From Kink and Fetish to BIPOC and Trans:
The Diversification of a Multi-Generational Nonprofit

Author: Cara Warren
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Supervisor: Dalia Abdelhady

ABSTRACT

Diversity, equity, and inclusion have become an important part of justice work in today's society. Nevertheless, many non-profits still fail to diversify. While previous research has examined methods for an organization to successfully diversify, there has been a distinct lack of research on how these methods play out in an intersectional manner. This study aims to better understand these processes by looking at an organization that successfully changed from being seen as a kink, fetish, and alternative sexuality space for white, cis, gay men to centering their organization on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and queer/trans communities. This is done through special attention to queer theory, intersecting identity, and motivation. Through thematic analysis of organizational documents, an interview, social media, and news articles, the organization was found to use many common structural methods to achieve diversity. However, underneath each of these methods, there was a genuine motivation to see marginalized communities and their own fight as one and the same.

Keywords: *BIPOC, Trans, LGBT+, Intersectionality, Diversity, Non-profits, and Organizations*

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I. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BDSM	Bondage, Discipline / Domination, Sadism / Submission, Masochism
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
ED	Executive Director
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, plus
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, plus
LGBTQI2A+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Two-Spirited, Asexual / Aromantic / Agender, plus
Org(s)	Organization(s)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the age of Black Lives Matter, Me Too, and increasing attacks on marginalized groups and their rights, conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion have increased. However all too many organizations have failed to improve on these points. Leadership positions overrepresent the white population in the US (Adejumo, 2021, p.63). While there have been improvements in the non-profit sector regarding the race/ethnicity of seats on boards, they still have a long way to go (BoardSource, 2021, p.3). In addition, all-white boards engage significantly less in racial equity work (Ibid., p.12). Boards are often willing to change but hold a misconception that they do not know where to find diverse candidates (Ibid., p.5). In addition, 1% of board members identify as transgender (Ibid., p.3). While this may be an improvement, there is still room to grow.

Even within communities that often consider themselves diverse, there can be a lack of attention to the needs of all marginalized communities. Identity-based movements, like the queer movement, can fight for a select few while ignoring others (Lanzerotti, et al., 2002, p.57). This can involve leaving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) behind within the queer movement but can also break into internal fighting between the individual identities that exist within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, plus (LGBTQ+) acronym. Those that are transgender and transition, for example, can lose their status as members within the queer community after other community members perceive that they have gained a heterosexual identity (Manuel, 2006, pp.13-14). These subcultures that exist within the queer community break apart the queer community and influence the broader diversity, equity, and inclusion that is often discussed within organizations. Intersectionality, therefore, tries to work towards better understanding the power dynamics at play within the broader sets of marginalized cultures while fighting for the most disadvantaged.

Inspired by these issues, I have chosen to do a case study of an organization which has become more diverse through a focus on intersectional identities. To keep this organization anonymous, I'll use the pseudonym Alternative Events. The organization has existed for four decades within a large urban center in the United States and has, during the pandemic, succeeded in becoming diverse not only through improving the diversity in their board but also by completely overhauling Alternative Events and their mission. Their board now has almost no members that are both white and cis. Alternative Events has a closer connection to

the community and better representation on their stages at major events. While still a work in progress, their reputation has begun to change as they work to diversify. Their previous connections to marginalized communities through their focus on supporting kink, fetish, and alternative sexuality and their informal connection to the gay community make them an interesting organization to study. In particular, it provides perspective into the subculture of different marginalized identities.

This research is also significant to development studies. The 16th sustainable development goal mentions fighting injustice (United Nations, 2023):

> 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

To be able to achieve this, all people need to be included in society at all levels. A nonprofit representing marginalized communities may have lower status than international non-governmental organizations, but these non-profits provide a high level of community and support to the communities they represent. This helps further societal development by strengthening institutions at the local level.

The aim of this research is to determine how diversity can be increased within non-profit spaces. Seeing how much of the research on diversifying organizations focuses on larger organizations or does not explicitly mention trans folks, I aim to look at the nuances of diversifying within an already marginalized community with particular respect to BIPOC, queer people, and transgender people. Another goal of this study is to gain insight into how motivation affects the shape diversity takes in an organization that is considered to have succeeded.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide this study, two research questions will be used:

> What motivates an organization to take on diversity as a significant project within the organization? How do strategies to increase diversity take shape?

1.2 DISPOSITION

I begin my study with a discussion of previous literature and research in the fields of diversity and organizational studies. From there, I delve deeper into queer theory and identity. I then expand on the documents, social media, and interview as well as on my own position and methods used. This is then followed by my analysis, where I discuss Alternative Event's process of diversification as well as what influenced it. This begins with a discussion of their past and community focus, followed by structural changes, their values, and an external perception of their past. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of implications of this study, highlighting different methods used and the motivation behind their change.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations have been an important part of studies centered around diversity, equity, and inclusion. There have been a number of studies looking specifically at white normativity in organizations (Adejumo, 2021; Gaudette, 2022; Lee, Leedeman, and Bernstein, 2023; Nickels and Leach, 2021; Ward, 2008). In particular, they argue that cultural changes are needed to increase inclusivity and discuss the nuanced approaches that needed to be taken. However, diversity is largely discussed from the perspective of increasing acceptance for primarily BIPOC in most of these studies. Looking at an organization that has changed to center not only BIPOC but also Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Two-Spirited, Asexual / Aromantic / Agender, plus (LGBTQI2A+) folks at large, helps broaden the scope of research on diversity in organizations. This is especially interesting to analyze in a community that has been underground and misunderstood, such as the kink, fetish, and alternative sexuality community. Research confirms that there is indeed white normativity within Bondage, Discipline / Domination, Sadism / Submission, Masochism (BDSM) spaces and events, and that overrepresentation is, therefore, prevalent in these areas as well (Erickson et al., 2021). Other studies have looked at the structures and superficiality at play in many diversity trainings (Brewis, 2016; Grinage, 2020). Better understanding the structures in place, as well as how they can be changed, may help the community at large make more changes in the future. While culture and white normativity are discussed in

relevant research, further analyzing the organizational and individual motivations to make these changes may aid in understanding how efforts to diversify take different shapes.

Studies have also discussed different methods with which narratives can be changed to combat racism/sexism or to reshape an organization's identity. Nickels and Leach (2021, pp.523-524) suggest using counter-storytelling to center marginalized voices in nonprofits. They also acknowledge the lack of representation of BIPOC and white women in non-profits, pointing to influences of cultural scripts contributing to the continuation of white patriarchal culture in nonprofits (Ibid.). Understanding how these methods might look within the larger process of diversification may help complete the story. Another study looks at how history can be used to shape an organization's general identity (Anteby and Molnár, 2012, pp.533-534). While this was not discussed in relation to diversity, it would be good to acknowledge it as a factor at play when an organization diversifies.

Community has, as a concept, been included when discussing diversity. Gaudette (2022, p.142) mentions community as relevant to diversity when talking about outreach and accessibility in the context of increasing the diversity of BIPOC in a youth leadership program. Meanwhile, Erickson et al. (2021, pp.1069-1070) noted problems with BIPOC not being included in the BDSM community due to lack of representation, location, and expense of events in predominately white cities, cliques forming on identity lines, and not listening to the experiences of marginalized persons. The problems with location and expense also show an accessibility issue similar to the one Gaudette (2022) discusses. Ward, on the other hand, (2008, pp.576-577, 582) discusses it as strategy that failed for another organization when trying to diversify. Looking at diversity in an organization that already had connections to one marginalized community may help highlight why a focus on community is still noted as important to diversify but has also failed in other instances.

As an explanation for why an organization may not succeed in diversifying, culture can be put forth. Ward (2008, p.583) concludes that racialized culture and hegemonic ideas may hold an organization back from diversifying even if it adjusts its composition and structure. Thinking reflexively and identifying positionality may help employees of an organization understand the racist and sexist structures that may influence them and their work (Nickels and Leach, 2021, p.525). Looking at how an organization successfully diversified may highlight how breaking from hegemonic structures plays a role in the process of becoming

more diverse. Analyzing the motivations behind breaking these hegemonic structures may help with understanding how these structures are reshaped during the changes.

How organizations interact with these societal structures has been seen in other studies. Mazzei, Montgomery, and Dey (2021) look at how social enterprises often fail to implement their goals when these would involve breaking the status quo of everyday life. They find that while social enterprise aims to break out of neoliberalism, funding problems often cause them to participate in the same systems they are fighting (Ibid., p.1637). Meanwhile, Gratton (2018) shows that strategic planning may help non-profits achieve their goals. Confirming the funding woes that Mazzei, Montgomery, and Dey (2021) explain hold back organizations, Gratton (2018, p.32) shows non-profits need to have achieved a certain level of stability before being able to plan strategically. The hegemonic structures of neoliberalism may affect an organization's ability to diversify if it requires strategic planning. At the same time, structures that are often considered counter-productive to activist organizations may, in fact, help them. In this instance, Florian (2018, p.160) found that bureaucracy protected volunteers from high demands. Issues of over-standardization that came from bureaucracy were remediated with incorporation of different viewpoints and fluidity (Ibid., p.159). While some research argues that we need to look beyond structure to understand how an organization can diversify, it is still important to acknowledge the role that formal institutions and structures play in this process. These studies may not have discussed diversification explicitly, but they show that societal and organizational structure may still have a role to play in studying diversity within organizations.

There has also been research into diversity trainings and the culture of pressure to diversify. Brewis (2016, pp.372-373) analyzes the power relationships that exist in diversity trainings, and in particular that between diversity practitioners and trainees. They note that diversity trainings often problematize the individual instead of the organization (Ibid., p.344). This helps explain how diversity is often used in a superficial manner by trying to change individuals instead of the structure that is keeping inequities in place. It shows one of the many faults that exist within the corporate culture of diversity. Another study examined the superficial professional development programs that aim to increase diversity without standing against neoliberalism (Grinage, 2020, p.7). They find that the discussion of diversity within a school is more focused on multi-culturalism and creating unity instead of solving problems (Ibid., pp.21-22). It enables white people to be happy and unaware of the racist structures that

exist while the trainers profit from the program (Ibid., pp.22-23). This shows how diversity is often used to continue racial inequities. Looking at why an organization diversifies and the effect that has on the strategies they use could supplement these studies which show how diversity is often used in and by corporations superficially, without making any structural changes.

The studies found on diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations have largely focused on racism as well as sexism, but few have discussed the multitude of identities that face marginalization on a daily basis. In addition, many focused on how diversity initiatives fail. Dobusch (2021) notes how mainstream approaches to diversity and inclusion often lead to the creation of autistic people becoming the other. Inclusion approaches often focus on neurotypical forms of sociability which may not be applicable to autistic people (Ibid., p.391). Ward (2008) conducts their study at a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) nonprofit which, by nature, discusses the necessity of diversity within another community but the changes to diversity within that organization do not center trans folks. Much of the discussion of organizational diversity does not account for the complexity of identity or societal structures that keep a more institutional change from happening.

To better understand the complexity surrounding intersecting identities and power structures as well as to better understand why organizations diversify in different manners, I ask the following research questions:

> What motivates an organization to take on diversity as a significant project within the organization? How do strategies to increase diversity take shape?

Bringing another layer of intersectionality into the discussion of diversity and looking at a deeper form of diversity is important to achieve and grow knowledge of true equity. In addition, better understanding the reasoning behind making the changes may help explain why different actions are taken as well as help explain shape of the new more diverse organization.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Queer theory is essential when studying identity and diversity. Seidman (1996, p.23-24) discusses how queer theory and sociology benefit each other by together acknowledging how social dynamics, power, institutions, identity, and social movements can be rethought. One point was how identity is a construction that can be both imposed on the individual but also be useful for social change (Ibid., p.21). The choice of which words to be used to describe an identity can split a community as has been seen within the gay and queer communities (Gamson, 1996, pp.400-401). It is still apparent within the queer and gay communities today that there is a view that homosexuality can be used to assimilate into normative society. This is then challenged by the concepts of bisexual and trans, which naturally blur the binaries and hard categories of society (Ibid., p.407). Today concepts such as non-binary, agender, and genderqueer continue to blur these boundaries or completely break out from them. Understanding conflicts caused by identities creates a framework to see the part that identity plays in an organization's diversification.

The need to have both defined and blurred identities is also important regarding diversity. In queer theory, there is a view that queerness is used to stand in stark contrast to the normal and to the constraints that taking on a specific identity creates (Gamson, 1996, pp.401-402). This refusal of the normal can however quickly become just another category that either summarizes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, plus (LGBT+) or limits individuals to remain undefined (Ibid., pp.402-403). There is, however, also a benefit to having defined identities as they are easier to fight for politically (Ibid., p.410). A proposed solution is to try to find a balance between the lack of boundaries and secure boundaries by using defined identities when working towards specific rights (Ibid., p.412). Consequently, there is not necessarily a need to define a category when that category is not specifically being fought for. For the purpose of this study, I do recognize specifically BIPOC and trans people. This is in part to recognize the discriminations these groups specifically face within the organization. However, I also often refer to marginalized communities in general. This is to acknowledge the complexity that exists when discussing diversity and the many identities and combinations thereof that may be difficult to specifically acknowledge. In addition, I often use the word diversity as a goal to strive towards. However, the word diversity implies a categorization of individuals which can quickly cause the concept to be superficial.

Regarding the importance of having undefined categories, I aim to expand on how diversity can look and appear as opposed to using it simply to mean equal representation.

Creating a diverse organization brings to question how identity is used in today's world. Individuals can use it to define themselves in relation to others and find commonalities (Brubaker, 2004, pp.31-32). At the same time, identity, when used in an everyday sense, can lead to assumptions. For example, researchers may assume that individuals experience a high level of sameness within a specific group, or they may define an identity as something people inherently have (Ibid., p.37). For the purpose of this study, I often reference different identity categories and discuss how diversifying means centering these, as well as how individuals from these categories play a role in diversification. It is important to note that identity is so complex and nuanced than one person cannot possibly represent an entire community. In addition, helping one community may not help all nor will it be possible to help all the individuals from all identity categories equally. This is part of the reason BIPOC and trans people are highlighted but, even within those, not all groups will likely be centered. Takagi (1996, pp.255-257) notes the nuances and ever-shifting boundaries of identity by looking at Asian-American subcultures organized around sexuality. This risks dividing up identity groups into overly-individualistic categories, however, it is still important to understand how intersecting identities affect one another (Ibid., pp.256-257). For this reason, intersexuality and intersecting identities are acknowledged and discussed but not to the extreme. Identity plays a role in how we interact with our communities and how they interact with us. Nevertheless, it is still important to understand how flexible the concept of identity is.

The importance of different marginalized groups roles in society serves as a basis for this study. In order to achieve equity for the most marginalized, the very hegemonic structures that uphold society need to be broken and then reshaped in an equitable manner (Kosma, 2022, Ibid., 298). Queer theory has long discussed breaking down these structures or going against normativity, especially in relation to diversity (Kirsch, 2000, p.36). One clear part of this is the word queer itself (Ibid., p.34). The word is vague so as to be able to break from the normative duality that is found within mainstream concepts of gender and sexuality (Ibid.). By refusing to specifically define groups it is able to include all that breaks from the normative (Ibid., pp.34-35). Within the context of this study, it is important to look at how normative structures are broken down but also how identity and diversity is defined.

4. METHODS AND DATA

Alternative Events was chosen as an exceptional case. It is a long-standing organization of about 40 years in a large-urban center in the United States that had gained a reputation for being for white, cis, gay men over time. I had learned through discussion while interning at an organization with close ties to Alternative Events that they had recently succeeded in diversifying within only a few years. Studying a success story may shine new light in comparison to Ward's study about a queer organization that fails at diversifying (Ward, 2008). Another study focuses on a larger youth leadership organization's success with diversifying, however, without an intersectional lens (Gaudette, 2022). Comparatively, Alternative Events had a closer connection to a marginalized community before their change. They previously focused on alternative sexuality with a strong informal connection to queer rights. Many of the studies found have not looked at the broader spectrum of marginalized identities but focused primarily on diversity regarding increasing and lifting BIPOC presence and rights (Adejumo, 2021; Gaudette, 2022; Lee, Leedeman, and Bernstein, 2023; Nickels and Leach, 2021). Having already a strong connection to the queer community, Alternative Events' process could help show how diversifying works when multiple identities are being discussed. I chose inductive thematic analysis in hopes of discovering the different methods of diversifying as well as how diversification looks on a broader scale (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, 2012, pp.3-8). I do this through a lens of queer theory and with an understanding of the role of intersecting identities.

4.1 ETHICS

Regarding ethics, I have tried to be as transparent with Alternative Events as possible. I gained permission from the Executive Director (ED) orally after explaining the purpose and use of the thesis as well as explaining that I would not name them or the organization's name but may name their position. In order to keep the organization and interviewee anonymous, I use a pseudonym for the organization and simply state the ED's title. In addition, I have paraphrased any information that can be found on the web, so people cannot easily look those pages up on a search engine. I also sent them a copy of the interview transcription, so they would be able to comment if they felt something was incorrectly stated or wanted it to not be used. I have also tried to reflect on my positionality to account for my own inherent bias.

With any research, the researcher's position and inherent bias will affect their work (Mann, 2016, p.13). As a white, cis lesbian studying how an organization became more inclusive of BIPOC and trans folks, I have a higher level of privilege. In addition, I do not have the lived experience of being someone who is BIPOC and/or trans. In one way this is a positive since I can look at it from an outside perspective. However, it also means it is more likely that I miss or misrepresent an integral experience or piece of culture from other marginalized communities. In addition, I am Jewish and struggle with mental health. While I do not feel that these make up a significant portion of my identity, sometimes they can help me empathize with other groups. At the same time, they can hurt due to the conflicting cultures that can be found between different identities.

Being a member of the queer community, I have personally seen and participated in its racist and transphobic sides. Since I was a young kid, I would have discussions about discrimination and often speak from a place of ignorance. I would regularly have racist, transphobic, and even homophobic thoughts that I still have today. Over time, I have learned to question these, but some of these learned biases may still seep through in my work. Part of my motivation for choosing this topic is to question my own inherent bias. The other is that I want to be able to change the queer spaces that I enjoy so much, so that as many people as possible feel a part of them - in this instance BIPOC and/or trans folks. These will undoubtably form my analysis, but by acknowledging them, it will be easier for me to look at the data from other perspectives.

In addition, I want to acknowledge different marginalized communities. I primarily mention BIPOC and trans if I mention a specific community. That said there are many other marginalized groups that could be looked at more closely such as those that fall underneath, disability, age, religion, class, etc. Many of these groups are often underrepresented or poorly represented in research both as subjects and creators. While they may not be specifically mentioned in this case, I want to note that they are a part of the whole marginalized community when I mention it.

4.2 DATA

The data used was gathered through several sources. Organizational documents, tax documents, an interview with the ED, Alternative Events' social media accounts, reviews, and social media discussions about the organization, as well as news articles and blog entries. The multitude of sources allows me to analyze Alternative Events from different angles.

The organizational documents include their present bylaws as well as a one-year Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plan. Both of these documents are easily found on their website. The bylaws were ratified in 2021 and the DEI plan was written in 2021. The plan is presented as a DEI plan on the website but named a strategic plan on the actual document. I learned from their ED that the plan says it was written for one year, but they have been treating it as a five-year plan. In addition, I tried to find the previous bylaws but lost contact with the ED and unfortunately had limited time to request them from the IRS. However, the search for the previous bylaws led me to tax exemption forms that Alternative Events had filed for all tax years from 2015 to 2020. I did not analyze the numerical data., however I did use qualitative data, like their mission statement. Considering the significance that documents like these play in the modern world, they shine light on a social setting by looking at how they function (Prior, 2003, p.4). They can also carry implications for future settings (Prior, 2003, pp.57-58).

My introduction to Alternative Events was through my supervisor at a previous internship. They connected me to the organization's ED who was happy to talk about their diversification process. The interview was recorded and conducted on Zoom due to geographic constraints. The interview was semi-structured and was a little over an hour long. The interview helped give some more insight into the cultural shifts and how the Alternative Events actually became more diverse. Interviewees may be happy to talk about one aspect of their culture while leaving out another and the interviewer may affect that (Mann, 2016, pp.133-134). Unfortunately, I was not able to secure more interviews to be able to see another perspective. However, the ED did point me to several places I could find more information about this process. I learned that they posted their bylaws and DEI plan on their website and demographic data could be found on GuideStar. GuideStar's aim is to connect funders to nonprofits and obtains their information through the nonprofit, federal government, and partners (Burdick, 2023). This means that some of their data may still be biased towards the nonprofit.

Other sources produced by the organization itself included social media and their website. These, in addition to the interview, were able to give some insight on how Alternative Events had changed over the recent years. Using the internet archives on the Wayback Machine, I was able to see their website over the last ten years. This is still affected by socioecological processes that algorithms create (Ogden, Summers, and Walker, 2023). Their Instagram was also useful in this regard. It was easy to scroll through the posts to see the changes over the years between the kinds of photos they posted, what they advertised, as well as captions. Facebook was similar. I could also look at which events they had posted there.

To try to achieve an external perspective, I looked at reviews, comments, online discussions, as well as articles about Alternative Events. The reviews came from Google Maps, Facebook, Yelp, and TripAdvisor. Discussions were largely found on Reddit, but I found some singular posts with no comments on Lex, a social media app exclusive to queer people. Most of these did not discuss diversity within Alternative Events. It can be hard to find unweighted data from social media (Morstatter and Liu, 2017, p.12). Nevertheless, they helped give some external opinion. The news articles discussing diversity were often older, but I found a couple from around 2021. Most of them also quoted the ED, so these were not able to give an entirely different perspective from that of the ED's. Ultimately, all of the sources combined show how the organization's process of diversification took place.

5. ANALYSIS

Any organization is rooted in their history (Hatch and Schultz, 2017, pp.657-658). The systems that built up around this nonprofit date back to the mid 80s and 90s during the time of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) crisis. As the ED explained, Alternative Events was founded on queer and leather subcultures rooted in the market. However, there was also an anti-gentrification stance as it was founded in response to the gay bathhouses closing down. This shows some of the push and pull between mainstream institutional practices and activism that often puts strain on non-profits (Mazzei, Montgomery, and Dey, 2021, pp.1627-1628). That said, the diversity in Alternative Events' early events was more mixed with the focus being on anti-gentrification

and recognition for AIDS/HIV as well as safe spaces to express sexuality. As the organization's diversification took place, they started to rely more on this past activist and anti-gentrification history to support their changes. News articles also connect the Alternative Events' activism to their roots. While not explicitly noted as a strategy to diversify, that the ED mentioned the organization's diverse past shows they see a connection between their present and past diversity. Being able to use an organization's history can help shape its identity and thus how it is perceived by others (Anteby and Molnár, 2012, pp.533-534).

However not all of Alternative Events' present day aims align with their past. While the anti-gentrification and AIDS activism of the past shows an anti-capitalist and activist standpoint, the ED referred to the organization as being previously primarily focused on fundraising. This focus might be potentially connected to the activist mission Alternative Events held from its beginning. Activism requires the need of funds to be able to support and fight for a community (Dykewomon, 2004, p.54). However, they also explained that over the last 10 years there has been a switch to a more community-building focus. Some online reviews and articles discussing the organization also confirm that Alternative Events has become more diverse and community focused over the past 10 or so years. There has been some controversy over this.

One guide written by a private blogger in 2019 explained the reaction to Alternative Events beginning to become more diverse. They state that it is "The Gays" who feel that the biggest event Alternative Events does has lost its edge. "The Gays" likely referring to the stereotypical cis, possibly white, gay men who have dominated this event in the past. They are the ones that feel like there are too many straight people and women. The article even added that is often because "The Gays" miss the days of the event being "manly-men-only". While this does not specifically mention BIPOC and trans, it shows how some people have resisted the change of who can come to their events. Many reviews or comments on platforms like reddit also conflate the presence of women as being the presence of more straight people. It is as the author said, a want to keep the event less diverse and meant only for "manly men". The use of the Alternative Events' past activism to back up this switch to diversity helps give this push some footing to stand on. Even if that past was not as diverse as they are aiming to be now, it gives them a way to reframe their outward image as long as they acknowledge this past in an authentic manner (Anteby and Molnár, 2012, pp.533-534; Hatch and Schultz, 2017, p.692). Through this history they are able to control the narrative and

oppose those saying they miss the old event. The organization succeeds in doing this by drawing on a much longer past and trying to return to that. This is a strategy that may work well, especially in legacy organizations that have any sort of activism or community focus in their past.

5.1 CREATING COMMUNITIES

Community and community building is something that the ED mentioned throughout the interview. It is also frequently noted on their website and in their DEI plan. This is shown through concepts like collective leadership and creating spaces for marginalized people. These were also often discussed by the ED as a goal of Alternative Events, but connection to community and what could be considered social capital was described as a tool or reason that the organization succeeded in diversifying. Alternative Events, prior to opening a community center three years ago, has been largely based around one specific queer and alternative sexuality community event. The ED expressed that the focus on community has grown with the increased focus on diversity and inclusion.

Presently, they foster community in several ways. At the community center, they have classes and smaller organizations use it for meetings. A drag troupe has used it as a rehearsing space. They have also done digital events, which has helped increase the accessibility and access within the community. At their major event, they have more community stages that allow better representation but also visibility for local community members. Their DEI plan also states that they should conduct outreach to engage diverse communities and decrease barriers as well as have programs in non-traditional settings. Plus, they aim to include the community in decision-making processes. While their bylaws do not give any direct power to the community, they have actively tried to have a more diverse board which means a more diverse section of the community is represented. In addition, they have feedback forms and work closely with a wide variety of community organizations. Their acts at their major event have become more diverse as can be seen on their website. By engaging with marginalized communities, it has made it easier for Alternative Events to become more diverse. This is a similar strategy to what Ward wrote about in her discussion on a different LGBT organizations' failure to diversify (Ward, 2008, pp.576-577, 582). However, a key difference is how Alternative Events considers itself as being a part of that diverse community whereas

in Ward's it would be referred to as a separate community (Ibid., p.582). Fostering community aided diversifying in this instance because they were melding into that community - not trying to have that community conform to their previously white and cis culture.

Part of the reason I learned about Alternative Events was that a queer nonprofit I interned at uses the center for retreats and works closely with Alternative Events. Working closely with community organizations is a part of their DEI plan. Alternative Events aim to partner with organizations that align with their own core values and mission as well as share resources with communities that face disparities. The ED expressed consistently the importance of working with other organizations within the community. One example came from when I asked about their experience with other queer organizations:

> I am a huge, huge believer that there is no reason, short of an intense values mismatch, that we shouldn't work with each other, /…/ uplift each other, and hold each other dear because we are too small and unsupported of a community to treat each other as competition. I'm a big fan of really showing up for other orgs.
> - ED, age 50

This mutual support was also expressed in a give and take relationship relating to getting volunteers for one's own organization. The ED explained that you cannot expect to get volunteers from one organization if you are not volunteering consistently at that organization yourself. They even explained that volunteering consistently for another organization is important to build this culture. The ED would rather volunteer for other organizations than to give them money or help them plan. In this way, volunteering became a tool for mutual support and community building between organizations. It also cements another genuine way to build community that is not just for their own gain. The ED's persistence and consistency may relate to their explanation of how being present in marginalized communities, especially kink, SM, and leather for 30 years, has given them connection to those specific communities and has built trust. This community presence is also how they felt they have been able to succeed in diversifying Alternative Events.

5.2 RETHINKING LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

The ED expressed how organizations that became diverse in any quick manner have done it by putting someone from a marginalized community in charge. That is what Alternative

Events did. Their ED identifies as non-binary and indigenous as well as having a disability. When I first heard about Alternative Events, I got the impression that their ED had been a large reason why the organization diversified. During the interview, they expressed a passion for working in nonprofits and especially with diversity. While understanding there is still a long way to go, they were proud of what they achieved. In this instance, the ED was able to use their community connections to help diversify the organization and, more specifically, the board. They knew people within the community that could help affect this change and asked them to join the board when the time came around. From there, those people brought people in. In contrast to the lower-level leadership positions that Ward (2008, pp.565) and Adejumo (2021, p.66) refer to as not enough on their own to diversify, Alternative Events gave a person with several different marginalized identities significant power. Having that power allowed them to use their identity within a diverse community to grow and change the culture of an organization.

They have now cemented this representation in their bylaws by requiring that half the board be BIPOC and/or women/trans/nonbinary. In addition, they require a connection with the alternative sexuality community. Previously, they have had board members that were not even queer, BIPOC, or part of the alternative sexuality communities. Instead, these people were there for the event organizing or legacy aspect of Alternative Events. By ensuring that two thirds of board members are part of the alternative sexuality communities, they have people making decisions that can better represent and serve their community. Quotas can ensure that the benefits of board diversity can be realized (Swoy, 2021, pp.214-215). This cements their move to a more diverse board and provides for them to continue working towards increased diversity and inclusion in the future.

While the increased board diversity is a benefit, relying on diversifying through social connection presents a problem. If organizations diversify by putting people from different communities into power, and in turn, those people bring in the people they know from their own communities, it may lead to exclusion of those that do not have social connections. This is one of the ways inclusivity can exclude a group of people like those who are not as socially adept or accepted by their communities (Dobusch, 2021, p.380) There is often a need to know someone to get access to an organization, community, job, or even sometimes individuals. I, for instance, was put in touch with the ED at Alternative Events through my supervisor at a different queer nonprofit. The ED explained that certain people are put in charge because

they have existing connection to power. I do believe they were referring to relationships with people in high up places like city officials. At the same time, they expressed personally having community connection. Both could be considered kinds of power or social capital, although of different natures. That said, if having that social connection is required, it presents a barrier to those that do not have it. They might have changed the culture of Alternative Events slightly, but in this way, it still relies on exclusive power structures.

A potential solution might be transparency and accessibility. These are mentioned in their DEI plan. The ED also noted their importance several times. They were not explicitly mentioned as a way to combat the unequal benefits that those with personal relationships with present board members have, however, in the DEI plan, transparency and outreach is mentioned as a way to increase equal participation. In this way, it appeared to be a potential solution to this problem. They try to be as transparent as possible by making as much of their documentation like bylaws and plans available publicly online, but also doing things like talking to students such as myself. In addition, the ED's aim with transparency is to enable those with less privilege to be able to work at Alternative Events. They explain it:

> And really, really, really creating a lot of transparency and accessibility for all of the history and current structure, tools, and items /…/ so that people who have less access and less privilege can do this work without it being such a slog. I think part of how these organizations keep power calcified is by gatekeeping information. /…/ moving away from a gatekeeping model to a really open model where people can access the information that they want or need easily, I think makes room for more people without societal power to do this work.
> - ED, age 50

The DEI plan affirms the ED's goals with transparency and accessibility and how it can be used to help shift the organization to becoming more diverse. This aligns with Gaudette's (2022, pp.28-29) findings that removing barriers helped increase diversity in a youth leadership organization. Alternative Events wants to remove barriers, so the organization's events and practices are more easily accessible. One way to do this in their DEI plan is through providing translated materials and interpretation. Another is through community listening sessions, committees, and advisory groups. The aim to include the community in the decision-making process also helps increase transparency of the organization's inner workings. Ultimately, their focus seems to be on accessibility, and transparency is one tool to achieve that.

Despite these aims, their bylaws seem somewhat more exclusive as the board maintains a lot of control and votes the new board in. Limitations as to what percentages of marginalized communities need to be represented is a check that is placed on this. They also state that board vacancies will be publicized as needed to ensure the right composition of the board. While I have not been able to see if they tend to post vacancies publicly on their website or within different marginalized community groups to give people who do not have connections an opportunity to join, it does show a commitment to representing a diverse group of people. It just might not show community inclusion in this particular regard.

Transparency does not however just serve to notify people of board postings or create accessibility. It helps change the dialogue around the organization. The ED gave an example:

> But I think that another /…/ key piece of this was making as much of this as possible transparent to our communities. Because that meant that when we went to do board recruitment the first time, after all that change, /…/ a couple of people who joined the board were like, "Yeah, I would never have worked with [Alternative Events] before, but I heard things were really different now."
> - ED, age 50

Without being open about their changes, it may have been harder to gain trust. There is evidence that transparency helps gain trust of funders (Harris and Neely, 2021, p.214). For Alternative Events, transparency helped gain the trust of the community they represent. Without it, it may have been harder for the community to see the changes they had been making.

While transparency and community building are methods to diversify, community also serves its own purpose. The ED explained the value of community when talking about the purpose of queer nonprofits or any organization for and in marginalized communities:

> [These organizations] serve as a place for people to first find commonality and community and have a place to show up as their full selves and still, you know, find acceptance and joy.
> - ED, age 50

There is a value in community for community's sake and organizations, like Alternative Events, help create those spaces. Being more diverse means that they can create that community for a broader group of people. They also expressed that these organizations are able to connect people to create community and find support. By focusing on community, it

has become an inherent part of Alternative Events and created a backbone to enable it to diversify, not just symbolically, but in a meaningful way. This is a distinct difference from trying to connect to a community; instead, Alternative Events was becoming a part of one and creating their own.

5.3 FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF DIVERSIFICATION

The shift to diversify did not just happen through the reliance on communities or transparency. There were other circumstances affecting the shift. There had been a leadership crisis with one interim ED failing to handle parts of the organization, like finances. This is what created the space for the present ED to step in. This happened to also coincide with the pandemic, which created a greater need for community building but also reducing reliance on one event, according to the ED. It also helped finally spark the opening of their community center. Having the first ED who was not cis or white, as well as the increased focus on the community, helped the shift towards diversifying. The ED also noted that the pandemic made the shifts in demographic makeup less noticed. Large events, like the pandemic, often allow for major social changes to take place (Della Porta, 2020, p.945). Alternative Events may have made the shift anyways, but it is likely that these outside circumstances helped propel the diversification of the organization.

As with any nonprofit, there are many structures in place enabling Alternative Events to exist as an organization within the society we live in. A lot of the process of diversification has challenged some of these structures. Finances, relationships with officials and other organizations and companies, informal institutions or practices within Alternative Events, and formal structures in the organization, like bylaws, have all been affected.

Finances are frequently mentioned by the ED. Fundraising was a major part of the Alternative Events since its start in the 1980s. They also discussed some of Alternative Events' failure of focusing too much on funding; they were always trying to be "bigger, do a bigger event, and get larger grants". Even as a nonprofit, funding is still necessary for an organization to succeed (Mazzei, Montgomery, and Dey, 2021, p.1638). However, the ED described a more recent shift away from fundraising to community building. Nevertheless, fundraising is not completely gone. Even their community center is used for fundraising at

times, albeit that is to be able to continue to support their community. Money is a part of modern society, and organizations as well as people need it to survive.

There was also a sentiment of wanting to not be extractive of volunteer labor. The ED wants to be able to pay for jobs people do not find fun. This was expressed in a sense of wanting to support and appreciate the person's work as opposed to a need to pay in order to encourage someone to do the job. They said:

> Recognizing that the way that we have used volunteer labor has been pretty extractive and coercive and making it a model where if there aren't people who want to do the job because it is fun and fulfilling, then it's not a volunteer job; it's a labor job and kind of [making] a clear delineation there.
> - ED, age 50

While this may not directly explain diversity, it shows a commitment to appreciating the work that individuals within their community have done. This care likely makes it easier to foster a diverse and less mainstream organizational culture by focusing on the people.

After the shift towards diversity, their funding was affected. While the shift did cause a loss of funding from some donors, it also made it easier to get certain diversity related city grants. There were also some sponsors that were unbothered. This was described by the ED:

> Some of the sponsors that we've worked with for years and years and years are just like, "Yeah, makes no difference to us." /…/ Like, they don't care. They're just like, "Great, we just want to get out there and reach our 200,000 people." There's just less of an impact in some spaces.
> - ED, age 50

These supportive grants and sponsors help make diversifying easier. An organization does need a strong economic standing to be able to successfully strategically plan (Gratton, 2018, p.32). Their bylaws mention that directors on the board need skills such as fundraising skills as well as past experience in nonprofits.

This may help ensure Alternative Events can run well but makes it harder for just anyone to be a board member and easier for those already in the sphere to join. While associates do not need this, they are not able to vote. Nevertheless, it gives those with less experience a chance to contribute to the organization and be heard. As Florian (2018, p.153) points out, bureaucratic structure does not inherently go against an organization's activist and

community focus. That is as long as they maintain their connection with the community and avoid professionalizing the organization (Ibid.). Considering Alternative Events does not pay members of the board and has significantly increased its participation in the community, their board differentiation is working thus far. Some articles discussed their DEI plan as an important change in diversity. This plan acknowledges organizational structures as well as wanting to increase the influence of diverse staff and the community. Generally, having a clear structure and goals was also seen as a positive by the community even if these things are often encouraged in mainstream culture as well.

Interestingly, Alternative Events' strategic plan also mentions being results-driven. It describes monitoring systems that include collecting demographic data to ensure they are meeting their goals. This contrasts some complaints in a different organization about how being too focused on numbers contributed to the white normativity of the organization (Ward, 2008, pp.578-579). This, plus a focus on diversity, especially of the people they served, helped that organization receive grants (Ibid., pp.570-572). The ED of Alternative Events explained that their strategic plan was made through a government grant, so that may have influenced how much they should focus on monitoring progress. However, not enough data was gathered to support or deny this. Nevertheless, they also discuss using this monitoring to quarterly adjust their practices to become more diverse and ensure they are continually anti-oppressive and anti-racist. The plan also outlines that these assessments should be done transparently and include community feedback. In this way, they continue to involve the community in the organization and encourage their participation. Throughout the plan, they frequently link back to involving the community as a way to improve equity. Not only that, but Alternative Events' goal was to improve equity within the organization itself, and receiving funds was not a driving reason behind diversification. The ED mentioned that they still had negative effects on their funding from the shift, and the better access to government grants happened to be a positive effect.

5.4 RESOLVING STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS AND LIMITATIONS

These structural conflicts can also be seen in other ways. The ED described neglecting connections to power, for instance city officials, in favor of putting a greater focus on the community. Part of the problem was that building these relationships took a lot of time and

energy from the ED. They described needing to "constantly curry favor in city government" if they wanted to maintain and build connections with those officials. They also said that their predecessors spent more time on that than community building. This once again shows that some of the Alternative Events' success in diversifying may have come from the anti-mainstream, anti-corporate shift in favor of a focus on the community. This can be seen at another organization as corporate culture where well-connectedness within the board seemed to contribute to the whiteness of that organization (Ward, 2008, pp.569-570). In addition, for the Alternative Event's ED, this sort of schmoozing is also naturally something they do not enjoy and as such focused on community instead. That innate focus may help with changing the culture of an organization as it means they are genuinely trying to make the shift and not just in a superficial manner to look good.

At the same time, this shows a challenge that may be present to other organizations trying to diversify through a focus on the community. As many nonprofits experience financial scarcity as well as needing to work with various government institutions on a regular basis, not building relationships with those in power may put a strain on an organization. The ED also described the requirement for building these connections to get support:

> I think the other part is there's this idea /.../ that the organizations that are most integrated into those systems should be the ones that get that sort of support. /.../ So, it ends up being these sort of legacy organizations led by people who have existing relationships to structures of power.
> - ED, age 50

It is a structural issue. Nevertheless, their DEI plan also aims to combat this issue of fundraising by having a diverse funding base, so they do not rely on only a handful of people or organizations. In addition, having diverse funding sources generally increases funding from donors as well as businesses (Suárez and Hwang, 2013, pp.598-599). There are, however, concerns that partnering with business may over time transfer business practices as well and cause them to be less involved in advocacy (Ibid., p.600). This shows the fine line that nonprofits must walk between the market and their advocacy work. For Alternative Events, less focus on this funding has helped them with their advocacy work and community building that has helped them in their diversity shift.

These structural limitations are not just present in the broader society but were also present within the organization throughout this change. Alternative Events had previously only had

the occasional token person who was trans or BIPOC on the board. These people had previously tried to push for more representation, but no major changes happened until the present ED stepped into the position. However, it was rare to see someone with an intersectional identity. The ED described people in the organization refusing to discuss becoming more diverse when the shift initially began, as well as saying, "that's just not our demographic". Lacking structure through explicit shared values contributed to these disagreements:

> [Not having agreed upon shared values] is often true for legacy orgs or [similar organizations], which means that the org is just getting steered by the values of whoever is in the room instead of agreed upon shared values. /…/ It leaves a lot of room for conflicting needs, and basically whoever is the loudest and/or more charismatic [sets] the values. So, shifting away from that into a /…/ collectively agreed upon value set I think was one of the biggest moments of laying the ground for change.
> - ED, age 50

They found that providing structure through explicit shared values that had previously been informally decided made it more possible to have collective decisions and eventually diversify.

5.5 SHIFTING VALUES

Part of how they cemented this value change was writing it into their bylaws, other documents, the website, and repeating it in many news articles. The most noticeable shift is in their mission statement. The first line already starts by emphasizing the importance of community and diversity. They specifically mention making an inclusive space for alternative sexuality communities. At the same time, they emphasize that they will center their work on BIPOC and LGBTQA2I+ people. In addition, they highlight their anti-gentrification history to back up their stance on diversity and inclusion. In addition, they focus on the broader liberation movement and building community and education. This is not just having one diversity day once a year as a different organization that failed diversifying did (Ward, 2008, p.568). It is an entire refocusing of Alternative Events using history, community, and activism to make this change.

The change in the mission statement is one of the most notable things about Alternative Events. It influences how the organization is described in news articles, on social media, and by themselves in tax documents. The most recent nonprofit tax exemption for was for 2020

but filed in July 2022 by the present ED. Given the context, this was the most notable change from the previous years. The document for 2019 was filed in 2020 during the term of the ED but was instead filed by the president at the time. Their old mission statement mentioned fundraising as well as uniting adult alternative lifestyle communities for the purposes of self-expression and entertainment. There was no mention of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities or anti-oppression statements. As the ED had discussed, Alternative Events used to focus more on fundraising and very little on marginalized communities. By the time this tax document was filed again in 2022, their mission had completely switched. There is now no mention of fundraising or entertainment. There is similar language expressing their commitment to alternative sexuality to the statement in 2020, but now they also mention BIPOC and LGBTQA2I+. Their focus is on support, advocacy, visibility, and celebration instead of fundraising and entertainment. Both statements mention safe spaces but the focus of the present one has completely shifted to fighting for BIPOC and LGBTQI2A+ rights. This change in the mission has managed to spread throughout other sources and support the work they do for equity and inclusion. This quick switch shows a commitment to diversify. This was requested but not followed through in the organization that failed (Ward, 2008, p.578).

The swift and natural change in leadership in Alternative Events also reflects the committed attitude, though it happened over the course of three years. The leadership change reflects the ED's experience that the only way to diversify is to put people with marginalized identities in power. Presently, they feel that who has voting power is incredibly important. This is visible in their bylaws. At least half of the voting members of the board need to be BIPOC. Half also need to be women and or/ trans or nonbinary. Having a more diverse leadership has been requested in other alternative sexuality communities (Erickson et al., 2021, p.1069). By doing this, it shows marginalized communities that Alternative Events is committed to making this change. It also allows people from those communities to make the organization into their own. They did not symbolically honor people of marginalized identities to show that they do diverse work. Instead, they changed their structure and centered marginalized people in both their work and organizational structure.

In addition to changing the structure and representation on the board, they ensured that the organization stays committed to diversity and inclusion through formally institutionalizing the informal changes they had started with the new ED and discussed before. The DEI plan

and updated bylaws officially instituted the changes. In addition to cementing their present system, they acknowledge that change is inevitable at the beginning of their DEI plan. Their bylaws account for inevitable change by requiring regular strategic planning. Meanwhile the DEI plan accounts for this by focusing on continually discussing power and privilege and how to combat it, as well as exploring the social construct of race in their everyday lives. Alternative Events will provide antiracist workshops and other DEI learning opportunities for those involved in the organization and the broader community. In addition, the DEI plan states their aim to develop systems to monitor their success on diversifying regularly. They will also have an accountability committee that advises the board on organizational actions as well as an equity committee to strengthen their DEI work. By consistently working on diversifying, they have established a system that aims to change with time and not just fall into a different limiting structure.

In order to achieve some of these structural changes, they worked with a black-led consultancy. They helped rewrite Alternative Events' bylaws and create the DEI plan that would help make some of these changes structural. This happened in the middle of the process after the first set of board elections since the change of ED. This meant that there was some more diversity. However, that diversity was more noticeable in the elections the year after. This meant that there were more cis white folks sitting on the board at the time of working with the consultancy. The shared values came from the work with the consultancy and the ED expressed feeling like working with them was incredibly valuable. They also felt that starting with the structure and things like planned values with this consultancy helped lay the trackwork for later changes like diversity in the board. The DEI plan was another piece that they felt the consultancy really helped them with. The work happening prior to coming back to in-person events may have also helped set the stage for the major shift that was seen at their first event back in-person.

5.6 VISIBILITY, REPRESENTATION, AND INCLUSION

Visibility and representation are also two concepts frequently mentioned within the organization. They are often discussed in a positive light by Alternative Events' ED where one is highlighting those that are often ignored in a genuine sense. Meanwhile, there is also discussion of highlighting marginalized persons, but for an alternative motive like fundraising

or wanting to appear diverse even when an organization is not. The ED talked about how there was previously often one person who was BIPOC or trans on the board. In Alternative Events, those individuals often tried to diversify the organization but failed. When the ED first joined the board, they were put in charge of revamping the woman and trans area. This meant they were able to make that one area more diverse but did not want to be more involved because the board was so rigid. The ED explained why genuine representation is important and why marginalized people do not show up to certain events or organizations:

> I often get this question from white, cis, gay led orgs of, "How do we increase diversity? How do we get fill in the blank people to come to our thing?" And I'm like, they're not going to. Because it's not their thing. Because you have not given any agency or actual power to anyone in that community. So, why would they go to your thing? /.../ Understanding that investment has to come from a real reflection in leadership and, more importantly, from putting marginalized people in actual positions of power, not just /.../ surface roles that can get you points.
> -ED, age 50

The visibility the ED created came from showing off marginalized people for their own work and the power that they had within Alternative Events. It could be considered a method of counter-storytelling. Nickels and Leach (2021, pp.523-524) suggest using counter-storytelling to change the narrative of marginalized groups in non-profits. This was largely done on their social media and website but also shown by having a primarily BIPOC and trans board as well as remaking the women/trans/nonbinary stage into one of the best ones at their biggest events. Meanwhile, the organization had previously used marginalized people to appear diverse. According to the ED, Alternative Events was, for instance, showing off marginalized people in photographs before the switch.

Their change between this superficial form of representation to a commitment to diversity is distinctly seen on their social media and website. On their Instagram before the shift, the photos look professionally done with classically good-looking models like one might find in the RuPaul's Drag Race Pit Crew, albeit Alternative Events' photos are primarily of white men. Further up, they start to add the occasional black man or white woman albeit still as models. Quickly, in 2020 the photos shift to genuine looking people from their events with increasing frequency till it looks as it does today. The entertainment they post after the shift is also represented in a much more realistic light. Their Facebook is similar in this way. On both platforms, they also specifically discuss fighting for rights in both the text and pictures. Plus, their women/trans/non-binary area is highlighted much more frequently. Their website changes can be seen over a progression largely between 2019 and 2021, when the website

began to look almost exactly as it does today. In the middle of this switch, they also began using more black and white photos, possibly to convey their connection to their anti-gentrification history in 2020. This said, their history has been posted on their website since 2014, so it is not entirely new. By May 2021, their website had their mission statement front and center, the DEI plan, their bylaws, and more genuine and diverse photos as well as discussion about equity and inclusion for marginalized communities. Their newly opened community center also becomes much more central on their website. This coincides with their work with the black led consultancy. Now their focus on diversity and helping marginalized communities permeates almost every single page and post on their website and on social media. This helps show outwardly their commitment to their change as well as altering the story that they tell.

Having diverse representation relies on having a variety of people with different backgrounds and identities filling different roles. For an event, that might be the people who are on the stage. The organization has tried to do this even before the ED stepped in. However, a lot of that work was still done by the present ED when they revamped the women/trans/nonbinary area. This increased the foot traffic through the area significantly, and it is now one of the areas they get the best feedback on. Part of this process was who the acts were:

> We brought in this genderqueer, Iranian rapper who was living in exile in Canada as a headliner. The stage was hosted by, who it's still hosted by, a local burlesque and drag star who worked at the Folies in Paris. And, it's just been cooler and cooler every year.
> - ED, age 50

It is not just about bringing in a person with a specific identity. They bring in people from the community but also people with marginalized identities that are well-known and will likely attract a big crowd. When they had to do a digital event during the pandemic, they brought in a famous Asian-American comedian, actress, musician, and LGBTQ/Asian-American activist to host the event. The ED explained that this increased representation on the stages one year meant that the greater diversity in the audience was palpable the next. According both to the ED and various news articles, they also have more community stages now. Representation like this is important to building that community and accepting culture as more people are able to relate to who they see on the stages at events especially those in the alternative sexuality community (Erickson et al., 2021, p.1069).

This representation can also be seen in other queer circles. They noted that at a queer activist conference there was a noticeably higher level of trans and BIPOC EDs. I happened to also be at that conference, and while I was not at the session specifically for EDs, it was frequently mentioned that the conference was much more diverse that year. The reason the ED gave for this came from the feminist concept of the glass cliff. They expressed an idea that those who are marginalized work twice as hard to fix problems. There have been more appointments of nonprofit leaders of color since 2021, possibly due to a greater focus to end racism, and they have had to work with fewer resources (Daniels, 2022). Plus, many of them felt that their identities gave them strengths to be able to do their roles that white leaders may not have (Ibid.). These factors may have contributed to the ED's success in diversifying Alternative Events.

There was also often an expression of being proud of being diverse and reversal of roles. For instance, they only have one white, cis, gay individual on the board at the moment. Their ED explained: "We have our one white, cis gay man token who just got voted onto the board. He's delightful." It is an expression of the reversal of traditional tokenism that was once found in the organization. However, Alternative Events is not trying to completely separate from the mainstream and other identities. They are instead trying to find a common cause. The organization is now quite close with Pride which is often considered increasingly mainstream (Kaygalak-Celebi, S., et al, 2020, p.558). The ED also expressed understanding nuance and other opinions. Unless there is an intense values mismatch, they feel that working together, supporting their community, and building a common cause is most important. This self-reflection and reflexivity seem to help them accomplish their goals. Once again it is about having a genuine reason behind the work and not just focusing on the effects. In that way, the effects seem to be successful albeit there is still a lot of work that has to go in behind them.

5.7 MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF DIVERSIFICATION INITIATIVES

While a lot of methods Alternative Events used to diversify have been mentioned, it is worth trying to see in what ways they have been successful. Unfortunately, I was not able to get outside comments about the organization but could at least look on platforms like Reddit, TripAdvisor, Google Maps, and blogs to see some general opinion. However, it is hard to

rely purely on reviews and social media to see a full spectrum of opinion as there tends to be a high level of skewed bias (Morstatter and Liu, 2017, pp.1-2). I struggled to find discussion directly about Alternative Events' shift to a focus on diversity. There were a lot of generally positive comments on Facebook and Google Maps. At the same time, there was a lot of judgement that the organization focuses on kink, fetish, and alternative sexuality, as well as complaints of too many people going to their largest events. A lot of the more recent comments have not necessarily switched to using the organization's more inclusive language. For instance, on the organization's website, one smaller event is called a "little sibling". However, especially in gay groups, it is still referred to as a "little brother".

News articles have made the switch to discussing the organization's focus on more diversity. A lot of this is done through quoting their mission statement or ED. Their community center seems to be generally well spoken of. It has been described in reviews as serving the community well, disability-compliant, and used for things like book launches. Their DEI plan back in 2021 was considered progress by one person advocating for a need for safer spaces for the BIPOC community in alternative sexuality spaces. It is worth mentioning, however, that most of the article was criticizing Alternative Events, and they wanted to see a stronger proof of commitment to diversity from them. The women/trans/nonbinary area is also discussed positively, but there is still a lot of discussion that their biggest event is primarily for cis, gay men. I did not find much that was posted in the last year, so there is missing information from the present year. It may be that it takes time to change the outward image, but it seems that the work that they have been doing has still begun to make changes.

6. CONCLUSION

There have been several key concepts discussed regarding Alternative Events' shift in diversity. These include community, society, organizational structure, commitment, and leadership. Explicit solutions involved increased representation and visibility, community building, structural changes through plans and bylaws, transparency, and use of their historical narrative. Underlying all of these was explicit attention to activism, joining and participating with the marginalized communities they are trying to attract to diversify, and a genuine motive to make this change.

They did the work to think reflexively as has been a previously suggested tool (Nickels and Leach, 2021). Without calling it as such, they did use counter-storytelling when reframing the space that BIPOC and queer, especially trans, people held in alternative sexuality spaces. Transparency and focus on increasing accessibility became a tool as used in another study (Gaudette, 2022). They went beyond simply trying to include the small cultural shifts and increased leadership that had been suggested by Adjemo (2021). That said, Alternative Events does have a focus on results and demographics data, a focus that Ward (2008) had noted as problematic in another organization. Nevertheless, the results Alternative Events focuses on are more holistic, including both the community and the organization. The demographic data is a way for them to monitor and they do not break up categories like gender or race/ethnicity into minutia. While they want diversity in all of its forms, they understand that it does not come from crossing a checkbox to make sure they have someone from each minute category.

Alternative Events followed many of the classic structural changes of community outreach, requiring a diverse board and leadership, and formal plans. These, however, failed to create a significant cultural change in the organization Ward mentions, when it was largely focused on it for motives that seemed to rely on fundraising and appearing diverse (Ward, 2008). Conversely, Alternative Events became more diverse because they wanted to represent and fight for these different communities. The change shifted the organization in its entirety, but without this shift, the change may have become superficial as it did with Ward's (2008). Instead, they managed to stay committed to their goals and have slowly increased the diverse turn out at their events as well as representation within the organization.

This study was aiming to look at how diversity can be increased in non-profits and the shape that this takes from an intersectional and cultural perspective. Considering importance of internal organizational culture on diversity, it would have been good to look deeper at individual perceptions. The cultural aspect could be looked at further in a different study. Social media and news articles did, however, help to see an outside perspective, but they also have their own bias or fail to mention diversity. Results would likely be most relevant for other US-based, activist nonprofits that may already have a connection to working with a diverse or alternative population. Nevertheless, it still helps shine light on some of the processes behind the diversification process organizations undergo.

Considering this was a case study, future studies could expand on how motives in combination with methods of diversifying act as a driving tool in the success of diversification. This could also be done in an organization that is not based in the US or a more general nonprofit that has less of a connection to working with a diverse or alternative population. A deeper analysis on how intersecting identities play a role in diversification efforts could also be warranted, especially in larger, more mainstream organizations that may not already have a connection to any marginalized community. The societal and financial pressures, as well as culture and white normativity, could also continue to be further looked at in efforts to diversify. In addition, a discourse study on what diversity, equity, and inclusion actually entail in a broader societal perspective could further illuminate how and why different tools are used.

While more research should be done to expand on ways to diversify, some key methods found in this case study may be worth considering if an organization has analyzed their motives behind diversifying and wants to do so for its own sake, not for an ulterior motive. Otherwise, anyone of these steps can be done superficially and fail. One important part is giving power to those with marginalized identities, especially intersecting ones. Starting with identifying shared values and creating a strong mission statement and new goals that align with those of the marginalized communities it wants to represent. Community building and participation is key. True transparency can help build trust as well as increase accessibility to those that may not have the resources to gain access to public documents that are hidden behind the doors of the IRS. If an organization holds events, they can have more BIPOC and queer/trans performers as well as post them on their social media. Employing a BIPOC and potentially queer/trans-led consultant may help with restructuring internal processes and increase reflexivity. Ultimately, these strategies worked for Alternative Events because of its commitment to completely re-structure itself and take on a community and activist role. While other cases may find other solutions, the genuine want to diversify is probably not enough to make the transition alone, but without it and without the ability for white, cis people to give up power, efforts to diversify may fail.

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