

Disabled people, arts festivals and emotional timescapes: An exploratory case study

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study contributes to the leisure studies literature in three main ways: through foregrounding the emotionality of intellectually disabled people, an under-represented group within the context of events; through focusing on an arts festival, a form of event overlooked in comparison to other commonly studied types of events; and finally, through the testing of a new methodological framework – Brown’s emotional timescapes for events, itself adapted from Maguire and Geiger’s work on servicescapes. In this New Zealand-based study, we explore the emotions experienced by attendees, performers, volunteers, support workers and event organisers. Data from 20 interviews, participant observation and autoethnography was deductively analysed with a focus on expressions of emotion. We crafted a narrative for each individual, allowing us to identify the influence of the eventscape and map temporal patterns of emotional responses across the festival timescape. Findings show that participants experienced strong positive emotions. This was influenced by elements of the eventscape. In particular, interaction with others (including audience reaction) played a significant role in emotional timescapes. While the emotional timescape model was useful for broadly representing intensity of emotion over the duration of an event, we also identified limitations and propose a way to expand Brown’s theory.

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Introduction

To date, investigations into events and emotions have tended to focus on sports, music and cultural events (see for example Christou, 2015; Coetzee et al., 2019; Doyle et al., 2021; Go et al., 2021; Hallman et al., 2013; J. Lee, 2014; Y. Lee et al., 2008; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Oliva & Colombo, 2021; Powlowski et al., 2014; Wood & Moss, 2015). Arts festivals have been largely overlooked, despite the creative arts’ ability to evoke emotions (Bone & Fancourt, 2022; Brownnett, 2018; Fan et al., 2024). A singular focus on the experiences of attendees has meant that the emotions of other involved stakeholders such as organisers, volunteers and performers are less well understood. Furthermore, the overall emotional response to the event experience has been the subject of most enquiry, with the contribution of eventscape elements (such as venue, setting, performances, interactions with others) during the event receiving relatively less attention (Brown, 2020).

In regard to disabled people and events, recently there has emerged a corpus of research across a variety of contexts. Music events (Alvarado, 2022; Bossey, 2020, 2024; Dinis et al., 2020), sporting

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events (dos Santos Neto et al., 2019; McGillivray et al., 2019; Misener et al., 2018) and rural events (Sage & Flores, 2019; Wiscombe, 2019) have all featured. Again, however, with one notable exception (Walters, 2023), arts events have been neglected. In addition, research attention has been on identifying barriers and challenges to access for physically disabled people rather than foregrounding the positive outcomes (particularly social outcomes) that participation in events can facilitate (Walters, 2023). This is especially true for intellectually disabled people,¹ who have largely been rendered invisible. The emotional experiences of disabled people at events have been similarly overlooked.

The arts offers both creative and consumptive means of participation, both of which provoke an emotional response. The arts have been considered a valuable means for disabled people to showcase their creative abilities, and be appreciated for them, in the same way as non-disabled artists (Knutes Nyqvist & Stjerna, 2017; Onyx et al., 2018). Furthermore, the arts offer avenues for disabled people to highlight inequalities, challenge dominant negative stereotypes, reduce barriers to achieving life opportunities, and foster social inclusion (DaDaFest, 2021; Mullen & Wills, 2016). Hall (2013) argues that the creative arts allow intellectually disabled participants the opportunity for embodied and emotional expression, both through making art and gifting the art they have made.

This paper responds to a recent call to engage in scholarship around the theoretical, methodological and applied concerns of emotions within the context of leisure (Scott & Fletcher, 2024). In so doing it seeks to contribute to leisure studies through situating itself at the nexus of disabled people, arts festivals and emotion. First, and arguably most importantly, by selecting a festival primarily with/by/for intellectually disabled people, we are able to foreground the emotionality of a hitherto largely neglected group of event attendees. Second, we broaden the context, using arts festivals rather than music, sports or other commonly studied forms of cultural event (such as multicultural, ethnic, literary and food events). In addition, we expand the focus beyond attendees, to include performers, volunteers, support workers and event organisers who are important event stakeholders but whose perspectives (and the significance of their interactions) have been less commonly investigated together within a single study. In so doing, we extend our understanding of the value of different types of events for a variety of actors. Third, we test and assess the value of a new methodological framework: Brown's (2020) conceptual emotional timescape for events.

The paper is structured as follows: we begin by reviewing the bodies of literature from which this paper draws: first, we discuss intellectual disability to foreground the importance of the arts in facilitating the reframing of identity and expression of emotion. We then move on to an examination of how emotion has been investigated in leisure and events to date, and consider arts festivals specifically. Lastly, we discuss the emotional timescape model. The setting for our study is introduced at the beginning of the methods section – the InterACT Disability Arts Festival held in New Zealand. Following the methodology, we present our findings. In the final section we ground our findings within the literature, and provide a critique of the emotional timescape model.

Literature review

Intellectual disability, identity and the arts

Ableism is constructed by the binary of ability/disability and maintained by Western myths of human redemption and perfection as foundational to the ideals of human vigour and vitality, of the ideas of beauty, truth, reason, order and justice (Mullen & Wills, 2016). Within the disability sector, the voices of people with intellectual disabilities are heard the least. Intellectual disability has three essential elements: substantial limitations in intellectual functioning (resulting in an IQ of 70 or less); substantial limitations in adaptive functioning such as communication, social skills, self-care; and onset during the developmental period (before age 22). Conditions linked to intellectual disability include Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, neurodivergence, autism spectrum disorder, Fragile X syndrome, and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (American Association on Intellectual and

Developmental Disabilities, 2024; IHC New Zealand, 2024; Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, 2023).

A hierarchy prevails where those experiencing issues of physical access had come to the fore as they had promoted legislative change through The NZ Access Bill 2023. The Deaf community also identified as a group that are disabled by the lack provision to ensure their communicative participation. These positions contrast with the experiences of people with an intellectual disability. Rogers (2016), p. 2) identified their distantiation when stating ‘I do not want to lose sight of the fact that those who “speak”, or are “spoken with” or being “spoken for” are not listened to’. Indeed, Thomson (1997) notes that non-disabled people often do not know how to act towards disabled people, seeing them for their disability first and not recognising their identity as a complex individual.

Aligning to this lack of connectedness Fox and Macpherson (2015, p. 25) sought to challenge the judgement placed on the importance of art ‘made by people with complex communication needs that is unresolved or provokes discomfort is as important as work that is solely uplifting’. A further rebuttal emerged when considering the polarisation created by arts practitioners and the impact arising from cultural dominance of non-disabled practitioners and performers:

mainstream arts are largely produced *by* non-disabled people *for* non-disabled people, and remain inherently exclusionary . . . the openness of community arts and the adoption of broader definitions of the arts may offer prospects for the inclusion of people with learning difficulties. (Goodley & Moore, 2002, p. 14, emphasis in original)

As disability theatre and performance challenge people to re-examine the cultural assumptions imposed on disabled people, it teaches us to look without embarrassment, without resistance at bodily difference. The narratives created by arts delivery enable an interactive exchange – one that asks audiences to identify with the experiences and emotions of those on stage, to recognise disability as a social construct and to acknowledge their own role in this phenomenon.

Emotion(s) in/and leisure and events

Emotions (whether positive or negative) are an important facet of leisure engagement (Han & Patterson, 2007; Scott & Fletcher, 2024). However, there have been a number of attempts to investigate the emotion-leisure nexus since the early 1980s (for a discussion of this earlier work, see Han & Patterson, 2007). Within the last 25 years, Kerr et al. (2002) have applied the Tension and Effort Stress Inventory (TESI) in their study of Japanese women recreational tennis players, and found that a single session had a beneficial impact on emotion. Mitas et al. (2012) measured positive emotions of leisure travellers, observing that positive emotions increased before and during travel, and declined after the trip. More recently, another quantitative study by Chen et al. (2022) found that people who engaged in leisure activities more frequently had both higher levels of positive affect and more emotional stability in their daily lives.

Scott and Fletcher (2024, p. 355) argue for expanding the research beyond such quantitative attempts to ‘measure’ emotion, which they believe limits our ability to understand how emotions are ‘felt’. To that end, they drew together a valuable corpus of work in a special issue of *Leisure Studies* (Vol 43(3), 2024). The articles range widely across leisure contexts and approaches – from an ethnographic study of young museum visitors (Steinbeck & Munar, 2024) to the more conceptual and theoretical writing of Kumm and Pate (2024). Taken as a whole, this collection provides a sociological richness and nuance to the study of emotion and affect in our field. Of particular importance for this paper, though, is the autoethnographic work by Condie (2024). He writes of his experiences of leisure as a disabled person, foregrounding the nature and importance of emotions – positive and negative – in these experiences, stating that ‘I wanted my experiences and emotions to be heard as well’ (Condie, 2024, p. 526).

For many people, events are an important part of leisure, yet it is only within the last 15 years or so that research on emotions has been carried out within the context of events. While the nature of live events makes it somewhat challenging to research emotion(s), researchers have developed and tested a variety of methods for collecting and analysing data across a range of event settings. Earlier studies focused on the role of emotions (both positive and negative) in attendee satisfaction with the event. For example, Y. Lee et al. (2008) applied an environmental psychology framework based on stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) to their analysis of a Korean cultural festival, aiming to determine the influence of festival atmospherics on emotions. They found that elements of the eventscape within the control of the organisers, such as food quality and programming, had an impact on attendee emotions including satisfaction and loyalty to the festival. This S-O-R framework has also been employed by others to examine emotions, satisfaction and loyalty in different contexts, with similar results (see for example J. Lee, 2014; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012). Adopting a different approach, Christou (2015) and Christou et al. (2018) used ethnography to investigate the link between emotions and satisfaction at cultural events. They found that not only were positive emotions associated with higher levels of satisfaction, but they influenced visitors' perceptions of the destination itself.

Music events arguably lend themselves readily to the study of emotions due to their highly immersive and emotive nature – music has the power to 'transport' one somewhere else, to cause one to be 'lost in the moment' (Grebenar, 2021; Kumm & Pate, 2024; Oliva & Colombo, 2021; Wood & Moss, 2015). Wood and Moss (2015) asked participants at a live music event to record their activities and feelings at specific time points before, during and immediately after the event: the resulting notes and photos were then used as discussion prompts for a focus group held soon after. They found both positive and negative emotions associated with attending the event and, more importantly for this paper, that these emotions fluctuated over time. They also noted the impact of various event features and elements on the emotional responses.

However, perhaps the two most widely used methods to investigate and measure emotions within event studies are the PERMA framework (Seligman, 2012) and the Event Experience Scale developed by de Geus et al. (2016). The PERMA framework does not focus exclusively on emotions but does include them in its measurement of subjective and psychological wellbeing. Derived from positive psychology, it has five indicators: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment (PERMA). This framework has commonly been applied to sports events, with a number of studies finding a positive association between attendance and emotions such as happiness, joy and pride (Doyle et al., 2021; Go et al., 2021; Hallman et al., 2013; Powlowski et al., 2014). In a music event context, Oliva and Colombo (2021) applied part of the PERMA framework in conjunction with the Geneva Emotional Music Scale (GEMS-9) to investigate the relationship between the emotional outcome of festival experiences and subjective wellbeing, finding that attendees experienced positive emotions such as joy with greater intensity. Most recently, Rossetti et al. (2024) expanded the PERMA model, producing a conceptual framework showing how food festivals generate shared and long-lasting wellbeing. Again, this study mentions the influence of event elements such as the event setting, heritage and people.

The Event Experience Scale (ESS), as the name suggests, is a quantitative tool that focuses on the experience of events and identifies four components – affective, cognitive, physical and the experience of novelty, with the affective including excitement and emotional energy (de Geus et al., 2016). The intensity of affective engagement is considered a key factor in what makes an event experience unique and meaningful (Oliva & Colombo, 2021). Coetzee et al. (2019) applied the ESS to a sporting event, finding that only the affective and physical engagement components positively predicted an attendee's likelihood to participate in the event again and recommend it to others. Richards (2020), on the other hand, found that the cognitive component was strongest across his study of cultural festivals held in seven different countries, followed by the affective. His research extended the usefulness of the ESS, identifying differences across visitor groups (e.g. the level of cognitive involvement increased with level of formal education attainment) and across locations

(largely reflecting the type of cultural event). Interestingly, he also found that the affective dimension was most important during the event when attendees were sharing their experiences with others on social media.

Arts festivals and emotion(s)

Engagement in the creative arts can influence emotions, leading to greater happiness and positive affect, and overall higher satisfaction with one's life (Bone & Fancourt, 2022; Fan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, as can be seen from the preceding section the focus of much of the research on events and emotions has been on sports, music and cultural festivals (generally excluding arts festivals). To be clear, music is one art form, but 'the arts' is generally considered to be broader and includes fine art, dance, film, theatre, literature and writing, sculpture, photography and crafts along with music (Arts Council England, 2007). Furthermore, participation can be creative (for example, painting a picture or playing a musical instrument) or consumptive (such as watching a performance or attending a festival) but both evoke emotion (Fan et al., 2024).

Arts festivals (specifically those that are comprised of multiple art forms) and their relationship to emotions has been somewhat neglected by researchers, with a few notable exceptions. An exploratory study by Brownett (2018), modelled on the PERMA framework, revealed community arts festivals elicited an emotional response from attendees, some of whom reported crying after seeing an artistic performance, or feeling happiness as a result of attending. Brownett (2018) goes on to note that arts festivals may result in transformative experiences, especially where organisers provide 'opportunities to immerse self, engage in activities that use the senses and emotions or provide moments for creativity and co-creation' (p. 77). Similarly, Rossetti's (2021) work on literary festivals identified a strong emotional dimension for attendees, which was linked to positive wellbeing outcomes.

Brown's (2020) emotional timescape model

Investigating consumer emotions from a service marketing perspective, Maguire and Geiger (2015) found that the temporal dimension played an important role in the consumption experience, terming this the emotional timescape. Consumers experienced a range of different emotions over the course of their purchase (sometimes including the time both before and after purchase), triggered by various features of the servicescape (the atmosphere, physical layout and design of the space, staffing levels) and interactions with staff and other patrons.

As a form of curated consumption experience, an event is a liminal space of encounter within a particular time and place (de Geus et al., 2016). This notion led Tattersall and Cooper (2014) to extend the concept of servicescapes to events, which they argue can be similarly considered as 'eventscales' comprised of 'a combination of the tangible elements which shape the event environment and therefore *influence the emotional responses and experiences of attendees, event staff, and other involved stakeholders*' (p. 142, emphasis added). Events (and their eventscales) are thus inextricably tied to emotion(s) for a wide range of actors – not just attendees. Some of the studies on events and emotion discussed in the earlier section mention the influence of the tangible elements of the eventscape (for example, Y. Lee et al., 2008; Rossetti et al., 2024; Wood & Moss, 2015), however they do not explicitly link this to the notion of eventscape.

Brown (2020) draws together the concepts of emotional timescapes (Maguire & Geiger, 2015) and eventscales (Tattersall & Cooper, 2014) to present an as-yet untested emotional timescape model for events. This conceptual model does not seek to measure emotion, or identify it, but instead maps fluctuations in intensity (positive to negative on the y-axis) over the course of the event (time on the x-axis) as a function of an attendee's response to specific aspects of the eventscape. We adopt this framework in our analysis, testing its value and applicability.

Methodology

This exploratory study investigates experiences at an arts festival through the lens of emotions felt by different attendees. As such, we are guided by hermeneutic phenomenology and adopt a qualitative interpretivist approach to understand and map participants' emotional timescapes. Under this paradigm there is no prescribed method, but interviews, observations and discussions are common investigative tools (Van Manen, 1997). We supplemented this with object elicitation and memory work, which we describe below.

Research context: The InterACT Disability Arts Festival

The InterACT Disability Arts Festival held in Auckland, New Zealand, is our case study. This free festival began in 2010 and celebrates the achievements of disabled people in the arts, acting as a vehicle for showcasing their skill, talent and work in an environment that is safe and supportive. Local government and a range of community trusts provide financial support, with businesses providing in-kind sponsorship of equipment and art materials. Members of the local community are engaged as part of the inclusive approach to event organisation, with the aim to foster greater understanding and acceptance of disability.

The festival is held in two large warehouses and some more intimate spaces on the same site, approximately 30 minutes' drive west from downtown Auckland. The physical environment and range of social experiences offered within such a large-scale event are often both novel and challenging for attendees. In 2019 (the year being reported on here) the experiences included short film screenings, photography, art and sculpture exhibitions, live music and theatre performances, a live participatory videography session, along with creative workshops and activities such as tape art, mural painting (Figure 1), face painting, and badge, card and jewellery making. To align with special school hours and disability service days, the festival ran from 10 am to 3 pm each day. Out-of-town schools were able to apply for travel subsidies. Over the years, the schools and service



Figure 1. InterACT Disability Arts Festival participants completing the 'we are superheroes' tape art mural. Source: second author.

providers had started to use the festival as a tool for curriculum delivery, preparing work over the course of the year to present at the festival (Walters, 2023).

The festival attracted approximately 4,000 people in 2019, with most being of school age (although they ranged from primary school age to retired). The majority were intellectually disabled, although some had multiple, complex disabilities. In line with the argument against reducing people to their disability, and with the overarching ethos of the festival, this paper takes the focus 'off the afflicted body, the physical and mental components of disability, [and] the stigma' (Agmon et al., 2016, p. 2) by not referring to individual attendees' particular forms of disablement.

The ethos of the festival reflects the view that all people are valuable, have talents and can learn (Blatt, 1987). This framing calls for planning, delivery and support in a manner that accords '... all people the status of persons and personhood, emphasising our similarities as thinking and feeling people and trying to counter the dominant view that they are incomplete, damaged semi-empty vessels' (Sarason, 1985, p. 3). In many ways, then, the nature of the festival forces reconsideration of the emotionality of disability, especially for the support staff, teachers and audience members.

Participant recruitment

Non-probability purposive sampling was appropriate, as we did not seek to generalise the findings (Etikan et al., 2016). Two methods were used to recruit participants, who needed to be over 18 years of age and provide informed consent. Arguably the most popular was self-selection, where people were able to approach the first author who was sitting on a couch near one of the activities with a sign saying, 'InterACT with me'. In the second method, the first author approached people directly as they engaged in the activity stations on offer. A specially designed information sheet and consent form with simple wording and large font, approved by the event organisers, was used with the disabled participants (Walters, 2023). A standard information sheet and consent form was used with non-disabled participants. The event organisers also granted permission to conduct participant observation. Note: university ethics approval prohibits us from publishing any photographs that could identify individuals.

Data collection

As noted above, multiple methods were used to collect data. Two types of interviews were carried out. The first was the short in-the-moment interview often used by event studies researchers as it causes minimal disruption to attendee enjoyment of the event. This involves approaching attendees and asking whether they would be willing to have a brief chat about the event, followed by withdrawing to a quiet space to write detailed notes (Christou et al., 2018; Quinn & Wilks, 2013). A total of 17 such interviews were carried out, which was the point at which saturation was reached and no meaningful new information was forthcoming (Fossey et al., 2002). The first author was able to participate in bump-in for the event, which provided an opportunity to chat with four of the activity station and workshop volunteers about their experiences and observations of the event. Ten more in-the-moment interviews were held with disabled attendees during the event, two others with support workers, and one with a family member. The second type of interview was the more formal semi-structured approach. These were conducted with three event organisers and activity providers. Interviews lasted from 37 to 62 minutes and were digitally recorded and verbatim transcribed.

We had not anticipated using object elicitation to collect data; however many participants began spontaneously bringing the badges, cards or jewellery they had made to show us. We found it functioned as a valuable conversation starter and allowed access to their recounting of event experiences which otherwise would have remained unheard (Stedman et al., 2004). Active participant observation was also employed, with extensive fieldnotes and photographs taken to capture participant experiences and provide rich written and visual depictions of settings (Charmaz, 2006; Mackellar, 2013;

Wood & Moss, 2015). The first author captured their personal reflections on the observational data at the same time, which acted as an initial phase of analysis (Mackellar, 2013). The official photographs and videos from the festival photographer and videographer were also included as empirical material. Finally, given the nature of this enquiry the authors elected to engage in memory work as a form of data collection, reflecting on, discussing and responding to their emotions about the event, and the emotions they observed in other attendees during their event experience (Marschall, 2019).

Ethics approval was gained from University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, application number D19–055.

Data analysis

Interview notes and transcripts were read and re-read, and the visual material viewed and re-viewed, to understand the emotions being discussed or observed at various timepoints of the festival, by different attendees. Expressed and observed emotions were categorised as positive or negative, rather than defining them individually (for example, happy, joyful, sad), and then mapped onto the event timescape following Brown's (2020) conceptualisation. As individual attendees were not tracked for the duration of their event experience, their emotions were charted against the relevant consumptive factors of the eventscape (for example, the venue entrance, programming, noise level, service encounters with event volunteers/staff/support workers) according to the period of our observations, and a separate emotional timescape created for each. We then crafted an individual 'case study' narrative for each, based on our observations, to sit alongside the timescape. The memory work allowed us to reflect on our own experiences of the event in our different roles (the first author as principal researcher on the project, and second author as one of the event organisers) and interpret the emotional timescapes of other attendees.

Findings

Here we present our findings as a series of narratives accompanying the emotional timescapes of participants. To emphasise our contribution of broadening the range of stakeholder groups, we focus on the following participants: attendees, a performer, a support worker, a volunteer and one of the event organisers, and include different abilities. To capture a sense of real-time emotion, present tense is used. Participants have been anonymised in the findings.

Attendees (Figure 2)

Attendee A and Attendee B are disabled attendees who have both been to the festival before so there is a sense of anticipation. The venue is familiar to each of them, and they quickly orientate themselves to the different arts activity stations on offer. As they circulate independently around the venue, they meet up with friends they have not seen since the last festival and there is happiness as they tell each other what there is to do this year. They then settle into creative participation. The volunteers at each station show them what to do and help them when needed, which maintains the overall positive emotion when things don't go according to plan or if fine motor skills are needed. Attendee A makes a charm bracelet and is very excited and proud to show it to the volunteer and the first author, saying 'Look what I made for my mum!'. Attendee B is the same – they say 'I like making cards and stuff' and bring each one over to show the first author as soon as they are finished. The delight and pride are evident in both what they are saying, and in the photographs we take. Once they finish the activities they are interested in, there is a lull in programming as they wait for the final music performance of the day and the intensity of positive emotion wanes a little. The opportunity to engage in consumptive participation is clearly a highlight of the festival for both of these attendees, as they wait for a band called 'The Mutes (from mars)'. The Mutes are

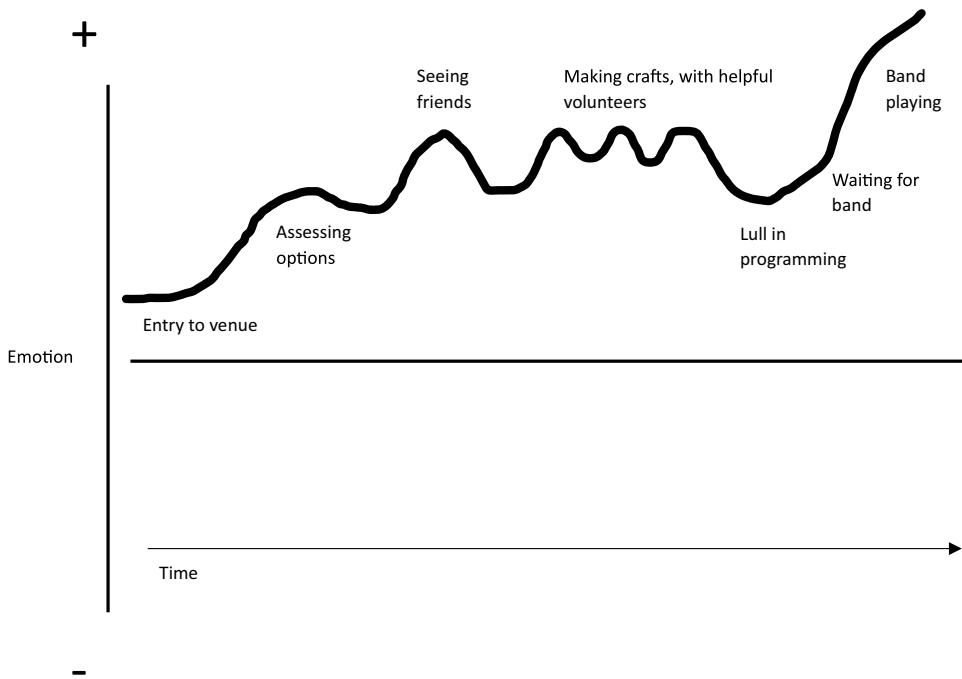


Figure 2. Emotional timescape for attendees. Source: authors, adapted from Brown (2020).

a unique professional rock band that draws on the creativity and passion of a group of incredible musicians, writers and performers who have a range of social and learning disabilities, the challenges of which have not limited the possibilities and talent of six amazing rockers (The Mutes from mars, 2024).

The two of them can barely contain their excitement at being able to see this popular band play live, moving into the performance space at the venue to get good seats. The video we take shows they don't remain still in their seats for long as the band starts playing, quickly starting to yell, clap, stomp their feet and jump about.

Performer (Figure 3)

Performer A is a disabled attendee who is also helping with bump-in and performing at the festival. Performer A is an actor, who tells the first author 'I love the festival!' They say 'I adore performing as it means I am the centre of attention!' Performer A chills out as they wait for it all to start ... then they see someone they know and rush off to talk. A real opportunity to be with friends and act up – they run towards each other, exclaiming loudly 'Gorgeous girl!' and engage in big hugs in a complete parody. It's hilarious and they are in fits of laughter. Later the first author hears Performer A introduce themselves to a new person: 'Hi, I'm [Performer A] the actor, here's my new film [handed over a flyer], come and see it tomorrow!' They should be in marketing! Performer A is performing twice during the festival, plus there is the premier of the movie they are lead actor in. Performer A is super excited, this is clearly their domain, and this is their community.

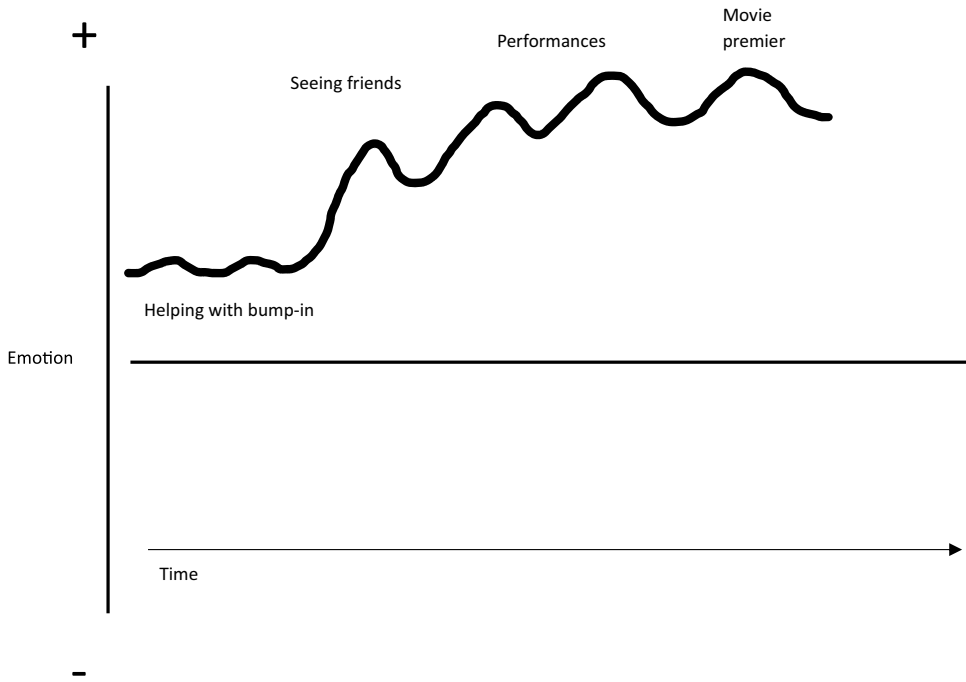


Figure 3. Emotional timescape for performer. Source: authors, adapted from Brown (2020).

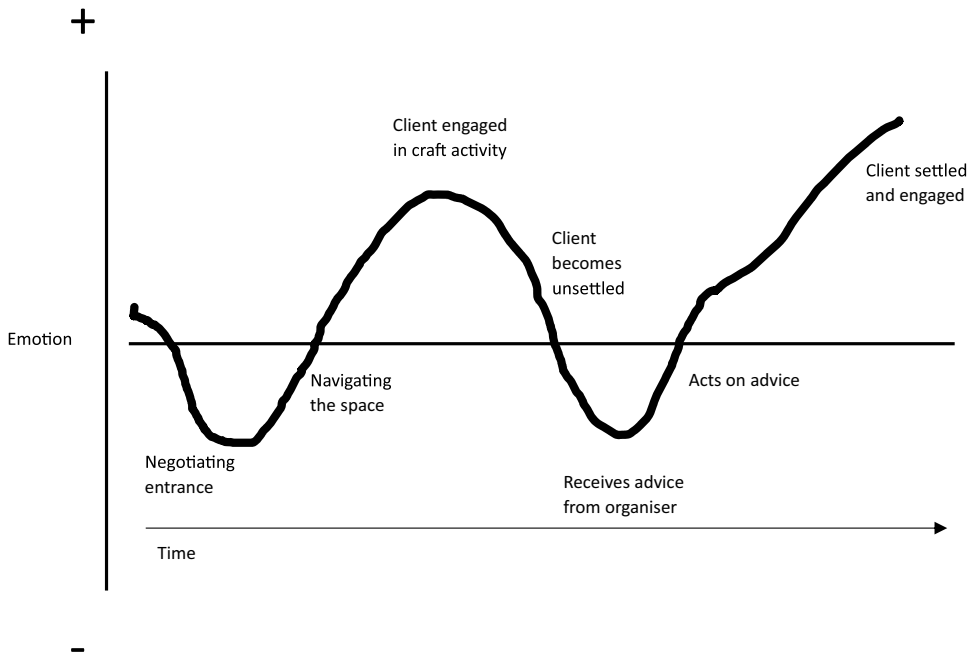


Figure 4. Emotional timescape for support worker. Source: authors, adapted from Brown (2020).

Support worker (Figure 4)

Support Worker A is a non-disabled first timer at the festival and their disabled client has complex needs. They are unsure of the venue entrance and how to get there from the carpark. Support Worker A is feeling somewhat stressed with this uncertainty, and is aware that the festival is underway and they only have limited time there. They successfully negotiate their way into the venue and begin feeling less stressed as they find their bearings with other support workers they know. They find an activity station and their client is happily engaged. Support Worker A feels more positive. Their client then becomes very excited and unsettled and Support Worker A is unsure how best to respond. They try a technique they have used before to assert control over the client, however this is a new context and it is ineffective, causing anxiety for Support Worker A. One of the event organisers, with lived experience of this type of behaviour, sees what is happening and quietly comes alongside. They suggest a different technique: Support Worker A takes their advice, and it works. The client settles into their activity again and as they are more relaxed Support Worker A begins to enjoy the festival alongside them. The event organiser who gave the advice told the first author later:

And then I watch for a few more hours and they're doing it, they're smiling, they're going, 'Yeah, this is easy. [The client] doesn't want to run away now because I've changed where I put my hand. They are with me and they feel safe and I don't have to be intrusive and grip their arm'.

Volunteer (Figure 5)

Volunteer A is non-disabled and this is their first time at the festival. As a beneficiary of the social welfare system, they experienced an extended 'low period' over the winter where they were struggling to find purpose and meaning in life. Volunteer A decided that people were the most

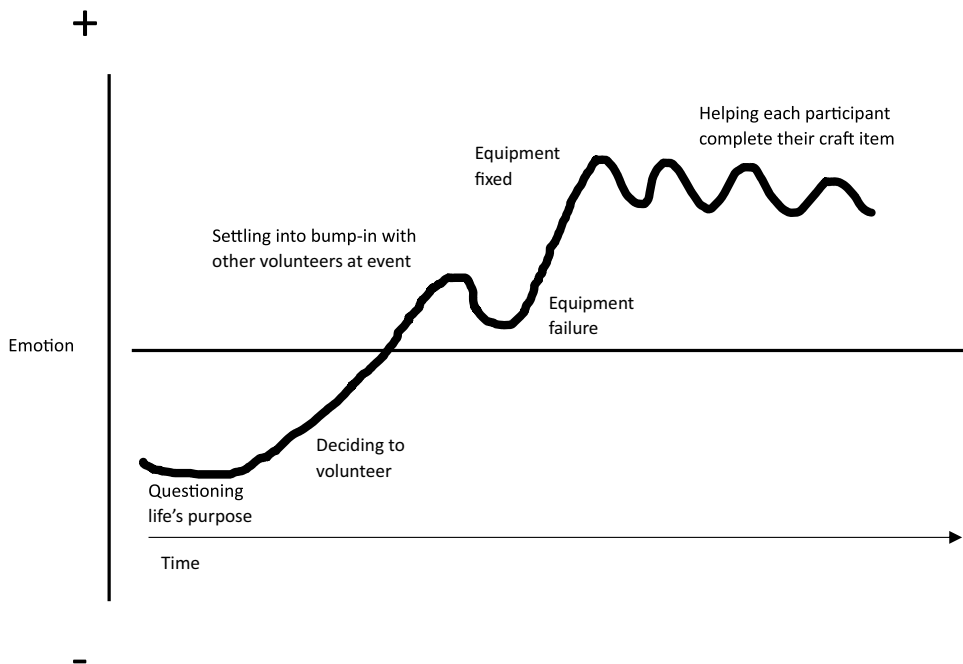


Figure 5. Emotional timescape for volunteer. Source: authors, adapted from Brown (2020).

important thing, that ‘chasing stuff’ was meaningless. They now spend their time volunteering and helping people: it makes them feel better, especially when they volunteer for disabled and elderly people, who Volunteer A says, ‘society has cast aside and deemed unworthy’. Thus, for this person, the emotional timescape extends from a period of months before the event, and it gradually becomes more positive with the anticipation of contributing to the festival. Volunteer A’s role at the event is to set up and help with one of the craft activities. The video footage we take shows that as they are setting up the activity station, it becomes apparent that one of the pieces of equipment is not working, which causes them to become worried that their activity will not be able to be offered. However, they ask a more experienced volunteer for help and together they develop a solution – the relief on their faces is evident, and Volunteer A is pleased they have been able to overcome the challenge. During the event, as people approach the activity station Volunteer A becomes quite animated as they help each person understand what the activity is about, then works the equipment to make sure they can achieve a good outcome. Our photos capture Volunteer A’s genuine delight seeing what people are making, and in the obvious happiness and pride in their achievements.

Event organiser (Figure 6)

The non-disabled second author is one of the event organisers (Event Organiser A) and has been involved in the festival for many years. They tell the first author of their experiences this year, helping out with the technical rehearsal in the days beforehand which they say was ‘instructive and supportive’, and then their frustration on the first day of the event, when they arrived early and encountered someone who ‘told me where I couldn’t park and how I should behave’. Over the course of the event itself the second author enjoys ‘having a function in the delivery and the frenetic stuff beforehand and seeing it through’. However, when prompted, they say their ‘emotional high points’ were:

around seeing my daughter performing, and her peer group . . . but then also seeing other people who I knew as adults or younger adults with disabilities seeing them being a spectator and just enjoying what they were

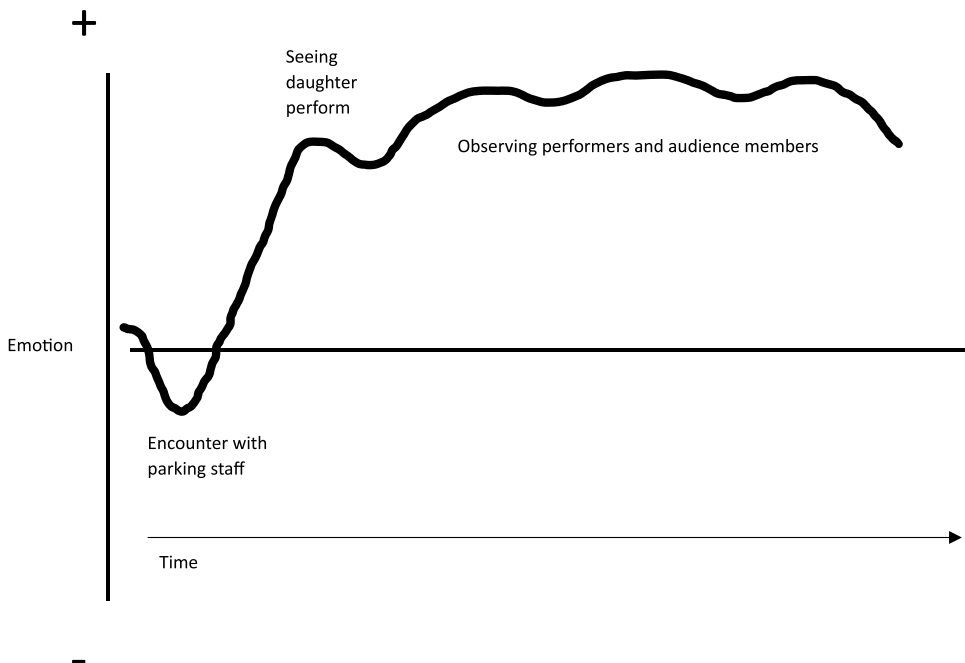


Figure 6. Emotional timescape for event organiser. Source: authors, adapted from Brown (2020).

doing. And then alongside that as I would sit on the apron of the stage and look to the audience and look to the performance, I think the constant high point was the complete overwhelming thrill and joy on the face of parents, of family members, and (when they could let go of themselves) the teachers and the support staff, because what I was seeing was people having a U-turn about what really was possible [for intellectually disabled people] and showing their pleasure and joy over it.

Discussion and conclusion

We begin this final section by discussing the unique context and focus of the investigation: an arts festival with/by/for intellectually disabled people, and the mediation of participant emotions by the eventscape. Our findings mirror those of Brownett (2018) and Rossetti (2021) in that we identified the evocation of strong positive emotions for our arts festival participants – whether disabled or non-disabled. The eventscape offered opportunities for people to immerse themselves in both creative and consumptive participation experiences, and the carefully curated range of activities provided disabled attendees the ability to engage their senses and emotions (Brownett, 2018; Hall, 2013).

Our findings show that attendees who were able to engage in creative participation experiences (such as making cards, badges and jewellery) experienced strong positive emotions on completion, which were boosted by sharing their accomplishments with others around them (Fan et al., 2024; Hall, 2013). This was influenced by elements of the eventscape that they encountered over the course of their event experience (Brown, 2020), such as their interactions with the volunteers in charge of each activity station. Performers also engaged in creative participation (acting in a play or performing as part of a band) and they experienced similar positive emotions. However, the nature of emotions differed somewhat – unlike the attendees they were often nervous but excited prior to their performance, but like the attendees they were happy and proud afterwards.

Interaction with others, including the enthusiastic audience reaction, was an important part of the eventscape, playing a significant role in attendees' and performers' emotional timescape. However, performance art also allows the audience members to access new perspectives in ways more complex and dynamic than simply using language (Kuppers, 2003). The experience of viewing the performances delivered from the stage during the InterACT Disability Arts Festival offered the audience the opportunity, or in many instances created the demand, that they recognised how 'cognition is at least as much a social as a solitary individual process' (Silvers & Francis, 2009, p. 495). These moments of exposure to the performance, especially when it was the parent's child on stage, called for the suspension of judgement often evidenced by heightened emotion amongst the audience as they responded with tears, smiles, applause and calling out encouragement. In addition, for many people, no matter what their role or whether disabled or non-disabled, seeing friends they had not seen since the last festival also boosted the level of positive emotion.

We now turn to the second purpose of this paper: the testing of Brown's (2020) conceptual emotional timescape model for events across a range of involved stakeholder groups. Overall, we believe it to be a useful construct to broadly represent and map positive/negative emotions (rather than measurement or articulation of specific emotions). However, there were some limitations. First, it was not possible to observe individual attendees for the entire duration of their event experience, or to identify every possible element of the eventscape influencing the emotional response, and therefore the development of a complete and detailed emotional timescape was not possible. While not impacting on the validity of the findings, it means that the timeline in each figure differs, with some spanning a few months and others just an hour or two. Secondly, some participants belonged to more than one stakeholder group and had more than one role – many performers were also attendees, and some volunteers were attendees and performers. We chose to focus on the self-selected main identity of each of our participants (e.g. Performer A was also a volunteer and an attendee, but identified most strongly as a performer). Finally, and arguably most importantly, while we initially intended to focus on different stakeholder groups (attendees, performers, volunteers, support workers, event organisers and researchers), it quickly became clear

that the individualised nature of the experiences meant it was not possible to create a general emotional timescape for each group.

To address this latter weakness, we propose an extension to Brown's emotional timescape model, to enhance its value and applicability for leisure studies researchers: the creation of single case study narratives to accompany the timescape. Our work demonstrates that this pragmatic solution allows the richness of the emotional experience to be captured, while still enabling the mapping of emotion against both time and the influence of constituent event elements.

To conclude, then, in responding to Scott and Fletcher's (2024) call for deeper engagement at the intersection of emotion(s) and leisure this paper has contributed to the leisure studies literature in two significant ways. Empirically, we have foregrounded the emotionality of intellectually disabled people, an under-represented group within the study of events (Condie, 2024). We analysed an arts festival, which is a form of events overlooked in comparison to other event types, and took into account the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups including attendees, performers, volunteers, support workers and event organisers. Theoretically, we have tested Brown's emotional timescape model and demonstrated how this can be adapted and extended, thereby improving its methodological applicability in a real-world context. We leave the fitting final word to Event Organiser B, who said this during their interview:

The reality is this is a group of people who routinely see each other as peers and equals and we make community. And we respect each other, and then we celebrate the people who are more vulnerable among us are seen, who they're seen to be and what they're seen to do and how that's regarded. And if that's only for three days once a year, that's a good top up, that's a really good boost and reminder going forward. It's like filling your emotional bank account up for quite a long time. Takes ages to drain this stuff out again.

Note

1. We define intellectual disability further on in this paper, but here we note that in some New Zealand contexts 'intellectual disability' has recently been reframed as 'learning disability' to include neurodivergence – while recognising that not all neurodivergent people may self-identify as disabled people (Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, 2023). Furthermore, we acknowledge the contested nature of the language of disability – should we adopt the people-first movement which uses 'people with disabilities' (Mullen & Wills, 2016) or the social model which prefers the term 'disabled people' (Cameron, 2007; Mullen & Wills, 2016; Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, 2023). The current official consensus in New Zealand is to use 'disabled people' (Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, 2023) and consequently we have adopted that terminology for this paper.

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