"BURNING MAN WAS BETTER NEXT YEAR:" A PHENOMENOLOGY OF
COMMUNITY IDENTITY IN THE BLACK ROCK CITY COUNTERCULTRE

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"BURNING MAN WAS BETTER NEXT YEAR:" A PHENOMENOLOGY OF
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A Thesis

by

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Abstract

of

"BURNING MAN WAS BETTER NEXT YEAR:" A PHENOMENOLOGY OF
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This study illustrates and explains communal identity performance and maintenance as manifested by the participants in the counterculture community at Burning Man. This community is dedicated to countercultural ideals set forth by the Burning Man Organization. This study uses multiple phenomenological and ethnographic methods including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis to investigate, identify and describe how individual behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, influence the social climate and communal identity of the temporary society of Black Rock City. The study uses the socially constructed community of Burning Man as a prototype of a counterculture environment to develop an understanding of shared maintenance of social norms, values and beliefs specific to counterculture communities.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this project is to illustrate and explain communal identity performance and maintenance as manifested by the participants at the annual Burning Man project held annually in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada. During the seven day event of Burning Man, the Black Rock Desert of Nevada becomes a community known as Black Rock City. The community is unique because it is temporary and also dedicated to countercultural ideals set forth by the Burning Man Organization. This study uses multiple phenomenological and ethnographic methods including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis to investigate, identify and describe how individual behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, impact the social climate and communal identity of the temporary society of Black Rock City. The study uses the socially constructed community of Burning Man as a prototype of a counterculture environment to develop an understanding of shared maintenance of social norms, values and beliefs specific to counterculture communities.

Observation and investigation of participant communication as a perspective of understanding communal identity maintenance is a communication topic which fits suitably in the language and social interaction (LSI) branch of the communication discipline. This study is appropriate to the communication field because of its theoretical and methodological groundings. Communicative acts in a cultural setting should be

considered to fully understand social interaction, insofar that "if we pay more attention to the structure and process of conversations we may be able to bring new insights to change in individuals, groups, and communities" (Hosking & Morley, 2004, p. 327).

While the Burning Man project, an annual experiment to demonstrate radical self-reliance, celebrates creativity and individualism, an explicit set of norms and values exists and is expected to be upheld by all participants including seasoned veterans and first-time attendees. Seasoned veterans and first-timers (also called "virgins") alike are expected to know, understand and live the cultural norms and demonstrate the Burning Man specific values. This study shows how the Burning Man identity is created and maintained across the varying experience levels of the participants through identity performance and switching, the use of language to encourage participation, interdependency between individual and society, human interaction to co-create meaning, and behavior shaping in co-constructed realities.

Since the project and population varies each year, it is worthwhile to understand how the identity of the community is maintained over the years. Burning Man is a place where individualism and creativity are celebrated through encouragement of radical self-expression. In such a place where individualism is so highly regarded, it is important to understand how the residents communicate their communal and yet temporary counterculture identity. To achieve this understanding, we can begin with a look at other counterculture festivals, which will be addressed later. To start, it may be helpful to begin with a short introduction to the Burning Man festival.

Burning Man Overview

Burning Man began in 1985 when Jerry James and Larry Harvey, a San Francisco builder and landscaper, respectively, took a small group of bohemian friends to Baker Beach in San Francisco to burn an eight foot tall figure of a man they made out of wood (Stein, 2000). At the very first event, everyone on the beach came running at the moment the man flamed up. The "numbers tripled" as people began to perform, playing guitar and drums, singing and dancing spontaneously as they "had instantly created a community" (Harvey, 1997, p. 1). Over the next several years of this annual event, attracting more people each time, the event and the physical dimensions of the Man grew so large that it was banned from the site. In 1990, Harvey and friends moved the event to the Black Rock Desert in Nevada, a former lakebed which is now 400 square miles of nothing but barren land and alkaline dust (Stein, 2000).

The event continues to grow, but has remained at the Black Rock Desert, termed 'Black Rock City' for the duration of the event, since the change in 1990. Participants call themselves "burners" and refer to their "community" in sharing rituals such as burning the Man and traditions of self-expression (Kozinets, 2002, p. 22). Burning Man is a "radical departure, a feast for all the senses" with the smell of burning wood cooking food, sounds of varying electronic music from all directions, intense heat and annoying yet addicting alkaline dust, and the unbelievably creative art installations and costumes (Kozinets, 2002, p. 21). The emphasis of Burning Man is on "embodiment, flamboyant decoration, excessive consumption, intoxication, sexuality, and fulfillment" which

demonstrates the more "openly hedonistic style of consumption associated with festivals" (Pike, 2001, p. 167).

The setting is commonly referred to as the "playa," which is the desert of the prehistoric bed of Lake Lahontan (Kristen, 2003). While the escape from the consumer market is both temporary and local, Burning Man maintains a noncommercial and non-consumer event based on survival, radical self-reliance and self-expression with a heavy emphasis on performance art and pyrotechnics (Kozinets, 2002).

The name Burning Man is appropriate for the festival because the burning of the Man, 45-foot-tall effigy built of wood, is the central and uniting archetypal metaphor of the festival – one based on purification through fire. Participants are encouraged to consider an act of transference onto the Burning Man, while the effigy is burning, on what they would like to eliminate from their lives, or what they came to burn. On Saturday night, the Man burns with a wild celebration of drumming and dancing until dawn.

No matter how eloquent the definition, Burning Man can never be completely described. One rendition of a description by Kristen (2003) is that Burning Man is "a week-long temporary community based on radical self-expression, creativity, survival and sharing" that "attracts a unique community of artists, performers and free spirits" with an emphasis on collaboration, cooperation and shared experience (p. 343). There is no vending or consumerism, with the exception of ice and coffee of which the proceeds are donated to the local high schools. Kristen (2003) synthesized three community principles: 1) Leave no trace. Everything brought in must be removed upon departure in

an effort to leave the desert in the exact condition it was found prior to the event. 2) No spectators. Everyone is encouraged to participate in some way. 3) Radical self-reliance. One must bring everything needed to survive, including shelter, food and water, for the duration of the stay.

As a temporary experiment to create an experience of caring human contact, Burning Man provides a place to escape the default world. Radiating with self-expressive art and performance, Burning Man is a "startling array of art installations" ranging from familiar contemporary art to the unimaginable (Kristen, 2003, p. 343). Communal practices at Burning Man distance consumption from the broader rhetoric of efficiency and rationality of capitalism (Kozinets, 2002). Now that I have provided a brief introduction to Burning Man, I will discuss two relevant and contradictory constructs in Black Rock City: individualism and connectedness.

Individualism at Burning Man

Individualism at Burning Man is palpable. It is everywhere you look, particularly in the art and performance. Costumes, discourse, interpersonal engagements, art installations, art cars, dancing, hula-hooping, fire dancing or poi, singing, poetry reading and more are performed at Burning Man. The participants express themselves and are in constant performance as if it were an ongoing ritualistic circus or intentional spectacle. While there is a specific area, called "Center Camp," which is dedicated to stage performances, it is not uncommon to see people walking around on the playa engaging in

different forms of artistic expression. Individualism and self-expression is in abundance at Burning Man and presents a key element of understanding the community.

Connectedness at Burning Man

Connectedness is present in the willingness and desire to help, to share, to give, and to contribute. Whether it is helping the neighbor build an art installation, inviting a passerby for dinner, or giving hugs, the community is collective and connected as one cohesive but arbitrary group. The community emerges ironically through the celebration of individualism.

Every year, during the week leading up to Labor Day, over 35,000 participants pile everything they can into their vehicles and drive out onto the desert. The climate is harsh: dusty, completely devoid of water, and daytime temperatures reach up to 110 degrees and nights nearly reach the freezing mark (Turner, 2009). Over the last two decades, the founders of Burning Man and its participants have transformed the explicitly artistic, bohemian traditions of festal gathering and the co-creation of art and theater into the organizing principles of a temporary town they call Black Rock City (Turner, 2009). Following the lead of its founders and participants, scholars generally have depicted Black Rock City as a sacred place for the celebration of art and creativity and the enacting of New Age religious rituals (Gilmore, 2005; Gilmore and Van Proyen, 2005). For one week each year, Black Rock City becomes a commons inhabited by individuals organizing community-building and individual identity (Turner, 2009):

> There are all sorts here, a living, breathing encyclopedia of subcultures: Desert survivalists, urban primitives, artists, rocketeers, hippies, Deadheads, queers, pyromaniacs, cybernauts, musicians, ranters, eco-freaks, acidheads, breeders, punks, gun lovers, dancers, S/M and bondage enthusiasts, nudists, refugees from the men's movement, anarchists, ravers, transgender types and New Age spiritualists. (Wray, 1995 quoted in Kozinets, 2002)

A quick visit to the Burning Man website (http://www.burningman.com) acquaints new participants not only with the long list of things that they will need to bring with them to survive in the desert but also the organization's mission statement and its Ten Principles. Note that these Principles are offered from the Burning Man website, not to be confused with Kristen's (2003) list. For many participants the Ten Principles serve as an informal social contract: at the top of the list is 'radical inclusion' – which is to say, that anyone can join the event; the second and third are 'gifting' and 'decommodification'. Despite the extensive consumption required to get there, Black Rock City aims to be an anti-consumerist world, one in which individuals retreat from the money economy toward interaction, participation and giving performances, objects and goods which help to sustain communal bonds. 'Radical self-reliance' and 'Radical self-expression' in turn suggest the idiosyncratic undertone of the communal work: through the sustenance and display of the individual self that the community as a whole is born. Subsequent principles stress the need for all to participate and to celebrate immediate experience, for each individual to be responsible to a civic whole and for the citizens of Black Rock City to 'leave no trace' on the desert floor when they leave (Turner, 2009).

At Burning Man, 'Radical self-reliance' means each participant must remember to bring sufficient food, water and shelter for him or herself and friends (Turner, 2009). The

participation ethic of Burning Man (and is its ninth principle) means that many come to the playa as part of a social unit devoted to doing work or creating a project in the desert. Participants may be attached to a group dedicated to provided a communal space or activity (also called "theme camps"), or part of a group devoted to constructing a particular artwork. Participants also may have volunteered for one of the groups responsible for managing the event's infrastructure, such as the Black Rock Rangers, something like a police force, or the Lamplighters, who light the lamps that lead to the man each evening (Turner, 2009). Six weeks later, thanks to the effort of a stay-behind clean-up crew, the desert is empty again; no sign of the city, not even tiny scraps of litter remains (Turner, 2009).

The Burning Man world – including the building of a sociotechnical commons, participation in project-based artistic labor and the fusion of social and professional interaction – help to shape and legitimate the collaborative manufacturing processes driving the growth of Google and other firms (Turner, 2009). In one ethnographic study of Burning Man, Sherry and Kozinets (2007), revealed nomadic spirituality as an emerging reactance to increasing dissatisfaction with conventional religious denominations and consumption.

As described above, only a limited amount of academic research has been conducted on the topic of the Burning Man project. A few scholars in consumer research, marketing, and anthropology have explored the Burning Man phenomenon, but opportunity lies in the field of communication. With unique and countercultural ideologies, Burning Man not only provides a "useful ethnographic context from which to

frame theory construction about community" but also from which to discover the essence of meaning (Kozinets, 2002, p. 22).

Overview of Music and Art Festivals

Since Burning Man is often positioned amongst other art and music festivals, an overview of the existing literature on other festivals is necessary. Here, we examine the existing literature about festivals including motivational factors, stakeholder analysis, economic impact, celebratory diversity and impact on the culture and surrounding community.

According to Earls (1993), a festival is "a communal gathering that objectifies people's collective wishes and dreams and provides an important occasion for a unique experience in their social lives" (Earls, 1993, p. 33). An assumption of this definition is that the collective wishes and dreams of festival attendees are objectified. While it is necessary to share a common or collective bond, not all festivals fit this specific definition. This definition may be appropriate for most festivals; however, this study explores how this generalization may not appropriate for Burning Man.

Motivational Factors

Several studies have identified the motivational factors for attending festivals. Motivation for attending festivals include excitement, event novelty, event loyalty, socialization, nostalgia, love of social gathering and an escape from reality (Yolal, Cetinel, & Uysal, 2009; Li, Huang, & Cai, 2009). For example, wine festival attendees

are motivated by synergy, travel and commemorating special events (Yuan, Cai, Morrison, & Linton, 2005). A study determining the influence of domestic versus international festival-goers found that domestics were persuaded by television and radio advertisements while foreigners were convinced by friends and travel agents to attend the festivals (Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004). While motivational factors for attending festivals is both interesting and relevant, there must be more motivation that these traditional factors for attending Burning Man.

Getz, Anderson, and Larson (2007) identified the stakeholder roles in festivals. These roles include: regulator, facilitator, coproducer, supplier, collaborator, audience, and the impacted. Under this typology, one person may hold more than one of these roles; however, it is highly unlikely that one person would hold all or even half of these roles. For example, a stakeholder might be part of the audience and the impacted but is not likely to be a regulator or supplier at festivals. While this is typical of festivals, it may be possible that festivals exist where stakeholder roles are more inclusive.

Economic Impact

Festivals may also be regarded as "the cultural resources of an area that make possible the successful hosting of visitors" in that resources, including advertisement, patronizing local businesses, driving business into the local community, similar to the travel and tourism industry, draw in a festival and draw in money for the local economy (Usyal, Gahan, & Martin, 1993, p. 5). Arguably, most festivals were designed specifically with economic stimulus in mind, which draws reasoning as to why festivals

revolve around the marketing of special occasions and the celebration of significant events (Arcodia & Robb, 2000). There has been a remarkable rise in the number of urban arts festivals in recent decades. City authorities tend to disregard the social value of festivals and construe them as simple solutions to economic generation and city image problems. As described below, celebration of diversity is one approach to stimulating economic growth and city image rehabilitation.

Celebratory Diversity

*S*everal studies have been conducted recently about various festivals including: the Yukon International Storytelling Festival (Cruikshank, 2008), aboriginal cultural festivals (Chang, 2006), DIY culture (Purdue, Durrschmidt, Jowers, & O'Doherty, 2008), pagan festivals (Hutton, 2008), Atlanta Pride Festival (Gillespie, 2008), and wine festivals (Yuan & Jang, 2008; Yuan, Cai, Morrison, & Linton, 2005). Hutton (2008) examined the nature of tradition and the process of evolution in modern societies and religious festive tradition while Purdue et al. (2008) found that the DIY culture festivals actually developed new senses of locality and community.

Throughout history, festivals have emulated cultural traditions or marked a religious or historical occasion associated with the community staging the festival (Arcodia & Robb, 2000). Culture exploration was studied in aboriginal cultural festivals (Chang, 2006) and soon after, intercultural transactions as social action by performers (Cruikshank, 2008). A survey of the most popular music festivals by Robinson (2009) includes Ozzfest, Woodstock, Denver and Miami Pop Festivals, South by Southwest

(SXSW), Lilith Fair, and the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. Also determined by scholars, if art festivals are to achieve their potential in animating communities, celebrating diversity and improving the quality of life, they must be conceived of in a more holistic way by urban managers (Quinn, 2005).

Community and Culture

The culture of festivals varies, but the four socio-economic impacts of festivals and special events have been identified as: community cohesiveness, economic benefits, social incentives, and social costs (Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2003). Conversely, as stated by Falassi (1987), the social function of a festival is closely related to values that a community regards as essential to its ideology such as social identity, historical continuity, and physical survival. Further, the impact of a festival relies heavily on the sense of community and celebration of an occasion (Goldblatt, 1997). Sense of community is intimately related to social capital (neighboring, citizen participation, collective efficacy, informal social control), communitarianism, place attachment, community confidence, and community satisfaction (Long & Perkins, 2007). Mexican immigrants bring the sport of soccer as cultural baggage to their communities as a recreational tool but also as a way to reflect their own cultural identity (Figueroa, 2003).

Festival attendance builds social capital (connections within and between social networks) by developing community resources and encouraging interaction between existing community organizations (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007). Festivals play a key social role in different societies and cultures (Alomes, 1985).

Counterculture

Counterculture is usually defined from the perspective of culture. Peterson (1979) maintains that culture consists of four elements: norms, values, beliefs, and expressive symbols. As a noncommercial and non-consumerism event, the participants and Burning Man "successfully construct a temporary hypercommunity from which to practice divergent social logics" more commonly known as counterculture (Kozinets, 2002, p. 20). The salient feature of a counterculture, according to Yinger (1982) is its contrariness to the comparative or normative culture.

For a counterculture to have any significant effect on a society, there must be some degree of interplay between the in- and out-groups. The interplay between the in- and out-groups or culture and counterculture is essential in informing of the other side's presence and position. The countercultural group plays an integral role in both identifying themselves as the out-group but also in reifying the norms, values and beliefs of the culture. Without a consistent interaction between the culture and counterculture, the counterculture would remain unnoticed and therefore irrelevant and unimportant. For a counterculture to be effective and useful, both for itself and the salient culture, different levels of commitment are necessary. The less committed levels serve as informants to the culture, while the more committed levels serve as role models for potential counterculture participants (Fox, 1987).

According to Yinger's (1982) definition of counterculture, the salient feature is its contrariness. However, Westhues (1972) defines counterculture, discusses the special conditions under which they arise, and analyzes the stages through which they pass.

Counterculture is "a set of beliefs and values which radically reject the dominant culture of a society and prescribe a sectarian alternative" of which the group of people "accept such beliefs and values, behave in such radically noncomformist ways that tend to drop out of the society" (Westhues, 1972, pp. 9-10). Since counterculture is "a set of norms and values of a group that sharply contradict the dominant norms and values of the society of which that group is a part," Burning Man is an appropriate scene for studying the maintenance of counterculture (Yinger, 1977, p. 833).

The most contemporary work in countercultures consists of a compilation of sociological analyses of skinheads, Satanism, the Unification church, Klu Klux Klan, the Church of Scientology, and survivalists (Zellner, 1995). Other countercultural studies include the commitment of youth to counterculture and the necessary modifications to accommodate (Hundeide, 2003), technology as a counterculture (Turner, 2006; Turner, 2005; Matei, 2005; Ross, 1991), the normative system and typology of counterculture of American punk (Fox, 1987), countercultural ideologies of communes (Berger, 2003), counterculture in the 1960s (Rycroft, 2007), the impact of counterculture on the conservation movement (Dasmann, 1974), and emerging counterculture in politics of South Africa (Entelis, 1974). Heath and Potter (2006) found that counterculture is not in and of itself against consumerism, but one of the driving forces. Most recently, Goldman (2010) examined gender constructs and social change in counterculture. As Duvignaud (1976) noted, "all observers agree that festival involves a powerful denial of the established order," which leaves a potentially appropriate space to fill with Burning Man counterculture (p. 19).

Community

Since "every society gets the counterculture it deserves," it is important to be aware of the theoretical framework regarding the culture of community itself (Yinger, 1982, p. 50). Realities are socially constructed and sustained within the context of people's disorderly and everyday conversational activities (Shotter, 1993). Underlying dimensions of community identity are the psychological sense of community, social cohesion, and community satisfaction (Puddifoot, 1995). Three underlying personal dimensions have been found with regard to individuals feeling a sense of community identity: support, connectedness, involvement. Shared dimensions in developing a sense of community include: perceived community engagement, neighborliness, and settleness (Puddifoot, 2003).

Several studies investigate specific communities. Stephens (2007) found shifting constructions of community as it relates to health communication and public health. Talen (1999) found that a sense of community is not necessarily related to the physical design of the community formation, but that resident interaction is more important. In groups, Swanson (1992) found that collective behavior lends toward organizational growth and greater levels of achievement (Swanson, 1992). More importantly and relevant to the individuality in community, Ardelt (2000) found that personality stability and change cannot be studied meaningfully without simultaneously examining stability and change in the social environment. Also, the interaction of personality and social systems is said to have "the usual outcome is that the initially different people are observed to behave in a strikingly similar fashion" in communities (Berkowitz, 1956, p.

210). According to a study of self-related experience in Indian communities, the inner self, multiplicity of the self, and the cultural configuration of language of selfhood show how cultures can diverge in the organization of activity around being a person (Boesch, 2003).

Other examples of other cultures has been provided in hopes of distracting the readers from identifying with aspects from their own culture and personal lives while entering different perspectives of individual existence and sociality, which enunciates some of the implications of the theory from the standpoint of a distant culture (Chaudhary, 2003; Chaudhary & Sriram, 2001). Identities acquire meaning in the contemporary societies where events in the social context challenge identities and redefine the boundaries of social groups. Since people's identities reflect social relationships, elements of the structure of common identities might be shared (Chryssochoou, 2000). Cunningham and Chelladurai (2004) found that relative group performance influences the formation of common in-group identity and in-group identity serves to improve affective reactions (i.e. satisfaction and preference to work with the group) based on cross-functional teams. The experience of community emerging from participants' discourse is not remarkably different from the academic meaning of community and individual perception of community is linked both to sense of community and to civic and political participation (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

Leader self-sacrifice and collective identification interact, such that followers' self-esteem is higher when they identify strongly with the collective and when the leader is self-sacrificial as compared to self-benefiting, which was found to be mediated by the

followers' perceptions of whether the leader respected and valued the group (De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Dijke, & Bos, 2006). For most organizations, this position can probably be argued; however, it is necessary to examine this generalization in the context of Burning Man. Even still, the personal and cultural feeling of belonging to a nation is impacted by the creation and spread of the imagined community (Anderson, 1993).

In relation to physical design factors of a community, Bouma and Voorbig (2009) found that the design influences social interactions in cohousing communities and that both age and the set of values, goals and behavior of the individual are important factors. In constructing utopian community ideals, Brenner and Haaken (2000) found that communitarian thought, as a part of a social movement, develops a socialist-feminist perspective with a focus on family, sexuality and democracy.

More directly appropriate to the study of the Burning Man community, Castro and Batel (2008) argue that generalizing new norms and practices when proposing change and innovation to a society is difficult. The social representational approach, based on the ironic interdependence of change and stability of the social group and the individual needs more dedication from those interested in advancing change. Three variables have been identified to determine the probability of advancing change in social groups is determined by the consideration of three variables. First, a respected expert must mediate the change and communicate concrete contexts and articulation with practice. Second, arguments and discursive strategies are certain in regard to resisting change with normative force. Third, the consequences for the change must range between transcendent and immanent, in that the greater good for the community must be obvious.

In building a strong heritage of a community, it is important to consider these issues when implementing change. In the event of change at Burning Man, these responses may not necessarily be the same due to the drastically different philosophies and ideologies of the counterculture.

Colombo and Senatore (2005) found that community identity is constructed in discourse and maintained through discourse and beyond within the confines of the local community, ethnic categories, in-group/out-group relations, and specific sets of relations. Additionally, community identity is discursively constructed by members in order to lend meaning to experience. Alternatively, social structures are negotiated and redefined through individual action and interaction. Howard (1994) found that social cognitive conceptions of social structure are delineated through a selective discussion of social cognition and sociological needs that implicate cognition. So, conceptions of the social structure or community are communicated through strategic interaction among the social group.

Identity

The sound of electronic dance music (EDM) is specifically designed to promote a non-stop dancing environment. Instead of a schizophonic rupture between performer or music source and audience, EDM is seen to perform a "transducive mediation between machine sound and human movement" (Ferreira, 2008, p. 17).

Significant associations between salience and self-definition, a tendency to view others in terms of the role-identity, increased social relations premised on role-identity,

expectations from other, and future behavior, were found. Significant predictors include: salience, self-definition, and social relationships (Callero, 1985). Frings, Abrams, de Moura, and Marques (2010) investigated the potential cost, encouragement of group members, and issue importance on group members' efforts to change the views of in-group deviants. They found that when costs are low, high levels of either importance or normative support are sufficient to increase persuasion action tendency. When costs are higher, higher levels of both issue importance and normative support are necessary to increase persuasion action tendency. Individual differences in social identity contribute positively to group-level outcomes (O'Gorman, Sheldon, & Wilson, 2008). Work group diversity and group identification have been found to be more positively related the more individuals believe in the value of diversity (van Knippenberg, Haslam, & Platow, 2007).

In negotiating role identities, a process of selection and definition of self-attributes occurs (Spencer, 1987). Sharing in, extending the circle of people who can enjoy the benefits of the shared resource, dissolves interpersonal boundaries posed by materialism and possession attachment – also found that food sharing is identifying an outsider similar to a family member (Belk, 2010). Crisp, Turner and Hewstone (2010) found that self-categorization and intergroup bias were related in common in-group contexts while crossed categorization contexts were not, insofar that overlapping categorizations, which has previously shown to reduce intergroup bias, does not lend itself to common in-group contexts.

When an in-group identity was not present, demographic dissimilarity was related to less satisfaction, but when a common in-group identity was present, there was a

positive relationship between ethnic dissimilarity and coworker satisfaction. Further, for

ethically dissimilar persons, coworker satisfaction was higher when a common in-group

identity was present than when it was not – social psychology and diversity management

(Cunningham, 2005). With regards to hazing, group identity is predicted by harsh

treatment and fun. Schooling skills and attitudes, conveying hierarchy, and promoting

social dependency – initiation practices support group functioning by promoting group-

relevant skills and attitudes, reinforcing hierarchies, and stimulating social dependency

(Keating et al., 2005).

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, as the grounded theory for this research, is used to understand

counterculture in a way that exposes the essence of meaning of the community identity.

According to Westhues (1972):

> To speak of the phenomenology of a counterculture is to speak of the way it
> looks at the world, or more accurately, what it defines the world to be. Its
> phenomenology is not just what we see when we look at those who believe in
> countercultural ideas. We mean the term phenomenology rather in its traditional
> philosophic sense of seeing the world as the counterculture sees it… grasp the
> impact of the ideology by studying it phenomenologically, that is, as it is
> perceived by those who accept its reality. (p. 12)

Phenomenology is the way we create meaning of our experiences. It is how we discover

the essence of meaning in our lived experiences. It is using the experience and

communicating the essence of meaning to those who are not familiar with the reality of

the mind. Understanding the experience of a phenomenon is living the experience and

what it means to experience it. We experience everything in our minds.

Since the Burning Man literature presents the project as a unique experience, a phenomenon that is unparalleled by any other festival, community, or camping trip, the only way to truly answer the question of "What is Burning Man like?" is through phenomenology. It is the best way to explain the subjective experience of the Burning Man phenomena, to explain the meaning of the lived experience of Burning Man identity and what it is like to actually live and feel the experience in the moment, without actually experiencing Burning Man.

Grounding phenomenology theory in personal experience, revealing the way in which the world is produced through constituting acts of subjective experience, allows for us to see the world as the counterculture sees it. Through understanding the essence of the meaning of the personal experience, or phenomenologically, it is possible that the reality is understood. Phenomenology serves as a unique tool in providing insight about experiences which cannot be measured or communicated adequately in any other way.

Stewart and Mickunas (1974) discuss two different forms of phenomenology: pure and applied. With pure phenomenology, the emphasis is on the mind and consciousness itself, whereas applied phenomenology is about the object experienced. While both forms are about experience and meaning, the divergent characteristic is the content of emphasis. Since Burning Man is essentially an object, rather an event, to experience, applied phenomenology is most appropriate. It is both necessary and useful to use ethnography and applied phenomenology for participant-observation of Burning Man because the phenomenon of interest—performed identity—cannot be adequately understood through other tools such as surveys or content analysis. To understand

Burning Man, we must go to it itself and experience the community *in situ*, to echo the

words of Husserl, "To the things themselves!" (p. 33).

Research Question

This study brings together counterculture, festivals, community, identity and

phenomenology. These topics have all been studied separately and this study combines

them to understand how identity emerges in a countercultural community of celebrated

individualism. While community tends to be in opposition to individualism, the essence

of the Burning Man community is based on the very notion of individualism, the precise

opponent of the traditional communal structure. Since community tends to be an

opposition to individualism, the proposed research seeks to understand a community

based on the notion of individualism. This contrasting culture is important because even

if we know everything about community and individualism, these two concepts have

never been posed in tandem for academic research. Thus the following research question

is proposed:

> RQ: How does a cohesive community identity emerge through communicative
>
>   behaviors in a counterculture where individuality and radical self-
>
>   expression are encouraged?

Chapter Two will offer a specific overview of the proposed research methodology.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Methodology

This study applies phenomenological theory, using ethnographic methods (i.e., participant observation and in-depth interviews), to observe the phenomenon of identity at Burning Man. Since "phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge," this methodology leads to understanding how Burning Man, as a phenomenon, is experienced and will give "meaning and essence in knowledge" (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 26-27). Phenomenology is "a reasoned inquiry which discovers the inherent essences of appearances" and since "an appearance is anything of which one is conscious," anything that appears to consciousness is a legitimate source of investigation and inquiry (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 3).

In this study, I use a combination of ethnographic and phenomenological methods to collect, validate, and analyze data using Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological research methods and Fetterman's (1998) ethnographic methods and techniques. To derive scientifically useful evidence in these phenomenological investigations, I have carried out the following methods and procedures to satisfy "the requirements of an organized, disciplined and systematic study" as set forth by Moustakas (p. 103). For a phenomenology to meet Moustakas' standards, it should satisfy seven criteria. They are:

1. The researcher must discover the topic and question which should emanate from an autobiographical source and have social meaning and significance;

2. The researcher then conducts a comprehensive review of the literature;

3. The researcher then constructs a set of criteria to locate appropriate co-researchers (i.e., respondents);

4. The researcher provides the co-researchers with "instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation, and developing an agreement that includes obtaining informed consent, insuring confidentiality, and delineating the responsibilities of the primary researcher and research participant, consistent with ethical principles of research" (p.103);

5. The researcher develops interview questions;

6. Using those questions, the researcher conducts recorded open interviews to focus on a phenomenologically bracketed topic;

7. Finally, the researcher organizes and analyzes the data for "textural and structural descriptions, a composite textural description, a composite structural description, and a synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences" (p. 104).

To help better understand Moustakas' research method, he organizes the seven steps mentioned above into three broader categories: Preparation, Data Collection, and Data Organization and Analysis. In the above list, numbers one through five are called Methods of Preparation. Number six is the Methods of Collecting Data, and number seven is referred to as the Methods of Organizing and Analyzing Data. To meet the requirements of the Methods of Preparation, is to "arrive at a topic and question that have both social meaning and personal significance" which is satisfied through my desire to understand how the community identity is maintained through communication during the

annual Burning Man project (p. 104). According to Moustakas, personal history brings the core of the problem in to focus.

Moustakas (1994) argues that a research question must uphold certain characteristics of science. First, a question must uncover aspects of the nature of lived experience. Second, a question must reveal the qualitative elements of experience. Third, a question "engages the total self of the research participant, and sustains personal and passionate involvement" (p. 105). Fourth, being qualitative in nature, a phenomenological question does not include predictive or causal relationships. Finally, meaning will emerge through creative and holistic description rather than from quantitative instruments.

Speaking to Moustakas' understanding of research as a personal enterprise, how community identity is shaped is interesting to me because of my past experiences. When I experienced Black Rock City for the first time (prior to this study), I was astonished by the way other more seasoned residents communicated and enforced their ideals and values of the community. Several instances occurred which made me more curious about this dynamic and how exactly it is maintained through the masses especially in a counterculture-based temporary society. I often times found myself worrying that I would say or do something inappropriate, hoping I would not embarrass myself or obviously identify myself as an unfamiliar, naïve or ignorant first-timer.

In the social sciences, we usually think of criteria as culture-free standards that stand apart from human subjectivity and value. In this study, however, conflicts over which criteria to apply boil down to differences in values that are contingent on human

choices. The demand for criteria reflects the desire to contain freedom, limit possibilities, and resist change. Ultimately, all standards of evaluation rest on a research community's agreement to comply with their own humanly developed conventions. The author ends by considering the personal standards that he applies to works that fall under the new rubric of poetic social science (Bochner, 2000). Ethnography is helpful here because the participant-observer nature of the work will allow me to see "reflections of members' social worlds or their perceptions of those worlds" (Spencer, 1994, p. 268). This happens as ethnographers build trust with the informants *in situ* and start to see things as an insider.

Participants

To gain access to the more seasoned and more involved burners, I was very involved and active within the Burning Man community during different times of the day and night to ensure a variety of participant exposure. Locating and selecting the research participants or co-researchers occurred during the seven days at the Burning Man project. In the pre-selection process, I screened all potential participants to ensure demographic diversity including age, race, religion, hometown, number of burns (times attending Burning Man), and level of involvement (i.e. theme camp involvement or experience, volunteer work, art installation, etc.). Most importantly, all potential participants provided verbal consent prior to being audio recorded for the purpose of social scientific research with the intent to publish. In the Black Rock desert, the weather and climate can often be unpredictable, consisting of heavy rain, intense wind dust storms, and/or

extremely high temperatures. I asked for an audio recording of their verbal consent due to the harsh environments and limited storage space during the event.

Accessing the Informants

Finding informants to participate in the in-depth interviews proved to be more difficult than I originally anticipated. This I partially blame on myself and my intimidation or lack of confidence in pursuing informants. However, I did receive recruitment assistance from my fellow campmates. Even once the informants were recruited to participate in the interviews, some of them seemed hesitant to spend their time answering a lengthy list of questions. Ultimately, I selected informants based on their willingness to participate, accessibility, convenience and experience level. I approached people who seemed lucid enough to talk. I was able to get a representative sample in regards to ethnic diversity and experience level, but did not reach diversity among the age range. The sample is representative, but is certainly not a totality. Due to the similarity in their responses and the age range, I have no reason to believe that any informants outside of the informants' age range would deviate from my findings.

Interview Protocols

In an effort to avoid guiding or persuading the informants' responses, I disclosed the purpose and goal of the study at the conclusion of each interview. In addition to demographic inquiry, I asked a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended interview

questions regarding personal and communal identity and responsibilities, which are attached as Appendix A.

At the conclusion of the interview, I gave each respondent the opportunity to provide an e-mail address for follow-up interviews, data validation and clarification, if necessary. The interviews were be supplemented by ethnographic observational field notes. Since the event is seven days in length each year, I was limited by the duration, but remained completely involved and interactive with the participants throughout the entire event. The field notes were documented, organized and cross-referenced according to Fetterman's (1998) standards of speculations, cues, lists, and personal diary-type comments separated out from observation notes.

Recording Data

With the anticipation of a strengthened understanding of the culture at Burning Man, I allowed for formal and informal time to process and crystallize my thoughts and findings periodically throughout the week. Overall, the coded interviews and ethnographic field notes were used as the primary sources to inform the phenomenology of Burning Man community identity.

At the end of the week, I had a total of 12 pages of handwritten field notes and conducted seven in-depth interviews, two of which were combined from a newlywed couple. There was a total of 252 minutes of audio recordings, which were coded using the method described below. These recordings revealed nine categories for further analysis and discussion.

Coding of Interview Data

The coding and analysis of the interview data was adapted from Moustakas' (1994) modification of Van Kaam's (1956, 1966) method of phenomenological data. This process included listing and preliminary grouping of expressions relevant to the experience, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing, final identification of themes, textual description, and developing "a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

First, I listed every utterance and expression that was relevant to the experience of Burning Man, and then preliminary grouped them by similar key words and descriptions. Then, I filtered the preliminary group eliminating any utterance that did not contact sufficient information about the experience, reducing the list to a more manageable size. This was followed by clustering related items into thematic labels to construct the core themes and then a final identification of themes through application, which served as the validation check. The themes were then used to "construct individual textual descriptions of experiences," using "verbatim examples from the transcribed interviews" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). The final step of this process resulted in an aggregate description of the experience of Burning Man, which will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Chapter 3

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Coding and Analyzing Data

Interviews

After transcribing the responses to the interview questions, I found the common themes using mostly keywords said by the respondents. The themes specifically focus on the investigation, identification and description of how individual behaviors impact the social climate and the communal identity of the temporary society of Black Rock City, especially across varying levels of participant experience. In the following analysis, I reveal that the Burning Man identity is created by the encouragement to participate, performance, interdependency between the individual and society, and behavior shaping co-constructed realities through human interaction to co-create meanings. The main unit of analysis to identify the communal identity as experienced by an individual is through face-to-face interactions and observed cultural patterns, and so throughout the following analysis, there are several narratives illustrating these points.

The emergence of the cohesive community identity is an organic process. Colombo and Senatore (2005) found that community identity is constructed and maintained in discourse of local community, ethnic categories, ingroup/outgroup relations, and specific sets of relations. Reflecting on the RQ of inquiring how the cohesive community identity emerges through communicative behaviors in a counter culture where individuality and radical self-expression are encouraged, the following

analysis is offered. Through the shared and separate experiences, a cohesive community identity emerges at Burning Man. In the coding and analyzing of the in-depth ethnographic interviews, the emerging themes included freedom of expression, altruism and the generosity of others, preparedness and survival, exclusivity and protection of their community, togetherness, dedication, accountability, acceptance and overall energy. The analysis is organized according to these themes below.

Freedom of Expression

Upon first glance, it seems as though these participants just want some form of freedom in the way they express themselves. They want to dress however they want and behave as they please. As I4 stated, her favorite part about Burning Man is "getting to wear whatever I want" (I4, 1:12). A common theme that each of the informants discussed was the freedom they felt in regards to how they can express themselves and their individuality, nothing that "wearing costumes" and "playing guitar and jamming with campmates" at the most basic level (I4-I5, 10:38). Further, on expressing individuality, I3 states, "one of the neatest things is recycling, I see a lot of Salvation Army, a lot of recycled clothing or stuff that I wouldn't be caught dead wearing on the street in my home town, but out here people comment on it, and go 'hey that looks pretty creative – how'd you do that?' You know?" (I3, 14:16). I5 takes joy in expressing himself and says it is about "coming out of your shell, not being the weirdest person here" (I5, 1:58).

Taking it a step further, I3 says that "freedom of self expression, solid in sexuality and self-image" best describes what it is like to be a Burner (I3, 1:30). While radical self-

expression is encouraged and allowed, ironically there seems to be a certain pressure to conform to this sense of freedom when some people might not instantly feel comfortable doing so. Burners have been defined as "crazy committed people to creativity," so for those who are not necessarily crazy or creative in the default world, they may have a difficult time adapting to this community (I2, 7:42). Burners are even creative in the way they articulate the way they express their individuality. One says, "I mean it all depends, if it's a party, dance until there is so much dust around me you cannot see me… dancing, building, smoking, just do whatever is comfortable" (I2, 13:12). This transducive mediation (Ferreira, 2008) between machine sound and human movement is seen at Burning Man in dancing and performance, but in the mediation between social interaction and social contributions. One Burner reflects on how he acted before entering and performing the Burning Man community. He states, "I was more reserved in my dress, self-image, white/gender thing, since then I have a different mentality, if I don't like what I'm looking at I can just look away" showing that Burning Man has actually served as a catalyst to feel more comfortable stepping out of the boundaries of popular culture (I3, 16:12).

On the surface, it seems like they want to wear (or not wear) whatever they want and act however they want, but this freedom of expression and creativity translates into some deeper layers of emotion and meaning. Research has show that individual perception of community is linked to both the sense of community and participation (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009) and the following statement from a virgin Burner acknowledges the deficit in his own freedom of expression in saying:

> For me its about creativity, expression, fun, others community, a tribe, a tribal environment that I think for the first time, like everything I've done for the first time, I feel like an outsider, it just makes me want to be better instead of feeling anything negative. A lot of people are much more extroverted than I am. [So, it's] like a measuring stick for how far I need to go to be open, and how that openness breeds [comfort] with others. [I] don't want to come off as not caring or elitist. [I'm] not judging at all, [just] embracing everything. [I want to be] able to express myself [moving] forward. (I6, 11:05)

He sets goals of how to improve his experience at Burning Man for future years to come. There seems to be pressure to be more open than this research participant is ready for. While he expresses his willingness to adapt, it interesting to see how he considers this an area for improvement in himself. Festivals vary in terms of creativity and have a widespread diversity (Robinson, 2009; Purdue, Durrschmidt, Jowers, & O'Doherty, 2008; Chang, 2006; Cruikshank, 2008; Hutton, 2008), but still none of them address the ironic development of community identity at a temporary festival which boasts celebrated individualism through radical self-expression.

After the research participant discusses his goals for the future in wanting to join in on this collective sense of freedom and that his previous non-Burning Man experiences have been steadily revealing this necessity:

> I feel like I do come with a lot of social stigma and programming that I've been trying to shed through exposure, different scenes, music scenes, realizing the importance, and then coming here where people are living their life to the fullest potential, in a new movement. Before coming here I was very analytical, about how I'm perceived instead of living in the moment… trying to shed that. (I6, 13:12)

His perspective is especially important when trying to understand the experience of a virgin Burner. He acknowledges where he has been, his current status, and his goals in regards to his level of acceptance, openness, and self-expression. While he is not fully

open in his expression, he understands the importance of this environment for other

artists, acknowledging the most important values at Burning Man:

> Respect and the event itself, the ability to have a venue and audience for what these artists do and allow for them to get their feedback… It is important for them to get the feedback. Come back for the symbiosis, feeds the artists. A lot of people are artists, the majority. [They are] artists through and through, people that are very passionate about this… about their work or other people's work… their music, art, culture, they're not ambivalent at all. (I6, 22:04)

It appears that he is respectful of the community norms and values at Burning Man and

he acknowledges the importance of the culture. He also appreciates the expression and

that he gravitates to:

> The spiritual side of it, the enlightenment, the art, they come hand in hand. Being around enlightened people, learning more about meditation and intent, being in workshops, an experience only in Burning Man…. Seeing an amazing amount of expression that covers so many square miles. (I6, 5:14)

In his conscious connection between enlightenment and artwork, it becomes clear why he

feels so spiritual after being exposed to the vast number of art installations on the playa.

He continues, in a confessional manner, to explain why he has found it so difficult

to assimilate to this more enlightened perspective found at Burning Man:

> [The dream] workshop made me realize there are a lot of things that we have programmed in us that we need to be able to locate, find, and pull out… from the media, pop culture that condition us in a way that breeds fear. So we have the ability of getting away from that paradigm, and move toward the meditation paradigm: we're already whole, amazing people, we just need to realize it and make that happen. (I6, 6:16)

He aligns the community of Burning Man culture with this meditation paradigm and

contrasts it with that of the default world, implying that in order to assimilate to Black

Rock City, we must actually separate ourselves from the mentality we've known in the

default world.

Not only is this a privilege to be able to assimilate to this mentality, it is actually an

obligation. I3 explains this obligation to express oneself and to participate at Burning

Man:

> If you see other people jumping on trampolines naked, take your pants off and get
> on that fucking trampoline… because if there's other naked people doing it too,
> nobody's going to be looking at just you…once you do that first back flip with your
> junk hanging out you're gonna feel freer than you ever have in your entire life. (I3,
> 9:54)

I3 continues later to explain how accepting and encouraging he is as a seasoned Burner in

stating, "I'll encourage anybody to explore whatever they need to get out as long as it

does not cause harm to themselves or others. Be yourself here because once you go home

you'll never see any of these people again" (I3, 18:04). While the anonymity brings

comfort, the ultimate joy lies within assimilating with this cohesive community.

The informants compare their expression at Burning Man versus how they behave in

the default world. In comparison to the default world, I6 describes himself as:

> Probably be much more through casual interaction, style… here [on the playa]
> there's such a comfort doing whatever you want, you can go running around naked
> and no one really cares, everyone is free to do as they choose. In the default world,
> you have to be careful with perception. I probably brought a lot of what is going on
> in the default world in here, I'm too guarded, too careful, instead of just being here I
> am… (I6, 26:11)

He acknowledges that he is too reserved and ultimately not fully integrated into the

Burning Man mentality.

While freedom of expression is aesthetically observed through clothing, it

encompasses as I3 recalls "clothing, attitude, generosity" which, excluding clothing, can

be best described as altruism (I3, 13:32). Since I have just covered freedom of

expression, I will now address the theme of altruism.

Altruism

Practicing unselfishness and devotion to the welfare of others seems to go hand-in-

hand at Burning Man. There is a deep rooted sense of altruism and generosity that serves

as an undertone throughout the entire event. These people do not feel obligated but rather

want to give to their neighbors because they acknowledge that these sentiments are what

make the playa their home.

Burning Man is all about participation, which, as my informants articulated, can be

expressed in many different ways. One of these ways is contributing to the community.

On performing participation, I2 describes that:

> You can do it in many ways: theme camps can be participants and all the rest
> observers. But I don't consider myself an observer. So I guess people that just come
> and park their car and put up a little tent and then walk around and party would be
> more of an observer and people who make an effort to build something that even
> looks nice for other people to get inspired to do the same then that's a participant.
> (I2, 9:30)

This is a completely selfless act of wanting to contribute to the community in a way that

will benefit others directly or indirectly. I2 has a desire to create artwork specifically for

others to enjoy.

There is a detachment among the definition of participation on the playa. I4 declares

that you are a "participant by clothing... if it's something you wouldn't wear out

normally then you're a participant, if you feel uncomfortable then you're an observer, it's

supposed to be participatory" (I4, 6:21). However, another virgin Burner claims that "physically here on the playa, there are only participants" (I1, 7:38). This is an area that needs to be explored further. From my own experience, I have seen people actively participate in the community without necessarily wearing costumes. Participation seems to be more about values.

Getz, Anderson, and Larson (2007) identified the stakeholder roles in festivals. These roles include: regulator, facilitator, coproducer, supplier, collaborator, audience, and the impacted. Under this typology, one person may hold more than one of these roles; however, it is highly unlikely that one person would hold all or even half of these roles. At Burning Man, it is common for participants to take on these roles, especially as a coproducer, supplier, collaborator, audience and the impacted. The roles at Burning Man might also include performer and janitor, since the event is officially hosted by a nonprofit organization but socially constructed directly by the participants. The Burning Man Organization sets up the space insofar as the land is marked off, but the participants are really the ones who turn it in to a temporary community. In Black Rock City, it is highly likely that the participants will hold all of these roles simultaneously, which contradicts the position that Burning Man is like other festivals. These stakeholder roles are less defined in that they overlap. For example, at Burning Man it is common to take the role of the janitor in leaving no trace, as well as serving as the entertainment through participation.

The values that have been expressed as being important to the Burning Man community surround the idea of altruism and generosity, or "helpful" and being "willing

to help" (I4, 2:18). Contributing to the community using a value system is unique to

Burning Man.

> I would just say integrity because it just says everything, but as far as Burning Man, creativity, freedom, just let everything out and be with people because outside of this place, people don't really, they're not being with other people, you don't hug them and kiss them or smile to them, and give them presents and just make them have a great time because they're there, but here, it's totally here. (I2, 2:46)

Research has shown that sharing in, extending the circle of people who can enjoy the

benefits of the shared resource, dissolves interpersonal boundaries posed by materialism

and possession attachment, therefore identifying an outsider similar to a family member

(Belk, 2010). The idea of creating strong ties resembling family membership with

sharing is interesting because of the gift economy at Burning Man. Participation and

expression includes human interaction which is entirely possible without extravagant

costumes. Sharing and gifting are examples of participating in the community.

Another important element of taking care of the community is the principle of

Leave No Trace. In explaining the values which are important to Burners, I3 melds these

sentiments together in one breath of "leave no trace, pack it in and pack it out, be

friendly, helpful. Give it because you never know when you might need something" (I3,

2:01). It appears that these ideas of giving to the playa not only includes taking care of

the earth, cleaning up your own messes, but also contributing to the community whenever

and however possible, "the playa giveth and the playa taketh" (I3, 2:04).

On each Burner's responsibility to the community, it is "to be good to one another,

to respect one another" which seems to be the baseline of the Burning Man values (I1,

1:35). Sure, there are other very important elements to the community, but as I2 explains,

it is not mandatory:

> Nobody has to do anything. I mean, nobody has to do anything. I could have just came here on the second day, told them that I cannot make it and then they would build it and I would come and I'll enjoy. So you just take on whatever you want. And I like to take on things. So, I took building and organizing the whole camping event with [my campmate] here. (I2, 4:38)

He admits here that he doesn't have any real responsibility but a desire to take on responsibilities from which his neighbors and campmates will benefit. Three underlying personal dimensions have been found with regard to individuals feeling a sense of community identity: support, connectedness, involvement. Shared dimensions in developing a sense of community include: perceived community engagement, neighborliness, and settleness (Puddifoot, 2003). Burning Man, however, is contrary to settleness because of the temporary nature of the event but also community engagement, connectedness and involvement during the other 51 weeks of the year when the participants are scattered all over the world and not connected through proxemics.

As a seasoned Burner, I3 deems it as his responsibility to offer assistance to the community even when they are not asking. He takes it upon himself to "help people avoid the pitfalls, give them glow sticks, water, or bicycle help, to participate, don't stand there and take a picture… go do it with them" (I3, 3:38). This is all rooted in the deeper desire to take care of each other within the community. Even within the first few days of her Burning Man experience, I4 acknowledges her responsibilities to the community:

> [Be] courteous and clean up after yourself, pull your weight, you wont ever be able to give back to the community what you get out of it. Someone needed a safety pin and I gave it to her – it made her day. Wear your costumes. (I4, 3:20)

I4 is still regarding her participation as wearing costumes, which is the way she chooses

to express her individuality. Although, it seems like she does not yet grasp that her safety pin experience is part of participating more than she realizes. Luckily for the community, she feels the joy in helping someone else at a purely selfless and seemingly simple act of giving away a safety pin.

This sense of altruism seems to be expected, even among the virgin Burners. When asked about the responsibility of the community, I1 replies that the community is "supporting me as however needed, like if something happens the community is here to look out for you (I1, 2:02). It is very interesting to see how these virgin Burners explain participation and altruism within the same sentence, even. I6 explains that from his community he "expect[s] sharing, a helping hand, understanding, and people to have fun" (I6, 16:47). Altruism and generosity within the same thought of having fun is a novel concept – these ideas do not usually align, especially this closely. Participants demonstrate altruism and generosity when helping their neighbors. For example, while I was standing in line to get ice for my own camp, I talked to a few participants who expressed their great joy in being able to help their neighbors build an art installation despite the inclement hot weather while also feeling hot, tired, thirsty and hungry. These participants helped their neighbor out of pure selfless dedication to wanting to contribute to their community and come back year after year to do so.

A veteran Burner explains his perspective on what he expects of his neighbors. Initially, it appears that he seems to be entitled but based on his prior explanations of his own altruism, this just is not so.

I believe that whatever their responsibilities is, it is just to keep me happy, and just

be with them, spend time and have a good time. Just like I care about them having a nice camp and food and everything else, they're just doing the same. (I2, 5:51)

It seems as though these expectations have developed over time and from his own experience with his neighbors throughout the years he has been participating at Burning Man.

When asked about the potential consequences to his neighbors for not complying with his expectations, he was at a loss. He could not even explain what would happen. Instead he provided a generalized statement regarding his lived experience:

The only experience I get with my neighbors is that there is courtesy and politeness, and like teamwork, yeah, whatever you want. Like, okay, you want us to do this? Okay! You want us to do that? Okay, yeah, let's work together. (I2, 6:37)

The only qualities or characteristics he describes as coming from his neighbors is helpfulness and generosity.

Several people have explained how their Burning Man values have translated into their lives outside of Burning Man. I3 says that "being at Burning Man this long, it has spilled over into my default world, give someone a glass of water, a glass of water is coming to you" (I3, 15:33). Perhaps it is the desire to become a better person and to be in an environment that is supportive of this generosity that keeps these Burners coming back year after year.

However, this generosity is not exclusive to veteran Burners. As a virgin Burner, I5 expresses his generosity in saying that he and his partner give "whatever we have, extra breakfast food, cold packs, rescue anyone in dire need" (I5, 5:59). Knowing what we know about current society in the default world, it would be interesting to examine how

and when this altruistic transformation occurs.

Even though the participants are more than willing to be generous and help take care of each other in the extreme environment of the playa, there is, of course, and expectation that you will be prepared and that you will come with the intent to take care of yourself and rely on yourself for your basic survival needs. Now that altruism has been discussed, the theme preparedness will be addressed.

Preparedness

As she describes Burners, since she does not identify as a Burner yet, she says they are "colorful and sparkly, probably stoned, yeah, just like light hearted and respectful and we're all in it together, prepared, too" (I1, 4:54). This explanation shows that preparation is either an afterthought or perhaps a prerequisite. She continues:

> I think it's the environment, and like the climate and like just the fact that this is such an extreme place that it's kind of this buffer zone between us and the other 51 weeks of the year… the separation and the extreme… it's the hot, and the cold, and the dry, and the extreme like sensations, things coming at you (I1, 7:44)

When positioning the environment as a buffer zone, it becomes clear that preparedness is definitely a prerequisite.

The harsh climates and the necessity for survival and preparedness appear to be part of the experience that brings this community together. When asked what they would change about Burning Man, I2 states "I don't think I would change anything" and then when a fellow campmate makes a suggestion of the weather, he refutes this by saying "No no no, take it as it comes" implying that the weather is all part of the experience (I2,

1:13). To echo this sentiment, I1 explains, "We're all in this crazy experience together (I1, 4:54).

The idea of preparedness is further positioned as a prerequisite when a veteran Burner explains the priority at Black Rock City of "desert survival first, party second. If you can't take care of the first, then you don't get the second" (I3, 7:02). Preparedness and preparation are required and necessary to then earn the privilege to enjoy the other elements of the event.

From my own observations, I witness people who appeared to be highly intoxicated. In listening to the environment around me, I observed that people have little tolerance for irresponsible behavior because I would hear phrases like, "some people just can't handle their playa" and "another one bites the dust." It seems that irresponsible behavior is the one instance where intolerance, sarcasm and judgment is appropriate in Black Rock City. When I asked about people making these remarks, people said it is usually the unprepared and irresponsible ones who come out solely with the intent of partying. Those making comments and passing judgments are trying to protect their environment and are disappointed when responsibility and accountability is not treated as a priority before having fun.

This is not to say that Burners are uptight, in fact, one admits that she is "way more uptight in the real world, with anxiety and OCD" but here she will say, "there isn't too much dust in my water, I'll drink it" and claims to be "way more laid back" (I4, 11:05). This laid back mentality translates into their expectations of the community which are limited to "keep the porta potty clean, give better directions or just say you don't know"

(I5, 4:27). They have very basic and simple expectations, but even this seems to be too much.

From my own experience as a virgin and veteran Burner, once you understand the layout of the city, you do not ever need to ask for directions. Having been given wrong directions a few times in my first year, I actually think that people give wrong directions on purpose. This is one way people participate is that they get the virgin Burners, because virgins are the only ones who would ask for directions, to explore parts of the city they would not have otherwise. At first, you may think that you are lost but ultimately, no matter where you end up on the playa, you are going to enjoy yourself and experience things you have never imagined. Giving bad or incorrect directions is all a part of the game; it is all a part of participating.

There are minimal complaints and they vary depending on experience level or veteran status. The virgins complain about the lack of resources because they expect the community to help them when they are not as prepared as they should be. The only veteran complaint was to preserve the exclusivity of their community, to make it difficult for people to infiltrate their community without similar levels of dedication. There is a high level of commitment involved to be at Burning Man physically and mentally.

One interesting transformation happened in the midst of an actual interview. When asked what he would change about Burning Man, he said he wished for a place to "buy water," along with complaining about the "massive lines" (I5, 1:28). However, in the same interview, he later said, "Radical self-reliance, goddamn it! It's the ultimate test: if you can't show up with enough water, then you don't deserve to be here" (I5, 13:59).

So it is like he wished for more convenience but he later realized that this is part of proving your privilege to be here. Now that I have covered the theme of preparedness, I will discuss the theme of exclusivity and anti-tourism.

Exclusivity/Anti-Tourism

These people are very protective of their environment and it seems as though they realize exactly what would threaten their community. They all seem to recognize and respect a certain level of exclusivity that exists on the playa. When I asked my informants about what would damage the community, nearly all of them mentioned some form of commercialization, which ironically would make this event feel like every other music festival out there. On what would ruin the community, I6 provides only one element that would be hazardous to this community:

> Commercialism or having a major sponsor would definitely leave a bad taste in people's mouths. If they were to try to get too strict and make too many rules, it would not allow for this free form structure to take place, it would have a very negative impact [on the community]. (I6, 22:30)

There is an element of pride and confidence that even though "corporate stuff" would ruin this community, it would never happen because "the community is strong and those expectations are so clearly laid out and people aren't going to let that happen" (I1, 8:34). They have a desire to keep this community pure and free from anything, such as money or commerce, which might corrupt the intentions.

It is reasonable to wonder how exactly this community would be impacted through commerce or commercialization. I5 elaborates on this point:

> If it became more commercial, with tourists wanting to look at naked people, keep it to where you cant really buy or sell anything, so you don't have people just showing up to sell stuff, be here and live. (I5, 8:58)

It is telling to see how these sentiments echoed with every single informant, ranging from virgin to veteran. This community, new and old alike, is very dedicated to preserving the counterculture culture.

According to Earls (1993), a festival is "a communal gathering that objectifies people's collective wishes and dreams and provides an important occasion for a unique experience in their social lives" (Earls, 1993, p. 33). Burning Man is, in fact, a communal gathering with a unique experience for people's social lives. However, Burning Man does not objectify wishes and dreams. While most festivals could be perceived as an exploitation or objectification to people's wishes and dreams through consumerism and souvenirs, Burning Man, as an anti-consumerism event, sets out to specifically not participate in the exploitation or objectification, but rather embraces dreams and wishes in a way that allows people to radically express said wishes and dreams less the fear of being judged.

Festivals are regarded as advertisement, patronizing local businesses and driving business into the local community providing economic stimulus (Usyal, Gahan, & Martin, 1993; Arcodia & Robb, 2000). As stated by the research participants above, Burning Man, on the other hand, was designed as a social experiment not as a money-making strategy. So, although the apparent category for Burning Man is "festival," it is clear that the traditional festival parameters simply do not apply.

In consideration of these four impacts of community cohesiveness, economic benefits, social incentives, and social costs (Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2003) based on the typical festival, it is clear that the economic benefits and social costs are not the intent or even a benefit of the Burning Man festival. Burning Man, however, does support the social function of a festival as closely related to values that a community regards as essential to its ideology (Falassi, 1987).

Rooted in the fear of "more media exposure, negative publicity" is the possibility of overpopulation and the attraction of tourists instead of citizens or participant (I3, 11:25). One way to mitigate the negative publicity would be to prevent the irresponsible and party-types from entering. One veteran has a strong opinion of what would help mitigate this issue. In an effort to protect their community, he would like to see a change in the "times the gate closes." He would rather "shut it off on Wednesday, to keep the people who show up at the end, which prevents the 'weekend warrior' vibe. Close the gate Wednesday morning/Tuesday night, keep the hardcore here, and the looky-loos and spectators out" (I3, 0:45). They are very protective of their environment. It is as if the extreme climate and harsh environment doesn't make it exclusive enough, they actually want to change the rules to further protect their environment and tighten up the exclusivity. This position is supported by previous research which investigated the potential cost, encouragement of group members, and issue importance on group members' efforts to change the views of in-group deviants (Frings, Abrams, de Moura, & Marques, 2010).

Concerning counterculture, the less committed levels serve as informants to the culture while the more committed levels serve as role models for potential counterculture participants (Fox, 1987). Attendees are the partygoers, the ones there to take from the community and give nothing back but more trash to pick up at the end of the event. Making a bad impression on the culture, as being disrespectful or unruly and then bragging about it, is potentially harmful to the likely appeal of this countercultural life.

When differentiating between the participant and spectator, a virgin explains that "a spectator stands back and watches events unfold. A participant is responsible for making the events unfold. A spectator observes, keeps their mouth shut and doesn't get involved. One stays safe and the other takes risks" and while he considers himself a spectator, he says he is "definitely trying to change [his] life in order to be a better person, someone who isn't intimidated in a raucous kind of crowd feeling comfortable expressing themselves" (I6, 20:09).

It can be "intimidating" because other "people were able to reference parts of Burning Man, with a deeper history… and connections to the event, they're able to compare and contrast… it's definitely something where I look forward to having that shared experience... I'm definitely coming back next year" (I6, 21:26). He is seeking that exclusivity and inclusivity or connection with the event. Although the community seems to be in pursuit of exclusivity and being part of an elite group status, they are also very dedicated to the sense of togetherness.

Burning Man exists in complete isolation from mainstream society in that there is no cellular service, no internet connection and it takes at least a two hour drive to reach

any kind of real civilization. Altman and Haythorn (1965) found that those in isolation revealed more about intimate topics and achieved a greater depth of disclosure in interpersonal relationships, which is an excellent explanation for the immediacy shared among Burning Man participants, even among those who have just met. Now that exclusivity and anti-tourism have been discussed, I will provide a discussion of the theme of togetherness.

Togetherness

A sense of togetherness seems to be an expectation that maintains the collective identity of the community. Like Figueroa (2003) found with Mexican immigrant soccer culture, the Burning Man culture is a way to reflect their cultural identity. I5 declares, "I don't expect anything, just be part of the group, not isolated and snotty" (I5, 4:53). To elaborate on this point, when I1 was asked about how she expresses her individuality on the playa, she had a difficult time answering the question:

> I think that's pretty hard and I think it's actually kinda the opposite, it's like it's the opposite of individuality, it's like this deep rooted sense of connectivity. It's not like we all need to be individuals, it's like, yeah, we're all individuals but we're all part of this thing, so it's kinda the opposite of individuality (I1, 9:11)

Instead, I1 feels like it is less about the individuality and more about the collective community. This is particularly surprising that she feels so connected or rather understands the community so well because at the time of her interview, she had only been in Black Rock City for 36 hours.

Each participant has a different experience. For example, when I6 was interviewed

at the end of the week, he still did not feel fully integrated into the community. He

admitted that the members of the community were like:

> Camp counselors; [they] encourage the kids to step outside of their comfort zone,
> but not too much. Just make a stride to go outside of what you're normally
> comfortable with. Next year, you already know what's going on, you already have a
> reference point, you know where things are laid out, you know where center camp.
> (I6, 27:57)

It seems as though he now has a goal to reach for the next year. He did not want to be

disingenuous and had a difficult time shedding his insecurities from the default world:

> Based on not knowing the people around me that well, kind of trying to get a read
> off of somebody before I express myself, thinking a lot and being serious instead of
> trying to be philosophical, just shut it and become more care free. I feel like I'm an
> outsider, by having that vision of myself it makes it so that I don't believe that I can
> engage in people, with that I feel like I will be looked at as an imposture. (I6, 29:12)

This perspective is understandable because within this community "the culture [has]

already set itself in: dress, attitude, inside jokes," so trying to integrate into an established

community may present a challenge if you are not completely willing to take those risks

(I3, 20:08). This supports that generalizing new norms and practices when proposing

change and innovation to a society is difficult (Castro and Batel, 2008). As found in the

literature (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Alomes, 1985), Burning Man is no different in this

sense, for without the actual festival, this entire culture would not exist with such a

unified identity.

Even still, self-esteem is higher when they identify strongly with the collective and

when the leader is self-sacrificial as compared to self-benefiting (De Cremer, van

Knippenberg, van Dijke, & Bos, 2006) burners have a strong tendency to resist the

traditional form of hierarchical organization. Since the event is founded upon ideologies

such as radical self-expression, counterculture and anti-consumerism, the prospect of

having a mainstream-like governing agency is likely to not go over well with the existing

community.

The risks, however, are not all that risky. When asked to describe the population of

the Black Rock City community, I3 provides a dichotomous description:

> The community is two fold: half new age, open hippies, and peace and love. Then there are the old folk, who just like to blow stuff up, and act sarcastic and witty, and very protective of this place. It's a cross between everybody should experience this and who is deserving, who will join in the fun, and if you're deserving. Just don't come in your Birkenstocks and jeans to take pictures. (I3, 5:44)

It seems that the only risk to take is joining in on the fun and being deserving. As

described above, deserving takes into account being prepared and altruistic. In another

informant's attempt to differentiate between the participants and observers, I1 says:

> It's hard to say here because we only see participants, maybe the um the cops, but the cops are participants too, that's all part of the thing it's like the officials roaming the streets, so we're all participants in this whole spectacle. Oh! Maybe, today a satellite went above so maybe the people looking at the satellite image. (I1, 6:45)

Since Burning Man "started off as counterculture and kinda evolved into its own actual

culture itself," perhaps there is no real culture (I3, 10:56). Even though the participants

make up the culture, it seems as though I6 does not need to be so self-conscious when

trying to integrate. His biggest and perhaps only antagonist is himself.

Even though the community is very open, accepting and collective, Burners

remain very protective of their environment because it takes so much dedication to make

this place happen the way it does. With the theme of togetherness established, now I will

discuss dedication.

Dedication

It takes a strong commitment to make this trip happen. People come from all over the world to participate at Burning Man. From the perspective of, "If you're gonna pay $300 to get here, participate!" there really is no reason to not participate (I5, 6:28). Plus, "it's the playful art… don't have limits because it takes a commitment to get here and be here for a whole week… leave your normal life and your work and everything and just come here" to experience Burning Man to the fullest (I2, 1:44).

It does take a great deal of preparation, dedication and commitment, but sometimes people still need to be shown how to properly participate as a citizen. I3 notes that he spends his time in Black Rock City "participating as a citizen.… I spent time learning to be an example, in showing by example, being open and friendly. We're all here because we want to be" so he takes it on as part of his responsibility to show, by example, how to be a participating citizen (I3, 8:11). As a quick note or tip on how to best integrate into the Burning Man community, I3 says, "if you see something that is more fun than what you're doing, you're obligated to stop what you are doing and go do that." A spectator is someone who sees it as fun… but doesn't participate. "Why did you come all the way out here if you're not gonna play?" (I3, 9:31)

The dedication of the community is evident in the elaborate works of art that are installed throughout the playa. This art is very inspiring and has a profound impact on the citizens:

> The community is the art, the creations, that shared desire and passion to evoke your ideas into reality, to come together and get outside of the box, the community is for people to see what's not working and try something that is going to work, taking

their passion and creating this city. (I6, 15:06)

It is not just one element that constructs this community, "this is nothing you can do alone. It takes an entire group of people to make the city. It takes different goals to make a full machine" which breeds a cohesive and collective community (I3, 3:11). None of this is possible without the highest levels of dedication from each and every participant. Now that this discussion has been addressed, I will discuss the accountability theme.

Accountability

Along with dedication to the community comes an innate sense of accountability. This accountability translates into actions, boundaries, responsibility, and contributions to the community. According to I1, "consent" is the only boundary that exists at Burning Man (I1, 10:14). She explains, "I haven't quite found, because I'm so new to this, I can't really say, it's still who I am, this reaffirms who you are, you can be anywhere but it's more fun to be with people of the same collective" (I1, 9:49). While she does not yet identify herself as a Burner, she agrees that she is part of the community because she identifies with the "same collective."

In continuing on the path of accountability, I3 calls out specific actions to "pick up your own trash, leave no trace, be respectful of each other, be respectful of the event itself" (I3, 4:09). When asked what would happen to people not complying with expectations, I3 notes that people would be "ostracized by peers" or have "angry campmates" and then for more official violations, like "grey water violations" they would get "fined by BLM" (I3, 5:11). There are obvious consequences for the rules set forth in

the guidelines; however, the social rules are certainly enforced.

To further confirm what I3 suspects would happen to those violating these

expectations, I1 provides a short narrative of an experience she had when someone was

not acting in accordance to the expectations of her neighbor:

> Last night there was a big rain storm and I went into a tango bar that had, it was
> their happy hour and they had a sheltering, and they're like 'come on in!' and I was
> chatting with this guy who also kinda got invited in and you know we were having a
> good conversation and then the person who invited us in walked by and he said,
> 'What's up, bitch?' to the guy, like who had served us and invited us in and then he
> said that and we're both like, where did that come from? And the guy was like, 'Yo,
> that's not okay' like 'please leave now' like 'that's not acceptable' and the guy like
> almost didn't believe him but this guy stood firm, like, no, like 'get out now' and so
> I think that's the kind of enforcement that there is, just like no, it's not cool that you
> just did something. It's that building in the sense of consent and permission and
> invitation, that kinda prevents a lot of those things and empowers people to say, no
> that's not okay. (I1, 3:42)

This provides a great example that none of the other informants were able to provide, one

in which someone was not complying with expectations and actually had to face real

consequences, one which reinforces taking accountability for your own actions and acting

in accordance to the values of the community.

Another element of accountability that is perhaps missed by first year Burners is the

obligation to familiarize yourself with the layout of the city. Each ticketholder is given a

map of the city upon entering the gate. When asked what he would change about Burning

Man, his answer was surprising:

> I guess it's hard being my first year to be that critical. There's a lot for me to change
> within myself before I ask Burning Man the event to change anything. They do such
> a great job, so many intelligent minds at work here that for, I guess the only thing
> they could really do differently is possibly have more of a visitor center, a place for
> people to come in and potentially look at footage, a virtual tour of what is going to
> be around, gain understanding of a multimedia experience, before and after you get

here. (I6, 8:45)

This perspective is very interesting because it seems like maybe he is confused about who is responsible for making his experience a positive one. It makes me wonder, who is this "they" that he is expecting to enhance his experience? Even after being here for a week, he does not understand that there is a "common empathy to have fun, give and take, can't just show up and expect everyone to make it for you" (I4, 7:17). I6 needs to go a little bit further to adopt the mentality of I4 and realize that it is his responsibility to make his own experience what he wants.

I6 confessed that feels a sense of obligation to "to learn, understand more, who's involved, participate more, contribute, be part of a camp, taking on responsibility, to running the city, not running, but being a part of the daily routine of the city" (I6, 15:45). Luckily, he is on the right track and has not adopted a mentality of the "people that come here for the wrong reasons… taking advantage of the freedom and openness of other people" (I2, 11:23).

It does take dedication and a desire to completely absorb into the values of the community. This dedication to preserving the values in the community circles back to acceptance and diversity. Now that accountability has been discussed, I will address the theme of acceptance.

Acceptance

Acceptance of diversity, honoring and respecting differences, is an essential element of this community. Even the most nascent of Burners understands that he will be

accepted but has a difficult time shedding the ingrained fears of rejection brought in from

the default world:

> I'm trying to let go of the thought of rejection and not being accepted, moving forward and learning how to be somebody who is not so serious, be much more jovial and joking instead of just critical, important issues. Things don't need to be like that all the time. (I6, 14:18)

He continues to elaborate on how and why he found it difficult to fully participate in this

environment:

> I came in here with a lot of respect and awe of what was happening around me and in a way I felt like it all happened too fast. Me trying to take it in and just allow for me to participate and be involved and see everything I wanted to be. Has to do with being a dynamic with a camp and compromising what I wanted to do. I was more of a spectator. (I6, 19:02)

Even still, it seems like everyone is respectful and appreciative of boundaries.

There are many different reasons why people come to Burning Man, and while

some are more superficial reasons than others, each reason, as long as it fits within the

values of the community, is respected and accepted. For the more lighthearted reason:

> Well, people need to break loose. And people are looking for a safe place to smoke drugs… haha. And people like a huge event like this that gives you parties 24/7, different parties, here and there, and this and that, the variety here is just what keeps it going. Nobody would give it up. (I2, 10:18)

Even though this seems like a shallow reason to come to Burning Man, I2 and his

campmates travel nearly 3,000 miles to participate and contribute to the community.

I2 took the interview into his own hands and asked a campmate, "Would you give

Burning Man up?" and his campmate replies, "Umm, I've lived in the States for seven

years and I've come here seven times. So you're asking the wrong person, I think…" and

then I2 continues, "I don't know anyone who has been here once and hasn't been back

since" showing the dedication which must be towards something other than just a seven day party or safe place to "smoke drugs" (I2, 10:18). There is something more to this.

While the reason for attending is masked by one giant party, the real reason is the meaning behind "the Man, fire, the yearning to escape from every day society, the 9-5 corporate work week, wanting to get away from regular fashion and mainstream culture" (I3, 10:31). Another element is being in an environment that is very protective against:

> Intolerance, any type of violence, anything that was too base that wasn't cerebral, the basic thing is that people can debate and have a dialogue on almost anything, find an ability to weed it out with words instead of getting physical about anything that's punitive that's overt sabotage. (I6, 24:04)

While the reasons for participating at Burning Man vary, the luxury of having this accepting environment is available and accessible to everyone, at least everyone who acts in accordance to the values of the community. He continues to express how he feels that he contributed and expressed his individuality, in comparison to others, in Black Rock City:

> The costumes, being able to, for most people it's a costume, for me I didn't really go out and do the singing, get up in front of the microphone, just dance and costume, and kinda smiling and saying hi and talking to people. (I6, 25:59)

The only expectation he is not meeting is his own. In his selfless acts of being inclusive of his neighbors and other people in the community, he is showing his own acceptance of them. While he feels that he needs to come back next year to feel more fully integrated, he is acting in accordance to the values of the community.

The characteristics of the community include "open mindedness, kind of nurturing aspect to it" which is yet another accepting element of the community (I6, 16:20). Again,

contrasting the mentality of Black Rock City with that of the default world:

> I said this after my second year… I thought it my first, and believed it my second. Humanity has gone down a path of 'as long as our generation is taken care of then I don't give a fuck. Here's what I'm gonna do to blow off some steam.' But a lot of these people here are executives. One year, I camped next to NASA's jet propulsion team. I mean these people are all really good at what they're doing. It rekindles my faith in humanity because there are some people with power who still have their mind open. (I3, 18:42)

This is in support of what Crisp, Turner and Hewstone (2010) found in that self-categorization and intergroup bias as related to common in-group contexts while crossed categorization contexts were not. Overlapping categorizations, which have previously shown to reduce intergroup bias, do not lend themselves to common in-group contexts. It is all of this openness, acceptance and rekindled faith in humanity that contributes to the energy of the community. Now that the theme of acceptance has been discussed, I will address the final theme of energy.

Energy

The following narrative is the best way to express how the energy is experienced in Black Rock City:

> Nobody gave me one [a playa name]! Actually, I was given a name. There was a place called "recreation place" and I walked in there, and they said, okay sit here, and then they gave me a massage, then I got a lap dance, and then they got me to sing something and then they asked me to take all my clothes off and give somebody else a lap dance. And then they put all my clothes in a little bag and gave me a new name and let me crawl out of this furry pink tunnel that leads you out to the Esplanade, like to the main street and I was totally naked with a bag of clothes with a new name. (I2, 15:38)

While he does not remember the name he was given, he certainly remembers this rite of

passage as he entered the playa with a new name and a new perspective on the Burning

Man experience. With regards to hazing, group identity is predicted by harsh treatment

and fun which is demonstrated by the passage above (Keating, Pomerantz, Pommer, Ritt,

Miller, & McCormick, 2005). Also, upon arriving at welcome gate, each attendee is told

to roll around in the alkaline dust which adds a certain degree of ritualistic hazing, which

may be a contributing factor to promoting the group identity. These experiences

represent the energy at Burning Man. Neighbors are "friendly, crazy sometimes, but in a

good way" and Burners have this expectation of them, mostly because everyone acts

consistently with these expectations (I2, 6:17).

When asked about what happens to anyone not complying with these expectations

of being friendly and crazy, I2 replied:

> I did not come across this… I would just remind them where they are and it's all
> about happiness and enjoying the moment so. Actually, I live my life like that, so
> it's not only Burning Man but Burning Man is just an opportunity to see other
> people doing that because in my life I just choose to do that. (I2, 7:16)

This veteran Burner takes the values of the community into the default world and has a

bit more of an in-depth understanding of who he is and how this community has

influenced him.

When I asked the virgin Burners about violating these expectations, one answered

simply, "we would have a lame place to camp" (I5, 5:14). Another had a much more

elaborate response and an example to illustrate his perspective:

> A wall would erect, an imaginary wall, you stay over there, we'll stay over here. I
> think everybody here has a beautiful understanding of the dynamic that goes on in
> this city, from my perspective everything went very well. Another group had a
> conflict with another camp, they got in a conflict with [a theme camp], [the theme

camp] marked off space because they felt like they were encroaching on their space. I don't think anybody realized how big they were (I6, 17:27)

This camper experienced a level of intolerance and a lack of cooperation from his neighbors. He expressed that he just kept his distance from the group that was not acting in compliance with acceptance and understanding.

The beauty of Burning Man is "the energy of the people, in peace and freedom with themselves, everything is good, you can be anything you want" (I2, 0:35). The most representative response on what keeps these people coming back is "the people, the atmosphere, just about everything it has to offer, sitting here with you" (I2, 14:22). This response was very vague, but it helped give me some feedback that as a researcher I was not tainting their protected world.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Conclusions and Recommendations

Each of the interview questions addressed a certain construct of the driving research question. The interview responses were then verified and supported using ethnographic observations. After careful analysis of the coded themes from the in-depth interviews, the data answer the following question:

RQ: How does a cohesive community identity emerge through communicative behaviors in a counterculture where individuality and radical self-expression are encouraged?

The data reveal an interesting conclusion rooted in the themes of freedom of expression, altruism, preparedness, exclusivity and anti-tourism, togetherness, dedication, accountability, acceptance, and energy contribute to the cohesive community identity.

In conducting my own separate coding and analysis, without regard to the Burning Man Principles, I found it to be very surprising to find that the themes coincide with the principles set forth by the Burning Man organization. The community performed consistently with its stated values. Perhaps it is the fact that there is no official entity there to enforce the rules, except for the citizens of Burning Man themselves. The Ten Principles of Burning Man, from the Burning Man website, are as follows:

Radical Inclusion: Anyone may be a part of Burning Man. We welcome and respect the stranger. No prerequisites exist for participation in our community.

Gifting: Burning Man is devoted to acts of gift giving. The value of a gift is unconditional. Gifting does not contemplate a return or an exchange for something of equal value.

Decommodification: In order to preserve the spirit of gifting, our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, or advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist the substitution of consumption for participatory experience.

Radical Self-reliance: Burning Man encourages the individual to discover, exercise and rely on his or her inner resources.

Radical Self-expression: Radical self-expression arises from the unique gifts of the individual. No one other than the individual or a collaborating group can determine its content. It is offered as a gift to others. In this spirit, the giver should respect the rights and liberties of the recipient.

Communal Effort: Our community values creative cooperation and collaboration. We strive to produce, promote and protect social networks, public spaces, works of art, and methods of communication that support such interaction.

Civic Responsibility: We value civil society. Community members who organize events should assume responsibility for public welfare and endeavor to communicate civic responsibilities to participants. They must also assume responsibility for conducting events in accordance with local, state and federal laws.

Leaving No Trace: Our community respects the environment. We are committed to leaving no physical trace of our activities wherever we gather. We clean up after ourselves and endeavor, whenever possible, to leave such places in a better state than when we found them.

Participation: Our community is committed to a radically participatory ethic. We believe that transformative change, whether in the individual or in society, can occur only through the medium of deeply personal participation. We achieve being through doing. Everyone is invited to work. Everyone is invited to play. We make the world real through actions that open the heart.

Immediacy: Immediate experience is, in many ways, the most important touchstone of value in our culture. We seek to overcome barriers that stand between us and a recognition of our inner selves, the reality of those around us, participation in society, and contact with a natural world exceeding human powers. No idea can substitute for this experience. (Burning Man, 2010)

Each of these ten principles is represented in one or more of the coded themes found in this study. The following table is provided for a clear representation of where these principles fit within the thematic categories from the analysis:

Burning Man Principles Found Within the Coded Themes

Coded Themes	**Applied Burning Man Principles**
Freedom of Expression	Radical self-expression, Participation
Altruism	Gifting, Communal effort
Preparedness	Radical self-reliance
Exclusivity/Anti-Tourism	Radical inclusion, Decommodification
Togetherness	Radical inclusion, Communal effort
Dedication	Radical self-reliance, Civic responsibility
Accountability	Radical inclusion, Radical self-reliance, Communal effort, Civic responsibility, Leaving no trace
Acceptance	Radical inclusion, Immediacy
Energy	Radical inclusion, Gifting, Decommodification, Radical self-expression, Communal effort, Participation, Immediacy

The most interesting part is how some of the principles combine to create a more dynamic theme than the original principle. This goes to show that it is not any single principle which contributes to the cohesive community identity, but rather it is the precise combination of principles which allow for an environment that is supportive of a strong community identity as well as individuality and radical self-expression. Ultimately, it

comes down to the principles set forth by Burning Man, which combine to allow for a cohesive community to emerge in a counterculture where individuality and radical self-expression are encouraged. The answer to the research question is as follows:

In a counterculture where individuality and radical self-expression are encouraged, a cohesive community identity emerges through communicative behaviors of an explicit list of principles guiding the human interaction within that community.

Limitations

While this study was carefully constructed and completed, there are several elements which limit the findings. Within the natural realms of an initial study of this area, there were several limitations which I will present in sequence of the project completion. These limitation areas include gaining access to the informants, interviewing, technology, coding, and the researcher bias.

Gaining Access

Gaining access to the actual site of Burning Man was a process and a limitation. Unfortunately, this event only lasts for seven calendar days and occurs only once per year. The research had to be conducted within a very short time frame which did not allow much time for reflective writing and documenting observations. Also, gaining access to informants was more difficult than expected. I found it to be a challenge to get the actual interviews. When I initially inquired about their interest in participating, people were interested but I was repeatedly rejected. The frequently used excuses included bad

timing, fatigue, being too busy, or on their way to do something else. Because of the nature of the playa, there is always something to do, to be seen, and something available for participation. The reality is that Burners are over stimulated for an entire week and I do not necessarily blame them for not wanting to be restricted for 45 minutes to complete an interview. It did feel like they were all trying to politely reject me simply because they did not want to participate.

Interviewing

Once the interviews actually started, the informants were very involved, active and even interested in answering the questions. In retrospect, I should have asked for more examples and more elaborations. For example, in the first interview, when the respondent mentioned "extreme sensations" and "things coming at you," I should have asked her to elaborate on these abstract and ambiguous phrases. At times it was difficult to keep their attention because we were both so overwhelmed with stimuli. In the recordings, the stimuli are evident in the external noise which does not even take into consideration any internal noise the respondent may be experiencing. I was fortunate enough to have seven respondents agree, commit, and complete their interviews.

In the future, I might consider saving the interviews for the other 51 weeks of the year so they can get the experience instead of just talk about the experience during that one precious week. It may be helpful to interview Burners during the other 51 weeks of the year, to get a more balanced perspective of how Burning Man impacts their lives on a

daily basis. Interviewing them outside of the event might provide a deeper understanding to their commitment and a more realistic insight regarding their experience.

The interview questions would definitely need to be narrowed. There were perhaps too many interview questions because a few of the interviewees got exhausted, one even warned that her attention span was about to expire. In the future, I would be more selective in the questions and would completely eliminate all of the questions about Burning Man as an organization because it did not seem to have any bearing on their decision making process or their involvement in the community. Although, there was no way of knowing about the unnecessary questions until completing the first round of interviews and noticing a trend from that point.

Regarding those who did not complete their interviews or simply denied being interviewed at a certain time, I should have asked for their email addresses. It would have been interesting to follow up with them and possibly administer the formal interview after the event to see how their perspective coincided with those who were willing to give the interviews. It may also be beneficial to find respondents at local or regional events to take a deeper look within the community and also to obtain access to even more seasoned Burners and in turn have a more diverse informant pool. Receiving input outside of the actual event may have provided data to enhance or possibly challenge the findings.

Technology

While technology was an integral part in collecting data, it also served to be a great limitation after the data were collected. I recorded the audio of all seven in-depth

interviews as well as a few conversations amongst new Burner friends, which were not used for the purpose of this study. The equipment used proved to be of very good quality, especially considering the equipment had to be wrapped in a plastic bag to prevent damage from the harsh wind and dust. I conducted seven interviews, but one of them did not save on the audio recorder. The loss of this particular interview is very unfortunate because this participant would have offered a unique perspective. The informant was the most irritable, cranky and judgmental of the community. He had a negative comment about nearly every concept. He complained about the music, the size of the population, the layout of the city, the weather, and the art. It was a very unique perspective as compared to the other six informants. However, even with this angle, the results would have come up the same.

Coding

The coding process was a limitation to this study because there was only one person coding the themes. It would have strengthened the study to have had at least one additional coder to develop the themes to ensure stronger validity and reliability. It also would be beneficial to include coders who are not involved or attached to the Burning Man community to provide a more objective analysis.

Researcher Bias

Admittedly, I am deeply connected to the Burning Man community and because I am fond of the event itself, my own biases might prevent any negative connotations from

spilling over into the analysis. This process might be happening as a subconscious effort to protect the reputation or experience of Burning Man. While this connection may have slightly compromised this study in terms of objectivity, the subjectivity is supplemented with a more informed perspective that could only be offered from researchers who are already involved with the event.

This work also interfered not only with my own experience at Burning Man, but with others' experience as well. Obviously, everyone involved were completely voluntary of their time and they even seemed to appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this research. Since at times, I felt bad for what I perceived to be as taking away from their experience in Black Rock City, I was perhaps less than objective when administering the interview questions and responding to their answers. In the future, I will simply ask more potential interviewees and attempt to risk more and more comfortable with rejection.

As a researcher who is connected to the context, I focused on the content which joined the informants together, rather than on what divided them. Even though the purpose of the research was to discover the elements which contribute to a cohesive community, it may have also been helpful to investigate that which divides the community. In the future, I will inquire about their differences in perceptions and explanations of their experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

In continuing this research, I will integrate solutions to the above stated limitations, continue to interview more participants and integrate the use of at least one

more method to triangulate and create a more solid understanding. I would also like to follow up with the virgins and inquire about their dedication once they left the playa.

Directions for New Research

Since Burning Man is a fairly novel context for scholarly research, there are several questions that would be relevant, interesting and informative. The following questions and topic ideas are offered as a guide to developing directions for new research within this context:

1. How does the commitment to the community fluctuate throughout the other 51 weeks of the year?

2. Semiotic analysis of the welcome gate.

3. Rhetorical analysis of Jack Rabbit Speaks (the Burning Man electronic newsletter).

4. Discovering or pinpointing the pivotal moment in the learning/participation curve from virgin to veteran.

5. Compare the experience of theme campers with smaller groups.

6. Compare the preparation lists of virgin burners (i.e. what is commonly on the "Next year, we're going to…" list).

7. Ethnographic analysis of the eplaya (electronic discussion board of Burning Man).

It is important to acknowledge that the Burning Man community is not the only counterculture community in our society. While other festivals do not necessarily have an

explicit value system in place, it might be interesting to look at how the identity other

counterculture communities arise without the presence of clearly stated principles to

serve as guidelines for their interaction within the community.

    This study is offered as an emerging and foundational step toward understanding

countercultures. Obviously, much more work needs to be done but at least this is a step in

the right direction toward understanding the experience of a counterculture community.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What do you like best about Burning Man?

2. What would you change about Burning Man?

3. What is it like to be a burner?

4. What values are important to you as a burner?

5. Is being a burner part of being a community?

6. If so, how?

7. What responsibilities do you have to the community here?

8. What responsibilities does the community have to you?

9. What behaviors do you expect from your neighbors?

10. What happens to those not complying with expectations?

11. Describe the community of Black Rock City.

12. Describe your involvement at Black Rock City.

13. How do you define observer and participant at Burning Man?

14. What are the key differences between these roles?

15. What keeps this community together?

16. What things would screw up this community?

17. What actions would threaten this community?

18. How would the community be threatened?

19. How do you express your individuality here?

20. How is it expressed differently in the default world?

21. What are the boundaries of how you can express yourself here?

22. How do you know what those boundaries?

23. How many times have you been to Burning Man?

24. What keeps you coming back?

25. How has Burning Man evolved over the years?

26. How do you feel about Burning Man as an organization?

27. Do you have a playa name?

28. If so, what is it and how did you get it?

29. What is your email address?

APPENDIX B

Interview 1

Audio File: 20100831 164737

What do you like best about Burning Man?

0:23 – "just the fact that you don't have to get your wallet out all of the time, you can

have fun and connect with people, and do all of that without getting out your wallet"

… okay, I just walked over to that candy machine and I'm like Candy! Ya! And then I'm

like… oh, but I need like like it's the kind you put money in, right? And its like oh! But

we don't need money here, you know, so it's just like oh yeah! Like just the fact that you

don't have to get your wallet out all the time and you can have fun and connect with

people and do all of that without getting out your wallet

What would you change about Burning Man?

0:40 – "I'm thinking about the environmental impact in terms of I mean both what

happens here and you know like kinda all the waste and stuff that's generated you know

like even through you're trying to be low impact but also getting everyone is on the large

scale pretty crazy, you know… so it's a pretty big deal to drive for two days to get here"

I'm thinking about the environmental impact in terms of I mean both what happens here

and you know like kinda all the waste that's generated like even though you're trying to

be like low impact but also getting everyone here is like pretty crazy you know like I try

not to use a car very often I ride my bike everywhere most of the time and I like to, so it's

a pretty big deal to drive two days to get here

What is it like to be a burner?

1:07 – (doesn't consider herself a burner and doesn't want to say what it means to be a burner, it's only been 36 hours)

[laughs] I don't know if I can answer that, it's only been 36 hours… I don't think I can really say, like I don't know.

What responsibilities do you have to the community here?

1:35 – "to be good to one another, to respect one another"

Uhh, to be good to one another, to respect one another and um I don't want to say lead by example but like, just you know, like practice that and, and just hope that everyone else does too

What responsibilities does the community have to you?

2:02 – "supporting me as however needed, like if something happens the community is here to look out for you to give you water, or sunscreen when you need it or anything"

Uhh, I think like just checking, not checking in but like supporting me as however needed, you know, like if, if something happens you know then the community is here to look out for you, you know make sure you get water or give you sunscreen when you need it or you know anything so yeah

What behaviors do you expect from your neighbors?

2:31 – "respect! Maybe not having your generator on all night when there's a whole bunch of tents around it."

2:44 – "the few moments of possibility for sleep, I want them"

2:56 – (our picture gets taken)

Respect… back to that you know maybe not having your generator on all night when there's a whole bunch of tents right around it, you know so it's just kinda a bit of respect but it's also kinda that mutual we're all in it together"

What happens to those not complying with expectations?

3:42 – "last night there was a big rain storm and I went into a tango bar that had, it was their happy hour and they had a sheltering, and they're like 'come on in!'and I was chatting with this guy who also kinda got invited in and you know we were having a good conversation and then the person who invited us in walked by and he said, 'what's up, bitch?' to the guy, like who had served us and invited us in and then he said that and we're both like, where did that come from? And the guy was like, 'yo, that's not okay' like 'please leave now' like 'that's not acceptable' and the guy like almost didn't believe him but this guy stood firm, like, no, like 'get out now' and so I think that's the kind of enforcement that there is, just like no, it's not cool that you just did something. It's that building in the sense of consent and permission and invitation, that kinda prevents a lot of those things and empowers people to say, no that's not okay."

Describe the community of Black Rock City.

4:54 – "colorful and sparkly, probably stoned, yeah, just like light hearted and respectful and we're all in it together, prepared, too. We're all in this crazy experience together"

Describe your involvement at Black Rock City.

5:21 – (relatively minimal involvement, 4 came together)

5:33 – (responsibilities: making food in advance, checking in and supporting group)

How do you define observer and participant at Burning Man? What are the key differences between these roles?

6:00 – "I think we're all participants, and that's it, you know and yet here we are you know participating and sitting here observing the guy in the lime green glitter walking down on the stilt walkers right in front of us."

6:42 – (Guy in a speedo Bag pipe playing the entire time)

6:45 – "it's hard to say here because we only see observers, maybe the um the cops, but the cops are participants too, that's all part of the thing it's like the officials roaming the streets, so we're all participants in this whole spectacle. Oh! Maybe, today a satellite went above so maybe the people looking at the satellite image"

7:38 – "physically here on the playa, there are only participants"

What keeps this community together?

7:44 – "I think it's the environment, and like the climate and like just the fact that this is such an extreme place that it's kind of this buffer zone between us and the other 51 weeks of the year… the separation and the extreme."

What makes it extreme?

8:02 – "it's the hot, and the cold, and the dry, and the extreme like sensations, things coming at you"

What things would screw up this community?

8:34 – "corporate stuff… but community is strong and those expectations are so clearly laid out and people aren't going to let that happen"

How do you express your individuality here?

9:11 – "I think that's pretty hard and I think it's actually kinda the opposite, it's like it's the opposite of individuality, it's like this deep rooted sense of connectivity. It's not like we all need to be individuals, it's like, yeah, we're all individuals but we're all part of this thing, so it's kinda the opposite of individuality"

How is it expressed differently in the default world?

9:49 – "I haven't quite found, because so new to this, I can't really say, it's still who I am, this reaffirms who you are, you can be anywhere but it's more fun to be with people of the same collective"

What are the boundaries of how you can express yourself here?

10:14 – "I'll go with like consent"

10:47 – (something happened, "uh oh, uh oh")

10:58 – "someone was just taking a video… without permission, it's not as clear to me as some of the other things. I wouldn't have a problem saying no, it's not okay"

11:04 – (on someone taking a video recording) "it's not up to me to like know if that's like, like it was okay with me, and I don't know what the deal is with that kind of situation, like it's not as clear to me as some of the other things"

 (11:45 – warns that her attention span is at about 2 more questions)

So, this is your first time here. Are you planning to come back?

11:52 – "I think so, I mean yeah, why wouldn't I? Except at like 5 a.m. when the generators are still going and I just want to sleep and it's like 'what the heck am I doing here in the desert like, you know, so that did cross my mind, it's like what am I thinking I wanna do this all the time? But uh, for the most part, yes!"

How do you feel about Burning Man as an organization?

12:12 – (no opinion on the BMORG, part of setting up clear guidelines and expectations)

Do you have a playa name?

12:39 – no playa name

(We hugged.)

12:05 – (also a researcher, did interviews for her master's thesis)

APPENDIX C

Interview 2

Audio File: 20100831 181254

Music in the background

(introduced to Alon)

What do you like best about Burning Man?

0:35 – "what I like about it best is the energy of the people, in peace and freedom with themselves, everything is good, you can be anything you want"

What would you change about Burning Man?

1:13 – "I don't think I would change anything… (the weather)… no no no, take it as it comes."

What is it like to be a burner?

1:44 – "it's the playful art… don't have limits because it takes a commitment to get here and be here for a whole week… leave your normal life and your work and everything and just come here"

(introduced to Oshri… "he's family")

What values are important to you as a burner?

2:46 – "values?! I would just say integrity because it just says everything, but as far as Burning Man, creativity, freedom, just let everything out and be with people because outside of this place, people don't really, they're not being with other people, you don't hug them and kiss them or smile to them, and give them presents and just make them have a great time because they're there, but here, it's totally here"

Is being a burner part of being a community?

3:47 –yeah, it's a community of people that come here and do the burning man every year. And you're gonna have 100 different or more different people because they like camping, or they like the trance music, or just girls, or naked girls. Everybody has their own reason.. this is the thing, for as long as I came here, I didn't get anything stolen or anything disappeared, or anybody talking nasty. Just good.

What responsibilities do you have to the community here?

4:38 – responsibility to build. Nobody has to do anything. I mean, nobody has to do anything. I could have just came here on the second day, told them that I cannot make it and then they would build it and I would come and I'll enjoy. So you just take on whatever you want. And I like to take on things. So, I took building and organizing the whole camping event with Alon here."

4:57 – (Oshri: I had this interview in 2005, I think! With a video camera and everything).

5:23 – "nobody is in charge of anybody… Actually, Oshri is in charge. oshri is in charge of getting everybody drunk and stoned!"

What responsibilities does the community have to you?

5:51 – "I believe that whatever their responsibilities is just to keep me happy, and just be with them, spend time and have a good time. Just like I care about them having a nice camp and food and everything else, they're just doing the same"

What behaviors do you expect from your neighbors?

6:17 – "friendly, crazy sometimes, but in a good way."

6:37 "the only experience I get with my neighbors is that there is courtesy and politeness, and like teamwork, yeah, whatever you want. Like, okay, you want us to do this? Okay! You want us to do that? Okay, yeah, let's work together"

What happens to those not complying with expectations?

7:04 – have never come across someone acting out, just remind them where they are, it's all about happiness and enjoying the moment. I live my life like that. BM is an opportunity to see other people doing that. In my life I just choose to do that

7:16 – "I did not come across that… I would just remind them where they are and it's all about happiness and enjoying the moment so. Actually, I live my life like that, so it's not only Burning Man but Burning Man is just an opportunity to see other people doing that because in my life I just choose to do that."

Describe the community of Black Rock City.

7:42 – "crazy committed people to creativity"

Describe your involvement at Black Rock City.

8:03 – "besides my camp and advice to other camps and, I dunno, doing stuff beyond the event itself, you know get everybody to have all the videos, photos and pictures and everything. Besides that though, with black rock, nothing."

How do you define observer and participant at Burning Man? What are the key differences between these roles?

(Is this B or D? Hi!!! Oohhh what are we building now! Building stuff! That was a very long mission… Where did you go? Everywhere. Lot of cool day parties. Did you know today is tutu Tuesday?)

9:30 – "You can do it in many ways: theme camps can be participants and all the rest observers. But I don't consider myself an observer. So I guess people that just come and park their car and put up a little tent and then walk around and party would be more of an observer and people who make an effort to build something that even looks nice for other people to get inspired to do the same then that's a participant."

What keeps this community together?

10:18 – a lot of stuff… but um, well, people need to break loose, and people are looking for a safe place to smoke drugs (laughs). And people like a huge event like this that gives you parties 24/7, different parties, here and there, and this and that, the variety here is just

what keeps it going. Nobody would give it up. (Asks a campmate): Would you give

Burning Man up? (Umm, I've lived in the states for 7 years and I've come here 7 times.

So you're asking the wrong person, I think.)

11:00 – "I don't know anyone who has been here once and hasn't been back since

What things would screw up this community?

11:23 "people that come here for the wrong reasons… taking advantage of the freedom

and openness of other people… or if the authorities would start making things more

restrictive, "you cannot do this, you cannot do that""

12:53 – "where would I put it, in my underwear?" (on carrying ID)

How do you express your individuality here?

13:12 – "I mean it all depends, if it's a party, dance until there is so much dust around me

you cannot see me"

13:42 – "dancing, building, smoking, just do whatever is comfortable"

How is it expressed differently in the default world?

14:03 – "with a bit more suspicion to people, whether they are going to understand that

much openness but I'm like that outside too."

(been 4 times)

What keeps you coming back?

14:22 – "Alon! (laughs) The people, the atmosphere, just about everything it has to offer, sitting here with you"

How has Burning Man evolved over the years?

14:47 – "My first one was in 2001… more art cars, more participation, more people, just more fun, but I like it the way it is, it doesn't really need to evolve, it's just good the way it is"

How do you feel about Burning Man as an organization?

15:17 – "I didn't really invest a lot of time in checking out everything they do because I see a lot of movement in everything they do but I don't know much."

Do you have a playa name?

15:38 – (no playa name) "Nobody gave me one! Actually, I was given a name that was a place called "recreation place" and I walked in there, and they said, okay sit here, and then they gave me a massage, then I got a lap dance, and then they got me to sing something and then they asked me to take all my clothes off and give somebody else a lap dance. And then they put all my clothes in a little bag and gave me a new name and let me crawl out of this furry pink tunnel that leads you out to the Esplanade, like to the main street and I was totally naked with a bag of clothes with a new name" (doesn't remember the new name, probably didn't like it)

16:55 (if you go online, FB, you can get your avatar name. mine was pugitoos, offered

more help with my project)

APPENDIX D

Interview 3

Audio File: 20100902 170541

What do you like best about Burning Man?

0:08 – "the fact that there are 50,000 people who want to be here, nobody who comes this far away from civilization, without the want to give to others, you don't come here for self-serving, you wont experience very much, bring more than you need, help sustain, abundance that everyone gets to enjoy"

What would you change about Burning Man?

0:45 "times the gate closes, shut it off on Wednesday, keep the people who show up at the end, prevents the weekend warrior vibe, close the gate Wednesday morning/Tuesday night, keep the hardcore here, and the looky-loos and spectators out"

What is it like to be a burner?

1:30 – "freedom of self expression, solid in sexuality and self-image"

What values are important to you as a burner?

2:01 – "leave no trace, pack it in and pack it out, friendly, helpful, give it, because you never know when you might need something, the playa giveth and the playa taketh. (gives example: first day of first year, "drunken dodgeball needs duct tape" led to a cold

beer)

Is being a burner part of being a community?

3:11 – "yes, this is nothing you can do alone. It takes an entire group of people to make the city, it takes different goals to make a full machine"

What responsibilities do you have to the community here?

3:38 – help people avoid the pitfalls, give glowsticks, water, bicycle help, to participate, don't stand there and take a picture… go do it with them

What responsibilities does the community have to you?

4:09 – pick up your own trash, leave no trace, be respectful of each other, be respectful of the event itself, outlined in survival guide

What behaviors do you expect from your neighbors?

4:33 – cleaning up MOOP: matter out of place, anything on the ground that is not playa

What happens to those not complying with expectations?

5:11 – ostracized by peers, or angry campmates, fined by BLM, grey water violations

Describe the community of Black Rock City.

5:44 – two fold: half new age, open hippies, peace love, old folk: blow stuff up, sarcastic,

witty, protective – cross between everybody should experience this and who is deserving, join in the fun, you're deserving. No Birkenstocks and jeans to take pictures.

7:02 - Desert survival first, party second. If you cant take care of the first, then you don't get the second. Tells people at home not to go! Because they won't vibe well or participate. You don't get to come play this. Tell them it's windy, dusty, hot, too commercial, too many people, not what it used to be.

Describe your involvement at Black Rock City.

8:11 – participating as a citizen, spent time learning to be an example, showing by example, open, friendly, we're all here because we want to be. Futzpa (Yiddish for fortitude).

9:00 – bringing virgins, prepared them adequately

How do you define observer and participant at Burning Man?

9:31 – define spectator/participant: personal rule: "if you see something that is more fun than what you're doing, you're obligated to stop what you are doing and go do that." A spectator is someone who sees it as fun… but doesn't participate. "Why did you come all the way out here if you're not gonna play?"

9:54 – if you see other people jumping on trampolines naked, take your pants off and get on that fucking trampoline… because if there's other naked people doing it too, nobodys going to be looking at just you" "once you do that first backflip with your junk hanging out you're gonna feel freer than you ever have in your entire life

What keeps this community together?

10:31 – the man, fire, the yearning to escape from every day society, the 9-5 corporate work week, wanting to get away from regular fashion, mainstream culture.

10:56 "Started off as counterculture and kinda evolved into its own actual culture itself"

What things would screw up this community?

11:25 – more media exposure, negative publicity (fatality info), intoxication/dangerous activities/rebar/moving vehicles/maybe one fatality each year

What actions would threaten this community?

12:03 – pressure from law enforcement agencies, from the past… issues about how money is supposed to be distributed for art grants, potential for nepotism or corruption, now three organizations funding art, intellectual & aesthetic art, BORG, BORG2, BORG3

How do you express your individuality here?

13:32 – clothing, attitude, generosity. Function before form here (on clothing)… wear comfortable, recycling clothing,

14:16 – "one of the neatest things is recycling, I see a lot of salvation army, a lot of recycled clothing or stuff that I wouldn't be caught dead wearing on the street in my home town, but out here people comment on it, and go 'hey that looks pretty creative –

how'd you do that? 'You know?

15:00 – lucky enough to go with tenure burners the second year, going since mid-90s to really appreciate what is going on here

How is it expressed differently in the default world?

15:33 – being at BM this long, it has spilled over into my default world, give someone a glass of water, a glass of water is coming to you

16:12 – I was more reserved in my dress, self-image, white/gender thing, since then I have a different mentality, if I don't like what I'm looking at I can just look away

16:45 – because he doesn't focus on menial stuff of caring what people think about (because of Burning Man), he's able to focus on more important things in life and not necessarily what other people think of him

What are the boundaries of how you can express yourself here?

16:59 – I still don't do nudity… if you want to see, you can ask me. Critical tits/dicks novelty wears off. If I don't find you attractive, then I don't want to be staring at your junk."

18:04 –On boundaries of others or imposing boundaries on others: "I'll encourage anybody to explore whatever they need to get out as long as it does not cause harm to themselves or others. Be yourself here because once you go home you'll never see any of these people again."

What keeps you coming back?

18:42 – I said this after my second year… I thought it my first, and believed it my second. Humanity has gone down a path of as long as our generation is taken care of then I don't give a fuck. Here's what I'm gonna do to blow off some steam. A lot of these people are executives, camped next to NASA's jet propulsion team, people are all really good at what they're doing. It rekindles my faith in humanity. Bc there are some people with power who still have their mind open

How has Burning Man evolved over the years?

20:08 – the culture had already set itself in: dress, attitude, inside jokes, evolved a little bit on placement of sound camp, design of the city, and the temple since David Best isn't doing it anymore

21:49 – discussed movement of soundcamps

How do you feel about Burning Man as an organization?

22:02 – incredible amounts of organization, compared to other music festivals in Europe and south America, medical, ice, porta-potties, DPW is here for 3 months. Use this as a baseline for organizational skills

22:47 – "This is a massive, massive thing. I mean to create a, you know I don't want to say party because that would just be too much, to create an event, that becomes the fourth largest city in a united states state for a whole week and then completely vanish like shambalah, it's just absolutely incredible, how do you make that happen? Make it

disappear and then still become better every year? And then wanna come back after a difficult year… this machine has so much momentum"

24:04 – the time that I think it will end is when the people who have been going for 15-20 years get to the point where they're lives take them in a different direction and they cant do it and the second generation, if the next generation of people are able to keep it up and keep the orginal tenants around… as long as Larry Harvey or John Law are still around and involved… have some say in it, I'm pretty sure that this will stay the course… they do have protégé and will ha!"keep the flame alive" .. focus on music and art, keep the ego in check, going for the Id. Let every body else take care of the ego

Do you have a playa name?

25:17 – ive had multiple but none that I really care for Scott Tamale instead of hot tamale, scotty too hotty, Gingie (means red head in Hebrew)

APPENDIX E

Interview 4 & 5

Audio File: 20100904 131055

What do you like best about Burning Man?

1:12 – "getting to wear whatever I want to wear"

What would you change about Burning Man?

1:28 – buy water, massive lines

What is it like to be a burner?

1:58 – "coming out of your shell, not being the weirdest person here"

What values are important to you as a burner?

2:18 – "being helpful, willing to help, I wish more people would be more courteous"

Is being a burner part of being a community?

3:00 – yeah, we got adopted into a camp, we got adopted pretty well.

What responsibilities do you have to the community here?

3:20 – being courteous and clean up after yourself, pull your weight, you wont ever be able to give back to the community what you get out of it. Someone needed a safety pin

and I gave it to her – made her day. Wear your costumes. Not monetary contributions. I liked the sit place, gave me someplace shaded to sit

What responsibilities does the community have to you?

4:27 – keep the porta potty clean, give better directions or just say you don't know

What behaviors do you expect from your neighbors?

4:53 – I don't expect anything, just be part of the group, not isolated and snotty

What happens to those not complying with expectations?

5:14 – we would have a lame place to camp

5:33 – music until all hours

Describe your involvement at Black Rock City.

5:43 – photo op, big show piece costumes,

5:59 – whatever we have, extra breakfast food, cold packs, rescue anyone in dire need

How do you define observer and participant at Burning Man?

6:21 – participant by clothing, blue jeans and t-shirt, if its something you wouldn't wear out normally then you're a participant, if you feel uncomfortable then you're an observer, it's supposed to be participatory. If you're gonna pay $300 to get here, participate!

What keeps this community together?

7:17 – common empathy to have fun, give and take, can't just show up and expect

everyone to make it for you. Hopefully we'll meet some people and network,

8:20 - (gave them a pad of paper bc they didn't have one, and they gave me a cold pack)

What things would screw up this community?

8:58 – if it became more commercial, with tourists wanting to look at naked people, keep

it to where you cant really buy or sell anything, so you don't have people just showing up

to sell stuff, be here and live

How do you express your individuality here?

9:55 – (migrated to shade and away from drumming)

10:11 – using yellow bikes, looking at art

10:39 – playing guitar and jamming with camp mates, wearing costumes

How is it expressed differently in the default world?

11:05 – way more uptight in the real world, anxiety, OCD, "there isn't too much dust in

my water, I'll drink it" way more laid back

What are the boundaries of how you can express yourself here?

11:34 – not allowed to have sex in public, took a bath in a tub in our front yard, as long as

you're not screwing somebody else.

12:05 – haven't walked around topless, but did bathe openly in front of camp mates

How many times have you been to Burning Man?

12:41 – first time. Enthusiastic YES! To coming back. Need a better setup, takes forever, need to bring more shade and water. Too much dirty water, need better evaporating system, conserve water. Save up and then come back.

How do you feel about Burning Man as an organization?

13:59 – pretty good, impressive what they have going on. Expensive tickets, water trucks coming by 2-3 times a day, they have emergency services, good structure, would be better with water. "Radical self-reliance, goddamn it!" the ultimate test: if you can't show up with enough water, then you don't deserve to be here.

Do you have a playa name? If so, what is it and how did you get it?

15:28 – haven't been named… Blue Devil (blue lingerie and devil horns – talking about playa names, half assed), Chops. Neal – bc of astronaut costumes.

 (loud music art car came through…)

16:42 – been on a few art cars, rode one out and it stopped and became a party.

16:57 – haven't ran behind a water truck yet… is the water more nasty that you are? Probably not!

APPENDIX F

Interview 6

Audio File: 20100905 164028 2

0:05 – (talking about Mongolian yurt community)

(Super slow talker… he's exhausted, so am I. You can hear it in my voice and in his voice. We got distracted a lot.)

2:07 – (listed campmates)

2:30 – **how many of you are virgins?** (He is another virgin)

2:45 – **did anybody lose their mind?** You mean, like go off the deep end? Nah… I think everybody here is pretty solid when it comes to partying and going crazy. This is their environment. From Tahoe, Trukee. Interviewee is from San Diego.

3:35 – felt a little nervous, carrying illegal substances, tailing with big furry bike

3:57 – school of fish getting chomped on (by the cops)… the chances are low that we'll get it caught. Is it that well tucked away? You don't wanna find out… just to be here finally, we made it to the other side! We're here!

What do you like best about Burning Man?

5:14 – the spiritual side of it, the enlightenment, the art, they come hand in hand. Being around enlightened people, learning more about meditation and intent, being in workshops, experience only in Burning Man, also Earth Dance (festival) might have it too. Seeing an amazing amount of expression that covers so many square miles.

6:16 – (examples of workshops) Kundalini yoga made me realize the importance of chakras and energy of alignment. The Dream workshop made me realize there are a lot of things that we have programmed in us that we need to be able to locate, find, and pull out… from the media, pop culture that condition us in a way that breeds fear. So we have the ability of getting away from that paradigm. Meditation paradigm: we're already whole, amazing people, we just need to realize it and make that happen.

7:38 – **did you practice yoga before you came here?** Yes, mostly stretching.

8:00 – I already knew before I came here the need to focus my mind, access the power inside my mind, signed up for a meditation course before even coming here. Going to a 10-day workshop, critical next level in my development

What would you change about Burning Man?

8:45 – I guess, it's hard being first year to be that critical, theres a lot for me to change within myself before I ask BM the event to change anything, they do such a great job, so many intelligent minds at work here that for, I guess the only thing they could really do differently is possibly have more of a visitor center, a place for people to come in and potentially look at footage, a virtual tour of what is going to be around, gain understanding of a multimedia experience, before and after you get here. (uhh, like Disney land?? Or… maybe that's what HE can do…)

What is it like to be a burner?

11:05 – for me its about creativity, expression, fun, others community, a tribe, a tribal

environment that I think for the first time, like everything ive done for the first time, I feel like an outsider, it just makes me want to be better instead of feeling anything negative. A lot of people are much more extroverted than I am. Like a measuring stick for how far I need to go to be open, and how that openness breeds comfortablility with others, don't want to come off as not caring or elitist. Not judging at all, embracing everything. Able to express myself forward.

13:12 – I feel like I do come with a lot of social stigma and programming that ive been trying to shed through exposure, different scenes, music scenes, realizing the importance, and then coming here where people are living their life to the fullest potential, in a new movement. Before coming here I was very analytical, about how I'm perceived instead of living in the moment… trying to shed that.

14:18 – trying to let go of the thought of rejection and not being accepted, moving forward and learning how to be somebody who is not so serious, be much more jovial and joking instead of such a critical, important issues, things don't need to be like that all the time.

Is being a burner part of being a community?

15:06 – the community is the art, the creations, that shared desire and passion to evoke your ideas into reality, to come together and get outside of the box, the community is for people to see whats not working and try something that is going to work, taking their passion and creating this city

What responsibilities do you have to the community here?

15:45 – to learn, understand more, who's involved, participate more, contribute, be part of a camp, taking on responsibility, to running the city, not running, but being a part of the daily routine of the city

What responsibilities does the community have to you?

16:20 – open mindedness, kind of nurturing aspect to it

What behaviors do you expect from your neighbors?

16:47 – expect sharing, a helping hand, understanding, and people to have fun with or… I didn't really hang out too much with my neighbors, went from here to somewhere else, here you're eating food or sleeping.

What happens to those not complying with expectations?

17:27 – a wall would erect, an imaginary wall, you stay over there, we'll stay over here. I think everybody here has a beautiful understanding of the dynamic that goes on in this city, from my perspective everything went very well. Another group had a conflict with another camp, they got in a conflict with OK Corral, OK marked off space bc they felt like they were encroaching on their space. I don't think anybody realized how big they were.

Describe the community of Black Rock City.

18:33 – I would say that it's a community of performers, entertainers, actors, creators, mystics, shamans, engineers, compassionate people, healers

Describe your involvement at Black Rock City.

19:02 – I came in here with a lot of respect and awe of what was happening around me and in a way I felt like it all happened too fast. Me trying to take it in and just allow for me to participate and be involved and see everything I wanted to be. Has to do with being a dynamic with a camp and compromising what I wanted to do. I was more of a spectator

How do you define observer and participant at Burning Man?

20:09 – spectator stands back and watches events unfold. Participant is responsible for making the events unfold. Spectator observes, keeps mouth shut and doesn't get involved. One stays safe and the other takes risks. Considers himself a spectator. Definitely trying to change my life in order to be a better person, someone who isn't intimidated in a rucous kind of crowd feeling comfortable xpressing themselves.

21:27 – intimidating – people were able to reference parts of burning man, deeper history, run deeper, connections to event, compare/contrast, something where I look forward to having that shared experience. Definitely coming back next year.

What keeps this community together?

22:04 – respect and the event itself, the ability to have a venue and audience for what these artists do and allow for them to get their feedback. Important for them to get the

feedback. Come back for the symbiosis, feeds the artists. A lot of people are artists, the majority. Artists through and through. People that are very passionate about this… about their work or other people's work. Their music, art, culture, they're not ambivalent at all.

What things would screw up this community?

22:30 – commercialism, major sponsor would definitely leave a bad taste in people's mouth. If they were to try to get too strict and make too many rules, it would not allow for this free form structure to take place, it would have a very negative impact

What actions would threaten this community?

24:04 – intolerance, any type of violence, anything that was too base that wasn't cerebral, the basic thing is that people can debate and have a dialogue on almost anything, find an ability to weed it out with words instead of getting physical about anything that's punitive that's overt sabotage

How do you express your individuality here?

25:59 – the costumes, being able to, for most people it's a costume, for me I didn't really go out and do the singing, get up in front of the microphone, just dance and costume, and kinda smiling and saying hi and talking to people

How is it expressed differently in the default world?

26:11 – probably be much more through casual interaction, style, nothing too, here

there's such a comfort doing whatever you want, you can go running around naked and no one really cares, everyone is free to do as they choose. In the default rules, you have to be careful with perception. I probably brought a lot of what is going on in the default world in here, I'm too guarded, too careful, instead of just being here I am…

27:57 – camp counselors, encourage the kids to step outside of their comfort zone, but not too much. Just make a stride to go outside of what you're normally comfortable with. Next year, you already know what's going on, you already have a reference point, you know where things are laid out, you know where center camp,

What are the boundaries of how you can express yourself here?

29:12 – based on not knowing the people around me that well, kind of trying to get a read off of somebody before I express myself, thinking a lot and being serious instead of trying to be philosophical, just shut it and become more care free. I feel like im an outsider, by having that vision of myself it makes it so that I don't believe that I can engage in people, with that I feel like I will be looked at as an imposture

Do you have a playa name?

31:26 – I tried to give myself a playa name, instead of going with Mike or Michael, I just went with Cole, but everybody knew me as Mike already. My thing is there are so many Mikes and Michaels in the word. People wanting to know if you have a road name

32:20 – road names, defining, road name, living as the sun sets, not street kids, more about kids following the music scene, very involved in extracurricular,

running/distributing drugs, interesting to get, known a lot of people were either in that scene or very affiliated with it, had the exposure, it's amazing the intricacy of the network.

34:26 – talked about my degree, social interaction, focus on community, individuality,

35:42 – you have to be expressive, there's still stigmas within this community

36:34 – talked about red lightening and sacred village…

36:59 – spent a lot of energy and stress working on the interviews

APPENDIX G

Interview 7

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID – LOST.

The fact that this interview is lost is very sad and unfortunate because it would have

offered an anti-burning man perspective. This more balanced perspective would have

been great to hear from him… Even though I don't think David's perspective is

representative of burners, it would have been beneficial to have his voice represented in

this experience.

David was a naysayer. He was complained constantly… about the art, the music, the

people, the weather (which was absolutely beautiful, by the way).

APPENDIX H

Field Notes

August 29 @ 8:24 p.m.

Along I-80, we had several people honking at us with our blue taped man on all sides of the RV. Everywhere we went, even inside grocery stores etc., people knew we were going to BM. Honking was startling because I kept forgetting we had blue BM figures and I thought we were cutting people off or something. I told a few girls about my study and they were very excited about it but said I would probably get better responses if I were dressed up (coming from a virgin).

August 30 @ 4:09 a.m.

We are just now arriving at the entrance. We've been in line since we got on highway 447. It's a mass exodus (but opposite) – like leaving a concert hall with 10,000 people*, except the inside of our RV is already dusty. I could taste it within minutes of driving on the dust/dirt road. People have bikes stacked in piles in their truck beds, on top of RVs and packed in school buses. Earlier, I took a friend's friend to pick up his hats that he left and he asked me about my playa name. I told him I was given one but it didn't really capture the essence of me. He kept asking, "who do you want to be," "who are you," and "what are you like on the playa?" I told him I was always the Mama Bear taking care of everyone and making sure they're okay. He said, "but is that how you act on this side? If you're the same on this side of the fence, then it doesn't count." This is a really interesting reference that I haven't yet heard before tonight. I told him I wasn't quite sure

who I wanted to be. During the drive we hit a jackrabbit and a field mouse and saw a few other mutilated animals along the highway. In line, I see old and new, big and small, nice and beater cars, trucks, SUVs, motorhomes, vans, and schoolbuses all lightly covered with playa dust. I can taste it when I talk, I can feel it entering my nose and lungs when I breathe. It's creeping it's way into the lines in my skin. My skin feels dry already. There are a ton of NV and CA plates on vehicles but we've also seen Michigan, WA, Utah, and New Mexico so far.

August 30 @ 5:09 a.m.

We were just approached by a fellow burner – greeting us in line. He walked up to my (driver's side) window and asked us how our trip went and told us he hitch hiked all the way here from Vancouver Island. Then asked if he could do some "crazy cool trades for some spare change" I told him we didn't have any change and sorry. He said "oh, no sorry. It's cool not to have money" smiled and took off. We received a text saying "We are testing the free playa network. We'll tell you when it's really working. NO EMERGENCY CALLS!" There is a jumbotron that reads: "GATE RULZ / HEY YOU / 10 MPH MAX / Make good decisions / Deliveries and Vendors / 2nd lane from left / all other traffic / use all six right lanes." People are getting out of their cars, walking to other cars, riding bikes around. My friends just took their bikes to Will Call to get our tickets while I'm driving the Manhattan Mammoth. I can hear a faint sound of electronic music but I'm not quite sure where it's coming from. The boys just came back and they didn't have tickets because you have to ride in on a vehicle because of liability issues, which is

new and different from last year. We're all wearing dust masks in the RV. The sun is

rising and it looks magical. It's a perfect clear blue with cloud accents and a hint of

creamy golden yellow on the horizon – absolutely breathtaking, especially with the sea of

hundreds of tail lights directly in front of us.

August 30 @ 5:59 a.m.

Finally just got through the first gate and headed to Will Call. It's the perfect time to be

arriving because the sun is coming up and we can see very clearly. It's beautiful and feels

almost surreal and nostalgic. There's a school bus next to us in line with several people

crammed in, with ice chests and bags packed in the back. I wonder where their bikes are

stored? People are dressed in all different clothes, ranging from jeans to skirt/sweat/sock

combo, crazy boots, playa coats (some decorated). So far I've only seen white people*,

one Indian, and two Asians. I am curious about the ethnic Diversity here. There are about

14 people waiting in line for the potty and one guy just laid down on the ground to make

a playa angel. Another one is walking around playing the harmonica. There's a girl

skipping between cars, a guy driving a Honda Element with 3 passengers and a U-haul.

Several people wearing glasses. I don't feel so odd. It's been almost 24 hours since I've

showered and this is the cleanest I will feel all week, I'm sure. Luckily, it seems like the

weather is going to be awesome this year – I'm so thankful because it was so hot last

year. The U-haul in front of me has a Florida plate.

August 30 @ 9:17 a.m.

Just finished breakfast and setting up camp. We're at 2:45 between C and D. We invited our neighbors over for breakfast. They are on their honeymoon. Sweet couple. They told us about a guy playing drums on top of his RV naked at 7 a.m. today.

August 30 @ 4-ish p.m.

Mario greeted a truck full of people saying "Welcome Home!" and he heard them reply "get out of my house!" It was very upsetting and off-putting. I yelled at a camp mate for smoking without an ashtray. We went to the Man and climbed to the top. We played with an interactive art piece and met one of the contributors to the installation. We've seen several dust storms and two quick white outs. Next, we're heading to a Sharpie Tattoo Convention for live music, tattoos, spa treatments, and cocktails. Then, we're headed to Mojito Monday for "the best damn mojitos on the playa."

August 30 @ 6:17 p.m.

We didn't make it to mojito Monday because it was too cold and it started raining. We went to "Bad Theatre" at 4:30p.m. and had everclear cherries. We were also offered picked eggs with "special herb." They stopped us on our way to the tattoo convention. They were from Orange County. We had our cherries and met a few people then moved along to the tattoo camp where I got and gave sharpie tattoos. The organizer of the camp was selective handing out Booty Call applications. WE came back to eat and headed back out after drying off a bit.

Tuesday 2 p.m.

We cleaned the RV all morning and shared some vodka shots with neighbors. I'm feeling very nervous about the interviews. I wonder how long it will take to ask these questions. I hope people don't mind talking about themselves for that long. It should be fine. I notice that people smile at me more when I'm dressed up in extravagant costumes. Today is Tutu Tuesday. The boys and I are all wearing tutus – it's quite cute. We've seen several men wearing tutus. Last night, we met Autumn at an Oasis camp with hula hoops and "palm" trees. She said that she and her large camp all agreed that if people were sleeping at their camp in the morning they would let them stay and not disturb them because that's exactly what it was designed for – for people to relax and enjoy themselves. ((talk more about the oasis – comfortable mattresses covered with fuzzy pillows and furry blankets))

Tuesday @ 5:15 p.m.

I just finished my first interview with a virgin burner. The interview felt extremely long but it was less than 15 minutes. Since she's a virgin she didn't have as much to say as I had hoped so I will continue to focus my efforts on more seasoned burners. I think it was beneficial to use her as my test run so I am better prepared for more important interviews.

Wednesday @ 8:49 a.m.

We just finally got in for the night. We went out on our neighbor's art car and met a lot of really great people. The night was extremely eventful – the car I was on ran over

someone. He jumped off of the car not realizing it was moving (because he was so messed up) and nearly got his head run over by the tire. Luckily, he moved out of the way and it only scraped his arm. We took him to Medical anyway. The guy was a virgin. I hope he learns a lesson from that. Later the same night, we saw a woman freaking out at Center Camp. Not sure what she was on but it took three men to hold her down to the ground. She even had handcuffs on. It really freaked me out because I'm sure she didn't intentionally try to overdose on anything and you just never know who it could happen to next. After we saw her, we decided to call it a night and headed over to our camp. Then we walked out to the open playa in our big group and hugged as we watched the sunrise. It was pretty cold so we were all bundled up in our playa coats and blankets. Then, our friends headed back to the other side and we met up with the same art car. We drove around for a while and I fell asleep on the car. Later, I woke up to the car parked at camp and found out I had been sleeping on their parked car in front of their camp for over an hour and a half. When I woke up, I apologized and left quickly. The camp assured me it wasn't a problem and promised it was fine. After sleeping until 3:30 p.m. we cleaned again then headed out with our neighbors for a couples massage class. The class was full by the time we got there so we rode around checking out art for the night.

Thursday

I was able to interview one of our new friends. It's his 6th burn, so he had a lot of insight about the community. Everyone is extremely sarcastic and intolerant of people not participating. However, most people are extremely friendly. We had the sanitation people

service our RV and were asking him about his experience. He was saying that he doesn't even know how he will explain it to his co-workers – "it's so unbelievable." He said he would stop by so I could interview him later. I think it would be very interesting to get his perspective.

In other news, it seems like burners have quite the sense of humor. Upon arrival, we received an event book. We weren't able to find several events that were listed in the event book. Also, there was one camp called "Emerald City" that was completely decked out but every time we saw it, there was a sign posted that the camp would open later in the week – it was very Wizard of Oz, so it made me wonder if the camp was really there and you just had to break in. Darn it, I should have broken in.

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