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Questioning the inclusivity of events: The queer perspective

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Abstract
Event programmes are typically designed with a target audience in mind, and such design can inherently signal inclusion or exclusion of marginalised segments. This is particularly the case for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) individuals, whose sexual and gender identities position them as an invisible minority on the periphery of society. Given the role of events in building community spirit, it is essential to ensure all members of a community feel able to participate in order to create a sense of belonging, fulfilling Sustainable Development Goals of inclusivity in community. Through the lens of Social Dominance Theory and in pursuit of equality for LGBTIQ+ communities, in-depth interviews were conducted with sexually diverse (queer) participants to explore their perceptions of inclusivity at community events. This study explored how elements of an event could serve to enhance or attenuate prejudice, and therefore influence the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ communities.

Keywords

Introduction

Social inclusivity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex people and other genders or sexualities (LGBTIQ+) is a complex issue. On one hand, improved societal attitudes in the Global North have allowed these communities to assert their identities; on the other hand, they remain largely invisible in the broader societal psyche (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). This is because much of the LGBTIQ+ communities, as a socially constructed distinction, cannot be identified by visual markers. Despite this invisibility, LGBTIQ+ people are still members of their broader community and should be welcomed as such. The importance of belonging, as an outcome of being included, has been well established in the literature. Belonging results in a stronger sense of collective purpose, and with it, the ability to access support required to improve one's wellbeing (Durkheim, 1951) and life satisfaction (Mackay, 2010). More recently, the notion of belonging has been explored as political discourse informed by hegemonic practices focusing on minority or displaced segments (Beekers & Schrijvers, 2020). Though belonging is linked to individual wellbeing (Hudson, 2015), such experiences are typically afforded to sections of the society that fit the norm, with those who depart being relegated to the fringe (Freeman, 2007). Accordingly, for LGBTIQ+ communities, feeling included in the societies they live is an important aspect of belonging.

Although the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do not explicitly discuss inclusivity within the context of LGBTIQ+ communities, they identify the importance of inclusivity to construct societies where all enjoy peace and prosperity (United Nations, 2020). Goals 5 and 10 set the challenge to reduce inequality experienced by minority groups and within countries, while Goal 16 promotes peaceful societies where people feel safe regardless of their differences. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015), fundamentally positions inclusion as a human right based on societal values such as diversity, equality, justice, rights and freedoms. Aligned to the aim of ensuring "no one is left behind" (United Nations, 2014, p. 9), these goals highlight the importance of inclusivity to the development of sustainable communities. It is here that community events can play a role, by creating an opportunity for the community to come together and consequently creating a sense of belonging and inclusion.

This study provides an in-depth examination of inclusivity at community events, especially through the eyes of LGBTIQ+ attendees. This topic is especially pertinent to contemporary events, as it relates not only to LGBTIQ+ communities but also other groups that have been traditionally marginalised. In doing so, we position this research under social sustainability, encouraging equality in the inclusion of those with different and alternative sexualities (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). By examining events as a means of leisure that can bring about social change (Mair & Reid, 2007), we deconstruct privilege within event spaces that favours heterosexual-cis-gendered individuals and identify how such environments can be made more inclusive.

Literature Review

Events have a range of impacts on the host community. Economically, they attract tourist income, stimulate the local economies and contribute to infrastructure development (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013). Socially, they help revitalise communities (Gibson & Connell, 2003) and build socio-cultural bonds among members of the community (Frost & Laing, 2015). Events can create a stronger sense of belonging as they bring people together to celebrate common themes and facilitate interaction between otherwise distinct, and potentially

distanced, groups (Walters & Jepson, 2019). Community events, in particular, facilitate a sense of collective identity, shared history and heritage, and are often tied to geographic locations (Finkel, 2010). They can raise civic consciousness, and enact greater socioemotional leadership. However, for these benefits to be realised, it is essential that all sections of the community are able and comfortable with participating in the event - particularly those traditionally marginalised and invisible (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2021). Kivel and Kleiber (2000) similarly note the full enjoyment of a leisure activity is impeded by an inability to be oneself. This, in turn, can lead to greater strain on the individual and poor health outcomes (Morandini et al., 2015). While research has considered the impacts of the event on the individual and the community, it has not adequately examined how events can be constructed to be inclusive. To understand the importance of inclusion in community events, this section will first define inclusion, highlighting its relevance to events, and then discuss Social Dominance Theory (SDT), which underpins this study.

Inclusion and events

Despite emergent forms of social inclusivity within tourism and events, various segments of society continue to be excluded or marginalised. Critical discourse in research is needed to further explore the benefits wrought by participation in broader society, especially in relation to the segments challenged by exclusion (Diekmann, McCabe & Ferreira, 2018).

In understanding inclusion, it is essential to explore this concept from both sides of the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy. Although exclusion is commonly regarded as the opposite of inclusion, the socioeconomic origins of exclusion refer to this term as an estrangement from society (Silver, 2007). Inclusion, on the other hand, speaks to integration and accessibility for all who are interested in participating. Active inclusion, among other factors, has increased participation rates among troubled youth, single parents, people with disabilities, unemployment and homelessness (Turner & Turner, 2013). Being included has been linked with an enhanced sense of well-being among disadvantaged and non-mainstream social groups – who are also often negatively impacted by capitalist ecosystems (McCabe & Johnson, 2013; Ram et al., 2019).

Community events are primarily organised experiences that reinforce individual and collective constructions of identity and meanings (Finkel, 2010). Such events serve a multitude of functions, including raising civic consciousness (Muir, 1997) and facilitating bonds that serve to create a sense of belonging through involvement with and participation in the event (Ekman, 1999). Consequently, community events can serve both as a reflection of societal attitudes and hierarchies, and as influencers thereof. To explore the role of events in this context and as possible tools of social justice, we employ SDT to evaluate events through the perspective of LGBTIQ+ communities.

Social Dominance Theory

SDT proposes that societies which produce economic surpluses are inherently structured as systems of group-based social hierarchies where there are dominant and subordinate groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Dominant groups define and maintain hegemonic practices while enjoying an unequal distribution of socio-economic benefits that is weighted in their favour, manifesting as social, cultural, and economic authority or power (Kattari, 2015). These

benefits motivate and enable dominant groups to behave in ways that are self-interested, supporting existing hierarchy while facilitating group-based oppression and discrimination (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2003; Sidanius et al., 2004; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). In doing so, SDT explains oppression and prejudice as the outcome of complex evolutionary, historic, institutional, cultural, and psycho-social forces, and advocates for a multi-level analysis approach to understanding such phenomena (Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006; Sidanius et al., 2004).

SDT has also been used to explore issues relating to sexuality. For instance, it has been applied to examine why heterosexual men are more prejudiced towards homosexual men (MacInnis & Hodson, 2015; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000), to understand the use of physical aggression (Dickins & Sergeant, 2008), prejudice in employment (Pichler, Varma & Bruce, 2010) and discrimination in sport (O'Brien, Shovelton & Latner, 2013), and to scrutinise support for social policies that restrict gay and lesbian individuals (Poteat & Mereish, 2012).

These studies demonstrate that a multi-level analysis framework, as provided by SDT, is particularly relevant for understanding attitudes towards homosexuality due to complex belief systems and institutions that have created "social pressure to hold the 'correct' beliefs" (Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000, p. 964). Importantly, O'Brien et al. (2013) note that subtle forms of prejudice towards homosexual people has replaced blatant discrimination and is more socially acceptable than racism or sexism. However, while SDT has been applied to explain prejudice, limited attention has focused on how it may be used to construct systems that challenge such prejudices. Through the context of community events, this study explores how practices within an event can enhance or attenuate social dominance, and consequently how events can be designed to be inclusive of sexually diverse individuals (defined as queer hereon). Accordingly, the components of SDT that are discussed in the following sections will provide the theoretical framework for this study.

Arbitrary systems

SDT argues that societies have a tri-morphic group structure based on binary gender, age, and arbitrary systems. This arbitrary system is formed on socially constructed divisions such as ethnicity, race, caste, social group, or other "distinctions that the human imagination is capable of constructing" (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 33) – including sexuality. The arbitrary system defines in-groups and out-groups, with out-groups regarded as threats to existing hierarchical structure, and therefore the focus of prejudice and brutality (Pratto et al., 2006). Out-group members are typically dehumanised by dominant groups as a means of maintaining the hierarchy (Sidanius et al., 2016). This process of dehumanising mentally distances the out-group and contributes to negative attitudes towards them (Trounson et al., 2015). This dehumanising is consistent with the othering experienced within the LGBTIQ+ context.

Through othering, labels have typically served to define queer people as an out-group, with the deviance associated with these tags being constructed as a threat to hegemonic values and norms (Rios, 2013). Bell and Valentine (2003) explain that the presence and acknowledgement of alternative sexualities within a society challenges and destabilises the structures of heteronormativity, rupturing previously-unchallenged assumptions of gender and sexuality. For the challenge they present to hegemony, queer people have traditionally

experienced higher levels of violence and threat in society (Dworkin & Yi, 2003; Markwell & Tomsen, 2010). Violence, in this context, acts as social sanction to discourage the deviation from the hegemonic norms that queer people represent. The way in which heterosexuality pervades all aspects of social life (Johnston, 2007) demonstrates its positions as the dominant in-group, with queer people – a subordinate group – typically occupying a lower social status (Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). Browne and Bakshi (2011) emphasise this point, arguing that queer lives are usually lived in heterosexual space and context, presenting a divergence between the individual's own construction of self and the space within which that self is enacted. Heterosexist codes may indeed be so naturalised within mainstream space that they become invisible to the majority, but still threaten to isolate and exclude those who do not conform (Power et al., 2014).

Institutions

Social hierarchies are produced and maintained by social institutions through the rules, procedures and actions they impose (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Institutions such as legal, financial, religious, educational, political systems typically have a strong impact on prejudice given their wide reach and ability to mobilise and influence (Pratto et al., 2006). Institutions can be divided into hierarchy-enhancing institutions that are relatively anti-egalitarian and support existing hierarchy; and hierarchy-attenuating institutions like human rights organisations and welfare agencies which allocate more resources for the benefit of subordinates (Sidanius et al., 2004).

Within a queer context, Hubbard (2008) argues that assumptions about normative sexuality are spatially produced and maintained by institutions of power. Policies enacted by legal and social institutions have been found to contribute to a greater power imbalance between heterosexual and sexually-diverse individuals (Poteat & Mereish, 2012). Homosexuality is still criminalised in 73 jurisdictions across the world, and only 30 countries and territories have enacted laws to allow same-sex marriage (Pew Research Center, 2019). The criminalisation of homosexuality has been the basis of physical violence against queer people by agents of the state in many countries (Funk, 2019; Mogul, Ritchie & Whitlock, 2011), aligning with Sidanius et al. (2004) who explain such regulation officially support systematic terror against subordinate groups. At the same time, policies like "*Don't ask don't tell*" – commonly associated with national defence forces – devalue and obscure the individual's sexuality and gender identity. Within the spaces in which these policies are conceived and enacted, the message that this is no place for queer people has detrimental mental health impacts on the queer people within those spaces (Barber, 2012). Some religious institutions have also supported the dominance of heterosexuality and hegemonic gender roles through their doctrine, using this as a basis to exclude those who depart from their congregations (Coley, 2017) and leading to greater prejudice against sexual minorities (Poteat & Mereish, 2012). These examples demonstrate the role of institutions in defining and promoting hegemony of sexuality and gender identity, while punishing those who diverge.

Legitimising myths

Finally, social hierarchies are legitimised through the attitudes, values, beliefs, stereotypes and ideologies that provide moral and intellectual justification for structure. These ideologies dictate favoured groups and lend credibility to the unequal distribution of social value (Pratto

et al., 2006). Similar to institutions, these myths may be divided into those that support the hierarchical structure and contribute to maintaining the sub-ordinance of groups (hierarchy-enhancing myths), and those that aim to challenge it (hierarchy-attenuating myths).

The belief that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation contributes to ideologies that legitimise discrimination against sexually diverse individuals (Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). The World Health Organisation positioning homosexuality as pathological until 1990 (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016), along with phrases like "*God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve*" that represent conservative Judeo-Christian arguments against homosexuality, has served to position homosexuality as beyond the natural order, and therefore subordinate (Kulick et al., 2009). In addition, stereotypes abound positioning gay men as feminine and woman-like, and lesbians being man-like (MacInnis & Hodson, 2015). These stereotypes further reinforce the notion that homosexuality is the antithesis of *expected* gender and behaviour (O'Brien et al., 2013), further contributing to the out-group status of the queer community, and the threat they represent to hegemonic notions of gender and sexuality.

Institutions and legitimising myths form the means by which existing heteronormative hierarchies are enhanced (encouraged) or attenuated (challenged). Both enhancing and attenuating institutions and myths often exist simultaneously, in a constant tug-of-war that can keep dominant and subordinate positions in flux. Events function as social institutions and consequently, practices adopted in organising community events may serve to enhance or attenuate prejudice. This often happens without the intention of organisers who may be ambivalent to their impacts given the pervasive nature of dominant ideologies (Kattari, 2015). Guided by the notion of enhancing and attenuating factors, we examine the community event experiences of LGBTIQ+ people to identify how events may be made more inclusive. The methodology of this study is outlined in the following section.

Methodology

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted in Australia to explore how sexually diverse individuals determine if community events were inclusive. Australia is often characterised as a masculine society, where male sporting motifs combined with the rugged imagery of the outback converge to construct and dictate the notions of accepted masculinities. This is consistent with the understanding that heterosexual men demonstrate a higher social dominance compared to other groups (Batalha, Reynolds & Newbigin, 2011).

In-depth interviews were conducted as they allowed for a deeper exploration of how an event is judged to be inclusive based on the unique experiences and identities of the participants. The private nature of such interviews is essential to encourage participants to volunteer ideas that may be personal in nature, without feeling the need to provide a socially acceptable rationale (Stokes & Bergin, 2006).

It is well established that there are a range of sexual identities beyond Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual noted in the acronym LGBTIQ+; these identities are typically captured by the '+'. For instance, identities such as Pansexual (whose sexual interest is primarily driven by personality traits as opposed to gender) indicate a different form of diversity which would not be typically accounted for if only LGB identities were recruited. To account for this diversity, our sample focused, more broadly, on people who identified as sexually diverse. As summarised in Table

1, a sample of n=16 was obtained in this study. During the interview process it became apparent that later interviews were not yielding additional insights, suggesting theoretical saturation.

Table 1: Sample sizes

Identity	n=
Gay	7
Lesbian	7
Pansexual	2

The sample was screened to include only those who had attended or were interested in attending community events. This was to ensure that the sample remained relevant to the purpose of the study and were able to make robust and informed contributions to the discussion based on their own experiences. This is in line with Sandelowski (1995) who notes participants in qualitative research should be selected based on personal knowledge, experience and the ability to provide informational representativeness by bringing a diverse opinion.

A mixed-sampling approach was used. Participants were initially recruited through LGBTIQ+ organisations with which the researchers were affiliated. At the completion of each interview, participants were asked to inform others about this research, thus adopting a snowballing technique. The mix of these techniques helped to ensure participants were able to provide an informed opinion based on their affiliations and understanding of this research. Such an approach of purposive and convenience sampling has been used previously when studying this segment (Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019), as it encourages participants who are knowledgeable and comfortable discussing the topic.

Interviews focused on exploring participants' view of inclusivity within the context of community events. Participants were asked to recall recent community event attendance and what they noticed was inclusive about these events. The concept of a community event was deliberately left undefined to enable participants to describe it in a way that captured their notion of what a community event was within their lived experience. They were also asked to think back on events they decided not to attend, and determine if signals of exclusion (relating to their LGBTIQ+ identity) played a part in this decision. Through this process, participants identified indicators they used to decide if an event was inclusive prior to and while attending the event. Interviews were conducted by the authors, two of whom publicly identify as sexually diverse. This ensured that the data was not influenced by biases introduced through the interview approach of any one researcher. In addition, to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, confirmatory questions were asked used to ensure emerging interpretations effectively captured participants' ideas (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed to facilitate analysis.

Consistent with the approach adopted by Pritchard, Morgan and Sedgley (2002), transcripts were separately analysed by two of the three researchers. As part of this process, the researchers adapted Burnard's (1991) recommendation on analysing qualitative interviews. Transcripts were read, and codes were manually assigned using an open coding process based

on how participants judged the inclusivity of events. Thereon, similar codes were combined into higher order categories. Following this process, and in line with Saldaña's (2016) team analysis process, the research team came together to discuss individual findings and interpretations. This clarified the themes to ensure there was consistency in researchers' interpretation. Using this approach, relying on two researchers also helped make sure the findings were not skewed by any single researcher's biases.

Findings and Discussion

Key findings of this research are discussed, beginning with factors that signal inclusivity and moving into how inclusivity is examined prior to, and while at the event. Finally, the role event organisers can play is discussed. The findings are accompanied by illustrative quotes from our participants and indicated by respondent number and sexuality.

Dissecting inclusivity

Consistent with Frost and Laing (2015), the importance of community events was underscored by the sentiment expressed by multiple participants who perceived them as an opportunity to *"feel bonded"* (R8, lesbian) with their local community. Such events enabled attendees to pursue their interests and define themselves beyond their sexuality (R2, gay), and created a sense of normalcy by providing an avenue to connect based on broader interests and ideas, not just about the LGBTIQ+ communities.

> *If I was only attending LGBT specific events, I think I'd become very isolated, I would have a much smaller support network and community. I think I'd get bored frankly because the strains on queer people and particularly in regional areas. It becomes quite a common topic of conversation and to be honest, I haven't always got the emotional scope to deal with those conversations… (R16, lesbian).*

Community events were perceived as performances that substantively reflected the values and attitudes of the local community. As noted by a respondent, these events provided an opportunity to *"see what everyone else is... how the town thinks and... how the town gets together and treats each other"* (R7, pansexual). Through observations and experience, community events acted as a proxy for whether queer individuals were welcomed.

Ultimately, the events contributed to the individuals' wellbeing by providing an opportunity to socialise and define one's place in their local community, fulfilling the inherent human need for a sense of belonging as noted by Mackay (2010).

> *It's better for the mental health of everyone. So, humans are very social animals and getting out and about… you need to find where you're accepted in the community because as humans we... all we want is to be accepted and it's actually part of your hierarchy of needs in a psychological sense of the word (R7, pansexual).*

It is against this background of hope for community events as structural or substantive forms of community that inclusivity becomes essential to fostering community belonging.

The role of inclusivity

Although participants overwhelmingly agreed with the sentiment of inclusivity, they differentiated between being included from being welcomed and *"accepted"* (R14, lesbian). Being included was largely a societal expectation in line with laws that prohibit discrimination, a form of hierarchy attenuation enshrined in the legal institution. As one participant noted, *"the question I suppose is, "Do I feel welcomed in it?" And is there a doubt about that?"* (R10, gay). Being welcomed and accepted was a more authentic sentiment, inviting the individual to bring their whole self. Accordingly, this alleviated the need for individuals to dress or act in ways that conform to heteronormative standards.

Having an inclusive environment was considered essential for those individuals who did not pass. Passing, in this context, refers to the ability of individuals whose physical appearance and behaviours conform to the heteronormative dominant group to mask their membership in subordinate queer communities. Queer individuals who attended events with their partners and those who cross-dressed or were transgender typically did not fit the norm in terms of behaviour or appearance, and therefore needed greater affordances to feel welcomed. This suggests that there may be degrees of sub-ordinance, with varying levels of prejudice that subordinate group members may experience.

> *I pass. Whereas, if you were a trans man or woman, or like ... It's a whole different experience. As a cis-gendered, very feminine looking woman... I don't really get any issues unless, I was with a partner or something. So as a trans man or woman, they would have a totally different experience. As a non-cis-gendered lesbian, or gay man, they'd have a different experience, and obviously much worse, probably (R5, lesbian).*

The role of hierarchy-attenuating practices as signals of inclusivity was found to vary in importance depending on the place and type of event. Such spaces typically enhance, if not define, social hierarchies and therefore dictate the behaviours permissible within them (Bell & Valentine, 2003). For instance, events held in places that are typically perceived as prejudiced against queer people had a greater responsibility to prove they were inclusive. A participant explained that being overtly inclusive was more important *"in really small, rural, regional areas where LGBTQ people would probably be ostracised quite a bit, who don't feel like they can participate or they don't feel that they've got a safe place to go"* (R2, gay). Similarly, events associated with traditional notions of masculinity – such as contact sports or motor racing – were automatically considered to be prejudiced. These events had a greater obligation to demonstrate inclusivity compared to those that focused on the arts or culture where there was inherently a greater sense of inclusion and participants reported feeling *"more comfortable"* (R14, lesbian). This aligns with the institutional socialisation noted by Sidanius et al. (2004) that suggests individuals are attracted to institutions that align with their discriminatory predisposition. In this context, the event and space define what is permissible and therefore the types of people in attendance - typically male. This provides an indication of the prejudice one might experience. For instance, in reference to traditionally masculine sporting events, but using a commercial event to exemplify the point, a participant noted:

> *You think of something like the V8 cars, I don't think I've ever seen anything up there saying it's LGBT friendly cause it's, it appears to be quite a*

heteronormative event. Gendered, straight man, male dominated, where probably I don't think that they would be inclusive of LGBT people (R2, gay).

Ultimately, inclusive practices at events could help reduce the need for constant surveillance, and the sense that queer individuals need to be *"fighting all the time"* (R1, lesbian). Participants reported often being *"subconsciously"* (R7, pansexual) vigilant about their environment as a means of ensuring their safety. Such vigilance can originate from previous personal or learned experiences, especially given that the lethality of violence towards arbitrary groups is significantly higher compared to other groupings (Sidanius et al., 2004). Inclusive practices may therefore help alleviate such anxieties, and encourage greater participation and flow (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000). However, participants also noted the potential for inclusive practices to make other groups feel excluded and cautioned:

> *I think you can definitely go a little bit overboard on trying to make people feel comfortable in the sense that you begin to single them out. And that's where things actually start to feel more uncomfortable than if they just did nothing at all (R13, gay).*

As part of the interview process, participants were asked how they decided an event would be inclusive prior to attending, and the markers they used to judge inclusivity while at the event. The following sections present the findings relevant to each.

Prior to the event

In the lead-up to the event, participants reported examining the event online including their social media posts; reviewing their promotional content; and identifying individuals, groups, or spaces associated with the event. While these factors suggest a structured approach to scrutinising the event, participants explained it as a passive process that was conducted concurrently with researching the event and deciding if it aligned with their interest and values. In essence, this process of researching was an evaluation of hierarchy-enhancing and attenuating factors.

Communications

The language and images used in pre-event communications was a clear way participants used to evaluate if events were going to be inclusive of LGBTIQ+ communities. This included examining comments made by event organisers or attendees on the event's social media page. Participants explained that language that reinforced binary genders, for instance, *"saying men are men, and women are women"* (R16, lesbian) could be construed as hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myths, making them reconsider their attendance.

Specifically, participants made mention of the symbols and images used on promotional material. The pride flag and the LGBT acronym were seen as hierarchy-attenuating symbols encouraging inclusivity, as understood by both LGBTIQ+ and non-queer communities. Including them on the promotional material positioned the event as being gay-friendly and safe by directly challenging the invisible and pervasive assumption of heteronormativity.

> *So I like to see identifications symbols. I like to see the gay flag wherever I can or rainbows or things like that because to me, that sparks my interest*

> *as, "Oh they are gay-friendly." Because the rainbow flag is a symbol that has been used for quite a few years now as a sign of gay friendliness. And by that, I mean, nobody's going to throw a bottle at your head basically. And I like inclusive language to be used. So probably if not specifying every variety of gayness, then using the acronym LGBT whatever (R1, lesbian).*

The overt use of these symbols in promotional content indicated explicit acceptance of the queer community at the event, suggesting that "*people were openly inviting me to come as a gay person*" (R1, lesbian). Such symbolism was regarded as "*comforting… knowing that there are people who are welcoming and don't really discriminate*" (R2, gay). These symbols were also noted as being essential to de-market the event to those who would be prejudiced – thus dictating behavioural expectations. This ultimately helped to reduce the potential for incidents at the event by making it clear such "*behaviour won't be tolerated. You will be asked to leave*" (R6, lesbian).

Participants also explained the importance of language as determinants of inclusivity. Events which were positioned as family-friendly were not necessarily perceived as hostile to queer communities, but were seen to be more inclusive if they included a broader conceptualisation of family to include "*parents or other kinds of different relationships*" (R8, lesbian). The use of "*family-friendly*" (R1, lesbian) was seen to provide some level of comfort indicating there would not be any "*alcohol involved, which can bring about some negative behaviours from people*" (R3, gay). However, there were mixed reactions to an event being family-friendly wherein the exclusive use of the term "*mum and dad*" was viewed as hierarchy-enhancing and reinforcing the myth of the heterosexual family unit (R8, lesbian), while concurrently devaluing the diverse forms families can take - including same-sex parents.

Associations

The space, vendors and organisations associated with the event informed perceptions of its inclusivity. Some venues, like sports stadiums were seen to be more threatening, due to the heteropatriarchy they represent. These venues – often ticketed, imposing and grey – were not regarded as "*a very open environment*" (R14, lesbian) and reinforced the hierarchy-enhancing institution of capitalist economics, with ability to pay as primary determinants of access.

> *But yeah, like the men's, you're going to a big stadium. It's kind of like a big... It's very structured. Whereas, I kind of like the lack of structure. I like it to be a bit more free-flowing and whenever this happens. Yeah, I think it's also quite a masculine kind of venue. But yeah (R11, lesbian).*

This was described in contrast to the community fields in which women's sporting events often took place, attracting optional donations, family participation and openness where attendees were free to express their sexual and gender identities. This had an additional outcome of creating atmospheres where hostile behaviour could be witnessed and responded to, inducing hierarchy attenuation to the experience. This demonstrates the interplay between the type of event and location in influencing how inclusive the event is perceived.

Participants were also sensitive to the overall inclusivity and agendas of organisations or individuals associated with the event. A lesbian participant (R16, lesbian) noted that they would not feel comfortable attending events where there was a *"supremacist flag or a swastika"* explaining in her view *"hostile groups are very rarely hostile to only one group"*. The perception consistent with Sidanius and Pratto (1999) was that individuals who prefer a hierarchy in one domain would likely support it within other constructed hierarchies where they benefit. Another participant noted:

> *Gay inclusivity is not just a single topic by itself. It goes into all of the intersectionality and all of the inclusivity of everyone needs to coexist together no matter what makes them different (R7, pansexual).*

On the other hand, partnerships with organisations deemed as allies or advocates for LGBTIQ+ communities were seen to have hierarchy-attenuating effects that contributed to inclusivity. Depending on the event, such associations may take the form of those organising the event, performing in it, sponsors *"that are supportive of LGBT groups"* (R5, lesbian) or those providing services at the event. The reputation of these entities was a contributing factor in how they were perceived and, by extension, how inclusive the event was considered.

> *Are there any groups that have the agenda that is anti LGBT? If there isn't, then what's stopping me from going to this event? Because it's kind of assumed that unless there are people there that you know are anti-gay, it's pretty much going to be a neutral event… I'm looking at stallholders and people like first aid and... cause there's certain first aid company that's very anti LGBT and I would not feel comfortable going (R7, pansexual).*

Partnerships with LGBTIQ+ allies or advocacy organisations were viewed as endorsements, contributing a layer of security for queer individuals against aggressive behaviour from dominant groups.

> *They could go through ACON [AIDS Council of NSW] to help promote it as an LGBT friendly event because 99% of LGBT people know that ACON is a reputable organisation that screens all of these events… and that the organisers have thought about all of these things (R7, pansexual).*

Aside from these pre-event communications and associations, the event itself also represented hierarchy-enhancing and attenuating institutions which paralleled with perceptions of inclusivity for our participants. These are discussed in the next section.

At the event

In making judgments about whether an event was inclusive for queer people, participants often took their cues from how the environments was designed as well as the language and behaviour of fellow attendees. These were primarily signalled by the event's inclusivity towards others and the behaviours exhibited by fellow attendees and the event's subsequent responses to behaviour.

Inclusivity towards others

There was an equivalence drawn between inclusivity enacted towards other marginalised groups (such as Indigenous and disabled attendees) and inclusivity towards LGBTIQ+ communities. The widely-acknowledged pride flag to represent LGBTIQ+ communities was mentioned by a number of participants as a form of open invitation to LGBTIQ+ communities (R1, lesbian; R2, gay; R3, gay; R8, lesbian; R14, lesbian), with slightly different interpretations. While some took the display of the pride flag as "*openly inviting to me to come as a gay person*" (R1, lesbian), others felt it was more to remind the heteronormative community "*to actually see the visibility because for me, it's more about education and normality*" (R14, lesbian). The latter, in particular, utilises hierarchy-attenuating symbols to disrupt the heteronormative assumptions built into public space (Bell & Valentine, 2003).

Displays of the Indigenous flag and sincere inclusion (i.e. not tokenistic) of a Welcome to Country performed by an Indigenous member of the community also counted towards the visible acceptance of diversity, and was extrapolated into acceptance of LGBTIQ+ communities. In Australia, the Welcome to Country is typically delivered by the Traditional Owners of the land to welcome visitors and encourage respectful behaviours to the land in response (Reconciliation Australia, n.d.). Therefore, some participants drew parallels between respect for Traditional Owners (Indigenous communities that are often marginalised) and inclusivity for other marginalised communities. Others also mentioned that event sites which visibly catered to disabled communities, making provisions for "*accessible toilets*" (R3, gay), "*wheelchair access*" (R9, pansexual) and "*spaces catering for special needs*" (R7, pansexual) were strong indicators for inclusivity. The assumption was that the inclusivity encouraged by catering for others would communicate hierarchy-attenuating intentions, and be similarly paralleled in the inclusivity the event's organising committee would show towards queer people. Some participants also noted the diversity of the attendees at the event provided an indication of how inclusive it was, in that it demonstrated if other minorities would feel welcome participating.

> *I think being surrounded by quite a diverse group of people and whether that is gay, straight, purple hair, whatever it might be… So I think it's, it's more the other people attending that makes it inclusive or makes it a safe kind of space to me (R11, lesbian).*

Behaviour of fellow attendees and event response

The behaviour of other attendees at the event also influenced how inclusive the event was considered. Participants identified two key elements that contributed to behaviours that were not inclusive: hyper-masculinity (present in men's sporting and motor racing events, and also described as "*machismo*" and "*alpha male*" by R10 (gay)) and access to alcohol. These contributors resulted in environments that normalised hierarchy-enhancing behaviours, manifesting in language such as "*faggot*" (R14, lesbian), "*you're a fucking wog*" (R5, lesbian), and "*show us your tits*" (R8, lesbian) that is derogatory to gay men, non-Anglo people and female attendees respectively. Alcohol was acknowledged as a key relaxer of inhibitions, "*which can bring about some negative behaviours from people*" (R3, gay) and "*people would just say shit more openly. I think what makes it uncomfortable is mostly just comments or abuse*" (R5, lesbian). These were identified as elements that fuelled hostile atmospheres

where unofficial systematic terror – which is not sanctioned by the state but performed by individuals (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) – was propagated.

On the other hand, participants recognised behaviours that made them feel more included, challenging the hostile behaviour that is emboldened by those higher in social hierarchies. For instance, other attendees standing up against aggressive or exclusionary behaviour (R7, pansexual; R10, gay; R14, lesbian) were hierarchy-attenuating responses that sought to minimise hierarchy-enhancing behaviours. Such behaviours were seen as a social response from those higher in the hierarchy using their privilege to combat unofficial systematic terror. This finding challenges the notion of behavioural asymmetry (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) in that those higher in the hierarchy may not always act in their self-interest or to support the structure, and can contribute to creating an open and inclusive event environment. The way attendees interacted with each other provided examples of the behaviours accepted within those communities, as expressed by one of our participants in relation to signals of inclusivity:

> *And it wasn't uncommon for a man, for one of the married men to actually put his arm around the other bloke and just have a male-to-male bonding moment about something. And it wasn't looked at as profound or wasn't looked at as disgusting (R4, gay).*

While exploring inclusivity at events was the key focus of this research, the responses from participants clearly indicate that inclusivity was not only confined to the temporal and spatial contexts of community events. As discussed, they extended beyond these confines into the pre-event messages communicated and choices made by these community events prior to such events. Therefore, the role of community event organisers as key decision makers about the marketing and communication associated with an event should not be neglected in exploring how events can be made more inclusive.

The role of event organisers

The role of community events as a social institution indicates the influence event organisers can have on their local community. To this end, participants were almost unanimous that event organisers set the tone for hierarchy-attenuation and inclusivity. They saw the communication messages around events as entirely within the sphere of organisers' control, because "*it sends a message from the outset for people that are going in, that they're going into an inclusive event*" (R15, gay). In addition, the ability to respond to hostile behaviours and impose sanctions, was also within the purview of event organisers:

> *High security to make sure that things don't get out of hand. Especially if there is any alcohol involved in the event and sort of advertising that, what's the word I'm after, not quiet but discriminative or rude or inappropriate behaviour won't be tolerated and you'll be asked to leave like a low tolerance, a no tolerance sort of announcement in advertisement (R6, lesbian).*

While participants recognised that individual attendees were responsible for their own behaviour, they explained that the way organisers managed such behaviours indicated how serious the event was about upholding or challenging existing hierarchies. In this regard, some

expressed cynicism about events that used inclusive language and symbolism – seeing it as a form of *"lip service"* (R1, lesbian), and explaining how organisers actually responded to discriminatory behaviours was the real litmus test. In particular, the event organiser's role in developing and implementing policies to curb unsavoury behaviour and language reflecting social dominance was emphasised. This is consistent with Kattari (2015) who explains that superficial practices by themselves do not reduce social-hierarchies if they are not followed by genuine attempts to cater to the needs of subordinate groups.

> *I think events have to avoid that tokenistic, tick the box, yes, we've got an inclusion plan, great, but then nothing actually happens. Having any kind of policy document, but on the grounds, there's not really any evidence of it. Things actually have to happen (R14, lesbian).*

However, most drew the line between *responses* to crowd behaviour and *actual* crowd behaviour when it came to drawing the boundaries of event organisers' responsibilities. As R5 (lesbian) expressed, "*you can't block a dickhead at the door sometimes*", and so while appropriate responses to curb hostile crowd behaviour were seen as part of the event's inclusivity messaging, participants recognised the inclusivity that characterises community events extends to the broader community, which could include those who might be hostile to them. Participants shared the substantive community sentiment that "*an event is just a reflection of what is*" (R10, gay), and so were inclined to view these negative crowd behaviours as a reflection of broader societal sentiments and hierarchies. Thus, a common sentiment was one expressed by this participant, who advocated for visible pride flags at community events because:

> *For me, I want the hetero community, I guess that is the community, to actually see the visibility because for me, it's more about education and normality. I would like it to be normal because I go to events with my sister, who's heterosexual, there's no difference in us going to an event together. I don't want there to be different, I want it just to be normal, accepted (R14, lesbian).*

On the other hand, one of the participants also cautioned against community events co-opting the LGBTIQ+ communities cause while doing little to actually challenge the social dominance that subordinates them, and potentially even furthering the sub-ordinance of particular groups (Wilson, 2017). Wary of the rainbow-washing by corporations that pay lip service to being LGBTIQ+-friendly, R13 (gay) pointed out that "*the more you try and advertise a queer event like that, you are actually disenfranchising a lot more people than people realize. Largely because that's mostly targeted at like cis gay white men anyway*". This points to the importance of acknowledging intersectionality of identities, in that even amongst LGBTIQ+ communities, social dominance can manifest.

Implications

This research is the first to apply SDT to community events, using it to provide understanding of how events may be designed to be inclusive of the LGBTIQ+ communities and how events as social institutions can implement practices to attenuate hierarchies. The findings indicate the simultaneous nature of hierarchy-enhancing and attenuating factors mean that the latter can be conscientiously incorporated into event management and experiences, even in the

face of the former as default. To this end, this paper contributes to the literature on event management by examining how social environments at events can be more inclusive of the often-marginalised LGBTIQ+ communities. The facilitation of the inclusive practices and the disruption of hegemonic norms the findings of this research represent echo the United Nations sentiment that no one should be left behind (United Nations, 2015), and create a just environment where all enjoy the benefits afforded by participating in community events. Following from our analysis, this section provides an overview of the theoretical and practical implications with the aim of facilitating a discussion for future research.

Theoretical Implications

Australia is characterised as masculine society which supports institutions that maintain the heteronormative hegemony (Batalha, Reynolds & Newbigin, 2011). In modern Australia, both enhancing and attenuating attitudes co-exist and are part of the dynamism stemming from the confluence of dominant social identities and marginalised out-groups. Within this environment, this research indicates that events can play a role in transforming communities and contributing to wider cultural cohesion as they tangibly represent and reinforce a community's sentiment towards marginalised groups (Jones, 2014).

This research has uncovered a heightened sense of vigilance and concern for harm that queer people experience, resulting from their position as a subordinate arbitrarily defined group, which the literature suggests experience a higher level of violence (Sidanius et al., 2004). Consequently, the findings indicate that to enhance the sense of belonging queer people experience, it is essential to explicitly communicate messages and incorporate symbolism and language that demonstrates inclusivity. Noting the prevalence of dominant ideologies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), such initiatives disrupt presumptions and environments that are unconsciously constructed as heteronormative and create spaces where alternative sexualities can co-exist without fears of retribution. The positive identification incorporated through messaging, language, and symbolism working to alleviate the dehumanising and othering typically experienced by subordinate groups, and leading to greater visibility and empowerment.

Prejudice needs to be considered at a holistic level as opposed to being binary between a dominant and a specific subordinate group. This is especially so for the LGBTQI+ communities who are innately heterogeneous (Ong, Vorobjovas-Pinta & Lewis, 2020) and have varying ability to conceal their sexuality or gender identity (Lewis, 2020). Similar to Sidanius and Pratto (1999), we found that individuals and groups perceived to be discriminatory to a marginalised group were automatically considered to be discriminatory to other marginalised groups. In addition, inclusive practices aimed at particular marginalised groups can also make others feel included. Challenging the hierarchy therefore requires consideration of multiple subordinate groups – such as those constructed on sexuality, gender identity, physical ability, ethnicity or any other arbitrary divisions; and how their interests interact to produce a more inclusive environment. Our findings indicate there may be degrees of sub-ordinance in operation within the social spaces of events. For instance, those who pass for the norm may experience less prejudice compared to those who do not. This suggests a nuance that is largely absent in how SDT has been applied to arbitrary subordinate groups like the LGBTIQ+ community (MacInnis & Hodson, 2015; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). Taken together, our

research challenges the application of SDT and calls for a more nuanced consideration of hierarchical positions and subordinate groups.

Practical Implications

Community events are tools that can be used to advance social infrastructure (Misener & Mason, 2006), which enable and sustain interactions amongst the members of the community. Community members themselves could be considered co-creators and co-narrators of the experiences and behavioural practices at these events. Therefore, event organisers do not necessarily have full control of the pre-arranged experiences at an event, as these can be influenced by other attendees' actions and behavioural traits that might stem from the societal attitudes and/or the individually preconceived notions of right and wrong. In the context of Australia, where this research was conducted and where social dominance of heterosexual males is comparatively high (Batalha, Reynolds & Newbigin, 2011), considered responses to hierarchy-enhancing behaviours can have positive effects on LGBTIQ+ communities' perceptions of inclusivity at events. This study suggests that event organisers have control over three key aspects of community events to transform these events towards hierarchy attenuation in pursuit of inclusivity: marketing, language and security.

Event organisers are in control of their marketing strategies and messaging, designed to influence customers, generate demand and build awareness (Grimmer, 2017). As such, marketing strategies could convey event organiser's values by transmitting covert and overt messages of inclusivity. Images and symbols presented in marketing materials provide a foundation upon which event organisers begin forming a relationship with their potential attendees. The use of visual cues and symbols such as a pride flag, pink triangle, or photos of same-sex couples would signal an LGBTIQ+-welcoming environment. Relatedly, LGBTIQ+ symbols should not be overused to avoid clichéd stereotypes and tokenistic gestures – which could have the opposite effect and call into question the purpose for including such symbolism. Similarly, organisers need to be cautious about individuals and associations they partner with, and their reputation for inclusivity.

Event organisers are also in control of the language they use at events or in promotional strategies. Our findings suggest that using inclusive language that does not default to gender binary can empower members of the LGBTIQ+ communities to attend community events. For example, pronouns 'he/him' and 'she/her' could be replaced with 'they/them', or 'everyone welcome' could be used instead of 'ladies and gentlemen'. The choice to be inclusive in messaging strategies is not only a critical and valuable form of civic engagement, but also serves as an educative signal for social inclusion.

Event organisers are in control of the security and governance measures. Therefore, they are in a position to coordinate a proactive response to inappropriate and/or antisocial behaviour. This paper suggests that practical policies such as a zero-tolerance framework could be implemented to signal a safe space for all. Zero tolerance policies are commonly used to intervene in minor offences in order to stop the escalation of a particular issue and to avoid bigger crimes (Korander & Törrönen, 2005). Such policies toward exclusionary behaviour should not be tokenistic; instead, they should be vocally communicated and visibly enacted at the event venues. Such measures can minimise hierarchy-enhancing behaviour, such as

bigotry, name-calling and hate-speech, encouraging inclusive culture through socioemotional leadership.

Limitations and future research

As with any research, the findings presented herein must be examined in light of various limitations. Firstly, the participants of this study – comprising seven gay men, seven lesbians and two pansexual individuals – did not span the whole range of identities under the LGBTIQ+ banner. Further research is needed to include identities that that are less represented in tourism studies such as bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer, intersex and other. A sample representing a more diverse population would have yielded more nuanced research. Secondly, the ethnic composition of the participants and their home location was not part of the research design. Often experiences can be influenced by multitude of identities (e.g., Asian and lesbian) as they interplay simultaneously in our social lives (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015). Future studies could explore the intersectionality of social identities and how they are addressed by event organisers within different locations (e.g., urban vs rural). Lastly, due to the nature of the research, this study was conducted in Australia only. Therefore, findings may not be representative of the experiences of event attendees elsewhere in the world, especially beyond the boundaries of the Global North where there is a stronger sense of acceptance for queer individuals. Arguably, the voices of the LGBTIQ+ populations beyond the Global North are significantly under-represented in tourism studies (Ong, Vorobjovas-Pinta & Lewis, 2020; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). As such research into these populations is critical towards understanding the role of events and inclusivity across borders.

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