IDENTIFYING SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF RURAL EVENTS

SACHA REID

School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Events have a range of consequences for host communities. While a number of researchers have focused upon impact assessment, there are some fundamental issues that require addressing. Firstly, most research investigating the social impacts of events use predefined quantitative assessment techniques or tools. These tools limit the ability of respondents to indicate the diversity of social consequences that they may experience. Secondly, the labeling of social consequences as positive or negative fails to acknowledge the "shades of gray" that may exist. Thirdly, there is a lack of research specifically investigating the social consequences of events within rural communities. Therefore, there is a need to identify a range of social consequences that occur as a result of hosting events, especially within rural communities. This is best achieved from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomena, thus qualitatively. This article aims to address these gaps by examining the social consequences of rural events from an event stakeholder perspective within three rural communities of Southwest Queensland, Australia. Specifically, this article reports on a number of social consequences identified that have been underutilized or discussed within the existing literature.

Key words: Social consequences; Rural events

Introduction

Events have the ability to draw outside investment and financial resources into local communities, which can lead to positive economic benefits that may sustain rural communities undergoing difficult economic periods. In today's society events also play an important social role. An event provides the opportunity to bring people together within a social environment to celebrate their and others' achievements; thus, events are integral for individuals as well as communities as a whole. Therefore, events have a range of impacts upon host communities.

However, much of the event research has been predominately focused on the economic impacts of events (Anderson & Solberg, 1999; Burgan & Mules, 2000; Dwyer, Forsyth, & Spurr, 2005; Jackson, Houghton, Russell, & Triandos, 2005; Mules & Faulkner, 1996; Ryan, 1998; Tyrrell & Ismail, 2005; Tyrrell & Johnston, 2001). It has only been in recent years that a shift in focus of this research has occurred, with greater recognition being attributed to the social consequences of events (Delamere, 1997, 2001; Delamere, Wankel, & Hinch, 2001; Fredline, Deery, & Jago, 2005; Fredline & Faulkner, 2002a, 2002b; Fredline, Jago, & Deery, 2003; Hall & Hodges, 1996; Reid, 2004; Small,

Address correspondence to Sacha Reid at her current address: Research Analyst, DTZ, Brisbane, Australia. E-mail: Sacha.Reid@dtz.com.au

Edwards, & Sheridan, 2005; Wood, 2005). However, much of this research has focused on urban and large-scale events, overlooking the social consequences of smaller or rural-based events.

The attraction of significant visitation at these large-scale events has considerable consequences for the host community. However, urban communities are larger and generally more multidimensional and dynamic in nature (Ife, 1995), and thus would absorb these social consequences differently from rural communities. The general paucity of research reporting upon the social consequences of smaller events held within rural communities (Janiskee, 1991; Lade & Jackson, 2004; Molloy, 2002; Reid, 2004; Small et al., 2005) requires further investigation. This article aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the social consequences of events. More specifically, the research objectives of this study were:

1. Examine the social consequences experienced as a result of rural events; in particular, by those subjected to the phenomena—the event stakeholders.
2. Identify new/additional social consequences not previously identified within the literature.

Social Consequences of Events

Social consequences refers to quality of life issues, such as social stratification, attitudes, beliefs, values, and lifestyles of host communities (Glasson, Godfrey, & Goodey, 1995; Milman & Pizam, 1988; Var, Kendell, & Tarakciogiu, 1985). Social consequences are the outcome of perceived changes in value systems, indi-vidual behavior, family relations, collective lifestyles, safety levels, moral conduct, and community organizations (Fox, 1977, cited in Ap, 1990). These changes may occur as the result of the introduction of foreign cultures, morals, and values that may conflict with long established host community cultures.

Table 1 details the range of social consequences of events identified within the literature. These social consequences have been identified as the positive and negative impacts of events on a community, in line with existing research of tourism's impact upon host destinations (Longson, 1989). Positive social consequences discussed within the literature include the potential of/ability of events to showcase a region and to draw tourism to the area, as well as providing leisure and recreational opportunities to the host community and tourists. Events have also contributed to a sense of community, community pride, and spirit within host destinations, thus improving the quality of life of residents. The educational and cultural understanding benefits of events have also been widely recognized.

Negative social consequences of events have been evidenced within the physical environment, such as litter, environmental damage, and loss of amenity, which impacts upon the quality of life of residents. Residents have recognized that they can feel alienated from their community and have sought alternative destinations during an event period to avoid the event imposing upon their lifestyles. Additionally, other negative social consequences identified within the literature were the introduction of foreign cultures and values to a community arising from event attendees, degrading destination images as the result of antisocial behavior or poorly

Table 1

Existing Identified Social Consequences of Events

Positive Social Consequences	Negative Social Consequences
Showcase effect	Environmental damage and litter
Tool for urban regeneration	Loss of amenities
Encourages tourism	Antisocial behavior
Enhances community spirit and improves quality of life	Causes very few job opportunities
Provide leisure and recreational opportunities	Exploitation and manipulation of event themes for commercialization
Promotes civic boosterism	Degradation of positive tourism and promotional imagery
Provides educational and cultural understanding	Causes social dislocation and increases in housing costs
Encourages participation in sporting activities	Financial burdens
	Loss of traditions
	Changes in community values and patterns

Source: Reid (2006).

managed events, and the commercialization of event themes resulting in loss of authenticity.

The social consequences of events have primarily been studied utilizing an adaptation of the residents' perceptions of tourism themes and measured using tools such as a social impact assessment or evaluation survey (Delamere, 1997, 2001; Delamere et al., 2001; Fredline, 2000; Fredline et al., 2003; Small et al., 2005). This approach attempts to quantify the social consequences of events within communities from the perspective of residents. Another characteristic of much of the research into the social consequences of events has been the concentration on large-scale events within urban areas, overlooking the fact that events are diverse and widespread throughout communities.

Caveats of Social Consequences of Events Research

A number of caveats of event social impacts research have been identified. First is the subjective nature of tourism and events research (Ap, 1990; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Researchers apply value-laden judgments in defining impacts as positive and negative. This fails to recognize that "shades of gray" exist and diversity of opinion among residents' perception of these impacts occurs. The term "impact" also implies negative connotations. This article argues that the use of social consequences may be a more appropriate term to remove the subjective, value-laden nature that current studies adopt. Second, the assessment of social impacts is also very difficult as there is no way of quantifying the social impacts and subtracting the costs from the benefits, as is the case in economic cost–benefit analysis (Crandall, 1994). Third, validation of previous studies findings conflict, as do the social impacts evidenced.

In a study for the Queensland Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing, Bell Planning Associates (1994) noted that negative impacts tended to be people's perceptions rather than measurable against objective indices. Van Doorn (1989) concluded that many of the social impact studies reporting negative impacts did not base their conclusions on solid empirical analysis because much of the research suffered from methodological flaws. There was a tendency to produce biased generalizations reflecting the researcher's preconceptions about negative sociocultural consequences (Van Doorn, 1989). Many of these studies also assess the social consequences of tourism against predefined themes, there-

fore limiting opportunity for residents to report alternative themes that they perceive impact upon them.

Labeling tourism and event impacts by predefined value-laden categories, such as negative and positive, does not allow for residents to explore the intricacies of each individual consequence. For example, what is positive to one set of stakeholders might be negative to another; the assessment of this will only be derived from an aggregate of the results and not reflect this diversity in opinions. What may be a generally positive aggregate social consequence may fail to address deeply held beliefs among some event stakeholders about this consequence, which event managers should aim to mitigate or minimize to ensure satisfaction and continued involvement from this stakeholder group. There is a need to initially identify all the social consequences that residents perceive from their perspective. These consequences should be derived from an individual's perspective, therefore from their own understanding and construction of the phenomena, not from the researcher's predefined value laden perspective.

The adoption of tourism impacts to develop social impact measurement tools relating to events has further facilitated this. The utilization of a predefined social impact scale, however, limits the ability of residents to identify additional, or deviate from these predefined, themes. It does not allow for residents to expand upon certain issues that they perceive as resulting from an event. The scale also limits the responses to those developed from social consequences relating to tourism predominantly, rather than identifying and validating these impacts. Evidently, there is a need to identify what the social consequences of events are from the perspective of those impacted upon, without adopting a predefined value-laden approach.

As a consequence, a criticism of the social impact of events research relates to the quantifiable and positivistic approach that eliminates the values and independent feelings of those affected the most by events (Hall, 1989). This is directed by governments' tendency to require quantifiable assessments of the impacts that arise. There has been an avoidance of support from governments for social consequence studies due to the intangible nature of their effects and because longer term studies that measure consequences well after the event has finished are not forthcoming. Social impacts tend to be treated as externalities to the more quantifiable and politically popular economic impact studies (Delamere, 1997). Therefore, it is timely that this research occurs.

Methodology

This research adopts a constructivist approach to the understanding of the phenomena. This approach acknowledges that perceptions of reality are constructed by individuals (Fay, 1996; Golinski, 1998; Kuhn, 1962; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Thus, it is the individual who is experiencing the planning, operationalizing, and hosting of rural events who is best able to report the social consequences of this event. No one set of constructed realities is more important than another; therefore, this is able to ensure that the research reported in this article is based on the respondents' constructed perceptions of the event. All social consequences of the rural event are included with precedence or importance not being assigned, thus aligning with the aims of the article in identifying the range of social consequences.

A qualitative research methodology was used to collect data. Fifty-four in-depth interviews with event stakeholders in three rural communities within the southwest Queensland region of the Southern Downs were conducted over a 6-month period in 2003. A matrix of events within the Southern Downs region was constructed to determine events suitable for inclusion. This matrix identified 55 events by name, location, theme, development stage, organizational structure, date, size, and cost of entry. Unfortunately, the size of this matrix prohibits inclusion within this article. A characteristic of the events chosen was that they were dispersed across the whole region of the Southern Downs, ensuring that the events reflected the rural diversity of the region. These events were also dispersed across the calendar to ensure seasonality was a not significant factor. The choice of three events throughout this region ensured that the results provided a range of social consequences arising from events across the rural area and were not specific to a particular event.

Respondents were identified using an event stakeholder typology (Reid & Arcodia, 2002) and a snowball sampling technique. Event stakeholders are groups or individuals who are affected or could be affected by an event's existence. These event stakeholders fell within one of the following of categories:

- have an interest in the event,
- are involved in the actual planning and organizing of the event,
- are financially responsible for the event or have made a significant financial contribution to ensure that the event occurs,
- derive a benefit from an event, and/or
- the community, because they are impacted by the event being located within their region (Reid, 2006).

Stakeholders were also differentiated by their level of involvement or risk, into primary and secondary stakeholder groups. Primary event stakeholders are those individuals or groups who incur risk and without whose support and/or involvement the event would cease to exist. This stakeholder group included event organizers, employees, volunteers, suppliers, sponsors, donors, attendees, participants, and spectators. Secondary event stakeholders are those groups or individuals who may or may not be involved, yet can seriously impede the event's success. Secondary event stakeholders included government, host community, emergency services, general business, media, and tourism organizations.

Individuals from each of these stakeholder groups, for each of the events, were identified and contacted by phone and/or electronic mail to participate. These initial respondents went on to identify further event stakeholders who were involved or affected by the event, thus the sample snowballed. In total 16 (A), 17 (I), and 21 (G) respondents were interviewed from the three communities. Respondents were initially contacted by phone and a suitable time for their participation was arranged. The interviews utilized a semistructured approach and varied in length from 60 minutes to 180 minutes and were audio tape recorded. The interviews were transcribed and returned to respondents for member cross-checking, with all findings obtained from a content thematic analysis of these transcripts.

Description of Research Setting

Located between 2.5 and 4 hours southwest of Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland, the Southern Downs area is a rural agricultural region. The three rural communities included within the sample were Allora, Inglewood, and Goondiwindi. Allora is the community located closest to Brisbane, approximately 150 km southwest of the capital. The community has a resident population (in 2001) of approximately 1,700 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Up until 1994 Allora was governed by their own shire council, although

amalgamations of political boundaries saw the community being incorporated within the larger area of the neighboring Warwick. Warwick has a shire population of approximately 20,000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a). Many residents within Allora, as a consequence, feel disenfranchised, alienated, and angry with this forced amalgamation. The residents believe that they were better off in charge of their own community, rather than being given the "leftovers" from Warwick.

The Allora Blue Cow Country Music Festival, a music eisteddfod and festival, originated in the early 1990s as the Gungellan Country Music Festival. This event was situated within the grounds of the Gungellan Homestead, a historical trust home, on the outskirts of the Allora township. The event originated as a fundraising event to raise funds/capital for the restoration of the homestead, which proved a success in attracting attendees, participants, and community involvement. In the late 1990s a federal government grant of AUD$2 million was bestowed upon the homestead and the purpose behind the event was no longer pertinent. The event was moved into the community hall in the center of the Allora township with the new aim of raising funds for charity. These benefactors were usually hospitals in Brisbane, the capital of Queensland, located some 2.5 hours' drive from Allora, which caused some dissatisfaction among community members and thus community involvement and support declined. In 2002, with the threat of the event being relocated again to a venue in Warwick, businesses within the community took ownership. The local hotel providing naming rights sponsorship for the event, other businesses were encouraged by this business to sponsor or to supply goods to the event and community members were sought for volunteering roles. The event has suffered over the years from a community that was disillusioned by the misappropriation of funds by the Gungellan Homestead Organization, a lack of ownership and support by the community.

Inglewood has a similar community profile with just over 1,000 residents residing in Inglewood with an additional 1,600 in the surrounding region (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005a). This township is located approximately half way between Allora and Goondiwindi, approximately 1-hour drive in each direction from these townships. Inglewood has suffered from 30 years of declining industries, especially since the deregulation of the tobacco industry in the mid-1970s. Towards the end of the 1990s the Inglewood

Shire Council, in an effort to turn around this decline, employed an economic development officer, and thus the olive industry was introduced into the region. Traditional primary production markets of cattle, sheep, lucerne, wheat, grain, and timber had been the norm in the area.

The Outback Olive Festival, a harvest and industry showcasing festival, in Inglewood was established in the late 1990s initiated by the economic development officer, a part-time tourism officer, and a group of local residents with the support of one of the major olive producers, the local shire council, and local businesses. The first two events were put on with much "fan fare" and media coverage; however, there were a number of issues that resulted. A lack of effective management and accountability resulted in the event making significant losses, with many local businesses failing to be paid for services rendered or goods supplied for many months. It was only after the major sponsor and the local council provided additional money that they were paid. Personality factors also arose between the committee and the rest of the community with many in the community being pushed out or alienated by the organizing committee. Consequently, many in the community were put offside with the festival and widespread community support was not forthcoming. Since this time, a new organizing committee has ensured that the event rediscovers its community "roots" with widespread community involvement being actively sought and the development of a program that is able to be achieved in a more sustainable manner.

Goondiwindi, a further hour's drive from Inglewood, has a resident population of approximately 4,700 in the town with a further 3,000 residents in the surrounding region (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003b, 2005b). The region is a renowned for wheat, grain, lucerne, cattle, and cotton production. The value of the crop industries within the region has provided significant returns for the community and resulted in Goondiwindi being established as a prosperous agricultural service centre.

The Goondiwindi Spring Festival, a public community festival, was initially developed in the late 1970s, by a group of locals, as a fundraising venture for the development of recreational facilities. After these initial objectives were achieved, the Rotary Club of Goondiwindi took over the management of the festival in the 1980s. Rotary has used the Spring Festival as a tool for community celebration as well as to raise funds

for community development. Declining attendance numbers in the late 1990s due to competing leisure interests resulted in the event being rejuvenated in 2000. The Goondiwindi Rugby Club was added to the organizing committee with the event being a jointly organized event that has as a feature a street parade and a series of rugby union games culminating in the Battle of the Border game. The event has received widespread community support and has become a key community event in the Goondiwindi social calendar.

Findings

Respondents identified a number of social consequences, on both a community and an individual level, which result from hosting rural events. After collection of the data, postinterview, and transcription, these social consequences were then grouped into five domains for ease of analysis. The domains were grouped due to commonalities in the constructs. The five grouped domains include the networks and interactions, affective, learning and developing, socioeconomic, and physical as outlined in Table 2. These domains were further categorized into community and individual level consequences, in line with existing research (Delamere, 2001; Fredline, 2000; Fredline et al., 2003; Small et al., 2005).

These findings identified a range of social consequence themes that have had limited application within the tourism and events literature, which this article will report on. These social consequences included themes such as trust and respect, breaking down social barriers, releasing stress and tension, forgetting hard times, being affiliated with success, a resistance to change, costs associated with attending, expectation of government assistance, and greed.

Table 2
Grouped Themes of Social Consequences

Networks & Interactions Domain	Affective Domain	Learning & Developing Domain	Socioeconomic Domain	Physical Domain
Community Level				
Participation/involvement	Entertainment/ atmosphere/sense of occasion	Awareness of/utilizing community skills & resources	Spinoff economic effects/development	Antisocial behavior/crime
Unity/belonging/sense of community	Motivation	Leadership	Generates tourism/ showcases region	Improving recreational facilities/resources
Relationships	Community spirit/pride	Change	Expectation of government assistance	Congestion/noise/litter
Trust/respect	Traditions/values			Safe environment
Communication/gossip	Morale boost			
Community development/ enticing people to stay/ move here	Community support/ ownership			
Social barriers	Identity			
Socializing opportunity				
Individual Level				
Opportunity to socialize/ interact with others	Releasing stress and tension/forget hard × Education/ learn new skills	Employment	Dislocation	
Relationships/trust/respect	Motivation	Sense of achievement/ confidence	Costs associated with attending	
Breaking down barriers/ accepting of others	Pride	Leadership	Greed	
Unity/belonging	Being affiliated with success	Changing attitudes		
Involvement	Ownership	Awareness of/utilizing skills & resources		
Enticing people to stay	Morale boost Identity			

Trust and respect were included within the networks and interactions domain as relationships are dependent upon trust. Community participation and networks also are dependent upon trust; therefore, opportunities of bringing people together to facilitate this is important for a community. Respect was a consequence of an individual being perceived to be doing a good job. Therefore, trust enabled people to work together and to develop relationships and networks, with respect occurring if an individual was perceived to be doing their assigned role competently.

Another social consequence included within this domain that had not previously been acknowledged within the literature was social barriers. The social divides or barriers that exist within rural communities are often deeply entrenched; in spite of this a neutral ground between these social groups may be achieved through organizing and planning rural events. Often this divide is based upon whether an individual is a "local" (born within the community) or a "nonlocal" (moved to the community). One respondent discussed the nature of this relationship:

Like people say "How long have you been here?"

I say "17 years."

They say "Good lord, you must be almost accepted as a local."

I say "No, they haven't forgiven me for coming yet." And that is about the crux of it. There is a saying you have to be here 15 years before they forgive you for arriving. [A6]

A challenge for rural events is ensuring that the event is not overly representative of one of these social groupings, otherwise the event risks losing the support of community members from the other group. Rural communities are heterogeneous and there are significant differences between these communities, therefore social divides are dependent upon the nature of individual communities.

The affective domain consisted of social consequences that were intrinsic or feeling based, which influenced or aroused an emotive response. The social nature of events contributes to a positive atmosphere and sense of occasion to be evident within a community. This is important for all communities, especially rural ones that have suffered from an unprecedented number of negative circumstances over past decades. The combined impact of severe drought, deep reces-

sion, and a significant decline in commodity prices has had a detrimental effect on rural economies. Additionally, the commercialization of agriculture and the impacts of technology, such as improvements in transportation, mechanicinization of farm equipment, refrigeration, and chemicals, have all played significant roles in changing rural areas (Butler, Hall, & Jenkins, 1998). This has led to an out migration of younger people, high unemployment levels, a loss of public services, and sense of apathy among some rural communities (Butler et al., 1998; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 1993; Reid, 2004). Events were perceived to allow the opportunity for residents to forget some of the hard times that they may be experiencing, allowing for a releasing of stress and tension. As one respondent noted, events:

take your mind off your troubles and just do something completely different. Forget about the farm, forget about the water or whatever because when you have bad seasons or are affected by the drought that has a big impact on the property owners through to all the workers, through to all the businesses in town as people aren't spending as much and all that sort of thing that has effects on the rest of the community anyway. So relief from that day to day grind and doing something totally different, going off and having fun. [G21]

It is particularly important for the psychological well-being of individuals and the community and may provide the impetus for the community to keep going in the face of adversity, particularly within rural communities.

Also included within the affective domain was a desire to be affiliated with success. The conservative nature of rural communities ensures that individuals are wary of new activities or individuals until they have proven their worth or success. This also relates to rural events, with people wanting to be affiliated with success and distancing themselves from failure. Respondents stated that they did not want to have "their heads cut off" [18] or to "stick outside the mould" [18] of the rest of the community and thus distanced themselves from involvement until an activity is accepted and perceived a success by the community. However, this mentality ensures that it may be difficult to establish new events within rural communities unless the support for and local community involvement is actively sought.

Within the learning and developing domain the issue of change was identified as a social consequence

not previously acknowledged within the events literature. Change related to the propensity of the community to cope with change and the role of events in facilitating this. The ability of a community to cope with change varied and was dependent upon the individual contexts and situations of the community. A traditional mindset of "resistance to change" was stagnating and impeding rural communities from reinvigorating their current positions. As one respondent acknowledged, "Change, resistance to change breeds enemies and if you get community members and council who has its mindset to resistance to change, believing that it should all be done the way it was 30 years ago, then the mindset is killing it" [I17]. Events provide a catalyst for introducing and facilitating change. In this research, the rural events have provided the opportunity of "locals" and "others" working together to break down social barriers and the introduction of and acceptance of new industries to a region.

The socioeconomic domain was comprised of themes that were linked with the economic situation of individuals and the community. These themes are often associated with the economic consequences of hosting events; however, they were perceived by respondents as also having social consequences due to the economic situation informing the quality of life, and accordingly the social environment of individuals and the community. There were three social consequences identified by this research that had limited application within existing literature: costs of attending, expectation of government assistance, and greed.

Local individuals and families may be disadvantaged by the costs associated with attending and participating in rural events. While entry fees to local events are minimal, or nonexistent, the cost of goods, services, and products within the event such as rides and food may cause economic hardship and social stratification.

> There would be a number of families I suppose that possibly couldn't attend things, so their children are missing out on it due to the financial costs. It is not a free event, you can go along to the parade and whatever for free but I think you have to pay if you want a ride. Well there is a cost attached, so some families would be missing out there. [G6]

The timing of the event, throughout the calendar year, may also affect issues relating to cost. If events are located too close to other events, or Christmas, New Year, and the start of school year, then the effects may be felt more strongly by the community.

There was also an expectation among some respondents that the government should become involved or assist through financial aid. Rural communities have been provided with government assistance to overcome drought and to improve lifestyles within rural regions; however, there may be a continual expectation that the government will provide assistance to rural communities. The question arises as to the role and responsibilities of governments in providing assistance to rural communities. A smaller number of respondents acknowledged that the community has to take control and responsibility for community development as financial assistance from the government is not sustainable. To achieve this ongoing education and individual development is required. Events provide the "breeding ground" for creating skills and knowledge among the community, which can be used to facilitate and foster future community development opportunities as well as maintaining and developing social and human capital within rural communities.

An interesting finding of this research related to greed. The potential of power and the exchange of money associated with events can result in incidences of greed occurring.

> there have been a few instances in town where trust has been eroded because people in positions are taking advantage of those positions to their own financial gain. Which I think is a huge social consequence of running an event, and it is sad, I hate it. My heart goes out to the future of events because of it. [G13]

Greed has the potential of creating distrust among the community, therefore weakening the networks and relationships that exist. Without trust the connectedness of these networks and relationships is diminished, thus not enabling social capital to be utilized or developed. Issues and effects of greed can be overcome through transparency of event organizers, effective planning and communication, as well as reporting mechanisms.

Conclusion

This article has reported that the social consequences of rural events can be grouped into five domains. These domains include networks and interactions, affective, learning and developing, socioeconomic, and physical.

One, the networks and interactions domain referred to themes such as relationships and facilitators of networks within the community. Two, the affective domain involved emotive and intrinsic characteristics that arise from rural events, such as community spirit and pride, sense of unity, and motivation. Three, the learning and developing domain incorporated themes such as education, skill development, and community capacity building characteristics. Four, the socioeconomic domain discussed themes that would generally be included as economic impacts, although they have an effect upon the ability of individuals and community to secure and achieve a quality of life. Five, the physical domain refers to themes affecting the physical aspects of the community which have consequences for the quality of life of residents.

These domains are in contrast with existing research that differentiated social consequences based on the level of impact (e.g., highly negative or highly positive) perceived by host communities (Fredline, 2000; Small et al., 2005). This article has consistently argued that the use of negative or positive categorizations does not allow for differing social constructions of those impacts or the "shades of gray" to emerge. The findings from this research indicate that while respondents' perceptions of social consequences may be negative or positive, it is necessary to explore the intricacies and varying social constructions of these themes. Retaining the social consequence theme as the primary source of the analysis and findings, as opposed to the positive or negative categorization, enables differences of opinion within the themes to emerge.

As this research has highlighted, a shortcoming of existing social impact assessment tools is the lack of a comprehensive list of social consequence themes/items. Had a quantifiable social impact assessment tool been utilized in this research, the identification of a number of social consequences, which had limited application within existing tourism and events literature, would not have resulted. These social consequences included themes such as trust and respect, breaking down social barriers, releasing stress and tension, forgetting hard times, being affiliated with success, a resistance to change, the affects of costs associated with attending, expectation of government assistance, and greed. As this article has argued, it is important to determine the social consequences of rural events from the perspectives of those who are most affected or influenced by the existence of the event.

Opportunities for future research exist to examine the similarities or differences of the social consequences of events within urban and rural communities. Additionally, there is the need to include the social consequences discussed in this article within existing measurement tools, to assess social consequences quantitatively. This will assist in developing a more comprehensive knowledge of the social consequences that arise from hosting events.

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