows the emotional experience of the original fun to be reexperienced’, and this can ‘solidify social relations’. Namely, each time Allegra and

Emily recount their experience of enjoyment at the Fringe, it 'intensif[ies] the original emotion' and the rest of the group 'pick up' on it, drawing EE from the group and priming them for future IRCs at the Fringe.

AF's *chain* of interactions in relation to the meaning of 'The Fringe' for them as a group began one year before they came together, with this previous visit used as a way to prepare them for future interactions at the Fringe, providing them with a source of motivation and excitement. This stresses the importance of pre-existing solidarity because it is in meaningful IRs prior to arriving in Edinburgh where groups negotiate an imagined ideal of what their Fringe experience will be like. Whilst in this specific story of Emily and Allegra's previous visit to the Fringe they do not connect it to why they chose the specific venue that they did, what this experience does is emotionally prime the group for an, overall, positive and intensive artistic and social experience, of which their venue will play a part in. Nevertheless, the question here is: what happens if these expectations aren't met?

### 6.2.3 '*Performing*' their expectations

Shortly after I had arrived at their venue ahead of their technical rehearsal, we went to buy takeaway coffees from a coffee shop close to their venue. On the way back, when we were walking towards their venue and could see the whole building in view, Emily and Allegra suddenly stopped walking, paused and took a step back and said 'wow'. Their movements were almost completely in sync, and I couldn't identify who stopped walking first. They just stood there, smiling for a few moments, looking at their venue and sighing in awe. Then, nearing the venue, they spotted their group name on a poster listing the shows being performed in their space, and started pointing at the poster and smiling. They both had their cameras out and were taking photos of one another posing in front of the building, and then pointing to their listing and photographing it. Emily gave me her phone at one point, and I took a photo of them together standing outside the front doors of their venue. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 30 July 2019)

This extract is taken from my fieldnotes of when I met AF at their Fringe venue building on their first day in Edinburgh for the Fringe. As is shown here, Emily and Allegra 'perform' to one another in a Goffmanian way through this IR of arriving at their venue, conveying to one another the shared meanings that they associate with being in Edinburgh for the Fringe – excitement, awe of their venue, elation, to name a few. Further, there are a few key IR ingredients that are high, making this a meaningful IR:

*bodily co-presence* where they are together at the sacred site of the Fringe, a shared positive, excited *mood* cultivated through seeing their names listed on their venue poster, and *rhythmic entrainment* as they are 'in sync'. These ritual ingredients feedback on one another, reinforcing the symbol of their venue as a professional and prestigious place to perform, which they want to align their group identity with. Further, they do this in public space to 'perform' these meanings in view of other Fringe Tribe members who will be sharing similar IRs as they arrive at the Fringe as well. Importantly then, their IR is not one that is unique to them and I often saw Fringe participants taking photos of themselves outside of their venues during my fieldwork. Emily and Allegra 'perform' in a way that they think is appropriate at the Fringe whereby one should venerate their venue, and in a way that they perceive will heighten the meanings they associate with their venue between them, increasing EE through their interactions (manifest as enthusiasm and excitement).

Moreover, the colour of the poster that they took their photo in front of represented their venue, with this moment of photographing themselves the beginning of publicly showing their affiliation to their venue's brand and what they perceive it to stand for (professionalism, comedy, prestige, 'the best'). Further, this IR is also about contributing to the transformation of place and making it sacred in view of the venue's brand and what it stands for within the context of the Fringe for all those who affiliate themselves to it. The building that Emily and Allegra venerate is normally a university building but, in the context of the Fringe where it is decorated with colourful branding and transformed into a building full of performance spaces with theatrical equipment, it becomes part of the sacred site of the Fringe. Thus, as a result of their expectations in relation to the Fringe and their venue, this situation of arriving at their venue was constructed to happen in a certain way, and when they 'perform' this expectation through their excitement, they reinforce their conceptions of the Fringe as a sacred site because the IR happens in the way that they expect it to.

#### 6.2.4 *Unmet expectations*

Many of AF's expectations of the Fringe did come to fruition as we shall see in greater detail later in this chapter – they did share their flat with other performers, they had 'fun' social and tourist experiences, and they networked with other professional

comedians. However, one aspect of their expectations was not met in the way that they wanted it to be, and this caused feelings of frustration and anger: the meaning of Discovery as a symbol of 'professionalism'. What they had imagined was a 'partnership' where they would meet the people they had been communicating with face-to-face, celebrate their 'passion' for the 'best' comedy, and experience smooth-running technical processes; however, in reality they experienced frustration because this idea of 'professionalism' was not met.

What AF experienced was what other performing artists have said they experience during the Fringe – organisations operating on commercial models and charging prices that are perceived by some as not commensurate with the standard of venue services being delivered. Whilst this is a complex picture as the seasonal nature of staffing means different venue experiences year on year, I often spoke to people during my fieldwork who had similar perceptions and described similar experiences. However, AF appeared to be unaware that there was the potential for 'the Fringe' experience to be inconsistent from venue to venue and from year to year. This is particularly interesting because it raises questions as to why people had recommended Discovery, and why some people continue to spend what can amount to significant sums of money to perform at the Fringe, if they aren't always getting the experiences that they hope for. Although some people do get frustrated at what they deem to be 'exploitation' at the Fringe resulting in activist campaigns such as the Fair Fringe, others appear to experience a level of collective emotion at these venues which, to an extent, overrides any frustrations they may have about the level of service they receive from their venue relative to the amount of money they have paid them. These experiences can be unpacked through analysis of IRC meaning-making processes.

The overall 'Fringe experience' is unique, intense, and challenging and 'going through' heightened emotional experiences as members of groups that 'belong' to particular venues can be viewed as a kind of 'initiation' into the Fringe Tribe. Nonetheless, certain venue experiences can pose a risk to this Fringe experience if frustrations and challenges are pushed too far and they aren't surrounded by other meaningful experiences. This can be explained through the example of AF's technical rehearsal which began immediately after Emily and Allegra had posed in front of their building full of hope, excitement, and venue affiliation:

A member of the venue technical team and Ramon were in the lighting box trying to sort out the lighting programming for their production. Ramon changed the lighting to yellow and said 'what about this for scene two?', Emily and Allegra replied 'yeah, yeah', but Marcus said, 'err [pause] I think we should try orange'. Ramon replied, 'okay, I'll try orange'. They make jokes to one another and laugh as they try different colours and eventually settle on the colour blue which they all agree on. At moments Ramon, Marcus, and Allegra on stage were excited, upbeat, and bubbly, and at other times they were communicating with Ramon about which lights to choose and trying to work through problems. The focus was constantly shifting but there was a definite sense that they had a strong working dynamic, knowing when to make jokes and when to concentrate. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 30 July 2019)

This extract from my ethnographic fieldnotes is an observation of the group at the start of their technical rehearsal, where they were productively working together and seemed to be having an enjoyable time. However, this mood shifted as the group became frustrated at some noise spill from the room next door to them, where another performing company were having their technical rehearsal:

Throughout the rehearsal there had been increasing noise spill from the room next door, but now as time for their tech was starting to run out, their frustrations about this increased. There had been a couple of throw away comments about it earlier, but Emily says now "it's an awful lot of money to pay for no one to hear your show." They tell me that they spent a huge amount of money on this venue. Emily asked me what they should do, and I recommended that they should speak to someone higher up in venue management about it. They ask the tech person from the venue and they say, 'there is little more we can do', and points to a window that has been boarded up to show what they have already done to try and prevent the problem. There is some muttering between members of AF as they talk about there perhaps being a different, quieter group in there for their actual performance. The technical staff member states that 'I don't know who will actually be in there', with Emily further commenting that 'it's not fair on whoever is in there because they will hear our show too'. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 30 July 2019)

Initially the group's frustration seemed quite minor ('throw away comments'), but as they slowly realised that the venue staff weren't going to do anything about the noise, and that it could interfere with their performance, they became tired and frustrated. Up until this point of the rehearsal, whilst there were reasons for them to be tired such as long-distance travel the day before, lack of sleep and adjusting to a new time zone, their energy levels and their focus of attention on the getting through the technical rehearsal were consistently high. However, now they feel exhausted ('just got jet-lagged'); they were no longer drawing EE from their group to maintain their focus and excitement, but they were putting it into failed interactions with the technical team, trying to problem solve the sound bleed and feeling emotionally drained as a result.

Furthermore, it seemed their frustrations were heightened because of their previous hopes of meeting Discovery 'in person'. AF had been told that they were meeting 'Sebastian' for their technical rehearsal:

When I had first arrived, they explained that they thought they'd be meeting Sebastian as that was who they were told they would be meeting, but they'd been assigned a different member of the technical team. During the first hour of rehearsal, another member of staff came in to say hello and Emily asked excitedly, 'are you Sebastian?', the venue staff member replied 'no, he will be here later to operate the lights'. When Sebastian eventually did arrive 20 minutes or so later, Emily stated boldly, 'we're Attractive Figures', but he barely engaged with them, going straight over to the lighting box to see his colleague. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 30 July 2019)

Their expectation was they had cultivated this incredible partnership with Discovery and that they would be meeting the person who symbolised this relationship and engaging in meaningful IRs with them. Instead, they had a range of different staff supporting their technical rehearsal, and when Sebastian did eventually arrive, he went straight over to the lighting box to engage with the logistics of the rehearsal, rather than entering into meaningful social interaction with them.

The realities of their experience, which included noise bleed and a lack of bodily IRs with people they had imagined interacting with, left AF frustrated, with Emily initially responding in a way akin to 'righteous anger'. Collins (2004) describes 'righteous anger' as follows:

[Righteous anger] is the emotional outburst, shared by a group (perhaps led by particular persons who act as its agents) against persons who violate its sacred symbols. It is group anger against a heretic or scapegoat... (p.127)

Righteous anger is a particularly intense emotion because it is expressed with a strong sense of security: the individual feels they have the community's support, and not merely in a loose sense.... [they're] evoking their feeling of membership in an enforcement coalition. (p.128)

The situation of AF's anger is a complex picture in view of this definition. AF viewed the venue staff as aligned with their belief system - all part of the same 'clan' to draw on the analogy from chapter four – but this experience shifted their understanding of their relationship of 'partnership'. As Emily described:

...I had to prove to *them* [their venue] that the tech wasn't working. I had to prove to them that they hadn't put up our review. I had to prove to them... Like it felt like

a bit gaslighty because I'm like, "No, I'm a fucking smart professional" [my emphasis]

That's my experience as a female sometimes and it was very triggering because I had to go for the shit eating grin and just kind of be like, "Hi, so sorry. Again, there's sound bleed. So sorry. Again, our tech doesn't know what they're doing. Again, you're not setting us up for success.

...It is a racket and you don't believe me, you don't believe me when I come in with issues, so [it] was very frustrating to have to do the emotional labour... you need to fix this. I'm a priority. (FG2)

The language here is quite different to their first focus group where they spoke of the people they had spoken to at their venue as collaborators, using positive language. Here Emily positions the venue as other – as 'them' and 'us'. Further, Emily represents AF's collective frustrations and internalises them individually because of the meaning that their production holds for her and for their group. Emily is a sociometric star, and she took on the greatest responsibility here for this problem – 'the emotional labour' – and she personally suffers as a result, feeling emotionally drained by her interactions with the venue because they do not understand the importance of fixing the sound bleed problem. Emily feels that the venue is 'not setting [them] up for success'.

From AF's perspective, the moral code in the performing arts is that performances should be quiet; performers seek to 'dissolve any awareness of the constructed nature of performance' (McCormick, 2015, p. 23), and AF believe that the sound bleed will do this, thereby distracting audiences. By allowing the noise spill to affect their art object which should be protected, Emily views this behaviour as a violation of their unwritten code of the moral community of the arts. She seeks confirmation of this violation to try and call the venue staff out as 'heretical' by explaining how much money they have spent, indicating that they view this behaviour as unacceptable, and asking me (a member of 'staff' at the Fringe Society) about what they should do. However, whilst in that moment I felt the frustration of the group having to rehearse with noise spill and that their production would likely be affected when they performed in the future, I was also aware that their experience would have been similar to others' at the Fringe. Some of the most 'prestigious' (and expensive) venues at the Fringe are in small corners of bars, converted hotel rooms, and old buildings that have no suitable soundproofing – all of this is part of the Fringe experience. In the case of AF, this isn't to suggest or determine a moral or value judgement regarding whether the venue behaved objectively 'right' or 'wrong' in their act of allowing the noise spill

to continue, but it is to highlight that Emily was trying to express her anger in a way where 'the community' (myself and the venue staff) would support her in her anger as 'righteous' and acknowledge that the behaviour was unacceptable. However, I didn't respond in the way that Emily had hoped – I did not act to call the venue out – and the venue staff didn't pick up on her anger in any meaningful way. Rather, what AF had to do was to realign their imagined conception of the Fringe Tribe, with the reality that the festival 'spirit', whilst sitting within the overarching frame of the moral community of the arts, also permits different kinds of behaviours. Their anger could not be 'righteous' because there were different group membership belief systems at play here within and across the moral community of the arts and the Fringe Tribe (as discussed in chapter four).

The IRCs of their technical rehearsal therefore became a process of re-navigating what is 'acceptable' at the Fringe, and finding ways to complete the rehearsal, despite their frustrations. That is, the sound bleed caused near IR breakdown, but they managed to draw upon their group resources of solidarity from their previous interactions to allow them to finish the rehearsal. After their moments of tension, Marcus reminds the group that they should trust their venue stating, 'they may be soundproofing as they're still doing lots of things'. Nevertheless, Emily does not respond to his comment; she steps up to take on a role akin to a charismatic leader within their group, realising that action is needed to resolve this issue, and says that they should talk to the venue management about the problem when the rehearsal is over. They are trying to work out whether they can both hold onto the importance of their production needing to be protected and view themselves as members of Discovery. Emily's decision to take action provides a way for them to continue to work productively together for the rest of the session; to allow them to build up their mutual focus of attention and shared mood again to complete their technical rehearsal. The group start to thank the technical team as tasks are completed, and jokes are made about the noise next door such as 'they must be white rappers'. They revert back to a group dynamic that they are most comfortable with to maintain group solidarity – a social life embedded in comedy. They find a temporary dynamic to enable them to cooperate with the technical staff to ensure their production is ready for performance because this is their overarching aim, important above all else.

### 6.3 Finding a group dynamic to continue at the Fringe

After failing to solve their sound bleed problem directly with the venue management as they had hoped, AF decided to organise a meeting with the producer of the production team from the room next door after their fourth performance of their production to try and solve the issue:

I had arranged to meet AF for a drink immediately following their fourth performance but, due to their meeting with the producer next door, they asked me if they could WhatsApp me in about an hour instead. After an hour and 20 minutes with no communication, I sent Emily a message asking if they might prefer to meet another day, but after a few further exchanged messages they said that they were eating, and that I could come and sit with them. They didn't mention the meeting to me at first, but after around 15 minutes, Emily started to compose an email message on her phone and was conferring with the others about what to say because she didn't want to 'sound rude'. At this point, Emily explained to me that the producer 'hadn't turned up'. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 3 August 2019)

It seemed they had shared a failed – or rather inert – IR with the production company next door, who didn't seem to share their belief that talking about the sound bleed issue was a priority. They had set themselves up for an interaction with the other production team, coming together in group solidarity and high EE to protect and defend their production. However, the person they should have been interacting with (the Producer) had not turned up, resulting in a complete absence of the group assembly needed to resolve the problem. This absence of presence removed their opportunity to have a collective voice to communicate why their production should be protected, leaving the group deflated. Further, this experience which was emotionally fragile for them - they felt both let down and frustrated - was one that they didn't want me to be a part of, with a barrier put up to me as an outsider of the group. Namely, they seemed reluctant to allow me back into their social space – not contacting me to invite me back in but waiting for me to ask.

After Emily composed the email and read it out to the others, Ramon said that he wanted to remove a line which asked whether the producer may be able to 'reschedule' the meeting. He explains that he doesn't think that they should engage with them at all now about this. The group agree and Emily sends the message. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 3 August 2019)

Following their 'inert' IR, they negotiate together that the best way for them to maintain their group solidarity is for them to not engage with them in the future. Thus, they took it upon themselves to navigate the problem of the sound bleed. Emily described in their second focus group:

Katey: Can you think of any examples during the summer where you worked particularly well together as a group?

Emily: Yeah, on stage every show for sure. Just combating the unplanned things of that. So audience numbers and the improv for the noise bleed from upstairs or if one of us is having a down day, I don't think you could ever tell on stage.

Emily describes that one of the examples of how they worked 'well together as a group' was in how they 'combatted' the 'unplanned' problems such as the 'noise bleed': they did this through improvising around the sound during their live performances. As a 'well-oiled machine' (Marcus),<sup>28</sup> they could navigate the problem as a group live on stage. The noise bleed was a risk factor to meaningful interpretation of their performance, and they overcame it through their shared understanding of how important it was for it to not interfere with their production, improvising around it to distract audiences and draw them into the experience of their show. They were able to view the noise bleed as a challenge to be overcome which, in turn, strengthened their group solidarity.

However, although AF overcame challenges together as a group 'testing' themselves 'mentally, emotionally, and physically' (Emily), which increased their group solidarity, the result of their frustrations and unmet expectations was a shift in the meanings that they ascribed to their venue, and to 'the Fringe'.

## 6.4 Changing 'emotional resonance'

AF's experience of collaborating with their venue brings to the fore how their beliefs changed, shifting the meaning that Discovery held for them as a group. In their second focus group, AF no longer speak of their experience of Discovery in terms of a collaborative relationship, but they associate it with 'corporate' values (Allegra, Emily,

---

<sup>28</sup> Note here that the phrasing is exactly the same as Collective Whispering who also called themselves a 'well-oiled machine', emphasising a Durkheimian social ontology of a group of people as more than the sum of their individual parts.

Marcus), linking into 'the corporate nature of the festival' and stating that the festival operates like a 'machine' (Marcus). Allegra states that she found it 'quite shocking' that the festival was less about 'creating art' and more about 'moneymaking', and Emily connected this to their venue saying that she was 'sad to learn that the majority of this money doesn't even go to The Fringe'. AF want to align themselves to what is 'good', and they interestingly still position 'The Fringe' as something that is worthy of money. It's hard to determine exactly what they mean to denote when they say 'the Fringe' here, whether this is the Fringe Society or 'the Fringe' as some abstract notion, but, in line with Allegra's statement that the Fringe wasn't about making art, together with the group's numerous statements that they were not at the Fringe for financial gain, it is possible that Emily believes their money should be going back into creating artistic work – what they think 'the Fringe' should stand for - rather than a 'corporate machine'. They put forward a dichotomous conception of the relationship between art and money as competing ideals, and it is through this lens that AF heighten their commitment to their production as something that represents their artistic ideals.

AF made a huge financial sacrifice for the sake of their production, placing importance on an 'art for art's sake' narrative, aligning with the beliefs of the moral community of the arts that art is intrinsically valuable.<sup>29</sup> They positioned their imagined conception of the Fringe as a sacred site where they could enact their belief in the importance of this narrative against the 'corporate' world, linking in with Durkheim's conception of the sacred as explained by Collins (2004, p.40):

For Durkheim, the touchstone of morality, and of the sacred, is that which is a value in itself, apart from a utilitarian value... higher value than merely mundane, individual consideration of 'useful or injurious effects'.

Whilst the group recognise that they needed financial support to participate in the Fringe and that this would be a barrier for them to return, AF view their participation in the Fringe as 'a value in itself', rather than seeking utilitarian gain. It wasn't financial gain that made their Fringe experience 'worth it', it was:

...getting to do a show with our troupe, our friends, performing for international audiences, performing every day in a foreign city that is beautiful and nothing like here. (Marcus, FG2)

---

<sup>29</sup> This notion of *l'art pour l'art* stems from 19<sup>th</sup> century France, and is tied to the idea that 'art needs no justification' via functional goals (Satyavrat, 2015).

Each of them made a personal and financial sacrifice. For example, a personal sacrifice was made by removing personal time, with their Fringe living situation described as a 'fishbowl' (Allegra) where they had 'zero personal alone time' (Emily). Emily also explained that although their investors were 'lovely' people, they felt 'an obligation to entertain a conversation about politics at eight in the morning because they had given [them] so much'; this suggests that their living environment at the Fringe included what Collins' describes as 'forced' IRs, where they had to 'put on a show of participating' (Collins, 2004, p. 53). The IRs were successful, but extra effort was needed, therefore contributing to 'interaction fatigue' (Collins, 2004, p. 53). In relation to their financial sacrifice, Emily explains that they put in 'anywhere from \$2,500 to \$4,000' each to attend the Fringe. They were willing to make these sacrifices because of their commitment to their aesthetic ideals and to their group – sacrifices in the name of 'art' which they felt that Discovery were not making.

However, despite not viewing their reasons for attending the Fringe in economic terms and associating their motivation to perform with the Fringe experience itself, they did view themselves as undervalued by their venue within an economic frame. Allegra explains:

...the only people who don't make money at The Fringe are the artists. And that's the reason The Fringe exists. So that was disappointing that the imbalance of expectations, you're paying a lot of money to do a proper theatre run there and they're [Discovery] providing you with a makeshift theatre space that yes, has sound bleed and lights that don't actually stay where you put them. So halfway through your show, you're not in lighting anymore. A tech that has never run tech before. So you're now training a technician to run your show so that, that definite imbalance. You're like, "Wait, I thought we were playing for a professional theatre run here. And instead we're paying a lot of money for some makeshift stuff." (FG2)

This extract highlights how their expectations in line with their elevated conception of Discovery and what it meant for them as grounded in professional standards, were not met which shifted the 'emotional resonance' of 'The Fringe' and their venue. Their emotions changed from excitement and feelings of professionalism to frustration, anger, and the feeling of being undervalued. However, interestingly, they didn't perceive the Fringe Society in this way, feeling that they were 'helping the best they can, but not getting any of this money' (Emily). They perceived the Fringe Society as aligning with their ideals because they hadn't paid them a huge amount of money and experienced an 'imbalance of expectations' (Allegra) in their interactions with them.

This perspective in relation to the Fringe Society could be perceived as ‘biased’ as Emily had a personal connection with a member of the Fringe Society staff (they had previously worked together); however, ‘bias’ here is better reframed as feelings resulting from successful IRCs where EE was maintained across situations. Emily had already built-up social cohesion with her contact at the Fringe Society, and she had shared this enthusiasm with the rest of AF, and upon arriving in Edinburgh, they had socialised with this contact and communicated about what resources would help to support them. Thus, their successful chain of IRs with this individual led them to affiliate positive associations with ‘the Fringe Society’, drawing high EE from their interactions with Emily’s friend, and feeling a sense of shared affiliation to the importance of their production in the Fringe context.

## 6.5 ‘Fun’ and feelings of ‘survival’

The result of AF’s failed and inert IRs in relation to performing at their venue led to ‘disillusionment’ as per Collins which ‘shifted the amount of EE (Collins, 2004, p. 168), connected with the brand of their venue. However, these failed IRs also existed alongside successful IRs, resulting in the overarching feeling that the Fringe was still ‘worth it’ (Marcus), they had ‘no regrets’ (Allegra), would ‘do it again’ (Emily), and had a sense of ‘survival’ (Emily) from enduring the intensity of the Fringe which, overall, reinforced their group solidarity, with multiple Fringe places being associated with meaning, including their venue:

Katey: ...were there any venues or places that held a particular meaning for you throughout your time in Edinburgh?

Emily: So like [Discovery] specifically for our venue, held meaning of course. The patio, because that was where we would gather and have our lunch.  
(FG2)

AF shared the intensity of performing every day for the full three weeks at the Fringe which led them to associate meaning with their performance space, allowing them to draw EE from performing together.

‘Fun’ was a key part of what made IRCs successful for AF, playing a part in the construction and maintenance of their sense of group identity before, during and after the Fringe. Fine & Corte (2017, p.66) define ‘the fun cluster’ as including the ‘concepts

of humour, play, teasing, adventure, and games' and these produce 'joint hedonic satisfaction'. In all of my conversations with AF, humour and teasing were inherent to the way that the group interacted with one another. To give a few examples, when Ramon and Allegra were late for their first focus group, Marcus exclaimed, 'wake up, wake up jerks!' to Emily texted them, and when Ramon's computer microphone was picking up background noise, Marcus said;

...as usual, we can hear all the noises that you're making [laughter]. Yesterday - Katey - we had a call with Ramon and he was - I think possibly riveting sheet metal...', and then Emily finished his sentence, 'while portaging a canoe through a tidal wave!

In addition, when asked about the meaning that their group name has for them, Allegra replied, 'we're all super sexy', with Marcus adding, 'we're all very attractive people'. They would often tease one another during my conversations with them, and mock themselves and this resulted in laughter, indicating deriving a sense of pleasure from their interactions. Emily also shared that the content of their shows often comes from their day to day observations of life; when I went for a drink with AF at one of the Fringe pop-up outdoor bars, someone walked passed me with a tray of beer, and Emily said that it made her think of the bar person slipping and spilling the beer all over me, further explaining how many of the jokes in their sketch show came from real life experiences where they would imagine how it could work on stage. Humour and play, as essential components to how AF interact and communicate, operate as cultural resources that optimise their IRs, enabling them to get emotionally attuned with one another and derive a sense of membership to AF. Both on and off stage their aesthetic tastes and sense of humour feedback on one another to heighten the ritual outcome of group solidarity.

Returning to Fine & Corte's (2017, p.66) definition, AF also emphasised 'adventure' and 'games' as enjoyable aspects of their experiences of being in Edinburgh for the Fringe. Allegra explains;

We paid to have an incredible adventure with our friends, and adventures, as you know, come with highs and lows and we knew that going in, and that's what we had. We had an awesome adventure.

It [living together] was pretty great. Like we had group meals and games nights and stuff like that. (FG2)

In amongst the frustrations of their expectations of their venue not being met in relation to what they 'paid' for, the sense of 'adventure' that they were able to derive from their Fringe experience allowed for their 'social engagements [to be] rewarding in themselves' (Fine & Corte, 2017, p. 66). They went out to a 'terrible restaurant' for Emily's birthday which led them to 'hold a special place in [their] hearts for the wrong reason' (Marcus), they found a pub to make their 'Sunday roast local' (Emily), they 'went to the sea' for 'a day trip', and even Tesco's held a 'special place in [their] hearts' (Marcus) and was viewed as 'nice' (Allegra) because, as Emily describes, 'it made [her] feel normal' and the anti-terrorism bollards placed on the Royal Mile became part of their memories because they had 'a tendency to fall over [them] all the time' (Allegra) whether 'sober or drunk' (Emily). These moments may, on the surface, seem 'trivial', but they are what Beckman (2014, as cited in Fine & Corte, 2017) describes as 'the foundation for collective life'. They construct stories which can be recalled as memories to reaffirm group identity in future interactions – as they did in their second focus group as they recounted them to me - and they provide in-the-moment 'hedonic satisfaction that encourage attachment' (Fine & Corte, 2017, p. 64). Fun can cement group solidarity because it provides opportunities for moments of collective emotion which foster collective effervescence, allowing individuals to draw EE from the group and feel connected to one another. Emily shares:

And the scotch and wine tasting tour that we did as the four of us. That was a really nice day that we were like, "Oh yeah, we're going to have fun and do touristy things as much as work things." And we did this really hilarious... and then we sat around and told each other what we liked about one another just to reaffirm.(FG2)

Emily directly articulates here that one of their tourist moments which they did for 'fun' resulted in them reaffirming their emotional connections to one another.

Another mechanism for successful IRCs at the Fringe for AF was the shared group feeling of 'survival' which underpinned the IRs that they found to be draining. One example of this can be seen through analysis of their flying IRs:

I remember the energy of where we flyered... I remember just every morning, I hate mornings to begin with, but having to prepare yourself for that Times Square energy... "Please come, please come"... And I remember hating that... I hate flyerling. It makes me feel sick. And so I remember that gross feeling, and then I remember the reset. Kind of like a Russian Doll every day of doing my makeup in the bathroom with Allegra, doing the show, having a great time no matter how many

people are in the audience. Yeah, I remember in emotions. And then after when the party is, after the show and woo. (Emily, FG2)

Emily explains here that they found their flyering energy draining. However, in the context of the whole day, the group were able to 'reset' ahead of their show and draw high EE from performing on stage together, resulting in enough energy to party after the show – they overcame failed IRs through drawing upon the high EE that they derived from performing together. Further, the intensity of these emotions is evident through Emily's expression that she remembered her experiences in emotions. Nevertheless, the build-up of these draining IRs led to a feeling of 'repetition' that was 'a bit crazy making' (Emily, Allegra), further explained in the following example:

It was a Wednesday, and it was the third week of Fringe, I think... and everything that could go wrong did go wrong and I had a snap, like I had a mental snap. I just cried with Allegra and our friend Lily on a patio in an umbrella in the rain, just bawling my eyes out. I was so tired, I was PMS-ing. I was just so down, and they're like, "Oh, well this is Suicide Wednesday." (FG2)

What is interesting about this shared experience is that Lily is a friend who is at the Fringe, rather than a member of AF, but Emily uses the collective 'they' to describe how Allegra *and* Lily talk about 'suicide Wednesday'; this suggests that there is a flow of EE between people at the Fringe which creates a collective emotion, distilled in a symbolic phrase which has meaning to those who use it – 'suicide Wednesday'. It is not literally a day of suicide, but it expresses the emotions of 'exhaustion' and 'desperation' collectively experienced at this point of the Fringe. Allegra and Lily are able to provide Emily with a sense of comfort because they are all going through this challenging experience together. Following this day, Emily states that:

So the day after that I got happy again. I got a tattoo with Allegra and Lily. We had a great time and kind of, "Yeah Fringe, is that all you got?" We won it. (FG2)

Emily, Allegra and Lily went through a difficult emotional experience at the Fringe which they shared with one another and likened to 'suicide', expressing the extremities of their emotions; however, despite this strong negative feeling, they used this shared emotion to bring themselves closer together, bonding over their experiences and uniting in a sense of accomplishment and 'survival' (Allegra, Emily), seen in Emily's language of 'winning'. Moreover, they decide to mark this moment by getting tattoos

together, a ritual experience that also created a permanent symbol of the Fringe experience that they shared, and overcame, on their body. Tattooing can be used as a means to commemorate important experiences and to represent different aspects of shared identity, serving as a form of 'emblem' of shared experience with others (Kloss, 2019). In the case of Emily, Allegra and Lily, the way in which Emily associates getting their tattoos with her language of 'survival' suggests that the tattoos serve as such markers of their shared experience of the Fringe. The tattoos are a symbol of their social relationship and what they have been through together, strengthening group solidarity and contributing to the construction of their collective memory. Thus, despite shifting emotional resonance in relation to Discovery and 'the Fringe' as a whole, they mitigated social failure through the enjoyment they derived from performing and IRs of fun.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Whilst AF displayed signs of overall meaningful experience across their chains of IRs, there were clear warning signs that could have led the Fringe to lose its sacred status, such as their feelings of frustration and anger. In comparison to *Collective Whispering* who underwent an identity transformation during their time at the Fringe, becoming initiated into the Fringe Tribe, the commitment to the Tribe by *Attractive Figures* appears as weaker, with them needing to work a lot harder as a group to make the Fringe meaningful. Their socially successful IRs are somewhat unstable, with their EE fluctuating across situations and only just pulling them through to view their experiences as an accomplishment. Thus, given the major role that their venue played in their expectations and the fragility of their IRCs, a clear implication for arts organisations has been unearthed here: expectations are important. The marketing and communications of venues are vital in how groups imagine their experiences and, if the experience doesn't live up to these expectations, social success will fade. Greater support is needed (both from within their group and from organisations such as the Fringe Society) to provide situations that will foster socially successful IRs.

Further, there is an important reflection here in relation to the Fringe Society's policy of 'impartiality'. Whilst this policy helps to preserve their aims as an organisation that seeks to provide support for performers, venue managers and organisations,

whereby anyone can register a venue or a production without the Fringe Society dictating what is the 'right' production or the 'right' venue, this also has implications for the expectations of performing companies. In my fieldwork, one Fringe Society staff member outlined some of what they felt should be core in their strategy going forward at a staff meeting, with 'managing expectations' and 'being clear on financial risks' listed as key future foci. This suggests an awareness that the 'impartial' information that they provide isn't necessarily managing the expectations of what the Fringe will be like in reality. As we saw in the previous chapter (Collective Whispering), imagining what the Fringe will be like can play a vital role in setting a group up for socially successful IRs because it enables a group to become emotionally attuned ahead of arrival. However, if the imagined future ends up being at odds with the reality, this can lead to disillusionment, ultimately increasing the possibility of IRs that fail or result in a 'flat feeling'.

If arts organisations such as the Fringe Society are serious about placing 'cultural value' at the forefront of their thinking and cultivating experiences that 'make a difference', the constructions and emotional sentiments of what, in this case, the Fringe will be like (both conscious and unconscious)<sup>30</sup> need to be unpacked to ensure that the messaging emitted optimises opportunities for socially successful IRCs and alleviates the emotional and social burden of groups having to negotiate these conflicts for themselves.

---

<sup>30</sup> Whilst there is no 'universal' experience of what the Fringe will be like year on year, it is the *kinds* of experiences that could be better communicated.

## Chapter 7: Challenging experiences can foster group solidarity

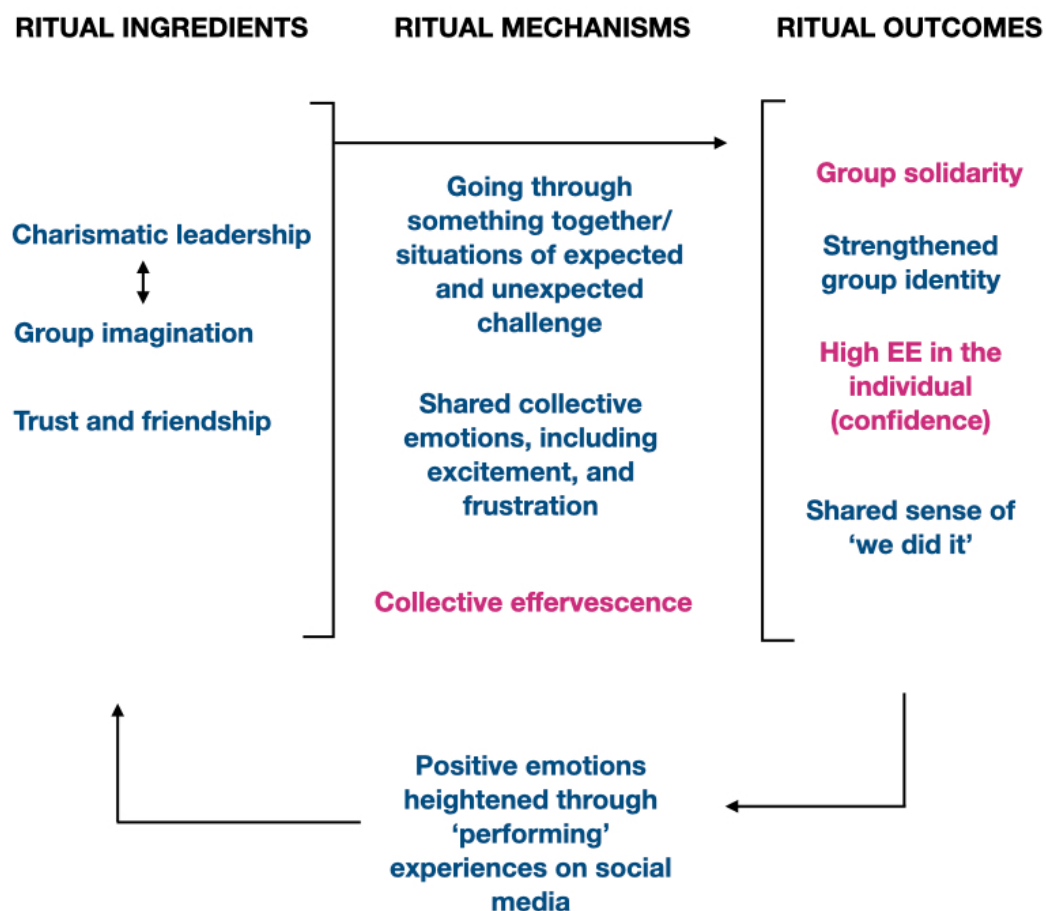
In view of ‘the advocacy problem’ in cultural policy of the 1990s that sparked a trend of measuring the ‘positive impact’ of arts participation and the subsequent obsession with capturing and articulating an objective ‘cultural value’ (see chapter two), the suggestion that in-the-moment ‘negative’ emotional experiences can be important to the social processes of meaning-making may be received as controversial to proponents of the ‘positive impact of the arts’ narrative. In part, this may be because of the complexity of ‘measuring’ negative emotions; for example, it may not be clear until a group moment of retrospect that uncomfortable or difficult feelings derived from challenging experiences may contribute to meaning-making in the longer-term. We need to research interactions and emotional feedback loops *across time*. Using the case study of community group *Gig Buddies* who attended the Fringe as part of Fringe Days Out (FDO) for their event ‘9 to 5’, this chapter argues that the Fringe presents challenging situations, but that these challenges can be viewed as opportunities to build group solidarity. Challenges are not intrinsically ‘bad’, and they can offer opportunities for socially successful IRCs when certain ritual ingredients are present, such as the presence of a charismatic leader. This suggests that arts organisations such as the Fringe Society should be less concerned about providing ‘positive’ experiences, and more focused on providing the support needed for groups to see challenges as opportunities, and on ensuring that situations of challenge do not exceed what can be overcome by groups.

After providing background information about Gig Buddies, I build upon Collins’ understanding of charismatic leaders as those with high EE who can energise people around them (Collins, 2004, pp. 150, 146; Collins & McConnell, 2015) and stress the importance of a charismatic leader within a situation of challenge, explaining how Jamie (Project Manager, Gig Buddies Scotland) as the group’s charismatic leader, is needed to give members the confidence to believe that they can push the boundaries of what they can achieve at the Fringe. Next, I develop an understanding of how situations of challenge alter IRCs by building on Collins’ notion of ‘moral solidarity’, unpacking the importance of intersubjective trust between members of the group and explaining how trust is essential to overcoming challenges in this context. Having explained ‘shared challenge’ through the lens of shared emotional experiences (excitement, frustration, collective effervescence, and a shared sense of ‘we did it’), I

argue that the ‘reward’ for overcoming challenges are feelings of connection within the Gig Buddies group, thereby concluding that challenges at the Fringe can be conducive to group social solidarity. The key ritual ingredients and outcomes of IRCs at the Fringe for Gig Buddies that will be explained are shown visually in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. IRCs at the Fringe with ingredients and outcomes for Gig Buddies, developed from Collins' (2004) model.**

*Collins' components are shown in pink text, with Gig Buddies additional ingredients and outcomes as identified at the Fringe shown in blue text.*



## 7.1 Background to Gig Buddies and 9 to 5

Gig Buddies is a project that was set up in 2013 by charity Stay Up Late, an organisation providing opportunities for those with learning disabilities to have late night experiences, such as seeing bands, going clubbing, or socialising with friends in the evening. The project began in Brighton, but has since been established in Sydney,

Australia and West Lothian, Scotland. The focus of this chapter is on the West Lothian branch of Gig Buddies (Gig Buddies Scotland) who participated in the FDO scheme in 2019.

The aim of Gig Buddies is to pair those with and without learning disabilities who require support with volunteers (their 'buddies') to engage in social and cultural experiences, going to gigs, the cinema, theatre, or other social events together.<sup>31</sup> Most activities organised as part of the project take place in pairs, with each member having a 'buddy' that they regularly share social and cultural experiences with. In addition, Gig Buddies Scotland provide opportunities for occasional group experiences, such as pub socials and day trips, with going to the Fringe one of their annual group offerings since 2017, alongside participation in other Edinburgh festival activities, including the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Edinburgh International Festival. In previous years, their engagement with FDO had been a group trip to see one production, in addition to extra Fringe Society funded tickets for individual members to see more productions either with their buddy, or in smaller groups. However, for 2019, Jamie (Project Manager, Gig Buddies Scotland) decided that he wanted to try something different; because their normal offering is to go and see productions, and they had already engaged with the Fringe via one-off events in the past, Jamie wanted to arrange a whole day and night of Fringe experiences: '9 to 5'. The aim of the event was to have 20 hours at the Fringe (9am to 5am), whereby members could enjoy productions, social experiences, and clubbing together – a whole day experience as a group - which would normally be inaccessible for those with learning disabilities who require extra support. This day out experience is the primary focus of this chapter, with those who attended referred to as 'GB': the 16 people who took part in 9 to 5, including Jamie. One member (Jack) had been to the Fringe with Gig Buddies before but, for the others, 2019 was their first time attending the Fringe together. Reference is also made to an event which was hosted at Fringe Central three weeks after their FDO, where Jamie and five members of the group contributed to a panel discussion and shared a video of highlights from their '9 to 5' day.

The 9 to 5 Fringe project sits within a wider network of organisational-level activism in relation to access to 'cultural experiences' for those with learning

---

<sup>31</sup> 'Cultural experiences' is used here rather than 'arts experiences' as considered in the rest of the thesis as this is the language that Gig Buddies employ to represent themselves.

disabilities, aligning with the Fringe Society's aims and together both existing as part of a 'culture for all' narrative as a core belief of the moral community of the arts (see chapter four). Gig Buddies state that they have 'four core values' in relation to culture, friendship, leading, and community life (Gig Buddies, 2020). They believe that those with learning disabilities should: have access to new, enjoyable cultural experiences; have people in their lives who aren't paid to be there; lead on how they want to spend their lives; and, be active in community life (Gig Buddies, 2020). The Fringe Society similarly state that they believe in 'breaking down barriers to participation and engagement', ensuring that 'the Fringe is a truly open access and accessible place' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 3), with the Fringe acting as a 'significant force for change and influence' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 4). These beliefs extend to those with disabilities, with the Fringe Society stating that 'regardless of class, race, gender, sexuality, nationality or disability, anyone who chooses to take part in the Fringe can do so' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 8).

As an example of this alignment of beliefs, the 9 to 5 poster used to advertise the event on social media and disseminated to members via the Gig Buddies newsletter noted that the event was 'made possible with FDO' and included the Fringe Society logo (see Appendix 7). This is important because GB's IRs are not meaningful in isolation; rather, they are meaningful in relation to a wider imagined moral community of the arts that believes in inclusive and transformative opportunities, with the Fringe Society's logo also a symbol of this shared belief system. Accordingly, the Fringe Society can be viewed as providing suitable social conditions for successful IRCs for community organisations because individuals such as Jamie can enter the Fringe with the confidence that they have organisational support in relation to their belief that bringing GB members to the Fringe (as a 'cultural experience') is important.

## **7.2 Setting up the challenge: why 9 to 5?**

The structure of GB's 9 to 5 event as a 20-hour day of social and cultural experiences was set up to be purposely ambitious and challenging, with the slogan on their event poster drawing on Dolly Parton's lyric, 'it's enough to drive you crazy if you let it' (see Appendix 7), suggesting that stamina is needed to participate. Supporting this, the

event was also described as their ‘20-hour Fringe marathon’ and ‘the biggest event [they]’ve ever done’ (Gig Buddies Scotland Facebook posts) in their marketing materials. The analogy to a marathon here is telling because it has connotations of striving for achievement through physical and mental endurance. Further, the framing of the event as set apart from the mundanity of everyday life mirrors that of the production companies explored in the previous two chapters – positioning the ideal of the Fringe as novel, heightens its status as a sacred site. However, to understand sociologically the importance of such a group challenge, we must also ask *why* members of GB would want to participate: why a 20-hour Fringe marathon?

Firstly, the idea of ‘9 to 5’ conveys an element of wanting to go beyond profane experiences, and to experience something completely novel that will unite members in a shared ‘sacred’ experience. Theo explains in GB’s first focus group that he was looking forward to 9 to 5 because ‘it’s something that I think Gig Buddies has never done before’, and Jamie reiterated several times that the event is the ‘biggest thing’ they’ve ever done’. The experience in itself of doing something that goes beyond ordinary experience was appealing to participants. Furthermore, because the number of spaces for the 9 to 5 event were limited, this heightens the ‘special’ nature of the event, providing an exclusive opportunity and strengthening the potential for Collins’ ritual ingredient ‘barriers to outsiders’ where a smaller membership group is created just for their shared Fringe experience together.

Moreover, in order for Gig Buddies’ Fringe experience to go beyond what is ‘normal’ for them, they needed to do something that was ‘really long’ (Jamie). Their previous Fringe engagements had been ‘just kind of one-off shows’ (Jamie), with these experiences also reflecting their Gig Buddies ‘socials’ which take place year-round with their regular members, such as ‘going to a gig in the evening’ (Jamie). In order to heighten the level of experience, it was necessary for it to include more than one event, with the focus on the ‘whole thing’ (Jamie) as a 20-hour mega-event encompassing a chain of IRs. The individual shows were less important than the experience in its entirety as a whole day experience, and this kind of durational experience was something that would be difficult to create without a large-scale festival context. Thus, the ‘whole’ was more than the sum of its individual parts because ‘9 to 5’ represented endurance and excitement, which each of the individual shows could not represent on their own.

9 to 5 was therefore a group challenge for GB, and it was a *conscious* and *expected* challenge: the group knew that it would be a 'marathon', but it was important for them to go through this experience together to show that they could endure it, strengthening their group solidarity and also acting as a public expression that those with learning disabilities can engage in meaningful social experiences. The Fringe was the ideal location for this challenge and public expression because it was a site of 'safe' challenge due to the support of the Fringe Society, and it was a location that offered novel experiences, in contrast to the everyday, providing suitable conditions for heightened levels of experience.

### 7.3 Charismatic leadership and group imagination

Whilst challenge was inherent to 9 to 5 and members were aware of this challenge, it's hypothetically possible that GB members could find the idea of a challenging experience to be overwhelming or too much of a challenge. However, this was not the case for GB because they had a group dynamic founded upon charismatic leadership, trust, and friendship which gave members the confidence (high EE) to believe that they could overcome the challenge together.

Jamie is a project manager, but his role is more than management and logistical organisation. Whilst his ability to ensure the smooth-running of projects is important to optimising conditions for successful IRCs at the Fringe, he also plays an important emotion-setting role: he is a charismatic leader who 'pumps up' those within the group with EE, with members 'admiring' him as a leader and 'following willingly in his trajectory' (Collins, 2019, p. 48). He sets the emotional tone of interactions, as Collins describes:

Durkheim would say that the charismatic leader becomes the sacred object for the group; I would say he or she is the focus of attention that sets the trajectory of the group, filling them with enthusiasm that they will accomplish something great together (Collins, 2019, p. 48).

In GB's first focus group, I asked those present what their expectations were of the 9 to 5 event, and it was interesting to see how answers from group members were affirmed through Jamie. Theo was the first to answer, directing his answer to Jamie rather than to me as the interviewer; 'I'm looking forward to it. It's something that I think

Gig Buddies has never done before, has it?', with Jamie replying, 'not at all'. Here we see Theo turning to Jamie for reassurance in his answer, suggesting that it is through Jamie that he constructs his own feelings in relation to the Fringe as a site for novel experiences. Supporting this, Theo then went on to ask Jamie how he was feeling about the event, again turning to Jamie to set the tone for the emotions of the room. Jamie explains that he wants 'everything to work', and then turns to Uberto and Jack to ask them each what they are 'looking forward to', heightening the positive EE in the room. Jamie changes the neutral phrasing of my question from 'expectations' to 'looking forward' to encourage excitement in their answers, with Uberto stating that he is looking forward to 'hanging out with people' and Jack to 'seeing the shows and staying out until five in the morning'. The conversation is directed at and regulated by Jamie as the group navigate their emotions together, with Jamie 'priming' them for future IRs at the Fringe through getting them excited about 9 to 5.

Further, Jamie also provides members of the group with the confidence to believe that they can push the boundaries of what they can achieve, and that exceeding personal challenges is 'good':

|          |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jamie:   | So, what's the most shows you've ever seen in one day? Do you know?                                                                                                   |
| Matthew: | Two or three shows.                                                                                                                                                   |
| Jamie:   | Okay. So on Saturday, we're going to see six shows in one day. So, you're going to beat your personal record of about the shows seen in one day, which is cool. (FG1) |

Jamie is motivational, using language that has connotations of 'winning' to provide the group with the EE required to prepare them for the challenge of their FDO. This idea of priming a group for success is characteristic of a charismatic leader, where 'charismatic leaders affect people's views of what is real and unreal, possible and impossible' (Collins & McConnell, 2015, p. 870). Attending the Fringe for 20 hours would normally be considered as difficult for those with learning difficulties, such as in relation to the logistical challenges of needing support staff for longer hours than typical shift lengths, but with Jamie's encouragement and belief in 'Gig Buddies' as a membership group that can provide support, it is viewed as a challenge that can be overcome together. Explaining further, another aspect of the Fringe which makes it seem impossible for members of GB are the 'crowds' and 'busyness' which Theo explains are 'too much' and 'quite stressful', meaning he would 'avoid it' on his own. However, being 'with Gig Buddies doing an event' makes it 'okay'. Membership of Gig

Buddies – through Jamie as a charismatic leader - transforms the idea of a stressful experience into an exciting group challenge, constructing positive group emotions that prime them for the experience. It is the *group* nature of Gig Buddies that is important:

Theo: And also, I'd like to say as well that it's good that I'm doing 9 to 5 with Gig Buddies, because it's good that in a group, there are people that I know, because otherwise, I wouldn't be comfortable doing that on my own. So that's why you've set it up. It's like a group, isn't it?

Jamie: Yeah, yeah. There's a lot of us doing it. (FG1)

Theo sees Jamie as the person who has 'set up' a situation through Gig Buddies that makes the impossible seem possible, where they are preparing to go through challenges together. In addition, Jamie also stated that he 'really encouraged everyone to sign up for the whole thing... because obviously, that's a really great thing I'd like you to do.' This is interesting because it isn't necessarily 'obvious' that doing the 'whole thing' is better, but it is Jamie's belief, and he shares it in a way that makes it become a group belief. Thus, because he passionately believes this, members put their trust in Jamie and it becomes a shared belief, where full participation becomes a marker of core group membership. At the first focus group, Jamie states 'everyone in this room is doing the whole thing', verbally affirming to the group that they are core members, and that they are in this together.

It is in the IRCs in the lead up to the Fringe where Jamie, as a charismatic leader, 'set[s] in motion positive feedback loops' (Collins & McConnell, 2015, p. 392) to 'pump up' members of the group with EE. The focus group is one example where these emotion-setting interactions can be observed, but they were also present in the group's pre-event planning meeting for 9 to 5 which took place on the same day after their first focus group with extra members of Gig Buddies and volunteers also attending (four days before 9 to 5). Jamie arranged for the group (approximately 15 people) to meet at Starbucks near the University of Edinburgh in the city centre where Jamie handed out the schedule for the day; here Jamie described what would happen, including where they would meet, how many breaks they would have and where they will go for food, what shows they would be seeing and the club that they plan to go to, as well as what they might need to bring with them such as pocket money. Importantly, the way in which Jamie read out this schedule was with enthusiasm, pace, and with a sense of nervous excitement as he smiled, laughing and shifting his body side-to-side as he read out the schedule, providing an emotional energy that members could tap

into. After this explanation of the day, several people present said that they were 'looking forward to it' and that they were 'excited' for the pizza that they were planning to have for dinner. Through allowing members of the group to imagine what would happen - the success of the day which included describing moments of social enjoyment such as sharing food and clubbing together - the group experienced in-the-moment excitement which could be transferred into longer-term EE in future IRs at their forthcoming 9 to 5 event. Moreover, providing an opportunity to imagine the success of the day enabled members to reaffirm their shared belief that they could accomplish the challenge of 20 hours at the Fringe together, where EE is manifested as individual confidence and self-efficacy.

Jamie's status as a charismatic leader and his ability to maintain enthusiasm in members is also sustained via digital and telephone communications. Collins states that 'ritual is essentially a bodily process' and that 'without bodily presence, it is hard to convey participation in the group'; however, for Gig Buddies, digital and phone communications were important to feed into in-person IRs and sustain trust between Jamie and members of the group. For example, Theo explains the communication options open to him when he was interested in participating in 9 to 5:

Well if you're interested in a Gig Buddies thing, like I was interested in the Fringe 9 to 5, you normally give Jamie a call, or you email Jamie. But it's better to communicate, then he tells you about it. I'm excited about Saturday. I'm looking forward to it. (FG1)

Immediately after Theo reminisces on contacting Jamie in this quote where he states it is better to call Jamie and speak to him, Theo states his excitement for the event, suggesting that these pre-communications have been important to his emotional excitement for 9 to 5. Jamie is the sociometric star for the group and the central point of contact for information and advice, running a Gig Buddies Facebook page (public) and group (closed and only for members) and Twitter account, and sending out regular newsletters. Theo states that Jamie needs to 'accept' you into the private Facebook group, and that Facebook is 'the greatest tool' (Theo), with Jamie also stating that 'it's a good way of getting in touch' and to 'share what they're doing with their Gig Buddy'. Theo also shared his excitement upon seeing the advert for the 9 to 5 event online and getting in touch with Jamie to confirm his place:

Jamie: So basically, there's a note in there [the newsletter] to say if you want a space on this, just directly contact me as soon as you can, and I'll add you to the list.

Theo: And I did. And I did. (FG1)

Their online communications are a way to keep contact between members going in between their in-person IRs, as well as a place to provoke excitement in relation to the potential for future shared IRs, all regulated by Jamie. As noted by Collins (2004, p.140), there is a 'time decay' of EE if it is not 'reinvested and reinforced by subsequent interactions', and these online communications provide a space to reduce this time-decay, continuing their conversations and sharing information about future opportunities offline.

Nonetheless, although Jamie is the charismatic leader of the group, the core point of contact and disseminator of information, Jack also plays a key role in heightening EE within the group in his role as a 'Gig Buddies Ambassador' and status as 'one of the first' (Jamie) members of Gig Buddies in Scotland. As an Ambassador, Jack goes to events to 'talk about Gig Buddies', 'helps new members out' and tells them about Gig Buddies at socials (Jack). In this role, Jack generates EE in new members by sharing his experiences with others and getting them excited about Gig Buddies. For example, Jack was the person who told Theo about Gig Buddies and encouraged him to join; Theo trusted Jack as his 'best friend' and a 'great person', leading him to become a member. A positive feedback loop of EE across IRCs is created, where Jack's high EE excited Theo who then became a member of Gig Buddies. Further supporting this; at the Fringe in 2018, Gig Buddies facilitated an opportunity for Jack to interview a famous comedian which was video recorded and shared via the Gig Buddies online social media channels. Jack proudly stated that he had this opportunity last year in the focus group, highlighting the value of this experience to Jack and its role in maintaining EE in relation to the Fringe via memory recall. However, this video not only heightened EE for Jack as an individual, but it was also a source of excitement for new Gig Buddy members to imagine the opportunities available to them at the Fringe. For example, Theo states:

I have to say as well, that Jack was absolutely amazing at interviewing [that comedian]. And I have to say, that when I watched a film, I thought what a good thing. Because one day, I'll probably be in a film like that as well. (FG1)

Through Jack as an Ambassador pumped up with high EE, Theo is able to integrate the experiences of another member (Jack) into his own imagining of what the Fringe will be like for him. The video is a tangible product that is able to provide evidence of the opportunities at the Fringe, such as meeting famous comedians; this heightens motivation and feelings of excitement in relation to the Fringe, priming members for future IRCs at their 9 to 5 event through a collective imagination of what it will be like.

#### 7.4 Trust and friendship

Theo and Jack's relationship stresses the importance of trust and friendship within the group, where trust supports and encourages participation at the Fringe. Explaining further and drawing on Durkheim, Collins (2004, p.xv) theorises trust as another word for 'moral solidarity', suggesting that trust within IRCs is the alignment of an individual's beliefs with the group's, further stating that trust can also be a 'long-term emotional disposition' whereby trust can 'manifest itself as high EE' and a 'willingness to take initiative toward social situations'. Thus, shared trust is understood as a feature of group solidarity, and as an individual commitment to the group, whereby IRs of friendship are those that lead to high group solidarity and a feeling of commitment. This understanding of trust is present within GB, with members putting trust in Jamie and in the idea of 'Gig Buddies'. For example, Gig Buddies is viewed as 'a great organisation' (Theo) and Jamie as 'a great person', with those who are part of the group using a language of 'membership' to denote belonging to the group. Lewis states:

Because I think Gig Buddies are the one – one thing - we're Gig Buddies. That are good, right up, what we can actually do. (FG2)

Here Lewis seems to struggle to articulate what Gig Buddies means to him, but he states 'we're Gig Buddies' in a declarative way, suggesting that the name itself represents who they are. Further, by associating the group with what is 'good' and 'right up' there is an echo of moral sentiment here, signifying trust in Gig Buddies as a symbol of their social relationships.

Collins' (2004) sees trust as manifest in the form of high EE (i.e., the feeling of trusting others in a group) (Collins, 2004, pp. xv, 121), with this case of GB showing

high EE trust within IRs of friendship - both those created before the 9 to 5 day and those during the event itself - which also reinforce commitment to the group (solidarity). The name of Gig Buddies in itself denotes friendship through use of the word 'buddies' and it is one of GB's core values to facilitate new friendships. Creating friendships between members is at the heart of what they do, and this is primarily between two people, such as between a member and a volunteer who are 'buddies', sharing visits to gigs and performances together which most of the volunteers had previously experienced with their 'buddy' ahead of 9 to 5. Moreover, Theo and Jack are 'good friends' and they met through a local drama class and have continued to be friends since joining. Theo explains that Jack is 'a great person' and 'we always have laughs together', also stating that 'as a good friend', he was 'proud' of Jack for his online video interview with a comedian from 2018. Theo was 'brand new' (Jamie) to Gig Buddies ahead of 9 to 5, with 9 to 5 his first day trip with the group, and he expressed that he 'wouldn't be comfortable doing that [the Fringe] on my own', only comfortable participating with the group for 9 to 5 because of the 'people that I know'. Thus, he is able to put trust in the group and accept the challenge of the Fringe because he trusts a few members of the group who are his friends, and these friends trust Gig Buddies, with him stating ahead of the Fringe that he was 'looking forward to it'.

The relationship between trust and friendship for Gig Buddies can also be analytically understood through Wallace and Hartley's (1989, p. 101) understanding of trust, where 'people who have experienced mutual trust in intimate conversations with a close friend tend to form a close social bond as the two individuals become one in friendship.' The 9 to 5 day provided 'a lot of time to just chat and get to know each other' (Jamie), and this was particularly the case because Jamie had planned into their schedule numerous breaks between shows, and time together for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as social time at the club at the end of the day. In relation to having breakfast together, Lewis stated, 'that's how we make Gig Buddies, to be a part of it, with other people, and getting to know them.' It is through getting to know other people that Gig Buddies is created, with Jamie supporting this through expressing that the 'group of people' who shared 9 to 5 are 'just friends really' (Fringe Central quote, 23 Aug 2019). In addition, their experiences as part of 9 to 5 were supported by time shared at other festival activities (e.g., the Edinburgh International Festival and the Edinburgh International Book Festival):

I think the whole month as well has just been kind of getting to know each other better and I suppose bonding. Getting to know each other, getting closer together as a group because we've done so much stuff, just this month. (Jamie, FG2)

There were multiple opportunities to engage in meaningful conversation with one another (IRs of friendship), enabling a feeling of trust between members (high EE), and providing members with confidence in Gig Buddies (solidarity).

However, confidence does not rely on a person or system being infallible. Trust relies on making a commitment to a person or system even when outcomes of actions are contingent: situations that are uncertain and threatening, where one seeks protection from these uncertainties. Trust is a key dimension of group solidarity for Gig Buddies because members are aware that the Fringe will bring about situations of challenge. Namely, because trust was cultivated via IRs of friendship *ahead* of the Fringe for GB and also reinforced through IRs of friendship during their 9 to 5 day, members had a confidence in Gig Buddies and in other members that whilst the Fringe would be challenging, they could get through it together.

## 7.5 Going 'through something together'

I definitely feel that everyone around this table have been through something together. I definitely feel like we've got connections to each other now, like we did that huge thing together, which I feel really is special between us. One thing we've all got in common is we did 20 hours of the Fringe. We saw half a dozen shows and then we went to a club until whatever time. (Jamie, FG2)

The key mechanism of successful IRCs at the Fringe for GB was shared challenge: the notion of 'going through something together', resulting in closer connections between members, as Jamie explains here. However, this raises the question of: what were the specific components of the 'huge thing' that they shared, and how did these experiences unite them? This question can be explored through unpacking the shared *emotional* experiences of 9 to 5 which brought members of the group closer together. These emotions shall be discussed in the following sections through exploring moments of 9 to 5 that incited: excitement and feeling 'ready', frustration, collective effervescence, and a feeling of 'we did it'. Moreover, I also show that there were two kinds of challenges at the Fringe - *unexpected challenge* and *expected challenge* – with the former relating to challenges that pose a threat to successful IRs, and the

latter to purposely ambitious moments of 9 to 5 that were set up to be overcome as a group.

## 7.6 Excitement and feeling 'ready'

At the start of GB's 9-to-5 day, the group shared breakfast at Wetherspoons (9am-11am), and this was an important ritual to prepare the group for the Fringe activities ahead of them, fostering feelings of excitement and anticipation amongst themselves:

There was a lot of questioning to one another in relation to clubbing and staying up late: "Are you going clubbing?" "What time are you going to stay up until?" "Have you been clubbing before?" "How will you stay awake?" "Do you drink coffee?" These questions seemed to initiate excitement amongst members. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 3 August 2019)

One member also noted that talking about the plans for the day was enjoyable and meaningful:

Jamie: Lewis you were talking to me about how you really liked meeting up for breakfast because we were all together.  
Lewis: I really enjoyed meeting up and discussing what was going on. (FG2)

The questioning between members and talking about plans for the day together created an emotional 'feedback loop' where each individual's excitement 'hyped up' (ethnographic fieldnotes) another individual's and so on, with emotions building up as shared emotion in the form of collective excitement and anticipation. This was also facilitated by a strong mutual focus as the content of speech reflected the challenge of the 9 to 5 event; focusing on how long one might be able to stay awake for, or whether strategies such as drinking coffee to stay awake would be employed. This focus on mental and physical endurance is a co-construction of the feeling of being 'ready' for the day ahead, language used to describe the start of the event on the Gig Buddies Twitter page. As noted by Collins (p.xii), 'where mutual focus and entrainment become intense, self-reinforcing feedback processes generate moments of compelling emotional experience' where, in this case, the uncertainty of what is to follow also heightens the level of trust and feeling of being 'in it together' between members of the group:

When members were asked whether they were excited or looking forward to the day, their responses were primarily about the intensity of the experience and 'getting through it'. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 3 August 2019)

This 'getting through' is a navigation of the unknown together, which could not be done alone; as Theo explained whilst having his breakfast, he 'wouldn't go clubbing without the Gig Buddies group' (Ethnographic fieldnotes).

After breakfast, the group walked to their first Fringe venue together which was about a 10-minute walk away; I engaged in conversations with members about whether they had seen shows at the Fringe before and what other creative activities they are involved with such as musical instrument playing. One member turned to me (Millie) when we arrived at the venue and said, 'I can't believe I haven't moaned. I usually hate walking'. The conversations between members as we walked created a feeling of being in-the-moment, with the walking feeling less strenuous than normal. Thus, here we begin to see the importance of IRs happening in a *chain*. The group's collective excitement and anticipation at breakfast resulted in high EE in individuals, with each individual feeling 'ready'; these feelings were carried over into walking to the venue together, resulting in heightened group mutual focus in relation to the day ahead.

During the first performance itself, I noted the following behaviours in my ethnographic fieldnotes:

Matthew was asleep through various points of the show, but he still said that he enjoyed it afterwards. I observed shared moments of both boredom and engagement - boredom seen in looking down into their laps or into their hands, shuffling, and heavy breathing, and engagement visible via laughter, following the actor on stage with their eyes, and interactive moments with the audience where members spoke to one another.

These reflections show that their mixed emotions, including in-the-moment boredom which may not typically be considered as part of social solidarity processes, as well as more stimulating emotional processes such as engagement, were important to socially successful IRCs for this group. Further, when asked by Jamie immediately after the production what members thought of it, the majority gave positive answers such as 'amazing' and 'very good', with only one person indicating that there were moments where they were bored. This is interesting because although the lived experience of the show wasn't all positive, their expectations of the day as a meaningful and emotionally positive experience combined with the high EE of their previous social

experiences at breakfast and walking to the venue resulted in an overall collective feeling that the show was 'amazing'. My own personal reflections on watching the show also reinforce this:

I did not enjoy the production, but I really enjoyed sharing the experience of going to the show with the group. I was excited by the whole concept of 9 to 5, and the social experiences beforehand heightened this, leaving me looking forward to the next Fringe experience of the day. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 3 August 2019)

This stresses the importance of the ritualistic aspect of watching a production, where the performance is seen through the lens of how we imagine the experience to be and framed within the social relationships of those who it is shared with.

## 7.7 Frustration

One emotion that was discussed in detail in GB's second focus group was group frustration in relation to a chaotic part of their day where they were trying to negotiate getting everyone in their group into a venue in George Square to watch a production:

George Square would definitely be my lowest point, if we're talking about high points and low points. It wasn't my low, I wasn't bored or sad or down, it was just my big moment of crazy frustration. (Jamie, FG2)

Whilst across the whole chain of IRs at the Fringe that this group shared, their frustrations can be seen as transformed into collective effervescence, with the Fringe viewed as an opportunity for challenges to be overcome thereby increasing solidarity, it is important to note the precarity of this situation - it could easily have been otherwise. The success of IRs relies on *situational* factors, and how groups move between a chain of varying situations, reinvesting their social and emotional resources from previous interactions into new situations. The situation of getting into the venue to watch this production that shall be described in this next section was not conducive to successful group interactions. On a basic level, the group were not together, and the crowds were distressing, making individuals have a 'desire to escape' (Collins 2004, p. 51) – a clear sign of interactional failure. Thus, had this situation of frustration been followed by more situations that led to failed interactions, the strength of the group may have faltered. At some point, the group may not have had enough EE to keep

battling the situations that they found themselves in, leading to either interaction fatigue, or worse, group dissolution and feelings of disconnection to 'Gig Buddies' as a membership symbol. This was a situation of *unexpected challenge*.

Firstly, the group had been separated; Jamie was unable to locate a member of their group who was a wheelchair user because he hadn't re-joined everyone after not attending their previous production, and several members were trying to buy drinks which was taking much longer than anticipated:

We couldn't see them, couldn't get through to them on the phone. I didn't know where four of our group were. (Jamie, FG2)

Secondly, Jamie had arranged 'early access' and 'wheelchair access' into the venue, but the venue staff didn't seem to have record of this, and without the member of their group who was in a wheelchair, they were sent to a different entrance. As a result of the confusion over where their wheelchair user was, several members of the group had to tackle going through large crowds of people to find their way to the main entrance of the building which caused distress. Jamie and Theo explain:

Jamie: And we had to get past the queue who were going in, while sticking together as a group and it was just very busy, wasn't it? It was very tricky. That's the only time when it got a bit frustrating.

Theo: I didn't like that at all. (FG2)

Moreover, as Jamie was the organiser of the group and the one responsible for everyone, he was stressed at this point as he tried to get everyone into the venue. As the charismatic leader, able to set the tone of interactions, his EE influenced others within the group:

Theo: Were you stressed at that point?

Jamie: Did you realize?

Theo: Yes.

Jamie: Did you? Because I hadn't told anyone all that. (FG2)

Even though Jamie did not mention that he was stressed, others in the group 'felt' his stress, leading to a build-up of shared stress, leading to group frustration.

On the surface, this situation has a range of elements that suggest weak or failed interaction between members during this time of their day. Whilst no one was alone and it is possible that there were micro-level successful IRs taking place within

the sub-groups of the people at the bar, those with Jamie, and the wheelchair user and his support worker; from a group-level perspective in relation to group-level ritual outcomes, their group assembly was dispersed and this led to distress, expressed through Jamie's behaviour. Further, due to the large crowds all around them, this led to an unpleasant experience for some, with it harder to enjoy this moment of being together at the Fringe. However, although this shared emotion of stress and frustration made it difficult to get attuned to one another to build up into collective effervescence at this moment, there was a shared mood here amongst members which resulted in weak group solidarity. Namely, even though they were separated into three smaller groups, they all had a mutual focus on getting into the venue on time, and they all shared the distress of having to get through the crowds – this shared emotional experience of distress was a form of unity amongst them even though they were separated physically.

This is an unexpected situation - the group is on the edge of social failure, held together by their shared emotions but feeling a sense of disconnection from their group. However, in this case, the group was able to regain their high EE because their separation was followed by an intense shared experience where their unpleasant feelings were overcome, resulting in positive emotions:

Then just before the show starts the back entrance to the venue and in comes Kevin and Noah and it's just the best feeling ever, because they'd made it and they stayed with us until the end of the night. (Jamie, FG2)

The relief that Jamie expresses here highlights another moment of 'getting through' the Fringe together. In addition, because the production itself was enjoyable for all those who attended, they shared a sense that the trials that they had been through were 'worth it'. Jamie explains:

And actually the show was amazing. I really like [name of show]. Actually for all of that big frustration to happen and then see that show was a great payoff for me. It was fantastic. (FG2)

The show was a 'payoff' and, once again, we see the importance of interaction ritual *chains*. Their shared ritual of watching the performance together – a shared emotionally enjoyable experience with a potential for collective effervescence – enabled them to view their previous unpleasant emotions from a new perspective. Their group dynamic was one led by a charismatic leader, as well as strong trust in

one another, pulled them through the challenge. It was the strength of the successful IRs surrounding this moment of turmoil that enabled them to transform their negative emotions into collective effervescence, and therefore enhance group solidarity. As noted by Collins (2004, p.235), 'ritual transforms whatever initiating emotion the group shares and focuses upon into an outcome emotion'; here they entered their performance space with a very strong shared emotion of frustration, but the show got them into mutual focus as they watched the show together, resulting in collective effervescence and leading to positive outcome emotions:

I felt focused, with [name of show] I felt really focused and... it was all slapstick. I laughed, didn't I Jamie? I think the whole entire show, it was really good. (Theo, FG2)

Moreover, despite the moment before this show being their 'lowest point', it was also the show that became the most memorable – talked about more in the second focus group than any other production, with Jamie also noting that two members planned to see the show again at some point before the Fringe ended. This supports Collins' (2004, p.134) theory that 'the level of collective attunement at the height of the interaction predicts how much EE is carried over by individuals'. The collective effervescence of watching this production was strong - heightened by following their previous frustrations – and they left the show feeling elated. That is, their EE was so high, they developed 'a taste for more ritual solidarity of the same sort', feeling 'motivated to repeat the IR' (Collins, p.149).

This situation of group frustration resulted in a meaningful experience; however, the shared frustration of GB could only have a 'pay off' because it was short-term, surrounded by high EE situations, and because the group had already been primed for a day that may be challenging. Thus, this situation is markedly different to the overarching idea of the challenge of 9 to 5 which was set up as a 'marathon' – an *expected challenge* with pre-determined boundaries. This latter form of challenge can be unpacked further through analysing the group's experience of clubbing which was carefully planned by Jamie on behalf of Gig Buddies to excite members and push the boundaries of social experience for the group.

## 7.8 Clubbing and collective effervescence

The inclusion of clubbing at the end of the 9 to 5 schedule was important to encourage excitement among members. As an activity that is typically less accessible to those with learning disabilities, the prospect of sharing a late-night experience was novel, ambitious, and appealing, helping to prime members for successful IRCs in the lead up to the day and acting as another challenge to overcome that would bring the group closer together. However, this challenge was one set up by Gig Buddies; rather than being an unexpected and uncontrollable challenge as per the situation of group frustration, this was a challenge that Jamie felt able to guide members through, setting up a situation of support to enable members to have an enjoyable experience. The clubbing acted as a kind of emotional ‘reward’ for their previous group frustration and a chance to celebrate getting through their ‘intense’ day together. When asked in their second focus group what experiences from their day were ‘strong emotional experiences’, Jack responded:

- Jack: Yeah, the clubbing because I am nervous. Yeah. When I see the [inaudible] I think at opening we had him ... what was his name, Dario?
- Jamie: Dario... Dario works for TogetherTime... Because we ran the clubbing bit with TogetherTime, a couple of TogetherTime members joined us at the club and Dario was just their staff member. Dario helped out.
- Katey: Okay, so you felt a bit anxious, but then when you had the support of Dario and you were in the venue that was overcome, and then did you enjoy it in the end?
- Jack: Yes.
- Jamie: It was like your favourite bit, wasn't it?
- Jack: (Laughs) Yeah.

Here we see that Jack was ‘nervous’ about the clubbing, but with the support of Gig Buddies and partner organisation TogetherTime, it ended up being his ‘favourite bit’. Jamie also noted this in their Fringe Central event (23 August, 2019) when talking about clubbing together, explaining that ‘people had quite big anxieties about new experiences and new places, but once you get in and you’re with a group of people who are supporting you to have a good time, just friends really, people you’ve been with all day’, it’s a ‘good’ experience.

Moreover, the challenging aspect of the experience intensified it, with the group’s anxieties getting them emotionally attuned, and heightening positive emotions

when these anxieties were overcome. Thus, because clubbing was a challenge for members, overcoming this led to a heightened level of collective experience which resulted in high, positive EE in individuals. Theo explained that he 'liked the bouncy castle at the club' and Lewis explained that being with others in the club made him feel 'fantastic' and he 'really enjoyed it'. Further, Lewis' positive experience of clubbing increased sociality. Throughout the day, Jamie explained that the group had 'a lot of time to talk to each other between shows' and this led to Lewis speaking to Polly where Polly shared with Lewis that she was looking for a DJ for a birthday that was coming up. During their time at the club, Lewis decided to go up to the DJ and speak to them about Polly's search for a DJ, and this encouraged him to engage more deeply with the clubbing experience:

|        |                                         |
|--------|-----------------------------------------|
| Lewis: | I was up singing with him [the DJ].     |
| Jamie: | Yeah, you joined the band, pretty much. |
| Lewis: | I joined the band.                      |

There are feedback loops here, whereby successful IRs led to more successful IRs, thereby increasing opportunities for social connections. As a result of conversations with Polly earlier in the day (IRs of friendship), the build-up of excitement in relation to clubbing in the lead up to it (EE from successful IRCs), and then being 'caught up' on the collective attunement of the experience itself (collective effervescence), Lewis decided to directly speak to the DJ and 'join the band' to sing alongside him (EE manifested as confidence). His EE was high because of the strong emotional experiences he had shared with others in the group, both before and during their clubbing experience.

The positive experience of the club also left members with a feeling of wanting to experience clubbing again in the future, with Lewis stating that he 'would love to do it more often if I could', a member on their video shared at Fringe Central that 'hopefully we can do this again', and Theo and Jack deciding to take part in a similar experience by signing up to another Fringe event the following week (silent disco). Theo explained at their Fringe Central event when talking about their clubbing experience that it gave him the 'confidence to go to silent disco', a key sign of high EE following a successful IR. Once again, we see how successful IRs result in a desire within individuals to repeat the experience, seeking opportunities for more EE.

The clubbing experience provided the ideal situation for collective effervescence. The group displayed high social density from a day spent together and then close bodily encounters in the club expressed through hand-holding and dancing (Promotional Video Footage shared on Facebook), and they shared the mood of ‘good’ anxiety (i.e., nervous excitement) in the lead up to the event and enjoyment during it, alongside an intensification of this mood through socialising, singing and dancing together. It was a ‘process of intensification of shared experience’ and ‘a condition of heightened intersubjectivity’, resulting in a ‘collective consciousness’ among members (Collins, 2004, p. 35). They felt ‘a kind of electricity’ among themselves expressed through their positive emotions and feelings of connection which resulted in ‘an extraordinary degree of exaltation’ (Durkheim, 1912 [2001] p. 162). Furthermore, their shared clubbing experience fulfils Durkheim’s notion that collective effervescence raises the individual above oneself, enabling ‘feelings and actions of which we are incapable [of] on our own’ (Durkheim, 1912 [2001] p. 157). Members of Gig Buddies were unable to engage with the clubbing experience alone as individuals, but with the support of the group they experienced new, positive collective emotions that would have otherwise been unexpressed. This brought them closer together as a group; as Jamie described, their shared experiences resulted in ‘a sense of community’ among them.

## 7.9 A shared sense of “we did it”

The culmination of IRCs at the Fringe for GB resulted in a group sentiment of ‘we did it’ (Jamie) – a sense of overcoming challenge and going through something together, as well as individual and group-level accomplishment; for example, Lewis expressed that he ‘managed it’ and Theo stated that it was ‘a big thing I’ve done’. Moreover, Jamie once again displayed his role as a charismatic leader within the group by encouraging others to become aware of their achievements during their second focus group:

|        |                                                                                                                                |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jamie: | Do people feel like they accomplished something by going there [to the Fringe]?                                                |
| Lewis: | Yes we did.                                                                                                                    |
| Jamie: | Do you think, did you think you could get out for 20 hours beforehand?<br>Do you think that was something you could have done? |
| Theo:  | No.                                                                                                                            |
| Jamie: | Do you think that's something you can do now?                                                                                  |
| Theo:  | Yes.                                                                                                                           |

Jamie encourages Theo to see how his perspective of what he can achieve has changed as a result of 9 to 5, aligning with a belief present within the moral community of the arts: the transformative potential of arts experiences (see pp.81-83). Further, this achievement becomes a sign of something that binds them together in their own group solidarity; it is a sign of membership and of being inducted into the Gig Buddies group, constructing a collective memory that unites them in a group identity founded upon 'common' experience (Jamie).

### **7.10 Sustaining positive emotions**

The positive emotions shared throughout 9 to 5 were also sustained across IRs through digital media; this included the excitement and enjoyment that has been discussed in relation to going to see productions together, having breakfast together, and clubbing, as well as other social experiences that resulted in high EE including getting takeaway pizza together and singing happy birthday to celebrate a volunteer's birthday. A key part of their positive experiences was 'performing' them to one another as per Goffman's performed self; for example, the expectation that the experience would be fun and 'epic' resulted in a performance of this to one another in how members of GB communicated at their breakfast. This can also be understood through analysis of the group's social media activity on their GB online accounts, controlled by Jamie. During the day Jamie was continually taking photographs and filming parts of their social and cultural experiences, both sharing online as live events unfolded and, after the day was over, creating a compilation video of all the clips from the day to share with members and online followers. These moments where Jamie asked members to 'perform' for the camera encouraged them to collectively express positive emotions in their behaviours, smiling at the camera, putting thumbs up, posing as a group, and being asked on video how they were feeling, heightening the overall emotional experience and resulting in collective effervescence. Thus, sharing with an online audience also provided an aspect of 'exhibition' to their performed behaviours (Hogan, 2010), imaging how online viewers would interpret and respond to their day experiences (Marwick, 2012). As noted by Hogan (2010), the online 'audience' here are 'those for whom one puts on a front' and this 'consists of the selective details that one presents in order to foster the desired impression'. This is important within the context of Gig Buddies because Jamie

controls these 'selective details', presenting an 'idealized' version of their group experiences (Hogan, 2010). As a charity whose aim is to enable people with learning disabilities to 'enjoy the social life they choose', sharing these images online supports their activist agenda in relation to accessibility and inclusivity, with Jamie choosing the images that best show their enjoyment and excitement throughout 9 to 5.

Moreover, the promotional video screening as part of their Fringe Central event curated by the Fringe Society was used to elicit positive emotional responses in viewers to bolster their activist agenda, as well as providing an opportunity for members to re-live their experiences and share their insights of the benefits of the day in response to questions from those attending. It became a resource representing their collective memories of the day, able to stimulate discussion and prompt in-the-moment EE through remembering past IRCs:

Yeah and I think also getting together and doing the talk that we did about Fringe and 9-5, again just kind of reminds us about that time we did that crazy thing.  
(Jamie, FG2)

The opportunity to have a shared space to reflect on and re-live experiences was important to reducing the 'time-decay' (Collins, 2004, p.140) of EE, allowing it to be re-invested in new IRCs, setting the stage for future collective emotional experiences. Digital media sharing was therefore an important component of GB's Fringe experiences, heightening in-the-moment positive emotions during IRCs, sustaining these emotions via re-living them when members viewed them in the future, and publicly supporting an activist agenda in relation to the inclusivity and accessibility of Fringe experiences.

## 7.11 Conclusion

This chapter builds upon Collins' emotional-entrainment model by putting forward an empirically grounded theory for how IRCs work within situations of challenge that are constructed against a backdrop of activism and supported by organisational-level operations (see Figure 5). This is relevant to organisations such as the Fringe Society who aim to understand and 'break down' 'social barriers' characterised by a narrative of 'it's not for me' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 5) because it explains how such narratives are transformed within IRCs. That is, through the Fringe Society

providing the opportunity for groups to navigate challenges of the Fringe together via their FDO scheme, with the support of strong charismatic leadership and trust at a group-level, challenges at the Fringe can be a means to create and strengthen group solidarity whereby collective Fringe memories contribute to meaningful group identity. This is an important insight for arts organisations because ordinarily barriers to arts engagement are viewed as individual barriers, with organisations needing to provide individual-level support (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, pp. 4–5). This chapter shows a different perspective: groups build upon their pre-existing group features carried over as ingredients from previous IRCs such as group solidarity, intersubjective trust, and friendships and harness these ritual ingredients for social gain, utilising them to overcome challenges that may be conceived of as ‘barriers’ and increasing solidarity through sharing these experiences. It is the group-level of analysis that is vital to understanding these complexities, and this needs to be given time and attention within cultural policy to shift the narrative of individual transactions with art objects to chains of IRs across situations with others in a group.

Nonetheless, Gig Buddies were open to tackling challenging situations because of the narrative constructed by Jamie that the Fringe would be meaningful for them, and the way in which members got on board with this idea because of their pre-existing solidarity. One might question what would happen if a group’s pre-existing solidarity and identity constructed ideas about the Fringe that meant they weren’t so open to immersing themselves in the turbulence of it: this shall be explored in the next chapter.

## Chapter 8: *“It’s not for us” – feelings of exclusion*

This chapter explores Interaction Ritual Chains (IRCs) at the Fringe for members of the Citadel Youth Centre (Citadel), based in Leith, Edinburgh. On their Fringe Day Out (FDO), many of Collins’ ritual ingredients were present, including group assembly, mutual focus of attention, shared mood, and intensification through rhythmic entrainment, creating emotional feedback loops. This resulted in a positive emotional experience for members, who described the production that they went to see as ‘brilliant’, ‘thoroughly enjoyable’ (Thomas), and ‘outstanding’ (Chloe). However, whilst theoretically these elements should have resulted in strengthened solidarity and a sense of belonging to the Fringe Tribe cultivated through a collective experience, the group felt that their experience was an ‘individual’ one, rather than a shared group experience, and the dominant feeling associated with the Fringe, even after their FDO, was exclusion. This challenges IRC theory because the presence of these ritual ingredients did not lead to collective effervescence; thus, the purpose of this chapter is to problematize and explain why, despite experiencing what looked like socially successful IRs at the Fringe, feelings of exclusion in relation to the Fringe remained dominant.

The chapter starts by providing background to the Citadel and to the preconceptions of the Fringe that members hold. This background is then used to argue that through their construction of a shared identity based on their membership to the Citadel which is located in Leith (their sacred site), the group position ‘the Fringe’ as ‘other’. It then analyses how their IRs happened at the Fringe, highlighting that there were only weak changes to group solidarity, arguing that their ‘day out’ ritual was ‘incomplete’, and their EE was not re-invested in future interactions associated with the Fringe. Participation in the research focus groups provided opportunity for participants to reflect which supported group solidarity; however, for service users of the Citadel,<sup>32</sup> I argue that their group identity as ‘outsider’ to the Fringe pervades because it has been constructed over many years of IRs within their Leith community. The chapter concludes that organisational relations between the Citadel and the Fringe Society hold potential for strengthened solidarity to form through IRs

---

<sup>32</sup> ‘Service users’ is used here to describe residents of Leith who attend the Citadel who are not members of staff or volunteers contributing to its operations.

at the Fringe in the future but, at present, the IRs of service users continue to reinforce a narrative of 'it's not for us' in relation to the Fringe.

## **8.1 About the Citadel and New Spin**

The Citadel Youth Centre is a community centre based in Leith, an area in the north of Edinburgh city which used to be a separate municipality until 1920 when it became part of the City of Edinburgh. The Citadel provide a range of support for those in their local community, particularly for young people and families, including youth clubs, in-school projects, support for new mums and advice for adolescents seeking employment. Since 2009, the Citadel has also delivered intergenerational work to bring young people (aged 10-18) and older people (aged 50+) together, with one key element of this work their 'New Spin' Intergenerational Café. Every Friday, young and older people meet at the Citadel in their kitchen/dining area where they spend a few hours sharing refreshments alongside engaging in activities such as games, arts and crafts, cooking, and other group, participatory activities. The number of people who attend each week varies but tends to be in the region of around 20-25 people. The New Spin (NS) project is organised and managed by Lukas (Youth Worker), but volunteers also help to support with tasks during the café each week.

A group of NS members (approximately 15 people, including staff and volunteers) took part in their Fringe Day Out (FDO), going to see a Fringe production together on 23 August 2019, and this group's engagement with the Fringe is the focus of this chapter. Of note to the quotations used in this chapter, the voices of older participants were noticeably dominant across both focus groups, but particularly the second group where only one young person took part. Another important point of background to the chapter is that the Fringe Society collaborated with the Citadel to host a 'family day' at the Citadel premises where the Fringe Society facilitated a Fringe 'taster' day including circus, theatre, and face painting. This day was for children and young people, and not specifically for the NS group. I did not attend this day and the focus of this chapter is the NS group and their FDO, rather than this 'family day'.

## 8.2 Contextual factors influencing IRCs

In order to contextualise this chapter, there are two important points of background. Firstly, the meaning of the Fringe for NS as derived from Collins' (2004, pp.98-99) 'secondary realm' of rituals, resulting in 'items of news, gossip, reputation' in relation to the Fringe. Secondly, the physical locale of the Citadel as in the district of Leith in Edinburgh, which contributes to members of NS identifying with being a 'Leither' (someone who lives in Leith).

In relation to the first point, the meaning given to the idea of 'The Fringe' by NS draws upon ideas taken from interactions with others beyond it and narratives that circulate in the media which construct a reputation as the Fringe being 'not for residents' which includes those living in Leith, tracing back to the Fringe's conception in 1947. As explored in the introduction of this thesis, residents have expressed their feelings of exclusion, as documented in the media, in relation to the Fringe. Whilst the Fringe in the early days did have a greater emphasis on Scottish work, with six of the eight uninvited performing companies who started the Fringe coming from Scotland; as it grew, newspaper media also documents that concerns were raised by Edinburgh residents over the lack of inclusion of local communities, whereby the Fringe has been called numerous times to 'focus on residents' (Gourtsoyannis, 2014). Anderson (2019) supports this, noting that the controversy of the Fringe is 'nothing new', referencing the 1950s where the council debated banning the Fringe. Leith is used as a symbol for 'those who are excluded' from the Fringe and also the people who, in part, represent Edinburgh, with a right to have a voice within the Fringe and its operations. These perspectives are wider than just Leith but the circulation of narratives at these meso levels can influence more localised interactions: the resistance to the Fringe from those living in Leith can be viewed as mirroring, and also feeding into, the emotional sentiment of these wider narratives.

Leith also has a complicated history in relation to Edinburgh. It used to be an industrial port area for maritime activities, and Leith residents voted against a merger with Edinburgh, but this was ignored (Gillon, 2019). Further, the area had primarily been made up of tenement buildings for the working class, but the post-war period of the 1960s and 1970s led to major development changes resulting in new high-rise buildings, alongside an increasing reputation of being 'unsafe' due to drug problems throughout the 1970s and early 1980s (Doucet, 2009). However, the gentrification of

the area, along with the inclusion of the major tourist attraction of the Royal Yacht Britannia (the former yacht for the royal family) in the 1990s, increased its popularity for upmarket housing developments on the port, new restaurants and bars which has led to the area having a diverse community of both poverty and deprivation, and middle-class wealth (Doucet, 2009). Thus, the idea of the Fringe as representative of 'Edinburgh city centre' being separate to Leith is one that is also bound up in this cultural history of gentrification, with the people of Leith (also referred to as 'Leithers') feeling that 'Leith no longer belongs to Leithers', as reported in The Scotsman newspaper in 2002. In this article, a retired dockworker notes that 'the real Leith gets on with life' which is 'beyond the posh restaurant facades' (Gilchrist, 2002). The term of 'Leither' has connotations of being embedded within the 'real' Leith community. As Lukas explains in the media in reference to his work for the Citadel: it's commonplace for people living in Leith to describe themselves as 'Leithers', saying they're from Leith, rather than Edinburgh, if asked.<sup>33</sup> These dimensions of the wider cultural and geographic history of both Leith and Leith's relationship to the Fringe fed into the IRCs of NS at the Fringe, making it difficult for the group to derive meaning from their FDO because their trip to the city centre to see a production was viewed as something that was 'not for them'.

### **8.3 IRCs at the sacred site of the Citadel**

Considering the way in which the neighbourhood of Leith plays a role in constructing a shared identity for residents, the Citadel as a building located in Leith that provides 'community-based youth work' with 'strong links to local people and local partners' (Citadel Youth Centre, 2019) is an ideal sacred site for 'Leithers' because it represents their shared understanding of the importance of their neighbourhood and history. Thus, understanding how NS's IRCs operate at the site of the Citadel in Leith is essential to framing the group's experience at the Fringe and to understanding why feelings of exclusion remained the dominant mood after their FDO. Feedback loops from previous chains of group interactions at the Citadel prime members for certain kinds of emotional experiences, and they also tell members how to behave in Fringe situations. For NS, their sacred site is the Citadel, with their identity derived from being

---

<sup>33</sup> Quote paraphrased and media reference not included to preserve anonymity.

connected to Leith. Exploration of the fieldnotes I made on my first visit to the Citadel on 7 June can be used to further explore this:

When I arrived, I saw several young people sat at the reception desk, leaning on the side and chatting to one another, and they pointed me to the cafeteria where the weekly intergenerational lunch was taking place. I met Lukas there and he was very welcoming and introduced me to some of his staff, including Eve, a new youth worker. I spoke to Eve about her moving to Edinburgh just last week. I commented that everyone seems so welcoming at the Citadel and she said they were. I then joined a conversation with a young person and an older person who were talking about one of their relatives being in the RAF and also about the sea cadets, sharing their stories. Following this, I chatted to an older member who told me about the importance of the community in Leith – he said that he knew a lot of people and often bumps into people that he knows.

When it was time for the intergenerational lunch to begin, Lukas told us to all gather around and he introduced a new young people to the group. Lukas was very loud, friendly, organisational and positive. Whenever he spoke, the young people listened, even if they had to stop talking amongst themselves to hear. Lunch was served - Mexican food - and everyone ate together around a large table in the kitchen/dining area, engaging in conversations and creating a noisy atmosphere. We then played a team building game in smaller groups, using spaghetti and marshmallows to build the tallest tower we could.

This extract provides several telling signs of focused, and routinised, successful IRs at the Citadel, showing a steady flow of EE across situations. Firstly, the people at the reception desk chatting on my arrival conveyed to me that they played a role in the operational running of the centre; they were young service users, but they were volunteering their time to help, and they did this in a comfortable manner. They displayed signs of Collins' IR ingredients of group assembly, mutual focus on running the reception area, and a shared relaxed mood that visibility portrayed to me that they belonged at the centre – they had group solidarity. Further, Eve's comment that the Citadel has a 'great atmosphere' reinforced the sentiment that I had picked up on from these young people who were running the reception area; whilst volunteering is a form of 'work', she suggests that she finds it a comfortable place to be. Moreover, the IR of sharing lunch together all around one big table again shows signs of the dynamic of the centre where everyone felt comfortable to eat together and chat. The emotional flow was welcoming, comfortable, and relaxed.

Next, Lukas's role in introducing me to others and later when members were attentive to him when he spoke, displayed to me his managerial and central role in the group. He was able to emotionally manage the mood of the room though directing people – telling me who I could interact with and organising the activities of the

afternoon. He had a 'big' personality that was able to get people emotionally attuned and focused on a shared activity (the game) out of a moment of unfocused activity (light conversations between people). This shared activity was a moment of organised interaction and it was consciously a way to build team spirit, as shown through the competitive nature of it. Importantly, everyone entered into this team game willingly, without resistance or need to be convinced, which is in contrast to their IRs at the Fringe as shall be explored throughout this chapter.

Moreover, the conversation I observed about the RAF conveyed to me a conversation IR whereby the two people were bonding over shared experiences, and the conversation I had with the older person stressed that much of their bonding came from living in Leith. The word of 'community' was particularly telling of this, suggesting that the locale of the Citadel in Leith makes it part of this 'community' where many people know one another. In this sense, whilst NS members had a wide range of demographic backgrounds, they were united over their shared locale of Leith and the kinds of experiences they engaged in through living there.

However, whilst much of what I observed displayed signs of successful interactions, there were different kinds of activity across a large number of people (approx. 25 people in total), and participants explained to me in their focus groups that they didn't have 'close' relationships to one another. Participants described their participation at the Citadel as 'like being at home' (Eileen), being part of 'an amoeba' where they 'mix' and 'absorb each other' (Thomas), and as somewhere that fosters a 'sense of belonging' (Anastacia). The themes of the Citadel as inclusive, supportive, and welcoming were also prevalent in their descriptions. However, there were mixed views in relation to the intimacy of their relationships; Chloe noted that she has 'strict boundaries' where she doesn't get too close to people, and Anastacia said that she felt the 'opposite' saying that she felt 'really supported by the people' at the Citadel and this held 'meaning' for her. Nonetheless, Anastacia also stated that she felt their relationships were 'obviously not like a friendship'. When asked whether the people in the first focus group 'knew one another quite well', there were multiple responses of 'yes' and 'no' at the same time, with Ruth explaining that they meet every Friday but only 'occasionally' or 'very rarely' seeing one another the rest of the time. Yet, Sophie explained that she 'grew up' with some of the other younger members of the group, with Henry agreeing that it is more common for younger members to know one another from other parts of their lives, such as 'juniors' (i.e., from school).

These mixed responses suggest that there may be different levels of central/peripheral ritual participation when the group interact at the Citadel. Collins (2004, p. 116) argues that there is a 'continuum' of participation in IRs where some people are 'barely members' or 'barely participating' and others 'nearer the core' with 'the sociometric star' at the centre as the person who is most intensely involved in the IR. Supporting this, some people in the focus group expressed that they felt a sense of belonging in the group and others that they didn't at all, as well as some noting that they were newer to the group or had been members for longer. Lukas seemed able to influence the emotions of a room, with Chloe stating that whenever she sees Lukas 'networking' she feels 'like saying, can I join the conversation? I wanna network with you and I dunna like networking', suggesting that his sociality is contagious within the group and that he is 'nearer the core' of activity.

Nonetheless, the group structure of the Citadel is not one big group with some who are at the core and others more peripheral, but there are multiple groups at play, with different IRs often happening at the same time. Chloe explains:

Even within New Spin group there's - I'm not going to use the word clique - there's... I think I interact more with the kids than I do with some of the adults because of the way - it's not even its structure - the way the people are, but then there's the realisation that perhaps some of the people need the support for their friends or people they're closer to, or people that they've bonded with more than me. (FG2)

Chloe doesn't want to use the word 'clique' – perhaps because it has negative connotations, and she derives a sense of belonging from her membership of NS – but she later in the focus group allowed me to use the word 'sub-groups' as an alternative which she felt more comfortable with. When asking the group to unpack further what they meant by NS having 'sub-groups', Chloe explained that she always knows 'who is gonna sit together', and that is 'not gonna change' and Gary agreed that people often sit separately in different groups and that 'you have to know where everybody's gonna sit because that's where they always sit.' Chloe's statement that this does not 'change' also implies that the solidarity within these sub-groups has been built up over IRCs where barriers to outsiders have been created, making it harder for new members to break in. As Gary explains, he is 'reluctant' to approach certain members because 'they think I'm being too familiar'. There are different sub-groups sitting within the wider membership group of 'New Spin' which also sits under the organisational banner of 'the Citadel'. In view of my ethnographic fieldnotes and these perceptions

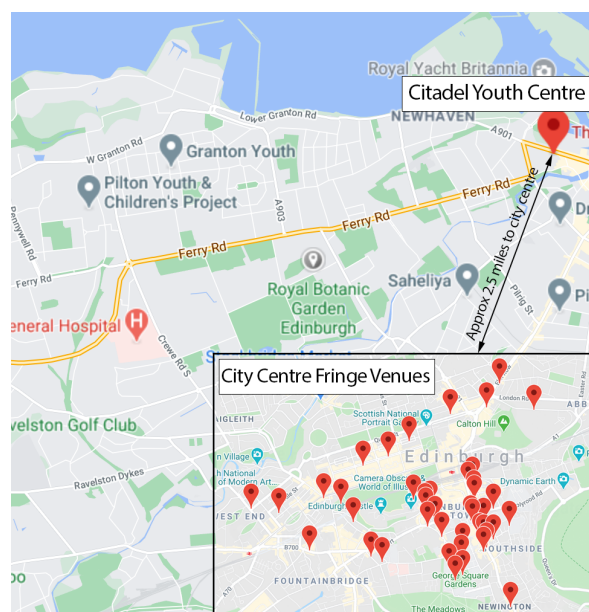
of their group dynamic, it suggests that the core ritual ingredient making their interactions successful and holding them together is being together at the Citadel every Friday for their intergenerational, shared activities (bodily copresence), rather than a relational foundation, such as friendships (as was the case for *Gig Buddies*).

NS therefore have a very different group dynamic to the other three case studies presented thus far in this thesis because their social organisation is looser. They don't have an intersubjective, relational social cohesion, and this raises questions as to how easy it is to transfer their IRCs that create solidarity at the Citadel into a new location, such as venues at the Fringe in the city centre. The physical geographic location of the Citadel in Leith creates a unified sense of sharing a sense of meaning derived from place, positioning themselves against the Fringe in order to affirm this membership. For example, when asking the group how they felt about the Fringe in their first focus group, Thomas stated:

Below London Road, going North, towards Leith, we seem to be basically excluded because we're not being asked to participate either as visitors, or as we're bringing a show down to Leith, would you like to be part of it? Or, where in Leith would you like the shows to be? (FG1)

To further explicate to the reader where Leith geographically sits in relation to Fringe activities to aid further understanding of the physical space that separates the Citadel and Fringe activities, relevant to understanding this emotional sentiments of being 'excluded', Figure 6 has been included below:

**Figure 6. Map showing where the Citadel Youth Centre is located**



The language of 'we' in Thomas' expression is in relation to those who live in Leith and this is reiterated by Eileen who explains, 'we're excluded' when discussing the accessibility and convenience of the Fringe in the first focus group. They also use a language of 'them' without always explaining who 'they' are, stating that 'they do nothing for us' (Eileen) and it's 'them' and 'us' (Ruth, Thomas), defining those in Leith as in opposition to 'them', alluded to in some places as the Fringe Society but in others with no articulation of this being the Fringe Society or other organisation. This suggests that it could be hard to include NS in Fringe activities which take place in the city centre because their identity is constructed in opposition to 'them' – interpreted here to mean people who are affiliated to the city centre such as the Fringe Society. There is little else that unites them except for their sense of shared membership to the Citadel in Leith which they construct through a positioning against an imagined idea of 'Edinburgh city people' – 'them'. In this sense, when they engage in IRs at their sacred site of the Citadel, they have Collins' (2004) ritual ingredient of 'barrier to outsiders' where participants have a sense of who is excluded from their group, and also which groups they are excluded from. Their solidarity comes from being 'other' to that which happens in the city centre, and this includes, and is represented by, Fringe activities. This is a very different type of exclusory barrier to the practical and emotional barriers faced by those with learning difficulties in the last chapter (Gig Buddies) which could be overcome at the Fringe because the 'barrier' for NS is also part of what makes them 'who they are' – their group identity.

This combination of meaning derived from place and othering of those associated with the Fringe results in a sense of moral rightness manifested in standing up for the group and defending Leith as a location that should be central to the Fringe offering. One of the most telling observations of the importance of Leith to members is in their use of the word 'Leither'. This was evident when I visited the Citadel on 21 February 2020:

Jacob (Manager, Citadel Youth Centre) had unexpectedly arrived with footage being used for the forthcoming FDO promotional video which the Fringe Society had sent to Jacob for approval, and he wanted to show it to members for their thoughts. He played the video on the large television screen in their dining room area. During the screening, most people were watching and when someone from the Citadel appeared in the video there was a noticeable increase in people smiling and some 'wooing' to show their support. But the biggest emotional response came from when a member of their group exclaimed 'I'm a Leither' in the video, making a fist with their hand, raising it slightly and then pulling it down. The people watching

starting 'wooing' and laughing loudly, with many making the same hand gesture and saying 'yeah' in solidarity.

Here we see how living in Leith is a key feature and symbol of their group identity, where they raise their hands to show signs of membership of the group. This is a Fringe Society video about the Fringe and FDO, but it is the moment where they see part of their identity represented that they are able to connect to it.<sup>34</sup>

The Fringe Society also convey their understanding of the perception of the Fringe as exclusory for residents outside the city centre, including Leith, through their community engagement work, seeking to transform what they describe as an 'it's not for me' narrative (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 5), welcoming communities into the Fringe. However, 'it's not for *me*' suggests an individual relationship with the Fringe whereby meaning is constructed alone;<sup>35</sup> whereas, as IRC theory explains, meaning-making is a social process occurring through social interactions. There is an element of 'it's not for me' because there is a process of internalisation of group meanings as described by Collins (2004) as 'what individuals do with them when they are alone', but this is derivative from social processes as expressed within NS members language of 'we'. The Fringe Society understanding of 'it's not for me' would therefore be better expressed as 'it's not for *us*' where perceptions about the Fringe are constructed with others.

## 8.4 New Spin at the Fringe

Viewing this backdrop of what makes IRs socially successful for NS (they happen at the Citadel, they are united by the shared identity of being 'Leithers'), this next section analyses their FDO to argue that, whilst they had moments of focused interaction and shared enjoyment, their Fringe IRs did not hold any long-term meaning for them in a way that contributed to their group solidarity because they happened in the city centre (actively taking them away from their sacred site) and they were short-lived.

---

<sup>34</sup> My second focus group had already taken place before this video screening, so it isn't possible to explore here whether inclusion in this video changed their perception of the Fringe in any way.

<sup>35</sup> Whilst it's not for 'me' could also mean a 'type of person' rather than an individual (i.e., 'people like me'), by the Fringe Society adopting this kind of language, they suggest that they see those who attend as collections of individuals, rather than as groups which adopts a view of individualism, rather than collectivism which I am arguing is an important framework of understanding here.

NS' FDO took place on 23 August 2019; I arrived at the Citadel Centre around 12.30pm, and we waited for approximately 20-30 minutes before we left to go into the city centre to see their chosen production. This wait time had occurred because Lukas had originally planned to use the Lothian bus tickets that had been provided by the Fringe Society to attend; however, he had changed his mind and organised a Citadel minibus because this would mean that they didn't have to rush.<sup>36</sup> My fieldnotes from this time highlight the lack of one shared mutual focus of attention or group assembly across those attending the day trip, in addition to multiple moods across different sub-groups:

I arrived at the Citadel and saw a few people waiting in the seating in the reception area, both young and older people. I asked where Lukas was, and I went into the kitchen area to find him - there was a leaving party for Sue, so they were all sat around eating food. Lukas said I could join, but I said I would wait with the others in the corridor as the leaving party was not a part of the New Spin's activities and I felt more comfortable with the others. Eve and Penny were talking about their visit to the Fringe last year... Sophie was sat on the floor with her head in her hands saying she was hungry, and she looked tired. One of the adolescent boys behind her kept poking her and she said a few times, "that hurts stop it" until one of the older people said, "stop it means stop it". The boy laughed and then stopped. Lukas came to check on us in the corridor and Sophie asked if she had time to go out for food and she did, so she went out to the shops, also encouraging Henry, Luke and Patrick to go with her. In the meantime, Lukas brought over some croissants for us to share. We ate and chatted as we waited for the others to return. Marius also arrived during this time and went to find Lukas who brought him back into the corridor to wait with us, starting a conversation about speaking different languages with Marius. When Lukas left to return to the kitchen, Marius, rather than sitting with us, stood a meter or so away at the reception desk.

The Citadel is like a school where multiple people come and go in and out of the building affiliated with different programmes (akin to school years to continue the analogy), whereby, within these programmes, there are different sub-groups, constituted because of the way in which the situational conditions of place (the Citadel building and local area) enables multiple IRs to take place at the same time.

Lukas is in the kitchen, pulled between running a leaving party and checking on those arriving for the day in the corridor, Sophie is hungry and wants permission to

---

<sup>36</sup> This is an interesting development on the Citadel's relationship with the Fringe Society because it shows how, as an organisation, they are willing to financially invest in going to the Fringe through paying to use their own minibus. It suggests that the gesture from the Fringe Society of providing the bus vouchers to show their support is potentially more important than their financial value. Further, it raises questions about the 'one size fits all' nature of community engagement programmes where resources could be better distributed through a deeper level of understanding of what specific support different organisations need.

be able to go out, as well as 'fend off' one of the adolescent boys from poking her (a sign of boredom but also familiarity), Eve and Penny primarily engage in their own conversations or speak to me, except for the moment they intervene to stop Sophie being poked, and Marius stays stood aside from everyone and engages directly only when facilitated to by Lukas. When Sophie, Henry, Luke and Patrick go out, the group is spread across three locations: the kitchen, the corridor, and at the shops, and they are each directed by the smaller IRs that they share in their sub-groups (going to the shops together, having a party, waiting together). Following these IRs across different locations, the leaving party ended and those who were participating either left the building or joined the group in the corridor if they were coming on the Fringe trip, and Lukas also joined us in the corridor, along with Sophie, Henry, Luke and Patrick when they returned from the shops. Initially there was some group interaction between everyone when they came together, as facilitated by Lukas:

Lukas was running around looking for tickets and thought that that he might have too many but then started worrying he might not have enough. When looking through the tickets, he came across a Fringe voucher for £4.20. He asked me if it could be spent in the Fringe shop and I replied, 'I think so'. Following, this Lukas shouted 'does anyone want to spend £4.20 on merch' as he waved the voucher above his head. This got the attention of everyone waiting as they were all looking at the voucher, with some laughing, and a few of the boys were raising their hands to show that they wanted the voucher. Lukas handed it to one of them and said, 'you better spend it' and he replied, 'I will, I will.' (Ethnographic fieldnotes)

This was the first sign of the day that the group were becoming emotionally attuned, engaging in laughter together (a sign of shared enjoyment) in physical group assembly with a group focus on the voucher for merchandise, and engagement with the idea of the Fringe trip ahead where the voucher could be spent (but by an individual, not the group). However, the emotions experienced here did not build up sufficiently to result in any heightened level of emotion at this time, appearing as 'sudden' emotions, rather than longer-term EE (Collins, 2004, p. 105). Rather than being connected to any longer-term symbols of the Fringe that may have a particular meaning, such that the voucher may be deemed a meaningful relic, it was a means to prompt momentary entertainment. In addition, what is interesting about this interaction is the role that I play; Lukas seeks confirmation that the voucher can be spent at the Fringe and he sees me as affiliated with the Fringe Society, therefore able to confirm this, suggesting that I played a role in fostering some sense of association with the Fringe Society.

Namely, Lukas and I 'perform' our roles to one another as Youth Worker and Fringe Society 'staff' member to instigate this 'game' between the young people of grabbing the ticket which was the first sign of engaging with the idea of going on the Fringe trip, albeit in a way that is connected to individual notions of consumerism.

Following this moment, the groups went back into their micro-interactions in sub-groups, but Henry brought everyone back into shared attention again as he encouraged laughter by waving 'some kind of stick that looked like a hiking pole around' (ethnographic fieldnotes), creating an IR of group fun, although one not specifically related to their FDO. The conversation then turned to the Fringe; one person said, 'I don't ken [know] what we are going to see' and some questions were asked by others including, 'where is it we are going?', 'what are we seeing' and 'will we get food after?'. Being physically assembled and sharing laughter allowed the group to turn their attention to the purpose of why they were together - their group day trip ahead. However, this questioning suggests that members have little awareness of the plan for the day, in contrast to Gig Buddies, where they have potentially missed out on IRCs that could have emotionally 'primed' them for their FDO;<sup>37</sup> instead, they put their trust in the Citadel to organise plans on their behalf. Lukas noted in their second focus group that he perceived this to be a positive aspect to their operation:

You know, one of the great things at the New Spin is you dunna have to do much thinking if you're an older or younger person because it's all organised. We're all getting the bus, all the tickets are paid for, we take the group, afterwards we get an ice cream and a juice.

However, whilst 'not knowing' provides an element of surprise to their experience, and encourages the group to imagine their day ahead, setting the group up for excitement, it also puts members in a passive role. This is potentially problematic to creating shared meaning in relation to the Fringe because the preconceptions for several people in the group are that the Fringe is 'for other people' and does not 'involve' the people of Leith. As shall be explored later in this chapter, there is a desire within the group to have a more participatory role where they are more active in their engagement with the Fringe. Moreover, allowing the group to imagine the day ahead

---

<sup>37</sup> Lukas told me during my fieldwork that he had discussed with the NS group what they wanted to see at the Fringe prior to booking immediately following their first focus group, but I saw very little awareness of this on the day itself. This could suggest that the IR of this preparation was not meaningful in a way that constructed a shared memory that could be invoked here in their in-the-moment interactions.

without providing detailed information, leaves open the prospect of members being let down. Examining the question of 'will we get food after?' which was left unanswered at this stage of the day, alongside Lukas's assertion that the group 'usually' get 'an ice cream and a juice' afterwards, suggests a desire and expectation of eating together after the show, and this desire was left unmet, leaving the ritual *incomplete*, as shall be revisited later.

It was now time to go outside and get on the minibus, which Lukas announced to everyone waiting:

Someone said that 'Henry should sit at the back', and then there was some joking between the young people that 'he won't fit at the back', followed by some laughter and one young person noting, 'I'm only joking. I love you!'. They run to get on the bus, and all sit at the back together. Everyone else then gets on. Lukas reads out the register and to my surprise I am also on it and have to confirm my presence. After the register, Lukas shouted to me, 'Katey, sing us a song!' and a few people started singing 'the wheels on the bus'. At first the young people at the back of the bus don't seem to like this, sighing 'arrrrgghhh no', but then they slowly join in and start saying 'Fred the bus driver' as part of the lyrics as Fred is the name of their driver. I then noticed the young people at the back watching videos on their mobile phones together and laughing, and I overheard someone say to Lukas that they wanted to get food after, with Lukas suggesting that they could get ice lollies but it's expensive, with everything costing 'London prices'. (Ethnographic fieldnotes)

This situation replicates, and builds upon, the emotions experienced by members in the previous interactions whilst waiting for the minibus, even recognising that aspects of the Fringe exclude them, such as it being expensive. Firstly, the teasing of Henry is similar to the teasing of Sophie when she was being poked. Whilst teasing could result in negative psychological implications if it was coming from an 'out-group' member, we see Henry laughing with the others who tease him and then sitting at the back of the bus with the other young people for the rest of the journey. Teasing is part of 'the fun cluster' where 'unscripted spontaneity' is an important part of the ritual (Fine & Corte, 2017, p. 67). The young people use teasing to display to one another that they are all members of the same group, and that this is a situation of fun and enjoyment.

Next, the group singing builds upon the previous shared laughter experienced whilst they were waiting inside in relation to Henry's 'stick', constructing a situation of shared focus that is characteristic of a 'day trip' because it is a typical activity for a community group or school to engage in on a bus. Singing is also conducive to a sense of group solidarity because of its potential to increase rhythmic entrainment, intensifying shared mood and focus 'through falling into shared rhythms' (Collins,

2004, p.67). However, importantly, the content of the song that enables this bonding is a generic, popular 'school trip' song in the UK, and it is not related to the Fringe in any way – what brings them together are IRs that are routinised and meaningful for them as part of their pre-existing social dynamic which is akin to a 'school group'. After the song ended, the group reverted back to conversing in their sub-groups, facilitated by the layout of the bus as members had chosen to sit next to the people who they tended to associate with. The members took EE from their shared experience of singing and used this to interact with the people who they were closest to; for example, the enjoyment shared by the young people watching videos together.

The IRCs across waiting to go into town and on the minibus show strong potential for social success as there is an emerging build-up of shared emotion, moving from laughter and excitement into the shared experience of singing and travelling together. However, each time they share a full group emotional experience, they revert back into their smaller groups, so the social success of the IR appears stronger at a sub-group level. They take positive EE from their larger 'school group' experiences and use this to energise their pre-existing relationships. Nonetheless, Lukas seeks to build upon their whole group-level experiences:

We got off the bus around the corner from the venue near George Square, and Lukas shouts to everyone, 'are we all having a good day so far? It's only going to get better!... We walked to the venue, with people chatting on the way, and joined a long queue outside of it. Here Lukas counted the tickets and noticed he had one spare which he gave to one of the adolescent boys who enjoyed walking around trying to find someone to give it away to. Lukas then realised that he actually had one further spare ticket; the boys wanted to give it away again, and Lukas said that they could only do it if they encouraged someone to like them on Instagram. They walked around with the older people watching and laughing as they tried to find someone to give it to. They succeeded and the stranger got out their phone to like the Citadel on Instagram as the boys watched the person do so. On Lukas's request, I then took a group photo of everyone sat on the steps near to where we were waiting which Lukas wanted to share on Instagram. We also kept getting told off for sitting on the steps by the venue staff. (Ethnographic fieldnotes)

Lukas tries to pump the group up with energy and excitement, and the 'game' of giving the tickets away provides a shared group focus that allows space for, and fosters, IRs of fun amongst the group, particularly the younger people but with the older people watching and laughing. One important component of this situation is the *time* needed to foster fun; Fine & Corte (2017, p. 65) note the importance of this, suggesting that 'carving' out time for fun generates commitment to the group. This is relevant because visiting the Fringe is an experience that includes social interactions before and after

watching productions. When discussing in their second focus group moments of the Fringe that helped the group to interact as a whole group, rather than in smaller already-formed sub-groups, the experiencing of queuing repeatedly came up:

Katey: So did you talk to each other on the Fringe trip?

Chloe: There wasna much opportunity, except in the queue.

Katey: So, when you went on the Fringe trip, did you feel that those sub-groups - or the way that people normally interact - was the same or did it help to break that and for people to mingle more?

Gary: When we were standing in the queue, it did break it a wee bit, but when we were inside the groups kind of formed again.

Furthermore, queuing and being on the steps was highlighted as a memorable experience:

Lukas: ...I remember when we sat outside the venue as a group, chatting away about a great bit of fun, and we kept getting shifted from sitting on the steps [overlapping - all laughing together]...

Katey: And that's kind of what Lukas was saying as well that when there were silly things happening on the steps, it was those things that you remember now?

Gary: Yeah, yeah, probably, yeah.

The laughter here from others at Lukas's comment about 'shifting' on the steps (which they did because staff made it known that they weren't permitted to sit there) suggests an in-the-moment experience of fun at the focus group created via re-living an experience in the past – it is part of their collective memory and it unites them in shared experience. However, this 'shared experience' is one that was created out of the one key aspect of their group identity that united them in view of the Fringe – 'them vs. us'. What unites them is what they are 'not allowed' to do at the Fringe – it affirms and builds on their 'otherness' at the Fringe. Further, their moments of fun supports Fine & Corte's (2017, p. 67) assertion that fun is more than a pleasurable experience because it extends out from the original moment of fun, becoming a 'collective project' that is memorable and 'embedded in ongoing social relations'. The 'ongoing' part is important because memories become part of the 'narrative of community' (Fine & Corte, 2017, p. 79) for members of NS where referring back to shared experiences strengthens their pre-existing group identity as 'other'.

Thus, when they entered the venue to see the production, and this opportunity to continue to build on their 'ongoing' relations waned, their sense of collective experience faded:

Gary: I think when you go there as a group, you travel there as a group okay, but as you walk through that door-

Ruth: you're an individual

Gary: you become an individual, you know, and you sit there and... [inaudible] in getting there, the travel, you know, yeah, a bit of banter on the bus and stuff like that and then you've got the walk and everything else, and then you're queuing up outside, that's where the group to me comes in, but when you sit in that separate seat - it's like being in a cinema. (FG2)

Nevertheless, whilst the group agreed in their second focus group that they thought the experience of watching the show felt like an 'individual' experience, my observations of their experience didn't correlate with this. This could suggest that they have little awareness of what a collective Fringe experience is, with their sense of collectivity coming from their experiences at the Citadel where they can participate simultaneously in multiple kinds of IRs. Mirroring this simultaneous interaction, I did notice that the group immediately reverted back to their sub-groups and despite Lukas saying on the way in that 'we all want to sit together', they did sit in smaller groups, with a group of younger people sitting noticeably further behind everyone else. However, within these sub-groups, I observed the group at the back taking a photo of themselves sat together, chatting within groups, making eye contact with one another at certain points of the production that were particularly impressive (the show involved circus tricks), clapping together with the rest of the people in the auditorium (which was a converted university lecture hall), and leaning in together to watch engaging parts of the show. These observations are characteristic of a shared experience at the Fringe and hold potential for collective effervescence. Supporting this, comments in their second focus group suggested that it was a shared, positive emotional experience, with one member saying that 'they enjoyed it' (Gary) another agreeing that they 'thoroughly enjoyed it' too (Thomas), and Chloe that it was 'out of this world' and that she would 'have regretted it' if she hadn't gone. Moreover, immediately after the production ended, they all went as a group to queue up to meet the cast with several members having their photo taken with performers and looking at

merchandise. On their Citadel Instagram page (controlled by Lukas), Lukas posted that they had an 'amazing day at the festival', that it was the 'best show we have seen to date', with a comment stating, 'roll on next year's festival'. Whilst this is an organisational representation of their experience which could be more about 'performing' a positive image of the day online, Lukas's use of positive language together with my observations, suggests that there were elements of socially successful IRs at the sub-group level (ingredients of bodily co-presence and shared mood for example) which did build up to moments of collective experience, but EE did not build up in any meaningful way to create an emotional flow that buttressed their pre-existing identity. Accordingly, we must ask: why did members feel that watching the production was an 'individual' experience rather than a shared, group one when their behaviours suggested otherwise? What was the failure?

One option in answering this question could be to take a Bourdieuan approach and argue that NS did not have the right kind of cultural capital to interpret their Fringe experience. Barrett (2015) has indeed explored this avenue through the case study of the Royal Court Theatre in Liverpool through examining the field of theatregoing for working class audiences; she argues that there is a particular form of less-traditional repertoire and content (such as comedy; see McGrath, 1981, pp. 54–55), and redesign of auditorium space that can encourage increased participation in a way that meaningfully speaks to working class audiences. However, whilst this route is useful to examine the role of class, it cannot answer why a Fringe experience such as watching a circus show where there is active participation, seemingly meeting the aforementioned working-class criteria, does not result in meaningful experience for NS. Further, the Bourdieuan approach often ends in somewhat of a zero-sum game whereby structural inequalities that result in social reproduction of these inequalities will always triumph over any organisational or group-level action to support groups to engage in meaningful arts experiences. Whereas, drawing upon IRCs, it's possible to unpack a more nuanced picture of what is meaningful for a group such as NS (i.e., the Citadel, Leith) which elucidates the role of group identity and place (being a 'Leither') that needs to be considered by organisations such as the Fringe Society, as well as technocratic problems in relation to NS's FDO being 'incomplete' and the challenges of Fringe Society staff connections not reaching service-users.

## 8.5 An incomplete 'day out'

Whilst NS's chain of IRs at the Fringe showed signs of socially successful interaction, with moments of shared enjoyment and mutual focus, this social success was weak because their 'day out' ritual was perceived as *incomplete*.

Chloe: ... when the show was finished it was like, everybody went in opposite directions and I felt, 'hmmmm' that's... it was quite, for me, it was quite, oh, abrupt [inaudible] there were [inaudible] and I did get somebody who was going in my direction, one of the kids, went in my direction and we kind of discussed the show. It was 'aaahhh' is that it? Hey up; I wanted a blether... ... it would have been nice to have somewhere to go to, for discussion or [inaudible]

Gary: I just went because I thought, 'that's the finish' full stop. (FG2)

Chloe expresses a desire here for a socialising IR after the production. This would be characteristic of a socially successful IR as reminiscing together can heighten the emotional effect of an experience, with shared rhythms in conversation also able to build up rhythmic entrainment to create feedback loops. This highlights the importance of the IRs that surround the direct engagement with an art object which aid in constructing a feeling of meaningful Fringe engagement. Moreover, Gary confirms that he left immediately when they got back to the Citadel after the production, further explaining how he would have liked to have more interaction afterwards:

Gary: [inaudible] maybe how about we go in there and have a brew, and have a cup of tea, and ask about what you thought about it. That's where you're gonna see camaraderie. (FG2)

Gary directly acknowledges that 'camaraderie' comes from socialising and that sharing opinions of the production together would have led to a greater sense of group solidarity. Moreover, returning to several members' requests to go for food following the production earlier in the day at the Citadel and on the bus, this desire was never met. As part of their imagining of the day experience, members had pictured a whole 'day out' together where afterwards they would socialise, such as over sharing food together and, without this element of the day, the group were left with a sense of going through an 'individual' experience, rather than a shared one – their FDO was really a bus ride into town to see a show with little other surrounding activity. This can also be understood through Collins' (2004, p.117) concept of 'social density' where the amount

of time spent in one another's presence and participating in meaningful interaction can support the build-up of emotion; in this case, the group met at the Citadel at 12.30pm, were in watching the show between 1.30pm and 2.30pm and were home by approximately 3-3.30pm. This is highly transactional in structure because the situation was constructed for the group to watch the show and leave which is not a 'day out' at all – this is in stark contrast to Gig Buddies where their activities exploited the nature of a festival as providing opportunities for diverse social and arts experiences. Excluding the show time, NS had approximately an hour and a half for socialising together informally outside of watching the production together; their 'day out' had low 'social density', with little opportunity to interact in a way that would move beyond what would be considered 'normal' interaction for the group to instigate heightened level experience. There was an appetite and a need for more socially successful IRs and this need was not met; thus, as a 'day out', their ritual was *incomplete*.

Interconnected with this, the group experienced weak social solidarity because any EE derived from their Fringe experience was *not reinvested and reinforced by subsequent interactions* (Collins, 2004, p. 140). High EE is derived from emotional entrainment and therefore a build-up of emotional flow, and it is carried across situations by emotionally charged-up symbols (Collins, 2004, p. 107). For the Citadel, we see across their IRs at the Fringe a spark of emotional feedback in relation to experiences of 'fun' shared when travelling together and waiting to go into the production which could have led to EE in individuals, but none of these fun experiences were particularly unique to the experience of the Fringe. Rather, their positive emotions manifest as Collins' (2004) 'short-term emotions' which did not feed into any symbols of their social identity (i.e., being a 'Leither'), explained against the backdrop of the longer-term EE created through IRCs at the Citadel.

Thus, returning to the question of why members felt like watching the show was an 'individual' experience; it felt like this because their 'day out' IR chain was incomplete – they never had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences together and co-construct a collective memory of their experiences.

## 8.6 Group reflexivity and Fringe Society staff connections

A caveat to these arguments about NS's FDO is that their participation in the research focus groups acted as a place to navigate their positive experiences of the Fringe alongside their preconceptions which seemed to act as an IR in itself to strengthen their whole-group ritual outcomes. In my role as researcher and 'staff member', I was able to introduce NS to the new IRs of the Fringe through discussing with them after their Fringe experience what they did and did not find meaningful, prompting them to reflect on their FDO when they wouldn't have done otherwise. This is a vital reflection because arts organisations often assume that groups are familiar with the IRs of arts experiences and leave the onus on organising arts engagements with, in this case, the community organisation. This is important to provide autonomy and choice in relation to how groups want to experience the arts, but it also means that groups may 'miss' what it is about the Fringe that they can derive meaning from. One key factor in meaningful experience at the Fringe is therefore ensuring that organisational relations (i.e., between the Fringe Society and the Citadel) can 'reach' service-users so that they also feel welcomed into an arts experience.

Explaining further, it was clear from participants in their second focus group that they wanted time to share their experiences after the Fringe, a need which was not met; however, although taking place 6 weeks after their FDO, the focus group itself fed into their in-the-moment IRs at the Citadel, helping the group to process their experiences both of the Fringe and of being members of the Citadel which strengthened solidarity:

Gary: ...I'm new obviously and you got this group of us here now; how often has this happened in the past?

Lukas: Exactly like this-

Gary: Where you can sit down, and you can talk - like you just said - you can speak to me, or me speak to you. Well, the general thing, you know.... It might be up to us to say 'right, well, [inaudible]

Ruth: Next time you've got a group just say to the- to anybody- what do *you* think?

Lukas: Well, I think there's potential to maybe use this space more... (FG2)

After discussing with the group their experiences at the Fringe, they expressed this desire to have an opportunity to speak to one another more regularly, to get to know one another better. Through identifying what they felt was 'missing' from their day out, it supported the group in understanding how their whole-group dynamic could be improved in the future. It was an IR where members were present together (group assembly) with a mutual focus of attention on participating in the group and a shared mood, reminiscing on their experiences, as well as a rhythm in speech. The focus group provided an opportunity to reflect which brought the group closer together, as well as contributed to their perception of the Fringe and the Fringe Society. When asked about the support from the Fringe Society, Lukas noted:

I also feel like we're learning every year and part of even getting yourself involved, I thought it added another layer because you know, it's been a small input in terms of just having this little discussion but I think the fact that we had that before, we were able to select as a group three things that we wanted to see and then take it to the wider group, and then you joined us as well which I think's been huge emmm.. but it's been really huge, is the fact that you've been part of it Katey and I think... it's a small detail but I think the fact that you kind of had the space, well both the space and the willingness to do it, I think's huge and maybe some arts partners don't always get that, you know, they get given tickets and then, 'oh look, free tickets, just bring a group along' and they either don't realise that well, none of the group knows who you are, you know, even a couple of meetings, it just makes it so much easier that I'm sure today, if you just came without knowing this group, I think, how many would be having this conversation? It would be half of what we've had today, so these little inputs of turning up and just spending, having a cup of tea and spending some time, I think is really big. But trying to explain that sometimes to another organisation can be tricky. (FG2)

Lukas viewed me as a member of staff at the Fringe Society and explains here how he saw the focus groups as adding 'another layer', suggesting that the discussions added extra depth to their Fringe experiences. They used the first focus group as a stimulus to talk about the Fringe, selecting the production that they wanted to see after the meeting was over, and the second focus group facilitated group reflexivity, supporting an understanding of how their FDO could be improved in the future. Further, they get to know one another better through the group sharing, and this supported new connections. For example, Chloe explains that at the Fringe show she was 'reluctant' to approach Gary and she stayed close to the people she already had a 'bond with' but after talking together at the focus group she stated, 'maybe I'll change that [laughs] and you'll be sorry'. This stresses the importance of time for focused, group conversation to bring people together which is supported by Collins (2004,

pp.66-75) who argues that successful conversational 'turn-taking' can build up rhythmic entrainment where animated discussions are viewed as 'high solidarity conversations'.

Rapport is also alluded to in Lukas's description, where he emphasises the importance of me 'knowing the group' and the 'little inputs of turning up'. Building rapport with a group is important to ethnographic research and this supported my role as a researcher, but the way that Lukas describes this also supports the Fringe Society's approach to working with community groups, where FDO is more than giving tickets to organisations, but also about building relationships with communities. Lukas states:

I thought that the recent support [from the Fringe Society] was excellent actually umm... and certainly this most recent [inaudible] of taking a group to see a show, I felt like Julie's direct contact was fab, I felt like, you know, they really got involved, so you know, came down to see us on numerous occasions, you know... (FG2)

Creating organisational partnerships is important to the Fringe Society, as expressed in their business plan; however, they don't stress the importance of their direct *one on one in-person* relationships that they make with individuals at organisations which are key to successful IRs. Collins (2004, p. 53) argues that ritual is 'essentially a bodily process' where bodily co-presence is an essential ritual ingredient to socially successful interactions, and this is supported in Lukas's description. Julie and 'they', referring to other staff members, *physically* visited the Citadel on 'numerous occasions' (e.g., for their 'family day' event), providing an opportunity for Lukas and members of the Citadel (e.g., those at the 'family day', not NS) to 'directly' engage with the Fringe Society – for them to engage in IRs. The 'Fringe Society' was not viewed as an organisational concept by Lukas, but as represented by the people who members of the Citadel interacted with (notably, Julie), where relationships were formed with staff through social interactions, thereby building rapport. Lukas further referenced that he felt 'lucky' to go to 'that Out of the Blue event' and 'to rock up at the Fringe launch when I sees you [Katey]', highlighting again the importance of reinvesting EE from previous interactions to create relationships. This stresses the importance of interaction ritual *chains*, where EE is drawn from interactions with Fringe Society staff, embodied by Lukas. However, it is questionable here whether this EE was able to 'filter down' to NS service users and the direct relationships created seemed to stay primarily at the 'staff level' of organisational 'partnership'.

## 8.7 'Leithers' need active participation in the Fringe

This leads to somewhat of a contradiction: there is a 'partnership' created between the Fringe Society and the Citadel which is founded upon socially successful interactions across a chain of IRs which binds the two organisations together; yet, in the second focus group, several NS members still reported feeling disconnected from the Fringe and the Fringe Society, showing little understanding of who the Fringe Society. The EE didn't filter down because the social density of these in-person relations was not high enough at the service user level – no members of the Fringe Society came on their FDO, for example (except for me in my researcher role).

Building on the notion of NS already having a strong identity as 'Leithers' constructed in opposition to the Fringe and the wider narratives of Leithers as 'other' that their IRs form within, the emotions expressed by NS members during their FDO were *foregrounded by their previous IRs at the Citadel* which had been cultivated across many years of interacting together as 'Leithers'. This group identity of being 'other' to the Fringe provided much higher EE in relation to their pre-existing solidarity than the weak IRs and incomplete 'day out' chain provided in view of the idea of 'the Fringe'. They had an enjoyable experience, but it simply wasn't embedded within their social relations enough to build up to emotional entrainment to create a sense of belonging to the Fringe Tribe to counter their long-held beliefs.

There also exists what Summers-Effler (2007) describes as 'apparent stability' across the IRCs that maintain the 'partnership' between the Fringe Society and the Citadel, but beneath this public display there is 'considerable variation', including weak IRs. Whilst publicly the Fringe Society work with the Citadel and meaningful relationships are formed between staff, such as between Julie at the Fringe Society and Lukas at the Citadel; for many of the service users of the Citadel, this 'partnership' does not 'filter down' to their IRs. A basic example of this is in the reduced number of interaction opportunities the members of the group who went on the FDO had to meet Fringe Society staff. For example, Lukas met with Julie in person at three events and, similarly, met with me twice before meeting me for my first focus group, alongside several phone calls and email communications.

Whilst publicly there is 'stability', this solidarity primarily exists at the 'staff' level. Although some of this EE filters down to an extent, such as Lukas's enthusiasm affecting members of NS, there is considerable instability in the IRCs relating to the

Fringe for service users. Whilst they have an enjoyable FDO, it is surrounded by IRs that do not uphold meaningful associations with the Fringe but, rather, negative connotations. As Summers-Effler (2007 p.433) notes, they experience 'temporary vortexes of involvement', where they momentarily participate in the Fringe, but these temporary encounters exist within 'turbulent flows of action' where they are pulled back towards IRs that foster their connection to Leith and to their community where their group identity is positioned against 'the Fringe'. For members of NS, their sense of meaning is derived from participation in the community of Leith. Thus, for the Fringe to become a context that fosters successful IRs leading to high EE, it would need to be integrated into these meaning-making processes. When asked why Ruth decided not to go on the FDO day trip, she stated:

Because I felt it was more for Edinburgh as a city that it was for Edinburgh and the ordinary working people in it. (FG2)

This highlights the structuring effect of the narrative of 'not for us' because the belief of the Fringe being for those in the city centre prevented Ruth from engaging on the day trip; however, it also suggests that she would engage if the festival was more for 'ordinary' people. Ruth explained:

It would need to involve the schools a bit more, and organisations even like ours here. But bring it to the fore, and it's not a case of seeing it on a piece of paper that a kid brings in. Let people know because I thought - I've always thought it. There's so much on offer, and very little done to push it into the fore. (FG2)

The language that she uses here of 'involve' and 'bring' or 'push' 'it to the fore' expresses Ruth's desire for those within the Leith community to be more actively involved in the Fringe, also supporting this by saying that the schools should 'participate'. Thomas agreed with Ruth and stated that he believed schools should be 'blended into the programme' and 'part of the programme', further stating that it shouldn't be 'we're bringing the festival to you' but 'you are the festival', and he connects this to place by stating that he feels that it's 'we're here, you're there'. Chloe also supported this, arguing that there are 'so many parks in Edinburgh' that could be used for festival activities, listing a range of parks within and close to Leith. Their sense of meaning is derived from the local community and their temporary experience at the Fringe was not enough for them to feel 'blended' into it. Ruth asked Patrick in the focus group whether he felt 'part' of the Fringe and he replied, 'at some points, yeah, but not

really'. There were brief moments of enjoyment during their FDO, but there was no sense of deep immersion in the Fringe that could change their sense of separation from it. As Thomas states, 'we take the shows to the children. We don't ask the children to be the show' (Thomas); further, in relation to watching a show as part of FDO which he agreed was a 'brilliant' experience that should be 'recommended', he asked, 'why isn't it being given... properly?' and 'why isn't it being given to the people of Edinburgh to participate in?' An incomplete 'day out' going to the Fringe was not enough for this group because of their strong shared belief that they want to participate *actively* in the Fringe's main programme of events.

Moreover, the way in which the group talk about the Fringe as something that could be 'given' is also telling of their perception of the organisational structure of the Fringe as something that could be 'given'. The group noted in their first focus group that they understood the Fringe Society to programme the events at the Fringe and there were numerous indications that they felt venues in Leith should be made available for them to use. Thus, despite the Fringe Society's 'open access principle' that anyone can participate in the Fringe and a model where anyone can register a building to be a Fringe venue; for certain members of this group, it would seem that they need more than an 'open access' statement and would like an *invitation* to be active in the festival:

We, the city of Edinburgh and the citizens therein should be physically involved in the creation and the focus of a way forward for the festival. (Thomas, FG2)

The NS narrative of exclusion in relation to the Fringe has a far stronger emotional pull that buttresses their shared identity as 'Leithers' compared to the weak social success of the IRs comprising their incomplete Fringe 'day out'.

## 8.8 Conclusion

Through the organisational connections of the Citadel and the Fringe Society (including the opportunity to participate in research for this thesis), there appears to be potential for future IRs at the Fringe for NS to be socially successful. However, at present the emerging build-up of positive EE from bodily co-presence between staff members of the Fringe Society and staff members of the Citadel that could lead to collective effervescence, is not reaching the service-user level, with current IRs

between NS members continuing to reinforce a narrative of 'it's not for us' in relation to the Fringe. This is an important insight for arts organisations, and for the Fringe Society specifically, because fruitful staff-to-staff connections are not enough to ensure that situations are fostered that will provide groups with the ritual ingredients necessary for meaningful experience at the Fringe. Given the way in which my presence as a researcher seemed to spark dialogue that enabled group members to be reflexive which may be an importance mechanism for successful IRs (as per *Collective Whispering*), a conclusion for the Fringe Society is that they may want to consider increasing the amount of bodily co-presence between their staff and community service users, further providing opportunities for greater 'active' participation in the Fringe.

## Chapter 9: Understanding meaning-making at the Fringe

This chapter synthesises empirical insights from the four case studies presented and wider fieldwork from the groups not spotlighted as cases to enter into a process of theorising to answer the research questions set out in chapter two. To restate, the primary aim of this study was to explore the following overarching question:

---

**Question one: What makes the Edinburgh Festival Fringe a meaningful experience for participating groups?**

---

Within the remit of this question, the following three interrelated research questions were also proposed as key drivers of the thesis:

**Question two: What specific ritual ingredients may increase the potential for socially successful IRs for small groups who experience the Fringe?**

**Question three: What can make IRCs succeed or fail for small groups participating in the Fringe?**

**Question four: What are the conditions that maintain and develop shared meanings for small groups who experience the Fringe, upholding the Fringe as a sacred site?**

In this chapter, I theoretically and empirically build on what has been presented in the case studies and construct a developed version of Collins' (2004) emotional-entrainment model to show how meaning-making happens at the Fringe, as shown in Figure 7.

The chapter begins by exploring question two, focusing on two key ritual ingredients that this research has identified as particularly important to socially successful IRCs at the Fringe: *pre-existing group solidarity* and *charismatic leadership*.

Interconnected to these ingredients and answering question three, it then unpacks the notion of *overcoming challenges* to argue that having high ritual

ingredients and solidarity (built up across chains of successful IRs) enables challenges to be viewed as opportunities, which is key to socially successful IRs at the Fringe. Further, the chapter explores how there may be an *optimum group emotional arousal* through a combination of high intensity and ‘middle-level’ rituals which creates and maintains meaningful experience at the Fringe.

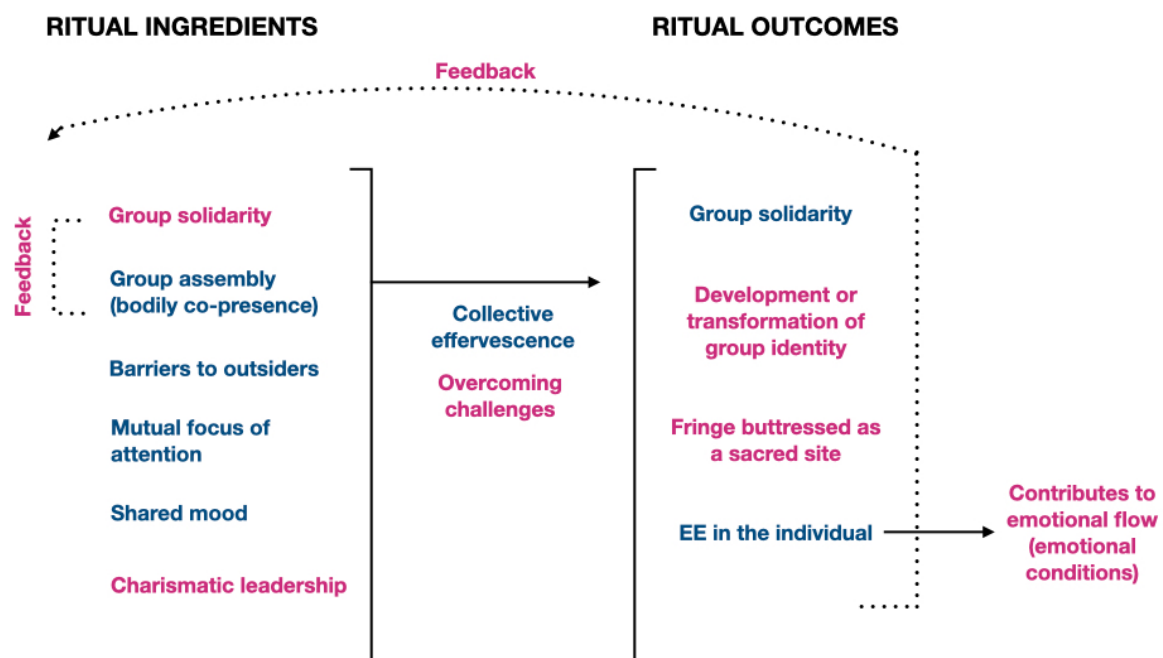
Next, and further building on questions two and three to answer question four, the chapter explores how emotions flow across IRCs at the Fringe, fostering a context of emotional contagion where those who align with the moral community of the arts can ‘latch onto’ these emotions, maintaining the Fringe as a sacred site.

The chapter then addresses the lead research question of the thesis, arguing that the Fringe is a meaningful experience for groups through an interplay of collective, group, and individual-level emotional flow, whereby IRCs pump up individuals with EE, creating ritual ingredient feedback loops within IRCs, also sustaining and developing collective effervescence across groups and maintaining the Fringe as a sacred site.

Finally, I conclude why this matters by revisiting themes from chapters one and two, reiterating that meaning-making processes are absent from cultural policy, with this micro-sociological analysis better able to articulate ‘cultural value’ than current research.

**Figure 7. Key ritual ingredients and emotional feedback loops that construct meaningful experience at the Fringe.**

*Collins’ (2004) ingredients and outcomes represented in blue, additional Fringe IRC ingredients and outcomes identified in this thesis represented in pink.*



## 9.1 Key ritual ingredients at the Fringe: exploring question two

### 9.1.1 *Pre-existing group solidarity*

The notion of 'pre-existing group solidarity' as a ritual ingredient is complex as 'group solidarity' is identified as a ritual outcome by Collins ('feeling of membership'), and also presented as a ritual outcome within this thesis. So, how can group solidarity be both an ingredient and an outcome? What this thesis has shown is that ritual outcomes from successful IRs can be carried over into new situations where the same participants are present, reinforcing solidarity and/or maintaining it, whereby group solidarity acts as a ritual ingredient – an 'initiating condition'. This is what Collins (2004) theorises as 'long-term feedbacks', which he defines as 'when the outcomes of one IR feed back into the conditions that make it possible to carry out a subsequent IR' (Collins, 2004, p. 146). Collins links the ritual outcome of group solidarity back to group assembly, arguing that those who have a feeling of group solidarity want to assemble for the ritual again, linking it to emotions.

Reaffirming Collins, group solidarity for small groups at the Fringe seemed to build-up via a chain of successful IRs, where emotional feedback occurred giving members of the group the feeling of wanting to go through a ritual again, 'especially when... solidarity [was] beginning to dissipate' (Collins, 2004, p. 146). For example, in the case of Gig Buddies where their FDO resulted in Theo and Jack signing up to take part in another Fringe activity in the future (silent disco). Group solidarity is not 'achieved' and static, but rather fluid and maintained. Thus, previous IRs in the lead up to the Fringe provide participants with the EE required for meaningful IRCs at the Fringe, with members *wanting* to continue interacting to increase their EE and reinforce solidarity.

Furthermore, pre-existing group solidarity ahead of arriving in Edinburgh is important because it sets up future IRs at the Fringe as socially successful. Discussion amongst members of small groups about what they are going to do in the future at the Fringe provides in-the-moment excitement, resulting in successful IRs and creating emotional feedback loops across IRCs prior to the Fringe. Collectively imagining what will happen at the Fringe can be part of meaning-making, and this is only possible when a group has a level of pre-existing solidarity, whereby members can engage in a

build-up of emotion leading to arrival. This dimension of priming ahead of the Fringe also augments Collins' ritual ingredients of 'mutual focus of attention' and 'shared mood' because it explains *how* these components were mutually agreed upon. That is, through imagining what the Fringe will be like, upon arrival in Edinburgh, groups have a shared understanding of where they should collectively direct their attention and how they hope to feel about it. At a group-level, the meaning of 'the Fringe' is co-constructed through these processes of shared imagination that enable shared understandings of 'the Fringe' to be carried across IRCs. In situations where some members of a group have previously attended the Fringe and newer members haven't, meaning is also 'handed down' to newer members, as was the case with Gig Buddies and Attractive Figures. This circulation of meaning is only possible because of pre-existing solidarity as maintained through emotional feedback amongst group members.

However, it is a particular kind of pre-existing solidarity that sets groups up for socially successful rituals at the Fringe. Explaining further, Collins (2014, p.2) states that solidarity is a 'feeling of belonging together in a common identity'. At the Fringe, this common identity is negotiated through belonging to the shared morality of the moral community of the arts and the initiation into or continuation of belonging to the Fringe Tribe, where the feeling of solidarity at a small group level connects to a shared emotional connection with others who share beliefs across micro and meso levels. Through this feeling of connecting with others, a small group is put in the best position to build on their solidarity. Collins (2014, p.7) explains this in the context of political action, stating that political groups become 'part of a discourse that defines what interests we think we are furthering, and who are in it with us'. This is vital to understanding what kind of solidarity is relevant at the Fringe because it isn't just solidarity with others in a small group that it is important, it is also solidarity with others who share in our interests and beliefs: everyone else at the sacred site who is 'in it with us'. As Collins (2014, p.7) emphasises, 'it is these symbol-formulated-interests that carry the Durkheimian solidarity of membership'. Processes of solidarity at a small group level therefore align with solidarity at a collective meso-level, and *this is set up in advance of attending the Fringe: pre-existing solidarity*.

Explaining this with examples, New Spin at the Citadel had pre-existing solidarity ahead of attending the Fringe, aligning with being a 'Leither' and feeling a sense of solidarity with others who shared this 'common identity', but this solidarity did not entail a meaningful Fringe experience. It was not the kind of pre-existing solidarity

which could be buttressed further at the sacred site because one element of their shared identity was in opposition to Fringe and its focus on the City Centre of Edinburgh. By contrast, Collective Whispering had already constructed a feeling of group solidarity in view of their shared commitment to training in performance and working in the arts. Chris expressed their group sense of affiliation with the devised and physical theatre community in their home city, seeing the Fringe as an opportunity to strengthen this affiliation through bringing knowledge from performing at the Fringe in the UK (see p.118). Their pre-existing solidarity had already been constructed through membership of the moral community of the arts and, in particular, their sense of identity connected to their interest in devised and physical theatre, setting themselves up for initiation into the Fringe Tribe. This was also similar for Madness Productions who were already committed to the community of student performing artists, Sea-salt Air to the professional theatrical community, and Lyra to the youth arts community. Their 'feelings of membership' to their small groups could be strengthened through engagement at the Fringe because the IRs they engaged in were an emotional continuation of what had come before.

In view of this, group solidarity and group identity are closely linked because solidarity is uniting in a common interest, which can be a dimension of a group's identity (Heider & Warner, 2010). Group identity can be built upon, develop, or change within IRCs at the Fringe, but these developments exist on a scale from minor to major. Changes may develop and build up slowly over time, or they may happen suddenly within one intense IR; however, at the major end of the scale, groups may reach a transformation of group identity which strengthens their pre-existing group solidarity to an extraordinary extent. In this sense, the intensity of the Fringe experience also becomes a marker of collective identity, where those who belong to the Fringe Tribe are those who have endured it. Comparing Gig Buddies and New Spin; Gig Buddies endured the Fringe's intensity and were able to claim ownership of 'the Fringe' as part of their group identity because they went through something together. New Spin, on the other hand, engaged in no such trial or commitment - their sense of collective identity was derived from being a 'Leither'.

Pre-existing solidarity as a ritual ingredient - understood with its interconnections to group identity - therefore explains why interventionist approaches to arts participation in policy are problematic. It is unlikely that a meaningful encounter for a group is a 'one off' experience - even if it is considered as a single engagement

with an art object - because there will be a chain of interactions preceding it that have fostered feelings of group solidarity (or not).

### 9.1.2 *Charismatic leadership*

Pre-existing group solidarity enabled groups to engage in IRCs at the Fringe in a meaningful way, but this 'priming' for IRs also seemed to be strongest within the groups that had a charismatic leader, such as in the case of Gig Buddies. Collins has written extensively on charisma (see Collins, 2020; Collins & McConnell, 2015), building upon Weber's charismatic authority to unpack how charisma is maintained in IRCs. What is important here is how charisma gets people 'on board' with the idea of the Fringe before it's even happened. This is primarily a kind of 'back-stage' charisma because leaders don't encourage their 'followers' through a public performance to the [often unknown] masses (as in front-stage charisma) but cultivate them in informal small group-level situations, such as through socialising, rehearsals, and group meetings (e.g., production meetings or Fringe planning meetings in the community). In these informal spaces, conversations about the Fringe take place, or photos or videos of previous visits are shared and, where there is a charismatic leader, the interaction is injected with emotions such as enthusiasm, motivation, and passion. As Collins notes, charisma mobilises people into action, and this is what we find in the lead up to the Fringe: charismatic leaders pump up their followers with high EE - they want to go, to be at the sacred site, and to experience for themselves first-hand what the Fringe is like. This is also only possible when there is pre-existing solidarity because members of the group *trust* their charismatic leader in a way akin to a guru in a spiritual or religious context. The narratives that charismatic leaders construct for their group are the group's 'truth': they set the tone of interactions and everyone else follows. This is an incredible power and can of course be exploited, leading to emotional domination, or what Collins labels EDOM (as in the case of Hitler at the extreme, which Collins uses as an example; Collins, 2018).

Within the groups included in this study, I did not observe extreme domination at the small group-level, but I did witness elements of domination that could be viewed as risk factors to exploitation. As we saw in the case of Gig Buddies, charismatic leaders can push their followers to go beyond what they ordinarily would deem

‘possible’. Charismatic leadership in this case heightened members’ positive emotions and increased their enthusiasm, but it could very easily lead someone into a situation that they don’t feel comfortable with. One way that we saw a group seeking to combat this was in the case of Collective Whispering where they used group-reflexivity through their ‘check-in’, providing an opportunity for self-expression for members of the group. Everyone in the group, including a charismatic leader, needs to have strong shared focus and shared mood within an IR – they need to be ‘on the same page’ as it were, constantly reflexive in order to minimise marginalisation. Nevertheless, although there is a risk factor of domination when there is a presence of a charismatic leader; in the context of this thesis, the presence of such leadership seemed to increase the potential for high EE and uphold the status of the Fringe as a sacred site by getting others excited about it. In the case of one of the production companies included (Madness Productions), merely belonging to the group where members had the opportunity to work with their charismatic leader (Beatrice) was enough to get them excited about the Fringe (“I wanted to work with Beatrice” one participant explains, with another saying, “I heard that Beatrice was doing the show for the Fringe and I thought ‘I have to audition’”). It was Beatrice as the charismatic leader that drew others into the idea of performing at the Fringe.

Charismatic leaders play an important role in emotionally priming their group for meaningful IRCs, where much of the work getting a group ‘on board’ with the idea of the Fringe comes from *within* a group. This is somewhat problematic in view of arts organisation and policy that seeks to ‘reach out to’ or ‘engage’ audiences, as well as to ‘break down barriers’ to arts participation, because meaning cannot be ‘given’ to a group; rather, it needs to be cultivated within IRCs. One way in which this cultivation happens is through a charismatic leader, where group members are more willing to engage in new activities (such as the arts) because of pre-existing trust.

The rationale expressed in this chapter thus far therefore argues that the two interrelated ritual ingredients of *pre-existing group solidarity* and *charismatic leadership*, can increase the potential for socially successful IRs for small groups at the Fringe (answering question two of this thesis). However, to understand this further and explain why some IRs succeed and others fail at the Fringe (question three), we need to examine the *situations* in which these IRs manifest. To do this, I argue that

*overcoming challenges* and *optimum group emotional arousal* are important to socially successful IRCs.

## 9.2 Situations and IRCs: Exploring question three

### 9.2.1 *Overcoming challenges*

In IRCs, small groups build upon their pre-existing solidarity to strengthen their relationships further and draw EE from doing so which enables them to have enough support within their group to exploit challenges for social gain. Nonetheless, there are a few key questions to unpack here: what kinds of challenges are ‘good’ challenges and which ones are ‘bad’? How much challenge is the optimum amount and when does a challenge become too much for a group to bear?

I argue that the crucial feature of a ‘good’ challenge at the Fringe is that it is experienced *in a group* where high EE has been carried over from previous IRs and ritual ingredients are high (i.e., group solidarity, charismatic leadership), whereby the feeling of being supported constructs a sense of *shared* challenge that can be overcome amongst a group. In this sense, it isn’t the challenge itself that is intrinsically good or bad, but it’s about the situation in which this challenge occurs and whether the group involved in interacting within this situation have the EE and ritual ingredients from previous IRs necessary to overcome it. Further, the context of the challenge is important, whereby groups who recognise the sacred status of the Fringe site are able to view their challenges as part of a ‘greater good’, whereby their ‘sacrifice’ is ‘worth it’ against the backdrop of a shared morality.

### 9.2.2 *How challenges can be overcome*

Building on the concepts of unexpected and expected challenges as discussed in chapter seven, it seems likely that an *expected challenge* holds a stronger likelihood of socially successful IRCs (but not necessarily a greater strength of group solidarity) when compared to unexpected challenges because there is an opportunity for the group to set themselves up for it – such as through a charismatic leader priming members for it – and to frame the challenge as part of what makes the Fringe

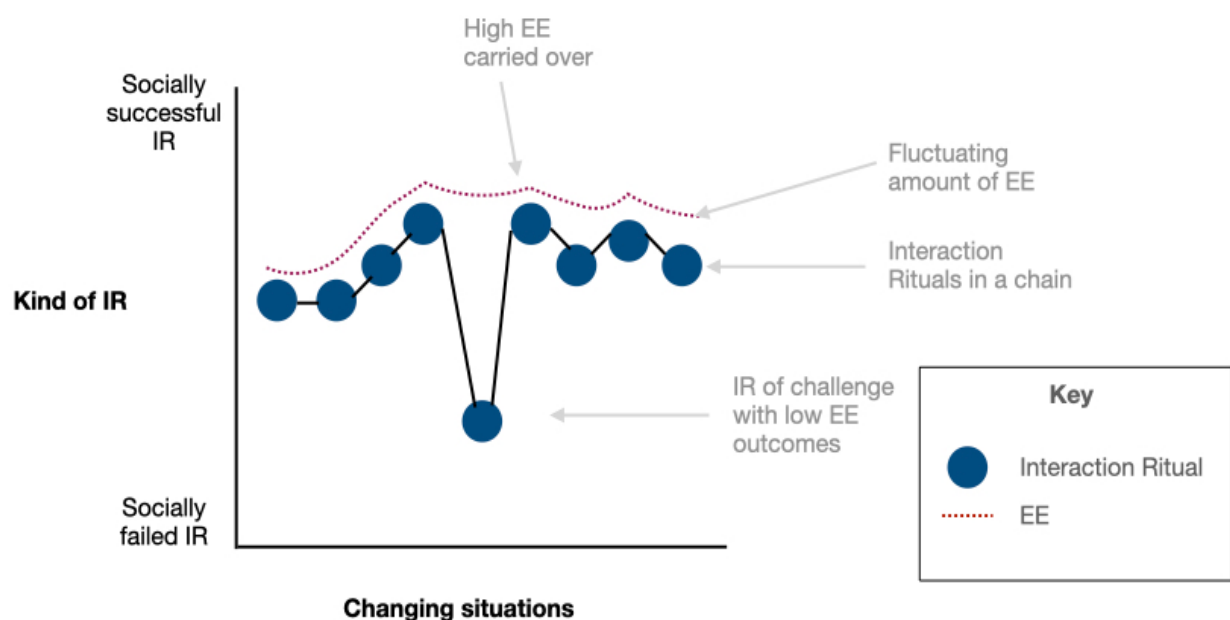
meaningful. The challenge is one that other groups have gone through before and shared stories about, and it contributes to one element of what sustains the Fringe as a sacred site, with overcoming it part of what constructs a sense of group belonging to the Fringe Tribe (a kind of 'initiation'). These are challenges such as doing a technical rehearsal in a tight timeslot when more time would be preferred (very common at the Fringe), an onstage performance challenge that pushes physical capacities (e.g., Collective Whispering), or navigating large crowds as an audience member (e.g., Lothian Autistic Society). Groups are aware of these challenges in advance of the Fringe and can pump one another up with the EE required to combat them. In addition, expected challenges often come with an element of sacrifice which raises the stakes of it such as 'giving up your job to do a full run' or 'saving up to come to the Fringe from another country' (2019 Fringe Society Marketing Plan, Internal Document). Overcoming the challenge makes the sacrifice 'worth it'. In this sense, expected challenges have a dimension of sacrality to them.

Unexpected challenges can be catalysts for strengthening group solidarity too, and there is a potential for heights of experience (high collective effervescence, high EE) that may be unobtainable within expected challenges. There is a sense of overcoming 'the impossible' which constructs a group feeling of invincibility i.e., 'if we can get through that unexpected challenge, we can get through anything', as per Gig Buddies' experience. This narrative is also upheld by the Fringe Society such as through their slogan of 'Leap Into the Unknown' used in 2018, where 'the unknown' is used to draw Fringe-goers out from a position of 'security' (conservatism) and into a position of 'stimulation' understood as 'excitement, novelty, and challenge in life', framed within a narrative of 'spontaneous fun' (2019 Fringe Society Marketing Plan, Internal Document). Moreover, the Fringe Society expand on this idea by stating that it is through navigating the 'unknown' where the greatest rewards are found. As communicated via their slogan in 2019; stepping into the unknown could 'make your Fringe'. Their campaign calls for Fringe participants to become 'risk takers' and 'rule breakers' which could lead to 'life-changing experiences' (2019 Fringe Society Marketing Plan, Internal Document). The 'unexpected' is part of the excitement of being at the sacred site.

EE can be carried over from previous IRs and build up in a chain, meaning that it acts as a kind of emotional resource to support in overcoming challenges, whether they are expected or unexpected. As we saw in the case of Gig Buddies, when there

is just one failed IR (or few) resulting in feelings of frustration, the group can draw on the high EE of previous IRs to get through the challenge. Further, the group can maintain their high EE in future socially successful IRs. When Attractive Figures experienced failed IRs, they were surrounded by socially successful ones, resulting in an overall feeling of the Fringe as meaningful. Theorising this, if the failed IR of challenge (or low EE ritual) is surrounded by high EE IRs, then the group can still overcome it. This is shown visually in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. How a challenge can be overcome by carrying over high EE from previous IRs and reinvesting it in future IRs that are socially successful**



### 9.2.3 When challenges cannot be overcome

Challenges may therefore become too much for a group to bear if there are not enough emotional resources available (what is carried over from previous IRs). Further, the absence of a shared construction of the Fringe as a sacred site within a group may mean that IRs fail because challenges cannot be understood as ‘worth it’ in view of a ‘greater good’. One example of this can be viewed through the example of North Edinburgh Arts’ Fringe Day Out:

I arrived at North Edinburgh Arts (NEA) where I waited with Amber, Faye, Alana, and Sally for a taxi. The taxi was late which was causing some worry, with Amber

concerned about another member of their group who was being picked up from her home in a different taxi. After some time, the taxi arrived, but the traffic on the way to the venue was terrible and it was looking like we were going to be late. When we eventually arrived, Katherine (the organiser of the trip from NEA) looked flustered and said, 'it's a disaster. They can't find our booking. They have said we can go into the venue as we have access requirements, but I need to sort this.' I helped with getting everyone into the venue and Katherine sorted the tickets. When we got in, Katherine said 'ah, well that was complicated, but we are in.' (Ethnographic fieldnotes, 4 August)

This experience involved several unexpected challenges (the late taxi, the traffic, the ticket booking problem), and in their second focus group, participants further commented that they were 'too far back to hear [the show] properly' and afterwards they had to just go home because there weren't 'any seats to go and have a drink'. One participant (Fran) also refused to join the second focus group because she 'couldn't find the venue' and didn't see the Fringe production; when I asked her to join the focus group, she looked 'quite grumpy' and she stated, 'you've got my opinion' (ethnographic fieldnotes). There was no sense of unified experience – one person was even separated from the group – and engagement with the Fringe resulted in reexperiencing of negative emotions (the expression of Fran's 'grumpiness').

This situation isn't dissimilar to Gig Buddies' experience of finding their venue in George Square where they experienced frustration (see pp.164-167); however, the ritual outcomes are markedly different. Why? Gig Buddies' challenge was surrounded by high EE rituals (it was a full 'day out'), and they had a charismatic leader who prepared them and guided them through it, telling them that the challenges are 'worth it' in view of the sacred status of the Fringe.

In sum of this section, challenges can be part of what makes an IRC succeed or fail (question two of this thesis); however, there are different kinds of challenges that are encountered differently for different groups dependent on social and emotional resources. Thus, the role of the Fringe Society is arguably not to remove these challenges but to find ways to provide groups with the resources to overcome them in a way that strengthens their group solidarity and the sacred status of the Fringe.

In the case of North Edinburgh Arts, there may have been logistical interventions that could have provided support such as a member of Society staff supporting in getting all the members into the venue, planning the schedule for the day, and recommending somewhere to have a drink afterwards. However, as we saw

in the case of the Citadel, logistics are only one element of a socially successful FDO. Space to learn about the Fringe through Fringe Society staff engaging in community activities with groups on their terms (e.g., at their sacred site(s)) and providing opportunities for groups to be reflexive in view of their engagement with the Fringe could be a useful starting point. Further, charismatic leaders who know and embody the beliefs of the Fringe Tribe enable their group to view challenges as opportunities through boosting EE, meaning that support needs to come from *within* the group too. The one-on-one relationships fostered between Society staff and charismatic leaders are important to building an understanding of how and why challenging experiences may be viewed as part of something bigger: a greater 'good' and something sacred.

#### 9.2.4 *Optimum emotional arousal*

The flow of emotional energy across IRCs for small groups also affects how they encounter different situations at the Fringe. EE in the individual enables those who participate in socially successful rituals to feel 'pumped up' and energised from their heightened emotions, able to derive meaning from their experiences. However, my fieldwork also stresses that there may be a peak of heightened experience – it's possible to have too much of a good thing. This is important to understanding what makes IRCs succeed or fail because a delicate balance of emotional energy is required for a socially successful IRs, where pushing beyond the emotional peak may result in IRs failing or having a flat feeling.

Comparing case studies one and two, we see that members of Collective Whispering noted several times that they felt the time they had at the Fringe was 'just right', performing three times to an audience and staying in Edinburgh for one week. Attractive Figures, on the other hand, stayed in Edinburgh for 4 weeks and performed a total of 26 productions, noting that the Fringe became repetitive and 'crazy making'. Attractive Figures entered what I call the 'danger zone' of interaction. They had a strong pre-existing group solidarity providing them with the EE necessary for socially successful IRs, but they reached a peak of successful interaction where it became a struggle to maintain the emotional high level of it, without leading to exhaustion. This is a need for what Collins (2004, p.109) theorises as 'middle levels of EE' which 'allows everything to proceed normally'. As the case of Attractive Figures shows; in amongst

the heightened group emotional experiences of performing together and going on day trips, Emily and Allegra carved out time for their friendship, engaging in 'ordinary' conversations and intentionally doing activities that they considered mundane such as doing their grocery shopping together. These middle-level EE IRs provided a bridge between high-level EE encounters to minimise the risk of their emotionally-intense experiences becoming severe.

Collins (2004), in part, explains how emotions cannot continue to increase to strengthen IR outcomes through his description of emotional satiation:

Why should high rituals end and why should people spend any part of their lives doing anything else? In the short run, interaction rituals come to an end because of emotional satiation... emotional arousal plateaus at some point; beyond this point, solidarity remains high for some period but mutual emotional arousal fades... This short-run satiation, however, does not eliminate the tendency to medium-run repetition of these rewarding situations... Successful IRs give individuals both emotional energy and membership symbols, which are resources easily invested in producing further IRs. (p.149)

Here Collins shows us how there will be a peak of emotional arousal which he describes as a 'physiological characteristic of emotions', whereby one cannot continue to engage in heightened levels of experience (Collins, 2004, p. 149). However, Collins only notes that this emotional arousal 'fades', whereas this thesis shows that high emotional arousal could transform positive emotions into in-the-moment negative emotions such as frustration (as per Attractive Figures).

Theorising this, as social density increases so too does the emotional payoff for group members in the form of EE (such as confidence, initiative etc.), but there is a peak of social density where it can become too much, leading to an emotional crash (exhaustion, interaction fatigue). An example of this from my fieldwork can be seen from production company Madness Productions where a participant noted that as a result of the intense social experiences of the Fringe they needed 'me time' that was 'away from it all' to recuperate, deciding to go to the cinema alone during the Fringe. This is also seen in arousal theory in psychology (Yerkes-Dodson law), but arousal theory assumes that EE is physiological, where stores are topped up from physical factors such as rest; whereas whilst these individual physiological factors are important – and Collins also acknowledges this – another important factor at the Fringe is *social* energy. Group members 'pick up' on the emotions of those around them, and this engages them more deeply with the Fringe experience: it is social density that

foregrounds emotional energy. Thus, in the example of the participant going to the cinema, the participant may have perceived this as ‘me time’ but they weren’t really ‘alone’, but rather separate from their performing group: it was also a social situation where they chose to be in an environment with others (at the cinema) where the interactional intensity would be lower than being with their performing company. What is important is for heightened emotional experiences to be surrounded by middle-level experiences in a chain, keeping EE at an optimum level for meaningful experience and ensuring that individuals in the group don’t push beyond the ‘danger zone’ and have an emotional crash.

There may be an ‘optimum emotional arousal’ across IRCs, where a delicate balance of high intensity rituals followed by middle-level IRs may be needed to ensure that the *chains* of IRs overall build up emotion in a way that heightens group solidarity and buttresses the Fringe as a sacred site. This has relevance to how the Fringe Society go about addressing burnout at the Fringe: they provide support for Fringe participants to manage their health and wellbeing, such as their range of Fringe Central events led by partner organisations, providing tips and strategies for a ‘mentally well Fringe’, running ‘mental health first aid 1-2-1s’, and offering silent ‘sanctuary’ spaces (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018b, 2019c). Nonetheless, these programmes are still embedded within the intensity of the Fringe, rather than allowing space for ‘ordinary’ IRs away from the high energies. Further, these programmes are primarily aimed at individuals and how they can psychologically support themselves and not at how groups can learn to navigate for themselves where their emotional ‘danger zone’ is.

In answering question three, whether a group has the ritual ingredients to harness situations of challenge for social gain is a core aspect of what makes IRCs at the Fringe succeed or fail. Further, viewing the amount of EE derived from an IR within the chain of IRs in which it exists is vital to understanding whether EE may become ‘too much’ – high EE doesn’t always entail successful IRs, if social density is too high. However, as explored in chapter four, meso-level emotional flow at the Fringe is also important to understanding meaning-making processes and why the Fringe is maintained as a sacred site.

### 9.3 Why emotional flow is important: Exploring question four

The relationship between social conditions and the situations in which IRCs manifest is not unidirectional from a microsociological perspective. That is, social conditions do not create interactional situations by way of cause and effect; rather, IRs create 'emergent and evolving sphere(s) of meaning established and negotiated through cycles of interaction' (Benzecry et al., 2017, p. 52). The meanings created within situations become part of the social conditions in which they take place, and they feed back on one another. As individuals become pumped up with EE as a result of a successful IR which they carry across different situations, an emergent emotional flow is created. Thus, social conditions can therefore also be understood as emotional conditions, whereby IRs take place against 'the backdrop of an ongoing flow of emotional energy' (Collins, 2004 p.125).

Within this view of conditions, collective effervescence can be viewed as part of the social fabric of the Fringe because heightened, shared emotional experiences build up to play a part in the construction of situations which are related to and influenced by socioemotional conditions. Small groups become emotionally aware of others going through similar experiences at the Fringe, this leads to collective effervescence which, in turn, heightens commitment to the Fringe Tribe and strengthens their within-group social bonds. There is a constant flow of emotions across situations which constructs an overall 'feeling' of a group's Fringe experience. As a participant from production company Sea-salt Air stated:

It is the scale of it that is extraordinary with the fringe isn't it? Which is that, that euphoria or negativity is felt by tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people because I am convinced that audiences pick up on the energy of venues because they are just so big the venues and it translates from performers to front of house crew to the technical crew and it does ebb and flow. It is irrefutably exciting to be at the fringe in the beginning of it, particularly that first weekend there's a real buzz of discovery from everyone involved, and the last weekend is always this wonderful odd bittersweet thing of people having the best time but also having no time, because they have nothing left to give. (FG1)

This participant articulates different levels of meaning, referring to 'venues' as emotional entities that express feelings which audiences can pick up on. This in itself is interesting because this participant sees venues as a kind of emergent property, whereby a venue is no longer just a building but has an emotional energy attached to

it, as created by the people, symbols, artistic objects, and interactions associated with it. Furthermore, there is a reference to the level of meaning of 'everyone involved', where this participant feels that there is an overarching emotional feeling that pervades the Fringe; however, importantly, this *changes*. It is exciting at times and exhausting at others, and the mechanisms of IRCs explain how these emotional conditions change.

The Fringe Society begin creating the emotional conditions of the Fringe well before it begins in August each year and this is part of what maintains and develops the shared meanings connected to the Fringe Tribe, buttressing the Fringe as a sacred site. What might feel like a new and unpredictable experience for those new to going to the Fringe has been constructed within previous interactions and sustained by organisations such as the Fringe Society. As Collins explains:

Situations are sometimes very unpredictable from a single participant's viewpoint. Situational action is predictable to a sociological observer who knows the individuals' IR chains (Collins, 2004, p. 142)

By following participants in the study, I was able to see how their 'new' experiences intersected with shared constructions of what a Fringe experience 'normally' looks like, such as staying out all night at pop-up bars, sharing accommodation with friends, and watching a wide array of productions. The Fringe Society pitch an experience that will take Fringe participants 'into the unknown' but, in reality, this 'unknown' is highly predictable for those who have an understanding of the *kinds* of experiences that the Fringe offers. These organisational messages can result in groups feeling let down, as we saw in the case of Attractive Figures, but these experiences can still be viewed as sociologically predictable. For Attractive Figures, the 'unprofessional' nature of the technical team was a shocking situation that they could never have foreseen, but from my perspective as a researcher having access to their preconceptions of the Fringe and understanding the kind of experiences that production companies might have, it was an unsurprising situation. Nonetheless, when groups were able to get 'on board' with the idea of the Fringe as a sacred site, such as Collective Whispering getting excited as they prepared their marketing materials, or Madness Productions who viewed it as the 'pinnacle' of all arts experience, they access a meaningful interpretation of the situations they experience which is shared by others who are members of the Fringe Tribe, feeding into the emotional conditions at the Fringe.

This meaningful emotional flow, however, can also be part of what constructs 'outgroups'. When newcomers to the Fringe visit without any prior commitment to the emotional and moral sentiment of it, there is a greater risk of feeling like an 'outsider', with it harder to engage in the meaningful interactions that may pull someone into the emotional flow of the Fringe. This may initially sound like a Bourdieuan explanation of cultural competence, whereby those who don't have the knowledge to understand the Fringe cannot derive meaning from it. However, the inability to connect to the emotional and moral sentiment of the Fringe may not be to do with a lack of knowledge in relation to the meaning of art objects (i.e., the knowledge to 'decode' it), but the dearth of interaction with others who feel emotionally and morally connected to these art objects (and meaningful social experiences which are connected to the symbols that enable art objects to have meaning). Namely, groups may feel disconnected from the Fringe Tribe because of low EE, making their experience energy depleting, rather than energy inducing.

The question of how the Fringe is upheld as sacred is also interwoven with meaning-making processes because meaningful experiences are able to imbue 'ordinary' situations with sacrality. However, as has been argued multiple times in this thesis, these meaningful IRs need to be *repeated*. As Durkheim stated:

There are occasions when this strengthening and vivifying action of society is especially apparent. In the midst of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become susceptible of acts and sentiments of which we are incapable when reduced to our own forces; and when the assembly is dissolved and when, finding ourselves alone again, we fall back to our ordinary level, we are then able to measure the height to which we have been raised above ourselves... To strengthen those sentiments which, if left to themselves, would soon weaken, it is sufficient to bring those who hold them together and to put them into closer and more active relations with one another. (Durkheim, 1912 [2016], p. 127)

The Fringe can be likened to such an 'occasion' which contrasts the profanity of the 'ordinary', where those attending share heightened emotional experiences across a chain of IRs.<sup>38</sup> When the Fringe ends, the meaning of shared experience needs to be upheld within a chain of IRs, and then re-lived and renewed within future IRs at the

---

<sup>38</sup> Whilst I argue here that festivals are sacred sites that contrast the ordinary, there are threats to the maintenance of this sacrality. In recent years there has been an increase in festivals, where it is possible to be engaging in arts festivals all year-round, moving from one festival city to another. One might ask: can there be too much festivalization? I would argue that there can be, and in order for something to stay sacred, it needs to be in contrast to 'everyday' experiences. An experience is sacred because it cannot be experienced all the time, but only in special circumstances.

Fringe. This latter part is particularly important because engagement with the Fringe as a meaningful experience is much more difficult within a one-off experience. This is also why the annual nature of the Fringe is important because groups can foster a relationship with the Fringe, and with the city where this meaning is enacted and re-enacted; if IRs are not recreated in the future, their meaning fades.

Durkheim's language of 'active relations' is apt here too because the emotional sentiment of social interactions needs to be kept alive at the sacred site. This partly explains why the case of Gig Buddies and New Spin are so different; members of Gig Buddies had multiple engagements with the Fringe, where after each successful IR, they reinvested their EE into new interactions, with some members going on to attend other festival activities across the rest of the month of August. The majority of those engaging in the Fringe from New Spin had a one-off, short visit to watch a production, with very little opportunity to re-activate their emotional energies from their experiences together, until their focus group. Lukas from the Citadel even recognised that making their group FDO visit 'an annual thing' to look forward to is important to its success in the future. Moreover, production companies often have a longer emotional engagement with the Fringe because they start preparing for it many months (sometimes even years) in advance. Maintaining the Fringe as a sacred site involves small groups repeating their socially successful IRs within the 'backdrop' of heightened emotional experiences shared by others (Collins, 2004 p.125).

Reflecting on these points together, the idea of an arts organisation, such as the Fringe Society, *building or creating* a community is short-sighted because everyone at the Fringe (Fringe Society staff included) is constantly part of an *emotional flow* of interactions, with various different levels of emotional feedback loops. Arts organisations, rather, play a role in contributing to this emotional flow which may be able to set groups up for socially successful rituals and maintain the status of the Fringe as a sacred site. The emotional sentiment that organisations permit, such as through marketing and branding, and the meaningful relationships that are cultivated within IRCs at the Fringe contribute to the emotional conditions of the Fringe. There are therefore challenges with engaging groups in the Fringe via one-off or short-term encounters because *chains* of IRs across different social levels are needed, where meaning-making begins in the wider moral community of the arts before even encountering the sacred site.

### 9.3.1 *'Performing' at the sacred site*

Another way in which groups contribute to the emotional conditions of the Fringe and uphold it as a sacred site is through a sociological 'performance' of the sacrality of the Fringe in public spaces, which has been cultivated in IRs leading to attending. The Fringe is a Goffmanian stage for groups to confirm (and sometimes develop or transform) their identity within IRs at the Fringe. The situation of the Fringe and a group's place within it is 'made real by [it] being acted out' (Collins, 2004, p. 16). These performances actualise the meanings embedded in IRs, displaying commitment to the moral community in public display for other members of the Fringe Tribe.

A festival is also particularly conducive to group affirmation through 'performance' because it makes use of *public* space. It is a site that can reveal aspects of social, cultural and political life on both a local and global scale, and it does this through its very public nature (Bennett et al., 2014). Interactions at the Fringe are performed in a way to be seen, where these performances bolster the emotional tone of the interactions. For example, in the case of the Citadel where Lukas immediately started initiating group performances of enjoyment when they arrived in the city centre, or Emily and Allegra's performance outside of their venue, pointing at their name on the posters to the entrance. The engagement with social media by the majority of the groups that were included in this study also reinforces the public aspect of this performance, whereby sharing moments of 'fun' online actualizes these emotions and provides an artefact that contributes to collective memory in the longer term, also publicly presenting their affiliation with the moral community of the arts through membership of the Fringe Tribe.

The Fringe Society and the various Fringe venues also hold an important influence here because they contribute to *defining* the situation of the Fringe and telling groups what the Fringe will be like in the lead up to it. This definition of the Fringe is then upheld and affirmed within IRs at the Fringe; as Collins (2004, p.24) notes, this aligns with the symbolic interactionist notion of the 'definition of the situation' which is the agreed-upon reality of those interacting. A key part of what defines the Fringe is socialising and moments of fun - often 'what appears trivial' (Beckman, 2014 in Fine & Corte, 2017). Groups *expect* that the Fringe will be enjoyable and exciting, where they will stay out late every night, often drinking alcohol and eating takeaway food, or where they may try things that they've never tried before, such as sharing a small flat with a

large number of people. These narratives of what will happen at the Fringe circulate before it begins in August, and they provide production companies and audiences with an idea of how to 'perform'.

The presence of a charismatic leader also enables 'performances' to happen smoothly, where group members easily feel drawn into the excitement of the Fringe. Whilst in the lead up to the Fringe and in 'ordinary' situations of everyday life, charismatic leaders prime their members in informal, backstage settings, engagement with Fringe activities during August in Edinburgh's city centre shifts charisma from backstage to frontstage (Collins, 2004, p. 24). As Goffman noted, 'we define the situation for those who observe the performance' (Goffman, 1956, p. 13) and, where there is a charismatic leader within a group, they construct the meaning of the situation for the rest of the group to observe and follow. This stresses the importance of *the people* involved in an arts experience; whereas previous research has tended to focus on the 'intrinsic' meaning of an art object, it is the presence of a charismatic leader (or people with certain levels of charisma if there is no 'leader', as was the case for Collective Whispering) that is important to how the art object is encountered.

Nonetheless, as we saw in the discussion in this chapter concerning optimum emotional arousal, the amount of Goffmanian performance at the Fringe can also reach a peak. Another dimension to why emotional exhaustion might ensue is an absence of Goffmanian 'back stage' time where 'the performer can relax' (Goffman, 1956, p. 70). The Fringe is founded upon a wider range of social interactions, where one may need to 'put on a show of participating' within certain situations, rather than enter into a natural flow of interacting, as Collins notes. This is how Attractive Figures became drained when they had to maintain enthusiasm when speaking with their 'backers' who they were living with – all their interactions were Goffmanian 'front stage' interactions because they felt the need to impress at all times. Constant front stage performing within IRs has implications for ritual outcomes – low EE. These kinds of forced IRs are energy draining and, across a chain of alike interactions, could lead to emotional exhaustion, as is often expressed by those participating in the Fringe ('suicide Wednesday').

The Fringe is upheld as a sacred site through acts of *doing* and *performing*; namely, participating in IRCs at the Fringe. IRCs are meaning-making processes, and they are the processes of sacralising the Fringe. The social conditions that maintain and

develop shared meanings for small groups change through flows of emotions and these flows of emotion influence conditions. On this view, conditions are intrinsically connected to the beliefs that circulate at the meso level and the success of IRCs at a small group level, whereby the meeting of these emotional sentiments can buttress the meaning of the Fringe as a sacred site if sentiments align. As the foundation of IRC theory argues, these meaning-making processes are strongest when there is bodily co-presence: people need to gather together *physically* at the sacred site.

Thus, just like ‘community’, the ‘sacred’ is something that is not static and must be maintained through repeated interactions. As Owen (2016, p. 108) explains, a distinction should be made between ‘sacred’ as something that you do (the Latin verb *sacrare* or adjective *sacer*) and as a term for a static object (a noun). Durkheim emphasises this in his work, arguing that collective *practices* determine what is sacred, using the adjectival form, stressing actions just as much as beliefs in his religious sociology (Owen, 2016, p. 108). Drawing on Durkheim, the Fringe is maintained as a sacred site through processes of *doing* – these processes of *sacrare* in IRCs. This is important because the sacred status of the Fringe would be under threat if groups could not continue to meet at the sacred site to experience collective effervescence with other ‘believers’, and if the Fringe Society and other arts organisations could not continue to construct an image of what the Fringe means within the moral community of the arts: ‘the largest arts festival in the world’.

#### 9.4 So, what can make the Fringe a meaningful experience?

Through identifying the key ritual ingredients at the Fringe, a key conclusion is that part of what makes the Fringe meaningful is the small group level, where pre-existing solidarity and charismatic leaders are important to meaning-making processes. This elucidates that meaning is constituted in interaction ahead of arriving at the sacred site and continues after it, connected to shared beliefs and emotions. Further, the Fringe may also be meaningful for groups when challenges can be overcome in a way that strengthens group solidarity, but emotional and social resources are needed for this to be the case. Nonetheless, the situations of the Fringe that are encountered by groups – such as those that are perceived as challenging – are also embedded within a shared morality that is upheld through heightened emotional flow within and across

groups, buttressing the Fringe as a sacred site. The Fringe is meaningful when groups gather together in-person and can 'tap into' this emotional flow - possible when a group already has a sense of affiliation to the moral community of the arts, where the Fringe is considered sacred.

These meaning-making processes are important to understand in research because, as identified in chapters one and two, the current approach in cultural policy is to try and articulate 'cultural value'. Through attempting to do this, previous academics have sought to understand how to 'capture' value, exploring the 'impact' of the arts in our society (Walmsley, 2020). However, this view sets up an impossible task because there is no 'absolute value' to be measured; rather, there are chains of interactions that may (or may not) imbue arts experiences with meaning. Further, a situation is also pre-empted and constructed within previous interactions ahead of Fringe experiences, so interaction with an art object is not an isolated experience, as tends to be the dominant way of thinking in current interventionist approaches, for example when evaluating one-off arts engagements for their positive outcomes. This research provides an alternative approach to cultural value, suggesting that IRCs can help to explain what does make arts' experiences important – they connect to our pasts, emotions, morality, and relationships – and, when these experiences are particularly intense and have the extra component of a physical location where many people who belong to the moral community of the arts come together, they take on an extra special, sacred level of importance where these meaning-making processes become *sacrare* processes.

## Chapter 10: Implications and conclusions

Drawing upon the key conclusions of the last chapter regarding what can make the Fringe a meaningful experience, this chapter seeks to explore some of the implications of the argument expressed. Firstly, I discuss the relevance of my key conclusions for the Fringe Society and for cultural policy, ultimately stressing that my thesis provides an alternative frame through which arts organisations can discuss their 'value' and calling for policymakers and academics to take seriously microsociological approaches as ways to better understand why the arts are important. I then reflect on the COVID-19 pandemic which led the Fringe to be cancelled in 2020 for the first time since 1947. Namely, this thesis is being written at an important sociological moment where, due to a global health emergency, individuals and groups are unable to meaningfully experience the arts in-person due to regional and national social distancing and lockdown restrictions, making it hard for IRCs to happen at all: what does it mean if groups cannot gather at the sacred site of the Fringe?

### 10.1 Implications for the Fringe Society and for cultural policy

**1. Meaning-making happens at the small group level. One way to access this group level may be through a key individual who regulates the emotions of a group: charismatic leaders are important.**

#### *Relevance to the Fringe Society*

At present, the Fringe Society set out to support individuals, communities, and organisations to participate in the Fringe. For example, in relation to 'removing barriers' to the Fringe (important to sustaining their ethos of 'open access'), the Fringe Society state that they will 'work in collaboration with individuals and organisations' to address barriers and ensure that the Fringe is 'a viable stage' for 'artists at all stages of their career' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a, p. 8). Recognition of how meanings are cultivated and sustained in small groups is absent. Thus, strategizing how to engage with groups should be an important part of the Society's future plans to optimise meaning-making at the Fringe.

As was explored in chapter eight, the presence of a charismatic leader within a group is one way that IRCs at the Fringe may become particularly meaningful, as those with charisma prime other members of their group for socially successful IRs. This is an important insight for the Fringe Society, whereby staff need to identify charismatic leaders and view them in the context of their roles as emotional regulators (rather than as isolated individuals).

Fringe Society staff communicate *directly* with potential charismatic leaders through remote communication via email or telephone, or in-person, or *indirectly* through marketing campaigns (i.e., messaging shared in printed materials and online via websites and social media). The meanings embedded in these interactions circulate across the primary and secondary realms of the IRCs at the Fringe model (see p.76). Fringe Society staff are both part of creating EE within IRs as a ritual outcome (direct communication) and mediating EE through circulating beliefs and symbols (indirect communication). In the case of the former, if charismatic leaders come away from their interaction with the Fringe Society with the ritual outcome of high EE, this emotional energy may flow into their future interactions with members of their group. Equally, this can work the opposite way; a socially failed interaction can result in charismatic leaders turning their group members away from the Fringe Society, thereby viewing them as outsiders. This was indeed the case with one of the other groups included in this research not presented as a case study; the charismatic leader had got frustrated over a music rights issue with the Fringe Society which she brought up in a focus group. This feeling of frustration immediately, emotionally caught on in the rest of the group, as they all shared their dislike of the Fringe Society, also pointing to feeling like their venue was physically distant from Fringe Society activity. They made a point of stating that they see their identity as separate from the Fringe Society and that their 'Fringe' did not include them, rather positioning their venue organisation as important for their meaningful IRs at the Fringe. Emotions *flow* and no interaction with Fringe Society staff is an isolated interaction.

Although it may not always be possible to determine who the person within a group is who can emotionally influence others, what I found from my fieldwork was that it was normally the organiser/director (as seen in the four case studies presented: Jamie, Gig Buddies; Lukas, Citadel; Chris & Julia, Collective Whispering; Emily, Attractive Figures), and this was the person who tended to have a relationship with a member of staff at the Fringe Society. As we saw from chapter six, Emily from

Attractive Figures explained how she contacted a member of staff at the Fringe Society and then disseminated information she received with the rest of the group. She was the point of contact for staff, but she was also the person in Attractive Figures who got other members excited about the Fringe; she had been before and was able to share stories and construct an idea for other group members of what the experience would be like for them. Also, in the case of the Citadel, Lukas attended multiple Fringe Society events and created relationships with Fringe Society staff, including myself. This led him to talk of wanting to make the Fringe an ‘annual thing’ for their group. Thus, whilst members of the Citadel may not yet feel emotionally drawn to the Fringe as a sacred site, Lukas is one key person who recognises the importance of making their visit a ritual which may, over time, start to create emotionally meaningful experiences.

Fringe Society staff need to specifically articulate to these charismatic leaders not just *what* particular information is, but *how* to disseminate it to other members of their group. Explaining this with an example, in the case of the Citadel, the information about who the Fringe Society are and what the Fringe Days Out scheme can offer stayed at the ‘staff level’ of organisational partnership, whereby EE was fostered between Fringe Society staff and Citadel staff through the sharing of this information. However, it did not ‘filter down’ to the service user level.<sup>39</sup> What was missing here was specific guidance from the Fringe Society about what and how to communicate with Citadel service users.

This messaging needs to come from *within*-group IRCs, rather than feeling like it is being ‘imposed’ from ‘outsiders’. Lukas (the potential charismatic leader in this case) did arrange for a member of Fringe Society staff to come and talk to service users about navigating the Fringe, but this communication was quickly forgotten by group members. Rather, learning about the Fringe and understanding its meaning needs to be embedded within existing IRC practices. In this example, New Spin meet every Friday for group activities where they construct and maintain their group solidarity. It is in this context where it is most likely that Lukas could pump members up with EE in relation to the Fringe, such as through Fringe-themed games, leaving Fringe programmes on the tables whilst members are informally chatting, and having

---

<sup>39</sup> I also observed this not ‘filtering down’ in the case of North Edinburgh Arts (Knit and Natter), Lothian Autistic Society, and Space (formerly Broomhouse).

Fringe Society staff participate in these activities. This kind of support from the Fringe Society requires an in-depth understanding of how groups operate (which will vary from group to group) and providing bespoke guidance to charismatic leaders on where best to integrate 'the Fringe' into pre-existing IRC practices. Fringe Society support cannot be a 'one size fits all' model.

### *Relevance to cultural policy*

As outlined in chapters one and two of this thesis, the narratives embedded within cultural policy prioritise the impact or value of culture on and for individuals and 'static' communities. By contrast, this thesis has shown that meaning-making processes exist at a *group* level, where individual meanings are derived from small group-level experiences. Meaning is cultivated within IRCs, and these chains are fragile, with EE needing to be continually reinvested to uphold meanings and strengthen group solidarity. On this view, festival experiences which are normally considered as 'artistic' encounters cannot be separated from group-level social experiences because they are created in and through IRCs which are intrinsically social. The meaning of the Fringe is therefore not an outcome – as in instrumental views of culture - but a *social process* that needs to be maintained.

Energies from those working within the creation and implementation of policies oriented towards inclusion and equity should prioritise activities that support meaning-making for pre-existing groups, be those groups already engaged in the arts or not. This involves consideration of how arts interventions can support pre-existing identities and how these identities may meaningfully develop through engagement with arts experiences, recognising that group identities can be positioned against certain arts experiences and organisations, resulting in resistance (as we saw in the case of the Citadel).

One might counter this argument by saying that policymakers focus on 'communities' as well as individuals. However, these communities are positioned as static, where the entry point to these communities tends to be through the individual (see pp.26-27,29-30). As I have shown in this thesis, there are complex and fluid feedback loops across different social levels, whereby small group beliefs intersect with larger collectives and imagined communities, whereby emotions play a key role

in maintaining a shared morality for those who engage in the arts. Ultimately, the social level of the 'small group' is missing. Creative Scotland note:

We are committed to increasing the quantity and quality of opportunities for everyone – to extend their *understanding of themselves* through engagement with the arts, screen and creative industries. [my emphasis]

This sentence implies that one's sense of self can be derived through engagement with the arts. However, this sense of 'self' is intimately connected to group identity, where these meanings are created through IRCs – we become who we are through and with others. This thesis therefore provides an extension in language for policymakers: the conception of 'the group' where meaning-making happens, thereby providing a bridge between the individual and community levels currently discussed.

**2. Meaning-making at the Fringe begins before arrival at the sacred site and continues after it. It extends outwards from art objects and is connected to shared emotions, morality, and beliefs.**

### *Relevance to the Fringe Society*

It is important that relationships between the Fringe Society and the small groups who they engage with are sustained and long-term, ensuring that their role in providing support and bolstering the emotional sentiment of the Fringe as a sacred site foregrounds IRCs for groups before, during, and after the Fringe.

Long-term engagement with groups is something that the Fringe Society already seek to provide, albeit tending to use the language of 'individuals' and 'organisations'. They have year-round participant services and community engagement staff who communicate with groups in the lead up to Fringe participation and, in some cases, afterwards as well, such as is the case of community groups who have engaged with Fringe Days Out for several years. Further, they provide support services outside of the month of August such as through networking and publicity events for production companies wishing to learn more about how to find a venue.

Nonetheless, this research highlights that offering these services may not be enough. As shown through the case study of the Citadel, groups need more than the sentiment of 'open access' to encourage them to participate, they wish to be *invited* to

participate and to be 'physically involved'. Further, many groups may not be fully aware of the services available year-round, with the support available needing to be better articulated within IRs with the Fringe Society; for example, a participant from Madness Productions noted in relation to Fringe Central, 'I have never heard of it', despite being in communication with the Fringe Society. Communication of the support the Society provide needs to be more than an email or online representation (e.g., website or social media post), it needs to be interwoven in bodily IRCs with the Fringe Society too.

It is recommended that the Fringe Society reach out to groups and to ask them how they wish to be supported or involved in the Fringe and providing support, rather than waiting for groups to reach out to them: providing an 'invitation'. However, this needs to be done in a meaningful and sustained way. Through my ethnographic work, I informally 'hung out' and engaged with my community group participants outside of attending the Fringe with them. This included knitting with members of Knit and Natter, attending a playgroup with Dads in Edinburgh through Dad's Rock, going to a science fair at Score Scotland, and playing games and singing with members of New Spin at the Citadel. These interactions on the surface feel unconnected to the Fringe, but my participation in them allowed me to create meaningful relationships with these groups in IRCs, whereby I could talk about the Fringe on the terms of my participants, rather than the other way around. As we saw in the case of the Citadel, the meaning of their Fringe Day Out was negotiated through participating in my focus groups, and the opportunity to talk about their experiences. They learned about the Fringe Society through in-person IRCs at their own sacred site.

This kind of direct engagement with groups is resource heavy and requires the time of Fringe Society staff to build meaningful relationships with groups to know how and when support is required. Nonetheless, because there is a 'time-decay of emotional energy' (Collins, 2004, p. 140), where one-off or short-term interactions cannot 'prolong' or 'store' meaning in symbols (Collins, 2004, p. 81), I argue that this resource investment in regular, direct communications with groups is vital to meaning-making at the Fringe.

The notion that meaning-making extends out from transactional engagements with art objects and is embedded in social relations may be greeted with frustration by policymakers and researchers who have stressed that the art object itself is ignored within research, prioritising ‘other’ non-artistic outcomes (e.g., Acord & Denora, 2008, p. 226; Dowlen, 2020, p. 9), and those who support an intrinsic value of the arts approach (as charted historically in Belfiore & Bennett, 2008). I respond that all dimensions of the intrinsic-instrumental argument are tied to the same view of art as something that can be separated from social structure to either have innate qualities or produce societal outcomes. An art object *cannot* be separated from social experience – it cannot be ignored because by researching social processes, we are researching artistic processes and vice versa. There is no ‘outcome’ as per a single instance of cause and effect where, for example, a one-off theatre encounter improves wellbeing, but a *chain* of meaning-making processes shared and created with others across situations. As Goffman argued, “there is no privileged reality standing outside of situations, but only a chain of situations and preparation for (and aftermath of) situations” (see Collins, 2004, p. 19). To those who may feel a social approach ‘reduces down’ some kind of innate ethereal quality of the arts, I respond with Durkheim’s definition of religion applied in the context of the moral community of the arts: the community is an emergent reality with a moral structuring power, and its social origin does not ‘reduce down’ the meaning of arts engagement but creates and sustains art’s ‘real’ meaning.

Connected to this, this thesis highlights that cultural policymakers need to re-think how they currently understand the relationship between art objects and communities. The Arts Council England strategy for 2020-2030 states:

...we believe that everyone, everywhere should benefit from public investment in creativity and culture, given their power to fulfil us, and to transform the communities in which we live and work (Arts Council England, 2020a, p. 15)

The moral community of the arts is not something ‘everyone’ can engage with unless they have specific memberships to groups that provide the ritual outcomes needed to derive meaning from membership symbols. Some people will find meaning through different kinds of experiences at different sacred sites, such as the way that the

building of the Citadel Centre was perceived as sacred because of its location in Leith which was an important symbol of belonging for that group. This isn't to say that there is no way to engage new people with arts experiences or to derive meaning from them, but it is a call to view arts experiences as part of a chain of social interactions, where group-level experiences are analysed as complex socioemotional processes. This perspective constructs a cultural policy that puts at the centre of 'transforming communities' the situations and conditions that allow groups to make meaning, rather than the interaction between 'static' communities or individuals and an art object.

Another implication for policymakers is in relation to funding structures, where more sustainable funding models are required to allow groups to make and sustain meaning in group-level IRCs across situations and contexts (both at the site of the arts engagement itself and beyond it). For example, at present, Creative Scotland fund their 'portfolio' organisations (Regularly Funded Organisations - RFOs) for three years and other individuals and organisations for 'time limited projects' (e.g., their Open Project Fund), as well as provide a small number of grants for 'targeted programmes'. Whilst RFO funding offers some limited sustainability across several years, like all of the Arts Councils in the UK, Creative Scotland's approach is primarily project-based, individual or organisational-led and relatively short-term. This overlooks the importance of small groups and their meaningful engagement with organisations in *chains* of IRs, whereby meaning is embedded within social relations *beyond* immediate engagement with an art object. That is, project funding potentially brings people together to construct a meaningful 'group', but the social relations fostered, and the EE and meanings cultivated within these social interactions will quickly dissipate if they are not maintained in future IRCs. Whilst it could be argued that RFOs provide a foundation in which project-funded groups can construct meaning within, in reality this landscape is fragile, whereby a few years is not long enough for RFOs to provide long-term meaningful support, with groups existing in a culture of precarity as groups are continually made, dismantled, and re-made and meanings continually negotiated and renegotiated in a changing social climate. This is congruent with Summers-Effler's (2007) assertion that social systems are not stable, but rather fluid and varied. In view of this, groups need opportunities to form and maintain longer-term meaningful group solidarities in view of a consistent backdrop of institutions in the moral community of the arts, where there isn't the risk of groups falling apart as soon as funding ends.

**3. The Fringe provides opportunities for challenges to be overcome, with this resulting in strengthened group solidarity for those with enough emotional and social resources.**

*Relevance to the Fringe Society*

The Fringe has a longstanding reputation as being an experience that is high risk – financially and emotionally - where many come away from it exhausted and having lost (potentially large) sums of money. I want to be clear that this thesis does not advocate for exploiting individuals, leaving them with no emotional or economic resources. When IRs fail, as they often do when the stakes are high (there is a ‘danger zone’ of interaction as outlined in chapter eight), the consequences may be grave, such as depression or a ‘desire to escape’ (Collins, 2004, pp. 50–52). Lack of emotional and economic resource may contribute to failed rituals and therefore feelings of complete disconnection from the Fringe Tribe, meaning some people may never come back.

However, although some IRs fail in this way, there are challenging experiences which are not only tolerable by groups, but they can be part of what makes the Fringe have the important status that it has. Challenges can increase chances of meaningful experiences when they are the *right kind* of challenges. In this sense, the ‘support’ that the Fringe Society seek to provide to ensure ‘a valuable and meaningful experience for all’ (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2018a) should include articulating to those interested in attending what challenges could occur and how they could be managed and negotiated in a way that improves their Fringe experience.

The Fringe Society already go some way to equip groups to deal with challenges, such as through providing extensive and detailed support for production companies in relation to ‘putting on a show’, including a range of toolkits and handbooks with tips and guidance on what happens at the Fringe, as well as direct communications with community groups to discuss their needs in relation to their Fringe Day Out. Nevertheless, there is tacit knowledge that members of the Fringe Tribe will have in the way of cultural and symbolic resources, such as in relation to the hierarchy of venues, which is not communicated to participants because it is nuanced, hard to articulate and tends to come from lived experience of the Fringe. This ‘knowledge’ is not fixed and may be contested (e.g., the reputation of venues develops

and changes each year), but the *kinds* of experiences the Fringe offers can be articulated. A dearth of this tacit knowledge may mean that groups have unmet expectations of the Fringe, as we saw in the case of Attractive Figures, making it more difficult to exploit challenges for social gain. The Fringe Society should therefore consider making groups more aware of this tacit knowledge, and of how groups will need to navigate a turbulent and changing landscape, highlighting that this can be part of what makes the Fringe meaningful.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, Society staff need to recognise and be honest about when challenges may be becoming too much and when it might be necessary to provide extra emotional resources for groups to be able to overcome challenges. This could include offering longer-term health and wellbeing support, rather than one-off sessions which only reach a limited number of participants and providing more extensive networking programmes that extend out from just the month of August, considering also that different groups will need different kinds of support.

However, providing bespoke and longer-term support is a resource intensive endeavour, and supporting and preparing groups for challenge is not easy. The majority of the Fringe Society's income is from commission and fees connected to their box office, advertising, registration fees, sponsorship, and their Fringe Friends (membership) scheme, with their expenditure primarily going on box office services and infrastructure, supporting artists, promotion and advocacy, marketing, and staffing (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2019d). The suggestion of increasing the amount of support they currently provide and tailoring this more specifically to group needs is one that would require increased income or funding to execute. This is a major challenge in a landscape of limited resources and funding, especially in view of the cancellation of the majority of Fringe events in 2020 due to COVID-19 which has affected infrastructure and income streams (see pp.236-237). Future research needs to be carried out to identify how the Fringe Society can enable groups to draw on their own within-group social and emotional support to overcome challenges on their available organisational resources (e.g., staffing, time, money). Whilst this is a difficult task, it is a worthwhile area of future investigation because groups need to trust the

---

<sup>40</sup> Whilst there are books available written by Fringe Tribe members to communicate some of this tacit knowledge to groups wishing to attend (e.g. Fisher, 2012; Gracey & Egan, 2014), finding these resources is currently on the onus of the groups themselves which requires them to know where to look for them.

Fringe Society that, if they are emotionally vulnerable in the context of the Fringe, there will be support there to get them through. One production company participant told me that it is important to have a 'safe space for people to be vulnerable' and this is key to overcoming challenge: challenges are not something to be 'fixed' but a sense of 'we are all in this together' is needed.

### *Relevance to cultural policy*

The dominant interest in UK policymaking has been on how the arts can 'benefit' individuals and society, with particular attention paid to 'positive' experiences, in view of justifying provision of public funding (Arts Council England, 2020a; Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016; The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, 2017; The Scottish Government, 2020). The importance of challenging experiences to group-level meaning-making, whereby in-the-moment, shared 'negative' emotions may result in stronger feelings of group membership, is nearly absent.

The key implication of this for policymakers is to consider individual emotional experiences - which may involve a range of emotional experiences, some of which may be challenging - in view of group memberships and the situations in which they are manifest, as well as exploring them in view of the interactions before, during, and after engagement with the arts. An in-the-moment feeling of frustration, for example, does not mean that an arts intervention has 'failed'. As Collins (2004, p. 129, 139) notes 'short-term emotional experience tends to flow' into the 'long-term emotional makeup' (i.e., EE), whereby EE should be studied 'in relation to the kind of situation occurring at the moment, and within the chain of situations from the immediate past'. 'EE is an empirical variable', and it would be possible for government bodies to fund research into how best to 'follow' the experience of groups 'across chains of interactions' to understand 'shifts of EE' (Collins, 2004, p.133, p.140). Such research could further explain why groups feel certain arts experiences are 'not for us' in contexts beyond festivals and support the creation of interventions to enable groups to overcome challenges and integrate the meaning of arts experiences into pre-existing group identities.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Collins (2004, pp.133-140) provides detailed guidance on how to measure EE which could be used in future research.

**4. The Fringe is a ‘sacred’ site. The Fringe Society play a role in constructing and upholding meaningful experiences at this site, such as through slogans, emotional energy and collective memories.**

The collective emotions of those who attend the Fringe play a key role in maintaining high EE. This has been discussed earlier in the thesis in view of the Fringe Society, such as how the branding that the Fringe Society construct and emit can play a role in fostering or feeding into meaningful group interactions; for example, their social media hash tags such as #IntoTheUnknown (2018) used to create excitement around the Fringe as a ‘a place where new discoveries wait around every corner’ (BBC, 2018), and #MakeYourFringe (2019) to encourage Fringe participants ‘take a chance on something new’, whereby ‘everyone’ is welcome. These slogans are more than just marketing tools, they have an emotional sentiment. They tell participants that the Fringe is exciting and that experiences will be novel, with the ‘unknown’ positioned as part of the excitement, all underpinned by a shared morality emphasising open access, diversity of artforms, social and ‘fun’ festival experiences, and placing ‘the arts’ at the forefront. This makes it easier for small groups to invoke these meanings within their small group interactions at the sacred site, fostering emotional flow between, within, and across different groups of people who attend the Fringe.

The Fringe Society also uphold the sacred status of the Fringe through sharing images and stories from previous Fringes which become a kind of ‘collective memory’ which future participants can invoke. They uphold the sacred status of the Fringe in their role as the ‘keeper’ of the Fringe’s history, preserving the origin legend. They do this through physically preserving archival records and displaying and selling historical posters in the Fringe shop on the Royal Mile, as well as a special merchandise campaign to ‘get your own piece of Fringe history’ for 2020 when the in-person Fringe could not happen due to COVID-19. It is through maintaining and emitting the ethos of this history that is the most powerful for groups: through positioning themselves as the largest open access performing arts festival and grounding this in the festival’s origin, they keep alive the collective memories that make the Fringe sacred. These folkloric practices, which happen across the Fringe Society’s online and offline marketing channels, contribute to creating the prospect of future excitement that generates in-the-moment excitement as a form of ‘priming’ for successful IRCs (Collins, 2004, p. 119).

Thus, the implication for the Fringe Society is to recognise that they play this role in upholding the symbol of the Fringe as a sacred site, and that these slogans, images, and other marketing materials and narratives that the Society communicate contribute to socially successful IRCs for groups - or socially failed rituals if imagined conceptions don't meet the reality of the experience - and to heightened collective emotional experiences for Fringe participants. Through this recognition, the Fringe Society could consider doing more to draw on the Fringe's history – and the group stories that make up this history – to build on and maintain the symbolic construction of what Fringe Tribe membership means. It is through group's connecting their own identities to the history of the Fringe and what it stands for that it's sacred status can be upheld and invoked in IRCs at the Fringe.

### *Relevance to cultural policy*

Understanding where sacred sites exist in the context of the arts, who engages in meaning-making practices at them, why they have come to be sacred and how they are maintained through in-person IRCs poses a challenge for policymakers. As Durkheim observed 'anything can be sacred', and it is society who negotiates what is sacred through meaning-making practices (Durkheim, 1912 [1995], p. 35). Thus, the challenge is knowing which groups venerate which places and how they have come to associate arts buildings, situations, and contexts as sacred, equally determining when a group's sacred site is found elsewhere. To do this would require funding research that follows different groups experiences across time to understand what they venerate and why. Yet, this may be resource intensive from a financial and time perspective, and the findings of such research may be harder to implement than the reports and statistics currently commissioned by government and funding bodies, which often produce clear statistical or brief results to support in decisions regarding where investment is needed (e.g., Taking Part surveys; see Department for Digital, Culture, Media, 2020). Changing how a group creates meaning is not yet understood, and indeed the ethical questions around whether the arts should change how a group already makes meaning needs to be posed and explored. If a group already has a sacred site outside of the arts, should they change where they find meaning, and why? It remains for future research to explore these challenges and questions.

## **5. ‘Meaning-making’ is an alternative frame through which arts organisations can discuss their ‘value’ and the role they play in fostering socially successful IRCs.**

Whilst future research should explore how to optimise IRCs for meaning-making in view of policy priorities, this thesis provides a new framework and language for arts organisations which can be used within the practices of the Fringe Society and adapted through cultural policy practice to support other organisations to articulate their ‘cultural value’. It augments and makes processual ‘value’ through the language of ‘meaning-making’, shifts the focus from individual transactions to group processes across situations and contexts, and highlights shared emotions, morality, and beliefs as key dimensions of why meaning-making happens at a sacred site. Thus, the frame of meaning-making – as a deeper and more nuanced way of articulating value – supports arts organisations and policymakers in their endeavour to understand and explain why the arts are important to individuals and to society and spotlights a new level of analysis: the small group.

Essential to moving cultural policy forward and to *inviting* groups into arts experiences – not just leaving open the doors and expecting individuals to find their way in – is to support a radical agenda of creating policy founded upon microsociology, where group-level interactions and situations are taken seriously. On this view, we stop coming to the conclusion that ‘culture is bad for you’ because we are stuck in endless cycles of social reproduction (Brook et al., 2020a) and start recognising that ‘interaction ritual is a mechanism of change’ if we can provide the ‘potential occasions’ by way of arts experiences to allow for within-group meaning-making and ‘ritual mobilization’ (Collins, 2004, p. 43).

### **10.2 What does this research mean in the context of COVID-19?**

Fringe 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Fringe Society coordinating a range of online activity for participants to engage in digital arts experiences. At the time of writing, it’s hard to say how this cancellation may impact upon meaning-making processes at the Fringe in the long-term because Fringe 2021 has not yet happened. However, drawing on the insights of this thesis, it is possible to

theorise the implications of this cancellation, reflecting on them also in view of the immediate responses from participants in the media. Namely, I suggest that without the opportunity to physically gather in Edinburgh for Fringe 2020, there is a collective sense of loss which provides some sense of solidarity; however, this is weaker than in-person solidarity. Through the loss of group assembly at the sacred site, the opportunity to generate EE in the lead up to, during, and after the Fringe is likely lost as well, leaving little opportunity to reinvest and reinforce EE in future meaningful interactions, with the 'group' reduced to isolated individuals, rather than members of something greater than themselves. This is not a wholly bleak picture because going through a shared, global unprecedented situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic may create shared emotions (albeit at a distance) that provide some sense of solidarity, alongside online communications expressing these collective emotions, and this may provide some opportunity to maintain a sense of belonging to the moral community of the arts, and to the Fringe Tribe. Nonetheless, drawing on the insights of this thesis, it seems the sacred meaning of gathering together in-person in Edinburgh cannot be replaced.

#### *10.2.1 Absence of group assembly (bodily co-presence)*

Collins (2004) argues that group assembly (bodily co-presence) is essential to socially successful interaction (Collins, 2004, p. 48). People need be *physically* assembled in order for IRCs to contribute to group solidarity, where 'interaction mediated by telephone, internet, or other distant media, are weak in producing emotional amplification and micro-rhythmic entrainment, and thus generate less solidarity and EE' (Collins, 2014). Indeed, in Collins' own work exploring the COVID-19 pandemic, he argues that IR is weaker when using digital media when compared to face-to-face interaction because 'it is more difficult to achieve high levels of mutual focus of attention and rhythmic coordination' (Collins, 2020b, pp. 495–496).

Scholars have questioned the assertion that people must be bodily co-present for emotional entrainment, such as Boyns & Loprieno, (2013, p. 33) who argue that IRC theory 'limits itself by emphasising face-to-face interaction' and that 'co-presence' can be fostered within 'internet-based, parasocial relationships'. Ling (2008) has suggested that mobile phone communication can produce medium-strength 'mediated

ritual interaction' but, as Collins has reiterated; even in this case, solidarity amongst phone users is still stronger amongst those who also meet face-to-face (Collins, 2014). This thesis aligns with this second argument; that bodily co-presence is a key part of what makes the Fringe sacred – it's about everyone being at the sacred site together - but digital communications can contribute to these in-person emotions. For example, marketing and communications from the Fringe Society played a role in heightening the emotions of the groups analysed here, and digital and phone communications supported sustaining emotions between physical interactions (as per Gig Buddies). However, Fringe 2020 raises a very important question: what happens when the Fringe is reduced to *only* the digital sphere?

Participant accounts in the Guardian newspaper suggest that absence of bodily copresence at the Fringe spurred a sense of collective loss:

I am an Edinburgh resident and have attended the festival every year since puberty. I never plan holidays in August as the city has so much to offer. I'll miss the atmosphere and the camaraderie and striking up conversation with strangers which leads to unofficial recommendations for the hidden gems of the fringe. (Wiegand, 2020)

The cancellation of all Edinburgh's summer festivals earlier this year has left MacFarlane [a street performer] with a deep sense of loss. "From a social standpoint it's really sad," she said. "Everyone can relate to that with Covid, it's that isolating experience of really missing people." (Carrell, 2020)

This position was also reinforced by those who work at the Fringe, such as William Burdett-Coutts (Artistic Director, Assembly Festival):

The festival's cancellation, he said, "is the most catastrophic thing which has happened in my lifetime. The gathering of people from around the world in Edinburgh was just extraordinary; it was just a huge arts and entertainments party." (Carrell, 2020)

These quotes suggest it may be feasible to argue that there was a collective mourning for the Fringe, which is a *social* mourning – missing the 'camaraderie' and the 'gathering'. This reinforces the arguments of this thesis that the Fringe is sacred because of the way in which it brings people from the moral community of the arts together: the loss is of the 'arts and entertainment party' rather than the loss of ethereal art objects. The reflection that participants felt the absence of Fringe 2020 in a meaningful way also upholds the argument that the Fringe is sacred – it is worth

mourning for, and those who revere it want to make their emotions public as a symbol of their collective loss. It is this public aspect which is important because it provides an opportunity for other members of the Fringe Tribe to share these emotions, thereby creating a build-up of collective emotion. However, whilst there is this opportunity for collective emotion on a large scale, the challenge is *maintaining* this emotion in a way that fosters solidarity, and this is problematic when there is no physical bodily co-presence.

#### *10.2.2 No opportunity to meet at the sacred site*

Closely connected to the notion of absence of group assembly is the loss of opportunity to meet at the sacred site of the Fringe: Edinburgh during the month of August. On the surface this sounds like the same point as there being no or low social density. However, this is a different, but interconnected reflection; it isn't just the lack of opportunity to meet with others, but it is the lack of opportunity to meet with others *physically at the sacred site*. Some small groups, such as community groups who live locally in Edinburgh or production companies in their home locations, may have met in some way during the month of August – perhaps socially distanced meet ups, for example. However, it is removing the opportunity to engage in IRCs during the month of August in the city centre of Edinburgh with thousands of other people going through similar experiences, whereby the city is imbued with a special emotional resonance during the Fringe:

It's always exciting and you get the butterflies coming into [Edinburgh] Waverley [train station]... It's so beautiful and quite nerve-wracking doing the fringe but it's always wonderfully familiar as well. (Carrell, 2020)

My husband and I have been going to Edinburgh in August for over 30 years – we plan to retire there. Edinburgh at festival time is like nowhere else on earth – buzzing with fun and culture, filled with people from all over the world. We've seen so many wonderful sights, met so many lovely people. It will leave a great hole in our lives – and millions of others. (Wiegand, 2020)

There are a couple of interesting points to note from these quotes; firstly, there is the emotional excitement embedded within them of visiting Edinburgh for the Fringe. The first quote states this directly in relation to the feelings the participant gets when arriving in the city, and the second positions Edinburgh during festival time as sacred in

contrast to the 'profane' – it is unique. Secondly, and interrelated to this, both of these quotes draw on the familiarity of the Fringe as part of what excites them. It is the *coming back* to the sacred site and knowing what to expect that raises emotional levels.

### 10.2.3 Digital participation

The Fringe Society coordinated a range of digital opportunities during Fringe 2020 including providing four livestreamed fundraising shows and platforms for pre-recorded videos, purchasing merchandise, fundraising, online networking events, audiobooks, and digital interactive workshops, and online performances for communities who are part of the FDO scheme. Future research could explore what meaning these digital engagements provided for those who participated in them in-depth; however, what I would like to reflect on in view of the themes of this thesis is how, even when digital platforms were provided for participants to engage with art objects, many used this as a way to reminisce on their previous in-person experiences of the Fringe. The digital events were symbols of the Fringe Tribe, with members of this imagined community able to use these symbols to generate EE across physical place. Participants on Twitter commented:

The programme art book looks like a great piece of nostalgia. I've ordered the hardback edition. (13/07/2020)

I will upload an Edinburgh festival photo every day this month...I will miss the festival this year. It's the biggest and best arts festival in the world and the best for comedy. You know all this. (02/08/2020)

Tweet: We will be watching different shows in different rooms, like going from venue to venue

Reply: Make sure they are unbearably hot and stuffy for the authentic experience. (13/07/2020)

Alongside sharing photos, participants used social media as a platform to reminisce on their memories at the Fringe to create in-the-moment emotional experiences, with this third quote highlighting how some even tried to recreate the feeling of being physically at the Fringe. Similarly, many used the 2020 digital space as a way to look to the future, priming them for future experiences at the Fringe, as shown on Twitter:

I'll use this August to discover new acts and artists, ready for next year. (13/07/2020)

Looking forward to 2021, bring it on! Making my own! #makeyourfringe (03/09/2020)

Could you [to the Fringe Society] come back for a longer run next year?' (13/07/2020)

Even though it seems that online experiences may be able to create EE and generate solidarity in a way similar to in-person experiences, it's possible that it is still the memory of the sacred site and the prospect of its return that enables online participation to be meaningful. In this sense, the strength of physically gathering with high social density is still what makes the Fringe meaningful, whether it is digital or not. Thus, there seems to be strong rationale that the cancellation of Fringe 2020 has raised acute awareness to what this thesis argues – the Fringe is more than art objects, it's a meeting of meaning-making, groups, place, and *sacrare*. This is important because it builds on the implications outlined here for cultural policy; namely, for policymakers and academics seeking to understand 'the value of arts and culture' in view of a concern that 'public money is spent effectively in support of the arts and culture' (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016, p. 4), we likely need to look beyond translating art objects to online platforms and think more about the role that social interactions, emotions and symbols play in constructing meaningful, and longer-term, arts experiences.

### 10.3 Final reflections

Whilst recognising that generalisability from this thesis is limited due to the qualitative and context-bound nature of it, with more research needed in the areas outlined in this chapter, it seems to me that the emotional intensity of the sacred site matters. Part of the reason the Fringe is revered is because it has a physical location (Edinburgh city) where participants meet *annually* and engage in intense emotional *in-person* interactions – group assembly. Further, this intensity can be what is conventionally considered as 'positive' or 'negative' because it is the notion of 'going through something together' that creates group solidarity, not necessarily moments of pleasure. Emotions are not intrinsically 'good' or 'bad': the group contexts and situations in which these emotions are expressed determine ritual success or failure.

This thesis is presented at a time of unprecedented, global challenge and uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby in-person interactions have been

acknowledged as vital to why the Fringe is special, with many yearning for them. This thesis shows why this yearning is so potent amongst members of the moral community of the arts: the opportunity to gather at the sacred site of the Fringe and engage in group-level interactions, together with feeling the 'emotional vibrations' of thousands of other Fringe-goers within these interactions, is irreplaceable.

## Bibliography

- Abbott, A. D. (2004). *Methods of discovery : heuristics for the social sciences*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Acord, S. K., & Denora, T. (2008). Culture and the arts: From art worlds to arts-in-action. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 619(1), 223–237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716208318634>
- Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (2016). The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception. In *Dialectic of enlightenment* (pp. 80–108). ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com> (Original work published 1944)
- Adorno, T. W. (1938). On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, 29–60. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3089181>
- Adorno, T. W. (1986). On the Social Situation of Music. In E. A. Lippman (Ed.), *Musical aesthetics: a historical reader* (pp. 216–270). Pendragon Press. (Original work published 1932)
- Alexander, J. (2003). The Strong Program In Cultural Sociology. *Oxford Scholarship Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195160840.001.0001>
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Anderson, D. (2019, June 12). Edinburgh's festivals are loved by residents... and here's why. *Edinburgh Evening News*. <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/whats-on/edinburgh-festival/edinburghs-festivals-are-loved-residents-and-heres-why-donald-anderson-545616>
- Arts Council England. (2018). *Developing a new strategy for Arts Council England 2020-2030*. [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE Strategy Consultation Framework\\_Autumn2018 Consultation.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE Strategy Consultation Framework_Autumn2018 Consultation.pdf)
- Arts Council England. (2020a). *Let's Create: Our strategy 2020-2030*. [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Strategy 2020\\_2030 Arts Council England.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Strategy 2020_2030 Arts Council England.pdf)
- Arts Council England. (2020b). *Measuring Outcomes: Tools & templates*. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/measuring-outcomes/tools-templates>
- Arts Council England. (2020c). *Our history*. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-organisation/our-history>
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (2001). *Handbook of Ethnography*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608337>
- Bakhshi, H., Hargreaves, I., & Mateos-Garcia, J. (2013). *A Manifesto for the Creative Economy*. [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)
- Bank, B. J., Delamont, S., & Marshall, C. (2007). *Gender and Education: An Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Banks, M. (2017). *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality*. Rowman & Littlefield International. <https://www.dawsonera.com:443/abstract/9781786601308>
- Barrett, M. (2015). Diversity and social engagement: Cultivating a working class theatre audience. In *The Ecology of Culture: Community engagement, Co-creation, cross-fertilization. Book proceedings, 6th Annual Research session* (pp. 95–104). ENCATC.
- Bartie, A. (2013). *The Edinburgh festivals: culture and society in postwar Britain*.

- Edinburgh University Press.
- BBC. (2018). *Edinburgh Festival gets under way*. BBC News.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-45057675>
- BBC. (2021, May 6). *Arts figures criticise plan to cut university funding for creative subjects*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-57006961>
- Becker, H. S. (2008). *Art Worlds* (25th Anniv). University of California Press.
- Becker, H. S., Faulkner, R. R., & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2006). Editors' Introduction. In *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, and other Improvisations* (pp. 1–20). University of Chicago Press.
- Becker, H. S., & Pessin, A. (2006). A Dialogue on the Ideas of "World" and "Field." *Sociological Forum*, 21(2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11206-006-9018-2>
- Beckman, J. (2014). *American Fun: Four Centuries of Joyous Revolt*. Pantheon.
- Belfiore, E. (2012). "Defensive instrumentalism" and the legacy of New Labour's cultural policies. *Cultural Trends*, 21(2), 103–111.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2012.674750>
- Belfiore, E. (2015). 'Impact', 'value' and 'bad economics': Making sense of the problem of value in the arts and humanities. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 14(1), 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022214531503>
- Belfiore, E., & Bennett, O. (2008). *The social impact of the arts : an intellectual history*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Benjamin, W. (1969). The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In *Illuminations*. Schocken.
- Bennett, A., Taylor, J., & Woodward, I. (2014). *The Festivalization of Culture*. Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781317031871>
- Bennett, T., & Silva, E. B. (2006). Introduction cultural capital and inequality: Policy issues and contexts. *Cultural Trends*, 15(2–3), 87–106.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548960600712777>
- Benzecry, C., & Collins, R. (2014). The High of Cultural Experience. *Sociological Theory*, 32(4), 307–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275114558944>
- Benzecry, C. E. (2013). Introduction. In *The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession (online edition)* (pp. 1–14). University of Chicago Press, Chicago Scholarship Online. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226043432.003.0001>
- Benzecry, C. E., Krause, M., & Reed, I. (2017). *Social Theory Now*.
- Bing, R. (1972). *5000 Nights at the Opera: The Memoirs of Sir Rudolph Bing*. Doubleday.
- Bishop, C. (2006). The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents. *Art Forum*. [https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY\\_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/ArtHistory/ClaireBishop/Social-Turn.pdf](https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/ArtHistory/ClaireBishop/Social-Turn.pdf)
- Bishop, C. (2012). *Artificial hells: participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. Verso.
- Black, N. (2016). Festival connections: How consistent and innovative connections enable small-scale rural festivals to contribute to socially sustainable communities. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 7(3), 172–187. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-04-2016-0026>
- Blunkett, D. (2000). *Influence or irrelevance: can social science improve government*. Times Higher Education (THE).  
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/influence-or-irrelevance/150012.article>
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (R. Johnson (ed.)). Columbia University Press.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. (1986). *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourriaud, N. (2002). *Relational Aesthetics*. Les Presses du réel.
- Boyns, D., & Loprieno, D. (2013). Feeling through presence: Toward a theory of interaction rituals and parasociality in online social worlds. In *Internet and Emotions (eBook)* (pp. 33–47). Taylor & Francis Group.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=1546773>
- Boyns, D., & Luery, S. (2015). Negative Emotional Energy: A Theory of the “Dark-Side” of Interaction Ritual Chains. *Social Sciences*, 4(1), 148–170.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci4010148>
- Brännäs, K., & Nordström, J. (2006). Tourist Accommodation Effects of Festivals. *Tourism Economics*, 12(2), 291–302.  
<https://doi.org/10.5367/000000006777637458>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.  
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- British Council. (2014). *About: Creative Economy*.  
<https://creativeeconomy.britishcouncil.org/about/>
- British Sociological Association. (2017). *Statement of Ethical Practice*.  
[www.britsoc.co.uk](http://www.britsoc.co.uk)
- Brook, O., O'Brien, D., & Taylor, M. (2020a). *Culture is bad for you*. Manchester University Press. <https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526144164/>
- Brook, O., O'Brien, D., & Taylor, M. (2020b). “There’s No Way That You Get Paid to Do the Arts”: Unpaid Labour Across the Cultural and Creative Life Course. *Sociological Research Online*, 25(4), 571–588.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780419895291>
- Brook, O., O'Brien, D., Taylor, M., & Campbell, P. (2018). *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries*. [www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/event/panic-2018](http://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/event/panic-2018).
- Brown, A. (2020, August 31). *What was Edinburgh’s Royal Mile like without the festivals?*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-53946873>
- Bryman, A. (2004). *The Disneyization of Society*. SAGE Publications.
- Burns, P., Hatch, J. H., Mules, T. J. (1986). *The Adelaide Grand Prix: the impact of a special event*. Centre for South Australian Economic Studies.
- Carrell, S. (2020, July 31). *“There is a sense of loss”: reflections on this year’s cancelled Edinburgh festival*. The Guardian.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2020/jul/31/there-is-a-sense-of-loss-reflections-on-this-years-cancelled-edinburgh-festival>
- Centre for Cultural Value. (2020). *About*. <https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/about/>
- Churchill, G. A., & Jr. (1979). A Paradigm for Developing Better Measures of Marketing Constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16(1), 64.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3150876>
- Citadel Youth Centre. (2019). *About Us*. <https://citadelyouthcentre.org.uk/>
- Cladis, M. (2001). Introduction. In C. Cosman (Ed.), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (pp. viii–xxx). Oxford University Press.
- Coghlan, D., & Brydon-Miller, M. (2014). Positionality. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446294406.n277>
- Collins, R. (2014). Interaction ritual chains and collective effervescence. In *Collective*

- Emotions*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199659180.001.0001>
- Collins, Randall. (2004). *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton University Press.
- Collins, Randall. (2011). *The Micro-sociology of Religion: Religious Practices, Collective and Individual*.
- Collins, Randall. (2018, July 3). *Kim Jong Un's Subdued Face With Trump: What effect did meeting Trump have on Kim Jong Un?* The Sociological Eye . <https://www.drRANDALLcollins.com/sociological-eye>
- Collins, Randall. (2019). Emotional micro bases of social inequality: emotional energy, emotional domination and charismatic solidarity. *Emotions and Society*, 1(1), 45–50. <https://doi.org/10.1332/263168919x15580836411823>
- Collins, Randall. (2020a). *Charisma: A Micro-sociological Theory*. Routledge.
- Collins, Randall. (2020b). Social distancing as a critical test of the micro-sociology of solidarity. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, 8(3), 477–497. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-020-00120-z>
- Collins, Randall, & McConnell, M. (2015). *Napoleon Never Slept: How Great Leaders Leverage Emotional Energy*. Maren Ink. <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Napoleon-Never-Slept-Leverage-Emotional-ebook/dp/B014W0P7TW>
- Creative Scotland. (2016). *Creative Scotland Arts Strategy*. [www.contactsotland-bsl.org](http://www.contactsotland-bsl.org)
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry research design: choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Crossick, G. (2019). *The Social Impact of Cultural Districts* (Issue March).
- Crossick, G., & Kaszynska, P. (2014). Under construction: Towards a framework for cultural value. *Cultural Trends*, 23(2), 120–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2014.897453>
- Crossick, G., & Kaszynska, P. (2016). *Understanding the value of arts & culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project*. <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report/>
- Daykin, N., & Joss, T. (2016). *Arts for health and wellbeing An evaluation framework*. <http://www.ae-sop.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/PHE-Aesop-Arts-in-health-evaluation-framework.pdf>
- De La Fuente, E. (2007). The “New Sociology of Art”: Putting Art Back into Social Science Approaches to the Arts. *Cultural Sociology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975507084601>
- Delanty, G. (2010). *Community* (revised). Routledge.
- Delanty, G., Giorgi, L., & Sassatelli, M. (2011). *Festivals and the cultural public sphere*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Festivals-and-the-Cultural-Public-Sphere/Delanty-Giorgi-Sassatelli/p/book/9780415587303>
- DeNora, T., (2010). *After Adorno: rethinking music sociology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media, & S. (2020). *Arts - Taking Part Survey 2019/20*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-arts/arts-taking-part-survey-201920>
- DeVellis, R. F. (1991). Scale development: Theory and applications. *Applied Social Research Method Series*, 26.
- Diedering, M., & Kwiatkowski, G. (2015). Economic Impact of Events and Festivals on Host Regions - Methods in Practice & Potential Sources of Bias. *Polish Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 22(4), 247–252. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pjst-2015->

- Doucet, B. (2009). Living through gentrification: subjective experiences of local, non-gentrifying residents in Leith, Edinburgh. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 24(3), 299–315. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-009-9151-3>
- Dowlen, R. (2020). *Research digest: Culture on referral*. <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Culture-on-Referral.pdf>
- Dubois, V. (2011). Cultural capital theory vs. cultural policy beliefs: How Pierre Bourdieu could have become a cultural policy advisor and why he did not. *Poetics*, 39(6), 491–506. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.POETIC.2011.09.003>
- Duffy, B. E. (2017). *(Not) getting paid to do what you love: gender, social media, and aspirational work*. Yale University Press. <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300218176/not-getting-paid-do-what-you-love>
- Duffy, M. (2014). The Emotional Ecologies of Festivals. In *The Festivalization of Culture* (pp. 229–250).
- Durkheim, Émile. (1995). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (K. E. Fields (ed.)). The Free Press. (Original work published 1912)
- Durkheim, Emile. (2001). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. (C. Cosman (ed.)). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1912)
- Durkheim, Emile. (2016). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (e-book)*. anboco. (Original work published 1912)
- Durkheim, Emile. (1982). *The Rules of Sociological Method*. [https://monoskop.org/images/1/1e/Durkheim\\_Emile\\_The\\_Rules\\_of\\_Sociological\\_Method\\_1982.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/1/1e/Durkheim_Emile_The_Rules_of_Sociological_Method_1982.pdf) (Original work published 1895)
- Durkheim, Émile. (1997). *The Division of Labor in Society* (W. D. Halls (ed.)). Free Press. (Original work published 1893)
- Dwyer, L., Mellor, R., Mistillis, N., & Mules, T. (2000). A framework for assessing “tangible” and “intangible” impacts of events and conventions. *Event Management*, 6(3), 175–189.
- Edelman, J., & Šorli, M. (2015). Measuring the value of theatre for Tyneside audiences. *Cultural Trends*2, 24(3), 232–244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2015.1066074>
- Edinburgh Festival City. (2016). *Research Reports*. Edinburgh Festival City. <https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/documents/156-research-reports>
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2018). *Arts Industry area*. <https://www.edfringe.com/take-part/arts-industry/login>
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2020). *Putting on a show*. <https://www.edfringe.com/take-part/putting-on-a-show/finding-a-venue>
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2018a). *EFFS Business Plan: 2019-2023*.
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2018b). *Fringe Central Events Programme*.
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2018c). *The Edinburgh Festival Fringe programme*.
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2019a). *About the Fringe* . <https://www.edfringe.com/learn/about>
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2019b). *Community impact* . <https://www.edfringe.com/support-us/why-support-us/community>
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2019c). *Fringe central events programme*. [https://issuu.com/edinburgh\\_festival\\_fringe/docs/2019\\_fringe\\_central\\_events\\_programm](https://issuu.com/edinburgh_festival_fringe/docs/2019_fringe_central_events_programm)

- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2019d). *Our Annual Review*.  
<https://www.edfringe.com/learn/about/annual-review>
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2019e). *The Fringe Handbook for Choosing a Venue*. <https://edfringe.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/docs/venues/Fringe-guide-to-choosing-a-venue.pdf>
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. (2020). *What is open access?*.  
<https://www.edfringe.com/experience/what-is-open-access>
- Ehrenreich, B. (2008). *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*. Granta Books.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.
- Fabiani, J.-L. (2005). Should the Sociological Analysis of Art Festivals be Neo-Durkheimian? In *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes* (Vol. 11, pp. 49–66). Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.2307/23866722>
- Fabiani, J. L. (2013). Durkheim and Festivals: Art, Effervescence and Institutions. In A. Riley, W. S. . Pickering, & W. Watts Millier (Eds.), *Durkheim, The Durkheimians and the Arts* (pp. 59–76). Durkheim Press.
- Fair Fringe. (2018). *Fair Fringe*. Fair Fringe. <https://www.fairfringe.org/>
- Fields, K. E. (1995). Introduction. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (pp. xvii–1xxiii). The Free Press.
- Fine, G. A., & Corte, U. (2017). Group Pleasures: Collaborative Commitments, Shared Narrative, and the Sociology of Fun. *Sociological Theory*, 35(1), 64–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275117692836>
- Finkel, R., & Sang, K. (2016). Participatory Research: Case Study of a Community Event. In *Critical Event Studies* (pp. 195–211). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52386-0\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52386-0_10)
- Fisher, M. (2012). *The Edinburgh Fringe Survival Guide: How to Make Your Show A Success*. Methuen Drama.
- Friedman, S. (2009). *Legitimizing A Discredited Art Form: The Changing Field Of British Comedy*.  
[http://www.socialpolicy.ed.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/55911/WP39SamFriedman.pdf](http://www.socialpolicy.ed.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/55911/WP39SamFriedman.pdf)
- Friedman, S. (2014). The hidden tastemakers: Comedy scouts as cultural brokers at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. *Poetics*, 44, 22–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.POETIC.2014.04.002>
- Friedman, S. (2018). *The Class Ceiling: Why it pays to be privileged*. Policy Press. <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/the-class-ceiling>
- Fringe of Colour. (2019). *About*. Fringe of Colour. <https://www.fringeofcolour.co.uk/about-us>
- Frost, N. (2016). Anthropology and Festivals: Festival Ecologies. *Ethnos*, 81(4), 569–583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2014.989875>
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Prentice Hall.
- Gerber, A. (2017). *The work of art: value in creative careers*. Stanford University Press.
- Getz, D. (2000). Developing a research agenda for the event management field. In J. Allen (Ed.), *Events Beyond 2000: Setting the Agenda, Proceedings of Conference on Event Evaluation, Research and Education* (pp. 10–21). Australian Centre for Event Management, University of Technology.
- Getz, D. (2010). The nature and scope of festival studies. *International Journal of Event Management Research*, 5(1). [www.ijemr.org](http://www.ijemr.org)

- Gig Buddies. (2020). *About Gig Buddies*. <https://gigbuddies.org.uk/about/>
- Gilchrist, J. (2002). "Leith no longer belongs to the Leithers." *The Scotsman* (Online Archive). [https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T004&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=4599&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=3&docId=GALE%7CA82389138&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZNE](https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T004&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=4599&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=3&docId=GALE%7CA82389138&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZNE)
- Gillon, J. (2019). *Secret Leith*. Amberley Publishing.
- Given, L. (2008a). Key Informant. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (Online edition). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n243>
- Given, L. (2008b). Rapport. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n366>
- Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Monograph No. 2). University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre.
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. Penguin Books.
- Goffman, E. (1989). On Fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18.
- Gordon, K. O. (2013). Emotion and memory in nostalgia sport tourism: examining the attraction to postmodern ballparks through an interdisciplinary lens. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 18(3), 217–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2013.846228>
- Gourtsoyannis, P. (2014, December 9). Edinburgh Festivals 'should focus on residents' . *Edinburgh Evening News*. <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-festivals-should-focus-residents-1518621#.Vlfi-waUXDM.twitter>
- Gracey, J., & Egan, V. (2014). *Cracking The Fringe: Your balls-out guide to taking on the Edinburgh Fringe*. reateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Grant, D., Hardy, C., Oswick, C., & Putnam, L. (2004). Organizational Culture and Discourse. In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Discourse* (pp. 317–336). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608122.n15>
- Gray, C. (2007). Commodification and instrumentality in cultural policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13(2), 203–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630701342899>
- Gray, C. (2010). Analysing cultural policy: Incurably plural or ontologically incompatible? *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630902935160>
- Gursoy, D., Kim, K., & Uysal, M. (2004). Perceived impacts of festivals and special events by organizers: an extension and validation. *Tourism Management*, 25(2), 171–181. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(03\)00092-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(03)00092-X)
- Hadley, S. (2021). Audience Development. In *Audience Development and Cultural Policy* (pp. 57–78). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-62970-0\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-62970-0_3)
- Hamilton, C. (2007). *Scotland's Year of Highland Culture 2007*.
- Harris, R., Jago, L., Allen, J., & Huyskens, M. (2001). Towards an Australian event research agenda: First steps. Event Management. *Event Management*, 6(4), 213–221.
- Heaton, P. H. (1947, September 23). 1948 Festival: Question of Scottish contribution . *The Scotsman*, 4.
- Hede, A., Jago, L., & Deery, M. (2003). Lessons from the past and directions for the

- future. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 10(Supplement), 1–14.
- Heider, A., & Warner, R. S. (2010). Bodies in Sync: Interaction Ritual Theory Applied to Sacred Harp Singing. *Sociology of Religion*, 71, 1–76.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srq001>
- Heise, T., & Tudor, A. (2007). Constructing (film) art: Bourdieu's field model in a comparative context. *Cultural Sociology*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975507078186>
- Hennion, A. (2007). Those things that hold us together: Taste and sociology. *Cultural Sociology*, 1(1), 97–114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975507073923>
- Herrmann-Pillath, C. (2018). *Interaction ritual chains in the resurgence of popular religion in China*. Conference paper.  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325526281>
- Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2011a). 'A very complicated version of freedom' Conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries. *Variant*, 41(Spring). <http://www.variant.org.uk/pdfs/issue41/complicated41.pdf>
- Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2011b). *Creative labour: media work in three cultural industries*. Routledge.
- Hodder, I. (2012). The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture. In *SAGE Biographical Research*. Sage Publications.
- Hogan, B. (2010). *The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893>
- Holden, J. (2004). *Capturing Cultural Value How culture has become a tool of government policy Capturing Cultural Value*.  
<https://www.demos.co.uk/files/CapturingCulturalValue.pdf>
- Holden, J. (2006). *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy Why culture needs a democratic mandate*. <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/Culturalvaluweb.pdf>
- Hosein, L. (2020, September 30). *5 artists who went to extremes with their bodies and put themselves at risk for their art*. CBC Arts. <https://www.cbc.ca/arts/5-artists-who-went-to-extremes-with-their-bodies-and-put-themselves-at-risk-for-their-art-1.5743583>
- Huxley, A. (1954). *The Doors of Perception (2010)* (J. G. Ballard (ed.)). Random House.
- Inglis, D. (2016). Durkheimian and Neo-Durkheimian Cultural Sociologies. In *The SAGE handbook of cultural sociology*. SAGE.
- Inglis, D., & Almila, A.-M. (2016). *The SAGE handbook of cultural sociology*.
- James, W. (1985). *The varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature* (M. E. Marty (ed.)). Penguin Books.
- Jamieson, K. (2004). Edinburgh: The Festival Gaze and Its Boundaries. *Space and Culture*, 7(1), 64–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331203256853>
- Jancovich, L., & Stevenson, D. (2021). Failure seems to be the hardest word to say. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2021.1879798>
- Johnson, R. (1993). Editor's Introduction. Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture. In *The Field of Cultural Production* (pp. 1–25). Polity.
- Jones, Alice. (2020). *Taking the Edinburgh Fringe's Madcap Energy Online*. NY Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/14/theater/edinburgh-fringe-festival-online.html>
- Jones, Andrew, & Navarro, C. (2018). Events and the blue economy. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 9(2), 204–222.

- <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-09-2017-0055>
- Kaplan, S. (2008). Finding the True Cross: The Social-Political Dimensions of the Ethiopian Mäsqäl Festival. In *Journal of Religion in Africa* (Vol. 38, pp. 447–465). Brill. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27594482>
- Karpik, L. (2010). *Valuing the unique: the economics of singularities*. Princeton University Press. <https://press.princeton.edu/titles/9215.html>
- Kelly, O. (1984). *Community, art and the state: Storming the citadels*. [https://www.academia.edu/470872/Community\\_art\\_and\\_the\\_state\\_Storming\\_the\\_citadels?auto=download](https://www.academia.edu/470872/Community_art_and_the_state_Storming_the_citadels?auto=download)
- Kester, G. H. (2004). *Conversation pieces: community and communication in modern art*. University of California Press.
- Kloss, S. T. (2019). *Tattoo histories: transcultural perspectives on the narratives, practices, and representations of tattooing*.
- Kvale, S. (1996). Chapter 7: The Interview situation. In S. Kvale (Ed.), *Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing* (pp. 124–135). Sage Publications.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). Interview variations. In *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (pp. 143–152).
- Langen, F., & Garcia, B. (2009). *Measuring the Impacts of Large Scale Cultural Events: A Literature Review*. [www.impacts08.net](http://www.impacts08.net)
- Larsen, H. (2016a). A Cultural Approach to Studies of Arts and Media Organizations. In *Performing Legitimacy* (pp. 1–31). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31047-3\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31047-3_1)
- Larsen, H. (2016b). Performing Legitimacy as Civil Opera Houses. In *Performing Legitimacy* (pp. 33–59). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31047-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31047-3_2)
- Leadbetter, R. (2018). David Graham: All the world's a stage when tackling issues that make a difference in people's lives. *The Herald*. [https://www.heraldsotland.com/arts\\_ents/16356098.david-graham-worlds-stage-tackling-issues-make-difference-peoples-lives/](https://www.heraldsotland.com/arts_ents/16356098.david-graham-worlds-stage-tackling-issues-make-difference-peoples-lives/)
- Li, J., Moore, D., & Smythe, S. (2017). Understanding a Community-Engaged Festival in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241617696808i>
- Liamputtong, P. (2015a). Focus Group Methodology: Introduction and History. In *Focus Group Methodology: Principles and Practice* (pp. 1–14). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957657.n1>
- Liamputtong, P. (2015b). Focus Group Methodology and Principles. In *Focus Group Methodology: Principles and Practice* (pp. 31–49). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957657.n3>
- Ling, R. (2008). *New Tech, New Ties. How Mobile Communication is Reshaping Social Cohesion*. MIT Press.
- Lopes, P. (2000). Pierre Bourdieu's Fields of Cultural Production: A Case Study of Modern Jazz. In N. Brown & I. Szeman (Eds.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Fieldwork in Culture* (pp. 165–185). Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lukes, S. (1985). *Emile Durkheim, His Life and Work A Historical and Critical Study*. Stanford University Press.
- Marwick, A. E. (2012). The public domain: Social surveillance in everyday life. *Surveillance and Society*, 9(4), 378–393. <https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v9i4.4342>
- Mason, W., Mirza, N., & Webb, C. (2018). *Using the Framework Method to Analyze Mixed-Methods Case Studies*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

- <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526438683>
- Matarasso, F. (1997). Use or ornament? *Comedia*.  
<http://www.culturenet.cz/res/data/004/000571.pdf>
- Matarasso, F. (2017). *'All in this together': The depoliticisation of community art in Britain, 1970-2011*.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Francois\\_Matarasso/publication/279411033\\_'All\\_in\\_this\\_together'\\_The\\_depoliticisation\\_of\\_community\\_art\\_in\\_Britain\\_1970-2011/links/55925d2b08ae47a34910e4be.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Francois_Matarasso/publication/279411033_'All_in_this_together'_The_depoliticisation_of_community_art_in_Britain_1970-2011/links/55925d2b08ae47a34910e4be.pdf)
- Mirza, M. (2006). The arts as painkiller. In *Culture Vultures* (pp. 93–111). Policy Exchange.
- McCormick, L. (2012). Music Sociology in a New Key. *Oxford Handbooks Online*.  
[http://www.academia.edu/27333585/Music\\_Sociology\\_in\\_a\\_New\\_Key](http://www.academia.edu/27333585/Music_Sociology_in_a_New_Key)
- McCormick, L. (2015). *Performing civility: international competitions in classical music*. Cambridge University Press.
- McGrath, J. (1981). *A Good Night Out. Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form*. Eyre Methuen.
- McGuigan, J. (2010). Creative labour, cultural work and individualisation. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 16(3), 323–335.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630903029658>
- Menger, P.-M. (2014). *The economics of creativity: art and achievement under uncertainty*. Harvard University Press.
- Miles, A., & Gibson, L. (2016). Everyday participation and cultural value. In *Cultural Trends* (Vol. 25, Issue 3, pp. 151–157). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2016.1204043>
- Moffat, A. (1978). *The Edinburgh Fringe*. Johnston & Bacon.
- Munro, I., & Jordan, S. (2013). 'Living Space' at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe: Spatial tactics and the politics of smooth space. *Human Relations*, 66(11), 1497–1525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726713480411>
- National Campaign For The Arts. (2010). *I Value the Arts*.  
<https://forthearts.org.uk/campaigns/i-value-arts/>
- Neil, O., Edelman, S., Sloboda, J. (2014). *Opera Audiences and Cultural Value: A Study of Audience Experience*.  
<http://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/jspui/handle/123456789/6543>
- Niekrenz, Y. (2014). The Elementary Forms of Carnival: Collective Effervescence in Germany's Rhineland. In *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* (Vol. 39, pp. 643–666). Canadian Journal of Sociology.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/canajsocicahican.39.4.643>
- O'Brien, Dave. (2014). *Cultural policy: management, value and modernity in the creative industries*. Routledge.
- O'Brien, Dave, Allen, K., Friedman, S., & Saha, A. (2017). Producing and Consuming Inequality: A Cultural Sociology of the Cultural Industries. *Cultural Sociology*, 11(3), 271–282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975517712465>
- O'Reilly, K. (2009). Access. In *Key Concepts in Ethnography (online edition)* (pp. 5–12). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446268308.n2>
- Oakley, K., Hesmondhalgh, D., Taylor, C., Comunian, R., Burns, J., Becker, B., Lee, D., Redhead, S., & Xin, G. (2010). *The cultural and creative industries: a literature review*.  
[https://eprints.qut.edu.au/43835/1/Literature\\_review\\_second\\_edition.pdf](https://eprints.qut.edu.au/43835/1/Literature_review_second_edition.pdf)
- Oakley, K., & O'Brien, D. (2017). Cultural Policy: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies (Introduction). In D O'Brien & K. Oakley (Eds.), *Critical*

- Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies: Cultural Policy*. Routledge.  
[https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/36675117/CRITICAL\\_CONCEPTS\\_CULTURAL\\_POLICY\\_INTRO.pdf](https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/36675117/CRITICAL_CONCEPTS_CULTURAL_POLICY_INTRO.pdf)
- Oancea, A., Florez-Petour, T., & Atkinson, J. (2015). The ecologies and economy of cultural value from research. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 24(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1128418>
- Owen, S. (2016). The sacred alternative. In C. R. Cotter & D. G. Robertson (Eds.), *After World Religions: Reconstructing Religious Studies*. Routledge.
- Parsons, W. (2002). From Muddling Through to Muddling Up - Evidence Based Policy Making and the Modernisation of British Government. *Public Policy and Administration*, 17(3), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/095207670201700304>
- Public Campaign for the Arts. (2021). *Gavin Williamson – stop the 50% funding cut to arts subjects in Higher Education*.  
<https://www.campaignforthearts.org/petitions/stop-the-50-percent-funding-cut-to-arts-subjects-in-higher-education/>
- Raufast, V., Alvarez, H., Druésne, J., Echiguer, M., Attias, D., Olivier, B., Melbouci, L., & Harrison, G. (2015). *Cultural times*.  
[https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/cultural\\_times.\\_the\\_first\\_global\\_map\\_of\\_cultural\\_and\\_creative\\_industries.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/cultural_times._the_first_global_map_of_cultural_and_creative_industries.pdf)
- Reed, I. A. (2017). On the Very Idea of Cultural Sociology. In *Social Theory Now* (pp. 25–48). The University of Chicago Press.
- Riley, A., Pickering, W. S. F., & Watts Miller, W. (2013). *Durkheim, the Durkheimians, and the arts*. Berghahn.
- Sanderson, I. (2002). Evaluation, Policy Learning and Evidence-Based Policy Making. *Public Administration*, 80(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9299.00292>
- Sassatelli, M. (2011). Urban festivals and the cultural public sphere: Cosmopolitanism between ethics and aesthetics. In *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (pp. 12–28). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203818787>
- Satyavrat, N. (2015). *Art for art's sake*. Britannica Online.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/art-for-arts-sake>
- Scharff, C. (2017). *Gender, subjectivity, and cultural work: classical music profession*. Routledge.
- Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2012). *Interpretive research design: concepts and processes*. Routledge.
- Schwarz, O. (2013). Bending Forward, One Step Backward: On the Sociology of Tasting Techniques. *Cultural Sociology*, 7(4), 415–430.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975513480957>
- Scottish Government. (2018). *A Culture Strategy for Scotland*.
- Shedden, S. (2019, August 10). “*Edinburgh has become a nightmare*”: Readers react to scathing new film about the Fringe . Edinburgh Evening News.  
<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/whats-on/edinburgh-festival/edinburgh-has-become-nightmare-readers-react-scathing-new-film-about-fringe-542940>
- Sherwood, P. (2007). *A triple bottom line evaluation of the impact of special events: the development of indicators*. <http://vuir.vu.edu.au/1440/>
- Shrum, W. (1996). *Fringe and fortune : the role of critics in high and popular art*. Princeton University Press. <https://press.princeton.edu/titles/5885.html>
- Simmel, G. (1986). The Berlin Trade Exhibition. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 8(3), 119–123.

- Sinclair, A. (1995). *Arts and Cultures: History of the 50 Years of the Arts Council of Great Britain*. Sinclair-Stevenson Ltd.
- SIT-UP Awards. (2020). *About Us* . <https://situpawards.com/about-us/>
- Smith, N. T., & Thwaites, R. (2018). The composition of precarity: 'emerging' composers' experiences of opportunity culture in contemporary classical music. *The British Journal of Sociology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12359>
- Smith, P., & Alexander, J. (2019). Introduction: the new Durkheim. In *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim* (pp. 1–38). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521806725.001>
- Snowball, J. D. (2011). Cultural value. In *A Handbook of Cultural Economics, Second Edition* (pp. 172–176). Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788975803.00029>
- Spillman, L. (2020). *What is Cultural Sociology?* Policy Press.
- Stephenson, B. (2015). *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction* . Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/ukhe/product/ritual-a-very-short-introduction-9780199943524?cc=gb&lang=en&>
- Sterchele, D. (2020). Memorable tourism experiences and their consequences: An interaction ritual (IR) theory approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 81, 102847. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ANNALS.2019.102847>
- Stevenson, David. (2017). Scoping the future of the Cultural Value Project. *Cultural Trends*, 26(2), 181–184. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09548963.2017.1324015?needAccess=true>
- Stevenson, David. (2013). *Against Absolute Cultural Value by David Stevenson - The #culturalvalue Initiative*. The #CulturalValue Initiative. <http://culturalvalueinitiative.org/2013/06/08/against-absolute-cultural-value-by-david-stevenson/>
- Stevenson, David. (2013a). What's the problem again? The problematisation of cultural participation in Scottish cultural policy. *Cultural Trends*, 22(2), 77–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2013.783172>
- Stevenson, David. (2013b). Reaching a 'legitimate' value? A contingent valuation study of the National Galleries of Scotland. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28(4), 377–393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2013.831250>
- Stige, B. (2010). Musical Participation, Social Space, and Everyday Ritual. In *Where Music Helps: Community Music Therapy in Action and Reflection* (pp. 125–147). Ashgate.
- Summers-Effler, E. (2007). *Vortexes of Involvement Social Systems as Turbulent Flow*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393107307662>
- Summers-Effler, E. (2010). Methods Appendix. In *Laughing Saints and Righteous Heroes: Emotional Rhythms in Social Movement Groups* (p. 203). Chicago Scholarship Online. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226188676.001.0001>
- Sutherland, I., & Gosling, J. (2010). Cultural leadership: Mobilizing culture from affordances to dwelling. *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society*, 40(1), 6–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921003603984>
- Tate. (2020). *Our Vision*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/our-priorities>
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing. (2017). *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*. [http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative\\_Health\\_Inquiry\\_Report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017.pdf)
- The Newsroom. (2019, September 9). Stephen Fry credits 'extraordinary' Festival

- Fringe as the catalyst for his career. *The Scotsman*.  
<https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/theatre/stephen-fry-credits-extraordinary-festival-fringe-as-the-catalyst-for-his-career-1-4990323>
- The Scottish Government. (2020). *A Culture Strategy for Scotland*. February, 2–60.
- Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 167–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275112457914>
- Tollefsen, D. (2014). Social ontology. In N. Cartwright & E. Montuschi (Eds.), *Philosophy of Social Science* (pp. 85–102). Oxford University Press.
- Turner, J. H. (2009). The Sociology of Emotions: Basic Theoretical Arguments. *Emotion Review*, 1(4), 340–354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073909338305>
- Turner, J. H. (2019). Cultural, Structural, and Interpersonal Dynamics. In E. B. Weininger, A. Lareau, & O. Lizardo (Eds.), *Ritual, Emotion, Violence: Studies on the Micro-Sociology of Randall Collins* (pp. 154–178). Routledge.
- Upchurch, A. R. (2016). *The Origins of the Arts Council Movement*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Varriale, S. (2016). Beyond Distinction: Theorising Cultural Evaluation as a Social Encounter. *Cultural Sociology*, 10(2), 160–177.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975515596447>
- Vom Hau, M. (2009). Social identities. In Princeton University Press (Ed.), *Usable Theory* (pp. 228–242).  
<https://www.dawsonera.com/readonline/9781400830671/startPage/241/1>
- Walkerdine, V., & Studdert, D. (2015). *Concepts and meanings of community in the social sciences Discussion Paper Researchers and Project Partners*.  
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/connected-communities/concepts-and-meanings-of-community-in-the-social-sciences/>
- Wallace, R. A., & Hartley, S. F. (1989). Religious elements in friendship: Durkheimian theory in an empirical context. In J. Alexander (Ed.), *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies* (pp. 93–106). Cambridge University Press.
- Walmsley, B. (2013). Co-creating theatre: Authentic engagement or inter-legitimation? *Cultural Trends*, 22(2), 108–118.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2013.783176>
- Walmsley, B. (2016). Deep hanging out in the arts: an anthropological approach to capturing cultural value. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 24(2), 272–291.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2016.1153081>
- Walmsley, B. (2020). *What value culture?*. Centre for Cultural Value.  
<https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/news-what-value-culture/>
- Watts Miller, W. (2013). Total Aesthetics. In *Durkheim, The Durkheimians and the Arts* (pp. 16–43). Durkheim Press / Berghahn Books.
- Wellman, J. K., Corcoran, K. E., & Stockly-Meyerdirk, K. (2014). *God Is Like a Drug & Explaining Interaction Ritual Chains in American Megachurches 1*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12108>
- Wiegand, C. (2020, April 8). “I’ll miss the camaraderie”: readers on the Edinburgh festival cancellation. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/apr/08/edinburgh-festival-cancellation-coronavirus>
- Willems-Braun, B. (1994). Situating cultural politics: fringe festivals and the production of spaces of intersubjectivity. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12(1), 75–104. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d120075>
- Wollschleger, J. (2012). Interaction Ritual Chains and Religious Participation.

- Sociological Forum*, 27(4), 896–912. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2012.01361.x>
- Wood, A. (2020). *Phoebe Waller-Bridge helps Edinburgh company Underbelly raise funds for Fringe artists*. WhatsOnStage. [https://www.whatsonstage.com/edinburgh-theatre/news/phoebe-waller-bridge-underbelly-support\\_52122.html](https://www.whatsonstage.com/edinburgh-theatre/news/phoebe-waller-bridge-underbelly-support_52122.html)
- World Fringe. (2021). *About*. <http://www.worldfringe.com/about-world-fringe-association/>
- Wynn, J. R. (2015). *Music/city: American festivals and placemaking in Austin, Nashville, and Newport*. University of Chicago Press.
- Wynn, J. R. (2016). On the Sociology of Occasions. *Sociological Theory*, 34(3), 276–286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275116664554>
- Zolberg, V. L. (2005). Success and failure of the sociology of culture? Bringing the arts back. *Sociedade e Estado*, 20(2), 337–350. <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-69922005000200004>
- Zuev, D., & Picard, D. (2015). Reconstructing the Antarctic tourist interaction ritual chain: visual sociological perspective. *The Polar Journal*, 5(1), 146–169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2015.1025495>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

**Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society produced 'official' Fringe programme covers for 2018 and 2019, with slogans 'Into the Unknown' (2018) and 'Make Your Fringe' (2019) stated**



# fringe

02-26 August  
2019

BE MAKE YOUR  
FRINGE

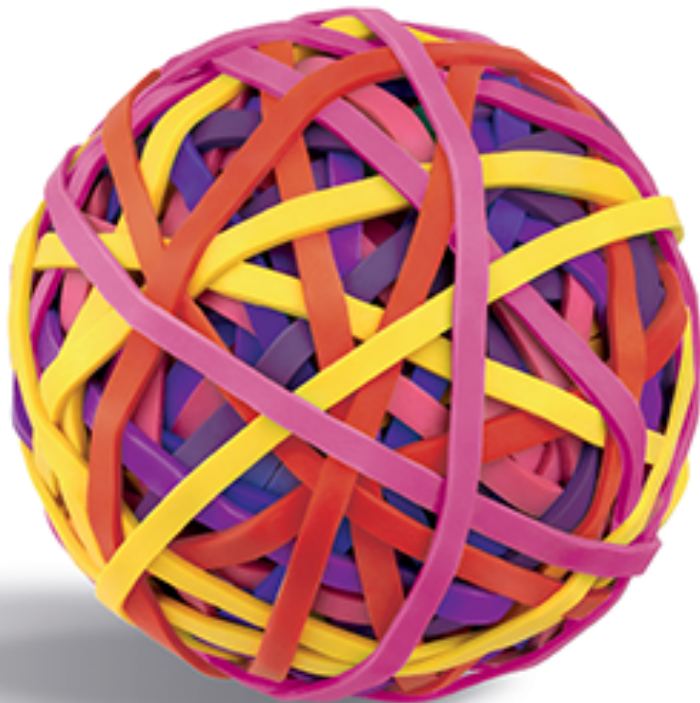
Virgin money

## *Appendix 2*

2019 'EdFest' programme cover produced by the 'Big Four' venues of Assembly, Gilded Balloon, Pleasance and Underbelly, highlighting programming 'the best shows at the Fringe'

# EDFEST.com <sup>LST</sup>

31 JUL - 26 AUG 2019



**ASSEMBLY GILDED BALLOON PLEASANCE UNDERBELLY**

## Appendix 3

### Example focus group interview guide for production companies.

#### Introduction

*Thanks, explain project and ethics*

1. Can you start by telling me a little bit about [your company/organisation] and how you came together as a group? *Prompts: have any of you worked together before? How long have you known one another?*
2. Has the group changed since it originally formed, such as new people joining the group after its original formation? Or people leaving?  
*Prompts: how did you look for new members? what was it like having someone new? Did you do anything to try and make them feel welcome?*
3. What show will you be bringing to the Fringe this summer?  
*Prompts: How did you choose this production? Was it a group decision? What motivated you to do this show? Why did you choose to perform it at the Fringe? Which venue did you pick and why?*

#### Main body

4. How did you come up with the name of your group?  
*Prompts: What meaning does it have for you? What about your logo? How do you present yourself in marketing material and why? What words would you use to describe your group? Do you have a longterm aim or goal in mind for your group?*
5. Can you tell me a bit about how you work together – talk me through a typical day.  
*Prompts: where do you rehearse? Do you have lunch together? Do you ever go out together in the evenings? What is the mood normally like during/after rehearsals?*
6. Thinking more generally now; how do you normally communicate with one another?  
*Prompts: Which forms of communication enable you to feel more connected to one another? Online interactions or face to face? At rehearsals or when socialising? Can you give examples? Do you use whatsapp, facebook or any other apps to keep in touch?*
7. Can you think of any examples of where you have worked particularly well together as a group either at the Fringe in previous years or on other projects?  
*Prompts: are there also social situations where you have connected, such as going to the pub together, at other festivals or networking events?*
8. What makes you feel the most present in the moment or the most focused as a group?  
*Prompts: does the environment make a difference? Time of day? What makes you feel the most distracted?*
9. How do you feel about going to the Fringe this summer?  
*Prompts: Are you excited? Nervous?*
10. How is performing at a festival different from other performance contexts? Does it feel different to you?  
*Prompts: Festivals are sometimes described as having a kind of ‘buzz’ or excitement. Have you ever felt this kind of feeling before as a group? Can you give any examples? Did this ‘buzz’ come from working together or did socialising play a part too?*
11. What are your expectations of the Fringe?  
*Prompts: what have you heard about? Where did you hear about these things? What do you think you’ll do? Do you have plans for places you’ll go to? Do you plan to do any social activities as a group?*

OR

Why did you choose to return to the Fringe this summer?

*Prompts: what was it about your experience in previous years that made you want to come back? What do you remember doing at the festival last year? Where did you stay? Where did you go? What meaning does the Fringe have for your group?*

12. What is your understanding of the Fringe Society?

*Prompts: How do you anticipate interacting with the Society over the coming months? Are you planning to go to any of the events at Fringe Central, such as networking events? Will you go as a group?*

13. The Society's branding of the Fringe is that it is a place for 'creative freedom'; what do you think about this?

*Prompts: do you feel welcome at the Fringe? Do you think that the Fringe is open for anyone to participate?*

#### **Close**

14. Do you have any further comments about how you'll work together as a group or your expectations of the Fringe?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

*Thanks for taking part and remind about ethics*

## **Appendix 4**

### **Example observation schedule (created April 2019), showing observation themes with associated questions to explore.**

1. Describe the research context
  - ⇒ Thick description of environment/ what is happening
2. Group assembly/ bodily co-presence
  - ⇒ How are people communicating with one another? Which forms of communications seem to show signs of connection?
  - ⇒ How do people gather in groups?
3. Barriers to outsiders
  - ⇒ What do you need to know to be a member? How have new people been inducted in?
  - ⇒ What cultural knowledge do you need to belong?
  - ⇒ Are there any group symbols? Physical or symbolic barriers?
  - ⇒ How are people scapegoated?
  - ⇒ What behaviour do people display that indicates they might be 'outsiders'?
  - ⇒ Are there signs of social isolation for some?
4. Mutual focus of attention
  - ⇒ What common activities are shared?
  - ⇒ How do people display focus of attention? Or distraction?
5. Shared mood
  - ⇒ How do people feel about shared activities?
  - ⇒ Do they show signs of shared or different feelings?
6. Collective effervescence
  - ⇒ Are there any signs of emotion being transformed into group solidarity?
  - ⇒ Any examples of heightened experiences or moments of exaltation?
  - ⇒ Any connections to specifically social experiences?
7. Group solidarity (feeling of membership) and standards of morality
  - ⇒ Any signs of needing to stand up for group (i.e. Fringe Society) as a member / defending it
8. Emotional energy
  - ⇒ Individual feelings of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action.
9. Symbols of social relationship
  - ⇒ Symbols that represent the group: emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that members feel are associated with themselves collectively.
  - ⇒ How do symbols represent signs of belonging?
  - ⇒ What signs of trust can be seen?
10. Social patterns and collective action

- ⇒ What social patterns of behaviour/ norms can be observed?
  - ⇒ What group/collective actions can be seen?
11. Exploring the role of the Fringe society in facilitating group solidarity
- ⇒ What practices are adopted from the Fringe Society?
  - ⇒ In what ways do people engage with the Fringe Society?
  - ⇒ How do Society staff and Fringe participants interact with one another?
12. Communities in flux, changing relations and networks
- ⇒ Are there signs of relations forming, being disrupted, changing and re-forming?
  - ⇒ How to group dynamics change?
13. Exploring how social, cultural, economic and symbolic resources function within the collective
- ⇒ What instances of exchange of social, cultural, economic and symbolic resources can be viewed?
14. Other themes to explore when making observations:
- ⇒ Inclusivity/arts for all and excellence
  - ⇒ Blurring of professional and personal
  - ⇒ Shared behaviours
  - ⇒ Fringe Society as facilitating sense of community
  - ⇒ Fringe central as a place for professional development
  - ⇒ Social integration, social solidarity, collectivity
  - ⇒ Social identity
  - ⇒ Supportive environment
  - ⇒ Sacrificial actions
  - ⇒ Core and peripheral networks
  - ⇒ The role of the art object in connecting to others (i.e. performance/ critical acclaim)
  - ⇒ Belonging
  - ⇒ Social isolation
  - ⇒ Meaning-giving/ meaningful experiences
  - ⇒ Interrelationship between art object and social relations
  - ⇒ Facilitating sacred (v. profane)

## ***Appendix 5***

### ***Themes deduced from initial stages of thematic analysis, used to inform case study selection and analytic approach***

- Activism
- Anticipating the Fringe
- Audience experiences
- Barriers to outsiders
- Belonging and membership
- Blurring of professional and personal life
- Charismatic leadership
- Collaborative processes or collective action
- Collective effervescence
- Collective identity
- Communication
- Communities in flux
- Creative processes
- Cultural resources
- Defining success
- Economic aspects
- Emotional energy
- Exploitation or inequalities
- Fringe Society
- Going through something together
- Group assembly
- Group dynamics
- Group solidarity
- Heightened experiences
- Individual action (outside of the group)
- Meaningful experiences
- Meaning of 'the Fringe'
- Mutual focus of attention
- My role as a researcher
- Networks and/or networking
- Organisational structures
- Place
- Power
- Precarity
- Privileged access at the Fringe
- Public expression of group identity
- Rhythmic entrainment
- Ritual chains
- Role of the art object
- Role and identities
- Sacred vs. profane
- Sacrifice
- Shared mood

- Social isolation or exclusion
- Social resources
- Socialising
- Social connected to the artistic
- Standards of morality
- Status of the Fringe
- Symbolic resources
- Symbols of social relationship
- Trust or vulnerability
- Uniqueness of the Fringe

## Appendix 6

### **Example consent form for participants of community groups and production companies.**



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
School of Social and  
Political Science

#### **CONSENT FORM**

##### **Communities at the Fringe: An ethnographic study**

*A project for the PhD in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh in partnership with Queen Margaret University and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society*

**Name of Researcher:** Katey Warran

#### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT**

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 04.03.2019 for the project in which I have been asked to take part and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
- I give permission for Katey Warran and the supervisory team to have access to my responses. I understand that my responses will be anonymised, and that all personal data about me will be kept confidential.
- I understand that transcripts of focus group interview data may be made available for secondary use, but this data will be anonymised and untraceable back to me.
- I understand that the investigator must adhere to the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice.
- I agree to take part in this research project entitled 'Communities at the Fringe'.
- I consent/ do not consent to photographs being taken of me and used for the purpose of this research project. (DELETE AS APPROPRIATE)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

## Appendix 7

Poster from Gig Buddies' 9 to 5 Fringe Days Out event.

**GIG BUDDIES**  
SOUND PEOPLE

More info  
in the 'Events  
Calendar'!

**FRINGING**  
**NINE To FIVE**

It's enough to drive you crazy  
if you let it.

Saturday  
3rd August  
9am-5am  
(Yes, you read that right)  
P.S. Did we mention it's free?!

Only 10 spaces for members are available for this event. If you want to  
be part of 'Fringing 9-5' contact as soon as possible!

**fringe**  
Defying the odds since 1947

Made Possible With Fringe Days Out

 Gig Buddies Scotland  
 @gigbuddies\_scot



West Lothian  
Council

**Short**  
breaks fund