

Stereotypes Created Within the LGBT Community on Social Media and its Infect on Mainstream Society: A Case Study on the Pride Parade Tag and Its Social Media Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the social media stereotypes of the LGBT community and their impact on mainstream society from a sociological perspective. Images posted on Instagram about pride parades were selected for the study. The main research method was categorical sampling and data study. In addition, based on the findings of this study and the characteristics of mainstream society, it was further found that stereotypes within the LGBT community have a negative impact on the survival space of this population.

Keywords: Social Media, LGBT, Stereotype, Pride Parade.

1. INTRODUCTION

LGBT is the abbreviation that refers collectively to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Acknowledging that the term LGBT encompasses a variety of identities that could not be reduced to a single one, referring to anyone who is non-heterosexual [1]. A stereotype is a generalized belief about a particular category of people [2]. It is an expectation that people might have about every person of a particular group. Stereotypes of LGBT people are based on their sexual orientations, gender identities, or gender expressions. Stereotypical perceptions may be acquired through a lack of first-hand familiarity, resulting in an increased reliance on generalizations [3]. Traditional stereotypes of gay men include femininity, hyper-masculinity, and sexual immorality. Stereotypes about lesbianism include that there must be a tomboy in a couple, or if both are feminine, that the mainstream media prefers to present it in an extremely feminine way. Stereotypes of transgender people are hermaphrodites [4]. Traditional methods of obtaining information about LGBT people include interactions with parents, teachers, peers and mass media. With the popularity of the Internet, social media has become another important reason for people gaining stereotypes about LGBT.

There is a gap in previous research on the stereotypes that exist within the LGBT community. In the

relationship between the LGBT community and social media, most studies have focused on hate speech. So the stereotypes of the LGBT about all of its groups and their impressions of mainstream society remain unclear. Pride Parade is the event that agitates for LGBT rights and celebrates the LGBT culture. Pride parades are foundational rituals for LGBT movements across the globe; as such, they act as collective responses to oppression, encourage redefinition of self, and express collective identity [5]. The potential benefits for LGBT minorities are predicted in the sense of media empowerment, social movement shifting, or domestic relationships [6, 7]. Specifically speaking, Pride Parade covers all the potentially beneficial aspects that have been described or predicted in current studies. Thus, Pride Parade was chosen to be the example of this study. For the impact of stereotypes shaped within communities on mainstream society, the author refers to the existing literature for a categorical discussion.

To provide some evidence that stereotypes exist within the LGBT community and are propagated in a biased manner on social media. It was possible to study the photos posted on Instagram to promote the Pride Parade. This is where this research begins. By sorting and sampling, these photos were classified into 6 groups by identifying whether they have these 5 elements according to the main types of LGBT stereotypes summarized by Valentine, Trautner, and Spade or not: Gay with feminine

temperament, over-masculinization, tomboy, both lesbian couple with hyper-femininity, drag queen, and others (that do not contain stereotypes). This study will finally compare and synthesize the photo number of each group and draw conclusion through typological analysis.

2. DATA AND METHOD

The author used categorical sampling and data analysis. 50 posts for an advertising pride parade in tags on Instagram with the tag #pride parade were selected. For the selection of photos, the last 50 photos posted under this tag would be chosen within one single month in the year 2022. The images are from an official named Third Point of View, from the officials used to promote the various regional marches, and from independent photographers. The following types of photos will be excluded: those posted to highlight the number of people in the parade, those posted as individual participants, and non-community guests invited by the event officials.

Then these photos were classified into 6 groups by identifying whether they have these 5 elements according to the main types of LGBT stereotypes summarized by Valentine, Trautner, and Spade or not: Gay with feminine temperament, over-masculinization, tomboy, both lesbian couple with hyper-femininity, drag queen, and others (that do not contain stereotypes, and we can get the photo number of each group [4]. The percentage of each element can be figured out by using this formula: Percentage=Photo number/50, and its result can be shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of pride parade posts

Category	Percentage
others	30%
over-masculinization	28%
drag queen	16%
both lesbian couples with hyper-femininity	14%
gay with a feminine temperament	12%
tomboy	0%

3. RESULTS

As the table shows, most of the selected photos of the Pride Parade can be categorized into those five categories of stereotypes, accounting for 70%. It can be seen that stereotypes exist for LGBT people and the classification method proposed by Valentine, Trautner, and Spade is in line with the factual situation.

Photos that do not fall into those five categories ("others") still take the top spot at 30%. Among these photos were older couples, people dressed up for the parade, and people who showed off their bodies. It is

clear that event promoters are very motivated to promote the diversity of the community. Taking the second place is the overly muscular male with a percentage of 28% of all images. To highlight their masculinity and muscular lines, they tend to be topless. The percentage of the next three categories: drag queens, both lesbian couples with hyper-femininity, and gays with feminine temperaments are close to each other, accounting for 16%, 14% and 12% of the photos in that order.

And surprisingly, the tomboy group doesn't seem to be popular on social media - these event promoters don't put a camera's eye on them. Among the 50 images selected, there were no photos of this type of lesbian. This may have something to do with the fact that they have always been overlooked in the community. This may be indirectly related to the neglected position they have always had in the community. This is because they can be perceived as not identifying with their femininity and not physically recognizing their femininity [6].

4. DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Status and Reasons for the Limited Understanding of LGBT People in Mainstream Society

People outside of the community do not usually study the community in-depth, and what knowledge they do have about the group usually comes from what they see in the media by chance [3]. This is because LGBT people are difficult to reach by people outside the community. Firstly, LGBT people are a small percentage of all people in society in terms of numbers. Sexual minorities are called "minorities" precisely because they are a minority in society at large. Gallup's latest update on lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identification finds that 5.6% of U.S [7]. On the other hand, it is difficult for people outside the community to know if a person is LGBT. For the most part, LGBT people do not disclose their minority identities (gender and sexual orientation) to people outside the community, and they try to act as if they are "normal" people in their daily lives [8].

Even when people in this community are approached, they may or may not know that they belong to the LGBT community. The reluctance of minorities to mention their identity stems from prejudice and discrimination in mainstream society, which can lead to verbal and behavioral bullying [9]. These result in little exposure to LGBT people outside of the community. Mainstream society has little access to LGBT people, resulting in the mass media becoming a bridge between minorities and mainstream society. And social media is the main avenue for advocacy in today's digital age [10]. So these promotional officials and independent photographers have become one of the few people in the community who can communicate with the outside world, and they have also gained a high level of voice as a result.

4.2. Advocacy for LGBT People to "Being Themselves"

The purpose of the social media campaign for the event was twofold: to attract more people to support the march, and to raise awareness of the LGBT community. Propagandists on social media use the public's curiosity to attract attention and gain more attention, so they need to highlight the LGBT community as different. They need to show people who dress up in a way that they don't see in everyday life or in intimate relationships with same-sex partners. It's an outward sign of "being yourselves", and it shows that people within the LGBT community don't care about the public eye. To highlight the characteristics of this group of people who boldly "do yourselves". Advocates need to identify typical targets and promote them to everyone. This bias can lead to the neglect of relatively low-profile people in the Pride Parade crowd who are common in everyday life.

It could be argued that the propagandists' cameras are focused on "role models" in the community who seem to be brave enough to face their true selves, and who are very different from those seen in the everyday life of mainstream society. These "role models" may express love boldly, and may dress beautifully to attract attention. A large percentage of those who participate in the march may differ only slightly from the mainstream in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity. Others may be less visible in the parade for several reasons such as psychological shyness, economic hardship, or simply because they don't like to dress in exaggerated clothing. So people who are not so different from the mainstream are ignored by the propagandists, and also by people outside the community who see these photos promoting the Pride Parade.

4.3. The Formation of Stereotypes and Its Impact on the Living Environment of the LGBT Community

Social media is one of the few ways for the LGBT community to communicate with mainstream society and because the average internet user is not a critical thinker, people outside the community will generally accept whatever the propagandist expresses. In the perspective of these photos, LGBT people can express themselves boldly: they can kiss topless without fear, and wear exaggeratedly beautiful costumes. In these photos, almost everyone is smiling happily. In these photos, almost everyone is smiling happily. People in the LGBT community are first and foremost people, and only secondarily do they have the LGBT label on them. More than anything else, they want to be treated like normal people [11]. So as photographers or senders of photos, the people they choose to use as representatives of the community to promote the Pride parade are not representative of the LGBT community as a whole. But because of the singularity of the medium, the public

receives only the LGBT images in these photos. And according to the statistics in the previous article, most of these representative figures are concentrated in those categories [4]. These categories then become what mainstream society perceives as LGBT people. These types of people are from the stereotypical image of the LGBT community in mainstream society.

The impact of this stereotype on the LGBT community will be discussed in two ways. The author will divide people in mainstream society into two categories: those who do not accept the LGBT community and those who do. People in the first category cannot accept people who are different from themselves, and they believe that the sexual orientation and gender identity of LGBT people are incomprehensible [12]. When this group of people sees that the LGBT in the publicity photos are almost dressed in a non-daily way and therefore very different from themselves, they think that people from the LGBT community are very strange and very different from what they see as normal people. These people do not see LGBT people as normal people and are unable to communicate with them normally. The LGBT stereotypes that are formed from social media make them assume that people in the community are so strange and different that they cannot be treated as normal. This deepens the discrimination and exclusion of such people belonging to the LGBT community.

This type of stereotype can become a tool for them to identify LGBT identity [13]. But when they find someone around them who has the characteristics of these stereotypes, they can identify that person as LGBT, and that one may be at risk of coming out of the closet passively. For another group of people in mainstream society who accept LGBT people, the bold and courageous side of LGBT people expressing themselves will allow this group of people to overlook the fact that LGBT is discriminated against and ostracized as a marginalized group in mainstream society [14]. While boldness and novelty are both positive images, it's just as much a stereotype. This can lead to the natural assumption that LGBT people are usually in a good state of life and psychological well-being. LGBT people are still part of a marginalized group that is frowned upon by mainstream society and needs the help of social forces to support them. Over-promotion of positive images of the LGBT community is an act of whitewashing which can leave the minority-accepting population with no sense of support for the LGBT community.

It seems to be correct for public officials and independent photographers should not only promote the non-everyday image of LGBT people but also promote the relatively ordinary people in the community who can be seen in mainstream society daily. For this research, the results turn against this clumsy suggestion for officials and indie photographers. The reason for that, as it has been implicitly delivered above makes an ambiguous

statement about the media influence of Instagram which has been chosen for this research. For some scholars, it is obvious that Instagram is in some sense special. According to Vilceanu, observations from the promotion aspects of LGBT social movements could be understood as working effectively. Such kinds of observations may be inherent to the medium: Instagram is not exactly conducive to complex arguments. To place such an emphasis on the role of Instagram as an influential medium, the social role everyone plays is not limited to the minority or majority, but something beyond. Such a picture or vision-favored public transforms complex arguments that are built on extensively researched topics between conversation partners who know each other well and wish to build long-term interactions [15]. It is undeniable that the act of social movements and social identities go for equality in the justification from both civil ways or mobilized engagements is vigorous. The nature of social media and the need for group promotion does not necessarily agree with the true spirit of LGBT and their value. As Vilceanu drew in his research as well as many of the posts and responses, these were all primarily positive in their interpretation of the SCOTUS decision seen as an LGBTQ victory, more work on interpreting the application of a negotiable code is necessary.

5. CONCLUSION

The survey of social media postings used to promote the Pride Parade and the case study of stereotypes affecting the living environment of the LGBT community provided insight into the existence and impact of social media stereotypes on the LGBT community. The findings show that stereotypes of LGBT people exist and that outside stereotypes are created by advocates in the community to attract attention and support. The stereotypical LGBT person is not representative of everyone in the community. In today's digital age, propagandists on social media have become the main bridge between the LGBT community and mainstream society. The homophobic stereotypes created by social media can be picked up by the uncritical masses, which can lead to a negative impact on the survival of the LGBT community. Propagandists in social media should improve their approach to the creation of this stereotype and its consequences.

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