



Henri-Pekka Olavi Henttonen

LGBTQIA+ Experience of Participation

Observations from Helsinki Pride Community Open Groups

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Author	Henri-Pekka Olavi Henttonen
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<p>Sexual and gender minorities experience exclusion more often than others. Helsinki Pride Community offers open community activities for adults who identify themselves as sexual and gender minorities. The open community activities aim to increase the attendees experience of participation. The purpose of this study is to examine how the attendees experience of participation is realised in Helsinki Pride Community open community activities.</p> <p>The study examines sexual and gender minorities, peer groups, and volunteers. The diverse term of participation is explored using a model by Helka Raivio and Jarno Karjalainen in which experience of participation is presented as opposed to exclusion. The study was conducted using themed interviews. The interviewees were participants in the Helsinki Pride Community open groups. The interview material was analysed using a theory-based content analysis. The researcher's role as a volunteer in the group activities, as well as the interviewees being chosen based on voluntary basis, weakened the reliability of the study.</p> <p>Seven participants who volunteered for the study were interviewed. The respondents found that the open community activities in general successfully support their experience of participation. Helsinki Pride Community and the volunteers provide the community activities with a framework for improving the attendees' experience of participation. The open community activities are organised in a way that equally supports first time attendees. The respondents consider shared experiences to make participating in activities and discussion easier. The respondents considered the individual nature of the meetings as somewhat problematic for a continuing experience of participation. While the use of multiple languages is generally seen as a positive, it is also seen as increasing the risk of feelings of exclusion in the groups.</p> <p>The open community activities support the attendees' experience of participation in different areas of participation. The respondents found that the open community activities provide the participants with an opportunity for activities, open discussion and building communality. The results of the study can be used by Helsinki Pride Community to examine the practices of open community activities especially in the areas where the respondents found room for improvement.</p>	
Keywords	Participation, peer groups, LGBTQIA+ minorities

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<p>Seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöjen joukossa syrjäytymisen kokemukset ovat yleisempiä kuin muiden. Helsinki Pride -yhteisö järjestää seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöihin identifioituville aikuisille avointa ryhmätoimintaa, jossa pyritään tukemaan ryhmien kävijöiden erilaista osallisuutta. Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää kävijöiden osallisuuden kokemuksen toteutumisesta Helsinki Pride -yhteisön avoimessa yhteisötoiminnassa.</p> <p>Tutkielma käsittelee seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöjä, vertaisryhmiä ja vapaaehtoisuutta. Monimuotoista osallisuuden käsitettä tarkastellaan tutkielmassa erityisesti käyttämällä Helka Raivion ja Jarno Karjalaisen mallia osallisuudesta syrjäytymisen vastaparina. Tutkimus toteutettiin teemahaastatteluina, joissa haastateltiin Helsinki Pride -yhteisön avoimen yhteisötoiminnan osallistujia. Haastattelumateriaali analysoitiin käyttämällä teorialähtöistä sisällönanalyysiä. Haastattelijana toimivan tutkijan rooli vapaaehtoisena ryhmässä sekä haastateltavien valikoituminen vapaaehtoisuuden perusteella heikensivät tutkimuksen luotettavuutta.</p> <p>Tutkielmaa varten haastateltiin seitsemää avoimeen yhteisötoimintaan osallistunutta vapaaehtoista. Haastateltavat kokivat avoimen yhteisötoiminnan tukevan heidän osallisuuden kokemuksiaan pääasiassa hyvin. Helsinki Pride -yhteisö ja sen vapaaehtoiset antavat yhteisötoiminnalle luotettavat raamit osallisuuden kokemuksen edistämiseen. Yhteisötoiminta on järjestetty tavalla, joka tukee ryhmiin ensimmäistä kertaa osallistuvia. Ryhmätoiminta koetaan turvalliseksi ja vastaajat uskovat samankaltaisten kokemusten tekevän toimintaan, kuten keskusteluun ryhmässä, osallistumisesta helpompaa. Vastaajat kokivat jatkuvan osallisuuden kokemuksen kannalta erityisen ongelmalliseksi ryhmätoiminnan tapaamisten kertaluontoisuuden. Positiiviseksi koetun useamman eri kielen käytön nähdään myös mahdollistavan syrjäytymisen kokemuksia ryhmässä.</p> <p>Yhteisötoiminta tukee kävijöiden osallisuutta sen eri osa-alueilla. Vastaajat kokevat avoimen yhteisötoiminnan antavan osallistujille mahdollisuuden toimintaan, avoimeen kanssakäymiseen ja yhteisöllisyyden luomiseen. Tutkielma antaa Helsinki Pride -yhteisölle kuvan osallistujien näkökulmasta osallisuuden kokemuksen rakentumiseen ryhmätoiminnassa. Tutkielman tulosten perusteella Helsinki Pride -yhteisöllä on mahdollisuus tarkastella avoimen yhteisötoiminnan käytäntöjä niiden osallisuuden osa-alueiden osalta, joissa haastateltavat kokevat olevan parantamisen varaa.</p>	
Avainsanat	Osallisuus, vertaisryhmät, LGBTQIA+ vähemmistöt

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Helsinki Pride open groups for LGBTQIA+ adults	2
2.1	LGBTQIA+ experience in Finland	2
2.2	The partner organisation and open groups	3
3	Participation and LGBTQIA+ groups	5
3.1	Experience of participation	5
3.2	LGBTQIA+	7
3.3	Peer support	9
3.4	Peer groups	10
3.5	Volunteers as experts	12
3.6	Examining experience of participation in LGBTQIA+ open groups	13
4	Experiences of participation in HPY open groups	14
4.1	Attendees' experiences	14
4.2	Research question	15
5	Study implementation	16
5.1	Study methods	16
5.2	Participants	17
5.3	Data collection	18
5.4	Ethicality and data management	20
5.5	Data analysis	20
6	Study Results	22
6.1	Overview	22
6.2	Interviews	23
6.3	Having	24
6.4	Belonging	26
6.5	Acting	27
7	Conclusions	29
7.1	Key findings	29
7.2	Reliability	30
7.3	Further research opportunities	31

Appendices

Appendix 1. Themed Interview Frame

Appendix 2. Example of the Analysis Frame

Appendix 3. Participation Agreement

Appendix 4. Participation Information Sheet

Appendix 5. Invitation

1 Introduction

Sexuality and gender affect a person's process of building their identity in every area of their life. Heteronormativity of the Finnish society has long pushed sexual and gender minorities to the margins, denying them the chance to express themselves freely in the different aspects of society. In the last decades this has started to change, in large part thanks to the diverse organisations lobbying for the rights of sexual and gender minorities. Organisations such as Helsinki Pride Community (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö ry., HPY) offer information not only to the members of minorities themselves, but to educational and other public organisations as well. (Jokela et al. 2020)

Sexuality and gender are complex phenomena, and terminology concerning sexual and gender minorities is constantly in flux. In this study, the current established acronym of LGBTQIA+ is used, to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer groups, including intersex and asexual people, as well as others belonging to any further sexual and gender minorities. The terminology concerning LGBTQIA+ people used in this study is explained further in chapter 3.2.

While the knowledge about sexual and gender minorities is increasing on the societal level, the high rates of discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ minorities, as well as the low rates of pursuing formal consequences, can be seen as signs of how LGBTQIA+ people see the possibility of pursuing further action for everyday discrimination. (Pihlajamaa 2021, 45) Such discrimination pierces most areas of life, causing LGBTQIA+ people to choose to conceal or downplay their sexuality and gender identity. Despite the positive shift in attitudes, sexual and gender minorities still perceive their identity negatively affecting their possibilities of societal and psychosocial participation.

A peer group setting gives LGBTQIA+ people a possibility for participation without a constant need for them to reflect on how their minority status affects their engagement in discussion and activities, whether these are related to issues concerning their unifying factor or not. Peer groups can give LGBTQIA+ people the opportunity to discuss their current situation and identity with people with similar experiences, but more importantly the setting can give the LGBTQIA+ people a safe and appreciative environment that they might not find elsewhere. (Nissinen 2011, 24-25)

This study examines the experience of participation of individual attendees in Helsinki Pride Community open group activities. The data on the attendees' experiences will be collected by a themed interview conducted for the purposes of this study. The study aims to examine how the open group activities improve the participants' experience of participation, and what kinds of factors do the participants consider relevant for their experience of participation and exclusion. Belonging to a marginalised group affects open group participants in many areas of life, but this study concentrates on the participants' experience in the open group activities in contrast to their general experience.

2 Helsinki Pride open groups for LGBTQIA+ adults

2.1 LGBTQIA+ experience in Finland

According to a survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA 2020) in 2019, attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people in Finland have improved since the previous survey in 2012. However, a third of the people surveyed who identified as sexual and gender minorities replied that they had experienced discrimination in some areas of their life during the last 12 months. The eight different areas of life surveyed in the study in which LGBTQIA+ people felt they had been discriminated against were: in searching for a job or a residence, at their workplace or place of education, in social and health care and in cafes, restaurants and stores. In the survey almost all of the respondents who had experienced discrimination had decided against reporting it further, and only 8% of respondents said that they were able to talk about their minority status completely openly at their workplace.

In a survey conducted in 2022 (Jauhola, et al. 2022) sexual and gender minority participants elaborated the situation by explaining that the most common forms of harassment they experienced were verbal disparagement, insults, and name calling. 15% of respondents said that they had experienced physical harassment, and 6% had experienced physical violence due to their minority status. The most common context for harassment was a combination of the online platforms surveyed, but many of the respondents expressed that the places in which they had experienced harassment included everyday settings such as schools (35%), restaurants (28%), and workplaces (22%).

The level of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people in Finland is dependent on different factors affecting a person's everyday life, such as their economic status and the area in which they reside in. Juhani E. Lehto and Camilla Kovero (2010, 188-195)

highlight the importance of differences in geographical areas in the experiences of gay men. They have found that in Finland as well as internationally, sexual minorities have chosen to move into, or to stay in, metropolitan areas. People belonging to LGBTQIA+ minorities do not necessarily consider their gender identity or sexuality to be the reason for their choice of residential area, but feel that in more densely populated areas they can express their unifying factor more openly. In Finland, Helsinki metropolitan area and even specific districts and neighbourhoods were found to be considered especially tolerant by LGBTQIA+ people. (Lehto and Kovero 2010, 208)

Exclusion does not have to be realised as discrimination for it to affect the lives of LGBTQIA+ people. People having a minority status affects people's well-being in a multitude of different ways. Onni Jaskari and Anna Keski-Rahkonen (2021) explain how sexual and gender minorities are exposed to additional stressors due to heteronormativity and cisnormativity prevalent in society. Such minority stress is caused by aforementioned attitudes causing prejudices, discrimination and harassment that cause LGBTQIA+ people feelings of constant wariness for discrimination and violence, as well as feelings of worthlessness and even internalised homophobia. Minority stress can be seen as one of the reasons why sexual and gender minorities are overrepresented in people suffering from mental illness and risk of suicide. (Jaskari and Keski-Rahkonen 2021, 1782-1784)

2.2 The partner organisation and open groups

Helsinki Pride Community (HPY) is an organisation established in 1991, originally called HeSeta ry., as Helsinki based branch of LGBTI Rights in Finland – SETA ry. HPY organises activities throughout the whole year, but especially during Pride month in the summer, which culminates in Helsinki Pride Parade at the end of pride week. In its strategy (HeSeta 2018) the organisation states their mission as aiming to advance equality, well-being, and experience of participation of people belonging to sexual and gender minorities. The organisation advances these goals by societal influencing, subject expertise, and activities based on communality. Volunteer and peer-based activities grounded in social and youth work are organised with the aim of creating opportunities for meaningful communication and societal impact. According to the organisation, the communality built on such activities reinforces people's opportunities and experiences of participation. (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2022a)

HPY organises open community activities for LGBTQIA+ adults. These include activities, peer support groups, and separate individual activities. HPY currently organises seven different open peer groups, each meeting approximately every two weeks. The activities are designed to have a low threshold and are usually advertised openly, for example through social media. These community activities are organised and planned together with volunteers to create recurring groups that best fit the volunteer's individual knowledge and experience. The open community activities are constantly evaluated and restructured to best fit the participants needs to create a space where they can receive peer support for their experiences as LGBTQIA+ minorities.

Group meetings are usually organised at Helsinki Pride Community premises in a specific community room for the groups. Specific meeting times and activities are decided for the season before the groups begin in the autumn and the spring. The meetings are usually between 2 and 3 hours in length, depending on the activity. Most groups are organised in Finnish, but because the groups consist of individuals with diverse backgrounds, English is often used in addition as a lingua franca or a common language for communication between people with varying levels of Finnish. Individual groups or meetings can be organised in other languages. Groups have been organised in Russian, for example.

In the beginning of every meeting the participants introduce themselves to the group after the volunteers describe the groups on a general level, together with the activities for the current meeting. During the introductions and while the attendees are waiting for the meeting to begin, they are introduced to safer space principles (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2022b) that are in use during the open group meetings. The safer space principles include a short description of behaviour expected during the groups based on mutual respect, concerning people's gender identity for example. The principles emphasise respect for the participants' privacy, to ensure that the participants can expect confidentiality concerning the identities of the groups' participants as well as the group discussions. At the end of a meeting, participants are asked to reflect on the meeting as a whole and are asked to fill a short survey on the group meeting. After the meeting the group volunteers estimate the number of participants and add any other possible notes to be sent to HPY organisers (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2022a)

3 Participation and LGBTQIA+ groups

3.1 Experience of participation

Concept of *participation* is hard to define precisely. In this study the term used instead will be that of *experience of participation*. Participation is studied in a social and healthcare setting, as well as in behavioural theory. In the field of social and health care, the concept of participation came to focus especially during the 1990's with more precise terms such as *involvement*, and *empowerment*, but differences between fields and contexts of study, as well as lingual differences, have blurred the differences of the terms (Beresford 2002, 95-96). In this study, *experience of participation* will be used as the most accurate possible translation for the Finnish term of *osallisuus*. *Osallisuus* is often translated as *inclusion* in studies regarding experiences concerning participation in different services. As this study concerns the open group participants' experiences on an individual level, using *experience of participation* seems better fitting than *inclusion* to emphasise the agency of the participants.

Experience of participation can be understood differently depending on the context. It is an abstract concept about actively being a part of something, and can be involvement, belongingness, or democracy, for example. Experience of participation as a concept can include or exclude active operation and belonging. Isola et al. (2017, 10) explain the concept as a person being in a situation like society, labour market, or different social groups, where well-being and values are being created in collaboration with others. Experience of participation can be categorised as a Ballung concept as defined by Nancy Cartwright and Rosa Runhardt (2014, 266-269). Ballung concepts consist of a diversity of factors that cannot be measured against each other inside the context of the concept. In the case of experience of participation, or *osallisuus*, the concept includes the experience of connecting to others, as well as safety and agency in affecting the community. The importance of these experiences cannot be compared between each other and their importance to a participant is purely personal, not defined by the concept of participation.

Päivi Rouvinen-Wilenius (2014) describes experience of participation as empowerment though participating in situations where a person can actively take part and affect matters concerning themselves. This kind of empowerment on societal level requires empowerment on an individual level. In addition to personal empowerment, Rouvinen-Wilenius includes identity and life management as parts of experience of participation.

Improving their experience of participation requires the participants to commit to actively participating, according to their capabilities and needs, as well as trusting and listening on both an individual and group level. (Rouvinen-Wilenius 2014, 51-53)

Martin Max-Neef (1991) has created a framework of basic human needs as a matrix of needs, satisfiers, and economic goods. In Max-Neef's matrix, basic needs are explained through their categories of *being*, *having*, *doing* and *interacting*. *Being* in the context of participation in Max-Neef's matrix means, among other things, adaptability, solidarity and respect. *Having* is about rights and privileges, as well as responsibilities and duties. *Interacting* in participation happens in settings such as communities, associations, and families, where the individual can affect the larger group context. The last category of *doing* is the most relevant to the goals of this study, as it explains what participation is in practice: Becoming affiliated, cooperating, proposing, sharing, dissenting, obeying, interacting, agreeing and expressing one's opinions. (Max-Neef 1991, 32)

Developing forward from Max-Neef's theory, Helka Raivio and Jarno Karjalainen (2013) define experience of participation as both an ethical goal and as an action of the people participating. Societal participation can sometimes be seen from an outside perspective as political actions, but it is truly only defined by personal experience. Raivio and Karjalainen consider participation to be a process within different social networks and that participation is an opposing force to exclusion. They examine participation in a way similar to Max-Neef's matrix through three dimensions of *having*, *acting* and *belonging*.

Raivio and Karjalainen include in their dimension of *acting* the terms of empowerment and agency. A person can make decisions on and affect the situation themselves as an individual subject. In the case of HPY groups, this could mean the participants' freedom to choose when and whether to participate, and how they choose to participate in the discussion in the group meetings, instead of having these choices made by the organisers. It can mean being able to affect future activities and being empowered to affect change elsewhere. *Belonging* means participation as a member of a group together with others. This not only includes the idea that the participants in a group are treated equally, but that they are supported in creating connections to each other. Participation as *belonging* means that the individual participants are enabled to act together as a group that supports the whole as well as the individual. For Raivio and Karjalainen, the dimension of *having* is explained as being more about experience of participation as societal well-being, while in the context of this study it is perceived as the group setting

being stable, open, and safe for all of the participants despite their different backgrounds and experiences. (Raivio and Karjalainen 2013, 17)

Other perspectives on the relationship between experience of participation and exclusion include, for example, Martha Nussbaum's (2011) system of *central capabilities* that explain the basic needs required to uphold the human dignity through their relationship with the society. While the central capabilities are the bare minimum that Nussbaum requires for a worthy human life, they can be utilised in a more limited context. Much like Raivio and Karjalainen, Nussbaum approaches participation as a right to have or experience something, as well as a right to avoid something. Among Nussbaum's central capabilities is *affiliation* which entails an individual's ability to participate without discrimination, as dignified and equal to others. They include a *control over one's environment* that requires ability to affect, for example, political choices that affect one's life. Peer support groups should enable the participants to realise values such as Nussbaum's central capabilities in themselves, as well as assist them to influence their circumstances through empowerment.

In the sociological context the experience of participation has been described as *social inclusion* in contrast to *exclusion*. This can be perceived as being able to participate equally with others in political, cultural and economic institutions, but participation as social inclusion can also be seen from multiple different perspectives depending on a person's individual situation. Lars Leemann and Riitta-Maija Hämäläinen (2016, 589) mention a person's age as an example; after retirement communal sociality might increase in perceived importance over economic concerns. Experience of participation requires that a person feels that they can impact their surroundings. Marginalised people can often feel that they are not as welcome to influence their surroundings as themselves due to their unifying factor, whether that is economic or immigrant status, or belonging to a sexual or gender minority. Marginalised groups can aim to improve their experience of participation by setting up organisations and other activities to improve their chances of influencing the larger context, and societal actors can support inclusion by supporting organisations and activities with such ambitions. (Pajula 2014, 14-17)

3.2 LGBTQIA+

Like experience of participation, sexuality and gender are complex issues that immensely affect a person's process of building their identity. In this study sexual and

gender minorities are examined together as a group marginalised by a heteronormative society and tradition. The acronym LGBTQIA+ is used to refer to the entirety of this group. LGBTQIA+ refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and other sexual and gender minority people.

The terminology concerning the LGBTQIA+ minorities fluctuates depending on the cultural context and language. Especially when treating the topic of gender minorities, the language used by LGBTQIA+ people themselves is adapting to the nuances of gender and sexual identity faster than the scientific terminology. For this study, terminology concerning LGBTQIA+ people will be used as defined by Jaskari and Keski-Rahkonen (2021, 1782). Gay, or homosexual, people are attracted either romantically or emotionally to people of same gender as their own, bisexuals to both men and women. Pansexual people are attracted to people of all genders, and asexual people are not (either at all or generally) sexually attracted to others. Queer and questioning people are unable or unwilling to define their sexuality under these terms.

Gender diversity is based on people's individual experience of gender. Gender can be understood through legal, anatomical (or hormonal), or social definitions. Gender minorities include trans minorities whose gender identity doesn't align with the gender assigned to them at birth, as well as intersex people whose physical attributes at birth does not align completely with either males or females. Finland, unlike many other countries, only recognises two genders, and everyone, including intersex people, are legally assigned one at birth. (Jaskari and Keski-Rahkonen 2021, 1782, Tasa-arvotiedon keskus 2022)

In addition to their sexual and gender identity, people identifying as LGBTQIA+ can be marginalised due to belonging to other ethnic, cultural, or religious minority groups or, for example, due to their disability and impairment. Identifying as LGBTQIA+ can be a different experience for people within different social and ethnic groups, especially among immigrant and minority communities. Studies in the topic of such intersectionality have increased due to the increased societal acceptance of LGBTQIA+ themes. One of the HPY open groups, People of Two Minorities, is organised for LGBTQIA+ people with different types of disability or long-term illness, for example. In addition to LGBTQIA+ people belonging to different marginalised groups, an intersectional perspective should take into account other factors defining the people in question, such as the age of the target group. For example, according to Hagai, et al. (2020, 14-15), younger people often describe themselves as being supported by existing LGBTQIA+

organisations, while the older generations describe needing to actively take part in minority activism, with the watershed between the age groups being coming to adulthood either before and during, or after the height of the stigmatisation of sexual minorities during the AIDS pandemic.

3.3 Peer support

Peer support is a concept that is used in this study in a similar meaning as *self-help support* and *mutual aid*. The term itself is broadly defined as people with common experiences sharing empathy or assistance in a reciprocal relationship. Peer support starts with individuals identifying themselves as being together with others that they feel a connection to. Trust and respect are built on mutual experiences based on the unifying factor in people's identity. Unlike in traditional relationships in an organised setting, such as between an expert and a patient, peer support means that the participants are equally able to challenge each other's opinions. (Mead, et al. 135)

The base premise of peer support is human sociality and cooperation. Such interactions have originated in communities that were very different from our current society, namely as people's experiences were much more similar to each other, with much smaller deviations from the norm. Today, people with similar experiences on a given subject are unlikely to be the same group of people that an individual would ordinarily spend time discussing their daily life with, depending on how much an individual's situation differs from their immediate surroundings. This applies especially in cases where a change in an individual's situation is significant, or where they are in the process of rebuilding their identity, such as coming to terms with, or starting to express their minority identity. (Kuuskoski 2003, 31)

Peer support is a concept that gives peerage a common purpose. The peers are people with similar experiences or a unifying factor that could include things such as employment, sickness, or in the case of this study, identifying as LGBTQIA+. Peerage is a connecting factor creating understanding and equality between participants and could mean that people share similar societal position in the context of their unifying factor, as well as the same societal support systems. Peerage is a common resource but does not necessarily mean that people are actively working together to assess or treat their common experience. (Mikkonen and Saarinen 2007, 20)

Peer support can be perceived as being a part of the concept of peerage that includes a common problem or a unifying factor that is perceived as unusual. Peer support is social support that is built around the topic connecting the participants. Peer support can materialise as personal support between two individuals, or collectively in peer support groups. Such groups have a common understanding of the goals of the group, even if the goal is often assisting participants towards their separate individual goals. At a minimum, peer support requires the cooperation of two people with similar experiences. The more people are included in a peer support group, the more reciprocal the interaction becomes. While a fewer number of participants, the higher the risk that a number of participants do not receive as much as they give in the process. Even in extreme cases every participant's experience is used to at least receive support in an understanding way. (Mykkänen-Hänninen 2007, 27, Jantunen 2010, 86-87)

3.4 Peer groups

Peer groups can originate in different ways from different kinds of relationships. They are often a part of a larger peer network that people can navigate according to their needs. Participants often find existing peer support groups through other peer networks, for example through friends or social media. In peer support groups, people who do not (necessarily) know each other beforehand come to share their experience with others. This can be seen as beneficial to the whole group as participants identify each other inside the group through their unifying factor instead of their differences. People join to support each other by their experiential knowledge. (Nylund 2005, 203, Jantunen 2010, 90)

Laimio and Karnell (2010, 14), describe peer groups as participants having a similar problem or issue that they gather together to solve and to adapt to without professional help. While in many cases the problem can be a common issue, such as a sickness or a societal issue, in all cases problems can be explained as a lack of understanding of the individuals personal experience on the issue in their life outside the peer group or network. Groups are based on mutual assistance and support, even if it is only letting the individuals participate as an equal to give participants experience and growth through equality and cooperation.

Groups can be organised for any reason and in a variety of ways. The only thing required from a group is to perform something together. Members of the group can have different goals for what they want from the group, but the group aims to reach their

goals together. Groups can be divided by structure and purpose. Groups discussed in this study are mostly small, under ten people, and open groups, which means that people can choose how often and when they want to participate. The purpose for the groups examined in this study is to act as peer groups, where participants are connected by similar experiences, in this case their identifying as LGBTQIA+. The groups are mostly discussion groups but some of them are structured around different activities as a way of easing attendees into discussion and participation in the group. (Kaukila, et al. 2007, 17-18.)

The strength of a peer support group comes from people not being forced into a role defined by their unifying factor but rather being able to express themselves in a group that naturally understand the social and political context affected by their unifying factor. As the unifying factor is already assumed by all participants, this encourages them to examine their diversity as individuals in the context of the discussion or activity. Participants can be themselves and grow according to their own goals while being supported by others understanding their needs and not being hindered by societal expectations identified with their unifying factor. In their relationships with people outside the peerage, group peers might experience that the unifying factor is not being sufficiently considered, or on the other hand unrelated issues are too readily blamed on it. Mutual understanding of the unifying factor allows the participants to expect the presence of the unifying factor to be presumed in discussions and activities without verifying it. Such an empathic approach from other participants can be a rare situation in which the individual is able to experience being understood as an individual, and not be defined by their personal situation related to the unifying factor. Similarly, the participant is seen as equal instead of a client or a patient as they would be when working with professionals. (Laimio and Karnell 2010, 18-19, Mead, et al. 2001, 136)

Peer support groups are especially suitable to be used in the field of social and health care. They are a better fit for organisations compared to the public services in the field, as they often focus on the progress of an individual instead of a set of goals. The spread of the internet has helped organisations to overcome a former problem of not reaching their clientele as easily as the public services. Whereas an individual would previously often be reliant on their contact with a professional for their specific situation to find out about peer support groups, today it is common to search the internet for such a solution before contacting a professional. This is a major reason why organisations are called upon to arrange peer support activities for people of unifying factors that public services might not even be able to cover. Helsinki Pride Community, for

example, is partly funded by Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) and City of Helsinki health and social services. (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2021, Kuuskoski 2003, 32)

Peer support activities are primarily meant for a pre-emptive role. Peer support can act as an addition to public services concerning topics such as those related to a person's identity. This has been a growing trend in Finland. As an addition to professional therapy, which has, due to limited resources, been forced to be used in a more reactive role. This does not in any way mean that peer support would, let alone should, be used instead of therapy, but as an additional resource and a way to guide people into seeking professional assistance when necessary. (Laimio and Karnell 2010, 11)

3.5 Volunteers as experts

According to Mikkonen and Saarinen (2007, 24-26), the function of the peers in groups is supporting each other, whereas the volunteers assist them, and the professionals use their expertise to take further responsibility in the care process for the participants. While the difference between an organising professional and the participating peers is usually easy to distinguish, volunteers are harder to position between these positions. Volunteers are defined as working without being professionally assigned to the activities and without being paid. Volunteers work for their own sense of enjoyment and according to their individual values. Volunteers can be a part of the peer group but are separated from peer support by the amount of their own experience involved in the support process. The peers participate to support each other with their own experience, whereas the volunteers should support the participants without the need to bring their own experience into the support process.

Volunteers have often previously benefited from peer group activities, either personally or through other people's experience. They can have similar motives of participating as the peers but are often motivated by a reciprocal relationship with the group as a process, in addition to the one they have with the participants. Volunteers guiding peer groups usually identify with the unifying factor of the group, but in some cases the volunteers may have been trained or have experience on the factor through, for example, family members. (Laimio and Karnell 2010, 18)

Volunteers' participation in peer groups is usually based on sharing the unifying factor with the participants. Sharing it does not necessarily mean sharing the volunteer's own

experiences on the subject, but enabling the participants to share theirs while functioning as a group. Group participants come to share their situation with their peers, not to listen to a volunteer explain their own. Therefore, it is important that a volunteer is on an adequate stage of their own process of processing the unifying factor. While it is usually positive that a volunteer leading a peer group can relate to the feelings rising from the group, it is necessary for them to be able to have a certain amount of qualified empathy to support the group as a whole through difficult emotions. A volunteer can act as an example of success in the face of the common issues related to the unifying factor, but they should not guide or require attendees to use the methods they have used without undermining the idea of a peer group. (Mykkänen-Hänninen 2007, 26-27)

3.6 Examining experience of participation in LGBTQIA+ open groups

Raivio and Karjalainen (2013) present experience of participation as an opposite to exclusion. In this study *having*, *acting* and *belonging* will be examined from the perspective of how HPY peer groups enable these dimensions of participation. The study attempts to examine how the peer group setting affects the participants experience of participation, but any attempt of assessing the participants experiences of exclusion as LGBTQIA+ minorities outside the immediate group setting is beyond the scope of this study. In the context of the peer group activities the attendees' experiences can be examined from both the viewpoints of participation and exclusion.

For Raivio and Karjalainen, *having* means sufficient income, health, and safety. In this study it will be more specifically examined as the framework that enables and organises the open groups activities. This includes the organisation and the volunteers as physically enabling the group meetings as well as setting and enforcing the group rules. *Acting* as empowerment and agency is examined through the attendees' agency in choosing to join the groups, taking part in the group activities and discussion, as well as how they perceive their ability to affect the development of the group activities. This dimension emphasises the participants' experience as individuals. *Belonging* is about the participant as a part of the peer group. It attempts to examine how the participant experiences their position as a member of the group and how they experience the group's communality as a whole. (Raivio and Karjalainen 2013, 16-17)



Figure 1. Adapted from Raivio and Karjalainen 2013, 17.

This study examines the different aspects of experiences of participation as experienced by the participants in the Helsinki Pride Community Open Groups. Based on the participants descriptions of their personal experience, the methods used by HPY can be dissected and assessed by their effect on the experiences of participation. To avoid the data on the experiences of exclusion sprawling beyond the scope of this study, this study will especially attempt to examine how the groups are organised in ways that the participants consider them to increase their experience of participation, and where they can see potential areas of improvement or requirement for additional agency for the participants themselves.

4 Experiences of participation in HPY open groups

4.1 Attendees' experiences

At the end of each group meeting, Helsinki Pride Community volunteers allow the group participants to express opinions on the meeting. This is usually done by letting a tablet computer circle around in the group during the end briefing for the meeting. On the tablet computer, the participants can choose to fill an anonymous feedback survey on the meeting. Most of the questions are multiple choice (agree/partly agree/partly disagree/disagree) but the questionnaire also includes an open space question where the participants can write additional comments. In 2022, almost 500 responses to the survey questionnaire were gathered. During this period the feedback was overwhelmingly

positive. In the 2022 survey the multiple-choice questions concerned the participants experiences on how they felt that the group is meaningful to them, how the group supports their well-being, and to what degree they feel themselves as a part of the community in the group setting. In all of the questions, almost all of the respondents either agreed or mostly agreed to the positive effects of the group meetings.

LGBTQIA+ people are at an increased risk of exclusion in society (for example Alanko and Kaljunen 2014). This risk materialises in diverse settings in all areas of life, but is especially prevalent in family relationships and public spaces, as well as schools and workplace environments. In a School Health Promotion Study collected by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare in 2019, among youth identifying as LGBTQIA+, only approximately 40% considered their everyday life meaningful compared to approximately 70% of other youth. According to the study, the overall estimate of the LGBTQIA+ participants experience of participation was lower than of those not identifying as LGBTQIA+. (Jokela, et al. 2020, 15-16)

4.2 Research question

LGBTQIA+ minorities suffer from harassment and exclusion or even violence in their everyday lives in Finland. The stress caused by this exclusion is affected by the immediate effects of exclusion as well as the persons own experiences and the assumptions they have of the general risk caused by their minority status. (Jaskari and Keski-Rahkonen 2021, 1782.) Sexual and gender minorities have been making a great positive impact on reducing this exclusion on societal level, but are still at a higher risk of discrimination on almost all areas of life compared to cisgender and heterosexual people. Public services, organisations and educational faculties are increasingly attempting to adapt practices that promote inclusion, equality, and safety. However, LGBTQIA+ people face biases in social and health care and, due to negative attitudes, choose not to disclose their minority identity at school or at workplace. (Oikeusministeriö 2021, 24, 27-28.)

Helsinki Pride Community organises LGBTQIA+ adult activities in a restricted setting of their peer groups without strictly defined goals. The attendees are encouraged to choose their personal goals for the group activities themselves in a safe and confidential setting with together with other LGBTQIA+ people. An overwhelming majority of group participants have a positive opinion about the groups and a high percentage of participants choose to revisit the groups. This study aims to provide Helsinki Pride Community with information on how the attendees feel that the peer groups promote

their safety, communality and agency as LGBTQIA+. The core research question of the study is:

How do the attendees in the open groups experience participation and exclusion, and which factors they feel are improving their experience of participation?

5 Study implementation

5.1 Study methods

The study is conducted as qualitative research using a semi-structured interview for gathering data. As it examines the way in which the participants make sense of the peer group context and aims to a better understanding of the attendees' feelings on the structures that enable their experiences of participation, this is a qualitative study. According to Jouni Tuomi and Anneli Sarajärvi in *Laadullinen Tutkimus ja Sisällönanalyysi* (2018, 23) no two definitions of qualitative research match each other. They emphasise, however, that despite qualitative research being based on subjective experiences and understanding, a theoretical background based on peer reviewed research is required to ensure the reliability of the research.

HPY has previously gathered quantitative data on the experience of the open group attendees, but the purpose of this study is to examine some of the causes behind the overwhelmingly positive feedback. The study examines the attendees' personal views on their experiences and connects them to the theory of participation as a multi-faceted concept as explained in chapter 3.1. These experiences are expected to have been influenced both by the participants own resources, other participants, and methods used by HPY in organising the open groups. The concept of participation is defined by objectively unmeasurable experiences to a degree that a qualitative approach can be seen to be necessary in examining the ways that the different aspects of participation are experienced by the peer group participants. (Berg and Lune 2012, 6-8)

The researcher has participated in the groups as a volunteer. This connection to the groups can affect the results, as it may affect the participants' willingness to criticise the activities or the organisers. On the other hand, the researcher has committed themselves to confidentiality on the contents of the group meetings, which can assure the participants of the confidentiality practiced by the researcher with their experiences more than they would a researcher coming from outside the context of the open groups. Similarly, knowledge of the researcher's participation in the groups might help convince the

attendees of the interviewers' genuine interest in the topic and their experiences. The researcher should take as an objective role as an interviewer as possible and utilise the question framework to distance the interview from their personal experience of the groups, especially if that experience is shared with the interviewee. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, their possible participation in groups in which the researcher has volunteered will not be disclosed. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2009, 98.)

The study will be conducted as a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured or focused interview is a method of interview that falls between a questionnaire and an unstructured interview in which the interviewer develops the questions during the interview. Unstructured interview is usually used to gather knowledge on the interviewee themselves rather than a separate topic. Semi-structured interview, more exactly themed interview as defined by Sirkka Hirsjärvi and Helena Hurme (2009, 47-48) was chosen for the study in order to emphasise the experiences and definitions used by the participants. Themed interview is considered less structured than most semi-structured interview methods because it connects the different interviews with similarly themed questions instead of utilising the same questions for the separate interviews.

The interview follows the methodology of a themed interview around the aspects of *acting*, *having* and *belonging* as defined by Raivio and Karjalainen (2013, 16-17) and explained in the context of this study in chapter 3.6. Themed interview is chosen as the interview method as the HPY open group participants have a common experience in having attended the groups, and as they are expected to have chosen to participate in the groups due to identifying as LGBTQIA+. As people belonging to sexual and gender minorities have usually experienced discrimination more often than others (Pihlajanmaa 2021, 45), the study will examine this shared experience from the perspective of participation and exclusion. One of the strengths of a themed interview is that participants can approach the chosen themes from their personal experience and point of view, answering the questions in their own words instead of being confined by definitions predetermined by the study. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2009, 47-48)

5.2 Participants

The study will be conducted by gathering information on the experience of participation from people who have participated in HPY open groups. Participants in HPY community groups will be invited to volunteer to participate in the interviews during group meetings, where either the researcher or the specific group's volunteers shortly describe the study. An advertisement (Appendix 5) will be left in the Helsinki Pride

community room, with the recommendation for the participants interested in the study to contact the researcher by e-mail to sign up for the interview or to ask any questions. When the study and the opportunity to participate in the interviews will be presented in the open group meetings, the personal and anonymous nature of the study will be emphasised.

When the respondents inform the researcher of their interest in participating in the study, they will be provided with information (Appendix 4) on the nature of the study, as well as on how the data collected during the interview will be stored and destroyed. The participants will have the time between signing up for the study and the interview to familiarise themselves with the information. The information will be provided in both English and Finnish, and the participants will be encouraged to contact the researcher in case they have any further questions. At the same time as the information is given, the participants will be provided with a form (Appendix 3) verifying their consent for participating in the study. This consent form will be collected from the respondent before their interview.

The participants will be chosen from among the volunteers in the order in which they sign up to be interviewed. If the number of attendees volunteering exceeds the scope of this study, the respondents will be chosen by the researcher to best represent as many of the different groups as possible, to ensure a diverse sample of experiences. The respondents will be treated equally as participants of the HPY open groups, without a need for them to specify which LGBTQIA+ groups they identify as. This means that the participants identity as belonging to certain LGBTQIA+ groups will not affect which respondents are chosen to be interviewed.

5.3 Data collection

A themed interview is an efficient technique used to gather specific information from an interviewee in a targeted manner. It does not necessarily require a prepared set of questions, but as the sampling group for this study will be small, a list of questions is prepared to give the interview a loose framework to ensure that the respondents give out answers that are, to some degree, comparable with each other. This is further explained under the methods of analysis. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2009, 106-107)

The question frame for the interview (Appendix 1) is built in a way that encourages the respondents to answer the questions as extensively as possible. The research

question was kept as the focus of the planning process for the interview to ensure that the participants would be inclined to answer the questions from the perspective of their experience of participation and exclusion even though the researcher and questions themselves will not explain this explicitly. Explaining the definitions of participation and exclusion used in the study to the respondents would carry the risk of giving them too strict of an idea to which interactions and practical experiences are expected in their answers, contaminating their answers with the researcher's expectations. Another major concern for the interviews is that the respondents might be naturally inclined to answer from the perspective of the realised practicality of the meetings instead of opening up on their personal experience.

The aspects of participation chosen to be used for the interview framework are:

- Attendees being invited and able to participate in the groups
- Attendees being supported individually with equal respect, without assumptions
- Attendees connecting and communicating as a group
- Attendees experiencing having contributed to the group and being able to utilise things discussed in the groups outside the groups
- Attendees being enabled to affect the activities and their experiences of participation being improved in the future

In the interview framework (Appendix 1), the question examples on each topic are only meant as guidelines for the actual interview. They emphasise the importance of the interviewee's experience and additionally include questions on how the respondent has perceived the other attendees experiencing similar situations. The reason for this is both to get an idea of the factors that the respondents find central to their experience of the group as a whole, as well as to have the respondent reflect on the factors that influence their personal experience compared to the other participants.

The most practical setting for an interview is a neutral and informal space that allows the respondent to be at ease and encourages structured open and honest communication. The interviews will be conducted either in person at HPY premises, or over a video conference. As the open groups are organised in these settings, the participants can be expected to be accustomed to these environments as the setting for their peer group meanings. Thus, the premises are convenient and accessible locations for the interviewee. The community room offers a quiet and private space for the interview to take place, isolated from distractions and interruptions. As some of the open groups, especially People of Two Minorities (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2022a), allow participants to join through a video conference software the respondents are given a similar option.

Interviews will be conducted on a schedule agreed by the researcher and the participants during January and February 2023, either in Helsinki Pride Community premises in Helsinki, or online via Zoom software provided by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. The interviews will be recorded. Both the interviews and the personal details collected for the study will be kept by the researcher on their own computer that is protected with a password. For the interviews conducted online, the connection has been established safely in a way in which all the information will be kept in the Nordic countries according to the confidentiality requirements. The interviews are scheduled to last at most an hour and will not require any preparation from the participant.

5.4 Ethicality and data management

The study deals with a sample from a small minority of people, participants in LGBTQIA+ open peer groups in Finland, so there is comparatively little previous study material. The latest possible peer reviewed material will be used in the study to ensure reliability of the results. The study follows the guidelines for responsible conduct of research and ensures that the interviewees are aware of the purpose, the methods and the ethical and security related matters related to the study. (Hyvä tieteellinen käytäntö ja sen loukkausepäilyjen käsitteleminen Suomessa 2012).

As the participants belong to marginalised groups in a setting specifically meant to allow them to express their identities safely, special care must be taken to ensure their anonymity. The study does not endanger the participants health or safety. For the purposes of this study, individual answers are not required to be published. The interviews will be recorded, and the records will be stored locally and protected with a password. After the interviews are transcribed, the participants will be contacted in case further clarification is needed on their interviews. After the interview material has been analysed, the participants' identification data is destroyed.

5.5 Data analysis

The data collected for the use of the study will consist of the interviews of the peer group attendees who have volunteered for the study. After an interview has been conducted, it will be transcribed from a recording. The transcriptions will not be translated before further analysis to avoid including unnecessary presumptions during the translation process. The data will be examined as soon as possible after the interviews, including during the interview process, to ensure that the data is as current as possible, as well as to ensure the efficiency of the data gathering process. Examining data during the data

gathering process allows the contents of the interview to be adjusted to better fit the research question. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2009, 135)

The interviews will be read thoroughly, transcribed and analysed as soon after the interview as possible. The data will be thoroughly scrutinised during the transcription process to examine how the respondents' answers relate to the research question through the interview framework. The transcribed material will be colour-coded to connect individual citation to the theory as presented in chapter 3.6. Colour-coding will be done by hand by the researcher. After the data gathered is colour-coded during the first step of the analysis process, the data found to be irrelevant or beyond the scope of the study is excluded from study results. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, 104-105)

The data analysis method used in this study will be theory-based content analysis. Content analysis as a research method is used to condense the research data into more compact information for systematic analysis. The researcher interprets the data to reduce redundant material according to the research requirements. Theory-based content analysis uses an existing framework or theory to create an analysis framework which uses chosen themes as a base to deduce data into subclasses. These subclasses can then be used to interpret the data to answer the research question. The components of experience of participation of Raivio and Karjalainen (2013, 16-17) of *having*, *acting* and *belonging* as described in chapter 3.6 will be used as the themes to create the basis of the analysis framework for this study. The interview data will be studied to find data relevant to the themes which will then be simplified and reduced into subcategories as shown in Table 1. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, 127-131, Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2009, 137)

Table 1. Example of the analysis framework adapted from Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, 130.

Theme	Citation	Simplified citation	Subcategory
Having			
Acting			
Belonging			

6 Study Results

6.1 Overview

The interviewees responded passionately to questions about the group activities and felt comfortable in disclosing their experiences concerning their personal experiences as LGBTQIA+. However, they often used examples of their personal experiences and conversations in the groups. Much of the interview data that was relevant to the research question included details that made them impossible to use verbatim while upholding the confidentiality as agreed with the respondents. Such details included mentions of particular group setting or volunteers, the respondents' gender and sexuality, their personal background, or the languages they have used or preferred to use in the groups. An example of the analysis framework used in the study is given in Appendix 3 to illustrate the way in which the analysis method was used in the study. However, in the examples given, the original citations have been heavily redacted to protect the participants' anonymity. Answers from a single respondent will not be connected to each other in the results published in this study as they would be easy to be connected to the individual group participant.

Helsinki Pride Community was considered, usually as an almost obvious presumption, to be effective and honest organisation in the background of the open group activities. The participants mentioned the importance of the well-known organiser in building confidence to join and keep participating in the groups. The respondents' opinions of the role of volunteers were more segmented. While most of the respondents applauded the volunteers' ability to adapt according to the needs of the groups, the respondents were divided on whether the volunteers should more actively set down the framework for the activities, such as dividing the participants into discussion groups or choosing the topics discussed during the meetings. The safer space principles set by HPY were seen either as positive, or in some cases almost meaningless due to the expectations based on the nature of the groups.

Multiple respondents said that when they first found out about the open groups, they were immediately compelled to at least come and see what was happening in the groups. The respondents found the open groups easy-going, and most had found it easy to participate in the activities and discussions soon after joining a group, often depending on how social they perceived themselves as. The respondents were clear that they were setting the boundaries of their involvement in the discussion and had not

needed to enforce them on others individually or with the help of the volunteers. The answer to whether they felt they could affect how the groups were organised was almost uniformly related to the feedback questionnaire given to the participants at the end of the meetings.

LGBTQIA+ issues were found to be discussed in a constructive manner by the respondents. The importance of an expectation of shared understanding of the LGBTQIA+ experience was emphasised in the answers although it was not considered to be relevant for the discussions conducted in the group. The respondents found it positive that the groups included people with different LGBTQIA+ backgrounds, even if it sometimes left some of the participants unable to participate in a given discussion from their personal perspective. Participants who had been coming to the groups for a longer time expressed a “positive duty” of peer support in inviting new or more quiet attendees into the activities, but trusted explaining group practices was better left to the volunteers. Multiple respondents expressed that they felt that their experience of participation was limited to the short group hours, especially if they only participated in a single group, and wished that the group meetings could somehow be more connected to each other.

6.2 Interviews

Information on the study, as well as the opportunity to participate in it, were presented in the open group meetings in the late January to early February of 2023. The study was presented in person by the researcher for most of the groups. Although the information emphasised the possibility of using e-mail to confidentially, multiple attendees chose to inform the researcher about their interest in participating immediately during the group meetings. All of the participants were asked to inform the researcher of their interest by e-mail, even if they had disclosed their interest in the meetings. A possibility of arranging the interviews at HPY premises before and after the group meetings was suggested by a participant and implemented as a possible setting for conducting the interviews. The participants were informed of this possibility but were encouraged to organise the interviews separate from the open group meetings to better ensure that they could participate anonymously.

Seven interviews were conducted for the study. Four of the interviews were conducted via Zoom and three in person. All of the in-person interviews were conducted in the HPY community room. Both English and Finnish were chosen by the respondents as the languages used for the interviews. The respondents had participated in the majority

of the different groups organised by HPY, but the exact groups will not be disclosed to protect the participants' anonymity. The interviews were conducted between 23.1.2023 and 19.2.2023, and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, with the average interview lasting approximately 54 minutes. The interviews were estimated to last 30-60 minutes, but the respondents were given the choice to use more time to answer the interview questions (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2009, 74). Only the longest interview had to be agreed to be cut off due to time constraints.

The interview theme framework and example questions did not require major adjustments during the data collection process. The example questions turned out to be mostly unnecessary but were used to emphasise the context of the dialogue as an interview, instead of a conversation. The respondents' reaction to the interview as a context for research could also be heard in the manner of speech they used. Some of the participants were using their everyday language, whereas some even corrected themselves during the interview to utilise more exact terminology. The style of the expressions used by the respondents did not seem to be connected to whether they chose to use Finnish or English for the interview.

6.3 Having

The concept of *having* as defined in chapter 3.1 and 3.6 was touched upon in the interviews when discussing the groups as a part of HPY, as well as a continuous process organised by the volunteers. This theme of the experience of participation was most clearly stated by one of the respondents as they responded that they “needed to come and try them even if only because *we have* these groups.”

Community is dependent on a place, not a location (Mead, et al. 2001, 136). Helsinki Pride is an organisation that the respondents recognised and had positive experiences of, which gives HPY an expectation of a degree of communality that invites the participants to the open group setting. HPY was mentioned as the setting of the group meetings as an organisation, whereas the community room was only mentioned in the context in one of the interviews. Multiple participants had previously participated in similar groups elsewhere, organised for example by Seta ry., and found the role of an advocacy organisation as a setting for confidential group meetings as natural. The open groups were seen as having succeeded in being a space where the attendees could participate at will as individuals, instead of being seen as simply a club for LGBTQIA+ people. Other HPY activities such as the Pride Week were only mentioned in the context of how the participants had found the open groups.

Responses that touched upon the consistency of their experience of participation was heavily dependent on the respondents' participation in multiple groups. The respondents who mostly participated in a single group felt that their connection to the group was limited to the time between the group meetings, whereas some of the respondents described the groups as an easily accessible opportunity to participate as often as they wanted. A group participant choosing to join Bi/Pan+, Men's and creative writing groups (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2022a), for example, has a better opportunity to choose whether to participate more frequently than someone participating only in the People of Two Minorities group. Some of the participants brought up that they felt that there was unequal support from HPY depending on the LGBTQIA+ group or groups the participants identified with. (Saarnio 2001, 49-50)

The framework set for the conversation in the open groups was seen by the respondents as including things such as the topics set by the volunteers and the code of conduct expected at the group setting. Some of the participants felt that the safer space principles (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2022b), presented at the beginning of the group meetings, helped to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity, while some considered the rules to be obvious anyway, either in the context of the open groups or in general. None of the participants minded that the principles were given out at the beginning of every meeting to emphasise their importance. The respondents found that emphasising the principles could give them a measure of safety during the discussions. Multiple participants highlighted the importance of understanding the participants' different knowledge and understandings on about different LGBTQIA+ issues and conventions. The respondents approached this from two perspectives. Firstly, other participants were assured that an incorrect use of terms was not meant to insult or hurt, secondly, the respondents felt that they were given the opportunity to speak more freely on topics concerning themselves without being judged. (Ståhlberg 2019, 74)

Volunteers were discussed by the respondents very similarly to how their dual role was presented in chapter 3.5. The volunteers were understood as organising the activities outside the immediate activity or discussion by scheduling the activities for a season, determining the topics and preparing coffee for the group meeting. Only one respondent mentioned, when asked, having noticed a volunteer actually having to enforce the rules in a group meeting. In this sense, the volunteers were clearly in the domain of *having* just like HPY as an organisation was, creating the context for experiencing participation safely.

6.4 Belonging

For Raivio and Karjalainen (2013, 16) *belonging* is communality and membership of the community. Both communality and membership were discussed from multiple perspectives during the interviews, from the group and organisational level to the membership of LGBTQIA+ minorities. For Helsinki Pride Community, communality is one of the central goals of the organisation (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2021). The organisation was seen as a positive actor that provides reliable information and opportunities of participation to most LGBTQIA+ groups. Respondents mentioned that they had used the HPY website for information on the open groups even when they had been suggested to join by others. The participants did not feel particular membership with HPY, even when they attended multiple open groups often, but spoke of “Pride people” when discussing the open group participants as a whole.

Many of the respondents mentioned a measure of safety due to the expectation of the group sharing similar experiences as LGBTQIA+ in the peer group setting. While this was often expressed as feeling freer to discuss topics related to LGBTQIA+ minorities, which also relates to *being*, the unifying factor was present in creating the atmosphere for the discussion. They felt that the LGBTQIA+ community was considered as a whole in organising the groups, even if some might receive less attention during the group meetings. While they had noticed the discussion leaning towards topics related to the most numerous minorities present in a given group, which might lead to some participants being excluded from them, the respondents felt that such situations were natural and unavoidable and not related to the participants being LGBTQIA+.

In a peer support group, the voluntary nature of sharing and participating should be emphasised. Communality and peerage in the peer groups does not mean that the attendees should be pressured into the discussion (Mikkonen and Saarinen 2018, 76). Multiple participants expressed that discussing their experiences of exclusion was important in constructing their experience of participation in the groups. For example, a participant described being able to talk about their partner openly (*acting*) in the group was a given, but only discussing how this had led to experiences of exclusion in other settings created a connection to the group. In this, the open groups were seen as actively providing experience of participation as a positive force against isolation when interacting with others. (Max-Neef 1991, 59)

Communality with other participants and volunteers was not realised on a level that the participants would have wished. Most of the participants felt that the groups were open

to new attendees and that the volunteers treated both previous and new participants equally. Most of the respondents emphasised that they appreciated the way in which the rules, practices and introductions were carried out at the beginning of each meeting to better invite them to participate in the activities. Emphasising new attendees runs the risk of undermining the progress of the group's communality. Many of the respondents expressed frustrations about the continuity of the activities. While this was often expressed as annoyance at the tight timeframes allowed for the group meetings, it was clear from multiple answers that starting a discussion completely from the beginning made it difficult to associate the activities with a membership of the group. This was the case especially when discussing with attendees that the respondents knew from previous meetings, and might create a sense of purposelessness in building up the group community. (Mead, et al. 2001, 136, Ståhlberg 2019, 63-65)

6.5 Acting

Acting was seen in the interviews in the respondents' decision to participate in the groups, as well as in how they felt they could choose to participate in the group activities. In general, the groups were considered to be easy to find and to join. Some had been encouraged by a partner or a friend, but most had used the HPY website for information that they used to choose to join the group. All of the groups being separate as well as different meetings and topics on the website was seen as lowering the threshold of joining for the first time (Helsinki Pride -yhteisö 2022a). The website could also be seen as a hindrance to the attendees' participation; before finding out about the open groups a participant would often be directed to donate or to volunteer for HPY. Respondents felt that while organised in the most efficient way, the groups being organised at the same time slot and location every time restricted many of the potential participants' opportunity to join.

The role of the organising volunteers in enabling experience of participation in the open groups is both organising *having* as described in chapter 6.3, and about creating opportunities of participation, *acting*, during the meetings (Mikkonen and Saarinen 2007, 64-65). The respondents felt that the role of volunteers was different as participants in discussions compared to organising the setting and even setting the topics. While the relevance of setting the topic divided the respondents, many of them expressed the volunteers participating in the discussion as a positive encouragement for the attendees. The respondents were uniform in answering that an attendees' social character was the main thing that affected their experience of participation in the

conversation. The setting allowed the attendees to participate equally, but changing topics and group sizes were seen as sometimes interfering with enabling everyone's participation.

The respondents felt that they were allowed to choose how much they chose to involve themselves in a discussion or an activity. The groups mostly adapted to different levels of participation from the attendees without problems. If the topic or an activity did not interest them, the respondents felt they had the opportunity to affect them, or at least the opportunity to opt out of the discussion. As mentioned in chapter 6.3, the respondents felt that the expectation of shared unifying factor allowed them to express their opinions more freely. This enabled them to both propose ideas with an understanding that they were not trying to offend, as well as express their opinion on what they did find offensive. The respondents positively mentioned in some way most of Max-Neef's (1991, 32-33) positive satisfiers for category of *doing in participation*, including cooperation, dissent, agreeing and proposing new topics.

One of the topics that was expected to affect the participants *acting* was the use of multiple languages in the groups. This was not brought up by the respondents themselves in the interviews, but when questioned about it, the respondents admitted to its importance for the attendees' experience of participation. All of the respondents felt that use of multiple languages was welcome to empower diverse attendees to participate. If translation was needed, it was inconvenient for the activity but was seen as bonding the group closer together. For some of the respondents, translating was among the most important acts of peer support that they felt they had contributed to the group. It lowered the threshold for people to participate in a language they were not as fluent in. However, as one respondent put it "people should not be pushed into a discussion just because they speak a certain language". Dividing the groups into discussion based on the attendees' language skills was seen as problematic, as people might be excluded from conversations that interested them or concerned the LGBTQIA+ group they identified with. On the other hand, being included in a discussion on a complex topic in a language one is not confident with was seen as risking a feeling of exclusion instead of improving experience of participation.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Key findings

Experience of participation can be explained as one of the main goals of peer group activities. It combines the individuals participating in the groups with the idea of communality (Raivio and Karjalainen 2013, 13). In general, the respondents felt that their experience of participation was valued and supported in HPY open groups. The organisation was seen as providing confidentiality and safety based on its reputation and other activities, and the open groups were seen as easy to attend for the first time. The respondents mostly appreciated the framework set by the organisation and the volunteers and felt that they were allowed room to express their chosen topics and opinions freely.

Many of the respondents felt that the diversity of LGBTQIA+ minorities helped develop experience of participation in the groups. As a passive factor, that creates experience of participation, the expectation of shared experience in the setting lowered the threshold for the participants to approach topics concerning LGBTQIA+ topics that they felt unfamiliar with. In fact, ensuring that all the attendees in the groups had equal opportunities to participate was considered to be one of the main factors of the attendees improving their own agency.

The topic of language used in the peer groups was discussed in the interviews thoroughly. The respondents uniformly agreed that participants should not be excluded based on their knowledge of Finnish or English. While many of the respondents felt that the decisions on the use of language are best to be decided according to the needs of the current meeting, they felt that the organic nature of the activities make it difficult not to risk excluding participants either while organising, or during the activity.

Communality in the groups is experienced as working well during the group meetings. The participants are all treated equally and the cooperation between the volunteers and the attendees improves the attendees experience of participation. Many of the respondents felt that the communality created in the meetings was not sufficiently utilised beyond the current meeting. Many of the participants join the groups for the experience of participation, but are disappointed when the work they put into the group is reset between the group meetings. The respondents feel that the communality, or social capital, (Mikkonen and Saarinen, 2007, 76) created during a meeting would be better

invested if the groups had greater continuity in and outside the group setting. It is possible that the participants and the organisation see the goals of the group activities differently. The participants expressed that their expectations for the open community activities was that communality built in them would expand beyond individual meetings.

7.2 Reliability

According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 263-164), assessing the reliability of a qualitative study is dependent on the subject, methods and resources available for the study. The study should be assessed as a whole, and different areas of reliability should be looked into both on their own and in connection with each other. The study results should be plausible for both the researchers and the study participants. While the participants do not necessarily have to agree with the results, the level of common understanding of the way in which the theory is applied to the study can be used to assess reliability. The results of the study should be applicable to other, similar contexts, and be comparable to related studies. The researchers' personal views and presumptions should be disclosed and separated from the study. (Eskola and Suoranta 1998, 211-212)

This study was conducted in partnership with Helsinki Pride Community. The researcher and the interview respondents have participated in HPY open groups and many of the respondents expressed a wish to do so in the future. The researcher's role as a volunteer in the open groups might affect the researcher's subjectivity as well as the respondents' estimation of it. However, the study was not funded by HPY nor is the researcher in an employment contract with the organisation. In the participation information sheet (Appendix 4), the respondents were assured that their participation in the study would not affect their participation in HPY activities, and that their identity and answers would not be disclosed beyond the researcher.

Methods for a study should be chosen in order to attain the most reliable results as possible. The position of the researcher cannot be overemphasised when examining the reliability of a qualitative study. The researchers' subjectivity can be the main factor affecting the reliability of the study. This study was conducted as a bachelor's thesis by a single researcher. The topic of the study, the material chosen for the theoretical background, the means of data collection, as well as the method of analysis, are based on the preferences of the researcher. The researcher conducted the interviews and the analysis alone without supervision. The researcher has no previous experience of

conducting or reporting a similar study. The study's role as a bachelor's thesis imposed certain expectations and limits for the conduct of the study. Factors affecting reliability such as the scope of data collection and the time used for analysis were heavily influenced by the nature of the study. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2018, 164, Eskola and Suoranta, 1998, 212)

Disclosure of the study participants' relationship with the research topic, as well as the researcher, ensures a comprehensive assessment of the reliability of the study. In this study, the interviews were conducted with open group attendees that volunteered for the study. While the sample was diverse, the attendees that chose to volunteer in the study might not be an accurate presentation of the group participants. As the role and terminology of experience of participation was not disclosed to the respondents before the interviews, their previous understanding of experience of participation as a concept did not affect the reliability of the study. However, the study being presented as concerning participation instead of experience of participation might have influenced the respondents' expectations for the purpose of the study. The researcher was previously known to multiple respondents as a volunteer in the groups. This, together with the possibility of the study results being used to develop HPY activities in the future, might have encouraged the respondents to adjust their responses to influence this development. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, 164)

7.3 Further research opportunities

The study approaches the theme of experience of participation from a comparatively narrow perspective. Experience of participation explained as a defining theme in people forming groups on different levels of society (for example Isola, et al., 2017) creates an unlimited number of perspectives to examine the experience of participation. This study examined HPY group attendees' experience of participation largely based on theory describing societal inclusion (Raivio and Karjalainen 2013). Further study of group dynamics occurring in the open groups would help in further isolating the factors affecting the attendees' experience of participation. For example, created by the current participants of the group instead of the group setting provided by HPY and the volunteers.

Multiple studies on the LGBTQIA+ minorities' experiences of exclusion in the Finnish context have been conducted recently (for example Pihlajamaa 2021, Jokela, et al., 2020). Although touched upon in this study, as opposed to the experience of participation, the role of exclusion in different areas of life of the open community group

participants would further assist HPY to better adapt their activities to the needs of the participants. Similarly, experience of participation as defined in this study could be further studied in the context of people identifying themselves as sexual and gender minorities in settings other than the open community groups, such as public services, and be used by HPY for their advocacy work.

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Themed Interview Frame

Attendees being invited and being able to participate at will:

- Kuinka usein olet käynyt ryhmissä? How often have you participated in the open groups?
- Mitkä asiat saivat sinut alun perin päättämään, että osallistut ryhmään? What made you decide to participate in the group to begin with?

Attendees being supported individually and with equal respect, without assumptions:

- Miten olet kokenut, että ryhmä tukee erityisesti juuri sinua ja identiteettiäsi? How have you felt the group supports specifically you and your identity?
- Kenelle uskoisit ryhmään tulemisen olevan helpompaa tai vaikeampaa? Who do you feel would find it easier or harder to participate in the group?

Attendees connecting and communicating as a group:

- Oletko kokenut päässeesi hyvin mukaan keskusteluun ja aktiviteetteihin? Do you feel like you have able to participate in discussion and activities well?
- Miten koet, että erilaiset ihmiset pääsevät osallistumaan ryhmässä? How do you feel like different people are able to participate in the group?
- Miten yhdessä tekeminen on onnistuttu toteuttamaan ryhmässä? How has the group succeeded in supporting doing things together?

Attendees experiencing having contributed to the group and being able to utilise things discussed in the groups outside the setting:

- Minkä ajattelet olevan keskeisin ryhmän sinulle tuottama kokemus? Mikä esimerkiksi saa sinut tulemaan ryhmään uudestaan? What do you consider to be the central experience you have gained from the group? For example, what makes you decide to come back?
- Kuinka paljon voit itse vaikuttaa tähän kokemukseesi? How much can you affect this experience yourself?
- Mitä ryhmästä olet vienyt tai aiot viedä käyttöön myös sen ulkopuolelle? What have you, or what do you think you will, take from the group to use outside of it?

Attendees being enabled to affect the development of the activities and their experience of participation being improved in the future:

- Koetko että voit vaikuttaa ryhmien toimintaan? Do you feel that you are able to influence the group activities?

- Miten haluaisit, että ryhmien toiminta kehittyy eri osallistujien tarpeiden mukaan?
What do you think would be the best way to make sure that the groups develop in a way that takes into consideration all the participants?

Example of the Analysis Frame

Table 2. Example of the analysis frame as used in the study. Some of the citations are translations and the citations have been heavily anonymised. Adapted from Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 130.

Theme	Citation	Simplified citation	Subcategory
<i>Having</i>	<p>Pride gives me a social event that is like a platform for easy conversation. I haven't been to a specifically LGBTQIA+ space before that's not just for (one LGBTQIA+ minority).</p> <p>I enjoyed it being a group that was more like a space for socialising instead of like an activist group.</p>	<p>The groups are a comparatively relaxed social event. I have not been to a space that is meant for all LGBTQIA+ minorities before.</p> <p>The group was a space for relaxed socialising.</p>	The group as a relaxed space
	<p>I kind of like that the organisers decide the topics of conversation anyway.</p> <p>I feel like the organisers listen to what all of the participants are trying to talk about.</p> <p>Sometimes the organisers could take a little more initiative to make sure the discussion isn't just about (one LGBTQIA+ minority).</p>	<p>I would like the volunteers to set a framework for discussion.</p> <p>I feel that the organisers are listening to everyone.</p> <p>The volunteers let the conversation to exclude certain peoples experience.</p>	The volunteers organising the conversation

<i>Acting</i>	<p>Yes, I feel like a have a lot of space for speaking, I just don't want to overwhelm people.</p> <p>I don't feel like I need to be especially extroverted, it's ok for people to just listen.</p>	<p>I participate as an equal but want to make sure that others can participate equally.</p> <p>I'm free to choose how much I want to speak.</p>	Conversation as equals
	<p>I like to discuss things way more than I like playing boardgames, but I can concentrate on the conversations.</p> <p>I have noticed that I'm often choosing which individual themes of the conversation I put effort into.</p>	<p>I can choose which aspects of the group activities I want to focus on.</p> <p>I choose when and how to participate in a conversation.</p>	Choosing the level of participation in an activity
<i>Belonging</i>	<p>It's been nice to find people that share similar problems and experiences; makes me feel less alone in the world.</p> <p>I'm sure that they have had very different experiences, but they share the understanding about being exclusion as (one LGBTQIA+ minority).</p>	<p>Other participants have brought up experiences similar to mine.</p> <p>While others participants have different experiences, we still share some of the same experience of exclusion.</p>	Shared experiences of exclusion as LGBTQIA+.

Participation Agreement

Title of the study: Experience of Participation in LGBTQIA+ Groups

Location of the study: Henri-Pekka Henttonen together with Helsinki Pride Community and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

Researcher / Thesis author

Name: Henri-Pekka Henttonen

Tel. number:

Email:

Person in charge of the study / Thesis supervisor

Title: Yliopettaja

Name: Jyrki Konkka

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Well-being

Tel. number:

Email:

I (signatory) have been invited to participate in the above research study. The purpose of the research is study the experiences of participants of Helsinki Pride Community open group activities on participation and its meaning to participants.

I have read and understood the written participant information sheet. The information sheet has provided me sufficient information about above study, the purpose and execution of the study, about my rights as well as about the benefits and risks involved in it. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I have had sufficient information of the collection, processing and transfer/disclosure of my personal data during the study and the Privacy Notice has been available.

I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I have not been pressurised or persuaded into participation.

I have had enough time to consider my participation in the study. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, without giving any reason. I am aware that if I withdraw from the study (I can continue it

later), any data collected from me before my withdrawal, can be included as part of the research data.

By signing this form, I confirm that I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

If the legal basis of processing personal data within this study is a consent granted by the data subject, by signing I grant the consent for process my personal data. I have right to withdraw the consent regarding processing of personal data as described in the Privacy Notice.

Allekirjoitus:

Nimenselvennys:

The original consent signed by the participant and a copy of the participant information sheet will be kept in the records of the researcher. Participant information sheet, privacy notice and a copy of the signed consent will be given to the participant.

Participant Information Sheet

Participation in Helsinki Pride Community open groups

Invitation to participate in a research study

You are invited to a study on the participants' experiences in Helsinki Pride Community open group activities are studied. You have been assessed as fitting the target group of the study as you have participated in a Helsinki Pride Community open group in the last six months. This information sheet describes the study and your possible role in it. Before you decide to participate it is important that you understand why the research is being done, and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read this information and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please ask. Before conducting the interview, we will ask you to sign a consent form for participating in the study.

Voluntary nature of participation

Participating in this study is voluntary. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your participation in Helsinki Pride Community activities or your relationship to the organisation. You can withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to give a reason and without there being any negative consequences for you. If you withdraw from the study or withdraw your consent, any data collected from you before the withdrawal can be included as part of the research data.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine participant's experiences of participation in Helsinki Pride Community open group activities and their meaning to the participants. Results of this study can be used in developing Helsinki Pride Community activities in the future.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The study will be conducted by Henri-Pekka Henttonen together with Helsinki Pride -yhteisö ry. The bachelor's thesis process is supervised at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences by Jyrki Konkka and Laura Holmi. The study is not related to any further studies.

What will participation involve?

The study will be conducted by interview on a schedule agreed by the researcher and the participants during January and February 2023, either at Helsinki Pride Community Premises or online via Zoom program provided by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. The interviews will be recorded. The online connection has been established securely in a way in which all the information will be kept in the Nordic countries. The interview will last at most an hour and does not require any preparation from the participant. Communication for the study will be handled by email provided by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and the personal details collected for the study will be kept by the researcher on their own computer that is protected with the password and kept locked by the researcher.

The study will be conducted in a way in which the material gathered from the interviews will be analysed using qualitative analysis method. While conducting the study, the material from the interviews will be anonymised by assigning the participants a personal code and their information will be kept coded in the study material. When the material has been analysed, participants personal details will be destroyed.

Financial information

Participation in this study will involve no cost to the participant. The participant will receive no payment for participating.

Informing about the research results

Study results will be published as a part of a bachelor's thesis that will be published publicly in the Theseus database. Participants can choose to be informed by the researcher on the publication of the bachelor's thesis.

Termination of the study

The researcher conducting the study can terminate the study if reasons emerge during the study that would require it, or if the researcher's collaboration with Helsinki Pride Community or Metropolia University of Applied Sciences is interrupted.

Further information

Further information related to the study can be requested from the researcher / person in charge of the study.

Contact details of the researchers

Researcher / Student

Name: Henri-Pekka Henttonen

Tel. number:

Email:

Person in charge of the study / Supervisor

Name: Jyrki Konkka

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Well-being

Tel. number:

Email:

Appendix to the Participant Information Sheet: A Privacy Notice for Scientific Research

Within this study, your personal data will be processed according to the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (679/2016) and the current national regulations. The processing of personal data will be described in the following items.

Data controller of the study

Data controller is the natural or legal person, public authority, agency, or other body which, alone or jointly with others, determines the purposes and means of the processing of personal data.

In this study the data controller is the researcher.

Types of personal data that will be collected

Collection of personal data is justified only when it is necessary for the study. The amount of personal data must be minimised, and personal data cannot be collected unnecessarily or just to be safe.

For the study, the data gathered about the participants will be their names and contact information. In addition to this, due to the nature of the target group, information related to the participants sexual and gender identities might be touched upon during the interviews.

There is no statutory or contractual requirement to provide one's personal data, participation is entirely voluntary.

Personal data will be collected also from other sources

During the study your personal details will not be collected from other sources.

Personal data protection principles

Communication for the study will be done by email provided by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. The interviews will be recorded. The interviews will be transcribed using Microsoft Word program and recorded interviews, transcribed interviews and the personal details collected for the study will be kept by the researcher on their own computer that is protected with the password and kept locked at the researcher's house.

For what purpose will personal data be processed?

Your personal details will be collected for the purposes of communication related to the study and collecting and analysing the interviews. When the interview data has been analysed, personal details data will be removed. Publication of study results will not include publication of personal details, and the answers given during the interview will be anonymised by assigning the participants a personal code and their information will be kept coded in the study material.

Legal basis of processing personal data

The legal basis is a consent granted by the data subject. You have the right to withdraw the consent at any time as described in this Privacy Notice.

Nature and duration of the research (how long will the personal data be processed)

The study will be conducted in 2023.

What happens to the personal data after the research has ended?

Personal data will be destroyed after the interviews have been analysed.

Data transfer outside of research registry

Personal data will not be transferred.

Your rights as a data subject

Because the participant's personal data will be used in this study, You will be registered to a study registry. Your rights as a data subject are the following:

- Right to obtain information on the processing of personal data
- Right of access
- Right to rectification
- Right to erasure (right to be forgotten)
- Right to withdraw the consent regarding processing of personal data
- Right to restriction of processing
- Notification obligation regarding rectification or erasure of personal data or restriction of processing
- Right to data portability
- The data subject can allow automated decision-making (including profiling) with his or her specific consent. Right to notify the Data Protection Ombudsman if you

- suspect that an organisation or individual is processing personal data in violation of data protection regulations.

If the purposes for which a controller processes personal data do not or do no longer require the identification of a data subject by the controller, the controller shall not be obliged to maintain, acquire or process additional information in order to identify the data subject for the sole purpose of complying with this Regulation. If the controller cannot identify the data subject the rights of access, rectification, erasure, notification obligation and data portability shall not apply except if the data subject provides additional information enabling his or her identification.

You can exercise your rights by contacting the data controller of the study.

Personal data collected in this study will not be used for automated decision-making

In scientific research, the processing of personal data is never used in any decisions concerning the participants of the research.

Pseudonymisation and anonymisation

All information collected from you will be handled confidentially and according to the legislation. Individual participants will be given a code, and the data will be stored in a coded form in the research files. Results will be analysed and presented in a coded, aggregate form. Individuals cannot be identified without a code key. A code key, which can be used to identify individual research participants and their responses, will be stored by the researcher, Henri-Pekka Henttonen, and the data will not be given to people outside the research group. The final research results will be reported in aggregate form, and it will be impossible to identify individual participants.

Invitation

Moi!

Teen opinnäytetyötäni avoimesta ryhmätoiminnasta ja etsin haastateltavia kertomaan kokemuksistaan.

Sekä uudet että kokeneemmat kävijät kaikista ryhmistä ovat tervetulleita!

Haastattelut voidaan järjestää joko Priden tiloissa tai etänä.

Jos olet kiinnostunut osallistumaan tai haluat lisätietoja, ota minuun yhteyttä:

henri-pekka.henttonen@metropolia.fi

HELSINKI
Pride
YHTEISO



Hi!

I'm doing my bachelor's thesis on the open community activities and I am looking for participants to interview on their experiences.

Both new and more experienced participants from all groups are welcome!

The interviews can be held at either Pride premises or online.

If you are interested or have further questions please don't hesitate to contact me:

henri-pekka.henttonen@metropolia.fi


Metropolia
University of Applied Sciences