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'You feel you're not alone': how multicultural festivals foster social sustainability through multiple psychological sense of community

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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the limited research on social aspects of sustainability in event studies, this paper seeks to understand how multicultural festivals promote and deliver social sustainability through the facilitation of multiple psychological sense of community for attendees. By considering refugees and ethnic minority immigrants, it also addresses the gap at the nexus of events and marginalization for under-researched groups in critical event studies. Focusing on the New Beginnings Festival, an arts and culture festival for migrant communities in Sydney, Australia, we sought to gain a better understanding by addressing this knowledge gap. A qualitative research approach was applied with data collected through participant observation, in-the-moment conversations, and semi-structured interviews. Applying the theoretical framework of Psychological Sense of Community as well as the concept of Multiple Psychological Sense of Community, we present the Festival Multiple Psychological Sense of Community (FMPSOC) model with three interconnected levels of community facilitated by the festival: Ethnic, Migrant and Mainstream. The model enables critical event scholars, event organizers and local governments alike to understand how multicultural festivals contribute to the social sustainability of their communities. It also provides a basis for evaluating this contribution and identifying areas for improvement.

Introduction

Despite the purported equal importance of social aspects of sustainability, it is the environmental and economic domains that have always dominated debates on sustainable development in many fields (Colantonio, 2010; Spangenberg & Omann, 2006), thus challenging the integrity of the holistic concept of sustainable development (Smith, 2009). Nevertheless, recent years have seen an increasing recognition of social sustainability with a body of literature now emerging (Colantonio, 2010; Vallance et al., 2011). Social sustainability is described as (a) a condition in societies that supports human well-being, as well as (b) a process in communities that can achieve this condition, now and in the future (Dujon, 2009). However, as Dujon (2009) notes, the determination of key factors that promote social sustainability and decisions about how to allocate (limited) resources to them is contested, and differs across space, time and place.

As with other fields, there has been an increasing interest in researching sustainability in the context of events in recent years. Again though, the focuses within event studies have mainly been on environmental and economic sustainability with relatively less attention on the social aspects of sustainability (Pernecky, 2013; Smith, 2009). A decade after Smith (2009) noted that social sustainability was yet to be firmly grounded within events studies, it remains largely under-investigated. While there is now a growing body of literature pointing towards the social impacts of events, Pernecky (2013) rightly argues that the study of social sustainability must be broader than, and indeed distinct from, the focus on social impacts of events. Recognizing that events also have the potential to contribute to societal values (Moufakkir & Kelly, 2013), Pernecky (2013) calls for research on the role of events in bridging isolation, and promoting inclusion, cross-cultural understandings, diversity and tolerance.

Events help to create a sense of both physical and relational community through connecting people and showcasing shared values (Derrett, 2003). As a form of relational community, psychological sense of community is extremely significant – it has well-being and quality of life benefits for individuals and communities alike (Buckingham et al., 2018; Sonn & Fisher, 1996; Townley et al., 2011). The work of Case and Hunter (2012) shows this to be especially important for marginalized groups such as refugees and ethnic minority immigrants. The premise of this paper is that multicultural festivals in particular have a vital role to play in the pursuit of social sustainability: we contend that they are a process that enhances human well-being, and as such they may make a valuable contribution to the lives of marginalized peoples (Walters & Jepson, 2019).

We apply the theoretical framework of Psychological Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) and the concept of Multiple Psychological Sense of Community (Brodsky & Marx, 2001) to an analysis of how a multicultural festival held in Sydney, Australia, helps refugees and ethnic minority immigrants develop and strengthen their sense of community, thereby facilitating their adaptation process in the new society and enhancing their well-being. In doing so, we demonstrate how the festival, as a temporary event experience, can be an important setting for shaping a potentially longer-lasting psychological sense of community among its attendees at three levels: Ethnic community, Migrant community and Mainstream community, and how these different levels of community are distinct yet 'nested' within each other (Brodsky & Marx, 2001, p. 162). Consistent with the argument that festivals need to engage with meaningful encounters to ensure more positive social outcomes are realized that inform community making (Duffy & Mair, 2018), we provide practical recommendations on how such meaningful encounters can be facilitated at each of the three levels of community.

Our focus on refugees and ethnic minority immigrants, as two under-researched groups in critical event studies (Hassanli et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019; Walters & Jepson, 2019), is consistent with the emphasis of social sustainability on equity *for all*, particularly the most vulnerable (McKenzie, 2004). Further, it resonates with the commitment of local governments to ensure the well-being of *all residents* by drawing on notions of social justice to increase opportunities for interaction and minimize social isolation (Mair & Duffy, 2015).

Social aspects/benefits of multicultural festivals

Koefoed et al. (2020, p. 5) state that festivals are 'rooted in the human desire to mark or celebrate important happenings' and involve breaking from the routine of everyday life. Multicultural festivals, our focus in this paper, are those that celebrate cultural traditions; most commonly the term refers to festivals that showcase the ethnic cultures of migrant communities (McClinchey, 2008). They are 'sites for on-going dialogues and negotiations within communities as individuals and groups attempt to define meaningful concepts of identity and belonging' (Duffy, 2005, p. 679). Such festivals play important social roles in different societies. They are known to create a platform for uniting people and supporting common experiences (Koefoed et al., 2020;

Simonsen et al., 2017). They provide a means of sharing and enhancing social and cultural value by helping to revive and maintain traditional cultures (Buch et al., 2011; Savinovic et al., 2012). By negotiating cultural differences, such festivals are reported to help in building diversity and better multicultural societies (Lee et al., 2012; Permezel & Duffy, 2007). It is argued that they build social capital by developing community resources, strengthening social connections and networks within the community, promoting social cohesiveness, and providing communities with the opportunity for public celebration (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Stevenson, 2016; Wilks, 2011). They foster feelings of belonging and contribute to a sense of place (McClinchey, 2008). However, Mair and Duffy (2015) note that where sense of belonging has been considered in such studies, the focus has mainly been on physical and geographically bounded communities, and not social, economic, emotional and/or psychological communities (Pedlar & Haworth, 2006).

With specific regard to migrant communities, multicultural festivals are known to reinforce notions of self-worth and community assertiveness, and thus strengthen their sense of identity to outsiders (Buch et al., 2011). By allowing ethnic minority groups to express and challenge their differences to the mainstream society, these festivals allow avenues for a more inclusive sense of belonging (Permezel & Duffy, 2007). Multicultural festivals empower diasporic communities through community solidarity and unity (Mackley-Crump, 2015; Sinn & Wong, 2005) and provide vital modes of identification and freedom in the lives of asylum seekers (Lewis, 2015). They help stigmatized or marginalized ethnic minority groups to mitigate the adverse effects of oppression by challenging stereotypical representations (Hassanli et al., 2020; Mason, 2015). While community cohesion and maintenance of links with homelands is a prevalent finding in festival studies on migrant communities (Hassanli et al., 2020; Lewis, 2015), so is the notion of identity and belonging to the host country (Lau, 2004, Sinn & Wong, 2005). Despite these findings, there is still a dearth of research on the experience of migrants attending multicultural festivals and scholars call for further research in this space (Hassanli et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019; Walters & Jepson, 2019).

Within culturally plural societies, multicultural festivals are embraced by local governments to promote cross-cultural understanding and tolerance of ethnic minorities (Fincher et al., 2014). This is consistent with the Contact Theory which proposes that intergroup contact may reduce negative prejudice held by one group towards another group through perceived similarities between them (Allport, 1954, as cited in Duffy & Mair, 2018). It is also argued that sharing space in proximity with strangers may facilitate understanding and acceptance (Duffy et al., 2019). Similarly, in Australia, the context for this study, local governments employ celebratory strategies such as hosting cultural festivals as a common anti-racism strategy (Nelson, 2015), and to promote greater tolerance by celebrating a community which is perceived to be marginalized in the public sphere (Fincher et al., 2014).

These points notwithstanding, critics view festivals and celebrations of diversity as commodification of Otherness, where minority cultures are gazed upon and their culture consumed by the dominating culture. By attempting to make minority cultures 'safe' for the majority, festivals are argued to pursue a weak kind of tolerance (Fincher et al., 2014; Nelson, 2015). Arguably, multicultural festivals may be used as proof of a tolerant nation (Permezel & Duffy, 2007), while reproducing and disguising relationships of white power (Hage, 1998, as cited in Duffy & Mair, 2018). Associating them with 'thin aspects of diversity' such as food, music, and clothes, Kingsbury (2016, p. 225) notes that liberal state-sponsored multicultural policies and practices, such as hosting festivals, obfuscate pressing issues in society, thus making them sites of domination and hegemonic power (Koefoed et al., 2020). By highlighting diversity, multicultural festivals are accused of encouraging the society to see and focus on the differences (Duffy & Mair, 2018), which counters the rationale of the Contact Theory. Further, festivals are argued to create and sustain community hierarchies through emphasizing and reinforcing a certain public identity that is communicated to others (Procter, 2004). Hence, Higgins-Desbiolles (2016) maintains that in an increasingly neo-liberal society where festivals are viewed as tourism attractions, it is important

to ask the question of whose interests the festival serves to ensure their social and culture value is not undermined. Other critical accounts note that festivals are complex processes with potentially divisive outcomes (Duffy & Mair, 2018; Mair & Duffy, 2015). The negative social outcomes that they cause undermine the positive effects, many of which may be inequitably distributed (Devine & Quinn, 2019; Smith, 2009; Stevenson, 2016). Highlighting the paradoxical nature of festivals, Duffy and Waitt (2011) note that while festivals can be a catalyst for social integration and cohesion, they may also operate as spaces of exclusion and alienation. They can be 'the gate-keepers of community values, encouraging some people in, while keeping others out' (Derrett, 2003, p. 52).

Psychological sense of community

Distinct from physical sense of community, the concept of a psychological sense of community (PSOC) was first identified by Sarason (1974) as 'the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure' (p. 157). Later, McMillan and Chavis (1986) conceptualized PSOC as 'a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together' (p. 9). They identified four major dimensions for PSOC: membership, mutual influence, fulfilment of needs and integration, and shared emotional connection.

   Membership denotes there has been some level of personal investment which in turn connotes a right to belong, and with this come boundaries that provide emotional safety through including or excluding people. These boundaries may not be physical but may be created by language, dress or traditions. *Mutual influence* is a positive relationship between the individual and the group, and in a tight-knit community the influence of one on the other occurs simultaneously. The *fulfilment of needs* is fundamental to a strong psychological sense of community. It is based on a shared set of values, and helps people recognise they have similar needs, priorities and goals. The final dimension, *shared emotional connection*, relies on a shared history or the ability to identify with one. Frequency of interaction is important to create a shared emotional connection, as is the nature of that interaction – if the experience is positive, people are more likely to become closer, bond, and form relationships. Furthermore, if a person invests time, money or emotion in the community they are more likely to feel a psychological sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These four dimensions can occur within both physical (territorial/geographically bound) and relational (social, emotional and/or psychological) communities (Buckingham et al., 2018; Pedlar & Haworth, 2006), although much of the literature has focused on the former (Brodsky & Marx, 2001).

Diversity in communities

As noted in the introduction, PSOC is considered an important component of a healthy community and denotes a community's image, spirit, pride, and relationships (Derrett, 2003). PSOC is believed to have various beneficial individual and community outcomes including increased well-being, life satisfaction, quality of life, community connectedness, and participation (Townley et al., 2011, Buckingham et al., 2018, Sonn & Fisher, 1996). Despite the desirable outcomes attributed to PSOC, a major critique is that it implies uniformity, homogeneity, and balance in community, which counters the core principle of diversity in communities (Neal & Neal, 2014; Townley et al., 2011). Wiesenfeld (1996) also posits that the many different definitions of community share the implicit notion of 'we' which signifies homogeneity among members as a necessary condition for group identity to develop.

In an attempt to conceptualise a definition of community to include commonalities and diversity, Wiesenfeld (1996) proposed two dimensions: 'macro' belonging; a (psychological) sense of community created by integrating minorities into the community based on shared experience of events, and 'micro' belonging; multiple collective identities in the community. Townley et al. (2011) suggested a 'community-diversity dialectic' to argue the need for PSOC to expand its focus on bridging, rather than bonding, social capital; that is, ties across diverse groups/communities that facilitate the flow of resources. To reconcile the tensions between the core values of sense of community and diversity, a common in-group identity among diverse individuals needs to be created. In such cases, bias is reduced, and members see themselves as belonging to a single, common group. The group identity superordinates and a more inclusive 'we' replaces the 'us and them' dynamics (Townley et al., 2011).

Multiple psychological sense of community (M-PSOC)

Building on these ideas, Brodsky and Marx (2001) introduced the concept of Multiple Psychological Sense of Community (M-PSOC); the idea that individuals identify with multiple physical and/or relational communities and, therefore, experience multiple senses of belonging to these communities. The ability to form M-PSOC strengthens ties between communities by creating a web of bridging and bonding relationships (Brodsky, 2017).

Despite people deriving aspects of a sense of community from different sources, for some people it is their ethnic and racial groups that often represent the referent or 'primary' community that they relate to (Sonn & Fisher, 1996, p. 418). However, while ethnic groups are vital to the adaptation process of migrants, developing a sense of belonging to only their origins could put them at risk of exclusion and segregation in society (Fisher & Sonn, 2007). Hence, M-PSOC is believed to help migrants maintain a sense of belonging with their original culture while also linking them to the broader social and cultural context. This in turn helps with their well-being, intercultural relations, and quality of life (Sonn, 2002). Moreover, Townley et al. (2011) recommend implementing interventions to increase contact between diverse cultures to enhance the sense of togetherness among these heterogenous groups. This is the basis for our premise that multicultural festivals may function as a process that enhances social sustainability.

Research context: migrants in Australia

Migration is defined as the process of moving from one place of residence to settle in another. Distinction is made between voluntary and forced migration with those falling in the first group categorized as immigrants or sojourners and those in the latter group as refugees (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). While immigrants make a conscious choice to leave their country for a better life (Settlement Services International, n.d.b), asylum seekers or refugees are forced to leave their country due to fear of being persecuted for reasons related to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, etc. (Refugee Council of Australia, 2016). The very condition of mobility- whether voluntarily or forced- has a profound effect on migrants' health and well-being as they face various challenges in their attempt to adjust in the new society, including language barriers, discrimination, lack of opportunities to interact with other ethnic groups, and limited network of social support (Bathum & Baumann, 2007; Bhugra, 2004; Kim et al., 2016; Sonn, 2002). Further, having to interact with a dominant culture may result in the loss of migrants' cultural symbols and relations which are central to their well-being (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). While we acknowledge that all migrants face such challenges, we also recognize that those migrants who belong to ethnic minorities and may, as result, face 'tribal stigma' of race, nation, religion (Goffman, 1963), struggle more in adapting to the new society. Therefore, in this paper we specifically focus on refugees and ethnic minority immigrants and, while not seeking to minimize differences in their

migration and settlement experiences, for simplicity's sake we refer to 'migrants' as an umbrella term for these groups. We use the term 'mainstream' to refer to all other groups within the Australian population including non-ethnic minority migrants such as those from Europe and the USA.

Australia is considered a multicultural society, with 29% of the country's population in 2018 considered migrants, i.e. their country of birth was reported other than Australia, and about 27% spoke a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Specific to Sydney, over half its local residents (54.9%) are born overseas; 36% arriving from a country where English is not the first language (City of Sydney, n.d.). Given the cultural mix, and as noted previously, local governments in Australia are expected to improve community relations and enhance representation and civic participation of all culturally and linguistic diverse groups. A variety of policies and practices are employed to promote intercultural understanding and reduce inequalities, including celebrations of diversity such as fairs, festivals and other cultural events (Fincher et al., 2014).

Methods

Data collection

We employed an interpretive and qualitative approach to our analysis of the 2018 New Beginnings Festival (NBF), a multicultural festival hosted in Darling Harbor in the heart of Sydney in November. The festival is an initiative by the Settlement Services International (SSI). As a community organization and social business, SSI's vision is 'to achieve a society that values the diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation and to assist individuals and families to reach their potential' (Settlement Services International, n.d.a, para.11). First held in 2015, this one-day outdoor festival aims to celebrate and showcase the creativity of migrant artists, performers and craftspeople living in New South Wales. It features live music, dance performance, creative workshops, cultural markets and world cuisines from various countries each year (SSI New Beginnings Festival, n.d.).

Data was collected using participant observation during the festival (after gaining permission from SSI), in-the-moment conversations with event attendees, and longer semi-structured interviews with event attendees, sourced through a random sampling method. While this recruitment approach proved to be mainly successful, a few expressed doubt in participating in the research. Therefore, we also used snowball sampling where mentors/volunteers or attendees who had already confirmed their participation in the research played the role of gatekeepers in making connections between researchers and other attendees. As it was not possible to secure translation services for this study, all interviews were conducted in English, after first confirming that interviewees were comfortable communicating in English. We do acknowledge this as a limitation of the study, as it further marginalizes the voices of those less able to discuss their experiences in English – who may arguably hold different but equally valuable perspectives on the NBF.

The researchers followed an interview guide, which provided them with insight about the respondents' background, ethnic/race identity, life experience in Australia, experience and interactions with others at the festival. Fossey et al. (2002) note that while in qualitative research no fixed minimum number of participants is required, data saturation has to be reached through adequate depth of information. Altogether 15 longer semi-structured interviews were conducted (see Table 1 for interviewee profiles) at which point data was saturated. Interviews took on average 45 minutes; they were audio-recorded upon consent from participants and then transcribed.

Preceding and concurrent with the interviews, researchers conducted observations at the festival where they recorded details about attendees and their interactions, as well as their body language and tone during the interviews. Triangulation of data, where interview and observational data were compared and contrasted, helped with interpreting and making sense of the

Table 1. Interviewee profiles.

Interviewee	Gender	Years in Australia	Country of origin	Role Attendee (A), Mentor (M), Stallholder (S), Volunteer (V), Performer (P)
I1	F	3	Somalia	A
I2	M	5	Egypt	A/M
I3	F	14	Colombia	A/S/P
I4	F	6	Argentina	A
I5	F	4	Sudan	A
I6	F	14	Sierra Leon	A/S
I7	F	2	Iraq	A
I8	F	15	South Sudan	A/S
I9	F	6	Iran	A/S
I10	M	3	Ghana	A
I11	M	5	Iran	A/V
I12	F	12	Iran	A/S/M
I13	F	6 months	Ecuador	A
I14	F	6 months	Chile	A
I15	F	11	Uganda	A

interviews at the analysis stage, and ensured credibility and dependability of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2002; Krefting, 1991).

Data analysis

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible method that is suitable for capturing the nuances in qualitative material dealing with complex social phenomena such as that under investigation here (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In an iterative process, we independently read and re-read the empirical material from the participant observation, in-the-moment interviews, and semi-structured interviews, purposefully looking for material that spoke to us of PSOC, and noting our thoughts. Once we were satisfied that all initial 'codes' (extracts of data) had been identified, we then condensed them into a series of basic themes based on their commonalities (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Basic themes were further collapsed over more phases of analysis, resulting in the identification of three overarching themes of community. These themes represent three distinct yet interconnected levels of PSOC based on McMillan and Chavis' (1986) conceptualization, and support the concept of M-PSOC (Brodsky & Marx, 2001). Presented as the Festival Multiple Psychological Sense of Community (FMPSOC) model, they include: 1) Ethnic PSOC; 2) Migrant PSOC; and 3) Mainstream PSOC (Figure 1).

Findings and discussion

Using the concepts of PSOC and M-PSOC, in this section we present evidence on how the festival creates sense of community for NBF attendees at three levels, unpacking each part of our FMPSOC model in turn.

Level 1: ethnic PSOC

The first level of psychological sense of community is created in relation to those from the same ethnic background. This characteristic is the strongest and clearest common bond shared at this level and is foundational to one's personal identity. As a result, this first level PSOC exhibits the strongest membership, mutual influence, faith that members' needs will be met, and emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).
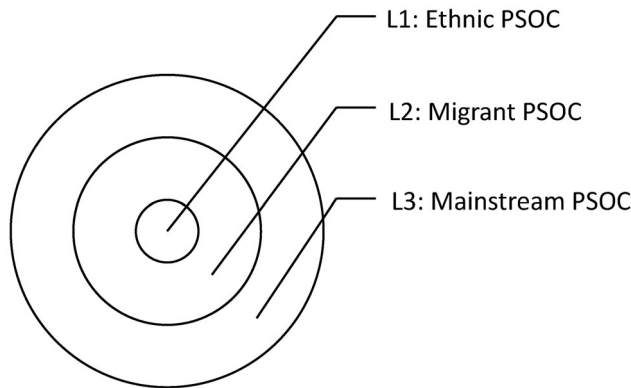
Figure 1. The festival multiple psychological sense of community (FMPSOC) model.

Familiar practices, expressed in dancing, music or dress, have an important role in developing feelings of belonging and unity for ethnic migrants (Lewis, 2010). Such socializing acts as a refuge from social isolation and exclusion which many migrants encounter in their everyday life (Hassanli et al., 2020; Lewis, 2010; 2015). By creating a safe space for interaction among people of the same ethnicity, the NBF creates a community and helps to ameliorate distress through solidarity and connection:

'You find people from the country or your culture and they understand you and maybe they did the same thing for the first time. They help you to pass it' (I5).

This echoes other research that has found people feel more secure with their own racial groups, where similar language and social togetherness foster a strong sense of community (Sonn & Fisher, 1996). Identification with an ethnic group as one's primary community reinforces norms, values and identities, and provides members with social support systems that help them address the demands of the new society and has implications for their quality of life, belonging and well-being (Phinney et al., 2001; Smith & Silva, 2011; Sonn & Fisher, 1996). Accordingly, migrants strive to protect identities that are challenged due to dis/re-location (Fisher & Sonn, 2007).

Consistent with previous studies which view cultural festivals as a manifestation of confirming and reinforcing ethnic identities and heritage (Buch et al., 2011; Savinovic et al., 2012), the NBF became a place of comfort and cultural fit for same-ethnicity attendees, especially in the face of uncertainties and insecurities of cultural differences felt outside the festival setting:

'… hearing loudly a language that you're familiar with and you're not ashamed to speak it – that's something you don't really experience often here. Like a lot of people … think twice before they speak their own language or play their own music in public places' (I2).

Similar to findings by Lewis (2015) in relation to dancing, our findings show that speaking one's language and hearing one's (ethnic) music played loudly create moments of freedom and power for attendees. Where spaces for true representation and enactment of culture may be missing in participants' everyday life, the NBF provides a 'natural' setting whereby 'permission' is granted to engage in cultural practices that are meaningful:

'[is a] place to express yourself and everything that you want to do … it's like you have permission to do something … it's not the same … over there [at NBF], it's just natural' (I14).

In allowing this freedom of expression, the NBF evokes experiences of nostalgia and forges a sense of connection to home. The concept of home includes both material and emotion aspects (Butcher, 2010; Liu, 2014). While the material aspect involves a physical location of dwelling, home consists of 'routinised everyday practices, relationship networks, and representation

imbued with personal and social meaning, cultural ideals, and values' (Butcher, 2010, pp. 24-25), representing a space of belonging and intimacy (Liu, 2014). Butcher (2010) further suggests an affective dimension of home which is embedded in memories of friends and family. In this sense, a place feels like home if it is considered a friendly, familiar and comfortable space where particular activities and relationships are lived (Liu, 2014). Our findings indicate that both the emotional and affective dimensions of home were evident at the festival. Through participant observation, we noted how the NBF brought together a group of newly arrived refugees who spoke the same language. By fostering a sense of unity around familiar cultural symbols, the festival created 'community moments' (Lewis, 2010) and a sensory experience of home for participants:

> 'If you see people dancing there [at the festival], they are really feeling happy, using their own language they feel safe, they feel like home … if at the festival I go to a Sudanese group that is singing, I will feel exactly like my home' (I8).

According to another respondent:

> 'It was really good to hear the music playing and some songs that I grew up with and I'm really familiar with' (I2).

The NBF allowed participants to practice ethnic identities and create a sense of home and safety, thus it is considered central to the production of a sense of groupness among attendees who relate to co-ethnics: *'We eat our Sudanese food … we chat, we sing and dance together'* (I5). This is consistent with Leal's (2016) study where the Holy Ghost festas played a role in the process of group making among people from the same origin/ethnicity.

The immediacy and temporality of enjoying dance and music at the festival provides 'momentary, ephemeral engagement with a "now community" that escapes the insecurities, precarity and depersonalizing effects' of migration (Lewis, 2015, p. 54). One attendee noted:

> 'It's just different. It's like when you go and see a movie. You're just very focused on what's going on … and then you have to [go] back to reality … .it just makes you feel like you're in your own country for a short time' (I13).

Level 2: migrant PSOC

A second level of psychological sense of community was identified amongst those who share the experience of immigration and its relevant struggles. While they may not be from the same ethnicity, and thus the commonality is one step removed, they share the refugee or ethnic minority immigrant status and the relevant experiences. As noted by Sonn and Fisher (1996), sharing similar histories, experiences, and identities is central in drawing people together, developing a psychological relatedness, and creating a shared emotional connection as one of the dimensions of PSOC (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In a study on Pacific festivals in New Zealand, Mackley-Crump (2015) also found such festivals to reaffirm the notion of diasporic community by creating unity among various Pacific communities that usually congregate within their own groups or church hubs.

The idea of a psychological sense of community based on shared experiences of immigration is particularly important due to a hierarchy of oppression or acceptability (Fisher & Sonn, 2007; Hassanli et al., 2020) - both among migrants from different ethnicities and between refugees and immigrants. Specifically, respondents indicated a covert system of discrimination against various culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australian society with African and Middle Eastern refugees at the bottom of the hierarchy. According to one respondent:

> 'I think they treat migrants differently … especially with Middle Eastern or Muslim background, they have a tough time, a tougher time' (I12).

Another attendee stated:

'I know for example refugees and asylum seekers have it really hard … [There are] a lot of comments that they're not welcome here and they are coming here to take resources' (I3).

Against this backdrop, the festival provides a space where all those with similar experiences of migration could come together and share their stories without needing to be reminded of the negative stigma associated with them. Rather than identify with the labels forced on them, the attendees use the festival space to connect with other migrants and internalize shared positive experiences that allows to develop a sense of belonging to the Migrant community, as well as foster their sense of pride and self-esteem. One respondent noted: '… *migrants are being celebrated and accepted [here] and that's something to be proud of*' (I14). Another maintained: *'Events like this are a way to celebrate migration and the great things that come with migration, basically' (I3)*.

For those at the margins of society, taking part in settings where others with similar experiences come together not only protects and enhances the individual's self-concept (Case & Hunter, 2012), but also influences their interdependence, attachments and togetherness (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). According to one respondent: '… *because I'm an immigrant I have more similarities with them [other migrant attendees] and I feel attracted to them as we have gone through the same thing' (I3).* These findings confirm previous studies on the role of festivals for minority and marginalized groups (Hassanli et al., 2020; Mackley-Crump, 2015; Mason, 2015).

Noting that the migration process is isolating, participants highlighted how interacting with other migrants at the festival provides the opportunity to gain an understanding about the social fabric of the Australian society and its various cultural groups:

'It shows you how … you are part of the same thing, from another culture, but in some way the same thing, the same living experience' (I13).

This shared experience of migration and isolation creates a 'psychological community of others' among different ethnic groups at the NBF which functions in two ways (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 261). First, the psychological sense of community among those who may have been 'othered' in their daily lives in the mainstream society provides social support through having someone to talk to about relevant migration experiences: *'we just chat and spend time with each other' (I6).* Another respondent maintained:

'… [we] prefer to have a place to sit and eat and share … this kind of environment was available and we were just having fun … we prefer enjoying food, listening to music and just talking about [our] story' (I1).

Second, this fostered sense of 'fictive kinship' (Carter, 2007, p. 547) functions as a social transmitter of strategies that helps attendees navigate their way in the new society. According to our respondents, having a community of people with shared experiences of migration provides the reassurance that others have survived the process and that they are not the only ones going through the relevant hardships:

'I enjoy talking to them because they have been here longer, and they can give ways or means to survive' (I10).

Similarly, interacting with those who had been through similar experiences, many of whom were involved in volunteering and mentoring roles at the festival, helped the newly arrived migrants with their sense of fitting in:

'[You] meet people and understand what different options you have and start navigating the net … the net of community organizations or people who … [may] provide you with some opportunities' (I4).

There was also the opportunity to look up to those who had more experience with settling in the Australian society. One respondent, who owned her own business, claimed that she was mainly driven by how she could be an inspiration for new migrants who would see her and believe that '*if*

she can do it, I can do it [too]' (I6). For her and other more established migrants, this level of PSOC and solidarity at the festival offered a sense of gratitude and appreciation as it reminded them of their early days and what they had been through to be where they were at now.

All in all, the psychological sense of belonging to a Migrant community created reciprocal benefits for both the newly arrived and the more established migrants:

'…when they came here, they may feel that people are not accepting them. Or they feel like they're alone…when you meet these people [at the festival] and you interact and speak with them, and sometimes they ask me how did you find Australia and what you do for the first time?….And how have you coped with this…I think for them and for me, that would be the kind of a relief, right? When you talk to others and they give you their experience and you give them your experience, you feel like you gain and they gain at the same time [that] you interact and you feel you're not alone' (I5).

Level 3: mainstream PSOC

While the previous two levels of PSOC fostered intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic connections, this third level is related to creating 'togetherness' between migrant attendees and mainstream Australian attendees. In the first two levels, ties are built between reasonably homogenous groups (either due to shared ethnicity or shared migration experience), whereas here a connection is made between two rather diverse groups. The common element in this PSOC is a life lived in Australia and a desire to understand each other. This equates to a shared emotional connection in McMillan and Chavis' (1986) framework, where people become closer the more they interact, and a positive experience helps facilitate a closer bond. It also supports the Contact Theory where interactions between diverse groups is argued to reduce negative prejudice through underlining the similarities between them (Allport, 1954, as cited in Duffy & Mair, 2018).

The NBF allows connections to be made with the mainstream population in multiple ways. It provides a chance for migrant attendees to choose how to represent their culture as attendees, performers and stallholders (i.e. which parts of their culture and/or identity they wish to share, and what constitutes an authentic representation of that culture and/or identity). In doing so, the festival helps create awareness and education among mainstream society, which in turn fosters respect of the migrant cultures:

'They [mainstream society] will learn, they will become interested and maybe it will change their mind […]. So they challenge themselves and they think that it's not all about what media and politicians say. It's about the depth of the culture' (I11).

While language was often a barrier, it was music, dance and food that not only increased understanding and awareness among NBF attendees but also provided opportunities for them to socialize and have fun. According to Permezel and Duffy (2007), music and dance allows people to experience emotions in a raw way which affects how they relate to one another. We observed that the mainstream Australian attendees at the NBF joined the stage to dance along to the ethnic music that was being played. Koefoed et al. (2020) confirms that cultural festivals empower bodies to dance and break down social distance and by doing so, they eliminate hierarchical barriers among people and create feelings of collectivity.

The NBF participants suggested that such opportunities allowed them to experience unconditional acceptance as 'humans', resulting in a sense of relatedness and connectedness:

'…it was really good to see some Aussies dancing with these songs…Because that's the thing, we're all humans, we all have things that we like, that we dislike, or things [that] make us happy or unhappy. We all like to have a bit of fun now and then, you know' (I2).

Through the transmission of joy, attendees became more alike. Such feelings of acceptance and relatedness serve as catalysts for the experience of belonging and connectedness (Sonn & Fisher, 1996).

The festival location was considered significant for this third, broader level of PSOC to be realized. Many respondents noted that previous cultural festivals they had attended were mainly held in segregated ethnic neighborhoods which limited opportunities for exposure and interaction with the mainstream population. These accounts are consistent with previous findings where cultural and political divisions within a host city resulted in some events attracting only members of one community and restraining the bridging of ties between diverse communities (Devine & Quinn, 2019). As such, the central city location of NBF had allowed attendees to move from the periphery to the center, both in a physical and psychological sense (Mackley-Crump & Zemke, 2019), bringing mainstream Australians into the festival and allowing for interactions to happen:

'Darling Harbour is a good place that brings people [together] … that mix could happen [there] with a variety of people … ' (I4).

Emotional safety, where 'people feel physically and subjectively safe and secure' with others, is important in creating a sense of togetherness (Sonn & Fisher, 1996, p. 425). Despite the festival being located in a normally 'unsafe' space for the respondents, it was deemed successful in creating a sense of emotional safety:

'There's no reason why I would go there. It's just nothing for me to do there, it's like New Beginnings took me [there] because it makes it safe … people are able to express their culture proudly and that's why I went there. Otherwise I'd never go' (I3).

Furthermore, the respondents saw the festival as an opportunity to challenge the dominant narrative about some groups of migrants as 'takers', 'queue jumpers' and 'trouble-makers'. The opportunity to showcase their capabilities through their artwork/business or to act as mentors and volunteers on the day, allowed them to build confidence and helped conceptualize their position in the new society. Being seen for 'who they really are' not only bolsters their sense of self but also helps in creating a sense of acceptance and connection with the mainstream community.

The attendees also found benefit in getting access to professional networks during the NBF, which often expanded beyond the festival. Applying the social capital concepts of bridging and bonding to PSOC theory, Townley et al. (2011) found that bridging capital provides community members with opportunities for normalized relationships and experiences, thus helping them with their sense of inclusion and engagement with the broader dominant community. As such, one interviewee who was also performing on the day emphasized that artists like her 'get a [professional] profile' (I3) through the festival, further highlighting the benefits in bridging capital (Townley et al., 2011):

'It's a massive platform to get your music known and, you know, it's a massive stage. It was the biggest stage I've played at … having that experience, that opportunity is massive for the artist that is new to the country and wants to continue their art journey' (I3).

The same respondent continued to say:

'I made new connections, even for my business, I was approached by … and potentially I can display my products there, all because of this festival. Otherwise I wouldn't have met these people' (I3).

This finding contests Wilks' (2011) argument that bridging social capital among attendees is not a feature of all festivals. Hence, by creating a variety of opportunities for the fulfillment and integration of attendees' needs, this third level of PSOC addresses the relevant dimension of McMillan and Chavis (1986).

Conclusion

Understanding how to facilitate migrants' adaptation process in the new country and increase their well-being is of paramount importance to national and state governments in multicultural

societies. Yet the lack of research investigating social aspects of sustainability affects the capacity of governments to achieve sustainable development. Responding to calls for research which examines the role of events in this context (Pernecky, 2013), we applied McMillan and Chavis' (1986) framework as a valuable analytic tool to identify the contribution of multicultural festivals to migrants' psychological sense of community. The framework has allowed us to identify three different levels of PSOC facilitated by the NBF that each address, to a greater or lesser extent, the four dimensions of membership, mutual influence, fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection (presented as FMPSOC model in Figure 1). In so doing, we have provided evidence of M-PSOC (Brodsky & Marx, 2001) and how this relates to the experiences of migrant attendees at a cultural festival.

Our model identifies three nested and interconnected levels of Ethnic, Migrant and Mainstream PSOC. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the tightest and most cohesive PSOC is based on ethnicity, one's primary identification (Sonn & Fisher, 1996), and as such it sits at the center of our model. This PSOC provides the strongest alignment with each of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) four dimensions. Wrapped around the Ethnic PSOC is the significant and important Migrant PSOC. Here, diverse ethnic groups are drawn together based on a shared experience of migration. While there is still alignment with each of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) four dimensions, the Migrant PSOC differs from the Ethnic PSOC in the sense that it develops migrants' understanding of social structures and values by providing opportunities to learn how to connect with mainstream society. This PSOC also plays an important role in removing hierarchies of oppression or acceptability (Fisher & Sonn, 2007; Hassanli et al., 2020) by providing a safe space for the sharing of stories. Such opportunities enhance migrants' self-esteem and well-being through the validation of positive feelings and experiences, whilst providing them with a sense of security that the difficult conditions associated with migration will change.

Whilst the importance of Ethnic PSOC in developing social connections for festival attendees to enhance their well-being is noted (Phinney et al., 2001; Smith & Silva, 2011; Sonn & Fisher, 1996), connections to other levels of community outside of the Ethnic PSOC - such as the Migrant PSOC identified here - are required to reduce the risk of exclusion and segregation in society (Fisher & Sonn, 2007). To this end, the FMPSOC model provides valuable insights into the important contribution of multicultural festivals in assisting migrants as they develop relationships outside the Ethnic PSOC. By offering leadership roles such as volunteering and mentorship and providing opportunities for migrants to showcase their capabilities and achievements, the NBF increased formal and informal connections between new and established migrants from different backgrounds. Alternatively, event organizers can design informal seating areas and breakout sessions where engagement between various migrant event attendees is encouraged. Regardless of the opportunities implemented at events, it is of paramount importance to increase attendees' awareness of the opportunities for engagement with broader ethnic groups, and the benefits gained from these interactions.

The third level of PSOC draws on a shared emotional connection between migrants and mainstream Australians. Despite being the weakest PSOC, it still has the potential to enhance migrants' feelings of acceptance by the broader community, and thus its significance cannot be under-estimated. Whilst Kingsbury (2016, p. 225) considers that food, music, and clothes reflect 'thin aspects of diversity', these factors provided opportunities for shared experiences within the Mainstream PSOC at NBF by removing barriers of language, limited cultural knowledge or shared norms between migrant and mainstream populations. Indeed, migrants identified similarities between themselves and the broader community in relation to needs such as enjoyment or the desire to learn about other cultures, which in turn increased their feelings of acceptance (Sonn & Fisher, 1996).

Whilst festivals held in ethnic neighborhoods exclude members of the broader community (Devine & Quinn, 2019), the selection of the NBF location provided an opportunity for event attendance from a diverse range of cultures, thus increasing opportunities for migrants to

engage with the mainstream population. This finding highlights the importance of location of multicultural festivals in supporting migrants' adaptation to the new society and their well-being. Further, the importance of involving ethnic minorities in the planning and programming of such festivals is evident. The NBF enabled migrant communities to control the inclusion of experiences within the event, reducing hegemonic power often evident in liberal state-sponsored multicultural policies and practices (Kingsbury, 2016). Further, by acknowledging that ethnic minorities are internally different and providing a platform for these variations to be represented, the NBF moves away from depicting a 'united front' to its audience (Fincher et al., 2014, p. 44), thus increasing the authenticity of the event. The showcasing of ethnic businesses provides opportunities to alter cultural misconceptions and acts as a bridge to Mainstream PSOC. These findings provide evidence of the capacity of events to increase cross-cultural understanding and tolerance between migrant and mainstream communities (Fincher et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2012; Pernecky, 2013). Alternatively, event organizers can consider engagement opportunities such as a mentorship scheme for mainstream attendees that allows meaningful interactions with migrants.

The FMPSOC model identifies and unpacks the different levels of PSOC that are created through a multicultural festival, enabling critical event scholars, event organizers and local governments alike to understand how such festivals contribute to the social sustainability of their communities. It also provides a framework for evaluating this contribution and identifying areas for improvement. Whilst it confirms that multicultural festivals can provide opportunities for attendees from multiple cultures to bond and bridge ties through the sharing of experiences, to avoid developing a festival which commodifies culture to support neo-liberal goals (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2016) it is imperative that event organizers facilitate attendees' membership of the Migrant PSOC and Mainstream PSOC. To enhance understanding of migrants' M-PSOC through event attendance and the contribution of membership to their well-being, and hence social sustainability, further research is recommended in a number of areas.

Future avenues for research include the application of the FMPSOC model in different event contexts and with various groups of event attendees to identify the role of socio-cultural factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, and religion in influencing the formation of MPSOC. Next, as sustainable development necessitates that long-term benefits be equitably distributed across groups (Smith, 2009), future research should include longitudinal studies to better assess the ongoing achievement of social sustainability through specific events (we have only found suggestions of longer-lasting value in this study). Moreover, as the performance and presentation of culture may reinforce a certain public identity for ethnic communities (Procter, 2004), further research is required to understand how multicultural festivals alter the mainstream population's perceptions of migrants' identity. The findings from these studies would provide insights which may be used to develop sustainable development strategies that move away from a perspective of multiculturalism underpinned by assimilation of new migrants (Fincher et al., 2014), to one which increases the mainstream community's capacity to adapt to and benefit from migrants' skills and knowledge.

Disclosure statement

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