

Lund University  
Department of Sociology

# **The Culture of Sexual Violence at Festivals**

*Through the Eyes of Festival Attendees*



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## ABSTRACT

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### **Abstract**

This thesis examines sexual violence at festivals based on eleven interviews with people that have been to two popular festivals in Iceland, Eistnaflug, and Þjóðhátíð. The thesis seeks answers to three research questions; How are festivals characterized by festival attendees? How do festival attendees explain sexual violence at festivals? What preventive methods at festivals have festival attendees noticed, and what kind of prevention do they think would work? To be able to give concrete answers to those questions, the thesis relies upon the theoretical background of the carnival, liminality, collective effervescence, sexually violent effervescence, and social network theory. The thesis presents how the core characteristics of festivals are gendered, as women are not able to experience liminality within the carnival to the same extent as men. As well as how sexual violence is mainly directed toward women and how they have had to take their own precautions regarding preventive methods, as the methods that have been used have not shown excellent results.

Keywords: Collective effervescence, carnival, liminality, sexually violent effervescence, festivals, sexual violence, culture

## **Popular science summary**

In this thesis, I looked at sexual violence at festivals through the eyes of festival attendees. More specifically, I focused the research on two popular festivals in Iceland called Eistnaflug and Þjóðhátíð. The subject is relatively new to academia, so there is not a lot of preexisting data. This thesis attempts to fill in that knowledge gap. Eleven interviews were conducted with Icelandic people that had gone to either one of the festivals. Nine of them were women, and 2 of them were men. The data from the interviews were analyzed through the methods of a case study and thematic analysis. Five theories support the results; The carnival, liminality, collective effervescence, sexually violent effervescence, and Social network theory.

The analysis is presented in three chapters. Firstly, the characteristics of festivals are presented. The features emphasize how gendered the festival settings are, where dress codes and drinking culture magnitudes the problem that is sexual violence. It also shows how men and women do not experience festivals the same as women are not able to emerge in the carnival and liminality fully.

Secondly, the second chapter showcases how festival attendees see festival violence at festivals. The most significant findings were the impact musicians, and performers have on the atmosphere. People either accept and normalize the behaviors of musicians that have been allegedly accused of sexual violence, or they despise them. Safety conditions are also a big concern, and interviewees mentioned that organizers needed to take more extensive measures and not sugarcoat the issue of sexual violence.

Thirdly, women have to be consistently aware of their surroundings to be careful, whereas men do not have to take the same measures. Lastly, anger and aggression are magnified by festivals' characteristics, leading to people breaking the rules, such as sexually violating another person. The last chapter focuses on preventive methods and how most have not shown great success. However, bystander intervention has shown some success, but it needs to be applied strategically.

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# 1 Introduction

“You see it as some sort of paradise; everybody is having so much fun and being such great friends. However, this community is not excluded from sexual violence just like any other.” (Paula)

Festivals have been a big part of culture throughout the ages, ranging from religious festivals in ancient Greece to music festivals in today's society (Cudny, 2016). The culture at festivals is colorful and complex, and people go there to escape their everyday norms. Even though the main aim of festival attendees is to have as much fun as possible, there is also a darker side to festivals. Like Paula a 27-year-old girl who has gone to Eistnaflug several times mentions in the quote above, festivals, like any other community, are not excluded from crime and deviance. Sexual violence is a current issue that festival attendees, organizers, and authorities have to address and respond to.

Sexual violence at festivals has been a topic of discussion in Icelandic society for many years. After each festival weekend, the media reports statistics from the police, which include the number of sexual violence cases (Valgerðardóttir, 2019; mbl.is, 2003; mbl.is, 1997; Vignisson, 2015; Daðason, 2016). Those numbers are most often picked up by the general public and criticized and speculated about. However, the topic has not been researched to a great extent within academia (Fileborn, Wadds, and Tomsen, 2020:194). This thesis will try to bridge the gap between the two by researching festival culture in relation to sexual violence through the experiences of festival attendees at two Icelandic festivals, Eistnaflug and Þjóðhátíð.

## 1.1 Eistnaflug

Eistnaflug is a festival held in the east of Iceland in a small town called Neskaupsstaður. It started as a small one-day festival in August of 2005 where 50 people attended but has evolved into a four-day festival where metal, hardcore, punk, rock, and indie music is played. A mix of Icelandic and international bands play at the festival (Eistnaflug, n.d.). Eistnaflug was, like Þjóðhátíð, canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Austurfrétt, 2020; Áttavitinn, 2021). The performances at the festival started in a music venue called Egilsbúð, but in 2015 as the festival got significantly larger, it was moved to a more extensive gymnasium. However, in 2019 the organizers decided to move the festival back to Egilsbúð,

where it all started (Eistnaflug, n.d.). Like at Þjóðhátíð, many people stay in tents on a camping site during the festival.

Eistnaflug is well known for its stand against people acting like idiots; a quote closely related to the festival states, “It is forbidden to be an idiot” (Eistnaflug, n.d.). A statement from one of the organizers also became widespread in 2014 and has been associated with the festival ever since. He stated that if anyone were to report sexual violence to the police that happened at the festival, it would be canceled and never held again (Haraldsson, 2014).

Aflið is an association specializing in helping victims of sexual violence. In recent years, they have been a part of the prevention team at Eistnaflug. People from the organization can be found at the festival wearing vests so that they are noticeable.

## 1.2 Þjóðhátíð

Þjóðhátíð is an Icelandic music festival that was first held in Vestmannaeyjar (Islands on the south coast of Iceland) in 1874 (eyjar.net, 2010; Þjóðhátíð, 2019). Since 1901 Þjóðhátíð has been held consecutively with only a few exceptions. In 1914 and 1915, it was canceled due to WW1 (Þjóðhátíð, 2019), and the latest cancellations were in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Sverrisson, 2020; Þjóðhátíð, 2021). It was first held on August 2nd, 1874, to celebrate the thousand-year anniversary of inhabitation in Iceland and its first constitution received from the king of Denmark. A celebration was held in a valley called Herjólfsdalur on the main island of Heimaey (eyjar.net, 2010). Since then, it has become an annual celebration that has turned into a festival attended by thousands of Icelanders. In 2019, between 12 to 13 thousand people attended the weekend-long festival (Ingólfsson, 2019). In modern times the festival is held every year on the first weekend in August, called Verslunarmannahelgi. The festival is then set on a Friday and takes place until Sunday night. The program over the weekend has been similar throughout recent years. There is a day program suited for children and families, and then there is a more traditional festival atmosphere in the evenings and through the night.

The main stage is set up in front of a hill in a valley called Herjólfsdalur. On Sunday evenings, the program includes Brekkusöngur or a singalong. This has been the most popular event in recent years and is broadcasted on TV and radio. Since its inception, it has become a tradition where the crowd sings folk songs and Icelandic pop songs under the control of a troubadour.

An association called Bleiki fíllinn, or The Pink Elephant, has been a part of preventing sexual violence at the festival since 2012. Their work is to engage festival attendees in the preventive



work by, for example, selling merchandise, one being a captain's band that can be seen worn by many attendees.

### 1.3 Research aim

The preexisting data on sexual violence is limited as it has only recently gained recognition within academia. At the same time, some studies have researched Icelandic festivals and sexual violence separately. The topics have not been researched as one phenomenon. This thesis will aim to fill in that knowledge gap by presenting answers to the following research questions:

- *How are festivals characterized by festival attendees?*
- *How do festival attendees explain sexual violence at festivals?*
- *What preventive methods at festivals have festival attendees noticed, and what kind of prevention do they think would work?*

### 1.4 Delimitations

Through empirical observation, this research has been delimited to focus only on two cases (Eistnaflug and Þjóðhátíð) in Iceland. It has not focused on festivals as a whole or in other cultures. The reason is access to interviewees and to make a comparison between two cases within one culture. Methodology-wise, the study is limited to the use of interviews. The choice not to conduct fieldwork was partially because of the Covid-19 pandemic, as neither festival was held due to restrictions. As well as keeping the focus of the thesis on the public view of the matter instead of a researcher's point of view.

### 1.5 Outline

Chapter two of this thesis will address previous research related to festivals and sexual violence at festivals. Furthermore, it will look into the history of festivals and the preexisting data on sexual violence at festivals. Chapter three will present the theoretical work and concepts on which the analysis of this thesis is built. Chapter four will then explain the methodological approaches used for the analysis and present an argument of why the chosen methods were used. Lastly, chapter five presents the results from the data collected for this research. The analysis from interviews conducted for this research will be presented first. It has been sectioned into three sub-chapters corresponding to the research questions presented above. Then a conclusion will be presented at the end.

## 2 Previous Research

This chapter will briefly describe how festivals are defined, their history, and what they have become today. It will then go over the pre-existing literature about sexual violence at festivals. Although a lot has been written about festivals, the topic of sexual violence is relatively new in academia. Fileborn, Wadds, and Tomsen (2020:194) even state that their research from 2020 on sexual violence at Australian music festivals is the first of its kind. According to Bernadette Quinn (2009:1), plenty of literature from tourism journals focuses on festivals, which have become one of the most prolific areas of tourism research. Less research has been done about the dangers of sexual violence at festivals and in carnivalesque settings (Fileborn et al., 2020; Wadds, Fileborn, & Tomsen., 2021).

### 2.1 Definition of festivals

Belgian anthropologist Piette contextualized festivals as events where celebration and enjoyment were to be had. He takes the definition further away from a purely religious activity like sociologists had defined before him and incorporates playfulness into the rules and regulations of festivals (Piette, 1992:38). He notes that a festival disturbs the social order and convention to reinforce it because of its antithetic behavior. It, therefore, replaces its proper logic, like ritual, rules and regulation, play, and ambivalence. People can get away from their everyday norms and move to a world of hedonistic and sometimes uncontrollable fun. Their social status outside the festival does not matter as they make new interactions and ignore the former qualities (Piette, 1992). Davies also mentions that festivals are unique because they bring people outside of their norms in time and space and provide activities, feelings, and emotions that are often unusual to the regular and material routines. These feelings can also be evoked because of the setting of a festival. They are usually held at temporarily transformed sites and add a sense of occasion and separateness to experiences gained in these spaces (Davies, 2015:535). They can also bring a collective identification for the communities hosting the events and re-establish the prevailing social norms, cultural values, and beliefs (Quinn, 2009:6).

Festivals differ from normal daily activities and are temporal phenomena, meaning that the experience of each festival is unique, and to understand the occasion, one would have to attend the said festival. They can become hedonistic playgrounds where carnivalesque attitude predominates, and play becomes a big part of the experience. Attendees let loose and are free

of all sensations outside of the festival (Cudny, 2016). The atmosphere can thus become very eccentric and 'oceanic,' where people lose themselves and let go as they go with the flow of the crowd (O'Grady, 2013:30-31). Festivals are also events based on extraordinary experiences. Janiskees definition is along the same lines as Cudny's where he states that festivals can be understood as "formal periods or programs of pleasurable activities, entertainment, or events having a festive character and publicly celebrating some concept, happening or fact." (Janiskee, 1980:97 cited in Quinn, 2009:5). They can either accommodate a local community or be a global phenomenon attracting people worldwide, like Woodstock, Lollapalooza, and Roskilde. They can also range from a small scale to a large-scale celebration held regularly or a one-off event, and they do not have to be tied or connected to a particular place, language, values, or history. It is also essential to look into the space and setting of festivals. They are on an extensive scale, so the socio-economic and environmental settings are essential. The existence of a festival is determined by the surroundings like the environment, setting, participating artists, organizers, sponsors, audience, the already existing culture, and politics (Cudny, 2016).

## 2.2 The origins of festivals

According to Bakhtin (cited in Hoy, 1992: 770), carnivals are when all social groups and classes come together for an enjoyable celebration. It fuses all of the groups into a festival of sorts. Traditional connections then disappear, and new ones are formed from concepts that do not go together in everyday social life but work in a festive setting. Festivals have a long history in society; they can be dated back to when primal people held rituals similar to today's religious festivals and originate from different continents, for example, South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Cudny and Davies agree that some of the earlier festivals were connected with seasonal occasions like sowing and harvesting (Cudny, 2016:22). A more advanced form of festivals that included elements of higher culture or art elements took place in ancient Greece. The first festivals are the events tied to the goddess Demeter and Dionysia in ancient Greece, around 1450 BC. Historians claim that an essential part of the rituals were performances of comedy, tragedy, and drama. Those events included celebrations of the god's anniversaries, the birth of heroes, and other special occasions. Activities included singing and dancing, citing poems, theater performances, and a feast, among other extravagant things (Cudny, 2016:22-23). Therefore, it is apparent that festivals had strong ties to culture apart from religion.

Bakhtin (1984:11) mentions how the carnivals and popular-festive forms during the middle ages were filled with “[...] flowering of a gay, affirmative, and militantly anti-authoritarian attitude for life, founded upon a joyful acceptance of the materiality of the body.” Turner (1982:11 cited in Quinn, 2009:5) came to a similar conclusion as Bakhtin, where the need to set aside time and space for communal creativity and celebration has been recognized by people in all cultures and that this practice dates back centuries. Examples of religious festivals from the early middle ages can be found in countries like China and Taiwan. One of those is The Ghost Festival which is still held today across both countries. The festival is dedicated to the spirits of dead ancestors and draws on the religions of Taoism and Buddhism (Cudny, 2016:23-24). Festivals that refer to religious holidays are still prominent in today's society and celebrate culture and religion. Another historic festival and one of the first ones was the Saturnalia, in honor of the agricultural deity Saturn. At the festival, Romans did not wear a toga, and enslaved people swapped roles with their masters. By doing so, they moved away from their everyday norms and referenced the mythical golden age when Saturn ruled and all people were equal (Cudny, 2016:23). Excessive drinking and drug-taking were also prominent at these events, which often served to transition into the carnivalesque (Wadds et al., 2021:3). This was also the case in the middle ages, where the jester became the ruler or god in a ritualistic parody. The fusion of jesters performing as those who are ‘well-to-do in life’ was done to produce laughter (Bakhtin cited in Hoy, 1992: 771). Had this been done in a setting outside of the festive carnival where the everyday social norms were at play, the upper class would most likely have reacted differently to the act as they would not have agreed upon the change in social norms.

In the nineteenth century, festivals celebrating the harvest, crop and seasons of the year started to become popular in the USA and Australia. They were held at an agricultural site, and at first, the festival was closely tied to the setting. They then evolved into occasions where entertainment was the focal point and moved away from the agricultural aspect. The music and performances did not have anything to do with agriculture as they had before. So, a swift change could be detected in the development of festivals (Cudny, 2016:24). With the arrival of the steam engine and later on cars, trains, and planes, people became more affluent. A class of wealthy entrepreneurs and a middle class formed, and the demand for better vacations and leisure became higher. Therefore, people could vacation abroad, and the festival industry became international. One of the earlier festivals that attracted the international population was Oktoberfest in Germany (Cudny, 2016:27-28), which is still being held annually and is very popular among people worldwide.

Along with the development of the world, festivals became a big thing in the second half of the twentieth century with a so-called festival boom. They were a part of building the post-industrial world and became a valuable component of the cultural economy, which became economically and socially valuable for the economy. They started to revolve more around entertainment such as music during the time of a cultural turn in the twentieth and twenty-first century and relate more to the growing affluence of satisfying services and culture-related needs of today's economy (Cudny, 2016:29). Like we know them today, Festivals deal primarily with symbolic goods, where their economic value derives from their cultural value (Cudny, 2016:30), such as music festivals. These festivals often take place over several days, and the focus is mainly on living in the present and what is easily consumable and available. This is often expressed through the slogan YOLO, an acronym for You Only Live Once. This attitude goes hand in hand with the “why-not attitude,” which can encourage irrational or dangerous behavior (Fjær & Tutenges, 2017:204). This kind of attitude can result in criminal behavior and sexual violence.

### 2.3 Sexual violence at festivals

When situating sexual violence at festivals, Baillie et al. (2022) suggest using a post-structural approach. It recognizes the fluidity of what sexual violence is and that it is not just one universal thing. A local or situational context shapes it, and what ‘counts’ is shaped by the existing power relations (Baillie et al., 2022: 712). According to that, sexual violence is a subjective term; even though the core definition stays similar, individuals and communities have their way of interpreting it. World Health Organization (WHO) has defined sexual violence as the following;

“Sexual violence encompasses acts that range from verbal harassment to forced penetration, and array of types of coercion, from social pressure and intimidation to physical force.” (WHO, 2012).

To further deepen the understanding of what sexual violence is, the definition from Tutenges, Sandberg and Pedersen will be used in addition to WHO;

“[It] covers acts of taking sexualized pictures or videos of individuals against their will or without their consent, as well as ‘the full range of forced sexual acts including

physically forced kissing or touching, verbally coerced sexual intercourse, and physically forced vaginal, oral, and anal penetration.” (Abbey et al., 2004 as cited in Tutenges, Sandberg & Pedersen, 2020: 410).

As mentioned above, sexual violence at festivals has not been researched to a greater extent, so data on the subject is relatively new and limited. Wadds et al. (2021) did a study based on interviews with victim-survivors of sexual violence taken during and after a major Australian music festival in 2017-18. However, they included data from any Australian music festivals. Their findings revealed that music festivals had become a space marketed as a product that commodifies release. They argued that social control had limited opportunities to release transgression, experimentation, and expression. Nightlife in developed nations and global cities was once a space to do so but has become less inviting with added cost and regulations. Hence, people have sought new spaces to let loose, and festivals have become one of the chosen spaces (Wadds et al., 2021). Concerning that, Baillie et al. (2022:711-712) mention that festivals are getting increased recognition as a space in which sexual violence occurs. With it being harmful gendered violence, some preventive methods must be implemented. They mention that some industry and grassroots campaigns have tried to account for the problem and address the issue. However, there is still a need for a strategic and evidence-based approach to be developed. They acknowledge the same issue as Wadds et al. (2021) that there is a severe lack of academic research in this context. They, however, mention that bystander intervention has shown promise in combating sexual violence at festivals. Bystander intervention refers to engaging individuals in a situation to intervene to help prevent sexual violence (Baillie et al., 2022:712). With festivals becoming an escape from everyday social norms, clothing also marked a break from it and has become a quintessential part of the performance by festival-goers as an aspect of both carnival and performing gender (Wadds et al., 2021:9). Young girls often choose to dress in a fantastical way. Others have used this as an excuse to stare at them, and one interviewee described how this could also make it easier for guys to touch them, and predators could see them as easier targets (Wadds et al., 2021:11). This example results from the objectification of the female body throughout history. It describes women's living space and how they have been told to be careful of perpetrators instead of telling perpetrators to stop violating women.

In their research on Australian music festivals, Fileborn et al. (2020) reflected on how important it is to look at gender when researching festivals. They state that “[...] women are often positioned as less ‘knowledgeable’ than male fans, less skilled as musicians, or as

involved in the industry on account of their sexual desire for male musicians or sexual desirability as performers.” (Fileborn et al., 2020:197). These features and views reflect gendered norms and power imbalance that underpin sexual violence and enable violence to prosper. Sexual violence at festivals occurs as a consequence of these tools. The setting of the celebrations may facilitate the violence to unfold in a unique way that might differ from what is known outside of festivals (Fileborn et al., 2020:197). Wadds et al. (2016:14) also note that the temporary structure of festivals invites determined intoxication where people challenge their everyday social roles and are pushed aside to pursue pleasure. The fact that advertisements for festivals are ingrained with a promise of an overtly heterosexual atmosphere moves forward the narrative of the entitlement men can have at the expense of women. As violence and harm are “[...] by-products of celebrated excess and cultures of transgression” that can limit women's engagement in carnivalesque action, and the nature of the festivals can provide ‘cultural scaffolding,’ that enables sexual violence and harassment (Wadds et al., 2016:14). Intoxication can also increase the opportunities for sexual violence because of the permissive masculine culture that presents itself in settings like festivals where there are high levels of crowding and formal, and natural surveillance is limited (Wadds et al., 2016:11). The preexisting studies presented here suggest that multiple factors can motivate sexual violence at festivals. These factors include; a permissive drinking culture that celebrates excess, emphasizes hedonistic release, promotes ruptures with everyday norms, and temporary settings of the festivals that prompt detachment from the setting as well as people.

### 3 Theory

This chapter will describe and discuss the theoretical framework on which this thesis is built. It will begin by going over Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnival to deepen the understanding of how people perceive festivals. Arnold Van Gennep's and Victor Turner's concept of liminality will then be presented as a theoretical concept to support and further build upon the framework of the carnival. Using liminality will further explain how festival attendees move away from their everyday social norms and into the carnivalesque. Durkheim's theory of collective effervescence will then be introduced to build the groundwork for the concept of sexually violent effervescence. Both collective effervescence and sexually violent effervescence deepen the understanding of festival attendees' behaviors and feelings. Lastly, the theory of social networks will be introduced to explain the importance of collaboration between organizers and everyone involved at festivals.

#### 3.1 The carnival

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher, developed a theory of the carnival in his book *Rabelais and His World*. His focus is on the carnival of the middle ages and the renaissance, which he describes as a time of culture of folk humor (Bakhtin, 1984:4). He writes about the popular-festive system of images as something demonstrated at carnivals. He makes an example out of Rabelais's book where inhabitants of an island make their living by getting beaten. When inhabitants have been thrashed and then paid, they rise again but as happy as kings and reach the highest level of happiness. According to Bakhtin, the thrashings represent symbolic actions directed at something higher, like the king, instead of a personal reason. The people elect the king, but he gets beaten like a carnival dummy when his reign is over. The beating and thrashing are equivalent to a change of costume or a metamorphosis. The death that follows the thrashing and the afterlife is a cosmic play and the two aspects of one world, each within its own body (Bakhtin, 1984:196-198). The definition of how people approach festivals in today's society follows Bakhtin's perspective. People go from being one version of themselves into another when attending festivals. The everyday norms that define normal living disappear like the clown, and people become the version of themselves that represents the king. Afterward, they return to the mundane, leave everything that happened behind and become the clown again.



Mike Presdee, a cultural criminologist, elaborates on Bakhtin's theory and notes that the transgressive characteristics of carnivals are incorporated into wider society today, such as popular culture. The popular culture becomes carnivalesque and turns the world upside down, where former orders and norms appear irrational because contemporary culture emphasizes emotion over education. The core elements of carnivals are where the body's pleasures are in the foreground, opposite to everyday social norms and structure. (Presdee, 2000:29-30). Transgression is also central when operationalizing the carnival. The attendee's behavior is legitimized through art, structure, and imagery. Outside of the carnival, these behaviors would be deemed inappropriate (Presdee, 2000:38).

An example was made of this in the text above, where the jesters of the middle ages parodied as those above them in the hierarchy. Such acts would not be tolerated outside of a festival or a carnival setting. The carnival setting becomes the dominant setting and temporarily replaces everyday social norms. Some of the acceptable things at a carnival can be considered criminal outside of it (Presdee, 2000:39). Bakhtin emphasizes the body a great deal but mostly the grotesque side. The carnival celebrates the body in a way that is not usual in everyday life, like the arse hole, genitals, birth, farting, burping, and belly laughing, to name a few. It is all a vital part of the carnival as "the performance of carnival uses the body as the stage, claiming it back from those who wish to control it, who wish to appropriate that which it produces, to civilize it, or even imprison it." (Presdee, 2000:39-40). The theory can be used to understand why people may engage in transgression at festivals, where they get caught up in the mood of acting grotesquely and out of character. Typically, nothing happens, but sometimes severe offenses occur, such as sexual violence.

Because according to Bakhtin, the body outgrows its limits (1984:26). Therefore, the sexual tension gets high as people step into their festival persona (or liminal space, which will be elaborate on further down in this chapter). Some might get over erect and step over boundaries and, in doing so, violate someone or commit any other crime. Carnival represents a world that has been overturned and is restricted through laughter, as the carnival is joyful. The laughter is directed at authority and is self-reflecting (Presdee, 2000:40). This shows how power play is different at the carnival as the level of respect for authorities and rules is a lot less than in a typical setting. Crime becomes the "subversion of bourgeois order" (Presdee, 2000:40). The carnival authority does not try to unify nor polarize, neither are the victims only those who wield power. The worldview offered by the carnival begins to question the authority (Presdee, 2000:41). When the power is in as much imbalance as it is at a carnival, the rules and regulations become blurred, and it becomes easier to overstep boundaries and commit a crime.

Presdee makes an example out of car hijacking and illegal racing in an area that was hard to maintain by authorities. The elements of the carnival are clear and presented in two key factors. “(1) the proximity of danger, both from the law and from accident or death; and (2) its oppositional status, unashamedly a celebration of doing ‘wrong.’” (Presdee, 2000:50). There is a certain thrill of being caught by the police, and a car chase would only make things more exciting. When put in the context of sexual violence at festivals, the same elements are present, as shown later in this chapter. In an everyday setting, it can be recognized that when people have consensual sex, they brag about it to their friends. In a carnival setting where norms and rules get blurry, there is a chance of the same bragging being done by someone that has sexually violated another person. The perpetrator is likely to experience liminality, and the victim could experience sexually violent effervescence (both concepts are explained in this chapter).

### 3.2 Liminality

In a comparative study of rituals in his book *Rites of Passage*, Arnold Van Gennep, a Belgian anthropologist, defined the concept of liminality as something ‘in between’ or a transition from one point to another. It is the second stage out of three in what he called ‘rite of passage.’ The first stage is separation from ordinary social life, and the third is a return to that same ordinary life but with an altered state of consciousness. His explanation revolved around religion, and the liminal stage was something that people found themselves in between heaven and earth. It is a stage where people experience engagement with the transcendental, expression of otherness, transformation, and sacralization of identity (Garwood, 2011:261-262; Turner, 1979:466-467).

Victor Turner, an anthropologist, drew on the work of Van Gennep to further develop the term liminality into a concept that embraces all transitions and all rituals everywhere. He focused his definition on how people experience the ritual of social drama that is provided at a significant social function (Bigger, 2009:209). As well as the ‘betwixt-and-between,’ which he described as a state of being in between the normal day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, conserving law and order, and enrolling structural status (Turner, 1979:465). The clock does not control the liminal; instead, it is a time when something might happen in a time of captivation. There is an element of experimentation and play to it, for example, the play of ideas, words, symbols, and metaphors. It is not limited to ritual and performative art but can be found in many things, including academic work, like scientific

hypotheses and experiments (Turner, 1979:465-466). Liminality has also been applied in research on temporary event spaces, expatriates, and nightlife tourists. John (2001:51) notes that temporary spaces like those used for festivals are liminal realms as they incite the recreation of alternative identities that affect orderings. Schlieuwe and Tutenges (2021) look into how people change when they are abroad in distant places among foreign people. This can often be seen when Danish youths travel to Sunny Beach, where the quote “What happens in Sunny Beach stays in Sunny Beach” can often be heard. The same can be said about those who go to American resorts for spring break, where students take part in more sexual activity during their break than in the months leading up to it. Experiences of liminality like these can be found all over the world, where nightlife tourism is high (Schlieuwe & Tutenges, 2021:1-2). It can therefore be applied to festivals. The same attitude as the Danish youth is often utilized at festivals, as per the ‘YOLO’ motto mentioned above. In the cases of the Icelandic festivals, Þjóðhátíð and Eistanflug, the attendees are not really among foreign people as almost all of the attendees are Icelandic. However, since people escape their everyday social norms at festivals and become a different version of themselves, liminality can be applied to this case.

### 3.3 Collective effervescence

In his book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious life*, Émile Durkheim presents the concept of collective effervescence as something that emerges during “revolutionary or creative epochs.” (Durkheim, 1995:213). When people experience effervescence, they are more stimulated, more intense, and feel more intimately connected than in everyday life. Not only do people experience change, but they become something other, stirred with a fierce passion that can only be satisfied by “[...] violent and extreme acts: by acts of superhuman heroism or bloody barbarism.” (Durkheim, 1995:213). Sometimes it might be expressed as a rigid morality that becomes very strict and planned out. At other times it can be the complete opposite, where it embraces sensitivity and the collective emotions depend on the group that it structures (Maffesoli, 1991:7). In a festival setting, this can be explained in relation to musical acts, where musicians perform for a crowd. They put on their public persona as they perform, and together with the crowd, they generate effervescence as everyone participates in the singing, dancing, and collective feeling.

What makes effervescence collective is that it is communally produced and experienced. It requires at least two individuals to be present but is usually experienced in larger crowds where the high level of excitement is collaboratively built-up (Wellman Jr., Corcoran & Stockly-

Meyerdirk, 2014:653, Tutenges, Sandberg & Pedersen, 2020:408-409). The crowd at a music festival can therefore experience collective effervescence. It can be explained as a euphoric state; when a famous musician plays their most known song, the collective effervescence heightens. Nevertheless, the general atmosphere of the festival can also produce collective effervescence. It can sometimes be heard that people are 'just glad to be here,' referring to the fact that the festival's atmosphere gives off a certain vibe that they identify with.

### 3.4 Sexually violent effervescence

Tutenges, Sandberg, and Pedersen (2020) introduced the concept of sexually violent effervescence in their article about sexual assault in the context of festive events. They mention a gap in the literature on sexual violence, namely in how victims experience and describe sexual assault and the encounters leading up to it. To respond to the gap, they analyzed precisely that in a festive setting. As a result of that study, they proposed the concept of sexually violent effervescence. It derives from Durkheim's collective effervescence but forms a dark sub-variant of it. There are three defining components of the concept;

“(1) it constitutes an altered state of consciousness in the sense that victims experience themselves, other people and their surroundings in an un-ordinary manner; (2) it involves a sense of losing control: victims get carried away and do things that they would not normally do, or they give in to the emotional flows of the situation; (3) finally, it emerges out of asymmetrical relations and involves negotiations over dominance, with one side feeling sexually exploited and abused.” (Tutenges et al., 2020:417).

During a sexual assault, victims often tend to lose touch with reality and who they usually are. They might also find themselves acting in strange ways that they afterward consider confusing, surprising, or morally wrong. The dissociation they experience may affect their self-defense, and they might opt for others to take control even if it goes against their instinct. Thus, the tendency to freeze, turn silent and block out everything during an assault (Tutenges et al., 2020:418). This thesis will not present data from victims of sexual violence; instead, the focus is set on the general festival attendees. Even though the main focus of sexually violent effervescence derives from the victims' point of view, it is still an essential concept to this thesis. Tutenges et al. (2020:418) mention that the feelings presented by the concept can

explain why only one of their interviewees reported their case to the police. Lack of experience with festive events and sexual interactions. As well as difficulty in fully recalling sexually violent interactions and coming to terms that the interaction constituted a crime also play a big part in it. The confusion and denial that victims feel and suffer plays a significant role in that only a few people report to the police.

### 3.5 Social network theory

The social network theory has been developed and adapted by many researchers in social sciences, but it emerged around 1960 and 1970 at Harvard's sociology department, where a group of scholars led by Harrison White focused their research on social network concepts and analytical techniques (Prell, 2012:19). It is essential to present festivals in the context of the theory as it is based on the assumption that there is a network between different actors in society, which form functional systems in the social space. The relationships help exchange ideas and information to cooperate creatively on a specific project (Wasserman & Faust, 1994:4-5). Traditional social science focuses on highlighting distinguishing characteristics. When looking at things from that point of view, only the best have and do the best. For example, a person's success is then explained as a function of their human capital and measured by their education, looks, social class, etcetera. The social network view considers outside sources and relationships that could both benefit and hinder their opportunities (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010:18). For festivals to exist, a network from different places in society needs to be able to cooperate (Cudny, 2016). For example, to prevent and adequately take care of sexual violence cases at festivals, there needs to be cooperation between organizers and police, medical staff, and those implementing preventive methods against sexual violence. Because regularities or patterns in interactions generate structure (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). If there is no cooperation, there is no structure, and attendees are likely to feel unsafe if they know that no measure is being taken to ensure their safety. According to the theory, there needs to be cooperation between people and networks; that is the core of prevention. That can establish some groundwork for the prevention of sexual violence at festivals.

The theories this thesis relies upon draw mainly from Durkheimian sociology and Durkheimian cultural criminology. Turner is very inspired by Durkheim, and he can be placed in the neo-Durkheimian tradition. That views religious thought and ritual as expressing and dramatizing the social relationship. The link between Turner and Durkheim has gone relatively unnoticed but Turners theories and central concepts, including liminality, are not borrowed directly from Durkheim but rather heavily inspired by his work (Olaveson, 2001:89-90). Bakhtin is not Durkheimian as such, but his work is very compatible with Durkheim's work on religion in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

## 4 Methods

In this chapter, I will describe and argue for the chosen methodological approaches presented in this paper. The methods were chosen by considering several aspects, such as practicality, viability, and ethics. Firstly, I will argue for why a case study was chosen as a research design for this paper. As it allows for a deep understanding of the case presented in the analysis. Secondly, I will introduce how the interviews were conducted and the data from them were collected. For the analysis of the interviews, I used thematic analysis as a support because it allows me to research interpretations.

### 4.1 Case study

I have chosen a case study for this thesis methodological approach and research design. A case study refers to “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units.” (Gerring, 2004:342). However, a case study can also include an examination of several cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018:189), as this thesis does. I rely upon two cases, one being Eistnaflug and the other Þjóðhátíð. The case study approach gives a deep understanding of specific phenomena and commonly concentrates on the “community’s approach to addressing a prevailing societal issue.” (Mabry, 2008:214). Gaining a deep understanding is not achieved easily, but by taking in the views, experiences, beliefs, and values of those who co-construct the phenomenon can be understood and the political and ideological context that sustains it. Personal experiences provide a building block for the knowledge base situated by each individual (Mabry, 2008:215-216).

As this study aims to deepen the understanding of people’s views on sexual violence that occurs in festive settings, interviews with persons that have gone to either Þjóðhátíð or Eistnaflug, two of the biggest festivals in Iceland, were conducted. The interviews aimed to gain a deep understanding of the experience and feelings that the interviewees have towards the phenomena. The two festivals were chosen as a setting so that the issue researched is within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007:73). Focusing on the two festivals and comparing them to each other and not disclosing a specific year to concentrate on makes this study an intrinsic case study. The focus is on the cases as they present an unusual and unique situation (Creswell, 2007:74). The temporary setting, the carnival, and liminal feelings presented at festivals make them both unique and unusual situations. Using a case study as a method encourages the researcher to be “alert to patterns of activities, and the variety of meanings participants ascribe

to their meaning.” (Mabry, 2008:217). This is done by conducting interviews and analyzing them using thematic analysis.

Some social scientists claim that other methods should be used instead of a case study as social science is about generalizing, which is not possible from a single case (Flyvbjerg, 2004:391). However, as argued above, it generates a more profound knowledge of the subject. Since the topic of sexual violence at festivals is a new research area in social sciences, it is essential to gather sufficient understanding about it.

## 4.2 Interviews

To answer the research questions proposed earlier in this paper, I found in-depth interviews the most suitable method. Because the purpose of this paper is to describe and explain festival attendee's feelings and lived experiences. I aimed to learn about their views on sexual violence that occurs around them when they attend festivals and their feelings towards the preventive methods and discussions conducted by the organizers of the festivals.

With the subject being very feminist, I chose to approach the data collection in a feminist manner. From 1970 to 1980, feminist researchers questioned whether quantitative research adequately captured women's experiences and everyday lives. To adequately research their lives, qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews were conducted (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008:328-329). With sexual violence being gendered violence, it is essential to have a feminist perspective while conducting the research. That resulted in in-depth interviews with eleven individuals from Iceland that have either gone to Þjóðhátíð or Eistnaflug. The participants were between the ages of 23 and 39. Nine of them identify as women and two as men. Six of the participants had attended Þjóðhátíð, four had attended Eistnaflug, and one participant had attended both festivals. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to two hours and were all conducted and recorded over Zoom. All the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Icelandic and quotes used in this thesis were translated into English. I relied on a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 1), but let the interviewees take control over the topics being discussed. For that reason, I did not rely much on the interview guide but rather let the conversation flow and go in the direction the interviewees wanted to. However, it was done within certain boundaries. I relied upon the guide if the conversation had gone into something irrelevant to the topic or if the interviewees had no more to say and needed guidance on the following subject of discussion.



During some of the interviews, interviewees felt the need to vent as they had not gotten the opportunity to express their feelings on the topic as much as they would have liked to. Most of them had strong feelings toward the topic, and at some points, all I did was listen to what they had to say without questions or interruptions. As I had disclosed both in the advertisement on Facebook and at the beginning of every interview that the interview concerned sexual violence at festivals, most of the discussion revolved around that. However, many interviewees directed the conversation toward general sexual education to prevent sexual violence, a topic that I had not set out to discuss in the beginning. As that became a frequent topic of discussion, I decided to include that in the last section, 5.3, of the results. The most significant part of almost every interview regarded the case of Henrik and other deviant musicians. Some interviewees were hesitant at first to mention the topic, but everyone got to express their opinion freely.

I acknowledge Steinar Kvale's (2007:1) usage of interviews as a tool to learn about people's experiences, feelings, and hopes of the world that they live in. Along with Lamont and Swindler's (2014:157) aim to not only collect data on "[...] behavior but also representation, classification systems, boundary work, identity, imagined realities and cultural ideals, as well as emotional states." Additionally, I acknowledge Doucet's and Mauthner's (2008:328) point on feminist research not only being "*on* women but *for* women" and being concerned with broader social change and justice issues. To follow those requirements, participants had to have gone to either festival and experienced the culture and space there. There was no requirement for participants to have any experience with sexual violence. To recruit participants, I posted on my personal Facebook page and in two Facebook groups an advertisement searching for people to participate in an interview that regarded sexual violence at festivals. I made it clear that the only requirement was to have attended either Eistnaflug or Þjóðhátíð. The Facebook groups that I posted in were not connected to the festivals but instead contained people of all ages, genders, and from all over Iceland. Thus, making my sample as diverse as possible.

#### 4.3 Data collection

As mentioned above, all participants answered the Facebook post, so they were already aware of what the research was about. At the beginning of the interviews, I emphasized what the research was about and disclosed that they did not have to talk about anything they felt uncomfortable with or their own first-hand experience if they had any. The aim was to understand how festival attendees experienced festivals, and how they interpret sexual violence and preventive methods that occur at festivals. The interviewees were also made aware that

they could withdraw from the research at any given point without disclosure. During the interviews, the participants were given plenty of space to formulate their thoughts and give their answers. As Kvale (2007:63) notes it is important for interviewers to listen actively and hear what is said and how it is said. Interviewees were thus given the opportunity to talk about anything that they felt was related to the topic of festivals and sexual violence. That resulted in fruitful interactions and I was able to ask them if they wanted to go into detail about certain topics that caught my interest.

#### 4.4 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from the interviews. Thematic analysis refers to “[...] a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set.” (Braun & Clarke, 2012:57). It is considered the most appropriate method to research using interpretations. As it offers a systematic element to data analysis. It also allows me to affiliate the analysis with a frequency of a theme in regard to the whole content, offer accuracy and enhance the whole meaning of the research (Alhojailan, 2012:40). As the interpreter of the data, I am aware that I select which stories are presented and analyzed.

The analysis began immediately after the last interview had been conducted and was done in several steps using thematic analysis tools (See, for example, Alhojailan, 2012). I started by transcribing every interview in Icelandic before reading them carefully and several times to get an overall picture of the data set. While re-reading them, a pattern appeared between the interviews and the codes presented themselves. Three significant codes appeared right away, and they were highlighted within each interview using a different color for each code. These codes were different experiences of women (subsection 5.1.2), Deviant musicians (subsection 5.2.1), and preventive methods (chapter 5.3). After reading through the interviews again, after establishing the first three codes, the rest of the codes presented in the results appeared. They were also highlighted with their given color to distinguish them from each other. When no more codes presented themselves, the existing ones were put into themes that correspond to the research questions, and they are presented in chapters 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 of the results. The first theme and analysis focused on what it is that characterizes festivals. The codes focus on what the interviewees felt what characterized the festivals that they had gone to. The primary focus is on festivals themselves and the secondary focus is on what interviewees interpreted as characteristics of sexual violence at festivals. The result of this analysis is presented in chapter

5.1 of this paper. The second theme and analysis focused on what interviewees felt motivates sexual violence at festivals. Several themes presented themselves within this code and the results of that analysis are presented in chapter 5.2 of this paper. The third theme and analysis focused on what preventive methods have been taken at festivals and what interviewees felt could be done to prevent sexual violence in the future. The result of this analysis is presented in chapter 5.3 of this paper.

#### 4.5 Limitations

With sexual violence being a very gendered subject, I was also aware that it was essential to have the perspectives of both men and women to gain a more profound knowledge of the subject (While I acknowledge that there are more genders than two, for the sake of this research I only refer to men and women as not to complicate the analysis overly). However, because my sample is only a small percentage of those who attend the festivals, I find it necessary to note that generalizing the data needs to be done carefully. As Lamont and Swidler (2014:162) mention, interviews can lead to methodological individualism when it comes to analysis. The explanans is an individual attribute as opposed to field-level or relational explanations. The results presented in this paper do not represent all festivals but give a great picture of Icelandic festivals.

Another sampling limitation is that the advertisement noted that interviews would be done over Zoom, which might repel someone from participating. However, conducting the interviews over Zoom allows talking to participants while in their homes. Which is generally considered a safe space, and they could therefore relax and feel comfortable sharing their stories (See Weller, 2017). Lastly, the interviewees come from different backgrounds, and some were brought up or live in the areas that host the festivals. While conducting and analyzing the data, I knew that it could affect how they perceive the festivals.

#### 4.6 Positionality

Doucet and Mauthner (2008:333-334) write about how discussing power differences can make the researcher both an outsider and an insider. In a way, they can relate to participants and invest their identities in the research relationship but also in relation to the data they produce. I noted this as I am involved in the same society and culture as the participants, so I reflected from both the insider's and outsider's perspectives.

Firstly, I was brought up in Iceland and I am a part of the Icelandic culture and society which gives me an insider's perspective. I have also attended one of the festivals on multiple occasions, so I know what to expect when going there and hearing about it. I am also very aware of the discussion about sexual violence at these festivals as it has been an interesting discussion for many years. However, being an insider does not mean that mutual understanding or 'better' knowing is guaranteed (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008:334).

Secondly, previously I did not go to the festivals as a researcher with this topic in mind so there is no fieldwork included in the data collection. Therefore, I have solely relied upon the reflections of the participants in the interviews. I would however also like to note that this research topic sits very close to my heart as someone who was made aware of the inappropriate behavior of people in authoritative positions at the age of 14 and heard about it consistently ever since, as someone who has gone to one of the festivals several times and felt uncomfortable when certain people were performing, as someone that has been in uncomfortable situations at the festival but was fortunate enough to have friends with me that stood together, as someone who has heard about way too many cases of sexual violence from each of the festivals. With that being said, I have tried to set all of my own ideas and thoughts aside in the analysis of the data to secure objectivity.

#### 4.7 Ethics

According to Hammersley and Traianou (2012:16-17), ethics has two meanings. Firstly, it is concerned with investigating what is good or right and how it should be determined. This refers to what the researcher should and should not do. Secondly, it is a set of principles that exemplifies what is good or right and how bad and wrong can be identified. It concerns the ethical codes held by the researcher.

Regarding their definition and the fact that sexual violence is a very delicate subject, both the search for participants and interviewing were done with that in mind. The first ethical concern I came across was regarding the text posted on Facebook in search of interviewees. My main concern was that people would be skeptical about participating because the text mentioned that the research was towards sexual violence. It concerned two very well-known and loved music festivals. However, since the me-too wave in 2021, the discussion of sexual violence at festivals has been open and honest. This thesis does not aim to harm anyone but to bring forward an honest and transparent analysis of the cases of the festivals.

Before conducting the interviews, I reflected on what was necessary to ask and what was not regarding sexual violence. As it is a susceptible subject, I made sure to evaluate each interview as it went on and let interviewees control the conversation within certain limits (to stay on topic). Instead of steering the conversation and pushing them to discuss something they did not feel comfortable talking about. I tried to stay neutral and not say or do anything that might seem judgmental or disrespectful. It is vital to downplay my point of view and personal conviction to stay as objective as possible (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:47). Some participants reached out to me through private messages with stories regarding their experience with sexual violence at festivals. That was taken into account when I interviewed them, and I made sure beforehand that they felt comfortable with sharing their stories and them appearing in this paper. I also made sure to meet the participants at an equal level so as not to create any power imbalance.

At the start of every interview, all participants were made aware that they did not have to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with. They could quit or draw their answers back whenever they wanted, and they could answer the questions as detailed as they saw fit. This was important to me as I know how sensitive the topic is and how it can get hard to recall traumatic events. Interviewees, along with any other person mentioned in the analysis, have all been given pseudonyms to hide their identities. All personal information that can be tracked to them has been taken out of the analysis and the interviewees were all made aware that nothing they said could be traced back to them.

Lastly, It has to be considered that neither festival has been held in the last two years (2020 and 2021) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. That can have an effect on memories and recollections of events as they happened years ago. Some feelings might also have changed towards events or people from when they occurred. It is not uncommon for people to reevaluate their feelings and conciliate after some time has passed. In regard to that, there has also been a significant change in awareness against sexual violence over the last two years in Iceland. This increase in awareness has led, musicians who have been accused of sexual violence to be canceled from events, such as festivals. With this being the reason why I wanted to do this study I had to be aware to not have this affect the interviews and the analysis.

## 5 Results

The results consist of three sections. The first section shows the main characteristics of festivals and sexual violence. The second section shows how festival attendees explain the sexual violence that occurs at festivals. Lastly, the third section shows what preventive methods the attendees have noticed and what kind of prevention they think would work.

### 5.1 What characterizes music festivals and sexual violence there

The interviewees reflected on their experience and what they felt were the most prominent features of the festivals. The most common things are presented in this subsection as the characteristics of both festivals and sexual violence.

#### 5.1.1 Sexual atmosphere

“There are definitely some people that just go there to fuck.” (Petra)

“I once walked through the family camping area, and there were people just doing it in their caravan in the middle of the night.” (Mikaela)

The above quotes describe the sexualized atmosphere that can often be felt at festivals. It is one of the things that characterizes them. Petra describes how the sexual atmosphere is expected, even before arriving at the festival grounds. In comparison, Mikaela describes how it can be found everywhere, even outside the central festival location in a camping area intended for families. Both quotes capture a quintessential part of the carnival, an escape from everyday norms. Having sex where anyone can hear is not considered a regular thing in everyday life. However, as people enter the carnival and experience the liminality, it becomes less of a problem. As Bakhtin (1984) noted, people become a version of themselves that represents a higher self, where they turn into another persona and become more playful and carefree. The YOLO attitude (Fjær & Tutenges, 2017) also becomes a forefront where they do not care what happens to them as long as it is fun. It can be sensed that people become more carefree when entering the carnival, and together with the liminal, they drift further away from their norms and become another version of themselves.

The dark side of the sexualized atmosphere is when it turns into sexual violence. When people become so wrapped up in the carnival and liminal energy, they might start committing crimes like sexually assaulting others. The energy becomes too high, and there is a need to let go or blow off steam (Presdee, 2000; Wellman et al., 2014). The respect for the other person becomes secondary, boundaries become unnoticeable, and there is no respect for consent. As Baille et al. (2021) point out, festivals are increasingly recognized as spaces where sexual violence occurs. The discussion of sexual violence even starts outside the festival. Tessa said with a defeated tone, “I feel like the discussion starts at the beginning of July, and it’s just like, now it’s July, now the raping starts.” Her demeanor suggests that she is tired of it being so strongly associated with festivals and that the discussion needs to be all year round not only centralized around festival seasons. Others also mentioned that they felt the discussion of sexual violence increased during the summer months when most festivals are held.

#### 5.1.2 Dress codes

Another distinctive feature of festivals is dress codes. As Wadds et al. (2021) mention, it is another way to break away from everyday norms. At festivals like those studied in their research, young girls often dress in a fantastical way by wearing limited and revealing clothing items. The way they (and many others at festivals) dress is a way of expression to get further away from everyday norms and into the liminal mindset. The clothing fits the festival setting but might be considered atypical in another setting. In the cases of the Icelandic festivals, the dress codes differ from the Australian ones, mainly due to the colder weather. At Þjóðhátíð, it is very typical for people to wear neon orange or yellow overalls made out of waterproof, rubber-like material and either a knitted wool sweater or a hoodie. The hoodies are often worn by friend groups that had them labeled with each individual's name and the name they had given their group on the back. This has been known as ‘the outfit of Þjóðhátíð’ for many years. The dress code is slightly changing with the arrival of social media. Tessa refers to how it is like walking into a 66°north store (a popular Icelandic outdoor brand), and people prioritize posting pictures of their outfits on social media. Before, people switched out their phones for old ones and wore old worn-out shoes. She says, “It used to be more like we had the mindset of just living with the dirt and the rain, but now it’s more like a fashion show.” At Eistnaflug, the most distinctive feature of the dress code is corpse paint. Marta explains that people can get it done at the festival, where people's faces are painted with white and black paint to make

them look inhumane. She then explains that people do not necessarily wash it off during the whole weekend, “It just runs down your face, and people are just grubby.” A particular dedication can be sensed by sticking to these dress codes. They do not typically fit into people's lives regularly, but it shows how important they are in festive settings by how committed people are.

Revealing clothing has often been made as an excuse for sexually assaulting someone, where women are told that they ‘were asking for it’ by wearing certain clothing items. However, stereotypically at both Þjóðhátíð and Eistnaflug, the clothing is not revealing, as mentioned above. Michelle noted the following: “This argument is invalid, and I don’t think it is a fact that the clothes matter. It’s just men excusing themselves.” She then mentions that people wear the yellow and orange overalls, which are usually oversized and not form-fitting, with a thick wool sweater. Therefore, not the typical carnivalesque clothing that can be seen, for example, at other festivals in a warmer climate. Even though clothing is a significant characteristic of festivals, it is not why sexual violence occurs at those events. There are cases of sexual violence regardless of revealing clothing.

Within the carnival, the body is celebrated. However, it is primarily the grotesque side, and in a way that is unusual in everyday life. The fantastical way of dressing is an expression where women can celebrate their bodies, something that might not be typical or their norm.

The overalls are associated strongly in Icelandic society with festivals, even though they are manufactured for sailors. They can be seen as sort of a statement to the weather, in a way that they are durable and can take on anything. People can let loose and sit on the dirty ground, spill on themselves and be carefree wearing them without ruining them. They are also a way to fit into the festival setting; people go into their carnival persona by putting them on. As Presdee (2000) mentions, the body is a stage that can be claimed back from those who want to control it or imprison it. People express their carnival persona by dressing in something considered inappropriate in everyday life and break out of the norm. It is a stark contrast to, for example, office attire. Other ways people typically express themselves at Þjóðhátíð and Eistnaflug are the hoodies, expensive outdoor clothing, the corpse paint, and heavy metal attire.

### 5.1.3 Economic value

Those interviewed that had gone to either festival multiple times over a long time mentioned that the festivals had changed from what they used to be. They have become more commercial, and the nostalgia is not present anymore. Sofia said that before, Eistnaflug used to be “[...] like



a good party, but now that it has become bigger, they have managed to kill it with commercialism. Before, it felt like the bands from the scene came together to throw a good party; now, it is something else.” Lindsey told a similar story about Þjóðhátíð but emphasized that she did not even want to attend the festival for some years. With her being from Vestmannaeyjar, her feelings toward the place itself were strong;

“[...] I felt that everybody was damaging the island. The valley and the hill are disgusting, and there is so much trash after each festival. People are ruining my hometown for a party that lasts a weekend. There are people that live here, and we are the ones that clean up afterward.”

This results from the economic values deriving from the cultural values (Cudny, 2016) and how the focus is on the easily consumable fun (Fjær & Tutenges, 2014). The culture and setting have been sacrificed for economic reasons by disturbing nature and expanding the festivals. However, both Sofia and Lindsey, among other interviewees, spoke about the positive aspects of the festivals and that the general experience was great. People travel long ways to go to either festival. Like Tessa said, “People put in so much effort to go there; it isn't like going downtown. Therefore, everyone wants to have fun.” The interviewee’s general impression was that the atmosphere is primarily positive, and that people care for each other. If something were to come up, someone would usually speak up and mitigate the situation, “[...] especially when people have started to drink; then they are even more ready to step in. Usually in a positive way.” says Lindsey.

#### 5.1.4 Drinking culture

Drinking is also a big part of the culture and in experiencing the carnival. It can encourage the YOLO attitude (Fjær & Tutenges, 2017) and boost people's confidence to do things they would otherwise not do. Interviewees described being aware of but also participating in excessive drinking, and some described use of drugs. Lindsey said, “When I was a teenager, and I did not drink, I couldn't even see the purpose of going to Þjóðhátíð.” She emphasizes how big of a deal drinking is within festivals. Michelle referred to her experience as involving an intense amount of alcohol and “What happens at Þjóðhátíð stays at Þjóðhátíð,” describing the same mentality as the Danish youth at Sunny beach (Schlieve & Tutenges, 2021). While within the liminal stage, questionable things can occur as the everyday norms shift. Michelle explains how she

perceives festivals, “You are more of a hero if you do something crazy. Like, when someone ends up going to the ‘death’ container, they are the shit.” The ‘death’ container she mentions is a container at Þjóðhátíð that people get put into by security if they are too drunk so that they can safely sleep off their intoxication. The container's name comes from people passing out from intoxication; Icelandic uses the term dying instead of passing out, hence the name's morbidity. However, there is a certain whimsicality towards the container, as Michelle mentions that people get praised if they get thrown in there. People are then considered to have gone all out, taken advantage of the festival, and sacrificed themselves for it. A promotional video on YouTube for the festival makes it a joke and notes that it is the cheapest accommodation in town. Festival attendees and organizers fully embrace both the carnival and liminality and the drinking that comes along with it. Sofia mentions how one musician who has become a regular performer once said, “If you remember Eistnaflug, you were not there.” While alcohol has been used as an excuse in the same way that clothing has been used against women, there is nothing that suggests that it causes sexual assault; it can, however, encourage wild behavior.

#### 5.1.5 Different experiences of men and women

Another distinctive characteristic detected throughout the interviews was how different men and women experience festivals. Atle recalled a story about him and his friends. They went to Þjóðhátíð one year without almost any supplies, planning to stay the weekend. They were there to party hard, so they pulled an all-nighter that ended with them crashing at an acquaintance's party. He then said;

“I don't know if I would have passed out without my friends. I knew the people at the place we were. But if I had been alone, I don't think I would have been sexually violated. Maybe my phone and wallet would be stolen or something.”

The remarks from Atle are in contrast to what some of the women described as their experience, where they mention that it is essential to stay hyper-focused at all times, never to be alone, and be generally careful. There was a general fear that could be heard from most of the women interviewed of being sexually assaulted. Tessa notes, “[...] You never know who is in the tent next to you.” She then describes her feelings of being scared of sleeping in a tent because anyone would be able to come in. Petra points out that going to a festival with friends is

generally “awesome” and “the spirits are high” but also that whenever she goes, “[she makes] sure not to drink too much and that everything is under control.” Lindsey tells a similar story of Þjóðhátíð but also mentions that she used to go to the festival as a child and that she feels that things have changed.

“You always have to be careful now. It wasn't like that when I was little, or I didn't feel like it was. We were told not to be alone and stay with friends. But it was about the typical bad things that you think about, such as someone might follow you to the toilet or trap you at the toilet.”

Wadds et al. (2021) mention that nightlife in cities used to be a space where people let loose of transgression. However, people have sought out other spaces, like festivals, because of added costs and regulations. In addition to that, Atle notes that things have changed. Boundaries have become more apparent, and things that were once considered okay are not today. There is more discussion about sexual violence than before, and the definition is more precise and accessible. If that is considered, it is not necessarily that sexual violence has increased or changed. People's views and tolerance have changed, making it seem like there are more violations than what they used to be.

To summarize this chapter, the core characteristics of festivals described in this chapter are the sexually charged atmosphere within the carnival setting, the tension that follows it, and the liminality, which turns into sexual violence. Women and men do not experience the festival and liminality the same, as women have more fear of something happening to them. In contrast, men are not typically worried in the same way about sexual violence. Dress codes and fashion plays a big part in today's festivals. It is considered self-expression but can be used against women objectively as it has for years throughout cultures and societies. Festivals have grown in recent years, they have become commercial, and their economic value has increased. They have also become a venue for easily consumable fun and where people engage in playful deviance. Lastly, drinking is a big part of festivals where people can express their YOLO attitudes more transgressively than in everyday life.

## 5.2 How do festival attendees explain sexual violence at festivals?

The interviewees reflected their views on what it is within festivals that motivates sexual violence. This chapter has been divided into subchapters that reflect the most common themes mentioned by the interviewers.

### 5.2.1 Deviant musicians

The wave of the me-too movement that overtook Icelandic society in early 2021 impacted the music industry, and people started to consume music differently. It became apparent that violent behavior of any kind, not just sexual violence, was not tolerated anymore. Victims started to speak up about what happened to them so that others would know what kind of people the perpetrators were and as a protest against the lack of action by the judiciary system. Alternative methods in their healing process were taken, such as telling their stories and returning the guilt to their perpetrators (see Antonsdóttir, 2018). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, neither festival has been held since the wave began in Iceland. So, there is no evidence to show what has changed or how it has changed in those festive settings. Some of the interviewees spoke on the matter and their future actions. Michelle said;

“We knew about Henrik when I was in high school, but the newest wave did not happen until now. If he were to play again, I would not go, and if there are artists like him playing this summer, I will not support the festival.”

One of the more significant cases to come up during the me too wave was the case of Henrik (He has been given a pseudonym to hide his identity), a musician who has performed at one of the festivals for the past years. He has been accused by several women of inappropriate behavior and sexual assault but has never been convicted. However, stories about his alleged behavior have circulated in Iceland for many years. Sofia also mentioned that she would not attend a festival if the organizers knowingly booked an artist accused of sexual violence. Atle explained that if he were an organizer, he would not book someone accused of sexual violence, but he would not go out and protest if someone else booked them. Other comments had a similar tone, which shows that the tolerance against protecting perpetrators has lowered to some degree. It shows that the interviewees are willing to boycott festivals even though they had not done so in the past, knowing the same things as they know now. As Michelle noted, the most

significant difference is that “there were so many whispers about Henrik, but there was a bomb when people started telling their stories on the news and suchlike.” Even though the interviewees expressed their opinions in general about how musicians should not be booked at large events like festivals if they had been accused of sexual violence, the most significant concerns were regarding Henrik, Tessa said;

“I find it odd that he was able to play for so long. When I was 16-17, everybody knew that he was sleeping with young girls and probably using his position of power to sleep with underage girls.”

The other interviewees that had attended Þjóðhátíð had a similar reaction when mentioning Henrik or were asked about their opinion on him playing at the festival. Mikaela describes it as follows, “I get a weird vibe from him. He can get the people singing, but what are they supposed to do? Should they not sing.” Her quote reflects how people follow the ritual protocol at singalong events and how they are caught up in the collective effervescence of the moment. It also shows how deeply rooted Henrik’s performance is in the culture as he overtook a segment with a long history at the festival. Presdee (2000) mentions that former orders and norms appear irrational during the carnival, and the body's pleasures take over the rational. When charismatic leaders, like musicians, have an impressive frontstage charisma in front of the audience, the audience gets swept off its feet. They do not only provide entertaining moments, but the crowd will follow them anywhere. However, having frontstage charisma does not equal that the person is charismatic in informal situations of everyday life (Collins, 2020:276-277). When musicians who have allegedly been accused of sexual violence and show examples of abusive behavior get to perform at large events, like festivals, it might inspire others to participate in such behaviors. As Michelle noted about musicians that have allegations and alleged allegations against them;

“I feel like they should not get a platform. I don't understand how Bryce (a pseudonym given to an entertainer) is always allowed back at Þjóðhátíð. He might be a symbol in the eyes of young guys, but the way he speaks is sexist. He has been acquitted of rape, but we all know how shitty the justice system is. I believe the girl that accused him, and I feel like that case should have been enough for him to step aside.”

Bryce is not charismatic in the eyes of Michelle as she views his behavior to be inappropriate in informal situations; however, as she mentions, he is a symbol in the eyes of young guys. They are the ones who look up to him and mimic his behavior as they find him to be a charismatic leader. As long as the movement of enthusiastic followers grows, it gives the leader the confidence of success (Collins, 2020:280). Provided that the musicians have a following, they will be able to play at the festivals, and their violent behavior gets more normalized by their followers.

### 5.2.2 Safety conditions

When it came to safety measures and security, the organization and organizers were a focal point. It was mentioned that the lack of security outside the music venues, where people were not as noticeable and more vulnerable, was a factor in feelings of insecurity. Several issues were raised about the lack of security concerning sexual violence. Lindsey described how she learned from her parents, who live in Vestmannaeyjar, about bottomless tents and how their task as part of the security team one year was to lift the tents at the camping sites to make sure there was a bottom attached. The bottomless tents became a known phenomenon some years ago as a tool to make raping 'easier.' The bottom was cut out of the tents so they could be placed over a person who was typically passed out due to substance use. She added, "That's when I knew how ugly things had gotten. [...] After that, I realized how bad people can be and that they utilize the situation at festivals. It's premeditated, and it's not spontaneity. They are there to rape someone." Atle also mentioned the bottomless tents but said he had heard about them as a joke rather than factual truth. Narratives might not always be factually true, and imaginative small talk may be rich in existential truth but lacks factual truth. It corresponds to the realities of a person's feelings (Tutenges, 2019). The feelings surrounding the narrative of the bottomless tents reflect the fear of sexual violence even though it might only be a rumor. Even though some narratives might lack factual truth, interviewees claimed that the organizers needed a clearer vision and position against sexual violence. Tessa mentioned the matter in line with The Pink Elephant:

"The Pink Elephant comes across like they are trying to show off, and when someone is on stage and mentions it, they say they don't want any pink elephants in the room. Why can't they say that sexual violence is not okay? I feel like they are sugarcoating it. You think of the cute pink logo and not how serious this matter is. It is also often just

mentioned when they talk about where you can buy the merchandise. I think many people have dissociated it with reality, it's just a fashion statement right now.”

In addition, interviewees also stated a lack of support if a person were to report sexual violence. Marta noted that she would be scared to report anything because she felt there would be no support from the festival. This is a concerning matter in that having little to no support decreases the risk of perpetrators getting caught and can, therefore, increase the likelihood of sexual violence. Commercialism has become a driving force for the organizers as festivals gain more popularity, and more people attend them. It is an economic decision to sell merchandise and connect it to a highly relevant matter in popular culture and festival culture. As Cudny (2016) mentions, the economic value of festivals is a driving force. Therefore, it is economically beneficial for the festivals to focus on the market value of the problem rather than the necessary help people need when faced with sexual violence.

It has become known that the organizers of Eistnaflug made up the quote, “Being an idiot is forbidden.” It was made up to fight against bullshit (Eistnaflug.is, n.d.), including sexual violence. In addition to the quote above, a former organizer repeatedly said that if someone were to report sexual violence at Eistnaflug to the police, the festival would be canceled. He also noted that this statement was not meant to silence victims (DV.is, 2016). Paula talked about her thoughts on the matter, stating the following:

“I don't like it [the quote]; it contains so much victim-blaming. We, of course, know that the responsibility lies with the perpetrator but in a society where victim-blaming is as much as it is, where does it really lie if you as a victim are going to report, and the whole festival is shut down? Then some perpetrator says; yeah, no, it's just my word against your word. You just live in fear of knowing that people might not believe you, and added to that the fear of the festival never being held ever again.”

Sofia had a similar point of view and said:

“Violence is extremely hidden due to the ‘idiot’ statement. What was a beautiful idea, in the beginning, has led to silencing. I know about so many cases of sexual violence. If they were to go by their policy to cancel the festival if something came up, it would have been canceled long ago.”

Sofia also stated that she had an argument on Facebook with one of the festival's organizers. It was regarding a case where someone had been drugged, and she posed a question to them, asking what they were going to do about it. The response she got from them was arrogant and not in line with their 'it is forbidden to be an idiot' policy. If someone were to drug people, they would, according to Eistnaflug's rules, fall into the idiot category and go against what the festival stands for in these matters. Changes like straying away from the policy can thus be detected. Sofia says, "The guy who came up with the slogan used to go up on stage and remind people of it. Now it is something to sell; they sell merchandise with the slogan on it". As mentioned above, the economic outweighs the cultural values.

Speaking up against sexual violence became a noticeable and valuable thing when the first me-too wave went around Iceland and has been ever since. So, selling the idea of being actively against sexual violence, even if they are or are not, became an economic reason where they could sell merchandise. It is a satisfying service as it results in growth and the needs of today's economy are met. It would not economically benefit them if they were to follow what has been stated and cancel the festival indefinitely if someone were to report sexual assault to the police. However, Eistanflug is not responsible for financing Neskaupsstaður or its sports team like Þjóðhátíð. The local sports team in Vestmannaeyjar depends on the income from Þjóðhátíð each year. In 2020 and 2021, both festivals had to be canceled due to the covid-19 pandemic, and the sports team in Vestmannaeyjar suffered financially (Eiríksdóttir, 2021). It is therefore doubtful that the organizers of Þjóðhátíð would ever cancel the festival intentionally because of something like sexual violence. It is apparent when looking back at recent years, as there have been many reports of sexual violence after each year's festival, but also it would disfavor them greatly. The same can be said about Eistnaflug, as there have been several stories about sexual violence and assaults, like the drugging, at the festival, but it is still held today.

### 5.2.3 (Women) be careful

When asked if the women interviewed felt safe regarding sexual violence and assaults, almost all of them said they mostly felt safe but then elaborated that it was almost only because of the measures they had taken themselves. The measures most often mentioned were; always staying in a group and never going anywhere alone, not drinking too much and staying alert, staying in crowded places, and walking on the main streets to minimize the risk of being cornered. The men interviewed did not have any safety measures and had not experienced any lack of



secureness. This exemplifies how gendered sexual violence can be, and the power imbalance found in festival settings (Fileborn et al., 2020). Also mentioned by some was how they would have their eyes open to make sure that other women were also safe. Petra said;

“You are always watching out for everything, and I have stopped girls who seem too drunk and asked, Hey, where's your friend? Where's this and that? Should I call somebody? Can I get you home? [...] If there's something, you try to help.”

The example from Petra shows how deep-rooted gendered violence is in today's culture and how women's engagement in the carnival is limited because they need to watch out for themselves and feel the need to protect other women. According to Bakhtin's (1984) carnival theory, the danger of something criminal happening in a festival setting is even higher than in everyday life. As Durkheim (1995) notes, when people enter states of collective effervescence, like at festivals, they tend to engage in behaviors that they would normally not do, like transgressing rules, sometimes even transgressing rules that are laid down by law. Doing wrong then becomes a celebratory action. Festivals have the ideal conditions for committing a crime; “A lot goes on, it's hard to track down witnesses, it's mostly word against word, and witnesses are unreliable because people are so drunk,” as Michelle mentions. She goes on to blame the justice system for how things are, as it does not support victims enough, and men have gotten away with gendered violence for so long.

#### 5.2.4 Anger and aggression

Bakhtin (1984) mentions how the celebrations of the grotesque are generally harmless, but sometimes the atmosphere becomes transgressive, and it can turn violent. When describing the violence that the interviewees had either heard about or witnessed, anger and aggression were brought up multiple times. Many of them described how the anger was directed towards women and resulted in sexual assaults. However, the anger was often unrelated to the victim.

Even though the general experience of both festivals was positive, the interviewees did describe some instances of violence. Sofia talked about how the image of festivals can be deceiving by saying, “There is a certain image that Eistnaflug holds, that everyone is friends and that nothing bad has ever happened.” Physical violence was often mentioned as violence against men. Lucas described an incident where he laughed at someone that had fallen. The guy then threatened to punch him if he did not shut up. Michelle had a similar story of a friend where someone walked

up to him and punched him out of the blue. She proceeded to say that incidents like these could easily ruin the night for a whole group of friends. She had seen that happen before and found it to be common. Not only is alcohol a contributing role in aggression (Wells & Presser, 2002), but Marta mentioned that “people are more aggressive when they do coke. There was a lot of chaos and substance abuse the last time I went. I know some people who sell drugs, and I met them for a reason.” The transgressiveness of the liminal is released in these instances, which fuels the violence.

However, the aggression towards women was described as being of sexual nature most of the time. As Bakhtin (1984) notes on transgressional atmospheres, the body outgrows its limits, and sexual tension can become high when people experience liminality within the atmosphere. Presdee (2000) adds that the body’s pleasure is in the foreground at the carnival. When people can not let go of the tension or release the body’s pleasure in a civilized way, they can do it violently. Alcohol plays a part in the pleasure of festivals and the carnival. Wadds et al. (2016:14) note that the temporary structure of festivals invites determined intoxication where people challenge their everyday social roles and are pushed aside to pursue pleasure. The fact that advertisements for festivals are ingrained with a promise of an overtly heterosexual atmosphere moves forward the narrative of the entitlement men can have at the expense of women. The heterosexual atmosphere intensifies gendered violence like sexual violence. Michelle acknowledged how the environment, atmosphere, and people create feelings of insecurity and how it is not only one thing that brings out that feeling. She also notes how drunk people create a more chaotic atmosphere that can result in even more fear. As Sofia notes on the alcohol consumption, “There are not that many people that go to a festival to stay sober. People start to do questionable things, and it progresses when it gets later in the evening. It’s a fucking dumb pissing match, and then they start fighting.” She also points out how “[now] there are more people that come only to party for three days, and not to listen to the music.” Whereas before, she experienced that more people went to the festival to listen to the music they loved rather than viewing it as a typical festival where the music does not play the central role, but the body’s pleasure does. Now the attendees, according to Sofia, search for liminality through the carnival rather than the music.

The aggression towards victims of sexual violence can also be damaging. The stand that the organizers of Eistnaflug took when saying that the festival would be canceled if sexual violence were reported to the police can build up aggression with attendees. They might become defensive if they were to become aware of sexual violence at the festival because that could

result in the festival never being held again. That point of view could be very damaging for the victim. During the act of the violence, they might experience sexually violent effervescence that can be underscored when considering the burden; if they were to report to the police, they are the reason the festival is canceled. It can also be damaging afterward. As Marta said, “I don't think you get much support if you were to report sexual violence to the police. I think I would at least not do it; I would be scared.” This can factor into the notion that victims are hesitant to report their perpetrators to the police.

In summarization of this chapter, different reasons for what festival attendees interpret as motivational factors of sexual violence have been laid out. Firstly, deviant musicians were presented. Their charismatic front-stage performance is why they can still stay relevant amongst festival attendees, but their inappropriate behavior in everyday life makes them deviant. Most of the interviewees did not belong to the group of fans that follow the musicians and thus have a critical opinion towards them. They expressed how someone that had been accused or allegedly accused of sexual violence should not have a platform to perform at a significant event like a festival. They also mentioned how their views towards deviant musicians had changed since the me too wave of 2021. Before, they had gone to festivals and not thought about if any of the performers had been accused or allegedly accused of sexual violence. However, most of them would boycott a festival today if they knew that someone with that kind of history was performing.

Secondly, safety conditions are a priority for every festival, and it should not be evaluated according to economic values as it is not just for show. It concerns the festival attendees and should be taken seriously. Some interviewees mentioned how bottomless tents were one phenomenon they had heard about. Nevertheless, some narratives may not be factually true; instead, they contain a fraction of the truth. However, the narrative of the tents grounds the fear that people have toward sexual violence. Interviewees also expressed how they do not experience support when it comes to reporting sexual violence; the statement from Eistnaflug encourages victim-blaming and pushes victims away from reporting to the police.

Thirdly, the women interviewed described how they feel primarily safe because they have made their own precautions and that they look out for other women. The men interviewed did not have the same experience as women regarding safety precautions, which elevates the fact that men and women do not experience the carnival or liminality the same. Women are also not given the space to react to assault and violence as they see fit, which bolsters victim-blaming.

Lastly, violence against men is mainly physical violence, whereas against women, it is mainly sexual violence. Alcohol plays a big part in the aggression that follows violence as it can fuel it even more if it is present. When the aggression is turned against victims of sexual violence, it can intensify the sexually violent effervescence and push victims even further away from reporting their perpetrators.

### 5.3 What preventive methods at festivals have festival attendees noticed, and what kind of prevention do they think would work?

Prevention of sexual violence at festivals has been proven difficult, and many methods have proven ineffective. Stand-alone campaigns rarely lead to long-term solutions but might increase awareness. However, it has proven to be more effective to mobilize multiple actors to implement efficient preventive methods (Tutenges, 2022). The social network theory notes that there needs to be cooperation between everyone involved at festivals to increase safety. Both those who organize it and attend it should have a say in how it should be done because if there is no cooperation, there is no structure (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Interviewees were asked about their opinions on preventive methods, and according to the social network theory, their views should be considered as festival attendees are a part of the cooperation.

When asked if the interviewees had any suggestions on preventing sexual violence at festivals, the most common answer was that sex education needed to be improved. In addition, interviewees also mentioned that the discussion about sex, boundaries, and consent needed a significant improvement in day-to-day life. Petra noted, “Recently, some awareness has been raised, and victim-blaming is decreasing. People are realizing that dress codes, and intoxication is no excuse. The root of the problem lies in the schools.” This emphasizes that sexual violence is a societal problem, not only a problem found in festive settings. Also mentioned was that boundaries are subjective, and the need for consent is vital. That part of a sexual experience should be emphasized more in the general discussion about sex.

While there is a need to eliminate sexual violence from society, a small step in that direction would be to start within certain aspects and settings, like festivals. Baille et al. (2021) mention that within festivals, some preventive methods have been taken in recent years by industry and

grassroots campaigns. Representatives from an association that provides counseling for victims of sexual violence attend Eistnaflug to provide help and support for those who need it. Paula notes that the representatives are visible at the festival and always willing to speak to people. They also wear vests to be easier to notice, and posters with information about them hang around the festival. A similar collaboration was once at Þjóðhátíð up until 2011. In early 2011 the chairman of the organizing committee made a comment stating that the association blew the problem of sexual violence at Þjóðhátíð out of proportion to make their work seem more necessary. They stated that the problem was not as significant as it was made out to be because the reports to the police were so few (see Garðarsson, 2011). However, the concept of sexually violent effervescence shows that victims often find it difficult to recall and describe what happened to them. They are often unsure whether what happened even constituted a crime. Sexually violent effervescence also shows that police reports are not an excellent source to indicate the amount of sexual violence since many people do not report their violence. As a result of the conflict, the association has not attended the festival since. A group on behalf of the festival and a grassroots organization that call themselves The Pink Elephant (Bleiki fíllinn) has, since 2012, taken over the preventive strategies. All of the interviewees that had attended Þjóðhátíð were aware of The Pink Elephant and what they stand for. Atle recalled that their campaign was intense the first year they were at the festival, and they were well promoted. Others mentioned that they have stayed visible in recent years but that their intentions are unclear. Lara, who went to Þjóðhátíð for the first time in 2017, was only aware that it had something to do with being against sexual violence but not the core value and that she saw quite a lot of people wear the captain's bands with the logo on them. The armbands are sold at the festival and are noticeable to show that sexual violence is not tolerated and let perpetrators know that bystanders are watching. Tessa talked about her view on the matter;

“The Pink Elephant comes across a little like a showoff, and when the organizers mention it on stage, they circle around it. They just talk about pink elephants; why can't they just say that sexual violence is forbidden? I feel like they are sugarcoating it. You start to think about the cute pink logo but not about the harsh reality of the matter, and it's often just mentioned in the same instant as when they mention where you can buy the merchandise. I think many people have disassociated it from reality, that it's just like a fashion statement instead of really standing against sexual violence.”

Even though Tessa mentions that the message of The Pink Elephant could be more transparent, their strategy involves bystander intervention. As Baillie et al. (2022) mentioned, bystander intervention refers to engaging individuals to intervene to help prevent sexual violence. That method has shown promise in combating the problem at festivals. Nevertheless, the message needs to be transparent to engage individuals. Even though it can positively develop preventive strategies, there can be a downside if clarity is lacking. As Paula notes;

“[...] I don't want to go to Þjóðhátíð because their stance against collaborating with an association that specializes in help for victims of sexual violence is ridiculous. It's important to have specialists that can help. For example, I would not want to go to the hospital, and I would not think to go there regarding every problem. I would never go to the hospital if I were harassed, but I would want to talk to some specialist. As a victim of sexual violence, I would also never go to the police; their processes aren't good.”

In the quote above, Paula emphasizes Baillie et al. (2022) and Wadds et al. (2021) point of how important it is to deepen the academic understanding of preventive work and evolve the work itself. However, both festivals have taken measures to prevent sexual violence and help if something arises. As Lindsey mentions, sexual violence is discussed by those who live in Vestmannaeyjar, and the hospital is ready if anything occurs. It can also be argued that the bystander intervention takes place at Eistnaflug. By promoting that, they do not tolerate anyone acting like an idiot. The festival's slogan is that it is forbidden to act like an idiot. However, the organizers involve the slogan in the festival itself by selling it as merchandise. Like with the pink elephant, most festival attendees are aware of both matters, which makes them either conscious or subconscious participants in the prevention of sexual violence. However, as mentioned above, its economic feature has had negative connotations. Some interviewees mentioned that the organizers only want to profit from sales and that the core value has been lost. As Cudny (2016) notes that festivals deal with symbolic goods and that economic value comes from cultural value. While the chosen methods can be seen as good, they need to be increased and more transparent so that attendees are entirely on board.

Some interviewees mentioned that to prevent sexual violence, security needs to be improved and increased. As opposed to bystander intervention, where the responsibility is on attendees. Because people want to be carefree and experience liminality, being constantly aware of if something criminal might happen around you can limit that experience. However, with increased security, it might take the weight off of some, especially regarding sexual violence.

However, added security might also increase the insecurity of others who are often profiled by authorities. Like Atle recalled, “[Authorities] probably searched me about twenty times over the weekend. We were just a group of dudes in baggy clothing.” While security and police are associated with authoritative actions that might be intimidating towards some, as Atle describes, an association that deals solely with sexual violence are not. As Paula noted above, having experts that deal theoretically and in practice with sexual violence prevention helps increase the security of that specific crime. As well as increasing the likelihood of people searching for help if they fall victim to sexual violence.

As shown above, women have more of a tendency to be alert toward their own safety and other women's safety. Even though preventive methods benefit everyone attending the festivals, it has a more significant benefit for women's safety. Petra notes, “You go there to have fun, and you are responsible for yourself. We know how society is, so we need to watch out for ourselves. It sucks, but society isn't better than that.” As the quote shows, when women have to stay alert and constantly be aware of themselves, it limits their involvement in the festival. They do not fully embrace the liminality as they can not let go of all of their norms. Because the norm for women when going out, outside of festive settings, is that they need to be careful. Women are often told to cover their drinks, not wear revealing clothing, and always be with friends. They are made responsible for not being assaulted, but they are also objectified and criticized for reacting in a specific way. Paula's story about a former friend of hers that assaulted her indicates the stereotypical way how cases like hers go. She describes the incident as follows:

“I was sexually assaulted by a former friend who is an idiot. He grabbed my breast, and I stopped him. Then he's like, “oh, yes, you have a boyfriend now.” Like that has anything to do with my breasts, but it was the only thing that stopped him. At first, I kind of regretted how I reacted because I felt that I was ruining the atmosphere, but it is ridiculous to think that way. But you cannot say anything as a woman without being called a bitch. I went against every norm, reacting the way I did. People around me were like, wow, Paula is angry.”

The reaction she gets from her perpetrator is insulting, but it also diminishes women's reality. This also emphasizes the point made at the beginning of this chapter about the need for sexual education. Paula describes another incident that emphasizes the need for experts that handle

cases of sexual violence. She notes that she stood in the back of the crowd, and a stranger came up to her. He immediately, without saying anything, puts his arms around her and tries to kiss her. She mentioned how unsafe she felt after that and how she thought that every man who came up to her for the rest of the festival would do something similar. She spent the whole festival standing in between her friends to feel secure and trick people into thinking that she was dating either one of them. This example also shows how women's responsibility is to make themselves feel safe instead of men owning up to what they do.

All of the shared experiences from the women interviewed to show how they cannot entirely lose themselves in the carnival and experience liminality. As soon as something happens, like someone acting differently or an assault, they get pulled back into their everyday character, which is a woman in a male-dominated society.

In summarizing this chapter, the interviewees expressed a few key elements they found would prevent sexual violence at festivals.

Firstly, there is a lack of sexual education in society. There is a need to improve the discussion about consent and boundaries. When it comes to festivals, the interviewees felt that the discussion by the organizers was sugar-coated and that it needed to go to the root of the problem. Instead of talking about idiots or pink elephants, the discussion needs to be about sexual violence.

Secondly, bystander intervention has been discreetly implemented at the festivals in the form of the idiot statement and The Pink Elephant. Associating the two elements so significantly with the festivals is a constant reminder of the topic. However, festival attendees are not entirely aware that it categorizes as a preventive method.

Lastly, women have not been able to entirely lose themselves in the liminality because they are constantly aware of the dangers around them. Not only do they try to avoid the danger themselves, but they are also likely to look out for other women.



## 6 Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the characteristics of festivals and sexual violence and how festival attendees perceive sexual violence and preventive methods. The findings based on eleven interviews show how gendered sexual violence is and how the setting of festivals emphasizes the inequality between men and women.

The sexual atmosphere that radiates in and around the festival is primarily heterosexual and specifically targets women. It is shown in several ways; for example, the fantastical way women dress has been used as an excuse as to why women get sexually assaulted. The excuse is not something that is limited to festivals. However, the fantastical dress code is very prominent at festivals—making it easier for perpetrators to use this excuse for why they sexually violate someone. However, as the results of this thesis show, the dress codes at both Eistnaflug and Þjóðhátíð differ from the fantastical way of dressing in warmer climates. It consists mainly of outerwear and overalls, which are not considered revealing or show much skin. As the weather is colder in Iceland, it has to be considered that it will likely rain during the festival. That shows that when the sexual atmosphere at festivals turns sexually violent, it is not because of what women wear, making the excuse invalid. Drinking culture has been used as an excuse similar to dress codes, with perpetrators blaming alcohol on the way they act. Alcohol can encourage wild behavior, especially within the liminal stage and when people have gotten away from their norms and everyday settings, where the consequences of their actions do not seem to be the same as they embrace the YOLO attitude. There is, however, nothing that suggests that alcohol causes sexual violence.

The sexual atmosphere constantly turning sexually violent has made women's experiences of festivals more limited than men's. The Women interviewed talked about being constantly alert to dangers around them. Therefore, they could not let themselves go entirely into the liminal stage and experience the carnival. They also expressed how they made their own precautions and that they tried to make sure other women around them were safe as well. The men interviewed did not express any concerns about their safety regarding sexual violence. As the carnival theory suggests, the likelihood of something criminal happening in a festival setting is higher than in everyday life. Therefore, it is vital to engage everyone in preventive methods rather than only being women's concern. The focus should be on eliminating the problem that sexual violence is instead of blaming the victims and putting all the responsibilities on to them.

According to the results, deviant musicians are one of the main characteristics of what upholds sexual violence at festivals. When the deviant musicians portray an impressive frontstage charisma, they still cater to some audience. As long as that is the case, the collective effervescence can take over, and their fans normalize their offstage behavior. Therefore upholding the culture of sexual violence. The culture festers at festivals because of the carnival and liminality and how far away the festive setting is from everyday norms. The rich drinking culture also magnifies the YOLO attitude and the distortion. By having deviant musicians perform at festivals, they act as poster children for upholding sexual violence as their fans normalize that kind of behavior. They get ‘inspired’ and act on their impulses when they listen to them perform. That is not to say that the deviant musicians are the reason why people sexually assault others at festivals; they are merely an inspiration, just as performers can inspire in positive ways.

Interviewees described how their views on deviant musicians had changed since the me too wave of 2021 in Iceland began. They had previously attended festivals where musicians and performers with sexual violence allegations against them were performing but immersed themselves in the carnival and took part in the collective effervescence. When this thesis was written, neither festival had been held since the me too wave due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviewees still expressed that some change would be made on their behalf regarding the views on deviant musicians playing at festivals. Most of them expressed that they would boycott the festivals if they were to perform. Before, there had not been as much thought put into this subject, but after victims started to step up in public and tell their stories of sexual violence, the views of many changed. It can be speculated that it might be because hearing or reading stories from a first-hand source humanized the victims more than they had before. Some interviewees knew victims that had been sexually assaulted at festivals but felt that the issue needed more attention after the me too wave. It showcases how it is essential to raise awareness of sensitive subjects.

Along with raising awareness, sexual education needs to be increased. The discussion of sexual violence, consent, and boundaries needs to be open to everyone all year round, not only during festival season. It can be considered that the silencing of sexual violence is why that type of culture is still as significant as it is at festivals. The subject is not as transparent as it could be, and neither is it discussed enough at the festivals. As described by the interviewees, the sugarcoating of the problem needs to stop, and the seriousness of the topic needs to be addressed. Preventive methods at festivals also need to be looked at closer, both in practice and in an academic way, as the subject of sexual violence has not been studied enough.

It is essential to look at sexual violence within different settings, as one size fits all does not apply in this case. The festival setting differs from the everyday setting that Bakhtin showcases in the carnival theory. As Turner explains through the concept of liminality, people do not act the same in that stage as they do outside of it. The studies that have looked into sexual violence at festivals have showcased that the methods used for prevention do not work as significantly as would be hoped for. Bystander intervention has shown some promise, but as mentioned above, most of the precautions have been made by women. There is a need to engage everyone within the action to make the experience of everyone equal.

Lastly, this thesis focuses primarily on sexual violence against women as the crime is significantly targeted more against women; however, I acknowledge that men can also be victims of sexual violence. In future studies, it is also essential to take other genders and trans people into the equation as not much is known about crimes against them in festive settings.

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## Appendix 1

Interview guide (translated from Icelandic to English).

- Which festival have you been to?
- When did you go?
- What is your age?
- Can you tell me about a good day at the festival?
- What about a bad day?
- What is your typical experience from the festival?
- What do you feel is the general discussion about the festival?
- How do you feel about that discussion?
- Can you tell me about your feelings towards the performers?
- Can you tell me how you see sexual violence play out at the festival?
- How is the security at the festival?
- How do you experience the environment?
- What do you feel is the reason for sexual violence at the festival?
- Is there anything you feel might help reduce and prevent sexual violence at the festival?