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DYKES ON BIKES: MOBILITY, BELONGING AND THE VISCERAL

ABSTRACT

This article contributes to growing scholarship on fluidity, embodiment and the politics of festivals. Such scholarship is crucial to understanding belonging as an embodied, visceral experience. Extending on this work, this paper seeks to draw further attention to the fluidity of festival boundaries and experience, by exploring how belonging holds the potential to become unlocated, and forcefully emanate through movement to and from events. I focus on a group of six Dykes on Bikes members, who rode motorbikes 1,800 kilometres as part of a larger group from Brisbane to the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade. Through this exploration I illustrate how attention to the visceral experience of belonging on the move allows geographers to address what holds individuals 'in place' so to speak, when attachment takes place through movement. In doing so I argue that the visceral is crucial to understanding belonging as mobile because it provides a framework to stand against universalised discourses locating belonging within the temporal and spatial confines of events.

KEY WORDS *mobilities; visceral; belonging; Dykes on Bikes; festival; sexuality; womyn*

Introduction

The Dykes on Bikes is an international group for womynⁱ who ride motorbikes. The group's identity subverts normative understandings of a female subject heteronormatively aligned with domesticity and passivity. Playing with femininities and masculinities in different ways through motorcycle skills, dress and riding styles, the Dykes on Bikes challenge dominant sexual and cultural expectations of what a woman is and what a woman can do. The term dyke, for example, originated as a derogatory term for a masculine female. The use of the term by the group is a deliberate political act to reclaim the word (Ilyasova 2006). Moreover, the endurance and strength needed for riding bodies has led motorbike riding to be labelled as masculine and working class. The Dykes on Bikes challenge masculine and classed understandings of motorbike riding by enabling alternative subjectivities and bringing into focus understandings of femininity.

In addition to dominant conceptualisations of motorbike riding as synonymous with freedom, escape and individuality, the Dykes on Bikes celebrates and values notions of a collective identity and a sense of belonging, which is forged through the enforced rules and codes of the chapter, and ideas of sticking and riding together. The subjectivity of the Dyke on Bike is not felt through following codes of membership alone; becoming, and remaining, a Dyke on Bike occurs through the practices of preparing the body for group rides, spending time together, riding together, leading pride parades, and returning from rides fatigued and sore. Attention to the Dykes on Bikes are notably absent within geographical scholarship, despite geographies current interest in mobilities, and recent calls to explore ‘a clear exposition of how gender and mobilities intersect to create shifting subjectivity from the perspectives of spatial mobility’ (Cresswell & Priya Uteng 2008, p.5).

This article contributes to the growing scholarship on fluidity, embodiment and the politics of festivals (cf. Picard & Robinson 2006; Johnston 2005). Empirically, the article explores belonging during the Queensland Dykes on Bikes 1,800 kilometre return journey from Brisbane to the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. I aim to mobilise the concept of belonging by drawing on the lived experiences of six womyn riding their bikes to Mardi Gras, as part of a larger group of 20 riders. I examine the entanglements of mobility, belonging and the visceral. In doing so, insights emerge around how belonging emerges and is viscerally experienced through movement. Here, I am particularly interested in exploring what holds individuals ‘in place’ so to speak, when attachment takes place through movement.

In the discussion that follows I embrace a visceral approach to explore the entanglements of mobility, belonging and the visceral. Firstly, I provide background to the ways in which scholars are conceptualising pride parades; exploring the coiled histories of the Mardi Gras Parade and the Dykes on Bikes. To assist in conceptualising mobilities and belonging through the body, an examination of the visceral theoretical approach and methodology is next introduced. Turning to a discussion of the empirical, I present participants’ experiences of preparing and attuning the riding body to belong, moments of friction and exploration of how belonging (and not belonging) emerge through co-motion.

Mardi Gras and the Dykes on Bikes – a coiled history

The Dykes on Bikes and pride parades are historically entangled. At the 1976 San Francisco Pride Parade a small group of women motorbike riders informally came together to ride as part of the parade. One of these first riders is said to have coined the phrase ‘Dykes on Bikes’ (San Francisco Dykes on Bikes History 2013). Receiving traction in the media, following the parade, the group rode

with the name. It was not until the mid-1980s that the group became formally structured as a result of growing numbers. Today there are 22 chapters internationally, three of which are located in Australia (Queenslandⁱⁱ, Sydney and Melbourne), all of which are governed by the San Francisco Chapter. In 2003, the group changed its name to the Women's Motorcycle Contingent/Dykes on Bikes - aiming to overcome essentialised understandings of women who ride motorbikes as 'dykes'; a move which aimed to increase inclusivity to all womyn who ride motorbikes (Ilyasova 2006).

There is no geographical scholarship pertaining to the Dykes on Bikes. Beyond geography focus is limited, recurrently reporting a linear narrative of the chapter's history (cf. Kreitler 2011; Weems 2011). Within pride festival and parade literature the Dykes on Bikes are often alluded to, yet seldom is voice given to the qualitative experiences of members. More broadly, literature exploring the intersections of women and motorbike riding has generated greater consideration. Focus includes, but is not confined by, the subservient and demeaning role of women within outlaw motorcycle clubs (Quinn & Kock 2003; Veno & Winterhalder 2009); the rise of middle- to upper-class female riders (Thompson 2012; Meyer 2009); and the empowerment and tensions that arise through the non-traditional gendered identity of women who ride for leisure (Auster 2001; Roster 2007).

In contrast to the limited research pertaining to the Dykes on Bikes, work concerned with Mardi Gras is immense and wide ranging. Focus includes the events political and cultural history (Carbery 1995); its role within the unfolding of Australia's sexual identity and politics (Mason & Lo 2009), the pivotal position of the event in Sydney's international tourist branding (Kates & Belk 2001) and the ways the parade is both a challenge to, and confirmation of mainstream, understandings of (hetero) sexuality (Markwell & Waitt 2009). More recently, Johnston and Waitt (forthcoming) have explored understandings of the embodied politics of *pride* emergent during pride parades. Their work is crucial to the current article, in that it draws attention to the emergence of belonging and the ways the politics of belonging is a visceral experience. While crucial, interrogations into the embodied politics of belonging have thus far largely explored belonging within the spatial temporalities of festivals and events. Acknowledging festivals as fluid, belonging holds the potential to become unlocated, forcefully emanating through movement to and from the event.

Festival scholarship more broadly has largely been influenced through positivist frameworks, consequently conceptualising events as closed, fixed spaces with tightly defined boundaries, predominantly focused on themes relevant to the immediate temporal specificity of the event. While this work remains invaluable to geographical understandings, in recent years there has been a turn to rethink festivals as complex spaces, acknowledging their fluidity (Picard & Robinson 2006),

embodiment (Johnston 2005) and politics (Browne 2007). This article is an attempt to build on recent understandings of festivals as fluid, embodied and political by exploring how belonging is experienced on the move during a return journey to Mardi Gras.

A visceral approach to mobilising belonging

Attempting to challenge the dominance of positivist frameworks, and rectify the forgotten body within festival and tourism literature, Veijola and Jokinen (1994, p.129) proposed the incorporation of 'embodiment, radical Otherness, multiplicity of differences, sex and sexuality in tourism [and consequently festival research]'. It took almost a decade, however, for their call to be answered. Johnston's (2001) seminal response in the article *(Other) Bodies and Tourism Studies* was crucial in empirically illustrating the possibilities of an embodied tourist account through an exploration of two mega pride events: the Aotearoa/New Zealand HERO Parade and the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade. Emphasis, for Johnston, was on the affective and emotional relationships, alongside the discursive and symbolic constitutions of text and talk. A focus which attempted to understand paradoxes and connections between what people say they do and the actualities of actions.

To further extend upon a corporal feminist approach to tourist and leisure studies, I utilise the concept of the visceral. Drawing on Probyn (2000), Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008) and Longhurst *et al.* (2009), visceral refers to the realm of internally felt sensations that emerge from a sensory engagement with the material and discursive world. A visceral approach acknowledges that emotions do not only reside within individuals, the visceral moves between bodies and places – encompassing 'both surface and depth, outside and inside, solids and fluids, materiality and spirituality, head and heart' (Longhurst *et al.* 2009, p. 335). I want to suggest that riding is a visceral experience because it brings senses into being; for example, one has to remain aware of their own riding body, how it is positioned on the road, its positionality towards other riding bodies, and other driving bodies – in this sense riding bodies open up and connect in different ways, at different times, for different reasons. Exploring the visceral realm of riding thus provides understanding of the ways members of the Dykes on Bikes are positioned in relation to others; providing an entry point to explore 'political understanding of how people can be *moved* or *mobilised* either as individuals or as groups of social actors' (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy 2008, p. 469). Addressing the visceral is crucial in the instance of this article because belonging is an embodied, emotional, sensuous,

relational, affective and political experience – thus something is missed when we ignore visceral responses to moments of belonging and not belonging. Yet more than this, exploring the ways belonging is experienced viscerally through movement provides an entry point for understanding the fluidity of festival spaces.

To explore belonging as a visceral experience I follow Probyn. For Probyn (1996) belonging is a mode that cannot be located in some authentic, static, pre-existing state. Belonging is rather an act of constantly becoming, a constant movement which is never fully achieved, never really obtained. Belonging, is a longing, a desire to fit in, to become other. It is the restless process between being and longing; be-longing. Belonging emerges through a desire to belong to something, which for the individual does not exist elsewhere. Yearning to belong is a felt, visceral experience –an emotional affiliation that exists between individuals and collectives, individuals and things, and individuals and places – an essence that emerges through movement which correspondingly generates association. To this end belonging may be conceptualised as an emotion providing meaning to individual subjectivities and collectives (Wright 2014). To understand belonging, Probyn (1996) foregrounds the body as a place of passage because, she explains, the surface is where social forces are produced, and become visible. Observing performance therefore reveals desires for belonging, and slippages between moments of belonging and not belonging amid bodies, and bodies and places.

There is a politics to the visceral experience of belonging. Belonging may serve as restrictive rather than progressive. It may introduce, or reinforce, boundaries that do not exist; a move that renders essentialised understandings concerning what belongs and what does not. Individuals consequently may need to negotiate or exclude particular subjectivities across multiple temporalities and scales when desiring to belong. There is also unevenness to belonging; some belong more than others, while certain individuals possess the power to determine the requirements of what belongs and what does not (Yuval-Davis 2011). Moving to a larger scale, sexual politics for the Dykes on Bikes is illustrated through the pleasures of group belonging, where the enjoyment of belonging functions as a form of entitlement and reclaiming that works against normative assumptions of a compulsory heterosexuality. Ahmed (2004, pg. 165) says ‘pleasure involves not only the capacity to enter into, or inhabit with ease, but also as a form of entitlement and belonging. For queers, to display pleasure through what we do with our bodies is to make the comforts of heterosexuality less comfortable’. The pleasurable belonging emergent through riding together as the group moves through the landscape is a highly visible political act.

Assemblage thinking opens up possibilities to consider how belonging is viscerally experienced on the road. Assemblages cut through dualistic understandings of body and thing, as bodies and materialities come together and scramble into shifting combinations. A visceral approach to mobilising belonging may, therefore, be conceptualised as the coming together of assemblages into socio-spatial formations that make sense as a coherent whole. For instance riding bodies do not merely govern bikes, riders are also affected by the agency of the bike, road, other riders, emotions and so on – where the body, bike, group of riders and emotions begin and end is not clear. Moreover as bikes, bodies, roads and regulations come together at certain moments during the journey, a seamlessness is established. I want to suggest that the shared experience of moving seamlessly together as a body without organs establishes affective ties between members of the Dykes on Bikes, creating certain moments where members feel at home, moments of belonging. Such moments become fractured when frictions (such as rain, congestion, suburban speed limits and night) scramble moving assemblages, creating moments of not belonging.

Methodology

Edensor (2010, p. 5) contends that the researcher ‘must take their own body, its respirations, pulses, circulations, assimilations, durations and phases of duration’ into account when considering embodiment and mobility. My experience riding motorbikes is minimal, yet onerous. Passengering on the back of motorbikes on friends’ farms growing up always left me wanting to one day take control of the bike. An experience as a late teenager riding on the back of a young male motocrossⁱⁱⁱ rider’s Suzuki RM-Z450, however, left me with an anxious haunting of motorbikes. The unfamiliarity of the wind lashing my body as we screamed through the Australian bush forced me to wrap my arms tighter and hide my face behind the left shoulder of my riding friend. I felt my body as vulnerable, my feet so close to the sandy ground surging past below, a constant reminder to keep my body close to the bike, yet also remaining conscious of the proximity of my legs to the heat of the bike. To facilitate flow my body conformed to the body of the bike and the body of the rider. Every vibration, every bump pulsed through me, felt through the entirety of my body. There were no speed limits, something we were taking full advantage of, as we reached 120 kilometres per hour. Approaching a straight we increased speed again, my heart stopping as I feared the combination of speed and thick sandy trail would bring us hurtling into the surrounding bush at the next bend.

This experience as a teenager led to some hesitancy when I was invited to ride with the Dykes on Bikes during fieldwork. I was caught between flashbacks of what I recalled as a near death

experience and the research benefits arising from the embodied experience of riding with the Dykes on Bikes. I was simultaneously relieved and disappointed as the onset of Brisbane's seasonal heavy rain during February fieldwork made the decision for me, and led the group to call off the planned ride that was to take place during my stay.

Motorbike riding is affective and emotional, generating unique experiences for individuals that can be difficult to articulate. For this reason I had initially planned for participants to share photo and video footage from their journey. Researchers have utilized video and photography with the objective of placing embodiment centrally rather than peripherally (Bates 2013). Video and photo methods make the body audibly, visibly and viscerally present. Initially participants were enthusiastic responding to my invitation to share any photo or video footage of their return journey. Participants, however, were hesitant to share their experiences once they had returned to Brisbane. They claimed their footage was too boring, or not what they had planned, preferring rather to talk or write about their experiences. This was despite my encouragements that *any* insight was of importance. While video offers powerful insights to geographers because of its potential to enable bodily insights, it is also for this reason incredibly personal.

Following the failure of video and photo methods I became reliant upon semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews took place with each of the six participants before and after Mardi Gras Parade. Participant observation took place when I was invited to stay with one of the participants, and through this, socialise with some of the chapter's members. Alert to the methodological challenges interviews and observation pose in terms of offering insight into bodily capacities, emotions and embodiment, I drew upon Hayes-Conroy's (2010) concept of 'imagined bodily empathies'. This concept attempts to focus on the power and motion of participant's emotions, affective intensities and unconscious bodily judgments. Hayes-Conroy contends that researchers cannot expect to fully know participants' visceral realities; yet the researcher can recognise or 'imagine' what an encounter feels like through empathetic communication by being there with participants: thinking through where things were shared and listening to how things were shared. Bodily empathies were recorded as field notes and analysed in parallel with a narrative analysis of transcribed interviews.

The ways participants chose to share their experiences through interviews and participant observation, in contrast to video and photography, affected the sorts of information captured. Rather than gaining insight into specific moments of movement, or the emotion of motion (Sheller

2003), participants chose to speak about their journey reflexively in relation to the themes of preparation, attunement and moments of belonging and not belonging – a discussion to which I now turn.

Preparing and attuning the riding body to belong

Participants were aware of the particular demands layered on riding bodies, and thus collective planning practices were administered to ensure their bodies held the capacity to complete the long distance journey. Long distance rides were planned in the months leading to the trip, providing practice opportunities for new members. Limited luggage could be carried on the bike and consequently parade and weekend outfits required careful planning before leaving. On the nights before riding limited alcohol could be consumed and adequate sleep was essential. For some, choosing which bike to take resulted in apprehension, with tensions between the aesthetics of the parade and the practicalities of long distance riding. Even the route taken was meticulously planned to ensure it was exciting and challenging, rather than straight and mundane. Danny [Dyke on Bike president] explains:

If Jay [Dyke on Bike member] had never been before and she tried to go down to Mardi Gras, you know it's very difficult. If you don't know what's on, where to go, what to do, it's actually very difficult to arrange it yourself. So for us I try and organise it. It's a big undertaking for me to try and organise it but as far as I'm concerned, I don't find organising it too overwhelming, as long girls go and they can kind of have a bit of a stress free thing. Like even me just planning the ride is huge because I make sure we do some awesome roads, we don't just go straight down the highway, that would be really easy, if we went straight down the highway and straight back home that would be boring. I make sure we sort of get a motorbike trip as much as it is about Mardi Gras.

To ensure harmonious movement on the road it was also essential for members to become attuned to the chapter's strict rules and practices before leaving Brisbane. Danny and Andy share how these requirements become embodied through practice rides:

Anna: Do you try to stay at your own pace or do you try to keep together as a group?

Danny: We try and stay together. I say to them [Queensland Dykes on Bikes members] 'you know what, if you want to ride like a fuck wit, you go and ride on your own, don't do it on a

club ride'. And all the girls respect that. We've got some girls who are pretty quick riders and they know that when they come on a ride they baton off [back down] and they do what everybody else does. We have an experienced rider up the back. And when we go out on big rides the ones of us who are really experienced riders we keep an eye on the newer ones. Young being riders, not young as in age. I mean part of the club is to teach people and prepare them for Mardi Gras so every now and then I'll go and ride behind someone and then afterwards go and pull them aside and go, this is what you need to do, just keep a little eye on that. You know technically wise, you need to do this. And you just go mate, follow me for a little bit and just see, just watch the lines. I'm going slow and I just want you to follow, just watch, technically when we are on the road.

Andy: And any particular time we go out we always just give a bit of a brief on what the roads going to be like or what experience level it's going to be like.

Danny: And if I rode my normal pace I would be a lot faster than when I ride with the group. And that's just part of it. We've got some of our girls who are brand new and have different bike capabilities. I ride a massive sports bike, there's no speed limit that I can't reach in point three of a second. But someone on a brand new bike they can't, they just can't. We're all understanding throughout the whole group, everyone's pretty much expecting that, the girls don't need to be any better than the next person, there's no competition happening, it's more about just riding together, keeping our formation. We want to keep people in the group and have a good experience, so they actually feel part of the experience.

While the spaces and temporalities of the ride from Brisbane to Sydney are open ended, fluid and generative, familiarity generated through specific repetitive practices and rules are crucial to the construction of flow and seamlessness once on the road. Butcher (2011, p. 246) suggests, in a discussion of metro use in Delhi, that 'knowing the 'rules' of appropriate space use on the metro is linked to knowing how to use, and thus belong, to the space of a modern cosmopolitan city'. Similarly for the Dykes on Bikes performative rules are imperative to experiencing belonging as an emotion between riding bodies. Moreover, the construction and reproduction of these regulatory performances introduce clear boundaries constructing what belongs and what does not – boundaries which are determined and governed by Danny, the group's president. Motorbike riders develop individual styles dependent upon desire for speed, the body's abilities, and the materialities of the bike and landscape. For the Dykes on Bikes members, however, it is essential to become attuned to the speed, formation and flow required to ride with, and belong to, the chapter – as Danny says 'if you want to ride like a fuck wit, you go and ride on your own'. Attunement to the

Dykes on Bikes takes place at the scale of the riding body (alongside that of the discursive), indicating belonging to the chapter is deeply visceral.

Moments of friction – moments of not belonging

The Dykes on Bikes seamless moving assemblage when on the road was ruptured at particular moments through the introduction of friction. By way of example, negativity came to a climax as the Dykes on Bikes entered Sydney, following two entire days of riding. Cam and Jay explain:

Cam: I enjoyed the ride down because I always enjoy endurance kind of rides. I was a little bit tired towards the end there, when it just started raining and it was cold. Towards the end, just about Hornsby, when you get to Hornsby, it just always seems to rain in that one particular spot and it just rained the whole way through, and I was just like, I'm freezing, I'm cold, I just want to get there.

Jay: It got dark really quickly and then it started to sort of rain. And we were counting headlights because we couldn't really see which of us, because it was dark and we couldn't distinguish between bikes. I was second last at the back and one of the girls was behind me. So we were counting headlights and we ended up with a group of people from somewhere else in the middle of our group. So we went through a set of headlights and she got stuck at a set of lights.

There was stickiness entering the city, which pulled the group apart, scattering the seamless assemblage; and consequently rupturing the visceral experience of belonging. Heavy suburban traffic, darkness, rain, tired bodies and traffic lights served as frictions, breaking the group's formation. As riding bodies separated, they became vulnerable and uncomfortable. Becoming lone riders they were forced to increase sensory awareness of the materialities that did not belong – it is only through discomfort that the riders became aware of their bodies as a surface that was separate to the groups body without organs. The cold rain felt on Cam's skin, for example, forced her to reflect 'I'm freezing, I'm cold, I just want to get there'. Exploring the frictions encountered on entering the city hints at the importance and power of belonging to the moving assemblage in enabling riding bodies to not only undertake the journey, but experience it as pleasurable. This suggests the importance of considering the visceral when attempting to deepen understandings of the relations between bodies, and bodies and places.

Belonging (and not belonging) in co-motion

Conceptualisations of belonging are regularly understood as emergent through place; consequently, mobility is often conceived as the antithesis to belonging. Exploring belonging as fluid, becoming and affective has the potential to unlocate belonging, enabling this emotion to emerge on the move. Belonging as mobile is significant for geographies of festivals because it provides a framework to move beyond the exploration of emotions as situated within the spatial temporalities of events – and thus increase understanding around the ways festivals are entangled with broader politics and social change. Chris' experiences illustrate belonging as mobile:

I don't like Mardi Gras, like the fact that it was Mardi Gras any more than I would have liked it if we had of just gone down there. But I wouldn't have gone by myself, I wouldn't ride that far without the group. And coming back I loved coming back, because we came back through the New England Highway on the Monday morning and I just loved coming back through there. And we didn't get wet the whole way home, it was quiet...and on the New England Highway, there are nice rolling hills and you can see horses and cows. We stopped in Armidale for breakfast and we took over this tiny café. All of us together.

Edensor (2010, p. 14) suggests the metaphor of flow is useful in conceiving 'the sequential process through which immanent experience is replete with successive moments of regular attunement to the familiar, and the surprising and contingent'. The experience of flow, Edensor further claims, holds the potential to escape feelings of alienation. For Chris, attunement to the group's familiar formation, alongside the moving material assemblage of rolling hills, empty roads, agricultural landscape, absence of rain and morning light brought forth a rhythmic flow which generated a sense of belonging. The pleasures of this more than human event were heightened because of the temporality of this moment – that is, returning to Brisbane Chris felt the capacity to relax, having completed the parade.

Chris' experiences on the road contrasted with experiences of the parade. Asked to further explain why the parade was not enjoyable, Chris responds:

I was just like yeah ok cool. It was like yay we did it. I wasn't bouncing off walls. I don't know I could give or take the parade it just didn't wow me. They [Dykes on Bikes members] were all like it will change your life. But I was just like, yeah. I expected I'd have this really high adrenalin rush but it was just, yeah nup. At the start when we moved into the section where it actually started it got a bit annoying because we were sitting there and it was like ah ok, and they said 'ok everybody get on your bikes' and then we started the bikes up, and then

we moved, and then we stopped and then we were sitting there and then they told us to turn them off because there was something on the road. A tree or something. There was something on the road, so I was like ah.

The irregular and non-sequential rhythm which came about as the riders were asked to stop and start disrupted and scattered the rhythmic flow of the parade. Waiting, stillness, irregular movement, and the introduction of material frictions triggered embodied responses of frustration leading to feelings of disconnection rather than belonging. Disconnection which was heightened through the way this moment contrasted with expectations of an adrenalin rush. Chris expresses more about her experiences of the parade when asked how she first reacted to the crowds:

Chris: You can't really hear the screaming over all the bikes so it's like you know you can see them screaming at you. And I had a mask on, so I wore this thing that I'd made and it's like half a gas mask that I wore. I wore that specifically because I knew if I had half my face hidden it makes me feel that I'm not on show, anonymous. So I did that on purpose, not just because it was part of what I was wearing.

Anna: Do you think that helped?

Chris: Probably yeah. Like I had goggles but they broke, so I didn't have those on. But this thing covers all of my face basically so I could pretend that I wasn't there or something. But I'd look at the crowd occasionally when we went passed and make faces at them or whatever and when we stopped I'd stop and wave. I engaged the crowd but it wasn't overwhelming I think because I had that on. I think if I didn't have that on I would have felt really naked. And been like, don't look at me.

The gas mask softened the sensory experience of performing the Dyke on Bike at Mardi Gras, enabling Chris to remain anonymous from the sexualised gaze formed through the assemblage of sounds, crowds, pride and sexuality. In a similar vein to Johnston's (2007) discussion of one participant's use of sunglasses in Scotland Pride, a heightened sense of awareness and self-consciousness arising from the unfamiliar and variegated rhythm of the parade, alongside the gaze of the crowds, was combatted somewhat through Chris' use of the mask. Yet the mask simultaneously hindered the emergence of relational belonging between Chris, spectators' bodies and the space of the parade.

Exploring belonging as a visceral experience offers insight into the paradoxes of Mardi Gras as a queer space, where comfort is extended in varying ways to some bodies (for example Mardi Gras may extend comfort to white, fit, masculine bodies) more than others, a process that consequently

affects feelings of alienation among other(ed) bodies. At first glance acknowledging the coiled history of Mardi Gras and the Dykes on Bikes at the scale of the group may influence scholars to concede that members experience comfort and belonging when riding in this event. Crucially, however, remaining alert to member's visceral experience of belonging gets at the ambiguous role sensory processes play in determining impressions of discursive regimes, explaining how some bodies may feel out of place within this queer space.

Conclusion

This article contributes to growing scholarship on fluidity, embodiment and the politics of festivals. Empirically, the article explored moments of belonging (and not belonging) during the Dykes on Bikes return journey from Brisbane to the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade. I have argued that attention to the visceral is crucial in addressing the ways belonging is experienced as an emotion through two main registers. First, the pleasures of riding in a seamless mobile Dyke on Bike assemblage, that came about through preparing the riding body, 'knowing the rules' and the absence of friction facilitated a visceral belonging that moved between and within members. Through this exploration I have attempted to illustrate how attention to the visceral experience of belonging on the move allows geographers to address what holds individuals 'in place' so to speak, when attachment takes place through movement. Second, I illustrated how a visceral approach addresses the nuances and paradoxes of emotion by attending to the enigmatic role sensory processes play in determining the felt experience of discursive regimes. In consequence it becomes possible to conceptualise how the visceral provides a framework to stand against ambiguous universalised discourses of belonging with reference to festivals and non-normative sexualities.

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NOTES

ⁱ 'Womyn' is one of several alternative spellings of the word 'woman', used to avoid the suggestion that females are dualistically defined through reference to 'man'.

ⁱⁱ Queensland Dykes on Bikes Chapter is state based to be inclusive of the urban areas of the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, which are in close proximity to Brisbane city.

ⁱⁱⁱ Motocross is a form of motorbike racing held on off-road circuits, designed to be physically demanding and competitive.

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