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“Am I Queer Enough?” (White) Queer Identity Verification and The Costs of Inclusion

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology

by

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ABSTRACT

“Am I Queer Enough?” (White) Queer Identity Verification and the Costs of Inclusion

by

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This research is an investigation into how queer students at the University of California, Santa Barbara constructed and reinforced solidarity among variously identified members of the queer community. More specifically, this research examines the significance of inclusion as a core ideological component of queer group and social identities on this campus and the racialized frames through which students conceived of inclusive queer politics. I incorporate social movement theories of collective identity, social psychological structural identity theories, and critical race theories to examine how students whose multiple sexual, racial, and gender identities were submerged within the broad category of the “queer community” engaged in identity verification among their peers. Through interviews with 53 queer students and over 100 hours of participant observation at community events, I examined the identity-based processes that students used to define and enact queerness at the individual and group levels, and found that white normative standards pervaded queer ideologies and practices in this site. Commitment to inclusion was a central component of queer identity among students but the methods of inclusion valued and promoted in this community often resulted in the re-marginalization of queer of color students for whom a queer person of color

(QPOC) identity marked them as a distinct subset of the queer student population. This research contributes to our understanding of identity processes and conflict within diverse social movements through incorporation of social movement, structural identity, and critical race theories to understand the complex identity-based investments of individuals who are members of diverse social justice communities. With special attention to students' articulations of diversity, inclusion, and solidarity this research also provides an empirical study of how identity management processes can reinforce structural inequalities and how those processes reproduce white-hegemonic norms that impact people through their everyday interactions.

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INTRODUCTION: INCLUSION IN THE QUEER COMMUNITY:

It was dusk and warm light emitted through the floor-to-ceiling windows of the Multi-purpose Room of the Student Resource Building (SRB). Inside students mingled with combined excitement and apprehension, familiar faces from the previous school year mixed with the unfamiliar faces of incoming students. As we approached the building Isabella sighed, nudging me. "I don't see any Black faces in there. Once again, I'm the only one." I scanned the crowd. Isabella was right. There were a number of Asian, Latin@, and white students, but she was the only Black student as far as I could see, even within our small group. Her girlfriend, Anna, and I were both White and Madison, a first year student we'd met up with on our way there, was Taiwanese-American. "Wow," I replied, "You weren't kidding."

It was the first week of fall quarter and Queerpalooza was about to start. Queerpalooza was touted as the most important event of the year for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and ally (LGBTQIAA or "queer") community on the campus since it provided new students the opportunity to meet other queer people and to learn about all of the queer organizations they could join. Here, student leaders from nearly one dozen queer student organizations gathered annually to present their organizations to incoming students in hopes of recruiting them as future participants. As the co-chair and only remaining member of Black Quare, Isabella was scheduled to speak on behalf of the organization during this year's announcements.

Roughly two hundred students crowded the open space as we entered. Older students, most of them established student leaders, advised attendees to write their names and preferred gender pronouns (PGPs) on nametags as they walked in and we followed suit. I jotted down "Shae, she/he/they" on a nametag that I stuck to my sweatshirt before scanning the room. Luke was the first person I saw, dressed in an oversized tall-T and fitted jeans with his sandy-blond hair cut close on the sides and gauges in his earlobes. I had seen him two nights earlier during introduction night at Rainbow House, the queer student residence hall on campus, where he was the resident advisor (RA) and had just come out as trans. He welcomed me with a hug as Moriarty approached, launching into her usual good-natured mockery of me for wearing an outfit similar to hers. I had known Moriarty for two years now, having initially become acquainted through student organizing on campus and later agreeing to mentor her while she navigated her experiences as a Mexican-American genderqueer heavily involved in student leadership. Tonight Moriarty and Luke were in good spirits and paused only momentarily to say hello to me, rushing off almost instantly to socialize, excited at the prospect of meeting new students and ushering in a new generation of queer campus leaders.

At 7:45 Amaya took a microphone from the podium at the front of the room and welcomed the group to Queerpalooza. This week her bob-length hair was electric blue, shaved on one side, and she wore patterned tights with her dress. It was only her second year on campus and already she was a student leader who passionately incorporated her experiences as a queer Chicana into her work within the community. Once she had everyone's attention Amaya asked students to take a seat somewhere on the floor. The boisterous conversations dulled to a low hum as people

sought out limited chairs or sat on the linoleum as instructed. Isabella leaned in excitedly as she sat beside me on the floor. "I see a few Black folks," she whispered. I looked around and noticed a light-skinned Black woman and two light-skinned Black men toward the back of the room. "Oh yeah!" I whispered back with a smile, though they were still a small minority among hundreds of students.

As the room fell silent Kelly, a white woman in a floral sundress and long blond hair, joined Amaya beside the podium. Though most people referred to her as an ally, Kelly had been active in the queer community for over a year, taking leadership positions and identifying herself at the very least as being "politically queer." Amaya took the lead, introducing herself and Kelly as the incoming co-chairs for Queer Student Union (QSU), the "queer political group on campus." Having anticipated that attendees who were new to the community might respond with apprehension upon hearing the word "queer," student leaders had already prepared a method for orienting new students. "You may be wondering why we use the word 'queer' as opposed to 'gay and lesbian' or 'gay straight alliance,'" Amaya proposed, "but don't worry! Max is going to come up and explain to you why we use 'queer' to describe our community."

Max approached the podium on cue, a white gay genderqueer who was tall and lean with a shaggy mop of dirty-blond hair on top of his head. He wore his signature style: brightly colored skinny jeans with an equally bright but clashing top, and black high-heeled boots held together with gold duct tape. He had barely reached the front of the room before he launched into a brief talk about the derogatory history of the word queer but explaining how it had been reclaimed as a source of pride and as a political term used to describe communities in a more inclusive way. According to Max, this inclusion encompassed gender as well as sexuality and broadened the ways that all of us could conceive of ourselves individually and collectively. He also suggested that queer identities enabled people to critique binary identities including but not limited to gender and sexuality.

Now that everyone was presumed to be on the same page about what it meant to call oneself or community "queer," it was time for students to become acquainted with the student organizations and centers that composed the queer community on campus. The list of organizations in attendance was extensive: Queer Student Union (QSU), Queer Commission (QComm), Friendly Undergraduate Queers in it Together (FUQIT- pronounced "Fuck It"), Queer Asian Pacific Islanders (QAPI), La Familia De Colores (De Colores for short), Black Quare, Keshet, Kinky Undergraduate Fetish Fellowship (KUFF), the Pride Committee, the Multicultural Drama Company (MCDC), the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (RCSGD), and the Rainbow House. With the exception of the RCSGD and the Rainbow House, which were institutional resources staffed by paid administrators, all of these organizations were student formed and led. For each group the co-chair would first describe the purpose of their organization and then invite each of the officers to introduce themselves by name, major and organizational role.

The three umbrella organizations represented at Queerpalooza were QSU, QComm and FUQIT. QSU was responsible for keeping students up to date on politics through educational workshops and associated events. As the queer constituency of Associated Students, QComm was primarily responsible for funding queer-related

programs and events. FUQIT was the explicitly apolitical queer social group and held weekly social gatherings for queer students.

In addition there were several groups catering to distinct interests and identities within the queer community. KUFF was open to anyone interested in bondage, domination, submission and any kink or fetish related topics. The Pride Committee was responsible for organizing the annual Campus Pride Week. The MCDC provided students of color who had faced discrimination in the theater department an opportunity to author, direct and perform original work, and their co-chair was a queer Vietnamese American who had been actively involved in the queer community for three years. Luke represented Rainbow House, inviting students to attend socials at the residential hall. Several student employees from the RCSGD informed the attendees about the services offered at the campus' LGBTQ resource center and invited them to visit any time.

Of the organizations and resources represented at this event, four were dedicated to fostering both queer and racial or ethnic identities. Three of them were explicitly queer person of color (QPOC) organizations. QAPI boasted a non-hierarchical leadership structure with no officer positions and ten members stood at the podium to represent their group. Two members, Brooke and Stephanie, took the lead explaining that QAPI had been established as a safe space for people who identified as both queer and Asian. Brooke smiled nervously as Stephanie rejected the microphone in favor of speaking directly to the crowd. They told everyone that QAPI was an open group, meaning that allies could attend meetings, but they had to be active allies in order to attend. QAPI leaders had proactively cultivated allyship in the queer community throughout the past year, and had even asked me to co-host an allyship workshop with them at a student-led conference the previous spring. "It's hard work," Stephanie stressed to the students in attendance at Queerpalooza, "and you have to be willing to do the work to be an ally."

Co-chairs Dane and Emilia introduced De Colores, the queer Latin@, Chican@ group. Dane was a white gay man with short blond hair who took the microphone while Emilia, a Chicana lesbian with long straight hair, stood beside him quietly. As Dane talked, Isabella gestured towards Emilia and whispered to me, "She's so annoyed." I looked at Emilia but did not know her well enough to discern her mood. I had heard rumors of discontent among QPOC leaders regarding Dane's uninterrogated whiteness as a leader for a queer QPOC organization. While Emilia looked on Dane exclaimed enthusiastically that, despite the fact that De Colores was intended for Latin@ and Chican@ queers it was a very inclusive group. "As you can see, I'm white as day!" he exclaimed, gesturing towards himself as evidence of just how inclusive De Colores truly was.

The leaders for Keshet, the queer Jewish student group, were in the process of appealing to QPOC leaders that they be considered a QPOC organization based on the cultural marginalization experienced by Jews. When co-chair Jacob ran up to the podium solo he apologized for the absence of other members who were home "praying their sins away" for Yom Kippur. He carried a rainbow flag in one hand and an Israeli flag in the other and offering a brief apology "to anyone who doesn't like Israel" with reference to the ongoing conflict in Palestine. He announced the group's inaugural year by delivering his favorite one-liner, "This group is so new we

can't even circumcise it!" and the crowd erupted with laughter. Jacob then described the need for Keshet by explaining that Jewish queers were an "incredibly marginal" population, reasoning that since the Jewish population was small and ten percent of the general population was queer, Jewish queers were "naturally a very small group." He only knew of six on campus though he "prayed to God" there were more and pled with students to come find him after Queerpalooza if they were both queer and Jewish.

As announcements wore on Isabella began jokingly asking me to join her when she introduced Black Quare so that she would not have to stand up there alone. "I would but people might think I'm delusional since I'm neither Black, nor an undergraduate," I laughed. Isabella laughed and shrugged in agreement. We had often discussed how alienated she felt being the only visible Black person in the queer community and she had recently begun sharing stories with me about how many members of the queer community criticized her for being so vocal about race.

Despite her reluctance to take the stage Isabella had a natural stage presence, standing tall in her black floral-lined boots and midriff shirt, her kinky hair styled into a short orange faux hawk, and earrings dangling against her dark skin. "He-ey!" she called out to the crowd, and waited for a response. When the crowd remained silent she prompted them again, laughing and calling out again, "I said, 'he-ey!'" This time the audience responded with an enthusiastic "he-ey!" easing the collective tension of having remained seated and silent for so long. "I'm Isabella and I'm the current chair for Black Quare, UCSB's organization for queer-identified Black and African diaspora," she began. "As you can see, we are a very small group, with only five members last year and currently only one— me— this year." She emphasized that Black Quare was a closed group in order to provide a safe space for members but that anyone who didn't identify as Black and queer was welcome to attend their open meeting each month. Then she paused and looked down at her hands where she held a small stack of fliers. Raising her eyes again she looked over the audience before she continued. "I have fliers, but I'm looking out there and I don't see any black people," she said, letting out a disheartened laugh. At that moment, a light skinned man standing against the back wall smiled and gestured for her attention. His presence seemed to reinvigorate her and she waved back. "Hey! I see you!" she called out, "I'll come find you!" (Field Notes Excerpt— September, 2012 Queerpalooza).

UNDERSTANDING INCLUSION IN THE QUEER COMMUNITY:

The above excerpt provides the reader a window into the queer community at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) as it was portrayed to me through attendance at community events and insider accounts. From Isabella's lament that "once again I am the only one," to Amaya's assertion that "we use the word queer in this community," to the proliferation of various queer student organizations in attendance, what occurred at this event

revealed significant dynamics at play within the queer community on this campus. Because it was intended to familiarize incoming students with the queer community, Queerpalooza provided an ideal site for beginning to trace the collective investments of queer student leaders on this campus and to observe those investments in action. By publicly establishing the meaning of queer group identity and by illustrating how community organizations and spaces were distributed on campus, student leaders implicitly conveyed to incoming students what it looked like to practice queerness in this community.

By designating the word “queer” as the collective identity of students involved with the community, student leaders suggested that membership was available to students on the basis of all forms of gender and sexual diversity. Although implicitly united under the overarching inclusivity of queerness, students learned at Queerpalooza that that they could also join specific queer organizations more suited to their particular identities and interests. The prerogative that all students be included was thus augmented by the proliferation of more discrete organizations recognizing students’ needs based on specific racial, gender, and sexual identities. Queer students often interpreted the diverse range of queer student organizations as proof of just how inclusive their community was. But the creation of subgroup organizations within the queer community also suggested that opportunities for students to achieve affirmation might have been lacking in more mainstream queer spaces.

The goal of this research is to investigate the meaning of inclusion within the UCSB queer student community and to examine the impacts of queer inclusive ideologies on students whose multiple identities were incorporated within a broad “queer community” framework. More specifically, I am interested in how inclusive ideologies impacted queer students of color whose racial identities marked them as a distinct population within the

queer community, and how they managed their own inclusion in queer student spaces, organizations and events.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

While social movements have traditionally been conceived of as distinct political collectivities directly engaged with the state (McAdams 1982; Tilly 1978), new social movement theorists suggest that contemporary movements tend to be more diffusely organized and often emphasize cultural changes that are “intimately interweaved with everyday life and individual experience” (Melucci 1996: 9; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Buechler 1995). By recognizing the significance of “cultural groups and interactions” in shaping movement communities, theorists have broadened their analytic focus to include submerged and informal networks of activists who sustain membership through shared ideological investments, mutually supportive relationships, and participation in movement activities and cultural reproduction (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Staggenborg 1998: 181, 182). This cultural turn in social movement theories reflects a shift from focusing on “the movement” as a distinct analytic concept to recognition of how each movement is the outcome of multiple interactional processes taking place among members. For Melucci,

Addressing the problem of how a collective actor takes shape requires recognition of the fact that, for instance, what is empirically called ‘a movement’ and which, for the sake of observational and linguistic convenience, has been attributed an essential unity, is in fact a product of multiple and heterogeneous social processes. We must therefore seek to understand how this unity is built and what different outcomes are generated by the interactions of its various components (1996: 20).

Conceiving of movements as “a vehicle for multiple and often contradictory demands” among members (Melucci 1996: 23) thus allows for a more comprehensive account of how movements are constructed and how solidarity is achieved in this process.

Most of the queer students who held leadership positions in organizations identified as activists to some degree, but even the students I interviewed who did not identify as activists had been involved formally or informally in queer community networks where the ideological investments and values of the queer community were refined and enacted. As a result their accounts of what it meant to be members of the queer community provided evidence of how students pursued queer solidarity through constant negotiations over shared ideological investments and cultural practices. Social movement theories provided a valuable lens for analyzing the symbolic significance of students' collective definitions and enactments of queer identity, while students' efforts to reconcile self and group identities made structural identity theory an ideal framework for understanding the interactional processes through which social cohesion was pursued in this population.

Both social movement's collective identity theory and social psychology's structural identity theory analyze how people make sense of in and out-group categories. But while social movement theorists are more concerned with the collective construction and maintenance of group boundaries, social identity theorists explore the ways that specific members manage identity conflicts over their own belonging and non-belonging in relation to social groups. Because of the compatibility between social movement and social identity theories, Stryker (2000) suggests that a combination of both approaches will allow theorists to more thoroughly comprehend the investments and self-conceptions of individuals as they negotiate community membership.

Inclusion has become a central tenet of most contemporary lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) movements for both ideological and strategic reasons; and the UCSB queer student community was no exception. Due to the constant formulation of

new sexual identities and the increased awareness of trans* experiences, movements have attempted to expand their constituencies by adopting the term “queer” as a collective identity incorporating all forms of gender and sexual diversity into a cohesive group (Gamson 1995), and have made increased efforts to frame diversity “as a central movement goal” (Ward 2008b: 252). Particularly within LGBTQ movement organizations, limited resources have prompted administrators to strategically develop diversity initiatives in order to draw from multiple sources of funding (Ward 2008a; 2008b). Marked by a distinct shift from emphasizing boundary distinctions between different identities to an emphasis on “building bridges” among constituents and with potential allies, Ghaziani (2011) suggests that queer politics has entered a “post-gay” era. Moreover, the influence of queer theory on LGBTQ movements has led to a postmodern turn in which participants contest normative gender and sexual constraints in favor of more fluid and malleable subjectivities (Butler 1990).

Although queerness celebrates multiple forms of gender and sexuality, the successes of movement communities are largely dependent upon a distinct collective identity that activists can use to seek “recognition of new identities and lifestyles” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 286; Bernstein 2005; Kebede, Shriver and Kottnerus 2000). Since coherence is central to the efficacy of movement claims, members of diverse movement populations often work to construct and refine their collective identities through internal conflicts over who is and is not a part of the movement (Cohen 1985; Gamson 1995, 1997; Brown-Saracino and Ghaziani 2009; Ghaziani and Balldassarri 2011; Ghaziani and Fine 2008; Ghaziani 2008, 2011). As boundaries between “us” and “them” shift within movements, specific subgroups of the population may experience intracommunity marginalization and find that previously inclusive spaces have taken on new meaning and purpose (Joseph 2002).

At the most basic level, identity politics allow members of marginalized populations to politicize their identities by making connections between their everyday experiences and larger systems of oppression (Berstein and Taylor 2013; Bernstein 2005). But as Moraga argues, even within the realm of identity politics “there is seldom any analysis of how the very nature and structure of the group itself may be founded on racist or classist assumptions” (1983: 33). Attempts to promote inclusion and to minimize intragroup conflict often have the unintended effect of erasing diversity within movements (Gamson 1995; Alimahomed 2010). This is partially due to the fact that efforts to present a holistic movement voice or collective identity can result in assumptions about members’ interests that stymie the potential for alliances both within and beyond a movement (Lichterman 1995). In queer movements this often occurs through declarations that heteronormativity is the primary locus of members’ oppression, resulting in the occlusion of race and class-based forms of discrimination that differentially impact movement participants (Cohen 1997). Therefore, despite queer identity politics’ incorporation of diverse forms of gender and sexuality, its emphasis on solidarity through resistance to gender and sexuality-based oppression obscures additional forms of marginalization that significantly impact queers of color (Kumashiro 2001; Moraga 1983).

In contrast to the singular focus of white queer discourses, queer theorists of color have expressed a deep interest in both difference and coalition as sites of transformative politics (Ferguson 2004:111). Intersectionality, developed out of feminist of color strategies for acknowledging their simultaneous experiences of multiple forms of oppression (Combahee River Collective 1983 [1977]; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2009), suggests that while single-issue politics may serve white feminists, white queers, and heterosexual men of color,

women of color and queers of color experience oppression on the basis of multiple identities, all of which intersect and none of which can be addressed without acknowledging the others. As a result, the experiences of women of color and queers of color require them to invest in strategies for recognizing multi-issue politics.

By engaging in oppositional consciousness women and queers of color are able to occupy multiple, shifting subjectivities that allow them to critique specific axes of domination as they arise (Sandoval 2000; Collins 2009). But their embrace of multiple identities and allegiances may also be used as justification for their marginalization within specific movements, especially if they are perceived as being transient participants (Alimahomed 2010: 163). In some cases, inclusion can result in what Hughey (2010) calls “a paradox of participation” in which non-white members of social groups are offered a certain amount of belonging accompanied by continued references to them as being essentially different. This is unsurprising since organizational attempts at inclusion often rely on white logics of diversity, which treat race and ethnicity as external factors to be incorporated into existing structures (Ward 2008a, 2008b). Rather than being explicitly excluded, Alimahomed notes that women of color are often marginalized through invisibility since white queer aesthetics and norms render their queerness invisible within larger queer communities (2010). Under these logics individuals may be seen as antagonistic to movement solidarity when they expose discriminatory dynamics within their own communities.

Group members who have greater degrees of structural power—on the basis of sexuality, gender, race, and class for example—are more able to control the shared meanings of identities, as well as to resist the identities that others attempt to impose on them (Cast 2003). As a result, within diverse communities the shared definition of a group identity and

its associated behaviors are likely to reflect the ideologies and investments of the most structurally privileged members. Though de jure racism refers to explicit, often individually enacted practices of racism as defined within the law, de facto racism constitutes the everyday racial realities of people of color whose experiences are mediated through the structural reality of racial systems. These forms of racism generally occur through *microaggressions*, “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal and Esquilin 2007: 273). Microaggressions are particularly sinister in that they are often subtle and easily dismissed or justified by the perpetrator, leaving people of color to engage in constant internal evaluations of hostile interactions and statements (Harper 2007). While I will provide instances of overt racism, I wish to emphasize that white supremacy in this site was often systemically enacted and reproduced through interactions that most students failed to recognize as having racist implications. Most instances of racism were expressed through sanctioned enactments of queer ideological norms that were constructed through white ways of knowing and seeing the world.

Bonilla-Silva refers to *racial structure* in the United States as “the totality of the social relations and practices that reinforce white privilege” and are buttressed by *racial ideology*, “the racially based frameworks used by actors to explain and justify...or challenge...the racial status quo” (2010: 9). To summarize:

The frames that bond together a particular racial ideology are rooted in the group-based conditions and experiences of the races and are, at the symbolic level, the representations developed by these groups to explain how the world is or ought to be. And because the group life of the various racially defined groups is based on hierarchy and domination, the ruling ideology expresses as “common sense” the interests of the dominant race, while oppositional ideologies attempt to challenge that

common sense by providing alternative frames, ideas and stories based on the experiences of subordinated races (Bonilla-Silva 2010:10).

While research has attended to the methods used by queers of color to resist white supremacy in queer communities, there has been little work to analyze how “dominant members and organizations view the position of queer women of color” as well as men and trans people of color, “[which] would provide us more information about the collective production of dominant queer identity and politics by those in privileged positions” (Alimahomed 2010: 166). By interviewing both white queer students and queer students of color I was able to identify the enactments and impacts of white-centric discourses in the queer community that defined certain queer identities and politics as “common sense.” Furthermore, white students’ perceptions of queer of color politics revealed their racial investments in queer solidarity and contributed to greater understanding of how power and privilege play out within racially diverse solidarity-based communities.

Tensions over how to promote inclusion in queer groups while acknowledging members’ multiple identities can provide a rich site where social movement theory and identity theory can be usefully integrated. While scholars have addressed the invisibility and disenfranchisement of people of color within queer movements (Alimahomed 2010; Anzaldúa 2007; Cohen 1997; Ferguson 2004; Moraga 1993) little attention has been paid to the specific identity processes that reproduce their marginalization in interactions with others. Structural identity theory is central to understanding how queer students’ interactions with one another reproduce ideologies that are central to the construction and maintenance of collective identity. *Identity verification* refers to the interactional process through which people engage in behaviors designed to match others’ perceptions of them with how they see themselves (Burke and Stets 2009). Individuals draw upon both implicit and explicit

feedback during interactions to determine whether or not they are adequately conveying themselves to others. The perceived or actual feedback individuals receive from one another about how well they are performing the roles associated with an identity is known as a *reflected appraisal*. If there is a discrepancy between an individual's self perception and the reflected appraisals they receive from others, the individual will tend to adjust their behavior until identity congruence is achieved. If identity congruence proves too difficult or impossible within one group, individuals may seek alternate groups more suited to their self-concepts (Swann 1983).

Positive feedback resulting in identity congruence is integral to harmony within groups, including social movement communities. Based on their shared definitions of a common identity, comprised of *identity standards*, members of a group are able to evaluate themselves and others as fulfilling or falling short of the expectations associated with that identity (Tajfel 1981). Shared meanings and ideologies associated with a particular identity provide a tool-kit for individuals to use when interacting with one another so that they can gauge whether or not they are effectively conveying to others that they are indeed who they claim to be (Benford and Snow 2000; Stets and Serpe 2013: 41). These shared meanings and ideologies allow movement participants to define and regulate in and out-group membership.

Collective identity scholars refer to the dedication of individuals to a shared group identity as “solidarity” (Gamson 1992), whereas structural identity theorists call this “group identity salience” or “commitment” (Burke and Stets 2009). In either case, these concepts concern a person's ties to a shared group identity in relation to the other identities and roles that the individual carries. All people have multiple identities, which are activated in various contexts according to how relevant they are in each situation. Identities can be based on

shared ideologies, beliefs and values, but are also generally “self-cognitions tied to roles and thus to positions in organized social relations” (Stryker 2000: 27). In other words, identities represent an individual’s sense of self as they relate to others through interactions in groups and organizations. Each individual carries multiple identities that are, according to identity theory, organized hierarchically in terms of salience. Identity salience refers to the likelihood that an identity will be activated or relevant across different contexts with more salient identities being more likely to become activated in more contexts. Stigmatized sexual and racial identities are likely to be highly salient for individuals because of the structural and interactional ways that heterosexism and racism impact their daily lives.

For structural identity theorists a person’s commitment to a group relates to whether or not membership in that group verifies the individual’s sense of self. Symbolic interactionism maintains that people understand themselves through the appraisal of others and behave in anticipation of others’ responses to them (Cooley 1902; Mead 1934). People prefer situations that validate their self-perceptions and thus tend to pursue affiliations that promote identity verification known as *self-verifying opportunity structures* (Swann 1983; Pinel and Swann 2000; Burke and Stets 2009: 68). Sometimes those spaces are designed to explicitly exclude people who disagree with or challenge group members’ beliefs in order to protect members’ positive self-concepts (Futrell and Simi 2004; Polletta 1999; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Because queer people of color (QPOC) organizations in this site were student initiated, their existence points to the possibility that queer of color students in this community were not achieving the identity verification necessary to sustain positive self-conceptions within larger queer organizations.

Social movements scholars tend to focus on the “political utility of solid collective categories” (Gamson 1995: 402) and have spent little time questioning the processes and impacts associated with promoting more fluid collective identities (Gamson and Moon 2004). In non-homogenous groups like the queer community investments, goals, and identity-based solidarity will vary. In these cases, rifts may develop and subgroups will emerge. But negotiations and conflicts over these investments are likely to highlight important aspects of queerness as a collective identity (Ghaziani 2008). Since individuals derive self-worth from their perceived standing and acceptance within groups identity theory can contribute to our understanding of how collective identities are negotiated in relation to diverse movement communities (Huo, Molina, Sawahata and Deang 2005: 238).

In his 1995 article, “Must Identity Movements Self Destruct?” Gamson postulates that the deconstructive turn of queer theory and queer activism poses a dilemma for lesbian and gay identity-based movements rooted in essentialist, quasi-ethnic identity claims. Because queer theoretical and activist orientations are primarily concerned with subverting delineated categories of gender and sexuality (Butler 1990) the identity standard for queerness is virtually non-existent. Because queerness lacks a finite identity standard the question remains as to how people verify and enact their queer identities in relation to others.

Building on Ghaziani’s (2009) assertion that movement cultures can be identified through conflicts over values and investments I focused my analysis on inclusion in the queer community and the disharmony over QPOC spaces that took place among queer student leaders during the 2012-2013 school year. Since people often attempt to validate their membership in communities by demonstrating their commitments to ideologies, values, and practices associated with the collective identity of the group I explicitly attended to the

ideological commitments that students on this campus associated with queerness. By centering my analysis on students' claims about the values and ideologies being violated or upheld by the establishment of QPOC spaces, I was able to operationalize the ideological aspects of queer identity upon which students were evaluated by their peers. This allowed me to analyze in-group dynamics among queer identified students as they engaged in ongoing negotiations aimed at verifying their identities in relation to queer group ideologies, membership and practices.

SETTING:

The University of California Santa Barbara was an alluring site for many students, perched near the cliffs and spanning over one thousand acres of the California coastline. In 2011 nearly 86 percent of the twenty-one thousand enrolled students were undergraduates, with 94 percent hailing from California, 4 percent from other U.S. states and 2 percent attending as international students. White students made up the largest racial group on campus (45 percent) while Latin@ (24 percent) and Asian and Pacific Islanders (20 percent) were the second and third largest racial groups. Only 4 percent of the entire undergraduate population was Black and an even smaller percentage was Native American (<1 percent).

This relatively progressive Research I University is a notorious party school, partially because of its location on the edge of the student-dominated community of Isla Vista (IV). Although IV is considered to be a generally hostile space for queer students, the University itself was ranked one of the top queer-friendly campuses on the "campus pride index" in 2012 due to the abundant resources available to queer students through various organizations, resource centers, and spaces. As a result of campus support and generations of invested student leaders, queer students are able to continually promote queer visibility, educational

workshops, and community on campus. Moreover, students have the opportunity to advance self-relevant intellectual pursuits through the LGBTQ studies minor offered by the Feminist Studies Department. Although this campus is not representative of the conditions in which all queer communities operate, the strength and vibrancy of UCSBs queer student community offers a unique opportunity to analyze what queerness looks like in a racially diverse and highly active queer population.

METHODS:

The data for this project were collected as part of a larger research initiative exploring the experiences of non-heterosexual women on the college campus, which was developed by Professor Leila Rupp in the Feminist Studies Department at UCSB. In 2010 I was hired as the lead researcher for this project, recruiting participants and conducting interviews. Shortly thereafter I was given permission to adapt the interview protocol used for Rupp's research in order to more closely explore identity management processes in the queer community and to expand my research population to include queer men and trans* students at UCSB. I began research for my dissertation in January 2011 while continuing to work in collaboration with Dr. Rupp on the existing project.

I was first introduced to the queer undergraduate community in 2009 when I was hired to act as the interim graduate student program coordinator for the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (RCSGD). During subsequent years I continued to participate as an active mentor in the queer undergraduate community by facilitating leadership retreats, supporting student-led workshops, and offering programs at the request of students and staff. As a white, queer identified, genderqueer woman who was twenty-six and a graduate student when I first entered the community, I experienced varying degrees of insider and outsider

status. Due to my age I was initially perceived as a potential peer to many of the students, but as time went on they came to know me as a mentor and friendships were established with a focus on ways that I could contribute to the community through my capacities as an advisor for student organizations and programming.

Many QPOC leaders responded with immediate enthusiasm to my inquiries about racial dynamics within the queer community and invited me to community spaces where these issues were addressed. However, I never attended closed spaces and thus cannot directly speak to the conversations that took place therein. Queer of color students with whom I was familiar tested my racial politics, often in ways I was only made aware of after the fact and likely in ways that I am still unaware of. For example, Isabella would frequently inform me after workshops and meetings that she had been waiting to hear whether and how I would acknowledge my own white privilege and complicity in white supremacy and would either critique or commend me accordingly. On one occasion, during a discussion students had asked me to facilitate about white privilege in the queer community, I emphasized that allyship required white people to challenge themselves and openly acknowledged that I had to actively combat my own racist ideas. Afterwards, Isabella playfully but earnestly told me that if I had instead *denied* having racist thoughts she would have discounted me entirely.

At the same time, white queer students who openly opposed closed QPOC spaces ultimately declined to participate in interviews. Due to the fact that QPOC leaders often referred white students to me as a resource for learning about white privilege, it is likely that white queer students who opposed closed spaces did not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences with me. On the contrary, several queer students of color who were openly opposed to closed QPOC spaces did agree to participate in interviews. As a result I

was able to gather information about the perceived negative impacts of closed QPOC spaces on queer people of color and their white queer friends. Bonilla-Silva suggests that people of color are more likely than whites to express their views on race and racism because they have “very little to lose in the contemporary racial order” (2010: 164). He elaborates on the contemporary impetus for whites to appear nonracist while people of color can speak more freely about their opinions on racial dynamics:

Whereas in slavery or Jim Crow, blacks had to be “stage Negroes” if they wanted to survive, as a consequence of new norms, whites now have to be “stage whites.” Therefore, being at the bottom of the racial order in post-Civil Rights American gives blacks at least the freedom to speak their minds (164).

While the “freedom to speak their minds” is certainly limited and contextual, it is likely that queer students of color were more likely to express views both in favor of and in opposition to closed spaces than white queer students due to white queer students’ desires to maintain a positive “nonracist” social identity in the eyes of others, and due to the increased risk that white students might appear racist if they spoke openly about their opinions regarding race.

In 2011 I began conducting open-ended semi-structured interviews (See Appendix) and, with the permission of student leaders, attending organization meetings to record observations for my research. I made my presence and intent known to queer students in attendance by announcing my research agenda at meetings and through word of mouth. For two years I attended as many social and campus related events as possible, fielding invitations both in person and on Facebook to students’ parties, workshops and campus groups. I also made myself available to students who wanted to talk about their work within queer student spaces, experiences with family and friends, and coming out processes. Although there were some exceptions, most of the students I interviewed were involved in at least one queer social group on campus. This was the result of purposive sampling, which I

accomplished by announcing my research mostly during queer student events and organization meetings. The goal of this approach was to generate interviews with students who, due to their involvement within queer community spaces, would more likely reflect on the interactional dynamics of the queer community.

Interview methods allowed me to access the deeper meanings of queer identity and community formation as participants in this study articulated them. Triangulating interviews with observations had two primary effects: I was able to observe the interactional effects of students' identities and orientations to community, and identify discrepancies between individual's accounts and actual behaviors. In addition, my participation in events and organization meetings facilitated my rapport with students resulting in rich discussions both during and beyond interview appointments. A number of students declined to participate in interviews and instead acted as primary informants during my research, finding alternate ways of having their voices heard and offering me insights into discussions, events and dynamics that I would have otherwise missed. Where I have used informal conversations in my research I first obtained the express consent of the students involved.

I use pseudonyms for all students who participated in interviews and at community events in order to protect their privacy and to respect their anonymity. I also honor each student's self-categorizations on the basis of race, sexuality and gender. Though I use broad racial categories such as Latin@, Asian or Pacific Islander (API) and Black to describe students more generally, I accompany individuals' personal narratives with their more specific self-designated racial identities. I refer to students in general as "queer" but indicate their self-designated sexual and gender identities when referring to a specific student. Few students explicitly identified as "cisgender" but I occasionally use the term to describe

students whose gender identities were congruent with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth. Students who did not identify with the sex or gender they were assigned at birth generally described themselves as transgender, while students who identified as neither, both, or multiple genders often described themselves as genderqueer or fluid. When referring to these students as a group I use the term trans* to indicate the diversity of gender identities and experiences therein. In accordance with genderqueer and gender fluid students' requests I either used masculine and feminine pronouns interchangeably, or used gender-neutral pronouns ze/hir/hir as opposed to he/him/his or she/her/hers.

Bearing in mind Kumashiro's caution that "[t]he presumption that queers of color constitute a monolithic group is as problematic as the presumption that all queers are alike, all Black Americans are alike, and so forth" (2001: 8) I still use categories like "queer students of color" and "white queer students" to describe subgroups within this community. Since I am attempting to challenge the uninterrogated norms that limited some forms of queerness while facilitating others, my intent is not to portray any one student's claims as representative of all others'. During my research it was rare that students expressed similar sentiments about queerness along racially distinct lines, except in the case of explicitly self-identified "QPOC leaders." Therefore I hesitate to assert that any one set of experiences was true to a particular racial group within the community. However I use these conceptual categories in order to call out the invisibility of "white queerness" on the one hand, while simultaneously acknowledging that although not all viewed race as a salient identity, most queer of color students categorized themselves as members of a distinct "queer of color" (QPOC) subgroup within the community. Through the lens of identity theory, this self and group-categorization is significant since people tend to act in ways to minimize identity

conflicts and portray a positive identity in relation to other group members. Because “queer of color” was a distinctly articulated identity within the queer campus community, conceding to its usage permitted me to more clearly delineate the logics and processes through which whiteness was reproduced at the very core of queer identities and ideologies on this campus.

In the following chapters I draw from interview data and ethnographic observations, which I coded in Atlas.ti in order to analyze themes relating to queer identity and community on this campus. Through outreach at queer student events and snowball sampling I was able to recruit fifty-three students to participate in semi-structured interviews about their experiences within the queer community on campus. My recruitment strategies yielded participants who were likely to be involved in queer community spaces, allowing me to focus on identity-verification as it occurred for students in interaction with other queers. Students were diverse across gender, sexuality and race (See Chart A). Thirty-eight percent identified as cisgender women (n=20), Thirty-eight percent identified as cisgender men (n=20), and twenty five percent identified as either trans* or gender queer at the time of interview (n=13). Twenty six percent of participants identified explicitly as queer (n=14), fifteen percent as bisexual (n=8), thirty percent as gay (n=30), fifteen percent as lesbian (n=8), nine percent as pansexual (n=5), and the remaining four percent identified as homosexual (n=1) or fluid (n=1). Thirty-two percent of participants identified as White (n=17), twenty-six percent as Latin@ (n=14), fifteen percent as Asian or Pacific Islander (n=8), fifteen percent as biracial (n=8), eight percent as Black (n=4) and the remaining four percent as multiracial (n=2). Campus-wide statistics on students’ trans* and sexual identities are unavailable but the racial diversity of my sample was roughly representative of the racial diversity of the campus as a whole.

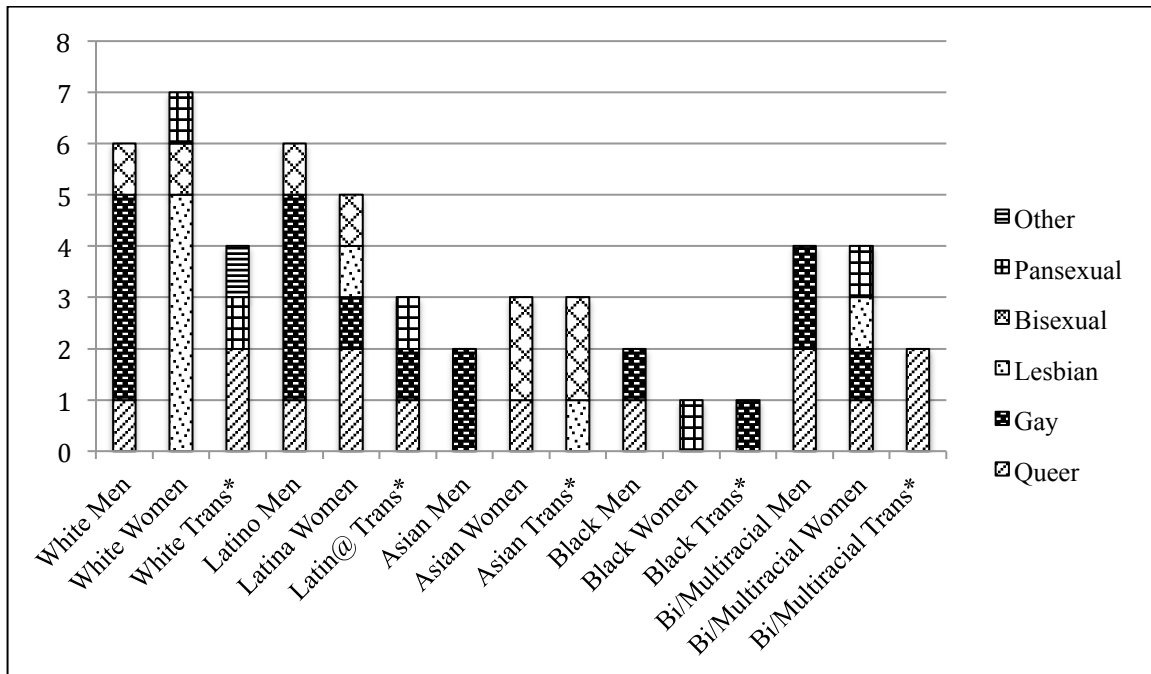


Chart A: Sexual Identity by Race and Gender

Although only a minority of students recorded their sexual identities as “queer” in their demographic information, thirty eight percent included queerness in descriptions of their sexual identities and nearly all students referred to themselves as “queer” at some point in the interview process. For these reasons it is likely that, despite varying identities on paper, students incorporated queer self-identification into their daily interactions with others. I use the term “queer” to describe the sexually diverse group of students in this study because, as I will discuss further in *Chapter Two*, that is the term students used to describe themselves and the broader community of which they were a part. But as my research suggests students encompassed within the queer social identity varied in their specific sexual orientations and gender identities. Not all of them identified personally as queer, though most of them did so when describing their relationship to other queer students or to the “queer community” as a whole.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW:

This project draws on social and collective identity theories to analyze how queer students on this campus constructed and reinforced queer solidarity among variously identified members. Through interviews and participant observation I investigate how, in the face of inclusive queer politics, students' racial identities remained tangential to queer group interests. Central to this investigation was my analysis of how inclusive discourses facilitated the reproduction of white-queer norms in the community. Based on my observations and interviews I found that the inclusive frames members of the queer community used to define queerness paradoxically resulted in the re-marginalization of queer students of color in community spaces.

By analyzing students' stories and interactions, I was able to better understand how queer students achieved identity-verification in the face of subjective appraisals and how their understandings of race influenced these processes. Focusing on inclusion as a central defining characteristic of queer collective identity allowed me to identify the ways that queer community solidarity actually alienated students who held multiple salient identities. Because social identities are subject to constant appraisal I focused my analysis on three dimensions through which inclusive ideologies were collectively reproduced and evaluated by queer community members: identity, structure, and practice. As a whole, this project illustrates the ways that white-centric queer inclusion was upheld through 1) Queer collective/group and social identities, 2) Queer organizations, and 3) Methods for practicing inclusion and engaging in allyship.

In Chapter Two, *Inclusive Queer Identities*, I draw primarily on interview data to interrogate the meaning of "queer" identities as understood by students who participated in

this research. I found that students often described queer as an identity that allowed for diverse participation in the community making it the most inclusive identity available to them. I analyze their responses using collective and social identity theories in order to better understand the salience of queer identity among students creating community with others, and to underscore the power of identity appraisals in guiding students' behaviors in relation to queer social groups.

In Chapter Three, *Self-Verifying Opportunity Structures and Inclusion in Queer Spaces*, I discuss the significance of queer organizations and spaces as self-verifying opportunity structures for queer students. Drawing on students' descriptions of umbrella organizations such as QSU, QComm, and FUQIT, I discuss how uninterrogated whiteness permeated those organizations prompting QPOC leaders to redouble their efforts to strengthen QPOC organizations and to develop explicitly closed QPOC spaces. Because membership in the queer community was highly variable and difficult to operationalize, I focused on organization meetings and events as sites where queer investments and values were made visible. By discussing their decisions to participate in, and experiences of involvement with queer organizations and groups, students provided me with insights into how they viewed themselves as members of the community and shed light on the impacts of role-fulfillment and socio-emotional commitments on their decisions to participate in specific queer student spaces (DeWeerd and Klandermans 1999: 1077; Wolkomir 2001). Observations at student organization meetings and workshops, as well as interviews with students about their experiences in those spaces revealed the functions and impacts of collective queer politics as they operated in specific contexts. In this chapter I also attend to students' responses to closed QPOC spaces, with particular attention to the rhetorical

strategies they used to accuse QPOC leaders of violating inclusion-based norms conceived of as integral to queer community solidarity.

Chapter Four, *Practicing Inclusion in the Queer Community*, traces how students conveyed their commitments to queer inclusive politics by actively promoting inclusive language, educating others and incorporating allies in queer organizations and events. Because queer students were heavily invested in increasing queer visibility on campus inclusive language and educational programming was primarily aimed at broadening heterosexual students' understandings of the queer community. Since allies were perceived as integral to the queer community I suggest that queer students' desires for external support and validation from allies influenced their ideas of what it meant to engage in active allyship *within* the community. This chapter concludes with analysis of how queer students' conceptions of allyship corresponded with others' feedback about whether or not they were perceived as effective allies. Based on my analysis in this chapter I suggest that active antiracist work in the queer community was partially foreclosed by the fact that addressing racial privileges posed a threat to white queer students' positive self-concepts.

Finally, in Chapter Five I discuss the implications of my findings for interdisciplinary scholarship on identity processes in diverse social groups. I argue that by providing an empirical study of the impact of multiple identities on movement framing and strategies this research contributes to social movement theory as well as to current studies of multiple identities within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and ally movements, with specific attention to articulations of multiculturalism and racial diversity among college-age queer student organizers. This research also contributed to race theory and theories of intersectionality by attending to how racial identities are constructed and experienced in

relation to community-building processes. More broadly, this research demonstrates the utility of combining identity theory and social movement theory to understand the complex ways in which identity contributes to the construction of social movement communities as well as how identity-verification processes operate in diverse social movement communities and, more specifically, within queer communities.

INCLUSIVE QUEER IDENTITIES

When a group of people share a common social identity and view themselves as members of the same social category they constitute a *social group*. A person's *social identity* relates to their sense of belonging within a particular group (Stets and Burke 2000: 225; Hogg and Abrams 1988; Tajfel 1981). In social movements self-categorization within a group is expressed through a *collective identity*, which is formulated through three processes: group boundary distinctions; the development of a shared and distinctive group consciousness about shared grievances; and the embodied politicization of everyday life that connects members' everyday experiences to larger social injustices (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Rupp and Taylor 1999:365). For the sake of this study I take both *collective* and *group identity* to mean the shared identity through which queer students made claims for recognition: i.e. "We are queer," or "The queer community." *Social identity*, on the other hand, refers to students' self-concepts in relation to the queer community: i.e. "I am a member of/part of the queer community," or "I am queer," with reference to what it meant for individual students to be queer in the context of the queer community.

Social categorization allows people to divide their social worlds so that certain groups in their lives become more influential to them than others (Reicher 1984; Turner 1982). Once people regard themselves in terms of a social category they internalize the shared ideologies and behaviors associated with that category, and their "views and feelings about the world are framed by that category" (Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg and Turner 1990: 99; Benford and Snow 2000; Stets and Serpe 2013). The group consciousness developed among members during collective identity formation includes the delimitation of politically correct behaviors and the development of an internal sense of "ethical selves" among members

(Dimen 1984). These ethical selves are developed in coherence with a moral group identity that dictates the values and investments of the collective (Kleinman 1996). Solidarity results from the “ability of actors to recognize others, and to be recognized as belonging to the same social unit” (Melucci 1996: 23) meaning that the shared group and social identities queer students formed in this context facilitated their sense of solidarity in relation to each other. As I establish in this chapter both queer group and social identities were constructed and internalized by students in relation to collective queer group norms.

While combining social and collective identity theories can promote deeper understanding of individuals’ relationships to groups (Stryker 2000), there is limited potential for making sense of people’s self-categorizations into identity-based groups as variably defined as the queer community. Because identity-verification relies on the group’s collective agreement on an identity standard by which to measure members’ success in performing an identity, the fluidity and flexibility of queer identities in this population initially made it difficult to discern the regulating effects of queer group membership. However, as Brown (1993) suggests shared *ideologies* may tell us more about group membership than the definitions of particular identities since those identities do not exist in a vacuum and members are likely to value multiple identity-based investments at once.

Because people pursue identity affirmation by demonstrating their commitment to ideologies, values, and practices associated with a particular identity, the meanings students associated with queer identities on this campus were key to understanding how they conceived of themselves and others as members of the queer community. While the identity standard for queer identity remained evasive for the most part, my data suggested that key ideologies guided the demarcation of queer identity and group membership on the UCSB

campus. Therefore, I operationalized queerness in this site by focusing on common ideological threads that students used to explain what it meant to be a queer student in community with others.

Through analysis of students' descriptions of queerness, I was able to establish that students identified as queer in order to accomplish three interrelated social identity outcomes that fortified their membership in the queer community. First, students identified as queer to accommodate for the *fluidity* and breadth of possible sexual and gender identities. This vast definition of queerness allowed a wide range of students to adopt queer identities for themselves, which facilitated students' claims of *solidarity* in community with others. Increased solidarity among queer students fortified and demonstrated their *political* commitments to queer ideologies and allowed students to merge their own political orientations with group norms and practices.

As I will illustrate throughout this chapter when they identified as queer to promote fluidity, community solidarity, and queer political liberation, students signaled their overall commitments to queer ideologies of *inclusion*, making them more likely to receive positive appraisals from their peers in the queer campus community. However, the queer ideologies that sustained group membership in this community were collectively framed through implicitly white ways of knowing that treated racial inclusion as an afterthought, thus resulting in the re-marginalization of queer of color students. The existence of a distinct QPOC identity signified queer of color students' systematic exclusion from white queer spaces while simultaneously empowering queer students of color to articulate the specificities of their queer experiences. As I will argue throughout this project, the whiteness through which queer identities were validated impeded the inclusion of queer students of

color by constituting racial identities as peripheral and deeming racially specific, nonwhite interests as antithetical to queer group solidarity.

QUEER SELF-CATEGORIZATION:

[A]t UCSB we use queer community um, as an umbrella term instead of like, the alphabet soup ... Which is good because we want to recognize the plurality of being queer and we have all these different identities that should be sort of like, celebrated or included. ... [I]t's difficult to say fifteen letters every time you want to talk about this community of loosely or strongly affiliated people. It's much easier to say "queer," and just mean "non-normative gender/sexuality identified people" (Om—White queer genderqueer, 20, 3rd year).

The sexual and gender diverse student body at UCSB was referred to collectively as “the queer community.” In some cases queer students imagined the queer community as extending beyond the college campus to include all people with non-normative sexual identities. However, students generally conceived of the national LGBTQ community as being invested in different goals and ideologies than those of themselves and their peers. They frequently described the national movement as the “gay and lesbian movement” rather than the “queer movement” to reflect the limited and assimilationist goals they perceived as central to national politics. As Elias (Chican@ genderqueer queer, 21, 4th year) explained, students on campus were “not so much about getting marriage but about making people feel safe ... and not so much to advocate for things that people who don’t feel safe would even benefit from.” Although they recognized the importance of national gay and lesbian organizations in countering anti-queer discrimination and understood the connections between national and local concerns, when students spoke of their “community” they did so with primary reference to the campus queer community. For the sake of this project I therefore examined students’ descriptions of the shared investments, values, and concerns specifically as they related to the queer community on campus.

Fluidity:

As a substitute for listing off the long acronym of sexual and gender identities that composed the “alphabet soup” of sexual and gender diversity, students suggested that the term “queer” provided them with the language to incorporate their diverse experiences and orientations into a collective sense of we-ness. Since the number of potential sexual and gender identities was constantly expanding, students said that even the most extensive list of identities would continue to leave out “so many people that are in between, or so many people that don't actually *know* what they are yet” (Cruz, multiracial Latin@ genderqueer, 18, 1st year). Megan (White queer/lesbian woman, 19, 3rd year) said that using LGBTQIAA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and allies) as a shorthand “doesn’t exactly encompass all the identities within the queer spectrum. So I personally use queer as a kind of umbrella term for anyone that identifies as, like, diverse within sexuality or gender identification.” As Tee (biracial Taiwanese/White genderqueer queer, 21 years old) explained, “words are very important to express who we are, so in the giant realm of identity politics I’m gonna stick with whatever’s most broad. And so that’s why I’m sticking with queer.”

Implicit in students’ definitions of queer group and social identities was that individuals identifying as queer could be part of a queer community of people, however “loosely or strongly affiliated,” without further explanation of their sexual and gender identities. Julia (biracial White/Hawaiian, lesbian woman, 18, 1st year) described queer community as “a blanket term ... meant in that context to insinuate that everyone is welcome. No matter who you are.” Timothy (Mexican-American gay man, 21, 3rd year) described queerness as encompassing everybody. “There’s so many,” he laughed as he listed

off a slew of identities that could fall under the category of queer and finally concluding that it could include “anybody basically. No matter what.”

Fluidity was akin to inclusion in that it prevented students from being excluded from the queer community in the case that their sexual or gender identities shifted. Because queer “is resisting definition on purpose and with intention” (Elias— Chicana genderqueer, 21, 4th year), mechanisms for offsetting cognitive dissonance were built into a fluid definition of queer identity, making identity validation more accessible to a wide range of students. Identifying as queer also validated students’ self-concepts of authenticity since the overarching qualities of queerness would still apply to them, even if shifts in their identities occurred. “The term queer is perfect for me,” Amaya (Chicana queer, 19, 2nd year) declared, adding that “some days ... I don’t even know how I identify within, like, a sexuality.” Emilia (Latina queer/lesbian, 19, 2nd year) was solely attracted to women but identified as both lesbian and queer to acknowledge that “sexuality could be fluid...[and] how I identify now might not be how I identify years from now.” As Max (White, genderqueer queer, 21 years old) put it, “queer covers kind of fluidity. ... So if you— if something changes, if you feel differently, it’s encompassed in queer and you don’t have to be thinking, like, ‘what am I? Am I really pansexual? Am I really gay?’”

While some students said pansexuality could describe the fluidity of their sexual attractions, most suggested that identifying as queer incorporated aspects of their identities that pansexuality did not. For Luke (White pansexual trans man, 20 years old, 3rd year) pansexual identity allowed him to acknowledge sexual attraction to all bodies while “identifying as queer is acknowledging that all of my identities, every single one of them is transient. Like, all of them can change ... and to me, I guess that’s what queer encompasses.”

Social identity theory is concerned with how membership in a particular category determines individuals' perceptions and behaviors (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1986; Kalkhoff and Barnum 2000: 97). Belonging to a category requires that people are "prepared to think in terms of that category" (Kalkhoff and Barnum 2000: 99); that they are ready to adopt the ideologies and behaviors associated with a particular category of which they wish to be a part. Even students who did *not* anticipate that their sexual or gender identities would change tended to alter their social identities to fit the fluidity of queerness. Those students identified as queer not because they were actually open to multiple attractions but because doing so allowed them to fit in and maintain solidarity with others. Cole (biracial Japanese/White queer man, 21, 4th year) began identifying as queer shortly after he got involved with queer organizing on campus because "being part of a really inclusive environment ... I like saying that I'm open to different things. But really I'm just attracted to guys (laughs)." Similarly, Reid (Filipino gay man, 19, 2nd year) was only attracted to men but emphasized "I don't necessarily wanna close myself off to the option." Students also described having accepted their sexual and gender identities more fully as a result of their involvement in the queer community. Although Cole was only attracted to men he said that he had always felt like his gender identity was fluid. "It's definitely something I do think about a lot because I'm involved in this community," he told me, "and it probably would be a little bit flatter ... if I wasn't."

As students' suggested, the very act of proclaiming identifying as queer instead of using distinct sexual identities allowed students a degree of control over others' perceptions and appraisals of them. Calling oneself queer facilitated identity verification for students who could self-categorize themselves as members of the queer community regardless of their

sexualities or genders. The fluidity of queerness challenged the rigid binary distinctions that were characteristic of heteronormativity and that many students saw as contributing to their own subordination. Rejection of inflexible boundaries thus permeated queer group ideologies and underlined students' commitments to inclusion.

Solidarity:

Students who weren't involved in the queer community were less likely to identify as queer. For example, Cindy (White lesbian, 28, 4th year) had never gone to queer organization meetings or events and said that she identified as a lesbian because "I don't think very many people, including me have the terminology at their hands. ... [T]he reason I identify as a lesbian is because that's really all I know." But students involved in the queer community were exposed to others who described themselves using an endless array of sexual and gender identities, and identifying as queer became a means for "saying the LGBTQQIA community is one that I'm a part of" (Christina—White lesbian, 19, 1st year). Consequently, identifying as queer provided students with a sense of "we-ness" in community with others. Elias (Chican@ genderqueer, 21, 4th year) said that using queer as "an all-inclusive term" allowed students to foster community solidarity without distinguishing between their different identities.

Students generally agreed that queer identification had less to do with specific sexual identities and more to do with expressing openness and commitment to the queer community as a whole. One of the values that students conveyed by identifying as queer was that they were accepting and open-minded towards others. Ross (Latino queer man, 19, 2nd year) said that when a person identified as queer "it tells me that they're very open...I can just relate...I don't see them being constricted and I like that." Because queer incorporated multiple sexual

and gender identities, Brad (African-American, gay man, 21, 4th year) defined queer as “a more politically correct term to say that, if you are also queer, you are accepting of people who identify as other things.” As Cole (Biracial Japanese/White genderqueer gay man, 21) explained, identifying as queer “comes down to a lot how I interact with other people. ... [I]t’s a bigger identity ... so I feel like I can connect more with other people and feel more connected ... instead of like, boxed in, I guess.”

According to social identity theory, people with strong group ties will generally alter their behaviors in attempts to achieve identity congruence. Because the queer community promoted inclusion, and queer identity was perceived as an indicator of personal investments in inclusion, students commonly deployed queer self-identification to elicit positive appraisals from others in the community. A number of students informed me that their peers explicitly encouraged them to identify as queer in order to fortify queer solidarity and most students complied. For example, Barry (Hispanic gay man, 18, 1st year) told me he adopted queer as an identity because “somebody told me it’s the proper one.”

As a result of community members’ perceived affinities for queer identities, nearly every student that I interviewed said that they identified as queer in the company of other queer students, even when their own sexual identities were more distinct. For example, Elena (Biracial Puerto Rican/Salvadorian bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) was partnered with a man and described having been criticized by others when she identified as bisexual because “they feel like I’m reinforcing ... gender norms and like, male/female.” When she subsequently identified as queer she began to feel “more solidarity” with others in the queer community, saying “at least here [in the queer community on campus] people seem to be more positive when I say ‘queer.’” David (Pilipino gay man, 21, 4th year) told me he identified as gay but

“when I’m out in public, at a meeting or something, I use queer as an umbrella term just for someone who’s not heterosexual.” He said he chose to refer to himself as queer in community spaces because “here, especially, some people are offended by smaller labels, more narrow labels.” Having perceived others as appraising them more positively when they identified as queer rather than “gay” or “lesbian,” both Elena and David altered their behavior and called themselves “queer” in community spaces. Doing so allowed them to reinforce their self-categorizations as “good” members of the queer community and to elicit positive appraisals from others, thus increasing their sense of solidarity with others.

Within this community identities perceived as reinforcing binaries, such as “lesbian,” “gay,” or “bisexual” were commonly looked down upon. But identities perceived as antagonistic to dichotomous orientations, such as pansexual were commonly seen as more inclusive and thus adhering more closely to the true meaning of queerness. This was likely because “[p]ansexual’ is most commonly used...as a sexual identity term similar to ‘bisexuality,’ but more inclusive of trans people. It also shows an awareness of the implied gender binary in the term ‘bisexual’” (Elizabeth 2013: 333).

Queer group identity was so expansive that most students perceived the queer community as including heterosexuals who were supportive of sexual and gender minorities. Tee (biracial Taiwanese/White queer genderqueer, 22, 5th year), who defined queer as “transgressive and non-normative” was sure to emphasize that “it can include straight people.” Ghaziani (2011) suggests that queer politics have entered a post-gay era in which communities have shifted towards incorporating allies rather than reinforcing identity boundaries around in and out-group membership. As I will further discuss in Chapter Four,

students described the incorporation of allies as central to queer students' investments in inclusion and diversity. As Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year) described it,

The queer community is just variation of just like gender and sexuality identities and just like a variation of people. ... I mean like I have straight friends who are allies to the queer community. You have queer people. You have gender fuck, gender queer. So I feel like the queer community is just ... like almost a diaspora of just different identities and different people, different categories and sometimes there are no categories! And I feel like the queer community is like, definitely like, a different - it's definitely like, diverse.

When Dalton described the queer community as a “diaspora” he alluded to the idea that queer students were intrinsically linked to one another through their common queerness and that to exist apart from one another would be an unnatural and disjointing experience.

Moreover, he suggested that allies contributed significantly to the diversity and inclusivity of the queer community on campus.

The solidarity that students sought through queer community was facilitated by the notion that despite differences in their experiences and histories they were all queer and were thus collectively facing the challenges of being a queer student on the college campus and beyond. When Patrick (White gay man, 19, 2nd year) heard people refer to the queer community he thought of “a lot of people with different sexual orientations and allies just getting together for the same cause.” Like many other students, Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) said that even if she were only attracted to men, she would “probably still identify as queer just because I think it’s not so much, like, a sexual attraction thing. I think it’s more like (laughs) ... this sounds so cheesy—like a state of being or like, a state of mind (laughs).”

Political

Queer solidarity took on additional meanings when viewed through a politicized lens. Queer

was a politically potent identity for Elias (Chican@ genderqueer, 21, 4th year) because

[I]t denies that definition, like: “These are the people who are in our community.” No. Like: “This is the community,” not like: “These are our identities.” It doesn’t break it down by individual identity and I think that’s what I really like about it in political spaces. It, fortifies, if anything, the community. It doesn’t have, like, this: “These are the lesbians, these are the gays, these are the bis, and these are the pansexuals, and these are the trans* folks, the genderqueer folks.” It’s just like: “We’re queer.”

Because claiming a collective identity can provide social movements with strategic visibility (Polletta and Jasper 2001) many students encouraged others to identify as queer in an effort to politicize them. Max (White genderqueer queer, 21, 4th year) told me that using queer to define the community spoke to “an optimism of political queerness.” Although he surrounded himself with others who identified as being politically queer in that they pursued social justice in part through deconstruction of heteronormativity, he said they remained open to including “the gays”—those he and his friends perceived as being non-political members of the queer community. “But we’re trying to change their minds a little bit, I think,” he laughed:

By being under that [umbrella of queer] it kind of feels like we can queer everyone. ... Everyone who’s willing to be under the identity of queer. ... They’re at least active and involved enough for that. So it can be an umbrella term for the community, it can be: There are gay people and there are lesbians and there are people who strongly just identify as those. But they’re not afraid to maybe say, “I’m queer.” And maybe for them it’s just synonymous: “I’m queer, I’m gay, it’s the same, whatever.” But I think it can ... move beyond that with them.

Identity politics allows people to transform stigmatized identities into individual and collective sources of empowerment and validation (Taylor 2000). The politic of taking a stigmatized identity and transforming it into something positive was a common motivation for students who identified as queer. Even students who expressed lingering discomfort with the historical connotations of the word told me they would like to start identifying as queer because they didn’t want to see it as a negative identity anymore, or because they wanted to

alter the social stigmas associated with queerness. Despite their initial discomfort with the term, many students in their first year of college told me that they had begun to describe the community as queer and were “starting to feel more comfortable” doing so “because everyone else is” (Joseph, White gay man, 19, 2nd year). Aaron (Biracial White/Cuban gay man, 18, 1st year), told me he believed that using the word queer to describe the community was “limiting the way people can hate on us” by using it as a “term of acceptance.” Timothy (Mexican-American gay man, 21, 3rd year) defended the use of queer telling me “we should take back our words. ... I mean it’s our word and we should use it.” Om (White genderqueer, 20, 3rd year) “started using [queer] more when I understood the political implications of it and began to feel more firm in my political convictions.”

In social movements activists rally around pre-existing social categories or formulate new ones, which they utilize to provide a framework for naming their collective grievances and mobilizing for change. In movements based on identity politics, these processes allow movement participants to reconfigure pre-existing, externally imposed, and stigmatized identities so that they take on new meaning and become symbolically empowering to members. Despite the derogatory connotations associated with the term “queer” students learned to use it in positive ways through socialization at queer community events and organization meetings. Cole (biracial Japanese/White, queer man, 21, 1st year) initially felt uncomfortable identifying as queer but recalled that, as a result of the community he found on campus, he had “probably just eased into it pretty fast once I got here.”

I mean, what I would say now is that queer means ... community, and especially just an inclusive community. ... Looking back that’s really what it was and why I came to identify as that ‘cause I really was thrown into it and there was so many people and I felt that it was a community right away. Um and yeah, and then once I saw everyone and what a nurturing place that it was, I was just kinda like, “Queer, okay!” And I didn’t really think about it.

In light of their socialization within the queer student community, queer became a positive identity for most students (Taylor 2000). Through participation in queer community spaces and events, students associated new ideologies and meanings with queerness and came to use queer in a new light.

Although the students I interviewed described queer as “more of ... a political term instead of ... anything specific” (Esthela— Chinese International student lesbian/queer/questioning genderqueer, 22, 4th year) they acknowledged that people outside of the community likely perceived it only as an umbrella term. “With the broader campus I wouldn’t say that people find it political,” Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual woman, 21, 3rd year) told me, “They just think it’s a term to kind of bunch together all these letters.” Tee (biracial Taiwanese/White queer genderqueer, 22, 5th year) said that, “in the context of the UCSB community, I think it’s the umbrella term. But um I don’t like that one hundred percent, because I also really want to grab the word queer and make it political. And show people how it can be political.”

Most students saw the act of claiming a queer identity as being a political act in and of itself. “I think it’s a very political sort of statement to be like, ‘Well, you know, I’m not gay. I’m queer, and there’s a difference,’” Fletcher (White queer man, 21, 3rd year) told me. Queer identity was so powerful for some students that it breached the boundaries of sexual and gender identity to be, “in its simplest form, just saying ‘fuck you’ to binaries. ... Just, basically, a ‘fuck you’ to everything” (Brooke, Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year). For Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19, 2nd year) identifying as queer was political because it allowed her a degree of agency in defining her own experiences while giving her a medium for disrupting normative conceptions of the term queer. “I just love telling people, like, ‘I’m

queer!” she exclaimed. Though identifying as queer initially signified a non-heterosexual identity for her, now

[I]t means so much more to me. I can make whatever I want to make of it ... when I say [queer], it shocks people— especially people who have never used the term in that light before. It’s also, like, a really nice way of taking something that was once used against me, to be like, ‘no!’ like, ‘I’m proud of being queer.’ ... And it’s an identity to me so ... I’m taking the power away from them. ... And I really like that about that. ... I’ve recently done a lot of like, analyzing just how powerful language is and the term queer has given me a lot of power.

Many students suggested that queerness was what differentiated political sexual communities from non-political sexual communities. Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual/pansexual woman, 21 years old) told me that when people identified as queer she interpreted it as meaning “that they think society is fucked up in some sort of way ... it’s more of a political thing to me.” Max (White queer genderqueer, 21, 4th year) explained that,

If somebody says they’re queer I don’t really think, “Oh, you’re using this as an umbrella term.” I’m thinking, you know, there’s a political motivation behind this. Hopefully people are saying they’re queer ‘cause there’s either a political motivation or ... gender recognition.

Luke (White queer/pansexual trans man, 20, 3rd year) distinguished gay and lesbian identities from queer identities based on political distinctions as well. “I don’t conflate the two,” he said. “I see like, gay and lesbian, like, mainstream over here and like, queerness over here. ... I say queer is more, like, political. ... It’s not just like, ‘Oh, I like girls, therefore I’m queer,’ because it’s so much more than that.” Although associating queerness with political investments in resisting heteronormativity could have made the identity less inclusive, the politicization of queerness actually contributed a moral dimension to the identity that facilitated ideologies of inclusion. Because political queerness rejected imposed categories of sexuality and gender, students fortified their own queer identities by refusing to police others’ uses of the term. Even as he defined queerness as political, Luke reinforced queer

inclusivity by asserting that queer was an identity that anyone could claim regardless of how he believed it should be used. "I'm not gonna identity police anyone," he continued:

[I]f you wanna identify as queer, identify as queer... But it is a little, like, I guess disrupting to me and like, my like, political beliefs when it's like, someone who's just kinda like, whatever, like, "Oh, I'm queer" like, "because I'm part of the queer community." ... Like, "We're all queer, it's cool" (mocking tone). Like that kinda thing. So like, that does bother me a little bit but like I said. ... [But] I'm never gonna tell someone not to identify as queer because ... policing anybody is not cool.

Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19 years old, 2nd year) paused before answering when I asked her what she thought people meant when they talked about the queer community:

I've had a lot of conversations with people about that ... like, how there's a difference between identifying as, like, a "gay community" and a "queer community." To me the queer community is an active group of people who are like, conscious of like the social, political, economic kind of relationship, as opposed to just someone ... w ho has same-sex attraction. Like there's totally different, um, identities, and there's a totally different communities as well. And so, um, it's really important, to, to understand that like, I am a part of a queer community, but not everyone who has same-sex attractions is part of a queer community. Some of them are part of a gay community, and that's, that's totally okay.

Here Amaya distinguished an important characteristic of belonging to the "queer community" as opposed to what she and others described as the "gay community." Contrary to the "gay community," which focused solely on same-sex attraction, the "queer community" engaged in conscious and active reflections on the intersecting politics of people's experiences. Even for students who didn't explicitly argue that intersecting politics were central to membership in the queer community, investments in inclusion remained core components of queer group membership. However, as I will discuss in the following section, inclusion operated in this community through white queer articulations of queer identity that effectively erased the racial intersections of queer inclusive politics.

“BEING QUEER IS JUST SOMETHING ON TOP...”

The title for this section comes from one student’s comment on the lack of racial awareness among queer students on campus and inattention to the fact that for some students students queerness was one of many salient identities. Within the queer community students of color were commonly referred to, and referred to themselves as “queer people of color” or “QPOC.” Categorizing themselves as QPOC empowered many students since doing so signified the simultaneous recognition of their racial and sexual identities in queer community spaces. But their QPOC status also marked them as a distinct subgroup within the community rather than as part of a cohesive queer group. As Kumashiro (2001) states,

QPOC identity is a political identity that has both power and limitations. Embracing an activist identity like “queer” or “of color” is paradoxical. It is necessarily helpful in some ways and harmful in others. This should not be surprising. Since every identity has meaning only because it is named against other identities, there can never be an identity that is all-inclusive. By saying who we are and what we are fighting for, we are necessarily saying who we are not and what we are not fighting for (6).

That mainstream queer and more specific QPOC identities were distinguished from each other within the community was not only symbolically significant but was manifested through students’ interactions. Even queer of color students who believed race was an unimportant feature of their lives still identified as QPOC during interviews and in community spaces. This was due in part to the strength and visibility of QPOC leadership on this campus but also had to do with discourses in the queer community that suggested racial identities were distinct sites of difference within the all-encompassing category of queerness.

Participation in diverse groups is mediated by existing power structures, which can limit some members’ abilities to achieve identity verification among their peers.

Consolidated around students’ shared sexual and gender marginalization, queer collective identity was often articulated to the exclusion of intersecting racial identities and,

subsequently, through implicitly white ways of conceptualizing queerness. Because the queer community focused primarily on gender and sexuality, positive appraisals were more accessible to students who solely focused on those aspects of their identities.

Queer of color students who talked about their racial identities in queer spaces were often perceived as imposing out-group concerns despite the fact that many queer of color students experienced their sexual and racial identities as being interrelated. For example, Cole (biracial Japanese/White queer man, 21, 4th year) described how his “mixed” queer and cultural identities were relevant to his self-concept:

I identify as like—I’ve identified from mixed, I’ve identified as you know, white and Japanese, like both. ... I went through a nihilist phase where I identified as, like, nothing ... and I think, um, in terms of gender identity I see a huge parallel ... between in both places. Culturally it’s very, very like in between ... gender-wise I feel very in between. ... Religiously I was brought up in church but the Methodist church is a very um, liberal church and it’s very much about um, showing, doing God’s work through action and like just loving. Um, helping people. So I never felt like any pressure there. Um, and yeah so I think all those things have helped me to feel very ... just very open to explore. ... Whatever I am. I don’t know ... I feel like I don’t have that much cultural baggage that’s tying me to identify a certain way.

Rather than mitigating his queer identity, Cole described being culturally “in between” as similar to and even facilitating exploration of his “in between” gender identity.

Unlike white queer students, queer of color students generally recognized themselves as having multiple salient identities. Emilia (Latina queer/lesbian, 19, 2nd year) identified “first as Latina, or a person of color. Um, and being queer I feel is secondary to me...Just because that’s not the only thing I am. There’s more to me than that. And identifying as solely queer, I feel it limits who I am.” But representations of nonwhite queerness were virtually non-existent within the queer community except in specifically QPOC spaces, making identity verification less accessible to queer of color students. This lack of representation directly impacted queer of color students for whom identity verification was

often only available on the basis of one identity at a time. For Kacy (Black gay genderqueer, 21, 4th year) lacking representation was made most prevalent “when I see like how, let's say, Blackness is represented, which is usually not including queerness. ... Or how queerness is presented, which usually doesn't include blackness. That's when I'm kinda like ‘Oh’ (laughs). ... That's when the issue comes up for me.”

Students for whom racial and cultural identities were salient talked about the challenge of reconciling multiple identities in a community focused solely on queerness. “[T]he thing that I struggle with the most is finding the balance between being a person of color and being queer,” Emilia (Latina queer/lesbian, 19, 2nd year) said,

[B]ecause I'm so traditional and because I'm so close to my family and to my culture ... for me that has shaped me into who I am. ... And not that being queer hasn't but ... my culture has definitely played a stronger role, or been more prominent in my life ... as opposed to being queer.

For Renee (Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19, 2nd year) her mixed racial identity, combined with her feminine version of queerness meant that she was constantly drawn into conversations about her identity. “It's not like super harmful or damaging but it's just like, it makes me go back and forth. And I feel like it's a lot of explaining myself, you know?” As a result, Renee discussed the increased pressure to navigate and verify her identities because of her racial and sexual ambiguity in the eyes of others:

If I was just like one thing, you know what I mean? Like, honestly, if I was heterosexual things would just be easier. Like if I was, not even mixed or if I was brown, just like “I'm Mexican” ... things like that it would be a lot easier because then it's like I wouldn't have to explain, you know? So even if they're not asking about my sexuality it's like: “Oh how old are you? ... Are you, like, different? What's your ethnicity? Where you from?” (Laughs) And so I'm always kinda— even if I had darker skin, and even if I was more butch, it's like, “Clearly she's Latina and like queer.” You know? But it's like— no. I have to explain both those things because I'm like kinda in the borderlands, you know? (Laughs).

Though prevailing white centric articulations of queerness ignored the ways that students’

expressions of queerness were informed by their racial and cultural backgrounds, many queer of color students explicitly described their cultural and racial identities as salient to their experiences of queerness. Danny (Pilipin@ bisexual trans/genderqueer, 18, 1st year) said that being raised by a Pilipino family in a predominantly White community resulted in his feeling like he had grown up “between two cultures,”

[T]he social aspects between the two differ greatly. ... Like, if you identify as gay or lesbian or whatever in Pilipino culture, they automatically assume that you're transgender. ... Um, and then in here [the White community] they're just kinda like ‘oh, you're gay, okay, sure, whatever.’ Um, so I think like, it's socially, it's important like to different groups... in terms of, like, how you express yourself.

Due to his family’s Pilipino cultural background, Danny suggested his sexual identity was interpreted differently at home than within queer student spaces. Intersecting religious and cultural affiliations also impacted queer of color students’ expressions of queerness. Sarah (Mexican-American gay woman, 21, 4th year) talked about having to keep her religious and sexual identities separate:

And even in some ways my cultural identity, because being Mexican is intertwined with me being Catholic. They’re like one in the same in essence for me. And so I’ve always had to keep those two apart growing up and that’s kind of why like, I kept it under wraps that I felt that I was gay.

Madison (Taiwanese bisexual genderqueer, 20, 3rd year) told me that

[B]eing Asian by itself, it’s just not right to be queer ... especially for a girl ... and to [my parents] any kind of queer ... it’s not normal, pretty much. They keep telling me about it and saying how narrow this path would be. ... I think pretty much every Asian American or Asian on campus can relate to the same thing.

Students’ racial and cultural backgrounds also influenced whether or not they used queer to describe their identities. Kacy (Costa Rican Black gay genderqueer, 21, 4th year) identified as a member of the queer community but described himself as “gay” because

[W]here I come from ... like, back home... they're gonna be like, "queer-what?" Like, 'cause I have friends that aren't college educated ... so like it's just easier for me

to like, to connect. ... I'm educated ... but I can still connect to my community and my friends back home if that makes sense.

While identifying as queer facilitated identity verification for students when they were within the queer student community, some queer of color students told me that queer identification was impossible to translate within non-queer cultural and racial communities. “With race especially, I can’t really come out as queer” Ross (Latino queer man, 19, 2nd year) explained, “Because there’s no real way to say the word ‘queer’ in a Latino space.” Elias (Chicana genderqueer, 21, 4th year) acknowledged the limited contexts in which queer identities were legible and said that ze only identified as queer in academic and activist circles. “I don’t think nearly enough people think about the discrepancies between access and using ‘queer,’” ze told me as we talked about hir hometown, El Centro, Mexicali. “When you’re organizing in certain spaces, like El Centro, there’s no access to higher education. ... Like, they’re not planning on going to a University. There’s no space to even be exposed to that.” Similarly, Esthela, a Chinese international student (lesbian/queer/questioning genderqueer, 22, 4th year) said that “I wouldn’t identify as queer when I’m home, because people—first of all, people don’t know this term and I don’t wanna be like you know ‘Oh, I learned it from somewhere else... So you need to accept this system, too.’”

White students, inspired by identity politics’ focus on transforming stigmatized identities into sources of empowerment, often failed to recognize identities that afforded them privilege. For example, when I asked how they saw other identities intersecting with their sexualities, white students rarely mentioned race and even fewer discussed white racial privileges. On the whole, students who talked about intersecting identities tended to focus on only those identities that either made it more difficult for them to identify as queer or those that carried potential stigmas, such as having a Jewish cultural identity. For example, Cindy

(White lesbian woman, 28, 4th year) said that being Jewish “just made me feel like a minority; more special, I guess you could say.”

Identity verification was central to these rhetorical moves among white students since queer community solidarity was based on shared marginalization and framed in contrast to heterosexuals who were perceived as having privileges queers lacked access to. “A lot of times for white folks being queer is the first time that they’re different,” Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19, 2nd year) explained of the absence of racial awareness in the queer community. “And for us—being QPOC—being a person of color is the first thing that we’re different about. And like, being queer is just something on top.” Because all students could purportedly relate to one another on the basis of queer marginalization but not on the basis of racial marginalization, issues pertaining to gender and sexuality were conceived of as inclusive, whereas racial issues were considered exclusive towards non-QPOC members. Due to the collective impetus for queer students to focus on shared marginalization in attempts to buttress solidarity, students were compelled to focus more heavily on their sexual identities than on their racial identities. Because, as Amaya suggested, “a lot of time for white folks being queer is the first time they’re different,” queer identity was an extremely important and salient identity for most of the white queer students I interviewed. For many of them it was the only significant identity that they spoke of at all.

One of the ways that whiteness permeated queer identity construction was by going unnamed. Though all students’ experiences of queerness were informed by their cultural backgrounds and racial identities, white students for whom whiteness was “invisible” found it nearly impossible to articulate or even recognize how their whiteness framed their own assumptions about shared queer experiences. “[F]or me it’s been harder to recognize ...

because whiteness is unmarked. ... so it's easy not to see it" Max (White queer genderqueer, 21, 4th year) explained of his own process of realizing he was not just "a queer" but a "white queer," and that the racial component of his identity was significant.

It's easy to not see your privilege; it's easy to not think that your experiences are those of a white, queer person ... as opposed to [the experiences of] a queer person of color. ... Whereas I think if you were a person of color, I think it would be more obvious because you're not the unmarked norm of, of society. ... I think it's been, it's definitely something I've had to think about and kind of be like, "This is the experience of a *white* queer person." ... It's definitely there but it's definitely something that I've had to kind of ... think about it. *Really* think about it. Whereas queerness it's kind of like, "Yeah, yeah." I can easily just go, "I'm queer" ... but it's harder to go, "I'm a white queer person" ... and kind of think of it like that and then think of the differences. ... [I'm] kind of trying to mark myself in that so that I'm aware of the whiteness of privilege and stuff like that. ... And not trying to continue the, the generalization and the primacy of whiteness in the queer community ... This is my experiences but I—I am white and I am, you know, getting privilege from that. Things that I don't even notice, you know things that I can't notice 'cause they're—they're not there because that's what you're not noticing (laughs).

Max was one of the few white students I spoke with who clearly articulated the implicit exclusion of queers of color in the community through collectively white definitions of "queer experiences." His racial self-awareness had resulted largely from his dual education in Sociology and Feminist Studies where he had become increasingly invested in critical analyses of queer identities and experiences. Identifying the implicit whiteness of queerness in the community required a conscious effort on the part of white queer students because discourses of whiteness reinforce the "emptiness of 'white' as a cultural identity; the political contexts, strengths, and limitations of different ways of 'thinking through race'" (Frankenberg 1993: 2). Because whiteness was unnamed in the queer community, ideologies of queerness that were formulated through *white* ways of knowing were generally conceived of simply as queer ways of knowing.

When white students did talk about their whiteness in relation to queer identities

they often did so by comparing their own positive experiences with the hypothetical, negative experiences they imagined people of color were subjected to based on assumptions that people of color were unequivocally from cultures where being queer was “a huge ‘no’” (Patrick—White gay/homosexual man, 19, 2nd year). The prevailing stereotype that queer students of color had negative experiences in their home communities due to culturally-based homophobia resulted in queer community discourses that framed non-white racial identities as inherently antagonistic to queer identities. But while white queer students imagined that queers of color experienced marginalization in communities of color, those same students rarely recognized how white queer norms contributed to the marginalization of queers of color *within* the queer community. In short, white students failed to notice how rendering queer and of color identities as irreconcilably in conflict with one another reproduced discourses that othered queer of color students.

While a number of queer students of color did describe difficulties reconciling their racial and sexual identities, just as many white students described difficulties coming out to their families because of cultural, religious or political ideologies. Moreover, queer of color students’ personal accounts demonstrated that many of them experienced greater identity verification when they were able to develop communities with people who understood their experiences of queerness outside of a white queer community framework. Although he experienced homophobia in his hometown, Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year) spoke positively about coming into his own sexual identity through involvement in the queer ball culture with his queer Black and Latino friends back home:

[T]hey actually made me feel good about my sexuality and good about what I was doing you know. And it felt good to like be engaged and like, find like the struggles and like, you know, what it meant to be Black and queer and like you know, what it meant to be Black and Latino and like intermingling and learning culture ... and

tradition and heritage, like, almost. It's kinda just like, "Oh my God I have a history!" Like, you know, there are people out there like me, you know, who are you know, accepting of sexuality.

HOW INCLUSIVE IS QUEER IDENTITY?

These data demonstrate that, in addition to students' revealing personal information about themselves, identifying as queer allowed students to convey something about their values as members of the queer community. Most students I interviewed adopted queer as an identity due to their involvement in queer campus community. Moreover, nearly every student who identified as queer at the time of interviews had only done so since they had arrived on campus. "Funny thing," said Madison (Taiwanese bisexual genderqueer, 20, 3rd year) "I never heard the word queer until I came to college." Similarly, Emilia (Latina queer/lesbian, 19, 2nd year) started identifying as queer "my first year of college ... I was just getting more involved in the queer community and was learning more about what it meant—what it means to be queer."

Adopting a queer social identity signified students' personal commitments to inclusion, open-mindedness, and in many cases a political investment in deconstructing heteronormativity. The fluidity of queer identity meant that students could maintain membership in the queer community without committing to a particular set of claims about their sexual and gender orientations. Identifying as queer within the community thus allowed students to explore their identities without risking negative appraisals from others and safeguarded their membership in the queer community in the face of potential shifts in their orientations. Because anyone could be queer, adopting a queer social identity effectively allowed students—especially white queer students—to develop a more broadly defined self-verification structure in community with others and to experience a sense of solidarity.

In this chapter I analyzed students' definitions of the social group referred to here as the "queer community" to establish how in-group membership was determined, and how students' queer self-categorizations reflected and informed their ideologies as members of the queer community. At first glance the fluidity of queer identity seemed to prohibit a coherent identity standard for what it meant to be queer. But the breadth with which queer was defined was actually key to mechanisms of identity-verification within this community. Students' articulations of queer group and social identities suggested that the core ideological investment they used to construct an otherwise indeterminable queer community identity was commitment to inclusion.

Gecas (2000) states that individuals are motivated to affirm their self-concepts through mechanisms of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and authenticity. Self-esteem has to do with one's positive view of the self as well as the motivation to receive positive evaluations from others, while self-efficacy relates to how an individual sees oneself as an agent within their environment. Authenticity, on the other hand, has more to do with the importance of one's identity having meaning, coherence and significance (Gecas 2000: 101). Positive appraisals that signaled their authenticity were more accessible to students who identified as queer and who were dedicated to queer inclusive ideologies.

But because of white-centric conceptions of queerness, being both queer and a person of color resulted in identity conflicts for many queer of color students in this community. In order to produce the most inclusive environment possible, queer students focused on commonalities rather than differences. This impetus, while aimed at acceptance and inclusion, discredited people seeking verification and support for identities that intersected with their queerness. When queer communities focus solely on sexual forms of

marginalization they disallow recognition of other forms of marginalization such as those based on class and race (Cohen 1997). The use of queer as a shorthand to describe a collective group in this site inadvertently erased differences among members of the community that were important to their self-concepts (Seidman 1993: 133).

Though the whiteness with which queer identity was constructed was not formally acknowledged, white norms operated through the ways that queer inclusion was defined. As Frankenberg (1993) states,

Whiteness...has linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (1).

If white students could only vaguely reference how their whiteness impacted their experiences of queerness, it was not because their own experiences of queerness were unaffected by their racial identities. On the contrary, whiteness and its attendant privileges were invisible to most white students, resulting in their dissemination of queer self-concepts absent of racial identity. It was this implicitly white standard of queer identity that functioned to guide the discourses and behaviors of students negotiating inclusion within the queer community. Attending only to gender and sexual identities within this community overshadowed the ways that race intersected with and impacted people's experiences of sexuality and gender. Through queer discourses that omitted racial intersections, white privilege infused queer group identity standards and foreclosed diverse forms of identity verification for many students queer of color involved in this community. In short, the identity verification processes that queer of color students were subjected to rendered them obscure as people of color or, if they insisted on "making race an issue," labeled them inept as queer community organizers.

SELF-VERIFYING OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES
AND INCLUSION IN QUEER SPACES

Community can be conceived of generally as a “form of togetherness that a movement group practices” (Lichterman 1995: 115). Those united by a shared category or group identity think of themselves as being in community with one another. The creation and maintenance of community is an interactional process that is achieved on an ongoing basis. Through collective practices that promote group interests members cultivate a sense of solidarity (Gamson 1992) and develop a social identity based on their sense of self in relation to one another (Tajfel 1981; Howard 2000). Once an identity becomes a source of identification with a group it ceases to be solely a person-identity and takes on the quality of a social identity (Burke and Stets 2009), complete with the defining characteristics that link it with a sense of “we-ness” (Gamson 1992).

Because inclusion was central to queer group identity, diversity was an important feature of the community. Queer students often suggested that the diversity of the queer community was manifested through the proliferation of multiple queer organizations. But despite their overall endorsement of racial and ethnic queer groups many students suggested that since homophobia impacted all queer students, focusing on differences like race only divided a community otherwise bound by shared sexual and gender marginalization. As a result, the investments of QPOC organizations described at Queerpalooza became central to contentions over what it meant to be part of an inclusive queer community during the 2012-2013 academic year.

More specifically, the work done by QPOC leaders to identify white queer students as beneficiaries of racial privilege was widely received as challenging the conception that

queers were a marginalized category characterized by shared interests. Both white queer students and queer students of color often argued that QPOC spaces were filled with anti-white hostility, and that these spaces excluded white students while re-marginalizing students of color. The claims that students made about their marginalized statuses and the ways they conceived of allyship among members within the queer community became a source of public discord through conflicting assertions about the shared subjugation of queers, disagreements over whether specific spaces should be open to the general queer community or closed to provide a safe space for certain members, and accusations of intra-community hostility when spaces were designated as closed.

In this chapter, I discuss internal fissures over whether QPOC spaces should have been closed to white queers in order to facilitate the well being of members of the QPOC community. While Black Quare was the only explicitly closed QPOC organization at the time of this research, QPOC leaders made numerous attempts to facilitate closed QPOC spaces during fall quarter of 2012. The strategies used by QPOC leaders to establish those spaces and the appraisals they received from others in the queer community shed light on how queer identity expectations mediated the prospective outcomes of QPOC organizing in this site.

Inclusive values shared by members were manifested through conflicts over how queer community spaces and events should be organized and carried out. More specifically the identity standard of inclusion upon which queerness was evaluated in this site encouraged members to maintain open access to queer community spaces, and invalidated QPOC leaders' desires for closed QPOC spaces. In order for identity appraisals to impact people's behaviors, the identity in question must be significant to an individual's self-concept and the

appraisal must come from a credible source. Since people often participate in groups due to a desire for identity affirmation (Owens, Stryker and Goodman 2001; Simon et al 2008) students involved in queer organizations and spaces likely held queerness as a salient identity. By illustrating how students sought identity verification through queer student organizations and spaces I will provide evidence of how self-verifying opportunity structures played a significant role in students' identity management processes.

COMING TO COLLEGE AND FINDING QUEER COMMUNITIES

For the queer students in this site college represented a “progressive space” space where they would have the opportunity to explore their sexual identities within a “supportive community” (Kacy, Black genderqueer gay, 21, 4th year). College was a place where queer students could “redefine myself...rediscover myself” (Saul— White gay man, 18, 1st year), especially since queer identity verification was not available to most students prior to attending college due to fears of coming out to family members or of being harassed in high school. Queer students often experienced their early sexual identities in isolation since other members of their families were rarely gay. Coming to UCSB completely shifted students' orientations towards queer identities and communities since it offered most students with their first opportunity to live openly gay lives.

Students also relished the opportunity to take classes where they could learn about theories relevant to their lives and many described the process of learning to analyze their own experiences and identities as life changing. In particular, students mentioned the Feminist Studies Department as a place where they had the opportunity to learn about intersectionality and queer theory. “When I took Feminist Studies it was kinda just like learning about myself,” said Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year). “I like, wrote a research

paper about depression and like, Black gay communities ... so it was like, my first time, like, ‘Oh shit, I actually can like, write about shit that matters to me.’” Elena (Chicana bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) recalled taking a Feminist Studies class about women of color that had sparked her interest in being more politically involved on campus.

[T]hat, I felt like, gave me almost like, tools that I haven’t had, to like, articulate ways that I was like, feeling about things—like really kinda getting a bigger, like, perspective on things. Um, and it made me feel comfortable to, like, try to like, get involved on campus and like, wanting to actually do something about the things I was like, learning about in class.

Similarly, Om (White queer genderqueer, 20, 3rd year) described hir excitement about coming to college where ze could be out and get involved in “queer things.” But Om had not anticipated that ze would end up loving Feminist Studies so much that ze would become Feminist Studies minor. “But I did. And got really into feminism and queer theory, which has sort of defined my college experience. Not something I expected, but something that has improved my life.” Though most students had learned to *use* the term queer from other students, they commonly situated their understandings of queerness through what they or their peers had learned from taking Feminist Studies classes. Perhaps most significantly, Feminist Studies courses served as a self-verifying opportunity structure for students who experienced varying degrees of confirmation learning about theories that validated the existence of multiple and fluid genders and sexualities

Students who had researched the campus ahead of time told me that they knew the queer community would be “visible” and “active” and as a result believed that the campus community would be “pretty friendly to the queer community” (Julia biracial White/Hawaiian lesbian woman, 21, 4th year). As Cindy (White lesbian woman, 28, 4th year) told me “I know there are resources if I seek them and I do ... see the rainbow flags and get

excited. And I see the club whenever there's signups and get excited." Max (White queer genderqueer, 21, 4th year) believed the queer community was so beneficial to queer students that being queer actually put them at a distinct advantage when coming to college:

I felt when I first got here that it was so much easier being a queer person on this campus than a straight person. ... Like, I felt I, I was able to have so many shortcuts to, like, "I can just go to Queerpalooza and then I know a bunch of queer people." ... And then I can go to this meeting and I can intimately learn more about these queer people. And I was able to make friends ... really fast. ... Being queer for me was really an advantage in this situation. ... Because we have a community with solidarity and we have a community where you can come in and say, "I'm queer, like, I'm a queer person" and ... we immediately have something in common that is important to both of us.

Indeed, many students told me that college was the first place where they had the opportunity to validate their queerness and said that the instant solidarity they felt upon meeting other queers was remarkable. As a result there was a huge incentive for students to participate in queer spaces. "That was my thing," Renee (Biracial Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19, 2nd year) said as she described the importance of belonging for queer students:

I'm just like, okay, I'm queer. But what kind of queer am I? Am I queer enough? You know are other people going to see me as queer? And I think that's just the thing is like belonging. ... Because it's like when, when I feel like I don't belong, I feel like everything else is harder. Financial aid, you know school, work. ... It's just like that sense of belonging I feel is like really rooted with everything ... it's a different world for people who are queer. ... And they come to college. ... I see people come to college seeking that solidarity as ... I'm going through shit and I'm gonna seek these groups to—as my kinda space.

As Renee suggests, finding queer community within organizations and spaces helped students to validate that they were "queer enough" and to establish a sense of belonging and solidarity in community with other queer students. While college offered an opportunity for students to explore their sexual and gender identities in community with other non-heterosexual and gender diverse peers, students also became more racially aware following their arrival at UCSB. Most students grew up in communities with people whose racial and

cultural backgrounds were similar to their own and coming to college was the first place where these students experienced racial diversity. As a result, racial identity was not salient for most students until college. Even Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) who recalled being the “token Asian girl” in her group of white high school friends told me that she had only really begun to think critically about the significance of her racial identity since she’d come to college. Annee (multiracial Black/Native American/Italian/Jewish queer/gay woman, 21, 5th year) had initially struggled to understand why she felt so alienated on campus but was able to explain her experience to me in retrospect:

I had not only my gender and sexuality working against me, but my class was an issue and kind of like my culture background, and its like, UC is apparently like the biggest population of white-identified people. ... I didn't know how I was gonna make it, you know? ... Because I wasn't from an area where it was favored to act white and be involved in white popular culture.

As Annee suggested, whiteness and its attendant norms were overwhelmingly privileged on campus. Attending a college where they were in the racial minority, many queer students of color became more aware of their own racial identities and how race impacted their experiences as college students. Madison (Taiwanese bisexual genderqueer, 21, 3rd year) told me that family friends “were telling me, like, this is more um white privilege here—or dominant. I am like, ‘Um, I don’t believe in that.’ And then I came here and I’m, like, ‘Yeah, they’re right.’”

White queer students also experienced new awareness of their racial identities. For example, Phoenix (White fluid genderqueer, 20, 3rd year) said that in Santa Barbara, because “there are a lot more white people ... it’s far more noticeable to me, like, how people just assume that, you know, I mean ... they have privilege.” Patrick (White homosexual man, 19, 2nd year) remarked that it was “interesting being here to have such diversity” and that he had

never been aware of his whiteness until moving to campus. “I never heard the term ‘check your privilege’ until coming here,” he added, suggesting that he had only become aware of his own whiteness as the result of having it pointed out to him by others. Students arriving on campus were thus exposed to new expectations concerning both their sexual and racial identities.

Despite the varying experiences of queer students, having access to multiple queer spaces facilitated students’ opportunities for sexual identity verification on campus. However, the contexts and content of identity verification processes operated differentially for white queer and queer of color students. In the following sections I discuss how queer organizations functioned as self-verifying opportunity structures on this campus, then analyze how inclusive ideologies guided the implementation and reception of different types of queer spaces in this context.

Queer Organizations as Self-Verifying Opportunity Structures

The party was in full swing. I was chatting with a recently graduated student when a first year approached us. The first year—weaving through dozens of partying queers who mingled around us on the front lawn—looked excited as he introduced himself to us. Immediately he began talking about his desire to be a part of this community. Instantly the recently graduated student suggested that the first-year find an organization that he loved, with people that he liked, and that they would become his “crew.” He also told first year to just slowly work his way in and before he knew it he would have his community (QSU Kick-Off Party, September 2013, Field Note Excerpt).

People heavily invested in a collective identity are likely to pursue role-behaviors associated with that identity (Simon et al 2008), and individuals often enter movement spaces specifically in pursuit of identity affirmation (Pinel and Swann 2000; Owens, Stryker and Goodman 2001; Simon et al 2008). Joining queer student organizations and attending queer events were role-behaviors easily accessible to queer students looking to affirm their

identities. Since the motivation for pursuing involvement in queer organizations was generally to “meet other individuals similar to me” (Emilia—Latina queer/lesbian woman, 19, 2nd year), these organizations functioned as self-verifying opportunity structures for queer students. Ross (Latino queer man, 19, 2nd year) described his first year on campus as an opportunity to start fresh

I was just like, “I’m just gonna start it off, ‘I’m queer, this is who I am, you can’t stop me.’” And it was fine because I got like – I put myself in the queer community and just like, got interactions from there and built like, the greatest friendships possible...

The queer community and its concomitant queer organizations provided spaces where queer students could relate to others like them. Of all the resources available to queer students on campus, students I interviewed cited queer organizations as being the most important. Megan (White queer/lesbian woman, 19, 3rd year) said that after attending Queerpalooza she felt “more comfortable with my identity and who I am. And I know more people in the community now and so I feel more comfortable going to those spaces, knowing more people.” Students generally felt more comfortable in queer spaces because their identities were validated in those spaces and they had temporary freedom from subjection to heterosexual norms.

The multiplicity of more specific, identity-based queer organizations allowed students to join organizations perceived as reinforcing their self-concepts on a more distinct level. For Alicia (Mexican-American gay genderqueer woman, 20, 3rd year),

[C]olleges are huge times of self discovering and redefining and, you know, it is a lot, a lot to deal with. ... It’s just harder when you are, like, marginalized ... there are so many parts of your identity that are marginalized ... and knocked down in so many different ways by the society. So it’s really cool that all these different groups exist...and create this, like, support ... community.

Organizations like FUQIT were especially popular among first-year students who were looking to expand their social networks. Since QSU was understood to be the organization where “everyone went” (Peter—biracial Pilipino/White gay man, 21, 4th year) and FUQIT was the explicitly social group, most students started in one of those two organizations. Mercedes (Hispanic pansexual genderqueer, 19, 2nd year) was glad she had chosen to start at QSU because

[I]t’s where any, basically any queer allies or people in the queer community um, just, like its basically social events and then they let each other know when, you know, LGBTQ events are occurring and everything. ... [T]hat’s where you meet and then that way you know what’s going on and so I’m kind of glad that I went to that or I wouldn’t know so much about other stuff that’s going on.

The breadth of queer umbrella organizations like QComm, FUQIT and QSU provided a strong draw for incoming students searching for community. But all of these mainstream queer organizations had reputations for having white agendas. Students acknowledged the widely held sentiment that QSU in particular had a white agenda, but generally struggled to explain what this meant in more concrete terms. “I honestly don’t know what that means,” Peter (biracial Pilipino/White, gay man, 21, 4th year) told me in a response similar to other students I interviewed:

Like, that’s just what I hear people say. And like, I understand that, you know, a Black female queer is not going to have the same experience as a white male queer. ... Like, I totally understand that that’s the case but when they say that they have, like, a ‘white agenda,’ I don’t know what that means. ... I don’t know if by like, white agenda they mean that it just doesn’t accommodate the experiences of people who don’t identify as white? I don’t know if it means that they’re like— I don’t know.

Students’ difficulties describing a “white agenda” pointed to the hegemonic dimensions of white supremacy in queer community spaces; the taken for granted and invisibilized ways in which whiteness permeated queer students’ everyday interactions and methods for sustaining

community on campus. As a number of students suggested, umbrella organizations should theoretically have encompassed all forms and experiences of queerness. In practice, however, they tended to function more as homogenizing spaces where queerness became the only locus of interest and concern. “[E]specially within QSU,” Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19, 2nd year) said, “it’s supposed to be more of an umbrella organization. Sometimes when the issues of race are brought up people will be like, ‘Well what does race have anything to do with it?’”

I observed these dynamics for myself on several occasions but one in particular comes to mind. In 2012, during the QSU officer retreat held at the beginning of fall quarter, Amaya had suggested that in addition to their annual Big Queer/Little Queer mentorship social, QSU should host a QPOC Big Queer/Little Queer social so that incoming students could have the opportunity to connect with older students who shared their ethnic or racial experiences. Kelly, one of the white officers immediately interjected saying that she did not believe that QSU should host an event that a number of the officers could not attend. Although QPOC leaders eventually hosted a QPOC Big Queer/Little Queer event independently from QSU, Kelly’s critique carried enough weight that the idea was dropped from within the organization. Because QSU was responsible for many of the informational and political social gatherings on campus, the influence of white leadership on the methods used for engaging in outreach had far reaching consequences in the queer community. Rather than recognizing that queer of color students were an important constituency of the queer community and working to address their needs, concerns over white inclusion defined the parameters of these conversations.

When I asked Luke (White queer/pansexual trans man, 20, 3rd year) to explain how he saw whiteness dominating queer spaces, he replied:

Um, I mean it's—it's apparent. You go into a QSU meeting and it's all white gay guys. ... That's just like, the way it is. Um, and you can just see that. And it's very, I dunno. I think that the—I dunno how to explain it without sounding (laughs) too offensive, but very like, um, very much so like, white people just being like, "Look at me, I'm queer" like, "I'm impressed"-type attitudes. I think that that's like, how it comes across. ... And then like, just like, acknowledging how those spaces might not feel safe for, like, queer people of color.

That most white students failed to notice their own racial biases was clear in the methods used to draw the greatest number of students to non-QPOC organizations. For example, FUQIT had a distinctly non-political mission statement to ensure that all queer students felt welcome in the organization regardless of their views. In alignment with this goal FUQIT leaders declined opportunities to collaborate on political events, and only pursued political issues as non-affiliated individuals. But while FUQIT's explicitly apolitical stance was intended to facilitate social inclusion it also justified the systemic marginalization and exclusion of queer people of color from full community participation.

For example, in attempts to promote active community involvement during Pride Week on campus FUQIT officers decided that, unlike previous years when Pride shirts had been distributed for free throughout the week, they would distribute those shirts only to students who tie-died their shirts during a two-hour event. Since students wore Pride shirts throughout the year as a show of solidarity, having a shirt was a significant aspect of queer visibility and identification in this community. Although the intent had been to foster community, FUQIT officers accidentally scheduled the event at the same time that the Queer Immigrant Rights Rally was scheduled across campus. At the event I witnessed one white queer student leader deny students shirts if they did not have time to stop and decorate them.

This meant that students without the privilege of free time or those who chose to attend the immigrant rights rally instead of the tie-dye event would have to go without a shirt this year.

When the conflict was brought to their attention, the co-chairs of FUQIT initially responded that they were an explicitly non-political group and wanted to keep their event separate. It was only by emphasizing that altering the parameters of the event would facilitate inclusion that myself and another student were able to convince them to change their plans. In this case, identity verification tactics worked to encourage leaders to save face at the threat of being perceived as being non-inclusive. But this incident was evidence of how white logics influenced more broad-based queer community spaces. When organizers held fast to the notion that students would have to participate in the community in particular ways, students attending the “political” queer immigrant rights rally were not given the same recognition as those who attended the “apolitical” tie-dye event. Because the norms that defined apolitical queerness were based in white queer experiences, FUQIT officers thus inadvertently reproduced a space defined by white queerness, sans recognition or acknowledgement of diverse queer experiences.

In her study of queer Latina and Asian women in the United States, Alimahomed (2010) describes a distinct shift in the marginalization of queer women of color in LGBT communities so that rather than being explicitly excluded from LGBT spaces and organizations, queer women of color are rendered invisible through white queer community norms. Ward (2008) observed similar dynamics in her study of LGBT organizations where implementing diversity relied on white norms for recognizing difference and incorporating rather than assuming the presence of people of color. Queer of color students often told me that “person of color” was not an identity they had considered for themselves before coming

to college. But, particularly in the context of a mainstream queer community permeated with white ideals, many of these students adopted a “queer person of color” identity. “Back home in Hacienda Heights, I was the white kid,” Tee (biracial Taiwanese/White queer genderqueer, 22, 5th year) explained, “because all my friends were Asian. Now here in Santa Barbara I’m the Asian kid, because there are so many white people around. And I feel like I need to like, represent the Asians.” The impacts of identity tokenization and neglect on queer students of color can also shed light on the motivations and methods behind developing QPOC organizations. As I discuss in the following section, the subdivision of queers into more distinct QPOC organizations was indicative of the homogenous investments and discourses privileged in umbrella organizations like QSU at the time of this study.

QPOC SPACES:

Queer organizations catering to students’ particular identities and interests allowed students to create self-verifying opportunity structures unique to their specific needs. At events like Queerpalooza students were exposed to the multiple spaces where they could seek verification of their specific identities so that queerness, their common denominator, could be shared at the broader level of community. But as a movement becomes more broadly defined conflicts are likely to arise over which investments to prioritize, and collective identity salience is likely to decrease for underrepresented members (Friedman and McAdam 1992; Brown-Saracino and Ghaziani 2009). Because many queer of color students lacked opportunities for racial identity validation in mainstream queer spaces, many queer of color students found alternate methods for validating their racial identities and for making race visible in queer spaces.

QPOC organizations, those organizations geared specifically towards queer students of color, offered students a space free from white queer norms where they could discuss their intersecting experiences of sexuality and race. Though QPOC organizations were generally considered important contributions to the diversity of the queer community, the need for those spaces appeared to be a relatively recent development. Contrary to Luke's (White pansexual trans man, 20, 3rd year) more contemporary observation that QSU was attended by "all white gay guys," in previous years queer students of color had dominated leadership roles within existing queer student organizations for as long as most students could remember—so much so that in 2008 a queer Asian student told me her friend had texted her saying that events had become "more diverse" because "more white men were attending." Queer of color students who had graduated from UCSB as early as 2004 touted the progressiveness of the primarily queer of color community and suggested that QPOC concerns had long been integral to queer students' investments.

When Elias (Chicana genderqueer, 21, 4th year) first arrived on campus in 2008, she said that umbrella organizations like QComm and QSU had still been QPOC-identified. "There was no QPOC organizations my first year that I remember," ze recalled. "De Colores came my first year. And I was already involved in QSU, and that felt like a safe space for me as a queer person of color. So I just maintained my involvement with these organizations." Because QSU and QComm were heavily populated with QPOC membership, there had been no need for QPOC specific organizations from what Elias could tell:

I think it was just the officers were mostly queer people of color. So those were the faces that were there. And just the work we did and the things we did. ... But I feel like within the activities, I don't know if it addressed QPOC issues specifically, I think it was just an organization that was like, tryna welcome people. And the folks were queer people of color, so the folks who were getting involved were queer people of color.

The rumored historical prevalence of queer of color leadership on campus likely resulted from queer of color students' desires for identity-verification in the face of both racial and sexual marginalization. As Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19, 2nd year) suggested,

...[A] lot of us, I think, tend to gravitate more towards queer spaces than we do to people of color spaces because, a lot of times, like, that identity is something that, like—I can talk about being a person of color at home but I can't talk about being queer at home. So I think, like, a lot of times in college we find those spaces—those queer spaces—a lot more.

Because college offered students a unique opportunity to affirm their sexual identities, queer students of color who could garner racial support in their home communities tended to prioritize sexuality-based investments when they arrived on campus. Even during the early 1990s, a time when queer politics had entered a lull in the national media, queer students of color continued to foster queer spaces on campus and to incorporate both racial and sexual politics within their communities.

It is significant that until 2002 the queer student community was home to only one queer organization, QSU, which had been founded by students as the “Gay Student Union” in 1970 amidst the increased gay and lesbian activism of the Gay Liberation Movement. It was not until the mid to late 1990s, when gay and lesbian activism again reached a peak in national visibility, that subsequent queer student organizations began to emerge on campus. With the passage of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) in 1994 and the “Defense of Marriage Act” (DOMA) in 1996, queer rights again entered the fore of public awareness. Gay and lesbian activists challenged DOMA’s definition of marriage as limited to the union of heterosexuals and contested the exclusion of openly gay soldiers from the military under DADT. As national attention to gay and lesbian rights continued to grow so, too, did the visibility of the queer student community in both activity and in numbers.

The establishment of the campus Queer Resource Center in 1999 (QRC, later renamed RCSGD) facilitated the entrée of increasing numbers of queer students as they sought safe spaces where they could access resources in a supportive community with others. In 2002 students founded FUQIT as a solely social alternative to the highly politicized QSU in order to promote increased socializing and community building among queer students. As organizational spaces and resources expanded, students engaged in tactics to alter campus policies and reveal the systemic marginalization of queer students on campus. By 2004, students had begun to pursue the implementation of an Ethnic, Gender and Sexualities general education requirement on campus suggesting that there was already a great deal of coalitional work taking place among ethnic, sexual and gender minorities on campus. Because students who come from less privileged social locations are more likely to engage in coalitional politics and attend to intersections of race and class, this allegiance was not surprising (Harr and Kane 2008). At the same time students Keily Hosman and Kalaya'an Mendoza developed the concept of queer bombing in response to students' experiences of homophobia on campus. Queer bombing offered students a tactic for disrupting heteronormative spaces by wearing shirts emblazoned with a hot pink bomb that read "QUEER" on the front while gathering in venues on or around campus that had been conventionally heterosexual. Reflecting the gay and lesbian political investments of the time, the back of the shirt read "We Do Recruit!" a tongue-in-cheek reference to the ongoing exclusion of openly gay soldiers from the military. Following several years of an expanding queer presence on campus students created Queer Commission to facilitate queer representation within the student government in 2007. Within two years Black Quare (2008), De Colores (2008), and QAPI (2009) had all been formed.

It makes sense that, amidst the perceived expansion of political opportunities for queers to express their grievances (Tarrow 1998; McAdam 1982; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001), there would be a resurgence of students' investments in queer community spaces and politics. Among the students re-entering queer spaces were white gay men who, though they had benefitted from white and male privilege so long as they maintained the invisibility of their sexual identities, were motivated to enter queer spaces in pursuit of the rights and recognition they had been denied on the basis of their sexual orientation. It was in this context that the previously QPOC-centered investments of the queer campus community likely began to shift. "I remember very clearly one officer meeting and someone brought up that QSU meetings weren't the safest space for like, gay white men, like they didn't feel comfortable" Elias recalled of his experience as a member of QSU in 2008,

And like, the reaction was kinda like, "Oh okay well, they're comfortable elsewhere." So it was clear that we were gonna maintain that. Like, there wasn't anything we had to change really, because we were creating a safe space for people who needed it.

Elias described that moment as "a turning point for me and like, an awareness of QPOC issues," because of the challenges posed by white gay men entering the space.

I wasn't as aware of things back then, so I have a hard time really like, pinning it down. But it's true, [white gay men] really just didn't come to events. And maybe because it's who was in it already. Like maybe the leadership was a lot more QPOC activist than I thought. ... And so they were addressing QPOC issues and being critical of white queer movements. ... I think the people who weren't feeling too comfortable were people who weren't willing to acknowledge their privilege. I think within those spaces people were forced to acknowledge their privilege. Or asked to. Or required.

Under the guidance of QPOC leaders, the extant agendas of QSU and subsequent queer organizations had been formulated around intersectional politics that took for granted the significance of racial and cultural experiences when defining sexual identities and investments. But white gay men who were seeking validation of their marginalized sexual

identities perceived the emphasis on white privilege in those spaces as minimizing their own sexuality-based oppression. Because they couldn't enter those organizations without being confronted with the reality of their own privileges, white gay men experienced queer spaces as combative rather than as enhancing solidarity.

The question remains as to how a formerly QPOC dominated community shifted so drastically, and in such a short period of time, to reflect the priorities and investments of white queer students. Based on the timeline of campus organizations and national gay and lesbian politics I suggest that shifts in the national political climate for gays and lesbians resulted in an influx of previously uninvolved queer students into queer student organizations. Due to increased representations of queers as aggrieved minorities, formerly inactive queer students sought self-verifying opportunity structures through involvement in queer organizations and spaces. Among these students were increased numbers of white queer students, many of them gay men, for whom sexual oppression was primary as a social justice concern. The emphasis on white queer political interests within student organizing between 2000 and 2010s was the likely result of the increased presence of white queer students who lacked the capacity to recognize how despite their sexual marginalization, racial and gender privileges still imbued their perspectives and approaches to queer social justice. This shift in queer politics and the subsequent emergence of QPOC specific organizations was reflected beyond the UCSB campus through the proliferation of increasing numbers of explicitly QPOC organizations across the United States beginning in the early 2000s and the development of the first annual multi-campus Queer People of Color Conference (QPOCC) in California by 2010.

Having been displaced by white queer organizers, QPOC leaders began forming alternative organizations where they could address racial and sexual marginalization concurrently. While they had been the backbone of the queer student community on campus for nearly two decades, QPOC leaders were subsequently relegated to the status of “bridge leaders” (Robnett 1997) catering to a racially diverse subset of the now ostensibly white-centric queer community. In their roles as student leaders they now served as the primary link connecting QPOC students with queer events and resources, and were often sought out by white queer organizations to co-sponsor events in efforts to increase diversity-based funding opportunities. Though many queer students of color maintained leadership positions within QSU and QComm, the work that they did to support their own queer of color communities were treated by others as being secondary to the work being done by the broader queer community. Elias recalled this shift and said that although ze stayed in QSU for hir remaining three years on campus, QPOC organizations were now the only spaces where QPOC concerns were effectively addressed. “I think if I came into the community now, those are the spaces I would have been involved with,” ze said,

Because it’s really interesting how it’s changed. And I don’t know if it was because QSU became whiter, or just stopped addressing QPOC issues. Or if it was because these spaces just needed to come around and when those spaces opened up space for leadership, like, the leadership went into QPOC spaces.

Whether or not the increased whiteness of umbrella organizations led to the development of QPOC organizations, the end result was that the intersectional politics once integral to the queer campus community had since been driven into QPOC only spaces. Rather than engaging in racially and culturally conscious politics at the community-wide level, queer of color students now turned to QPOC organizations where they could foster their racial and sexual identities without the resistance of white queer students. By developing self-verifying

opportunity structures that were no longer available to them in the broader queer community, QPOC leaders had found a temporary solution to the negative appraisals they received from white gay men entering the community.

Renee (biracial Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19 2nd year) used the metaphor of yoga to describe the resistance of white queers when confronted with their racial privilege:

[T]he idea of being in yoga is like you're on this mat and you're in an uncomfortable position and you're trying to sit through that and really see how that feels and grow from it. But it's like what people don't understand is that discomfort is on and off the mat for certain people. ... Like very privileged people with that notion of "oh this is uncomfortable I'm gonna grow from it." It's like you have to understand that this discomfort follows people in their work, in their home, everywhere, like you know, we need to acknowledge that.

Renee's metaphor provided a clear example of the privilege associated with "choosing" to explore discomfort as a form of enlightening personal growth, as opposed to something that many people experience in their daily lives. The privileged people in yoga that Renee spoke of were very similar to white queers in the community who saw discussing race as an option that was disruptive to perceived community harmony or as being "too uncomfortable" to confront. Those students failed to see that not addressing race was what disrupted community harmony.

Because of white queer responses to racial issues, queer of color students on campus were reticent about discussing their racial identities and experiences in queer spaces that were not explicitly QPOC oriented. In 2012 I attended an open QPOC dialogue that was hosted by a coalition of leaders from the various QPOC organizations on campus. There, queer students of color shared their experiences of being shut down by white queers when they talked about race. Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) lamented that she often wanted to talk about the significance of her racial identity as a queer woman but

would always hear people groaning as soon as she started to speak about communities of color. As a result she said she would often catch herself thinking: “No! This is a queer space! Don't ruin it by talking about race!” Grace (Taiwanese American, bisexual woman, 22, 4th year) chimed in that she, too, felt like she wasn't supposed to talk about race in queer space and she shared a story of how two queer students of color had been in the RCSGD talking about racism when a white student had told them to, “’Shh.’ And basically to ‘keep it chill and not bring up racism and get angry about it in the space.’” According to her story the white student had then suggested that the students of color “unify instead.”

QPOC organizations were necessary because queer students of color often combatted both homophobia and racism in their daily lives. Far from being alternate discourses, as they were portrayed in the broader queer community, racial discourses were integral to queer of color students’ experiences of queer identity and community. For Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year) QPOC spaces were “seriously imperative.”

I feel like you need those spaces because ... I feel like first of all you have to work on yourself as a person like, you know? 'Cause if you can't get along in your own community and articulate your own struggles and what you're going through. ... I feel like you have to help yourself before you can help others and branch out to others so I feel like Black Quare is one of those spaces where it's just like, where we're learning and we're growing and we're able to talk about it.

Unlike the white gay men who were made uncomfortable by discussions of race, several queer of color students said that *not* talking about race got in the way of their feeling included in queer spaces. As Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19, 2nd year) put it,

You know, I'm just like, I'm a queer woman of color ... can we get more, like—? (Laughs)... so it's just, a lot of times when you bring that up they're just like, 'why?' you know? Like, 'Why do you have to make it about race?' And it's just like, it has something to do with it. ... It definitely has something to do with it. ... So we're just there fighting the good battle, you know and hanging in there and trying to build like a better relationship with queers and growing and developing, you know.

Because being a queer woman of color (QWOC) came “with a different territory...and different experience,” Elena (Latina bisexual/queer woman, 21, 4th year) said that “having that like, solidarity and just other QWOC and being able to just like talk about our experiences and stuff has been very, um, empowering and very, I think, amazing.” Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year) said that since the queer movement had essentially started out as a white movement, the increased visibility of Black and Latino queers indicated movement progress. As a result, he said that QPOC organizations like Black Quare were integral to the continued growth of the community “‘cause a lot of people don't understand like what it means to be black, what it means to be queer, what it means to be low-income, you know. ...Like, a lot of people's realities are different, you know?” Similarly, Ross (Latino queer man, 19, 2nd year) said he was most likely to attend De Colores events because his racial and sexual identities were both integral to his sense of self.

Despite the idea that queers constituted a more progressive social group, race related concerns were treated as out-group concerns within the broader queer community. When queer of color students did experience intracommunity racism they were often perceived as being overly sensitive or as misinterpreting behaviors indicative of “preference” or cultural differences. Since the queer community was supposed to be a progressive space, queer of color students also resisted the idea that they themselves had experienced racism. For example, Brad (Black gay man, 21, 4th year) mentioned that he had been rejected by men who were not interested in dating black men, but explained to me that it was more about personal preference than racism as far as he was concerned. Harold (White queer man, 21, 4th year) cited conversations he had overheard “amongst queer men I always feel like there’s a kind of like, ‘Ha-ha—eww, I’d never go with an Asian or Black man!’ Like, that’s a very

widespread idea for white, Latino gay men I feel.” Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year) described his own experiences of isolation within the queer community as being something he couldn’t quite name (see Harper 2007) but that he sensed might be based on people’s racist disinterest in knowing him. “A lot of times it’s like people don’t think that they’re racist when they really are,” Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19, 2nd year) told me. For example, she took issue with people who identified as radical queers while maintaining a distinct silence on matters of race. “I’m just like, ‘well, you’re a radical *white* queer,’” she distinguished, “which is nice but, don’t like, push it there.”

Due to the erasure of QPOC experiences in the queer community, QPOC leaders went to great efforts to recruit new queer of color students into QPOC organizations and to raise general awareness of race within the queer community. Caleb (Hispanic/Latino gay man, 18, 1st year) one of the incoming students that QPOC leaders had attempted to recruit, said being Hispanic had never seemed important to him until he got involved in the queer community:

Coming here one of the big things that I realized was that my colorblindness was a problem to other people. ... I just came here like, you know, “Race doesn’t play like a big factor in my life because I grew up with so many people of my race.” ... But coming here like ... I’ve noticed like people, like when I tell them that I’m color blind ... that I am color blind of race ... they kind of get upset with me. ... Or they say things like, “Well I need to educate you of your privilege” and stuff like that. And it’s just like, “You don’t have to” like, “I’m fine the way I am, and I understand.” Like, I do understand the difference between like, White, Hispanic, Latino, etcetera all of that stuff. ... But it’s just not— it doesn’t play a big factor in my life. Personally.

For queer students of color for whom race was not a salient identity, involvement in QPOC organizations was less likely. Since group norms emphasized solidarity over difference, many white queer and a number of queer of color students saw QPOC tactics for strengthening QPOC communities as being divisive. However, the ongoing resistance to discussions of race within the queer community led QPOC leaders to recognize and question

the white norms imposed by a solidarity-based queer group identity. As social movement and social identity theories would predict, involvement in QPOC spaces resulted in increased salience of racial identities and a sense of connection with group members. Ross (Latino queer man, 19, 2nd year) said that being a leader in the Student Commission on Racial Equality (SCORE) had taught him about his “intersectionality” and increased his political awareness. By investing in the concerns of “underprivileged students” he told me he was doing work that “affects me...and I like seeing that reflection through my involvement.”

Significantly, self-verification relied in part on students’ abilities to connect with others who shared their specific racial identities. For example, Tee (biracial Taiwanese/White queer genderqueer, 22, 5th year) founded UCSB QAPI (Queer Asian Pacific Islanders) after returning from a queer student conference in 2008 where “they did a Queer People of Color Caucus, and they put all of the queer people of color in one room and acted like we had something in common.” During her first year on campus, Alicia (Mexican-American gay genderqueer woman, 20, 3rd year) had prioritized De Colores because “it’s just like queer Chicano-Chicana whatever. ... I was like of cool, it intersects. I thought it was cool.” Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year) also expressed the importance of having queer spaces that acknowledged all of his identities and wished he had learned about them earlier,

'Cause I feel like it maybe would've resonated inside and maybe, I guess like, counteracted the, like, internal strife and pain and yearning that I had before learning about my identity? ... And it's kind of like ... difficult but it's key to, I guess ... being happy almost, and understanding where you are in the world.

Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) was involved with QAPI when I interviewed her but said that during her first year she had not understood why she would need a specifically Asian queer space like QAPI. “When I was a freshman and I heard about QAPI I thought immediately, like, ‘Why do I need QAPI when I need QSU?’” she recalled,

laughing. "I didn't see the need for the space. ... I was so comfortable with my queer identity ... I knew I wanted to make queer friends and stuff ... but it took so much more time for me to come into my Asian identity." As her racial identity became more salient to her she began to recognize the need for QPOC spaces like QAPI. But her sexual identity, which had initially been more salient to her, had guided her initial involvement in queer spaces:

[T]he thing is my sexual identity ... was very like, explicit. ... I was sure I had multiple attractions to, you know, different people. ... And then I, just recently, I guess, in the last three or four years I, my like, racial identity has become kind of like, unclear to me. ... Like, um, I told you I went to like, a primarily white high school. ... I kind of um, fell into that I think and I was uh, grew very, very, very, very comfortable being around very many white people and being the only Asian girl and um, being like, a token Asian. I was like, very at, at its height I think I was very, very comfortable with that label. ... I had a lot of internalized racism, a lot of internal things like, going on inside and I was um, I don't think I even knew it. And then and then when I got here and I started thinking about my identity not um, not around a bunch of white people (laughs) I was like, I was kinda of like, um, I was kind of like, um, shocked that I, I went kind of four years blindly and um, now I'm still kinda trying to figure it out and I'm still trying to figure out how um, how to deal with it and how my race affects everything else. ... And it's still kind of like, um in my life where I'm constantly checking myself and constantly being like, like, "Ugh, why am I thinking these things? Why do I desire this? Why don't I desire this?"

As Scherif (1936) suggests, the increased salience of other identities weakens the impact of in-group norms, particularly when those other identities are connected with alternate social networks. Amaya (Chicana queer woman, 19, 2nd year) recalled her first experience in queer Chican@ spaces, which provided her an empowering reprieve from the white queer spaces she had been so accustomed to:

I think for a really long time I was used to seeing white queerness and what queerness meant in a white sphere. Um, and to see [queerness] kind of manifested in these QPOC, especially in Chicano spaces, and like, just to be able to speak Spanish, and talk queer stuff in Spanish was really cool. ... Like, I used to speak Spanish every day. I don't anymore, you know ... just being able to like hear music or, like, make references to things and people understand them. And it's just, like—it's really cool to be in spaces where I feel like I really identify with people, and making those friends who like really understand different things, and different sides of me. 'Cause um I do feel like sometimes I have to compromise certain identities in certain spaces.

And that's okay, but like being able to just like when I'm having fun just completely...you know, let loose, and do whatever I want is really cool.

Amaya's sentiment that she had to "compromise certain identities in certain spaces" suggested that in spheres defined by white queerness, queer of color students perceived that they would be negatively appraised or subject to scrutiny if they talked about identities other than queerness. The prevailing representations of queerness in this community thus left little to no room for conceptions of what it meant to be *both queer and a person of color*. Queer of color students were discouraged from discussing race in queer spaces and, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four, if they experienced racism they were expected to educate their white peers as to how and why what they said or did was offensive. As a result of the ongoing emotional toll of these identity management strategies, queer students of color began working together in order to establish closed QPOC spaces during the 2012 school year.

Closing QPOC Spaces:

QPOC organizations provided queer of color students with an alternative to white-queer spaces where they had been required to omit their racial experiences for the sake of queer solidarity. As a result, queer of color students had created an opportunity to validate their intersecting sexual, gender and racial identities. Despite the fact that most students recognized the importance of QPOC organizations in a racially diverse community, a prevailing question among students during the 2012-2013 school year was whether or not QPOC spaces should be closed to white queer students. Because the queer community was collectively defined as being inclusive and diverse, and because the whiteness of queer group ideologies was rarely acknowledged, many students struggled to make sense of why queer students of color would need spaces free from their white peers. As a result, when QPOC leaders suggested that QPOC spaces be closed to students who did not identify as both queer

and of color, many queer students (both white and of color) resisted the idea wholeheartedly on the premise that all queer spaces should be “inclusive.”

Since its inaugural year, Black Quare had functioned as the only closed QPOC organization on campus. Other QPOC organizations had maintained that allies were welcome to attend meetings and events, provided the focus remained on the students each organization was intended to serve. Throughout the 2011-2012 academic year QPOC leaders, most of whom were third and fourth-years, began working to increase collaborations between QPOC organizations and to heighten the visibility of queer students of color in the community. But by 2012 the impacts of white privilege on QPOC spaces became too caustic for student leaders to ignore.

Two notable occurrences provide examples of the types of conflicts that accompanied QPOC leaders efforts to actively pursue the possibility of creating additional closed QPOC spaces on campus. The first of these events, which sparked an increased sense of urgency amongst QPOC leaders that closed spaces should be implemented, was the first-time occupation of a De Colores co-chair position by a white queer man. The second event, which occurred months later, was the formation of Keshet whose QPOC-identified leader requested that Keshet be included in closed QPOC spaces on the basis of the shared cultural marginalization of Jewish students.

Dane was a 2nd year when, following the resignation of the previous co-chair, he offered to step up and take the De Colores position. Though he had a strong relationship with his friend and co-chair, Emilia, he became notorious among QPOC leaders for his unchecked white privilege. Stories abounded as to how his white privilege manifested in queer spaces. One student told me that during introductions at a queer organization meeting, attendees had

been asked to pantomime their academic major. When it was his turn, Dane had indicated that he was a Spanish major by pressing his forefinger horizontally under his nose like a mustache. Another student expressed discontent that Dane often described himself as “transracial” to indicate his strong affinity for Latin culture, and this student suggested that his cooptation of a term used to describe infants adopted cross-culturally was both inaccurate and offensive. On another occasion he was rumored to have said that he was “Latino by association” because his boyfriend was Latino. Many QPOC leaders suggested that in addition to making racially insensitive comments, Dane consistently tokenized queer of color students by asking them to explain their experiences to him, and dominated conversations within QPOC spaces.

When a former co-chair of De Colores who had since graduated messaged Dane that he had “no right to be taking on this group,” Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) told me that it had caused “a stir ... within QPOC leadership.” The dialogue among leaders shifted from how to facilitate open collaborations to the importance of closed QPOC spaces, and Dane was eventually pressured to step down:

Part of having you know, a white person on leadership um, holding you know, um, spaces that are supposed to be safe. Like ... how are you gonna say that, you know, the space is safe for this person when you know, people like you—like this white person—like are oppressing them and they can't freely talk about how they *feel* because they feel awkward that the person in—in leadership is a white person, you know? So, um, I guess that's where the discussion about like open vs. closed spaces happened. And I mean, it's—how's he gonna like help hold a space where he's not allowed to be in?

Having a white co-chair might have resulted in decreased attendance at De Colores meetings. “It's been expressed to me recently that there are people that are interested but don't feel safe with him being in that space” Emilia (Latina queer/lesbian woman, 19, 2nd year) lamented, and “because we don't have that many members it's hard to really create a strong space.” A

number of students confirmed Emilia's fears that Dane's presence as a co-chair discouraged Chican@ membership in De Colores. While Renee (biracial Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19, 2nd year) wasn't opposed to the idea of having open QPOC spaces where allies could attend, she told me that she had not been to De Colores since the beginning of the school year because,

The person in charge of it was—this, like, white male, was the co-chair. And then the other girl was Latina, actually, and queer. And it was just really weird to me ... I don't know. Like the idea of a white male being a co-chair position of a Latino/Latina queer org kinda turned me off.

The second issue that afflicted QPOC leaders was how to define QPOC identities as they worked on QPOC collaborations when Keshet entered its inaugural year. Seizing the opportunity to collaborate with other marginalized students Derek, the QPOC-identified co-chair for Keshet, requested that his organization be included in closed spaces despite the fact that most of Keshet's members were not QPOC identified. Already under a great deal of pressure to justify their desire for closed spaces, QPOC leaders were exasperated by this latest development. "It's interesting that they're like, arguing for being a part of QPOC because they have oppression as well," Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) said,

Which, which I dunno if that really makes sense. Um, cause they're *not* people of color. ... So I mean they could say that they strongly ally *with* QPOC ... but not that they *are*, or that they belong in it and that they need to be included. And a lot of, I guess, um, Keshet issues right now that they're coming up with is inclusivity, and being recognized as a group. ... And (laughs) personally it just feels like ... well now you know what it's like to be a QPOC group. Cool. Like, please, like, just, just do your thing like, you know? ... The complaints just felt very, like, whiny (sigh). ... Like, "People aren't recognizing us! Why?"

Although she expressed frustration, Grace also understood that, like everyone else, "Keshet's just looking for somewhere to belong." Though Derek used the added dimension of cultural

oppression to explain why Keshet should be included in QPOC spaces, white queer students often used sexual oppression as justification for their own inclusion in QPOC spaces. That white-skinned privilege functioned differently than cultural and sexual privileges seemed lost on both religious and sexual communities as they argued that queers, people of color, and religious minorities who all experienced oppression should not exclude one another. Absent from this narrative was acknowledgement of how queer students of color were excluded from most queer spaces through the permeation of white queer norms and the lack of attention to white privilege.

In the context of these and other incidents involving struggles for QPOC recognition, leaders began working to facilitate closed QPOC spaces where they could work collectively to address concerns relevant to their communities. “[T]here comes a point where it’s like I need to stop, I need to I need to be able to feel *okay* enough to—where there’s spaces where I’m not explaining myself, I’m just being. You know?” Renee (biracial Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19, 2nd year) explained.

And that only exists in closed spaces. Like I really just don’t, there’s no other way for me to feel that way, you know? Cause it’s just like in every other space I’m just kinda like, it’s like “oh why do you feel that way?” “Ok let me tell you” and it’s not really a big deal but it’s like at some point, somewhere, people need a space to just be and not have to explain why that is. You know. So that’s why I think it’s important for me.

But despite the necessity of closed spaces, QPOC leaders continued to face resistance from many community members. “I know it hasn’t been, you know, popular ... to have closed spaces,” Elena (Latina bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) confirmed:

People get really upset that they have like, closed space meetings and um, I think that’s a necessity to have those times where you can have those spaces and talk and really feel comfortable and like, really talk about how you’re feeling. ‘Cause sometimes you don’t feel comfortable ... ‘cause I think, like, people talk about um, closed spaces and there’s a lot of like, misunderstanding and people don’t, like, understand why the space would have to be closed.

CLOSED SPACES AS THREATS TO QUEER INCLUSION:

The most common critique of closed space was that all queers experienced marginalization and should therefore refrain from being exclusionary towards one another. Many students believed the queer community was already a progressive community and struggled to understand why queer students of color would need to construct alternate spaces to discuss their distinct experiences of oppression. Critiques of closed QPOC spaces also relied on the logic that, by closing spaces, QPOC leaders were violating the inclusiveness of queer community norms. As a result, many queer of color students did not want to attend closed QPOC meetings because, as Dan (Biracial Black/Puerto Rican queer man, 19, 1st year) exclaimed, “I can’t believe we’re being exclusive. Like, we’re not letting other people into our meetings.”

Sarah (Mexican-American gay woman, 21, 4th year) said that increased QPOC leadership had resulted in an inclination within organizations “to be like, ‘We don’t want like, um, white people in it.’” She elaborated, telling me she felt there was “a lot of hatred in that ... like towards ... white males, specifically.” She told me people of color were always the ones critical of white men and expressed a frustration about the dynamics she observed.

I—personally like, it hurts me when people do that because its like I understand there’s like this, like, privilege, I guess. But I’m kind of above it. ... Like I don’t really see that as any sort of— like I know it’s a legitimate issue and some people do need to check their privilege. ... But I try to keep away from that. Like, I try to be as inclusive as I can be.

Sarah acknowledged that privilege was a “legitimate issue” in the queer community but suggested that forcing white men to check their privilege or stay out of QPOC spaces was not an inclusive practice, and interpreted QPOC desires for closed spaces as antithetical to queer community inclusion and solidarity. Moreover, Sarah suggested that white men were judged

more harshly than white women. “I feel like white women ... are closer to being ... of color ... [T]hey’re like, ‘she’s a woman, she’s been through enough’” she explained. By refraining from singling out white queers, specifically men, she viewed herself as being “above” looking at people on the basis of their gender or race.

Sarah was not alone in believing that white men were judged more harshly than white women. Patrick (White gay/homosexual man, 19, 2nd year) told me he “tried to approach all queer related events with an open mind” but that he avoided QPOC organizations because he believed leaders were judging him on the basis of his race and gender. Through the lens of inclusion white queer students suggested they were taking the high road by attempting to participate in QPOC spaces:

I remember one of the main reasons why I went to QSU was because I had this whole preconceived notion that if I go to QAPI they’re going to be looking at me like, “Why the hell is this white kid here?” ... Because even my QPOC friends are like, “Oh white people this, white people that,” you know, “White people like—this is what’s wrong with them.” So I’m just like, “You’re telling me that you want me to go to your organization but you’re just like—” I don’t wanna sit down there and like—I’m trying to come there with like, love and support and openness—I really don’t wanna sit there and talk about how we hate white people because of how, you know, like, ignorant they are, you know? ... Of course, some of them are but I feel like I was just like, intimidated by all these orgs. But now I know better. Now I know you have to go in there with your own voice and like, educate them and be like, “No, you know, it’s a possibility we can all be friends, I promise.”

Because Patrick perceived his QPOC friends as “hat[ing] on white people” he felt justified in attending QPOC spaces to “educate them” about how “we can all be friends.” White men were more likely than other students to suggest that QPOC leaders needed to be educated about how they were only hurting themselves by excluding white queers, and queer men of color often defended their white friends. When queer men of color resisted closed QPOC spaces their perspectives effectively invalidated the perspectives of QPOC leaders—mostly women and trans* people—who were struggling to facilitate closed spaces. “I feel like

whenever racism comes up it always comes back to white people oppressing people of color,” David (Filipino-American gay man, 21, 4th year) explained when I asked him about closed spaces:

I don't wanna say, reverse-racism, because racism is structural. ... But in a sense I feel like there's a lot of hate towards white people in the queer community.” ... I don't like that, at all. ... So that's kinda why I backed out. ... [I]f they want closed spaces then I think they should go for it. ... But at the same time I don't think they should be exclusively closed spaces... I think if people are uncomfortable in the queer communities of color then they need to learn how to trust other people...who don't identify the same way they do.

That leaders pursuing closed spaces were untrusting, as opposed to acting in response to white supremacy, was a common perception amongst both white queer and queer students of color. Although he recognized that racism was structural, David perceived closed spaces as being antagonistic and even discriminatory towards whites. It is also significant that he and many other queer of color students engaged in distancing mechanisms when referring to QPOC leaders. Since “those seeking to deflect the stigma they experience as members of a subordinate group” may engage in defensive othering, it was unsurprising that many queer of color students for whom race was not a salient identity went to great lengths to distance themselves from QPOC leaders (Schwalbe, Holden, Schrock, Godwin, Thompson and Wolkomir 2000: 425).

When queer people of color, especially men, resisted closed spaces it was symbolically significant. The prevailing sentiment that closed QPOC spaces were exclusive, and therefore antithetical to queer solidarity, provided a strong incentive for students not to associate with them. Because closed spaces were perceived as antithetical to queer community values, some students extricated themselves from the community as much as possible. While some students acknowledged that QPOC students’ experiences of racism

were valid, most still perceived them as unnecessarily highlighted in queer spaces. “They know that they’ve had these experiences. But coming to college we gain a lot of realization and insight into those experiences that we’ve had,” Peter (biracial Pilipino/White gay man, 21, 4th year) commented.

And it, it, it can be angering. And so I don’t want to come down on these people for being angry. Like, they have every right to be angry about the experiences that they’ve had. But I think what they’re doing is they’re closing themselves off to be with themselves... I feel like this anger, um, in the leadership is affecting the image of the community. And that negative image of the community is something that people kinda wanna dissociate from... And I know that I personally have experienced just, not wanting to be a part of it... Like, I personally don’t want to be a part of it anymore.

Like other queer men of color who extracted from the queer community in order to distance themselves from the “anger” of QPOC leaders, Peter symbolically aligned himself with white queer forms of inclusion. In doing so he marked QPOC concerns as divisive subgroup politics and reinforced racial ideologies that supported the white queer status quo (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 9).

Patrick (White homosexual man, 19, 2nd year) said that most students perceived of closed spaces as “basically segregating the white people from the rest of the community because you are white and for no other reason than because you are white.” But as Kacy (Black Costa Rican gay genderqueer, 21, 4th year) explained, the suggestion that students of color were segregating themselves was based on willful ignorance of how spaces were often constructed with implicitly white intentions and without concern for the interests of people of color:

Like, the whole, like, dialogue regarding, like, “Black people always segregate themselves...” I’ve heard that exact phrase, like, “They’re segregating themselves” from someone else. From a specific person ... I’m not gonna put them out there, put their shit on blast. ... And it’s like, well, are white students segregating themselves, too? ... Like, look at it from both situations.

As a result, despite the efforts of QPOC leaders to create safer spaces for their community, white male privilege continued to operate through the pretense of facilitating queer solidarity.

Based on the feedback they received from white students that talking about race would “ruin” queer spaces, antiracist queer students of color did not always feel they could speak freely about their experiences without being judged. In response to widespread resistance to closed spaces, QPOC leaders attempted to use “fear of judgment” and “safe spaces” as strategic frameworks for portraying the necessity of closed QPOC spaces. Like most students, Ross (Latino queer man, 19, 2nd year) described a safe space as “a space where I can just ... like discuss issues and also discuss things that are benevolent to things the community is involved in.” As a result, he felt that closed spaces were an important step towards facilitating QPOC solidarity:

[D]ialogue is a lot more empowering in these closed spaces, which I feel is necessary here at UCSB especially with like the QPOC orgs. ... I would like to have De Colores be a closed space because—not that I'm like against anyone being allowed to like go, but its more or less like I want to chill with my peeps, you know.

But queer safe spaces were also accountable to commonly held ideologies of tolerance and inclusion. While he supported and even desired closed QPOC spaces, Ross was sure to qualify his statement with the caveat that he wasn't “against anyone being allowed to go,” that it was more about being able to “chill with my peeps” than about excluding others. While this statement may seem like a minor point, the fact that he brought it up during our interview suggested the power of inclusive discourses in framing closed spaces and individuals' commitments to queer values. Even in this context, and knowing that I supported closed spaces, he expressed justifications for his desire not to be exclusive against others, underlying his characteristic commitment to inclusion.

Luke (White queer/pansexual trans man, 20, 3rd year) understood how closed spaces could be perceived as divisive, but contended that in a white dominated community they were necessary. “I just think that white people need to acknowledge that,” he argued,

[I]t takes a lot to acknowledge your whiteness ... which is still something, like, I struggle with. ... That's why I just feel upset with white folks. ... Especially, like, other white queers that are like, "You're just being exclusionary, and blah blah blah." ... It's like, "No, no, no, they're not.”

The constant focus on whether or not white folks should be included in QPOC spaces detracted from the work QPOC leaders’ efforts to strengthen their own communities. Although some students claimed that QPOC interests were disintegrating community solidarity, the primary source of leadership burnout among QPOC leaders was justifying their reasons for closed spaces against the entitlement of white queer students who felt they should have the right to participate in QPOC spaces. Referring to the work QPOC leaders had done to reconcile Keshet’s position in QPOC collaborations and Dane’s position in De Colores, Grace explained that QPOC leaders were unable to address social spaces and community until they first addressed white people’s concerns. “I guess the discussion around, you know, white people and their presence was a big thing” Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) reflected:

I dunno, we were talking about having a closed space and then there was like a Facebook event ... people were like, commenting and saying you know ... I'm not even sure if it was just white individuals. But you know, queer people of color, like active in the community...were you know, posting on these walls and saying, you know "I don't understand." You know, like "Why, why this is a closed space? ... Why aren't white people allowed?" And like, and saying things like "My white friends feel like 'this' when this happens," you know? ... And it was like ... it almost felt like they, they felt like we were ... talking about oppression too much and they didn’t like it because it was giving them a bad name in front of like their white friends ... It was like a very like, they were pleading with us to “stop this nonsense so that we can appease to the white community,” is what it felt like.

As Grace suggested, many queer of color students perceived closed spaces as potentially

threatening their own positive queer identities in the eyes of their white friends. Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) laughed and shook her head when she talked about ongoing confrontations over closed spaces:

It's been exhausting (laughs). Frustrating. It's um, oh man, I— again with this year being so different than the last years, I think it's been very um, almost uncomfortable for the other people in the ... queer community ... for the first time [to] be seeing closed spaces and not having access to these spaces. And, and, feeling like, left out of something, you know? And um, the response we've been getting is just, um, a lot of people not understanding. Or not kind of, getting it and they're um, I mean I've gotten messages from people saying like ... "I've been to QAPI meetings before, I've been at Black Quare, De Colores meetings before, I don't get why it's closed now." "I don't get why— I mean, what are you all gonna be talking about that's so—?" I mean—I got this one really nasty message, yeah. And I'm not gonna say the name (laughs) but like it was just like very, like, "I don't even know why y'all are—why y'all need this space because it's not like y'all are doing any top-secret work or something in there." ... And I was like, oh man. It's very like, hostile, almost (laughs). Um, but I mean I think it's expected ... almost. Because it's like, the first year that, before closed spaces didn't exist— yeah, at all. I don't think there's ever been a closed space in the history of UCSB QPOC orgs.

White queer students and their friends repeatedly invalidated QPOC spaces and the work of QPOC leaders through various rhetorical moves. The suggestion that QPOC leaders were not “doing any top-secret work or something in there” and the constant negative appraisals of QPOC leaders for being “exclusive” portrayed queer of color students’ racial realities as inconsequential and even inaccurate. These strategies for resisting closed spaces are examples of microaggressions collectively aimed at portraying QPOC leaders as being overly sensitive and petty for insisting that they needed their own spaces.

In the face of contentions over closed spaces, QPOC leaders expressed frustrations that while white queer students demanded they be included, they rarely took advantage of opportunities to attend open QPOC meetings and events. “Like last night,” Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) told me, “[QAPI] had like, a meeting and uh, I think Asian allies came ... but it was definitely just Asians.” Though many students

were offended that nearly all Black Quare meetings were closed, Kacy (Black Costa Rican genderqueer 21, 4th year) laughed that “when we do have events that are open the person—like, specifically the person that has made certain comments and things—like doesn't go to Black Quare events ... It's like: ‘You *did* get the invite- I made sure we invited *you!*’”

QUEER ORGANIZATIONS, CLOSED SPACES AND IDENTITY VERIFICATION:

Group expectations are powerful determinants of members’ actions. When people hold a cherished identity as members of a collective they will often act in ways to verify their membership and to prove to other members of the group that they belong. As a result, queer students’ behaviors in relation to other members of the queer community suggested certain expectations about how queers should behave and which investments they should value. Early in my research it became clear that the ideologies of solidarity imbedded in queer identity and community were implicit in shutting down discussions of race within queer spaces. These ideologies were powerful enough to discourage students of color from challenging intracommunity racism for fear of being seen as “ruining” queer spaces, indicating that expectations of sexuality-based unity were powerful investments that guided students’ behaviors.

It is significant that inclusion and exclusion were repeatedly deployed in critiques of closed QPOC spaces. Because queer identity in this context was formulated around inclusion, accusing someone of being exclusive was the most effective means through which queer students could negatively appraise one another. That queer social groups in this context were concerned with social justice and recognition of power structures failed to mitigate the rhetorical effectiveness of inclusion as justification for shutting down closed QPOC spaces. In this chapter I discussed how white queer students were able to achieve identity verification

within the queer community's umbrella organizations where their whiteness was protected from interrogation. However, the same inclusive politics that protected white students from scrutiny fostered a climate that limited queer of color students' abilities to develop their own self-verifying opportunity structures through closed QPOC spaces.

White queer issues, coded simply as "queer issues," were conceived of as in-group concerns while QPOC issues were framed as external, additive, or divisive to queer concerns. Because members of diverse movements often have strong subgroup attachments (Azzi, Chryssochoou, Klandermans and Simon 2011) research indicates that resistance may occur when those subgroup attachments are overemphasized through tokenization or neglect (Huo, et al 2005: 239). It is common for members of stigmatized communities to create alternate spaces where they can organize in closed spaces free from the judgment or suppression of outside groups (Hurwitz and Taylor 2012; Futrell and Simi 2004; Polletta 1999; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Taylor and Whittier 1992). According to social identity theories, people who receive negative appraisals within one community tend to seek out more self-affirming self-verifying opportunity structures. While the queer community offered a self-verifying opportunity structure for many students, those with multiple salient identities often found that they were tokenized or neglected in mainstream queer organizations. One solution to this dilemma was for queer of color students to cling to affiliations that validated both their sexual and racial identities. Racial and ethnic queer organizations provided queer students of color self-verifying opportunity structures, where they could access ongoing confirmation of their own experiences and self-conceptions (Swann 1983; Swann, Polzer, Seyle and Ko 2004: 11).

QPOC leaders attempted to facilitate QPOC solidarity and identity validation by offering queer students of color spaces free from the demands of white queer norms. QPOC organizations and spaces—some of which were closed to students who didn't share the identities of group organizers—should have relieved queer of color students from the pressures of addressing white queer students' concerns that race would "ruin" queer spaces. However, the construction and maintenance of specifically closed QPOC spaces caused alarm for those students who were forced to grapple with how their own uninterrogated privileges had negatively impacted open QPOC spaces.

Queer students' concerns with inclusive self-verifying opportunity structures—organizations and spaces designed to welcome people exploring various facets of their gender and sexual identities—clouded the logics of safe spaces used by QPOC students working to develop spaces for change. As I discussed in Chapter Two, students defined the queer community through inclusive politics and non-regulation of people's identities and participation in community spaces. As a result the issue over closed QPOC spaces was framed through queer group politics that classified exclusion or segregation of any kind—even when intended to support a subset of the population—as antithetical to queer political investments and ideologies.

Alongside a prevailing emphasis on solidarity and inclusion the presence of specific racial and ethnic queer student groups gestured towards diversity in the queer community. Organizations catering to people's multiple identities signaled to some students that members of the community were "working proactively to...tailor to different needs and identities and people" (Dalton Black queer man, 21, 4th year). But the formation of these groups suggested that, rather than being integral to queer group identity and values, race and ethnicity were

relevant only to communities of color—that is, defined as an addendum to the queer community that was implicitly white. As Renee (biracial Mexican/White queer woman 19, 2nd year) put it “You don’t like closed spaces because, you know, you feel like you don’t like a group of strangers making you feel like, you know, ostracized or like different. But it’s like...that’s my reality every single day.”

Critiques of closed spaces were often framed in terms of inclusive queer politics and suggested that queer students of color would further isolate and marginalize themselves by creating separate spaces. But lacking from assertions that closed spaces would reproduce inequalities was critical attention to how closed spaces were formed in response to existing white supremacy in the queer community. In fact, the efficacy of anti-closed space discourses was indicative of the prevalence and power of white privilege and white-centric ideologies in the queer community. If antiracist efforts had been integral to queer community ideologies the need for these spaces might not have existed. As Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) exclaimed through exasperated laughter, “I think maybe if these issues were like, included in things that already exist, you know, then we wouldn’t have to create like a subsection for *every single* identity!”

Because white forms of inclusion pervaded the queer community, queer of color students had to explicitly articulate the importance of QPOC spaces against accusations that they were being exclusive. This was in part due to the fact that queer of color identities and spaces were considered to occupy additive dimensions of queer experiences and required justification and constant legitimation. White queer identities and spaces, on the contrary, were simply considered queer; unracialized in their whiteness. As a result, there was a great deal of public discussion during this year about how white students’ felt excluded from the

queer community because of their whiteness. But when QPOC concerns were named, they became a source of discomfort in the queer community. Many queer students perceived QPOC leaders as being unnecessarily confrontational and closed spaces were often framed as being motivated by “anger” or “hatred.” In the following chapter, I will consider the ways that queer students in this site attempted to promote inclusion and diversity through specific interactional processes, and how white norms ultimately influenced the potential impacts of antiracist queer organizing and intracommunity allyship.

PRACTICING INCLUSION IN THE QUEER COMMUNITY

In the previous chapters I discussed the ways that students used queer group and social identities to promote solidarity and inclusion, then illustrated the significance of the self-verifying opportunity structures that they created for themselves through queer student organizations. Having addressed how identification and self-verifying opportunity structures functioned to promote inclusion in the queer community, I will now turn to an analysis of group processes.

Social movement organizations and communities provide a unique site for studying the interactional effects of identity management since participants often share a pre-established orientation towards what progress looks like (Srivastava 2005; 2006). While scholarship has attended to how white antiracists manage their own identities among themselves (Hughey 2012), there has been little attention to the interactional effects of managing the privileges associated with whiteness in a racially and culturally diverse social movement community. Under an ever-expanding queer group identity that emphasizes inclusion (Ghaziani 2011), queers of color are often invisibilized rather than explicitly excluded (Alimahomed 2010; Misa 2001) from queer spaces. Because their experiences were submerged within broad, white-centric frameworks for what it meant to be queer, queers of color often remained invisible until they challenged the norms that rendered their sexual and racial identities as irreconcilable. But when queers of color contested ideologies that reinforce queer solidarity at the expense of their full participation in queer spaces, they were often perceived as threatening the cohesion of the queer community.

People often attempt to verify their identities by actively demonstrating their commitments to ideologies, values, and practices associated with the community they wish to

be a part of. Practices that enact and solidify group interests facilitate a sense of solidarity or “we-ness” among members who consequently develop a social identity based on their sense of self in relation to the group (Gamson 1992; Tajfel 1981; Howard 2000). By focusing on inclusion, queer students were able to construct methods for expressing openness to others, but for true inclusion and solidarity to occur students generally agreed that they must behave in ways that signaled their commitments to inclusive identities and spaces.

The inclusion-based definition of queer identity and the impetus to facilitate inclusive spaces reflected group values that students were held accountable to through various activities and processes within the community. Methods for practicing inclusion in the queer community were most commonly enacted through *inclusive language*, *educating others*, and *incorporating allies*. In this chapter I provide an overview of the intent and implementation of each practice, with attention to how each practices reinforced white forms of queerness and solidarity and re-marginalized queers of color in this community.

Inclusive Language:

Utilizing and educating others about how to use inclusive language was one of the most commonly cited interactional methods for facilitating inclusion among queer students in this community. Inclusive language consisted of avoiding potentially offensive words and using gender-neutral terms—for example “you all” instead of “you guys”—to refer to groups. Like most of the students I interviewed, Emilia (Latina queer/lesbian woman, 19, 2nd year) had first been exposed to the concept of inclusive language in the queer community. For Emilia a safe space was “being with like-minded individuals...that are aware of their privilege...the things that they say.” For example, students encouraged one another to avoid the use of terms like “crazy” to describe undesirable situations or behaviors in order to de-stigmatize mental

health concerns and to say “you all” instead of “you guys” so as not to be gender exclusive. Out of respect for transgender students, student leaders promoted the use and respect of people’s preferred gender pronouns (PGPs) and QSU officers even encouraged attendees to share their PGPs during weekly icebreakers. By incorporating inclusive language strategies within organizational practices and everyday interactions, students attempted to create safe spaces for one another and to limit the potential for alienating fellow queers.

In addition to increasing awareness of how their own words impacted others, queer students were encouraged to engage in inclusive language by refraining from speaking on behalf of others and by recognizing how much space they occupied during community events. During several organization meetings and workshops I witnessed students formulating methods for calling attention to problematic words or phrases, and for inviting others to “check their own privileges.” These methods were established through “community guidelines” that varied from one event to another but always included the following four themes:

- *Ouch, Oops, Sorry, Educate:* If someone says something to offend you, let them know in a kind manner (“ouch”). If you say something to offend someone else, acknowledge it and apologize (“oops—sorry”). The person who was offended can then educate the person who offended them as to how what they said was problematic
- *One Diva, One Mic:* Only one person should speak at a time
- *Step up, step back:* Alternately known as move up, move back to acknowledge the ableism implied by “stepping” up, this guideline reminded people to be cognizant of how much they were speaking in a particular space. People who were speaking the most were encouraged to “move back” to make room for others, while those who had been silent were encouraged to “move up” and have their voices heard.
- *Use “I” Statements:* Speak for yourself, not for others or for the whole community.

Grace (Taiwanese-American pansexual woman, 21, 4th year) said that establishing ground rules was symbolic of inclusion because “it's hard to, like, make everyone feel comfortable but at least you know that they're trying.”

Although the guidelines and their attendant explanations at meetings suggested methods for checking one's own privilege, several students claimed they were still uncertain as to what they should be “checking” and why. Moreover, because queer group solidarity relied on shared marginalization, white queer and queer of color men frequently experienced identity conflicts when confronted with the idea that they had privileges. Reid (Filipino gay man, 19, 2nd year) who had recently had his cisgender male privilege pointed out to him described privilege as a “hot topic” in the queer community:

I don't know if I like the whole idea of quantifying someone's privilege over another. Um, I know it's definitely led to a lot of tense moments between my friends and other individuals in the community so it's interesting ... I, I haven't honestly been involved in any confrontations or any tensions ... but I have friends who um, definitely are involved in the community ... and have been pushed away because of their race or because they're male.

Identity conflicts were especially prevalent among white, cisgender gay men since they were accustomed to emphasizing their marginalization as queers in the context of heteronormativity rather than grappling with their own white and male privileges. “I never thought really about being white,” said Patrick (White homosexual/gay man, 19, 2nd year),

So it's very interesting coming here and people alerting myself of my whiteness. ... I always have to remind myself that I am white so I have to be careful what I say in certain aspects. Or I am white so I have to come off as a certain kind of person. Or I am white so I have to really make sure I don't talk too much, you know?

White students and male students often resented having their privileges highlighted in a community where they had sought solidarity based on their experiences of sexual marginalization. Some students suggested that being told to check their privileges was a form

of discrimination within the queer community since it limited their abilities to participate in closed spaces and to voice their opinions more generally without risking reprimand. “A lot of it is trial and error and just observation,” said Patrick (White homosexual/gay man, 19, 2nd year):

[L]ike the phrase where “the average man will like, learn from his mistakes but a wise man will learn from the mistakes of others.” ... So like, I will see ... like a white person or just somebody and then a queer person of color, they will say something and then someone in the community will snap at them like, “Why did you say that? You’re ignorant, you’re this and this.” And I’ll be like, “okay—shit.” ... So it’s kinda like inclusive language and like, check your privilege, they’re all kind of the same thing to me in a sense where you really don’t know until you accidentally say it and then somebody kinda calls you out on it. ... So a lot of checking your privilege is if your privilege is not being checked then people will snap at you or kinda put you in line. Then you will realize it.

Checking their own privileges required students to recognize how their race, class, gender, or sexual statuses influenced their behaviors or clouded their abilities to recognize how they were being oppressive in specific spaces. As a result, white queer students and both white and queer men of color perceived themselves as being subject to identity appraisals on a constant basis, and engaged in continual identity management strategies for maintaining their positive identities in the queer community. However, it is significant that these students only described inclusive language as oppressive when they were required to check their own privileges in relation to QPOC spaces and organizing.

What these same students failed to recognize was that inclusive language in the queer community was constructed through white frames that were rarely if ever acknowledged. Kacy (Black Costa Rican gay genderqueer, 21, 4th year) put it best when he suggested that, “within inclusivity is a little bit of exclusivity.” Suggesting that inclusive language disproportionately required Black queer students to code switch and to adopt white

communication styles if they wanted to be perceived as culturally sensitive members of the community, Kacy elaborated:

Obviously I, I try my best and like, my hardest. Like, I don't say "guys" ... 'cause I understand how powerful words can be to people. Trust me, I've been at the receiving end of words ... but like, at the same time like, it's hard coming from like, the culture that I come from. Like, for instance, this is the only thing I have a problem with inclusive language is around the word "bitch" to be honest. Like, not problem because I understand it is an issue, like, period. But where I come from it's different. Bitch doesn't mean the same as it— like, if anything back home, like, you call your friends a "bitch." ... I follow inclusive language. I do. And I understand the power of words. Like, *trust*. But sometimes it's, like, it's cultural, like, relevancy-thing? ... Kinda of make me like a little bit, you know—where I can't act the way I wanna be because it's like, it's gonna offend someone else like, so I understand that. ... But you know, so it's just a little like, "Oh snap."

For queer students of color, seeking community within both racially and sexually based communities often required participation in distinct spaces where identity norms differed.

This required the situational management of their identities (Sandoval 2000) and concomitant shifts in their behavioral adherence to values associated with queerness. While students were expected to refrain from using terms like “bitch” (sexist), “fag” (homophobic) or “lame” (ableist) there was little attention paid to the ways that white queer students, and queer white men in particular, coopted Black linguistic codes and stereotypes in nonreflexive ways.

During the 2012 student drag show, one queer women of color told me that she had removed herself from the Facebook event because she was tired of seeing white people use black slang, and another queer woman of color posted on Facebook that she was sick of people using drag as an excuse for racism.

Inclusive language practices in the queer community that forbade the use of words that could offend others also resulted in increased surveillance of queer of color students. It was common for white students, during inclusive language workshops and programming, to inquire as to how they should address people of color who were using derogatory racial slurs

rather than focusing on their own linguistic practices. For example, during the questions and answers portion of an inclusive language workshop one white woman shifted the focus from how she could be an ally by educating other white people to ask how to intervene if she was on a bus and heard “a bunch of African Americans using the n-word.”

More generally, Elias (Chicana queer genderqueer, 21, 4th year) suggested that adopting inclusive language required “breaking away from” previous ways of speaking, which often made it difficult for hir to express hirself in queer spaces:

Like English is my second language. And it’s hard enough sometimes to pick up words but when you change it up, it’s even more difficult. And I really started having this conversation with myself I guess in the recent year I two. I noticed more and more things that can or cannot be said in terms of inclusivity, like, triggering folks. ... I have such a hard time being able to speak sometimes when I’m trying to make sure I can even be in that space ... I already speak less in class because I really have to, like, think about like, wording the things that I want to say. But, within like, just like having a QComm meeting sometimes I freeze up too much.

As these accounts demonstrate, queer of color students were disproportionately silenced and surveilled within the queer community through the enforcement of implicitly white expectations imbedded within inclusive language,

Educating Others:

Like most institutions UCSB includes a diversity initiative as part of its mission statement, which provided a ‘cognitive script’ for students to draw from as they formulated strategies for promoting inclusion within their own communities (Raeburn 2004; Ward 2008b).

Because of the academic context of the university, diversity programming focused primarily on the implementation of educational workshops intended to educate students about cultures and identities different from their own. In addition, students who had gained greater self-awareness through Sociology, Feminist, and Ethnic Studies courses believed that by similarly

enlightening others about the diversity and variation of human sexualities they could achieve greater acceptance for queer students on campus.

The common conception among students in the queer community was that heterosexual students only harassed queer students because “they’re confused about it—they don’t know what it is” (Mercedes— Hispanic pansexual genderqueer 19, 2nd year). “People know about ‘Oh, those queer students,’” Elena (Latina queer/lesbian woman, 19, 2nd year) said, “But you know, they, I guess aren’t necessarily educated.” Because they believed homophobia on campus resulted primarily from lack of awareness, queer students most commonly cited increased visibility and education as a solution to the discrimination they faced.

Having queerness acknowledged in non-queer spaces through educational initiatives was validating for students and made them feel more welcomed on campus. Dan (Biracial Black/Puerto Rican queer man, 19, 1st year) described the UCSB administration as successfully bringing awareness about queer issues to the community because information about queer students was incorporated within orientation materials. The RCSGD facilitated Safe Zone trainings for organizations across campus, QSU officers held educational meetings several times per quarter, and students set up tables showcasing queer student organizations at campus-wide events. In addition to hosting informational workshops queer students engaged in “queer bombing” events during which they wore Pride shirts, or shirts emblazoned with a hot pink bomb that read “QUEER,” as a tactic for disrupting heteronormative spaces and making queerness more visible on campus. Students consistently saw these approaches as facilitating efforts to encourage heterosexual students to be more “open to the queer community (Timothy—Mexican-American gay man, 21, 3rd year).

Queer students also provided educational programming for members of their own community. Most workshops designed for internal education addressed “basic things— understanding, like, preferred gender pronouns and ... not making assumptions about gender identity and sexual orientation and all of that” (Elena Latina bisexual woman, 21, 4th year). For many students, ongoing internal education was integral to community solidarity since learning about other peoples’ experiences could increase their ability to work cohesively with one another. But education within the community also required that students be willing to share educate others about their own experiences.

One of the reasons that closed QPOC spaces were so stigmatized was because they appeared to violate queers’ obligations to educate others in service of the community’s overall well being. Because logics of inclusion promoted educating others, queer students of color were expected to educate white queer students and to incorporate them within QPOC spaces. “I understand the importance of having those spaces ... but those spaces have two purposes,” Peter (Biracial Pilipino/White gay man, 21, 4th year) said, “One is to give that space to people who need it. But it’s also to provide an area for people who are outside of that community to come and to learn.”

Because the norms guiding inclusion in this context required actively educating and integrating others, the implementation of inclusive practices fell disproportionately upon the shoulders of QPOC leaders. For example, many students suggested that if QPOC leaders were going to check others’ privileges should also educate them as to what they could do better. “[I]t’s always a really interesting like, whenever I hear somebody say ‘Check your privilege ‘cause you’re white’” Patrick (White homosexual man, 19, 2nd year) reflected. “[I]t’s just like, ‘Explain that to them,’ you know?”

Moreover, QPOC leaders promoting closed spaces were subject to expectations that they justify their interests. Many students resisted closed spaces based on the assertion that well-intentioned white allies were not adequately educated as to why they were being excluded. For example, despite the efforts of numerous QPOC leaders to reach out to and educate Dane, according to most of the students I interviewed Dane had been unaware of how his presence impacted QPOC spaces. “He just wanted to *help* but he didn't understand like the oppression part about it” Grace (Taiwanese-American bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) suggested, “And I think, he never really was able to have anyone talk to him personally about this kind of stuff.” Queer of color students were thus expected to be allies to white queer people by compassionately educating them about racism and white privilege. “There will always be a divide, there will always be privilege,” Dalton (Black queer man, 21, 4th year) assessed. “But it's just like, working in the community to like make it better and like...questioning those people and challenging those people but also recognizing the fact that they too are struggling with a lot of things, too.”

Since queer students perceived lack of information as being the primary barrier to queer inclusion, members of the queer community were expected to educate others and to remain open to learning about other communities. Queer students believed that the discomfort heterosexual students might feel when learning about queers was part and parcel to the process of increased awareness about their own heterosexual privileges. They did not however, translate this onto the exposure of white queers to their own racial privileges and the consequent internal fissures over QPOC concerns. Queer students generally spoke of racism as the purview of the uneducated but seldom addressed racism within their own communities. During a community dialogue on white privilege in the queer community,

Renee (biracial Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19, 2nd year) said she often felt like it wasn't the "right time" to talk about race when she was in queer spaces unless there was an explicit educational program taking place about "intersectionality." Other queer students of color shared similar concerns during that dialogue and expressed discontent with white formulations of queerness that demanded they articulate their identities in isolation from one another despite the fact that their racial and cultural identities were integral to their experiences as queers. Because they were simultaneously expected to educate white queers about QPOC concerns and refrain from discussing race in mainstream queer spaces, queer students of color were commonly required to transform the QPOC spaces they had developed for their own well-being into sites for educating white queers.

Despite the significance of education as an inclusive practice, it was emotionally exhausting for queer of color students to constantly educate others about the impacts of racism on their own communities. This was especially true because opponents of closed spaces, drawing on inclusive ideologies, rarely internalized what they learned about racism. "When I have an argument with one of these people, it's like they in their heart of hearts, they deep down they know they're right," Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) said of her discussions with students opposing closed spaces:

They think this is the *truth*. Like, they think this is *how* it is. And me trying to fight that battle does nothing ... and to keep my sanity, I need to stop. ... And even if they wanna learn something from me—even if they wanna be educated ... I don't know why I'm putting their education in front of *my* emotional and mental, like, well being.

Renee (Biracial Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19, 2nd year) said that her and other queer students of color often had to educate the same people repeatedly. "[I]t's kinda just like, you know like, 'What's wrong with being colorblind?'" she told me of responses from other

students, “And it’s just so typical...you need to know this and I’m caught in this fucking system where I’m educating you again.”

When QPOC leaders did attempt to educate queer students and, more specifically white gay men, those interactions opened them up to increased hostility and often to overtly racist attacks on their methods for achieving QPOC recognition. Due to my position within the community white students managed their racial discourses in my presence (see Bonilla-Silva 2010), but through private Facebook messages and during one-to-one interactions where they were less subject to public appraisals, white queer students and their friends were often openly aggressive towards QPOC leaders. Isabella, who was consistently harassed on Facebook because of her outspokenness about racism, finally became so fed up that she shared a series of messages and posts with me to use in my research. Students’ deployments of white moral outrage, tokenization of QPOC experiences, and racist language were made painfully visible in these dialogues. Because many of these interactions went on for pages I have chosen excerpts from one discussion to analyze more in depth. Due to the fact that I only had Isabella’s consent to use this material I refrain from giving specific identifying information about the other student involved.

In response to an article on white privilege in queer communities that Isabella had posted and shared with several members of the community one white queer man, who had been involved in QPOC organizing and who had been widely criticized for failing to check his privilege— and even for posting photographs of himself on Facebook raking leaves in a sombrero, mustache and poncho— expressed outrage through a private message where he deployed racial discourses in service of portraying Isabella’s behaviors as racist. “You make me feel extremely uncomfortable just because of the color of my skin,” he told her. “I

honestly can not think of anything I have ever done to offend you,” he continued, “so that leads me to believe you harbor this angst against me because I'm white and from a nice background,” implicitly suggesting through barely veiled racism that, unlike him, Isabella was *not* from a nice background. “You talk about all of the privilege I have because I'm white and male, but by constantly saying stuff like that, you just come off as rude and disrespectful,” he argued, attacking her methods of communication, demanding that he was entitled to respect, and suggesting she do a better job of educating him on how to be a better ally:

Instead of using your anger and discomfort towards me in a bad way (giving me dirty looks and such), you could teach me how to be an ally the right way because I REALLY REALLY REALLY want to be an ally to the QPOC community (as well as other communities)... I hope you can open your mind a little, have a little more patience, and be a little nicer.

While she emphasized that his comfort was not her priority, Isabella expressed empathy for the “discomfort you seem to have in acknowledging your whiteness & white privilege.” She suggested a number of readings in service of “educating” him and said that, “Since I know now that you prefer 1-1 communication, I am happy to meet up with you in person/over the phone to discuss this matter more at length, if that’s something you’re interested in.” But even with her efforts to provide him with resources, the student responded defensively:

I’m not uncomfortable acknowledging my whiteness at all. I'm uncomfortable with the way you treat me because I am white. ... You say it's my responsibility to educate myself and, sure, I can do that. ... And I'm not guilty about being white at all. I haven't done anything bad solely because I'm white, so I have no reason to feel guilty. Stop assuming things. ... I appreciate the readings. I might look into them if I have spare time between work and school. Although I wouldn't mind getting into the sun a little more...my legs are starting to get super pale. So I guess I am uncomfortable with that aspect of me being white.

As this excerpt illustrates, even when provided with the information necessary to improve allyship, white queer students often deflected from their own responsibility of recognizing

white privilege and instead framed QPOC leaders as engaging in anti-white racism. Through these rhetorical moves white students, and especially white queer men, portrayed themselves as victims within the queer community; people who meant well but were attacked by QPOC leaders in spite of their own best intentions. During this particular discussion the student also minimized the impacts of systemic racism by referring to his own whiteness as something that only made him uncomfortable because his “legs are starting to get super pale,” a concern he intended to remedy by “getting into the sun a little bit more” but which might interfere with his ability to look into the readings Isabella had suggested. Finally, despite his emphatic claims that he “REALLY REALLY REALLY” wanted to be an ally to the QPOC community, noting that he had work and school to attend to and would thus only get to the readings “in my spare time” functioned to rhetorically diminish the reality of queer students of color who had to combat racism and homophobia in *addition* to their daily responsibilities. In this final move he revealed that engaging in active allyship was only a concern inasmuch as it did not interfere with his normal routines—and sunbathing.

Based on the expectations imbedded in queer inclusive practices, queer students of color bore the brunt of the work as white queer students turned to them for explanations about QPOC experiences. But even when queer students of color shared their perspectives and experiences with white queer students they were often dismissed and subjected to increased harassment and negative appraisals by other queer students. Queer students of color were thus effectively discounted and re-marginalized through the educational methods intended to promote inclusion within the queer community

Incorporating Allies:

Students' conceptions of allyship were variable but at the most basic level suggested that a person be invested in the struggles of communities they were not themselves a part of.

Allyship was a significant component of education and inclusive language since allies were seen as being uniquely situated to convey positive information about queer communities.

Since people tend to more tacitly agree with or accept norms proposed by members of their own group (Abrams et al 1990) queer students believed that critiques of homophobia would be more effective if they came from heterosexuals. "Sometimes in the more hetero-dominant world ... being queer may not hold validity ... so having someone who is heterosexual and socially accepted can provide an alternative pathway of awareness," explained Reid (Filipino gay man, 19, 2nd year).

Incorporating heterosexual allies required a combination of using inclusive language, educating others and encouraging allies to participate in queer community spaces. By using inclusive language, queer students expected that they could limit the alienation of their peers and thus increase the prospective pool of allies from which they could draw. At the same time, by making inclusive language a core practice within the community queer students could more readily socialize heterosexual allies to adopt inclusive language through their involvement. The presence of allies in queer spaces was especially significant to queer students since they interpreted the participation of allies as a form of resistance to the stigma of being perceived as queer. On the contrary, if a heterosexual friend declined to participate in queer spaces, queer students often felt rejected and stigmatized. For example, Bo (Mexican-American queer woman, 21, 4th year) described being hurt by "friends who—I've

like asked them, ‘Can you please come to this event with me?’ and they’re like, ‘I’m in LA but I just can’t because then people are going to think that I’m queer.’”

For most students, the willingness and desire of heterosexual friends to participate in queer spaces was validating. But the presence of heterosexuals could also result in undesirable shifts in queer spaces. “[S]ometimes as a queer person I wanna be around only other queer people,” Om (White queer genderqueer, 20, 3rd year) commented,

Not that you don’t love your straight friends and straight allies and they’re great but sometimes ... you just don’t want them around and it’s like, sometimes, the crushing heteronormativity of everything is getting you down and you need just you know, support from your fellow queer people and I think that’s sort of like, you could fill in the blank with any identity and you know, take out “queer” and “straight” and “heteronormativity” and put in different things.

In spite of the potential drawbacks of including heterosexual allies in queer spaces, their perceived authority to promote queer acceptance among their heterosexual peers led queer students to go to great lengths facilitate heterosexuals’ understandings of queer investments. Moreover, for many queer students identifying as an ally had provided them the opportunity to become involved in the community and to explore their own identities prior to coming out. Because of the potential for heterosexual allies to be questioning their own sexual identities, queer students believed that incorporating them within the community was an important aspect of inclusion.

Most students believed that anyone who was interested in or tolerant of queers could be an ally, regardless of whether they actively participated in the queer community. For example, Cruz (multiracial Spanish/Irish/Native American genderqueer, 18, 1st year) described his housemate as an ally even though she “never goes to any of the meetings, like ever ... She just like, asks me all these questions. Like, “So what do you identify as?” and

like "What does that mean?" ... And I'm just like, "Okay, lemme help you (laughs) understand all of this terminology.'"

So far I have discussed *out-group* or *extracommunity* allyship, which was allyship from people who did not identify as queer. Alternately, *in-group* or *intracommunity* allyship took place across groups within the queer community. Since identity politics relies on the production of an innocent and wronged social group, queer group members worked to maintain the perception that they were not active participants the marginalization of others. There is a moral investment at work in subordinated statuses such that marginalized subjects fundamentally conceive of themselves as being imposed upon rather than as being complicit in the marginalization of others (Fellows and Razack 1998). Many queers said that their own experiences of subordination made them more compassionate towards others and thus made them de facto allies to marginalized groups. This compassion theoretically facilitated inclusion and solidarity amongst queers and led to more intracommunity allyship. For example, Dan (Biracial Black/Puerto Rican queer man, 19, 1st year) suggested that:

[B]eing comfortable with my sexuality I've realized that I'm a lot more open-minded and like, liberal about other aspects, too. So, um, yeah, so like even when it comes to like, something like immigration or when it comes to like, abortion, I'm just like, so like, it's your, it's all up to the individual, It's just like, I'm just so, like, open to it. Like, inclusive. ... [Y]ou're taught, like, "treat others how you want to be treated." ... I want to be like, accepted for like who I am and so therefore I feel like I should just return my act and I should do the same to others.

In particular, students described attending events and organization meetings as being symbolic of allyship among members of the queer community. Caleb (Hispanic gay man, 18, 1st year) explained to me that he was not interested in joining De Colores for his own identity validation but in order to reinforce the importance of allyship supporting queer students:

I feel like I wanna know more about like, the whole like, Latino *and* gay community because I don't know a lot about that and I feel like ... if I'm apathetic towards what I

am then ... what makes it right for me to say that, like, “Why are you apathetic towards other people?”

Here, he framed his interest in attending De Colores and learning more about the “Latino *and* gay community” as a method for encouraging non-heterosexuals to ally with queers since his desire for support from heterosexual allies could be discounted based the impression that he was apathetic towards his own community of Latino gays. Thus students commonly deployed intracommunity allyship as a strategy for validating their own moral characters and for encouraging heterosexual students to ally with queer groups more generally.

Many queer students used the incorporation of heterosexual allies to buttress their critiques of QPOC spaces, particularly since most heterosexual allies were only exposed to queerness through open queer spaces. Several queer students suggested that, by closing QPOC spaces, QPOC leaders were alienating potential allies and limiting their own capacities for creating change. Emilia (Chicana queer/lesbian woman, 19, 2nd year) said that closed spaces were necessary but that allies should have opportunities to attend open spaces. “[I]f you don’t identify as a person of color, to understand and learn and hear about queer people of color struggles is important,” she explained, “that’s your best way to become a better ally.”

Participating in QPOC spaces and asking others to educate them was as far as most queer students’ conceptions of allyship went since that was how most heterosexual allies expressed their commitment to queer community. Attending QPOC events was also the most visible method through which white queer students could convey their commitments to community solidarity, making it the preferred method for achieving identity verification. As a result, being asked not to attend particular spaces reflected to white queer students that they were failing to meet the expectations of their peers. When they were asked not to attend

closed QPOC spaces, many white students interpreted the request as a negative appraisal.

“People don’t always know which ones are open, allies don’t know when to show up,” said Om (White queer genderqueer, 20, 3rd year), “and then of course you have the like, closed spaces and then people feel excluded and left out and the, ‘I wasn’t a good enough ally,’ like, ‘you couldn’t let me be there.’”

Because queer students encouraged heterosexual allies to participate in queer events, many white queer students had difficulty understanding how their presence in QPOC spaces could invalidate queer students of color. Individuals often participate in movement oriented behaviors in order to achieve identity-verification (Gecas 2000; Pinel and Swann 2000), and participating in activism that aligns with ones own values can be a means for validating a person’s positive self concept. By engaging in allyship students signified that they were invested in social justice beyond their own self-interests. But the “failure to live up to the requirements of these moral collective and value identities is viewed [and experienced] as a moral failure” (Gecas 2000:100). Subsequently, as Myers suggests that

[A]lly activism is a natural means of verifying that one is indeed a ‘good’ person. Sometimes, though, the challenges of being an ally prevent self-verification. If activists do not get the confirmation or appreciation from beneficiaries that they expect, they may exit the activist environment and find another site for self-verification. The same can result simply because allies grow weary of the ongoing self-presentation and identity maintenance tasks (2008: 177).

Resistance to closed QPOC spaces and anti-racist discourses frequently emphasized that insisting white queers constantly check their own privileges only pushed potential antiracist allies further away. These discourses were designed to uphold white queers’ moral identities while disputing the necessity for queer of color spaces. But white queer students’ participation in QPOC spaces often had the opposite effect since their uninterrogated entitlement in those spaces only reaffirmed the negative impacts of white privilege on queer

of color communities. Elena (Latina bisexual woman, 21, 4th year) suggested that white queer students' desires to be recognized as good allies probably limited their abilities to recognize and respect the importance of closed QPOC spaces:

I guess people misinterpret what closed means and um, they uh, maybe they have good intentions and really wanna learn about a community. ... Or be a, you know, active ally but you know, I guess they feel almost like, rejected or I dunno- I dunno how they feel but— I guess they feel like, really angry that they can't go or ... can't assert themselves in that space—I dunno.

THE MARGINALIZING EFFECTS OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Although inclusive practices were intended to make the greatest possible number of students feel welcomed in the community, the methods used for enacting inclusion had disparate effects on white students and students of color. Whiteness influenced which methods for practicing inclusion were deemed appropriate in the queer community and often foreclosed methods of inclusion promoted by QPOC leaders. While workshops were sanctioned methods for promoting awareness Renee (biracial Mexican/Italian queer woman, 19, 2nd year) told me that closed QPOC spaces, which were just as important for queer of color students, were frowned upon:

[T]he strategies to diversify have always just been like, like workshops like you know workshops, forums, like you know discussion spaces, there's like pamphlets, there's you know slideshows, like all those are cool and stuff. Um but I think the biggest thing is that we're lacking is experience, you know? ... And so it's like, there's like, we're giving everything academic terms and theories and you know we have all these strategies, but we're not just, like, talking about people's real experiences. And part of that is because it's hard for people to talk about that. And like a part of that ... if we want people to talk about that, like, we need closed spaces.

Due to the constant minimization and dismissal of QPOC concerns by white queer students and their friends, QPOC leaders began to resist the expectation that they should be using their energy to educate white potential allies. "Allies are supposed to be there for us," Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) sighed as we discussed white students'

expectations that QPOC leaders educate them. “In whatever way we need an ally to be ... not the other way around.” In resistance to continued tokenization and demands that they educate others, QPOC leaders promoted active rather than passive forms of allyship. As a result, most white students understood that more was expected of them than simply *saying* they were supportive of queer students of color. “I feel like just out of fairness I can't say that I currently am an ally to any other communities because I have not been active about it,” said Phoenix (White queer genderqueer, 20, 3rd year).

Like, there, there are communities within uh, the queer community, like, queer people of color ... who I would definitely love to be an ally for, because I definitely acknowledge and, you know, want to advocate the issues that that community faces. ... I think it's so critical to help them out with that but I have not done anything actively to help them yet. So I don't wanna call myself an "ally" because I don't think that's fair ... because I think that definitely if you're calling yourself an ally you need to be actively involved and not just, "Oh, yeah, like, I support you." I mean, what are you doing to show that support?

In this community, checking one's own privilege was one form of active allyship available to students. But being cognizant of how they occupied space also justified whites' evasiveness when it came to directly confronting racism. While many white queer students said they would have liked to be better allies, a number of them told me that they remained silent about racism in the community in attempts to check their own privileges. As Om (White queer genderqueer, 20, 3rd year) explained:

I'm a little more uncomfortable stepping up in situations that don't directly apply to me. Like talking about racism because I'm white and I know that like, you know, I have what I like to think of as like a good amount of knowledge – I feel educated to talk about topics that deal with race but on the other hand I don't wanna overstep my bounds as a person and sort of, I don't wanna dominate conversations about race ... if there are people there that can talk about like, their actual experiences as a non-white person.

In attempts to enact a positive white queer identity, several students talked about staying silent in situations where race was being discussed. In seeking identity-verification by

checking their own privileges, they often silently sanctioned the continued tokenization and neglect of queer of color students.

Alternatively, white queer men attempting to show they were allies often coopted QPOC spaces by speaking over others, taking action before QPOC students had the opportunity to take initiative, and derailing QPOC-centered conversations so that they focused instead on educating white queers about QPOC experiences. For example, one QPOC dialogue that had initially been planned as a closed space was subsequently opened to white allies so that Dane, the white co-chair of De Colores could attend. During that event I observed Dane take control over the meeting several times, speaking out of turn, and reiterating concerns that others had already articulated. As Emilia (Latina queer/lesbian 19, 2nd year) recalled,

I think he's just very unaware of his language ... very unaware of his white privilege. ... I know there was a problem when he kind of (pause) kind of like, took over like, facilitating during the QPOC space for coming out week. Um, so I know there was a definite problem there. And I think he was just trying to be helpful ... he wasn't trying to take up too much space, he was just trying to be helpful. And I think he felt that, since he wasn't really gonna be involved in the discussion ... he wanted to take over just, for like—for something small.

Despite his purported intentions to contribute to the space, Dane's lack of awareness with regards to how he continued to coopt spaces intended to serve queer of color students overshadowed his efforts. Often, white queer men who attempted to actively participate in QPOC organizing and spoke out about racism actually ended up taking up more space in QPOC spaces as a result of their efforts. Their support was appreciated to an extent, but was still troubling since they continued to occupy space with uninterrogated privilege and entitlement. Referring to a white queer man who had been consistently active in combatting

racism in the queer community, Brooke (Korean-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) said that,

I definitely think allies are necessary for this work to be done ... but like, being like, kinda like a voice, or kinda like a, like, a microphone almost ... I mean, it's not—it's not, it's not too like, great if like, when I think about it sometimes. When I think about it in depth I'm like "I dunno if I like that" but sometimes, like, sometimes it's like necessary, you know?

If, on the contrary, the work of QPOC leaders had been treated with as much authority as the work of white queer men, the necessity for having white queer men speak on behalf of queer people of color may not have been so necessary.

As these data suggest, the prevailing practices for promoting inclusion in the queer community reproduced inequalities in this site. Although white norms implicitly (and even explicitly) excluded queer of color students from full participation in queer spaces, white students maintained that they were being inclusive through constant efforts to participate in QPOC spaces. On the contrary, QPOC strategies for achieving self-care and identity-verification through closed spaces were perceived as being exclusive. Since identifying as queer suggested that one was dedicated to inclusive practices, the assertion that closed spaces were exclusionary towards whites fit nicely within the queer ideological standards for critiquing the queer identities of QPOC leaders. Consequently, achieving identity-verification was rife with contradictions for QPOC leaders in the context of white-centric conceptions of how queers should behave.

In this chapter I discussed three primary processes through which inclusion was practiced in the queer community. Inclusive language, educating others, and incorporating allies were sanctioned strategies for promoting inclusion and provided a framework for queer behavior that reproduced the marginalization of queer of color students. Because queer

students conceived of educating uninformed populations about queer theory, heteronormativity and other forms of gender and sexual injustices as part and parcel of an investment in increased visibility and acceptance, white queer students expected the same from QPOC students. The value-based identities of white queer students were threatened by QPOC leaders' assertions that, in expecting to be educated by queers of color, white queers were reproducing forms of white entitlement within the queer community. While they had the opportunity to address these concerns through active interrogation of their own privileges, white queer students' attachments to their subordinated statuses got in the way of their capacities for recognizing their complicity in subordinating others (Fellows and Razack 1998).

Self-esteem is highly contextual in that negative self-evaluations are heightened in settings where individuals perceive that others might evaluate them as being inferior (Elliott 2001). This is because people are reflexive (Gecas 2000) and make inferences about what other people are thinking and feeling. Therefore, the notion of "self" is mediated by social relations and through reciprocal processes of meaning-making that mitigate the ways we scrutinize our own behavior to achieve roles that are accurate reflections of who we think we are (Elliott 2001). When individuals' expectations concerning culturally agreed upon identities are perceived as being unmet, negative emotions can result (Goodwin and Jasper 2006: 625). As a result, movement participants with discordant identity expectations often engage in a great deal of internal affective and perceptual control around their collective identities in order to facilitate ongoing solidarity (Taylor 2000).

While queer students of color were often keenly aware of their racial identities in multiple spaces, white students' racial identities only became salient aspects of their

queerness in the context of specifically QPOC spaces and concerns. When issues of race were raised in queer spaces white queer students were often forced to look at privileges linked to their white racial identities that they had been blissfully unaware of. Indeed for white queer students acknowledging racism in the queer community resulted in a “spoiled” racial identity, in which a previously invisible white identity became representative of their complicity in systems of domination and subordination (Hughey 2012). Learning about white privilege within the queer community was antithetical to white queers’ maintenance of a positive self-concept since it required them to directly confront the ways that queers of color were marginalized through white centric forms of queerness. Identifying their own complicity in racial disparities within the community threatened to negate students’ assertions that were open-minded, progressive and inclusive queers. Moreover, the reflected appraisals they received left some white students—particularly men—feeling marginalized within the queer community. Patrick (White homosexual gay man, 19, 2nd year) described his own racial self-awareness as follows:

I am separated from a lot of stuff because I am not a queer person of color... So I am a white person so I am automatically labeled as someone who probably doesn't know as much about other people. I'm not as radical because I'm white, or that's what I'm viewed as. If I speak too much it's because I'm white and because I don't let other people talk. It's also because I'm male. Even though I'm as feminine as no other ... it's because I'm male. So I have to check that privilege as well. ... So it's very interesting how I have to always be careful of what I say, especially in the queer community. And I always have to, it's always very interesting how I have to silence myself sometimes because I don't wanna seem ignorant or I don't wanna seem, you know, “Oh he's just white and he's male so he obviously doesn't know where he stands.”

As Patrick suggested, many white queer students perceived discussions about white privilege as resulting in their exclusion from some spaces, and portrayals of them as being incompetent queers. Because he was “feminine as no other,” the accusation that he occupied a space of

male privilege seemed counterintuitive to Patrick. As a result of conflicting self and external appraisals about the significance of their gender and racial identities, white queer men in particular attempted to counter negative appraisals by engaging in constant identity management strategies in interactions with others, such as “silencing” themselves, in order to maintain a positive identity in relationship to queer of color students. It is true that white queer men were perceived as being more ignorant of their privileges than other members of the community. Although a number of students suggested that these dynamics represented the unfair targeting of white men, my data suggested that white men were the most common proponents of queer unifying claims that omitted discourses about race. One of the ways white students engaged in perceptual control over their identities was by asserting that they were attempting to be inclusive through their insistence on participating in QPOC spaces, which ironically confirmed their inattention to how white entitlement permeated their approaches to promoting inclusion.

Since individuals’ behaviors and identity claims are likely to be mediated by whether they believe others perceive them as fulfilling the roles associated with the identity (Burke and Stets 2009), a person’s sense of inner obligation to act in accordance with a movement collective identity may actually lead to more movement support and participation, even if they reject a specific identity claim (Bobel 2007; Simon, Trötschel and Dähne 2008: 936). However, members’ investments in a moral group identity may prevent them from seeing how their behaviors contradict their ideals (Srivastava 2005: 41). Brown (1993) argues that one of the pitfalls of identity politics is the propensity for marginalized subjects to become so wedded to their pain and oppression that they can only understand themselves and their identities in the context of their own subjugation. This limits marginalized subjects’

capacities for acknowledging where they themselves are complicit in perpetuating the marginalization and subordination of others (Fellows and Razack 1998).

The belief that bringing up race in queer spaces would ruin the space for others was based on catering to the comfort of whites and was upheld through identity-based incentives to promote inclusion. The moral identity conflict that many white students experienced when confronted with their privileges led many of them to resist discussions about racism within the queer community. Recognizing white racial privilege made many white queer students hyperaware of their own racial identities in a community where they had sought reprieve from stigmas associated with queerness. Many students thus perceived QPOC efforts to engage in antiracist discourses as producing a climate that contradicted the impetus to create inclusive queer spaces. What most students failed to recognize, however, was that many queer of color students experienced hyperawareness of their sexual and racial identities within both white queer and heterocentric spaces (Harper 2007).

Because the identity standard for queerness relied on members' investments in inclusion, assertions that QPOC leaders were being exclusive functioned as a negative appraisal of their queer identities. Consequently queer of color students were prompted to engage in perceptual control of their own queer identities by continuing to educate and promote inclusion of white queers in open QPOC spaces. In the final chapter I summarize my findings regarding how inclusive investments central to queer identities, spaces and practices in this site reinforced white norms and discuss the theoretical implications of my findings for sociological studies of social movements and structural identity theory.

THE COSTS OF INCLUSION

Understanding the racialized dynamics within diverse social movement communities requires recognition of how white privilege is enacted and reinforced through various identity-verification processes. Taking into account the fact that racism is systemic and that white supremacy is often reproduced through microaggressions enacted from the locus of uninterrogated white privilege (Sue et al 2007), I suggest that the racial ideologies imbedded within the queer community at UCSB, which privileged whiteness and white experiences as “common sense,” rendered queer people of color (QPOC) logics as counterintuitive to “what ought to be” (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 10). Particularly in an overwhelmingly white county like Santa Barbara, whiteness prevailed through implicit and explicit representations and articulations of what it looked like to be queer.

In order to analyze how white logics impacted identity verification processes among diverse members within the queer community, I attended to the ways that whiteness imbued queer group norms through dominant discourses that marked queerness and whiteness as unracialized statuses. Interviews with White (n=17), Latin@ (n=14), Asian or Pacific Islander (n=8), Biracial (n=8), Black (n=4) and Multiracial (n=2) queer students allowed me to explore the culturally and racially specific ways that participants conceived of inclusion and diversity in this site. By interviewing both white queer and queer of color students I was able to examine the discourses and practices associated with queerness while still acknowledging how race impacted students expressions, experiences, and interpretations of various forms of inclusion. To my surprise, the rhetorical frames used to talk about broad queer identities and ideologies were relatively cohesive across the board. However, the ways these frames were deployed in the service of inclusion varied dramatically depending not on

students' specific racial identities but based on the *salience* of students' individual racial identities. For example, white students who saw whiteness as a salient racial identity and recognized the privileges associated with whiteness were more likely to support closed QPOC spaces and antiracist initiatives. Luke (White queer/pansexual trans man, 20, 3rd year) had a strong commitment to working on understanding his own white privilege and, as someone whose social network was made up mostly of QPOC leaders, he learned to deconstruct his relationship to whiteness and to understand his friends' "hatred" towards white people through his own critical understanding of white privilege:

I have friends, I won't name them, but like, that very much so hate white people. ... Um, and like, are very open about it. ... Like, they're like, "I hate white people" (both laugh) and I'm like, standing right here, kind of like, "Eh! Okay" ... Um, but I mean, I guess, like, for me I just separate that more like, institutional whiteness as opposed to me as a white individual. ... Um, and so like, I think that the way that they see it and the way that they do talk about it, um, whether it be to me or just in an open space, um, 'cause I mean, a lot of my friends here are queer people of color. Everyone that I work with at the resource center are— they're all queer people of color except for myself. Um, and so like, just like they talk to me about like their views on it and so I mean, that impacts how I see it ... and why I feel upset with white folks—because they're not acknowledging these feelings that are coming from queer people of color.

Through his own racial self-awareness and active engagement in critical feminist studies, Luke recognized that criticisms of "institutional whiteness" were not the same as being negatively appraised "as a white individual." As a result, he supported closed QPOC spaces and other QPOC-centric forms of activism.

Regardless of their specific racial identities, queer students of color whose racial identities were highly salient were also more likely to support closed QPOC spaces. All of QPOC leaders who participated in this site experienced race as a salient identity. On the contrary, white and queer of color students who did *not* conceive of their racial identities as salient to their self-concepts were most likely to describe closed QPOC spaces and antiracist

activism as creating divisions within the queer community. For example, David (Filipino-American gay man, 21, 4th year) did not think of his racial identity as being significant:

Like, I don't see my race as defining me or really defining anybody. ... Like, I do acknowledge that there's a past history of people of color ... but in my mind I don't see anyone as being different because of the color of their skin. ... I don't get why people don't see that we're just people. ... Honestly, everyone has completely different experience, everyone is going somewhere different in life and I think we all just need to get along ... I'm really fed up with all the politics that come in with ... stopping oppression from white people. Stopping hate towards white people. ... Like I don't want these color barriers to come in the way from any side.

Rather than acknowledging white institutional privilege as the site of structural power that QPOC leaders were resisting, many students perceived anti-racist activism as born of “hate towards white people.” However, the dynamics that students described and that I observed during my research revealed the systemic persistence of white supremacy in this community.

There was no explicit acknowledgement of the existence of a white queer identity or community in this site. But the existence of a distinct QPOC identity and community revealed that white queerness was the baseline against which QPOC identity was defined. Though queer students intended to increase the diversity and vibrancy of their community through inclusive ideologies and practices, white supremacy continued to function and was even strengthened through the methods used to implement inclusion in this site. During interviews and observations I was astounded by the efficacy of inclusive discourses when used as a method for shutting down discussions about race. By the end of the 2012-2013 academic year QPOC leaders who had fervently engaged in antiracist activism within the queer community had seemingly resigned in the face of overwhelmingly negative appraisals and subsequent exhaustion. During our interview in late winter quarter, Brooke (Taiwanese-American queer woman, 22, 4th year) recounted her conversation with a fellow QPOC leader regarding the current state of the QPOC community:

My friend was telling me ... "It's so weird when you see ... the state of the QPOC community now and how almost it's like, dead air. Like, nothings happening." ... [H]e was telling me like, um, "It's almost like— it's almost like they won."... And I was like, "What? What do you mean, 'they won'?" And he was like, "Like, you feel it," like he said, he said that, um "It's just, we stopped. We stopped completely."

That QPOC leaders were eventually shut down despite their best efforts to revitalize the QPOC community suggests that the criticisms they were subjected to carried substantial weight with regards to their self-concepts and membership in the queer community.

Additionally, the failure of many students to recognize how white queer norms marginalized queer of color students and the converse efficacy of claims that QPOC spaces excluded white queer students revealed the power of racial discourses when deployed in service of white supremacy. Based on my findings I suggest that the impacts of inclusive ideologies, when applied in diverse social movement communities, can actually reproduce inequalities from within. Furthermore, I argue that these inequalities and the investments that reinforce them are made visible through the processes by which members of social groups engage in identity verification strategies.

Because people's self-concepts guide their behaviors in relation to others, the meanings associated with queer group and social identities were central to the ways identity verification and community belonging occurred in this community. Queer group identity was formulated and sustained through shared ideologies and norms that regulated the behaviors of group members and defined who was and was not a part of the queer community. The community was expansive with relation to sexualities and genders, but little attention was paid to identities and experiences perceived as peripheral to community solidarity. That racial identities in particular were treated as additive concerns reflects how imbedded white privilege was within the queer community. It was this implicitly white standard of queer

identity that functioned to guide the discourses and behaviors of students negotiating inclusion within the queer community. The uninterrogated white-centric focus of queer group identity thus provided a built in framework for resisting QPOC organizing and claims about racial inequality within the community. The identity-verification processes that queer students of color were subjected to thus rendered them obscure as people of color or, if they insisted on “making race an issue,” labeled them inept as queer community organizers.

Queer of Color Leaders as “Failed” Queer Group Members

Because access to queer student organizations offered a self-verifying opportunity structure through which members could finally embrace and explore their sexual identities, appearing to counter collective ideologies posed a prohibitive risk for queer students (Schwalbe et al 2000: 29). Portraying an authentic queer self was more complex for students with multiple salient identities, and many queer of color students had to code switch between their racial and sexual communities in order to fulfill the white-centric identity standards promoted within the queer community (Sandoval 2000). But as different identity categories become more salient to individuals the impacts of in-group norms can deteriorate (Sherif 1936). For QPOC leaders in this site, building community with other queer of color students resulted in the increased salience of a specifically QPOC identity and the development of frames for resisting white-centric standards for participation and inclusion in the queer community.

But since queer identities also remained salient to QPOC leaders, accusations that they were being exclusionary still had strong negative impacts on their self-concepts as members of the queer community. The efforts expended by QPOC leaders to achieve identity congruence in both queer of color and white queer spaces was indicative of the symbolic

power of inclusive ideologies, and resulted in exhaustion over identity conflicts as they attempted to show that they were dedicated to both queer communities.

As a result of the singular focus on queer sexual identities as a collective category, the specific identity “queer person of color” (QPOC) contained additional meaning for queer of color students at the group and individual level. Particularly due to the whiteness of the queer identity standard in the queer student community, many queer students of color conceived of themselves as a distinct category for which alternate goals and ideologies were particularly relevant. For example, instead of focusing on inclusion and diversity through the means promoted by queer students in general, queer students of color suggested that queer inclusion should take a critical approach to interrogating white privilege and racism as it impacted the lives of queer students of color. When they failed to accomplish their goals in the broader community, they sought closed QPOC spaces where they could work in solidarity with other queer of color students towards antiracist ends.

While calling out others and inviting them to use more inclusive language and behaviors was integral to queer community norms, a double standard existed for QPOC leaders. Queer of color students were caught in a catch twenty-two since participating in open QPOC spaces required them to educate white queers about the racial dimensions of their experiences while participating in closed QPOC spaces produced an identity conflict based on queer ideological expectations of inclusion. That this process of identity invalidation operated so effectively in a context where social justice was privileged as a central ideology suggests that multi-issue, identity-based politics are susceptible to processes that threaten activists’ cherished sense of self and moral obligations. That is, the refutation of racially conscious queer politics by both white queer and queer students of color called into

question privileges within the queer community and threatened to mark members as differentially privileged and implicit in systems of oppression. For white students and their friends, this resulted in an irreconcilable identity conflict. At the same time, queer students of color who raised these issues experienced identity conflicts on the basis of expectations from within the queer community that the primary role of queers was to facilitate inclusive dynamics.

Motivated by their desire for acceptance group members will often behave in accordance with explicit group norms, particularly if they anticipate that they are being subject to scrutiny (Deutsch and Gerard 1955; Lewis, Langan and Hollander 1972). It was significant that many queer of color students opposed closed QPOC spaces in defense of their white queer friends. Schwalbe and colleagues suggest that “defensive othering” may occur within groups among “those seeking membership in a dominant group, or by those seeking to deflect the stigma they experience as members of a subordinate group” (2000: 425). By defining themselves as different, and even exceptional, in comparison to QPOC leaders seeking closed spaces, queer of color students were able to emphasize their commitments to inclusion and to achieve verification of their positive queer identities within the broader (white) queer community. While white queer students also demonstrated their commitments to inclusion by contesting closed QPOC spaces, the testimonies of queer of color students were exceptionally powerful in this site since they provided an authoritative insider counterargument to QPOC leaders assertions that queers of color experienced racial marginalization.

Studies that focus on queer of color experiences often rely on discourses produced by those for whom “queer of color” is a salient identity. But there is little evidence of how

queers of color respond to intracommunity conflicts over race when they do *not* see their racial identities as significantly impacting their own experiences. Through interviews with queer people of color for whom race was not a salient identity I was able to address these absences, a significant contribution to the field since queers of color for whom race is not an issue often serve as the exception to the rule that justifies why whiteness need not be interrogated in queer communities. As Lipsitz suggests,

[N]onwhite people can become active agents of white supremacy as well as passive participants in its hierarchies and rewards. One way of becoming an insider is by participating in the exclusion of other outsiders. ... Yet we do not make these decisions in a vacuum; they occur within a social structure that gives value to whiteness and offers rewards for racism (1998: viii).

Within this community queer people of color, and more frequently queer men of color, resisted allegations that white supremacy was occurring in the queer community. As I suggest throughout this paper, identity-verification resulting in full group membership in the queer community likely influenced their decisions to ally with “nonracial” white queer politics rather than being categorized within the subgroup of queer of color politics.

Additionally, the appeal of being the “good” queer person of color, one who does not cause problems or make waves within the community over “divisive issues such as race,” can be alluring when opportunities to affirm one’s queer identity are more limited than opportunities for affirming one’s racial identity. Since many students of color were at least able to affirm their racial identities at home, the need for queer identity affirmation may have superseded racial identity verification in the queer community context. I am not suggesting that this was a conscious negotiation for all queer of color students, but interview data suggested that it played a role for at least some.

White Queers, In Defense of the Marginalized Self

When white queer students received negative appraisals suggesting they were complicit in QPOC marginalization they sought to achieve equilibrium by countering those appraisals. Most commonly they sought to restore their positive self-concepts by reframing the situation so that QPOC leaders appeared to be racist or exclusionary for “shutting down” well-meaning whites. Because queer community norms dictated that educating others and raising awareness and visibility in the broader campus community was an expression of queer identity commitment, white queer students expected to be educated by QPOC leaders as to how they could be better allies to queer students of color. These discourses often derailed efforts to engage in antiracist activism within the queer community and the efficacy of these strategies alluded to the power of inclusive ideologies and the impacts of white privilege in the queer community.

Alimahomed (2010) notes that there is little research examining how white queers and other dominant groups reproduce normative discourses in diverse communities. Since power relations are reproduced interactionally among members of social groups, the discourses deployed by white queer students are significant to our understanding how queers of color continued to experience inclusion despite overt investments in diversity and inclusion within queer social movements. It is difficult to imagine how members of a marginalized group could choose to ignore their own participation in the subordination of others. Even when they are not conscious of their own privileges, people are reflexive beings who are aware of the appraisals made of them by others. As such, white queer students’ perceptions of others’ appraisals and of their own standing within the community illuminated identity-based processes central to intracommunity exclusion.

One of the reasons that antiracist discourses in the queer community were seen as divisive was because they produced a moral identity conflict on the part of white queer students who were faced with increased awareness of their own racial privileges. Because subordination was a central component of members' self-concepts, queer students perceived their privileges as diminishing their social standings within the queer community. White queer students often suggested that having privileges made them appear less empathetic and less deserving of support in managing their own experiences of subordination. Marginalized statuses hence served as a form of cultural capital and a key component of identity congruence in this community.

Stigma allure played a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics within this community (Hughley 2012). Social movements research suggests that the cooptation of a stigmatized identity is often central to social movement framing and grievances (Taylor 2000; Whittier 2009). In these cases, stigmatized identities become sources of empowerment, as testament to survival, and as authenticating members' experiences. In the realm of identity politics, experience is particularly potent as a mobilizing and authorizing force. Identifying as queer and self-categorizing oneself as a member of the queer community allowed students to recognize their own oppression as sexual and gender minorities. Because solidarity was based on students' common struggles for recognition, many of them were strongly attached to their identities as marginalized individuals.

Participation in the queer community forced queer students—especially white male students—to reevaluate their social statuses and to recognize their complicity in systems of domination. While queer men were relatively open to discussing gender privileges due to their awareness of how gender norms shaped negative public perceptions and stereotypes of

gay men like themselves, they could not claim that they had been othered on the basis of race. But when they were asked to refrain from attending closed QPOC spaces, white men successfully coopted discourses of racial marginalization for themselves by claiming that white people were the actual victims of unfair racial treatment within the queer community.

People who are members of marginalized groups tend to respond to assertions that they are active participants in domination by highlighting their own subordination and suggesting that due to their disempowered status they cannot be “implicated in the subordination of others” (Fellows and Razack 1998). Among white queer students this assumption occluded their abilities to conceive of themselves as engaging in oppressive behaviors towards queer people of color. But by emphasizing their own subordination on the basis of sexual identification, white queers consistently framed sexuality as being more important than other loci of oppression and discounted queer of color experiences. As Moraga suggests:

[T]he danger lies in ranking the oppressions. *The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression.* The danger lies in attempting to deal with oppression purely from a theoretical base. Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place (1983: 29).

There was an allegiance to the marginalized self at play during the interactional processes I described throughout this study, which can only be understood in full when we consider to the ways that individuals come to see themselves as valuable, worthy, and moral beings. For LGBT activists constructing a collective “queer” identity means recognizing “us” as marginalized against “them” the oppressors. White queer students who perceived themselves as members of a subordinated category consistently argued that they would never discriminate against others on the moral basis that they knew how it felt to experience

discrimination. As a result, claims that they had been discriminatory towards queer of color students resulted in moral identity conflicts for white queer students. According to

Srivastava:

The political context of alternative moral identities ... explains why being seen as nonracist or antiracist is more likely to be a highly emotional concern for feminist and other activists or community workers and more likely to be crucial to their moral identity or sense of self. The political and ethical climate means that there is a great deal at stake—not only one's sense of goodness and sense of self but also one's political identity, one's career as activist or worker in a feminist organization (2005: 41).

For queer students invested in social justice, the idea that they could have participated in racism or any other form of discrimination threatened their own positive self-concepts.

When nonwhite people's accounts are provided as evidence of their own exclusion from various communities they are generally perceived as being overly subjective or as merely anecdotal (Ahmed 2012; Bonilla-Silva 2010). This pattern of dismissal is indicative of how white normative frames permeate both academic and everyday discourses, and influence how some (white) discourses are read as objective others (nonwhite) are read as subjective (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Despite her own demonstrated ability to critically discuss race and racial privilege, students who disagreed with her often defensively accused her of speaking with "misguided anger" (Facebook conversation 2013). Eventually she began referring students to talk to me in hopes that hearing things from a white person might have more impact, suggesting that "Shae is white and is way better than me at explaining white privilege and it functions ... and has the privilege of articulating better than me the many implications and reproductions of whiteness that manifest themselves in many (all) capacities" (Facebook conversations 2013).

Because people with strong identity commitments can be more concerned with others' appraisals of them than with the actual work associated with performing a role (Burke and Reitzes 1991), most white queer students chose to engage in compensatory behaviors for defending their own moral characters rather actively interrogating how they participated in reinscribing white supremacy. None of the students referred to talk to me ever made an effort to reach out and when I hosted a dialogue on white privilege in the queer community none of them attended. In fact, when the event was posted on Facebook several students who had opposed closed QPOC spaces suggested the dialogue would be more effective as a closed space for white students since talking about white privilege in the presence of queer of color students might feel threatening to white queers. Suddenly closed spaces, which had previously been portrayed as antithetical to white inclusion, became the logical means for allowing white people to discuss white privilege while simultaneously saving-face.

Because of my own structural location in systems of white privilege and my role as an educator, white students probably preferred not to talk with me directly since it would be more difficult for them to discount me than to discount their queer of color peers. Moreover, since people generally express microaggressions "in limited private situations (micro) that allow the perpetrator some degree of anonymity" (Sue et al 2007) students more concerned with maintaining positive social identities than working towards active antiracist allyship were less likely to engage in public conversations about privilege. The identity-based investments of queer students thus shaped the means and methods by which they engaged in social justice work.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

There are several areas of research that would contribute to greater understanding of the dynamics at play in diverse social movement communities. The first area concerns the influence of institutional cognitive scripts on the college campus when studying student movements. Like most academic institutions, UCSB includes diversity initiatives as part of its mission statement, providing a ‘cognitive script’ for students to draw from as they formulate strategies for altering campus practices and policies (Raeburn 2004; Ward 2008b). On campus, diversity-programming focuses primarily on inclusion and the implementation of educational workshops intended to educate students about difference. Influenced by institutional logics that account for diversity in terms of distinct identities, queer students seeking to maximize resources for their events and programming may learn to take an additive approach to diversity-based funding by strategically selecting co-sponsors from within the queer community who can appeal for funding under different marginalized identities (for examples of these dynamics see Ward 2008a, 2008b).

Future research could more thoroughly address how students’ gender identities influenced their approaches to inclusion within this community. While I discussed queer cisgender men’s resistance to closed spaces, the most visible antiracist QPOC leaders on this campus were cisgender women and trans* or gender queer students. Though the focal point of most antiracist critiques were focused upon the problematic position of a white gay man as co-chair for a QPOC org, white women were also critiqued for their role in perpetuating racist behaviors and discourses. Moreover, of the queer of color students I interviewed, those who were informed about antiracist work within the queer community but were opposed to closed spaces were all cisgender men. Thus an analysis of the gendered dynamics of identity

verifications in diverse communities would contribute to greater understanding of identity processes in this community.

Finally, the efforts of students in this community with regards to trans* inclusion could provide an alternate lens for understanding the how racialized and gendered frames function within contemporary queer communities. In my own research students discussed methods for trans* allyship more often than any other form of allyship. Because of the shared investment of queers in challenging gender norms it is plausible that involvement in trans* allyship permitted a more positive self-appraisal for white queer students than engaging in antiracist allyship. However, greater discussion of this dynamic would require deeper analysis of the relevant data.

SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Through incorporation of social psychological identity theories and social movement collective identity theories, this research contributes to scholarship on identity conflicts within diverse social movement communities. By analyzing students' descriptions of queer group and social identities, as well as their stories about how they pursued collective ideological investments, I was able to provide an empirical study of how identity processes influence group tactics and outcomes. Because people's self-concepts and conceptions of others are central to how they define situations, understanding the meanings of queer group and social identities allowed me to analyze how queer students expressed group expectations through interactions with and appraisals of one another. Queer identification and self-categorization in the queer community relied in part on students' conceptions of themselves as members of a marginalized category or group. Claiming a queer identity for oneself signified standing in solidarity with others who experienced subjugation based on their

sexual and gender identities. Queerness also relied on the moral imperative of having experienced discrimination and thus being more empathetic and tolerant towards marginalized individuals and groups in general.

This research also contributes to race theory and theories of intersectionality by attending to the interactional processes that occur in racially and sexually diverse communities and providing an empirical study of how identities contribute to the maintenance of racial structures. The inclusive ideologies that defined queerness in this site functioned so that anyone who appeared to exclude certain groups or individuals was deemed antagonistic to queer solidarity and community. However, the outcomes of inclusive ideologies disproportionately benefitted white queer students over queer students of color. When white queer students used inclusive ideologies to support their contentions that QPOC leaders were excluding white students by closing certain spaces, they were able to mobilize a great deal of emotional and ideological support from other queer students. This was partially due to the fact that through its invisibility as a cultural category (Frankenberg 1993) whiteness functioned so that white queer experiences were perceived as representative of queer experiences in general. Another reason for the efficacy of white queers' claims that they had been excluded was that they could point to specific instances where inclusion-based community norms—for example, educating others and incorporating allies—were being violated when QPOC leaders barred white queers from participating in closed QPOC spaces. On the contrary, since queer of color students were often excluded through everyday practices and through microaggressions that were more difficult to prove, QPOC leaders were frequently accused of being overly sensitive or of having invalid concerns. That white students could shut down antiracist dialogues using queer inclusion as justification suggests

the power of white privilege even in communities where diversity and inclusion are underscored.

Because participants in social justice communities often share a pre-established orientation towards what progress looks like (Srivastava 2005; 2006) the queer community at UCSB provided a unique site for studying the interactional effects of identity management in diverse social movement communities. Student accounts suggested that one of the core tenets of queer group identity on this campus was that of “inclusive politics.” But interview and observational data indicated that inclusion often occurred at the expense of recognizing internal differences and experiences of oppression within the queer community. While this finding is not exceptional in and of itself, my analysis of how these ideologies functioned at the level of identity-verification provides a new approach to understanding the dynamics of diverse group processes.

This study contributes to theoretical discussions of multiple identities within diverse communities, with particular attention to the ways that inclusive discourses constructed through white logics can result in the re-marginalization of people of color within queer communities. By analyzing discourses produced by both white students and queer of color students I was able to demonstrate the rhetorical strategies used by group members in the service of either securing or resisting white supremacy. Additionally, my incorporation of perspectives by queers of color who believed racism was a non-issue provides a more multifaceted view of how domination and resistance occur within movement communities where multiple salient identities are at stake.

This piece offers an interdisciplinary perspective on identity processes in social movements by bringing structural identity theory to bear on strategies and methods for social

organizing among diversely oriented groups and sheds light on the pitfalls of identity-based dynamics alluded to by Gamson (1995). Although I focus on queer students in this research, the implications of my study are far reaching. Despite the centrality of collective identity within social movements, the truth is that neither sexuality and gender, nor ethnic identities are essentially stable. On the contrary, they are situationally enacted, experienced and upheld through “the construction of boundaries and the production of meaning” (Nagel 1994: 153; Taylor and Whittier 1992).

The queer community at UCSB was composed of individuals linked to one another through shared self-categorization as queer. Although queerness was defined as a fluid and open category that could include “anyone,” queer community members still held one another accountable to the group through shared ideological investments and community based practices. Everything about queerness in this community—from the identity standard for defining social and group queer identities, to the construction of self-verifying opportunity structures, to the processes through which community was promoted and sustained—centered on inclusion. As a result, identity-verification and concomitant positive identity appraisals were primarily based on whether students were perceived as behaving inclusively and promoting intracommunity solidarity. Although previous research has attended to the ways that collective identities and investments are constructed and reproduced within groups, this project investigated how queer inclusion operated at the level of *identity*, *structure*, and *practice* in this site.

Identity

Defining queer as an identity and a community that could belong to “anyone...no matter what” was presumed to allow people to participate in the queer community and claim the

corresponding queer identity without fear of negative appraisals. Students described queer identity as the most inclusive identity available to them because it allowed for diverse participation in the community. But my data suggest that ideological standards were central to queer identity expectations and that these standards regulated students' decisions identify socially as queer rather than as gay, lesbian, bisexual or any number of the other specific identities available to them. Despite their various genders and sexual orientations, identifying as queer allowed students to link their own self-concepts with their membership in the queer community. Once they saw themselves as members of the queer community, students' own queer identities were shaped by queer community norms. The methods that queer students used for supporting their own standpoints were built off of and in interaction with one another. Queer students on both sides of the conflict over closed spaces attempted to use inclusion to their advantages. Since queer social identity was tied to students' self-categorizations as members of the queer community, membership regulated students' behaviors and impacted their self-conceptions and evaluations of others. Thus, by encouraging others to identify as queer, students promoted and reproduced a collective identity standard to which incoming members were accountable.

Since the measure for being a "good queer" in this community ultimately came down to whether one valued inclusion, students sought to verify their identities through behaviors and discourses that deliberately portrayed their commitments to queer inclusion. In order to promote inclusion and verify their own membership in the community students often identified as queer, invested in queer organizations and engaged in interactional processes of inclusive language and education. But when students raised issues or concerns perceived as highlighting racial disparities within the queer community, their commitment as queers were

often challenged and they were called upon to verify their queer identities through situational processes that reproduced and redefined what it meant to be individually and collectively queer.

Scholars have attended to the marginalization, exclusion, and invisibility of queers of color within white-centric queer movements and organizations (for examples see Alimahomed 2010; Ward 2008; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983; Anzaldúa 2007; Cohen 1997; Johnson and Henderson 2007; Collins 2009; Eng and Hom 1998). But little attention has been paid to the centrality of collective identities, and the group processes aimed at verifying those identities, in reproducing white norms within diverse communities. Based on the ways that queer students described their own interpretations and orientations towards queer group and social identities, I was able to reveal the investments in a “good” queer identity that functioned to reproduce racist dynamics in this queer movement community and suggest that identity verification was central to the systemic and interactional occlusion of racial concerns. In addition I examined the interactional processes through which identities contribute to the maintenance of social structures. QPOC leaders’ accounts of their own experiences combatting systemic racism within the queer community suggested that countering white logics posed a prohibitive dilemma if they also wished to maintain identity congruence as members of the queer community. When they called attention to the ways that white queers coopted QPOC spaces and resources, queer of color leaders were subjected to negative appraisals and were pulled into emotionally exhausting interactions where they were compelled to justify their interests in pursuit of identity congruence. Simultaneously, white queer students drew on inclusive logics and concomitant practices to buttress their own

entitlement to participate in QPOC spaces and to counter accusations that they were subordinating queers of color.

People may respond to identity discordance by eschewing a solidarity-based identity in favor of a more accurate reflected appraisal. However, individuals with a strong commitment to an identity may consciously engage in compensatory behaviors to meet role-expectations associated with that identity. Both queer of color and white queer students engaged in compensatory discourses to achieve identity congruence in the face of differing investments in and orientations towards inclusion in the queer community. However, queer of color student leaders also chose to identify as QPOC rather than as queer to signify their distinct investments and values in relation to the broader, white centric queer community. Meanwhile, despite the well-known and decades long feminist of color assertion that various forms of oppression are linked through systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism (Combahee River Collective 1983 [1977]; Moraga 1983; Collins 2009), most white queer students lacked the capacity for recognizing that they could experience marginalization in some contexts while being agents of oppression in others. By embracing and seeking to verify only their marginalized identities students saw themselves as lacking the power to marginalize and oppress others (Fellows and Razack 1998). Ironically, clinging to a marginalized identity status precluded the ability of white queer students to recognize the ways they participated in the reproduction of white privilege and limited their capacities for engaging in productive antiracist action.

Structure:

One reason that inclusion was so powerful among queer students was because participation in queer community spaces provided a degree of identity-verification that had been

previously unavailable to them. Organization meetings, educational workshops, and programming within the queer community helped to solidify members' self-concepts through verbalizations of what it meant to be "queer" as an individual, as well as articulations of which values, behaviors and ideologies were desirable among members. While students held their sexual identities to be individual and inborn qualities, queer programs, organization meetings, and workshops allowed students learn what it meant to be queer in relation to others—that is, what it meant to adopt a queer *social* identity.

Participating in queer spaces also helped to solidify members' self-concepts through verbalizations of what it meant to be "queer" as an individual, as well as articulations of which values, behaviors and ideologies were desirable among members. The politics and ideologies associated with queer community on campus were implicitly and explicitly expressed through community events, workshops and organization meetings. Based on their understandings of the norms guiding queerness, students learned to enact queerness appropriately within the context of the college campus.

Individuals with higher perceived status are likely to exert more influence over groups than those with lower perceived statuses (Kalkhoff and Barnum 2000; Cast 2003), meaning that claims made by those with higher racial, gender or sexual status in diverse groups are likely to be given more credence than those made by people with lower statuses. People who possess greater structural power on the basis of racial and gender statuses are often able to mediate the meanings of identities and to regulate the determinants of group membership. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that queer group identity and norms in this context were constructed through white ways of defining and experiencing queerness. White students and their friends consistently engaged in colorblind racism by resisting the

impulse to talk about race. When they did talk about race, white queer students often did so predominantly on their own terms, dismissing QPOC concerns while arguing that they were the ones being ostracized and that talking about race only divided the otherwise unified queer community. By constantly framing the queer community as one innately devoid of racially differentiated experiences, queer students thus reproduced a white-centric conception of the queer group category and conveyed the message that queer of color students should assimilate to the white queer cultural community in order to be recognized as full members.

There was a gendered dynamic to the ways that whiteness permeated queer community spaces. White queer men perceived themselves as being more highly scrutinized on the basis of their privileges. Sarah's (Mexican-American gay woman, 21, 4th year) suggestion that white women were judged less harshly than white men because queer students believed that "white women...are closer to being...of color...they're like, 'she's a woman, she's been through enough'" seemed to hold true in this site. Although white women were also culpable for reproducing racist interactions, white men generally took more defensive stances with regards to antiracist tactics and were often more vocal about their opposition to closed QPOC spaces. Many queer men viewed their social relegation to gender deviants as counteracting any male privilege they held, while failing to recognize how, within queer spaces, their male privilege and the socialized ways with which they occupied space, remained in tact. This was especially true for white queer men who lacked the intersectional capacity for understanding how despite their marginalized sexual statuses in white heteronormative spaces they still occupied a privileged status on the basis of their whiteness and maleness in queer spaces.

Practice:

While inclusion was central to queer group solidarity, the methods used for enacting inclusive politics reproduced white queer norms. White supremacy was reproduced within this community by students who expressed their entitlement to space, spoke with unquestioned authority, and discounted nonwhites' experiences. White students' and their friends frequently suggested that discussing race resulted in discrimination against white queer students, and these white-centric frames defined and upheld white queer ideologies while simultaneously invalidating queer of color students' racialized experiences.

The incorporation of allies into the collective queer group identity signaled students' commitments to inclusion rather than boundary distinctions (Ghaziani 2011). But the accompanying emphasis on incorporating allies produced logics of inclusion that justified white queers' assertions that they should be allowed to participate in QPOC spaces. Since inclusion of allies was integral to the use of queer as a community identity, many queer students could not comprehend how the desire of whites to participate in people of color spaces would not be well received. White queer students conceived of "being an ally" as "being in a space" since was how most heterosexual allies engaged in allyship. Although efforts to include various communities within movements is symbolic of inclusion and diversity, including multiple voices almost always comes from a "quest for knowledge" from those groups, rather than an analysis of why their stories have been absent from community spaces to begin with (Kumashiro 2001: 11). Instead of addressing the systemic marginalization of queer of color students, white students' expectations that queer of color students include them in QPOC spaces and educate them about race resulted in increased identity work for queer of color students and eventually led to exhaustion of QPOC leaders.

Some researchers suggest that embracing multiculturalism can provide relief from glossing over differences, but the ways in which diversity is promoted often results in the erasure or tokenization of differences within groups (Alimahomed 2010). For example, Ward (2009) suggests that discourses promoting diversity within queer organizations often reproduce white norms by defining people of color as special populations to be incorporated rather than as members whose experiences and interests are already fundamental to the queer community. To this end, Misa (2001) recommends that instead of embracing multiculturalism people invested in social justice should pursue active antiracist approaches to diversity, which would permit the acknowledgement of diversity while also attending to and addressing the systemic and cultural ways in which inequalities are reproduced within groups.

While I used specific examples from students' experiences my analysis was not about specific students but about the underlying ideologies and assumptions that allowed some voices to be heard louder and with more authority than others, and made identity verification more accessible to white queer students. Both queer of color and white students received negative appraisals of their abilities to live up to the moral identity standard of inclusion as an identity failure on their parts. But white queer students were able to more effectively counter negative appraisals than queer people of color were due to the authoritative weight of white logics within a racial system that privileges whiteness. That most queer students viewed closed QPOC spaces and antiracist discourses as exclusionary towards whites revealed the power of white normative influence as it operated in this community. However well intentioned, the practices used to promote inclusion in the queer community foreclosed

the potential for addressing multiple axes of oppression and subordination within the queer community as a whole.

In the contemporary United States where discourses about race have shifted to reflect the historical moment, racism looks differently than it did in previous eras (Mills 1997). Often racial minorities experience exclusion through microaggressions that minimize and invalidate their experiences and perspectives. As a result, people concerned with social justice are likely to overlook the ways that their own locations within social structures influence their orientations towards and interactions with others. My hope is that, in light of increased attention to the significance of identity-based investments as they relate to collective action within diverse movements, people will take pause to consider how their own attachments to cherished identities can foreclose opportunities for real allyship with others. This will not be a painless process. Recognizing ones own complicity in systems of power requires fearless and thoughtful commitment to interrogating who it is we believe ourselves to be and how our ways of engaging in self realization can impact others. But recognizing that our orientations towards social change are enmeshed with our own self-concepts paves the way for more critical approaches to activism that acknowledge multiple experiences and intersections of oppression.

There is a feel good quality to the concept of inclusion. Especially when we consider the deep and innate human longing to be a part of something. But when we consider the processes through which distinct groups are constructed, inclusion also becomes a means by which some people are considered full members while others are not. No one identity can be entirely inclusive; especially taking into consideration the fact that decisions about how identities are defined and who is and is not included are still primarily under the subjective

discretion of those with the most structural power. To say that I am “including” someone suggests that I have the structural power at my disposal to invite them to participate in a set of social relationships and dynamics to which they do not already innately belong. Therefore, I suggest that a social justice approach that focuses, not on inclusion but on recognition of multiple experiences and differences and a deep introspective consideration of our *own* identities and concomitant investments provides more potential for multifaceted participation than attempting to pursue full “inclusion” of as many groups or people as possible.

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APPENDIX: QUEER STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Information

Age:

Year at UCSB:

Major:

Hometown:

Race/ethnicity:

How would you describe your family's class background?

Parents' occupations:

Parents' educational level:

Do your parents own a home?

Sexual identity:

Sex:

Gender Identity:

Family and community:

Where did you live growing up?

What did your parents do?

Do you have sisters and brothers? Older or younger?

Where did you go to school? What was your school like?

Same-sex desire:

When did you first experience same-sex desire or attraction? What did you think about it?

How did you think of yourself? As different than other people of your gender?

Are you or have you been attracted to people of different genders? Do you anticipate being attracted to people of different genders in the future? How do you envision your future?

Origins of sexual identities:

Do you think your sexuality is biological or shaped by social factors or both?

Do you think the origin of sexuality is important? Why or why not?

Do you think it matters to other people or groups?

Identity:

How do you identify sexually?

What does this identity mean to you? Why this one and not others? How do you think about other identities [lesbian, queer, bisexual, gay, depending on how they identify]?

How do you define queer? (e.g. people refer to the queer community here at UCSB...what does queer mean in that context? How about as an identity?)

Has your identity changed over time? How and why? Do you expect it to change in the future?

Have you ever been questioned or challenged by others about your identity? By whom? (heterosexual/cisgender/transgender/queer people?)

What different terms do people you know use to describe their sexual identities?
Have you hear the terms “heteroflexible,” “spaghetti girls,” “mostly straight,” “bisexual lesbian”? If so, what do you make of them?
How do you see your sexual identity in relationship to other ways you identify? Has your sexual identity or gender identity shifted in relation to different partners you’ve had?
Do you think of your sexual identity as political?

Sexual experiences:

Tell me about your first sexual experience.
[If a heterosexual experience]: Have you had a same-sex sexual experience? Tell me about it.
[If a same-sex experience]: Have you had a heterosexual sexual experience? Tell me about it.
What counts as a sexual experience for you? [same-sex and heterosexual]
Have you hooked up? With people of different genders? [if yes] Tell me about your hookups

Relationships:

Tell me about your first relationship. When was it, what was it like?
[If heterosexual] Have you had a same-sex relationship? Tell me about it.
[If same-sex] Have you had a heterosexual relationship? Tell me about it.
What counts as a relationship?
What do you look for in a romantic partner? (Different for people of different genders?)

Coming out:

Are you out? To whom? When did you come out to different people in your life (parents, siblings, friends)? What was the process like? How did they react? How did you feel about coming out? How important is it to you to be out? What are the benefits and drawbacks?
Were you out in high school? What was that like?
Are there things that make it especially hard to come out to your family and community?
Are there other identity markers that make it difficult for you to identify as queer/bisexual/lesbian/etc.?
Do you work while enrolled as a student? Are you able and willing to be open about your sexuality in this space?

UCSB:

What was it like coming to UCSB from your hometown?
Did you have any fears/concerns coming to college? (i.e. homophobia, racism, sexism, etc?)
Where did you live your first year? Now? How did you choose?
Have you heard of the Rainbow House? What have you heard? What do you think of it?
Have you heard of the RCSGD? Do you use the RCSGD or any other spaces on campus?
What do you think of these spaces?

What are some resources available to queer students on campus?
What are some resources that you feel are lacking for students on campus?

Who do you go to when you have questions or concerns about queer student issues or resources?

What has that experience been like?

What is your social life like at UCSB?

How would you describe the social scene at UCSB?

Do you go to straight parties? What are they like? Have you ever seen women kissing women at such parties? What do you think is going on?

How is this similar to or different from women kissing women at queer parties? How do you feel about women who appear heterosexual and/or gender-normative and who kiss other women at parties?

Are there any ways that you feel you can identify other queer people on campus?

How would you describe your community at UCSB? What kinds of people do you hang out with?

Are you active in student organizations? Which ones? How did you get involved? How did you choose what orgs to participate in? Where there any challenges/conflicting identities or communities that you faced?

What role do you see yourself as having in your org/community? (Ask about challenges with school work or other responsibilities?)

What is the most important thing that you do that is part of your identity and queer identity more specifically?

Do you attend any events? Which ones are you most inclined to join?

Do you see yourself as being an ally in any communities?

What is the role of allies in queer community?

What do you see as the primary issues facing the queer community at UCSB? What would make things better here?

Is there a particular space that you think is a queer space?

Politics:

What types of things do you think queer (LGBTQ...) students here are concerned with?

Which issues might be more difficult to get support for?

How do you think the issues at UCSB tie into the missions and concerns of national LGBTQ organizations?

What do you see as the primary issues facing the queer community nationally?

How would you describe your political leanings?

What do you consider a radical struggle?

What issues do you think students here are concerned with?

Do you think queer activism is important?

Do you think of your sexual identity as political? Has that changed in past?

How do you feel about same-sex marriage? How do you feel about marriage as an institution?

Is there anything I haven't asked about that you'd like to add?