Investigating Podcasts for Gay Men:

Coping Strategies for Discrimination within the Gay Community

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Despite the expectation that the gay community provides a sense of belonging to young gay men, internal discrimination within the gay community, may lead to feelings of frustration and hopelessness in them. This study explored strategies known by gay men to cope with internal discrimination. In addition, it was investigated which coping strategies either contribute to engagement or disengagement behaviours, in response to the experienced discrimination. To answer the research questions a thematic analysis of four episodes of the German podcast "Vollqueer" was executed. In each of the selected podcast episodes a different area of discrimination within the gay community was addressed, those being racism, ableism, toxic masculinity, and body shaming. Through the analysis, many different coping strategies were identified, including engagement behaviours such as self-acceptance and visibility and disengagement behaviours like internalised hate or isolation. Overall, most coping strategies corresponded with engagement behaviour. Despite the limitation that this study explored only four episodes of a single podcast, the findings provide a first inventory of various coping strategies by gay men in response to internal discrimination. To address internal discrimination when engaging with the gay community, young gay men at risk of internal discrimination could be provided education on these strategies. Future research could also explore if and how similar coping strategies are used by other minorities.

Introduction

On the 18th of August 2006, the German Bundestag enforced the General Act on Equal Treatment ("The General Act on Equal Treatment", 2011). Through this act, Germany officially banned discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Ever since then, gay men were supposed to no longer fear being discriminated against in the workplace, in education, or health services. Nevertheless, the General Act on Equal Treatment did not help to fully eliminate discrimination gay men experience today (Ziegler, 2020). Gay men also experience exclusion and discrimination within the gay community, including gatekeeping and racism, especially because the community is fundamentally designed for white, cisgender, gay men (Parmenter, Galliher, & Maughan, 2020). This will focus on how gay men cope with internal discrimination, by analysing podcasts for gay men about the same topic. Throughout this thesis "gay men" refers to men who themselves identify as gay and who have sex with men (Finneran & Stephenson, 2013).

Discrimination within the Gay Community

Discrimination of gay men has been a subject of research for approximately 40 years already (Harrison, 2003). In her paper, Harrison (2003) described sexual identity development of gay men. She addresses how stressful it is for gay men to hide their homosexuality to avoid discrimination by others. Possible emerging consequences include isolation, depression, or suicide. The primary focus was always on how gay men experience discrimination through the heteronormative society, i.e., by people who are not part of the LGBTQIA+ community, although gay men often experience discrimination within the gay community itself (Parmenter, Galliher, & Maughan, 2020).

Even though the community itself is diverse, power and privilege caused young, white, cisgender gay men to become the centre of the gay community (Parmenter, Galliher, &

Maughan, 2020). As such, target of internal discrimination are usually minorities within this already marginalized group and can take on the form of *racism* (Ibañez, Van Oss Marin, Flores, Millet, & Diaz, 2012), *ableism* (Shapiro, 2015), *toxic masculinity* (Barrett, 2020) and *body shaming* (Wood, 2004).

An appropriate term to describe this process is intersectionality, which defines the categorisation of race, gender, sexuality, ability etc. as related and influencing each other (Collins & Bilge, 2020). At first, one might assume that, because sexuality is not a topic of discrimination within the gay community, other types of discrimination will also not occur. Possibly, because the gay community experiences discrimination itself and therefore is generally accepting. However, it is not that simple, as intersectionality works like a cluster. Discriminatory beliefs about one topic can fuel similar beliefs about other topics. Acceptance of one minority, in this case sexuality, does therefore not exclude discrimination of other minorities.

First, just because gay men as a minority want to be accepted themselves, does not mean that *racism* is not also an issue in the gay community. Past research already investigated how for instance gay-related racism is experienced by Latino gay men (Ibañez et al., 2012). It was found that racism in the gay community takes on various forms under the overarching term "Gay-Context Racism". For one, non-white gay men find themselves to be heavily objectified. They usually receive more attention due to their race instead of them as a person, simply because they fulfil specific ideas of sexual preferences and fantasies. Secondly, feelings of discomfort are common in Latino gay men whenever they are in a place filled with predominately white men. Lastly, it can be hard to find suitable partners. Many gay, primarily white men are not interested in sex, nor a relationship with someone of a different race or ethnicity, making the selection of partners even smaller than it already is.

Ableism, or homo-ableism in this case, describes a set of attitudes and actions whose result is the subjugation of gays with disabilities by gays without disabilities (Shapiro, 2015). In past research it was already uncovered how disabled gay men view their disability as an obstacle in their pursuit of intimate relationships with men. It is common in the gay community to encounter disability discrimination, creating the impression that physical attributes are far more important to gay men than emotional or personality characteristics. Consequently, gay men with a disability struggle to find and maintain a genuine intimate relationship with another man (Henry, Fuerth, & Figliozzi, 2010).

Toxic masculinity as a construct, which also includes femmephobia, can often be found in the gay community. It typically encompasses the oppression of femininity in gay men. This results in a common dislike of effeminate men, feminine acting men, and men who do not pass as heterosexual in a public setting. This dislike extends to intimacy, in which many gay men rule out feminine men as possible partners immediately. Instead, a heteronormative masculine man is desired (Barrett, 2020).

Finally, being a widespread issue in society, *body shaming* is also an enormous part of gay men's lives. Several studies already examined how dissatisfaction with body image influences people in general. It was found by Wood (2004) that gay men report the highest levels of body dissatisfaction compared to straight women or lesbians. That is in great part due to the issue of objectification within the gay community. What gay men share with women however is their drive to achieve a body shape they perceive to be ideal (Yelland & Tiggemann, 2003).

When compared to straight men, it becomes clear that gay men do not only strive to be thin, but also muscular. Gay men tend to be less satisfied with their own level of muscularity compared to straight men (Yelland & Tiggemann, 2003). Nevertheless, it was also found that although there is a difference in gay and straight men regarding body dissatisfaction, there are

some similarities. In both cases, social perception as well as media influences were the main source of body dissatisfaction, especially for single men (Morgan & Arcelus, 2009).

This dissatisfaction of gay men can also be accompanied by binge eating, purging and frequent diets. Such behaviours fulfil the purpose of being more sexually attractive for other men. This is in accordance with research confirming how important physical appearance is to gay men compared to personal and cultural identities (Wood, 2004).

Summarized, different minorities within the gay community experience discrimination from other members of the gay community, creating maladaptive behaviours to counteract discrimination and negatively affects their mental health. This can have tremendous negative outcomes for gay men at risk of internal discrimination. To oppose such outcomes, using coping strategies could prove to be effective.

Coping with Discrimination within the Gay Community

Previous research has shown that individuals typically display two types of responses when confronted with discrimination. These take on the form of either *engagement* or *disengagement*, as proposed by the Social Identity Theory (Bourguignon et al., 2020). Social Identity Theory analyses individuals' self-conception as group members. It focuses on group membership, group processes and intergroup relations (Hogg, 2018).

Engagement behaviours are typically strategies for problem solving. Members of a marginalized group seek social support within their own community who shared similar experiences. This strategy also directly leads to other strategies, those being affirmation of ingroup identity and group social support. Collective action is another known engagement strategy, indicating an attempt to collectively improve the social status of the marginalized group within society (Bourguignon et al., 2020).

Disengagement behaviours typically take on the form of withdrawal or denial. Among the most common disengagement strategies is self-group distancing, which describes members of a marginalized group trying to improve their social position by leaving that group. Another example is avoidance of discrimination which, as the name suggests, describes marginalized people avoiding any situation in which they could be discriminated against. In-group blame is another known disengagement strategy, in which members of a marginalized group blame the in-group itself for the belittling view of society in their group (Bourguignon et al., 2020).

In a previous study on usage of engagement and disengagement behaviours by gay people, Bourguignon et al. (2020) examined how ingroup identification of gay people impacts well-being. Their findings indicated that identification of gay people with their community improved well-being, while decreasing self-group distancing. The study also found that identification was positively related to engagement and negatively related to disengagement behaviours. However, what is missing from his study is a collection of what engagement and disengagement behaviours entail for gay men.

It would be valuable to learn about the strategies gay men use to manage discrimination because knowledge about effective coping could be shared and help other discriminated gay men. A qualitative analysis would be specifically suited for this purpose, as the experiences of other gay men who successfully coped with discrimination can be analysed in greater detail. Such narratives of discriminated gay men could help expand the findings of Bourguignon et al. (2020), while simultaneously providing the opportunity to explore other potential strategies, not covered by the engagement and disengagement framework.

Studying this could provide valuable insights which will help gay men with issues of discrimination, which they might encounter in the future. Doing so could result in them being better able to find their place in the community, in which they could openly express themselves without doubts or regret. However, also for researchers in general it could be of interest to see

how coping strategies differ depending on what kind of discrimination is experienced. Moreover, the use of storytelling through podcasts to narrate coping strategies is a topic that has not been studied yet. This could offer ground for similar studies of this topic in the future.

Ultimately, the aim of this study is to answer the following research question:

"What coping strategies targeting discrimination within the gay community do gay men mention in podcasts?"

This question should help to gain a general understanding of what coping strategies are used. Nevertheless, the focus will specifically be on strategies which either correspond with engagement or disengagement:

1. "Which of these strategies contribute to engagement?"
2. "Which of these strategies contribute to disengagement?"

Methods

Study Design

Storytelling. To qualitatively analyse discrimination, storytelling provided through podcasts is analysed. *Storytelling* is an over centuries old method to preserve knowledge, offer entertainment and build relationships. Research has shown that instead of being presented with scientific theoretical content, it is easier for humans to internalize content and contexts through stories (Jäger & Hinneburg, 2019). This is due to storytelling heavily relying on personification. Stories focus on a particular individual or group which makes listeners identify with and show empathy towards them (Dahlstrom, 2014). On the one hand, storytelling makes it possible to reach groups of people and expand their curiosity and interest about specific subjects (Jäger & Hinneburg, 2019). If these stories are about gay minorities and prevailing struggles they experience, it would be possible to broaden other gay men's understanding of their situation on a deeper level. One the other hand, storytelling is about sharing personal

experiences, while simultaneously expressing individual values and emotions. Telling, just like hearing about these experiences from others helps to deal with the addressed issues, ultimately leading to developing resilience (East, Jackson, O'Brien & Peters, 2010), possibly through the application of coping strategies.

      Podcasts. A podcast could be a suitable medium for researching storytelling in this study. Podcasts are usually an audio recording, sometimes a video recording, which can be listened to on many different devices (Hur & Suh, 2012). They are a popular medium nowadays, used for entertainment purposes or the distribution of information (Aziz et al. 2021). In the past a variety of advantages of consuming podcasts were found, including portability, flexibility, and convenience. These features make it possible to listen anytime the listener wants, wherever they want. At the same time, podcasts can be listened to repeatedly and also while multitasking. Such practicalities make information provided in podcasts more accessible for listeners. Podcasts also proved to be beneficial in the past regarding language learning (Heilesen, 2010). It's possible that storytelling and therefore education about how to cope with discrimination within the gay community can have similarly beneficial effects.

      Ultimately, compared to the benefits of consuming podcasts, the benefits of storytelling through podcasts are not yet thoroughly studied. Still, the author assumes they could prove to be a good approach to answer the research questions. Reason for that assumption is the fact that the podcasts "Vollqueer" in particular is completely representative of gay men and the discrimination they experience. Such representation suggests that coping strategies are addressed which can then be applied to either engagement or disengagement behaviours.

Procedure

      For the purpose of qualitatively analyzing gay men's responses to discrimination within the gay community, stories as shared in podcasts are analyzed. At first, different podcasts were

examined for suitability. For a podcast to be selected for this study, certain criteria had to be fulfilled. Only podcasts which addressed the topic of discrimination within the gay community were of interest. Also, because the study focused on responses to discrimination of gay men, it was necessary for the guests to be gay men themselves. The platform of choice for the provision of podcasts was Spotify. To minimize the collection of their podcasts, only podcasts which had the LGBTQIA+-tag were further examined. Podcasts that focused on lesbians or other queer people, and featured no episodes solely about gay men, were excluded. The remaining selection of podcasts was reduced through popularity and personal preference. The quality and suitability of these podcasts for the study was assessed by listening to randomly selected sample episodes.

It was important that the guests of each podcast mentioned strategies to deal with discrimination in their episodes. Therefore, all published episodes of these podcasts (173 episodes) were filtered until only the ones fulfilling these criteria remained. Out of these, the podcast "Vollqueer" was selected before four episodes of approximately 30 to 40 minutes were chosen for further analysis. The choice was influenced by how different topics of discrimination were discussed during the episodes. Initially the podcast "schwanz & ehrlich" was also taken under consideration for further analysis. However, even though different topics of discrimination were addressed in its episodes, no coping strategies were provided.

Data Collection

The focus of this study is a German podcast, which mainly discusses topics of interest for gay men. "Vollqueer" started in 2020 and as of now has 63 episodes (January 2022), which are available on multiple platforms including Spotify and Apple Podcasts. The name can be translated into "completely queer". It is described by the creator Antonio Šošić as a podcast for marginal issues in an already marginalised community. Through intersectionality he aims to create visibility for groups that find no approval in mainstream-media. Therefore, topics like

disability and racial diversity in the queer community are not overlooked, but instead thoroughly discussed with regular guests. The table below (Table 1) offers a list of the four selected episodes for this study.

For each episode at least one guest is invited, who can discuss a certain topic of discrimination. Almost all episodes are only recorded and available acoustically. One of the exceptions is also listed below. Because "Schwul und taub: Wie inklusiv ist die Queer-Community?" ("Gay and deaf: How inclusive is the Queer-Community?") is about being deaf within the gay community, this episode is available visually. The associated video includes translators using sign language to be more inclusive of deafness.

Table 1

"Vollqueer" episodes analyzed in this study.

	1st Episode	2nd Episode	3rd Episode	4th Episode
Title	Queere Asiaten – Über das Gefühlsleben einer unterrepräsentierten Minderheit	Schwul und taub: Wie inklusiv ist die Queer-Community?	Über Toxische Maskulinität und Männlichkeitsideale	Zu dick und dann wieder zu dünn? Über Body Shaming in der queeren Community
Translation	Queer Asians – About the emotional life of an underrepresented Minority	Gay and deaf: How inclusive is the Queer-Community?	About Toxic Masculinity and Ideals of Masculinity	Too thick and then too thin again? About Body Shaming in the Queer Community
Duration	33 minutes	41 minutes	34 minutes	27 minutes

Participants	Moderator: Antonio Šošić	Moderator: Antonio Šošić	Moderator: Antonio Šošić	Moderator: Antonio Šošić
	Guest: Charles, a gay Asian man	Guest: Rita & Tanja as translators, Okan & Felix, two gay and deaf men	Guest: Christopher, a biromantic man	Guest: Lucas, a gay man who struggled with body shaming
Topic	How it is to be underrepresented and how challenging dating is as a gay Asian	Experiences of gay deaf men within the queer community	Toxic masculinity and how to break free from old toxic behaviour patterns	Examining Body Shaming in the queer community and how to achieve a positive body image

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarkes (2006) approach was adapted and conducted. The analysis consists of six steps (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), which are listed in the table below (Table 2). Although being listed in steps, the analysis was a recurrent instead of a consecutive process. In other words, the researcher always has the opportunity to go back to past steps when new insights have been gained. Its purpose was to describe obtained data, while simultaneously interpreting and selecting codes and reoccurring themes from this data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The coding process started with listening to each podcast episode. Any time that discrimination, for instance body shaming, was discussed, the author transcribed the excerpt of the podcast episode. These transcripts were later completely analyzed for mentioned coping strategies. It was not necessary to analyze transcripts of the complete episodes. Only the data concerning coping strategies for discrimination were of interest and coded. The tool used for coding was ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analytic software. Similarly coded coping strategies were then defined with overarching themes. To make this process more comprehensible, and example will be discussed during each step.

Table 2

Adapted Thematic Analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017)

Step	Description
1.	Become familiar with the data
2.	Apply deductive codes to data (engagement behaviours & disengagement behaviours) and explore new codes
3.	Search for themes
4.	Review themes
5.	Define themes
6.	Write-up

The first step "become familiar with the data" was engaged in after finishing the transcripts of the four podcast episodes. This step served to get a thorough understanding of all the data collected. This was achieved through repetitive reading of the data. Simultaneously, notes were taken for possible coding.

During the second step "apply codes to data", data was first organized according to the engagement/disengagement framework. Here, this study took a primarily deductive approach as the codes for this study (engagement and disengagement strategies) were already partially determined. For example, when encountering the quote "One has to learn to love their body to experience positive feelings of self-worth", it was clear that this statement contributes to engagement. Therefore, the code "engagement behaviour" was assigned. Secondly, in an inductive analysis, the data was explored for strategies that were not applicable to the engagement/disengagement framework. To ensure the accuracy of the coding a second researcher was consulted. They were also a psychology student in their master's programme and gained experience with coding during past studies. That researcher also repeatedly read

through all transcripts and examined whether they agree with the previous allocation of data to either engagement or disengagement behaviours. For the majority of the codes both researchers agreed with the allocation of data. When in disagreement, opinions about different allocations of data were discussed and discrepancies resolved.

In step three "search for themes" similarities within the data were examined to find overarching themes. This was achieved by re-examining all the previous coding of coping strategies, to find possible similarities between them. When there was a clear overlap between coded data, this data was selected and assigned to a related theme. Continuing with the previous example, an overlap was found between the first quote and "You have to be at peace with yourself, then others will also find you more attractive". This overlap was first defined with "Acceptance" as an overarching theme.

Step four "review themes" covered the review and necessary modifications to the previously identified themes. It was checked whether each theme was properly supported by the assigned data. Furthermore, it was examined whether all themes were applicable to the research questions. That means that for instance, previously assigned data to the theme "Acceptance" were excluded because they were better suited for another theme. One example would be "I got used to it in school. That's why it [body shaming] didn't drag me down further like it would have others". Originally, the author would have also assigned this quote to "Acceptance". However, "Acceptance" as seen above corresponds much more with engagement behaviour, while this quote contributes to disengagement.

In the fifth step "define themes" all themes were finalized. All coded items were put into perspective of how they relate to each other as well as to the research questions. First it was checked whether all items were assigned to suitable themes. After re-evaluation it was possible that some items, although suitable for one theme, could be better described differently. In these cases, new themes were created, to better fit each item. Like in the previous example,

"I got used to it in school. That's why it [body shaming] didn't drag me down further like it would have with others" was no longer an item in support of "Acceptance". In this step it was assigned to "Emotional Blunting", as it was a better fit, while also contributing to disengagement. Overall, this offered a more detailed collection of clearly defined themes and therefore individual coping strategies.

The sixth and last step is about "writing-up". In the case of this study a report was produced. In it, the whole analysis and findings were written. During the writing process it was always possible to go back to previously taken notes regarding the data, codes, and themes. In the end, the report should logically explain how the researcher interpreted the data, but also why the specific themes were selected and valid (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Results

The question to be answered with this study is "What coping strategies targeting discrimination within the gay community do gay men mention in podcasts?" followed by "which of these strategies contribute to engagement?" and "which of these strategies contribute to disengagement?". Here the results of the thematic analysis of the four podcast episodes are reported. At first all findings regarding engagement strategies will be described from most to least apparent in the data, followed by the findings regarding disengagement strategies. Table 3 and Table 4 show all identified codes in correspondence with engagement and disengagement strategies, alongside their definition, number of mentions and illustrative quotes. As all data could be categorized as either engagement or disengagement strategies, no other themes emerged nor will be discussed.

Table 3

Themes of Strategies corresponding with Engagement

Theme	Definition	Number of times found	Illustrative Quotes
Education of Outgroup	Education of others in favor of minority	5	"Maybe there is already knowledge on how to act or what's discriminating. But I think it's not enough and more education is needed"
			"It requires a dialogue were those who are affected say what they need, and the other side actively asks what is important and what we need them to do."
			"If you start explained to children from early on, even in kindergarten, that there are these people [homosexuals and Asians] in our society, it is nothing bad, it's normal."
			"I expect that people are ready to indulge and show readiness to act according to my needs. They should do their homework when it comes to who is present at

events, what people we are, what characteristics we have and what it is we need."

"We would wish for people to learn a bit of sign language. I simply wouldn't have to speak."

Self-Acceptance	Learning to accept oneself to better cope with discrimination	4	"Ok you can either beat yourself up for the rest of your life or simply accept that these thoughts [affection for men] are there"
			"One has to learn to love their body to experience positive feelings of self-worth."
			"I'm lucky to be so confident and could put up with it [body shaming]."
			"You have to be at peace with yourself, then others will also find you more attractive."
Inclusive Spaces	Visiting places created for minorities	4	"My personal acceptance started when I visited a sex positive club."

"There is the Schwutz in Berlin. There are no definitions of a person there. You can just meet up there and state whether you use sign language or spoken language."

"There are certain parties where more Asians can be found, also more LGBTQIA+ Asians."

"A space needs to be created where my needs are getting recognized."

Visibility	Providing minorities with a platform to increase visibility	3	"They don't speak out due to fear of further discrimination. I think it's important that you want to give them a platform here, where they can speak out"

"Due to different places and platforms where LGBTQIA+ Asians can be seen more normality is created, leading to less misunderstanding"

"I'm skeptical when it comes to visibility through representation of cliché roles. I think more diversity is necessary."

Letting go of old Patterns	Disregarding rigid ways of thinking and thinking more openly	2	"One needs to understand that in the past the word "deaf" was associated with being dumb and also lead to the perception that deaf people are somehow mentally disabled." "We must move away from such definitions [traditional masculinity]. We need to destroy the dictated definition. Then we can look at ourselves and ask who we actually are."
Positive Definition of Self	Adapting ones definition of themselves in a positive manner	2	"I'm making myself smaller through the word "deaf", by defining myself with my deficit. However, if I say I use sign language, I have a positive, an ability. We define ourselves by our abilities." "Labels make it easier for you to see yourself with a specific group of people."
Activism	Taking matters into their own hands	2	"We need to be active. We have to engage with others, give feedback. We always have to empower."

			"I moderated an event in the Schwutz and did so in sign language. That's how many of the guys got introduced to it."
Appreciation of Progress	Focusing on the progress already made instead of the progress still missing	1	"As long as there is visibility of other nationalities and minorities in TV, there is a first step."
Diverse Media Consumption	Actively choosing the media we see to be more representative of minorities	1	"We have to move away from generic media and purposefully consume diverse media."
Openness towards Differences	Embracing our differences and actively working towards the understanding of others	1	"I believe one should try to communicate with others, not just Asians, so we learn from other cultures and can lower the inhibition threshold."

Table 4

Coding of Strategies corresponding with Disengagement

Themes	Definition	Number of times found	Illustrative Quotes
Isolation	Giving up on socializing and keeping to oneself or to the minority	3	"People like us don't often go to certain events, because we're a minority." "I can also imagine that deaf people just isolate themselves because you're not recognized or taken seriously? Yes, of course that's how it is." "We meet up as the minority within the minority and don't go to the party."
Adapting to public ideal	Changing to become desirable for other people	3	"The retailer told me I'm too fat and that they don't have anything in my size. That opened my eyes and I told myself that was the day on which I change my life." "Also, the conversations I experienced on dating apps [body shaming] motivated me to change."

			"Through a breakup I lost all awareness of my body."
Internalized Hate	Expressing hate towards a minority to distance oneself from the minority	2	"Due to the public perceptions [on homosexuality] I had to fight with internalized homophobia."
			"I was angry at everyone, including myself, and began to insult obese people."
Settling for Less	Accepting that something desirable is unlikely to happen and learning to live with that	2	"There are also people [at clubs] that just want to dance. They don't even want to get to know anyone or just drink, because they don't expect to meet someone."
			"Laughing together doesn't work and it can happen that I'm just standing in my corner, drinking two to three drinks and maybe waiting for sex."
Self-Doubt	Wondering whether the experienced discrimination might be justified	1	"When they read something like "no Asians" [in the dating profiles] they ask themselves "am I even worth it? Am I good looking?""
Emotional Blunting	Dulling of emotions as one is getting used to discrimination	1	"I got used to it in school. That's why it [body shaming] didn't drag me down further like it would have with others."

Engagement Strategies

      Education of Outgroup. The education of the outgroup is defined as education of people outside of the minority, in favor of the minority. Altogether this theme was found five times by the guests Charles in episode one and Felix and Okan in episode two. Charles remarked how "if you start explaining to children early on, even in kindergarten, that there are these people [homosexuals and Asians] in our society, it is nothing bad, it's normal". In episode two Okan explained how "maybe there is already knowledge on how to act or what's discriminating. But I think it's not enough and more education is needed". He also stated how "it requires a dialogue, where those who are affected say what they need, and the other side actively asks what is important and what we need them to do" to which Felix added "I expect that people are ready to indulge and show readiness to act according to my needs. They should do their homework when it comes to who is present at events, what people we are, what characteristics we have and what it is we need". In addition to a dialogue Okan also expressed how he "would wish for people to learn a bit of sign language. I simply wouldn't have to speak". What he means is that people knowing sign language, people knowing how to easily communicate with him, would eliminate the most prominent reason for him being marginalized. Hearing people would understand that Okan cannot speak, which would no longer be a problem due to their education in sign language.

      Self-Acceptance. Through the experience of discrimination in the past, it was possible for participants to learn self-acceptance. Accepting themselves helps them to better cope with discrimination now. Self-Acceptance was addressed four times by the guests Christopher and Lucas on episodes three and four. Christopher told himself in the past "you can either beat yourself up for the rest of your life, or simply accept that these thoughts [affection for men] are there." This shows how Christopher dealt with the self-hatred he experienced and instead came to accept himself for who he is. Lucas addressed three different types of self-acceptance. For

one "one has to love their body to experience positive feeling of self-worth." While also being "…lucky to be so confident and […] put up with it [body shaming]." Ultimately, he stated how "you have to be at peace with yourself, then others will also find you more attractive.". All three quotes highlight different types of self-acceptance, those being body positivity, confidence, and peacefulness.

Inclusive Spaces. A recurrent topic in the episodes were inclusive spaces, in other words, visiting places which were created for minorities. This code was mentioned four times during multiple episodes. Firstly, Felix stated in episode two how "a space needs to be created where my needs are getting recognized". In the same episode Okan also talked about such a space "there is the Schwutz in Berlin. There are no definitions of a person there. You can just meet up there and state whether you use sign language or spoken language". During episode one Charles also discussed visiting inclusive spaces: "There are certain parties where more Asians can be found, also more LGBTQIA+ Asians". Lastly, in episode three, Christopher confessed how his "personal acceptance started when I visited a sex-positive club". All excerpts show that inclusive spaces were considered very valuable when it comes to receiving acceptance and inclusivity. According to the podcasts guests, these spaces could provide safe spaces for gay men who experience internal discrimination.

Visibility. Participants mentioned that a platform makes it possible to increase visibility of minorities and the issues they're experiencing. This code was mentioned three times by Antonio, the host, and Charles in episode one. Charles addressed how many gay Asians "don't speak out, due to fear of further discrimination.". He continued this statement by saying "I think it's important that you want to give them a platform here, where they can speak out" with which he meant the podcast, Vollqueer. Later he added how "due to different places and platforms where LGBTQIA+ Asians can be seen more normality is created, leading to less misunderstandings". Concerning that statement Antonio spoke out about his worries, saying

"I'm skeptical when it comes to visibility through representation of cliché roles. I think more diversity is necessary". It shows that Antonio is cautious with Charles perception of how platforms should be used for any representation of LGBTQIA+ Asians whatsoever. In his opinion platforms are necessary but should portray diversity instead of fulfilling stereotypes.

Letting go of old patterns. Participants discussed that disregarding old and rigid ways of thinking makes it possible to think more openly and inclusively. In the episodes strategies of letting go of old patterns were found two times. First, in episode two, Felix mentioned how "one needs to understand that in the past the word "deaf" was associated with being dumb and also lead to the perception that deaf people are somehow mentally disabled". Felix shared that this perception could also influence the way other people view deaf people and stated letting go of this maladaptive perception was a first step towards acceptance. Secondly, Christopher explained in episode three that "we must move away from such definitions [traditional masculinity]. We need to destroy the dictated definition. Then we can look at ourselves and ask who we actually are".

Positive Definition of Self. Adapting ones definition of themselves in a positive manner was another type of strategy which was mentioned twice. Okan addressed it once in episode two: "I'm making myself smaller through the word "deaf", by defining myself with my deficit. However, if I say I use sign language, I have a positive, an ability. We define ourselves by our abilities". The second time, Christopher stated in episode three how "labels make it easier for you to see yourself with a specific group of people", which as he says strengthens the sense of belonging.

Activism. This code defines how people take matters into their own hands. It was mentioned twice, both times by Okan in episode two. "We need to be active. We have to engage with others, give feedback. We always have to empower.", which he already does as he

mentioned how he "moderated an event in the Schwutz and did so in sign language. That's how many of the guys there got introduced to it".

Appreciation of Progress. It was suggested to focus on the progress already made, instead of the progress that is still missing. This code was mentioned one time by Charles, the guest in the first episode, with the quote "as long as there is visibility of other nationalities and minorities in TV, there is a first step.". This quote was taken from a section in which representation of gay Asian clichés in TV was discussed. It highlights how in current TV the portrayal of homosexuality mostly includes white gay men. If there are gay men of other ethnicities shown, they are often written as hyperfeminine stereotypes and "over the top" characters. Charles however chooses to appreciate the current portrayal of gay Asian men on TV, instead of focusing on what is missing.

Diverse Media Consumption. This code is defined by gay men actively choosing the media they consume, specifically media that is more representative of minorities. This code was mentioned one time by Christopher in episode three: "we need to move away from generic media and purposefully consume diverse media".

Openness towards Differences. The final engagement strategy entailed embracing differences and actively working towards understanding others. This type of strategy was mentioned one by Charles in episode one who said, "I believe one should try to communicate with others, not just Asians, so we learn from other cultures and can lower the inhibition threshold".

Disengagement Strategies

Isolation. This theme discusses giving up on socializing with others and strictly keeping to oneself or to other people within the minority as a possible strategy for coping with internal discrimination. Episode two had three instances in which strategies were described that

fit this theme. First Okan confirmed that, when being a minority, isolation is common. He was asked by Antonio: "I can also imagine that deaf people just isolate themselves because you're not recognized or taken seriously?". To which he responded: "Yes, of course that's how it is". He explained further "people like us don't often go to certain events because we're a minority. Later he added "we meet up as the minority within the minority and don't go to the party".

Adapting to public ideal. Adapting to a public ideal means changing oneself to become more desirable for other people. This code was found three times in episode four. Lucas described different instances in which he was confronted with the public ideal of his body, starting with "the retailer told me I'm too fat and that they don't have anything in my size. That opened my eyes and I told myself that was the day on which I change my life". He experienced something similar on dating apps: "Also the conversations I experienced on dating apps [body shaming] motivated me to change". Even the times in which his body image was healthy it got disrupted: "Through a break-up I lost all awareness of my body". This loss of awareness was described as an aftermath of what constant adapting to the public ideal can do to someone, because no matter what body type Lucas had, it was never good enough.

Internalized Hate. The expression of hate towards a minority to distance oneself from that same minority. Strategies fitting this theme were found two times in two episodes. In episode three, Christopher confesses how "due to the public perception [of homosexuality] I had to fight with internalized homophobia". In episode four Lucas talked about similar strategies: "I was angry at everyone, including myself, and began to insult obese people".

Settling for Less. Settling for less describes how gay men accept that something desirable is unlikely to happen in response to internal discrimination. Eventually they learn to live with that circumstance. Altogether this code was found two times, both in episode two. Okan explained how a visit to queer spaces is experienced by him: "There are also people [at clubs] that just want to dance. They don't even want to get to know anyone and just drink,

because they don't expect to meet someone". He elaborated by saying "laughing together doesn't work and it can happen that I'm just standing in my corner, drinking two to three drinks and maybe waiting for sex". In the quotes it can be seen that Okan wishes to get to know someone in a club or laugh together with other people. However, he has learned that currently this just cannot be his reality, because of how people treat his deafness. Therefore, he accepted that fact. In other words, he is settling for less.

Self-Doubt. Self-doubt entails wondering whether the discrimination one experiences might be justified. This code was found once in the first episode. Charles said "When they read something like "no Asians" [in the dating profiles] they ask themselves "am I even worth it? Am I good-looking?"".

Emotional Blunting. People experience a dulling of emotions as they are getting used to the experienced discrimination. Emotional blunting as a code describes one strategy mentioned by Lucas in episode four: "I got used to it in school. That's why it [body shaming] didn't drag me down further, like it would have with others".

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question "What coping strategies targeting discrimination within the gay community do gay men mention in podcasts?" while specifically examining "Which of these strategies contribute to engagement?" and "Which of these strategies contribute to disengagement?". One of the reasons for examining this topic was the missing knowledge on what strategies gay men can use to cope with discrimination from within the gay community. The research questions were answered by thematically analyzing the podcast "Vollqueer", which targets gay men.

The results showed that a variety of engagement and disengagement strategies to cope with discrimination within the gay community could be identified. Most strategies, altogether

ten, were assigned to engagement strategies. Six other strategies were assigned to disengagement strategies. Hence, a primary finding of this study is that gay men are aware of more engagement strategies rather than disengagement strategies to deal with discrimination from within their own community.

This finding is in line with a study examining the coping skills of LGBTQIA+ youth. Craig, Austin, and Huang (2017) found that the most frequently mentioned strategies to cope with discrimination contribute to engagement. However, in their study they clearly differ between mentioned and actively used coping strategies by LGBTQIA+ youth. When looking at strategies most frequently used to cope with discrimination "avoidance of problems", a disengagement strategy, was most prevalent. Therefore, their study is only partially comparable to this one. The focus here was on coping strategies mentioned in podcasts. For further comparison with Craig, Austin, and Huang (2017) it would be necessary to explore what coping strategies were mentioned in podcasts, but also actively used by gay men in real life.

Other studies examining coping strategies of gay men had similar results. Makanjuola, Folayan, and Oginni (2018) studied coping strategies of gay men living with discrimination in Nigeria. Among their mentioned coping strategies were for instance support from friends, connectedness with the LGB community and mental health support, all corresponding with engagement behaviour.

A possible explanation for this study finding more mentioned and possibly more used coping strategies contributing to engagement, could be due to their psychological effects. Compared to disengagement strategies, applying engagement strategies results in lower negative mood, higher positive mood, and a better quality of life. Also, applying engagement strategies regularly is related to better functioning in daily life (Shermeyer, Morrow & Mediate, 2018). Such positive effects are desirable and therefore encourage to engage in more engaging coping strategies.

A secondary finding is that there was no clear difference in strategies applied to different sources of exclusion and discrimination within the gay community. Across different areas of discrimination, similar coping strategies were found. For instance, regarding engagement strategies, "Education of Outgroup" was a coping strategy mentioned to counteract racism as well as ableism. Similar coping strategies have also been reported in previous literature in response to homophobia, racism, ablism, and fatphobia (Acheampong and Aziato, 2018; Brondolo et al., 2009; Choi et al., 2011; Martínez-González et al, 2021). For example, Choi and colleagues (2011) also found that non-minority gay men isolate from social settings, similar to the minority gay men examined in this study.

Even when looking at discrimination of other minorities, outside of the LGBTQIA+ community, similarities in strategies can be found. For instance, regarding coping with racism, a study by Brondolo et al. (2009) showed that Asian immigrants in Canada accepted racism as a fact of life and chose to avoid or ignore it. Such a strategy can also be found in this study when looking at "Emotional Blunting" and "Settling for Less".

Regarding ableism, a study by Acheampong and Aziato (2018) about suicidal ideations and coping strategies of mothers living with physical disabilities also found strategies, which are comparable to this study. In their study, coping strategies were not used to counteract discrimination, but instead the suicidal ideations resulting from discrimination. Consequently, the similarities should still be considered. The strategy in questions is "self-motivation", which they describe as although being physically challenged, never feeling as they are disabled. This partly describes this studies "Positive Definition of Self", in which Okan and Felix began to positively adapt their perception of themselves.

Lastly, coping strategies for discrimination in form of body shaming were investigated in a study by Martínez-González et al. (2021) about women facing psychological abuse and how they respond to body shaming. They found various coping strategies which can also be

applied to this study. "Emotional Distancing" is in line with "Emotional Blunting" and "Problem Solving" with this studies definition of "Activism".

These similarities in coping strategies can indicate that coping strategies are not specific to certain types of discrimination but are instead universal. This assumption is based on the previously mentioned studies, in addition to intersectionality. Intersectionality describes the experience of discrimination due to multiple reasons compared to discrimination due to one reason (Atrey, 2018). Applied to this study, it suggests that experienced discrimination of someone who is gay and disabled is different to experienced discrimination of someone who is just gay. A supposed explanation for overarching coping strategies is the fact that they've been learned to counteract one type of discrimination (being gay) already and proved to be effective. Therefore, intersectional discrimination (being gay and disabled) demands the application of coping strategies, that helped in other areas.

Strengths and Limitations

This study is one of the few specifically focusing on discrimination within the gay community, which is not an extensively researched subject. Furthermore, there are currently no other studies of such discrimination which use podcasts as their object of analysis. Due to this studies qualitative approach, it was possible to understand the mentioned coping strategies on a more detailed level. Compared to a quantitative approach it was possible to understand the background of how the different coping strategies came to be and in what situations they were applied. Consequently, the present study is the first doing so and perhaps leads to further research on the topic from this point forward.

Concerning limitations, the findings may not present an exhaustive inventory of coping strategies applied by gay men in response to internal discrimination. For one, the selected episodes only featured one or two guests. That means only one or two viewpoints per topic

were shared. As a result, even though various strategies were identified, many of them were only mentioned once. That gives rise to the question of how accurate and transferable the findings are to the whole gay community. This is also relatable to another limitation, the analysis of only four episodes. Analyzing more episodes, ergo more data, could have helped to see which coping strategies stand out among multiple viewpoints and areas of discrimination. A third limitation is the selection bias in this study. The findings are based on gay men who felt comfortable with sharing their experiences of internal discrimination on a podcast. It is likely that these findings are therefore not the most representative of the majority of gay men. Consequently, it is possible that results are skewed towards engagement strategies, as compared to disengagement strategies, which may have been more used by gay men less comfortable with speaking out.

Future Research

In future research all the limitations mentioned above should be considered and improved accordingly. To review, that means analyzing podcasts in which more people talk about their experiences with discrimination.

While including more episodes covering the same topics, it could also be beneficial to focus on episodes which cover different areas of discrimination in the future. Although racism, ableism, toxic masculinity, and body shaming were already discussed, they are far from all topics regarding discrimination within the gay community.

Another possibility would be to broaden the scope of the study and to compare discrimination within the community to external discrimination. Although discrimination of gay men is a more studied topic already, a study like this one in which coping strategies are found in podcast episodes has not been done yet.

Finally, in the future this study could also be applied to other minorities. As something rather specific, that being discrimination within the gay community, was examined, it is possible to adapt this study to other groups of people. Resultantly, new insight about the discrimination of other minorities could be gained.

Apart from addressing the limitations of this study, there are also other directions that can be taken in future research. With knowledge about the mentioned coping strategies, it would be beneficial to see how well these strategies are applied and with what result. For instance, it would be interesting to see whether education of the outgroup does minimize discrimination within the gay community. This is based on past research already providing some indications to how beneficial coping strategies can be. For instance, Khosla and Kapur (2007) showed in their study how coping strategies help people to cope with stress, while also having beneficial outcomes for their well-being. Another study, conducted by Shermeyer, Morrow, and Mediate (2019) suggests that interventions aimed at actively engaging with problems, as in engagement behaviour, could be beneficial for students struggling with daily stress. Also, disengagement behaviours of these students are assumed to be less helpful and beneficial. Both of these studies conclusions are in line with Bourguignon et al. (2020), stating that engagement behaviour improves well-being, while disengagement behaviour decreases it. Consequently, similar results can be expected from extending this studies findings.

Practical Recommendations

Overall, the discrimination of gay men, but also other minorities, continues to be a prevalent social issue. It is societies responsibility to create an environment in which gay men are no longer victims of discrimination. However, developing and sharing interventions to enhance coping strategies is one step to create resilience in gay men and counteract discrimination. Since this study provided an overview of coping strategies used in response to

internal discrimination, these findings could be used to develop such interventions targeted at gay men, to teach especially young gay men about effective coping in case they ever experience discrimination from within their community.

A possible intervention could be like one suggested in a study by Sanders Thompson (2006). She focused more on how coping strategies can be taught in a therapeutic setting. Therapists could engage in problem-solving therapies to address their clients coping. Through setting and pursuing goals, as in coping with internal discrimination, clients could replace negative emotions with a sense of control.

Another, more general approach could be offering lessons for gay men in which coping strategies are discussed. Frydenberg ad Lewis (2000) already suggested something similar. Such lessons could be introduced in schools or queer spaces and include identifying coping strategies and discussing when these strategies are best applicable. Furthermore, an evaluation of experiences with certain strategies and their strengths and limitations could be beneficial.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to learn more about what strategies gay men use to cope with discrimination within the gay community, and how these strategies are narrated in the podcast "Vollqueer". Furthermore, it was examined which of the mentioned strategies either correspond with engagement or disengagement behaviour. Through thematic analysis, various coping strategies either contributing to engagement or disengagement were identified. Moreover, it was found that generally gay men are more aware of engagement behaviours rather than disengagement behaviours, to cope with internal discrimination. Secondly, although different sources of discrimination within the gay community (racism, ableism, toxic masculinity, body shaming) were analyzed, the applied coping strategies overall remained the same. The intention of this study was to put these strategies into words and make them more

apprehensible, while also encouraging further research on this topic in the future. Discrimination of gay men is still a prevalent issue today. Nevertheless, attention should also be given to discrimination within the gay community itself. Although discriminatory behaviour should be prevented in its origin, gay men effectively using strategies to cope with experienced discrimination is a skill not to be underestimated.

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