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The Social Modes of Listening: How Racial Identity and Music Shape Hook-Up Culture and Erotic Capital at Same-Sex Colleges

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Preface

All the historically women's colleges discussed in this thesis have adopted policies to allow transgender women to attend their institutions. For years, queer and trans students have been pushing for changes inclusive to trans women. This change to their admissions policy is an intensely discussed topic amongst the Seven Sister schools and traditionally single-sex colleges at large. The policies redefine these spaces as well as the profile of their student body. The inclusion of trans women into student bodies coupled with the freedom assigned female at birth (AFAB) students feel to explore their gender and sexual identities at these institutions, has created an identity crisis that is challenging how these traditionally same-sex institutions define themselves. This is important to highlight because it signifies that a cultural shift has taken place at these institutions that appears to be led by their student bodies. During a trip to Smith College last fall, I had the unexpected opportunity to attend the Seven Sisters Student Government Conference where this year's theme was defining what it means to be a women's college in 2018. Student leaders from Bryn Mawr, Smith, Wellesley, Mount Holyoke, Vassar, and Barnard all attended the conference. It became apparent from the conversations that students and administrators did not share the same opinion regarding what defines an historically women's college.

In selecting sites for my ethnography on queer party spaces at traditionally same-sex colleges. I selected institutions that shared similar attributes while also having different social structures. Wellesley, Smith, and Bryn Mawr colleges all met my criteria. They all exist within the original Seven Sisters consortium, and they have similar queer student life ecosystems. In order to address my theoretical question of how music mediates the social dynamics of queer hookup culture at traditionally same-sex colleges, I relied on student interviews, institutional data, student newspapers,

and playlists to help me address this question. All names have been changed in order to protect the identities and privacy of my participants. In total, I was able to interview three students from Smith, and two from Bryn Mawr. In addition to these, I repurposed interviews conducted with Wellesley students in 2017 from a research paper on how music mediates queer hookup culture at Wellesley's student-run bar, Punch's Alley (the pub).

In my previous ethnography on the pub, I explored how the entrepreneurial component of the pub constructs a social scene on campus that revolves around hookup culture, shared erotic appetites, and who is accepted in this space. Through qualitative and quantitative data analyses, I learned that music is extremely influential in determining and structuring which spaces constitute party spaces as well as determining who feels comfortable engaging in the hookup culture within such spaces. As one will see throughout this thesis, the results of my research confirm the importance of music to hookup and party culture. My 2017 research paper also led me to consider if similar trends could be found in queer spaces at other historically women's colleges. To explore the answer to this question, I asked myself: 1) What effect do school policies have on the formation of party culture; 2) What is the relationship between music, space, and party culture; and 3) what is music's relationship to hookup culture and erotic capital? In my attempt to answering these questions, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of music's relationship to queer nightlife and if that relationship presents itself in a similar way across the historically single-sex institutions that I will be studying.

1: Literature Review

I decided to start this ethnography by consulting literary scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology, sociology, and musicology because they felt most relevant to my work. Since this thesis was rooted in my previous ethnography on Punch's Alley and the role of music in that space, I thought that I could use the same literary references. I was wrong. As I collected interview material and listened to the experiences and narratives of my interviewees, I realized that the literature I was consulting did not speak to the themes – like race influencing their experience in queer spaces – I saw unfolding in the conversations I had with students. Specifically, I had not anticipated that racial identity and cultural background would be so critical to my thesis. This was an oversight on my part because racial identity played a significant role in the experiences of the students of color I interviewed in my previous ethnography. While many of the scholars I referenced were able to provide me with a framework to conceptualize music's relationship to identity formation, space, and social participation, these theories ignored race as a factor that would influence how music is understood as a social mediator.

To address this gap, I expanded my research to include literature from black and queer studies theorists as well as music scholars who directly discussed how music and race were intrinsically linked to each other. To incorporate their work, I divided the literature referenced in this chapter into three areas: sound and space; gender performance and its relationship to party culture; and the erasure of non-white identities when discussing queerness. Students at all three institutions discussed these factors when describing who feels comfortable entering queer party spaces in addition to who feels comfortable engaging in their college's queer hookup culture. The goal of this

chapter is to show that these theories inform my argument that racial identity, along with music, has a huge impact on who is made to feel included/excluded from queer hookup culture.

Sound and Space

Sound, Space, and Mediation

In order to understand the factors that mediate queer party scenes and, by extension, its hookup culture, one must first understand how variables such as social participation, habitus, erotic capital, gender performance/presentation, and queerness mediate these spaces. In his book titled, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation,* ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino discusses how strategic essentialism can be used by social groups to differentiate themselves from others by uniting around shared aspects of identity that are seen as fundamental to the people in the group. Simply put, Turino discusses how groups choose to emphasize certain characteristics, or traits, as a way of forming communities based on a perceived sense of shared identity. As he goes on to explain, the "conscious use of a few aspects of identity to unite people for political or social advancement" is a form of identity politics that creates hierarchy within society or, in this instance, within queer hookup spaces (Turino, 2008). Throughout this ethnography, I will demonstrate how strategic essentialism and other identity formation practices are utilized by social policies at Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, and Smith, as well as by their student body.

The use of essentializing certain characteristics and identifiers as a device for community formation is a common practice used by both students and their institutions. Students often choose to attend Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and Smith because they are distinguished as both traditionally women's colleges, and Seven Sister colleges. As Turino explains, realizing our own identities tends "to foreground aspects [of ourselves] that are regarded as important by the people around us"

(2008). Here, the foregrounded identifiers of the schools – as Seven Sisters colleges that provide education to women – creates and establishes community through a shared identity. Although typically used by marginalized groups, in this instance, the colleges employ strategic essentialism as a vehicle to help them create social groupings and communities amongst themselves and within their diverse student body.

Music and space are both dually used as devices to foster social group formation and participation as well as identity formation for different social groups on these campuses. For example, my interviewees agreed that the party location and type of music played determined who one would see in these spaces; additionally, these factors help to establish who would be welcomed (or feel comfortable) in these social scenes. Ola Stockfelt, an ethnomusicologist who studies how people create context and location-dependent relationships to music provides a useful framework in how to conceptualize the relationship between music, space, and social mediation. As this thesis will show, the relationship between music, space, and social mediation does in fact play an influential role in the social scenes that are constructed around party and hookup culture at colleges.

Cultural foundations for Modes of Listening

In his article on "Adequate Modes of Listening", Stockfelt postulates that different listening practices, or modes of listening, are connected to the specific listening situation in which they are used (2006). What he means by this is that how people relate to and experience music is shaped by the environment in which they are listening. Stockfelt defines adequate listening as the act of hearing music according to a given social situation, and the "predominant sociocultural conventions of a subculture to which the music belongs" (2006). Stockfelt expands upon this point by introducing the concept of genre-normative modes of listening which he defines as the environment one most associates as the appropriate listening situation for a specific genre of music (Stockfelt, 2006). For

instance, several students I spoke with told me that if they were to hear, for example, "Mr. Brightside" by the Killers playing at a dance party, they would leave because they don't consider that party music (i.e. dance music).

To adequately engage in party culture, one must understand the appropriate mode of listening for that genre (Stockfelt, 2006). Or to put it another way, participants must be able to form a contextual relationship between what the music suggests and the social cues displayed by members in the social scene. In short, Stockfelt is saying that an adequate mode of listening relates to a set of opinions, or practices, belonging to a social group that informs their social interactions. A likely explanation for the disconnect that students felt between "Mr. Brightside" and dancing is that "Mr. Brightside" does not fit within their subjective genre-normative mode of listening. College parties are typically seen as spaces where students freely indulge in sex and alcohol – these are not the social behaviors conveyed to the listener by the musical qualities of "Mr. Brightside" such as tempo and feel. Whereas, songs like "Sex With Me" by Rihanna sets the tone for the type of behavior that is expected within a particular social environment; it also signals who is allowed to participate in that environment. Simply put, music helps to contextualize which nonverbal social cues and behaviors are accepted in both queer and normative hookup environments.

While Stockfelt's theory is useful for understanding how genre-normative listening can shape one's relationship to a given social environment, he does not address the influences of race and cultural background in his theory. Race and cultural background have an influential role in forming a person's taste and habitus. Additionally, they also affect how different people understand the sub-textual social cues embedded within music. Music and racial identity are intrinsically linked through music's racialized history as well as by how our racial and cultural backgrounds help us understand music in relation to our lived experiences. As Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman state in "Music and the Racial Imagination", race is fundamental to shaping our basic understanding of what music

is because "it contributes substantially to the vocabularies used to construct race" (Radano & Bohlman, 2000). Radano and Bohlman's analysis of music differs slightly from that of Turino and Stockfelt in that they take the idea that music has socially-dependent forms of participation and go one step further to articulate that the relationships one forms with music – and consequently space – is inherently dependent upon one's racial identity. Combining Stockfelt's language regarding modes of listening, and Radano and Bohlman's analysis of the relationship between race and music, provides a framework that incorporates the lived experiences of students of color into my discussion of queer spaces.

In the example I provided earlier, I made no mention of the student's race or cultural ties, but if I had, it would have provided context as to why their genre-normative mode of listening did not associate "Mr. Brightside" with dancing. For many non-white students at these schools, the music played in dance and party spaces does not fit with their established mode of listening. Since their genre-normative mode of listening was shaped by the environment in which they grew up, many non-white students are not accustomed to hearing Top 40s songs – or other music popular to predominantly white listeners – in party spaces. Across all three colleges, the students of color I spoke with all reported that campus parties at their institutions were not the same as parties they would attend at home. This is, in part, due to the fact that most of the students I talked with were students of color who often found that on campus parties thrown by their white peers did not live up to their expectations, or standards of what they considered a party. Students of color are accustomed to attending parties predominantly comprised of people of color (POC) with afro-diasporic music playing in the foreground. The disconnect between genre-normative modes of listening and the perceived normative social scene is yet another illustration of how predominantly white institutions, like Wellesley, Smith, and Bryn Mawr, can be isolating to students of color. Many students of color do not identify music, like "Mr. Brightside", as dance music, because the musical

qualities of the song, such as timbre, tempo, and feel, do not match the qualities they have learned to associate with music designed for dancing. Thus, white students have unwittingly created social distinctions that create a divide between students who are made to feel included in campus party spaces, and those who are made to feel excluded – which unfortunately is oftentimes students of color.

Stockfelt argues that the mode of listening that the listener adopts in a given situation is dependent on how the person chooses to listen (Stockfelt, 2006). In order to choose how one wants to listen, one must first possess the adequate mode of listening required to properly do so. However, in the "Mr. Brightside" scenario, students of color are not given the option to choose which mode of listening they want to adopt because they do not possess the adequate mode of listening for this given situation. The twin dynamics of not being able to relate to the social cues expressed in the song, coupled with the prevalence of white students at the party creates an indirect social barrier between students of color and their white counterparts. As a result, students of color feel othered in predominantly white parties because they are unable to understand the expected social conventions that are relayed through the songs played. Additionally, they presume that the space is not meant for them and they are not welcomed.

Music, Social Identity, and the Other

Now, what if I said that this is not the only kind of othering described to me by students of color? Many students of color also described attending parties thrown by their white classmates that featured non-white music, like afrobeats and dancehall, yet, they still felt out of place in the party because the music did not align with their accustomed genre-normative mode of listening they were used to. For example, let's say that I were at a college party that is predominantly Caribbean-Americans; I would expect to hear reggae, dancehall, and soca music because that music derives

from Caribbean cultures. It would be considered normative in that space because of the shared cultural background of the guests present. Now, if I were to go to a different party populated by mostly white people and only dancehall and reggae was playing, I would perceive the music to be out of place in this given context because the people in this environment are not who I would expect to see at parties where this music genre is played. Furthermore, the social behaviors displayed by the party members does not align with those exhibited by Caribbean-Americans who possess the adequate mode of listening needed to decipher and understand the expected social behaviors – such as grinding and twerking – described in the songs.

In this situation Stockfelt would say that the music sounds out of place because it is being used outside of its genre-normative mode of listening (Stockfelt, 2006), but I believe that Stockfelt's definition fails to recognize the many ways in which music is also used to mediate social spaces as well. Genre-normative listening situations (a.k.a. genre-normative modes of listening) are part of the characteristic, or trait, that helps to distinguish different genres from one another (Stockfelt, 2006). In this instance these traits also help to establish the "ideal relationship between music and listener" based on factors like space, environment, group composition, and associations with specific scenes or groups (Stockfelt, 2006). In my second example, I would feel out of place (and to a degree othered) because, to me, the music represents community and cultural identity – both of which are not being appropriately used in this context. The non-normative use of music in this predominantly white space creates the inverse effect described in the previous example because I am the only one who understands the sub-textual cultural information embedded within the music. The white people in the space do not possess my genre-normative mode of listening; thus, they create their own relationship and embedded subtext to the music. Essentially, music that I associate with both a cultural and communal identity has been co-opted by members of this predominantly white party space so that they can use it for their own type of community formation.

From my interviews, I got the impression that this is a common experience for students of color at predominantly white institution campus parties. As a result, many reported feeling as if boundaries had been crossed, though they were not able to articulate why this practice felt unsettling to them. I theorize that these feelings of discomfort stem from the music not being used within its conventional mode of listening and has instead been made to fit a mode that has no basis or foundation in the original cultural context in which it was established. Instead, the music is used to mock and reproduce stereotypes of these students' identities.

This is now getting to one of my main points, which is that music, for many people, is used as an identifier, and the mischaracterization of one's identity often feels very personal and unsettling. Black and queer theorist Kaila Adia Story writes that the "hegemony of whiteness as 'unraced', coupled with white supremacy, allows whites a space to disavow their race privilege while simultaneously reifying people of color as the racial other. [Through this racial dynamic,] whites maintain an economic, social, political, and cultural advantage over people of color" (Story, 2016). Story illustrates how one's identity can be mischaracterized and co-opted by white institutions, such as predominantly white colleges, whose power derives from the systematic disenfranchisement of historically marginalized groups, such as POC. Co-opting and mischaracterizing POC identities further contributes to this power imbalance because it uses the tools created to uphold white supremacy to further exclude POC from controlling or attaining agency over how their identities are used. This could be a possible explanation for why POC, in particular, feel unsettled when their music is used outside of its appropriate genre-normative mode of listening.

POC feeling discomfort in white space is a recurring theme that will be examined in more detail throughout this ethnography. As I have shown, Stockfelt's theory on adequate modes of listening provides an essential and valuable framework for conceptualizing music as a mediator of social participation, but it lacks the needed vocabulary to address the social isolation felt by POC

due to the different listening practices that are influenced by race. As I have demonstrated, it is important to understand how race influences the social arenas ingrained within student life at predominantly white colleges since it greatly impacts the experiences of students of color and whether or not they feel included. With this in mind, I have coined the term "culturally-dependent social modes of listening" to connect Stockfelt's language regarding modes of listening with Radano and Bohlman's analysis of the relationship between race and music. It also provides a stronger framework for discussing and comprehending the racial and cultural differences that underlie the experiences of POC in predominantly white social spaces. As we will see throughout this thesis, music's inherent link to racial and social identities is also intertwined with the collective identity of a group and who is made to feel welcomed in the spaces they inhabit.

Gender Performance and Party Culture

Collective Identity Formation in Student Communities and its Relationship to Space

In order to understand how students socialize, it is essential to first understand how social groups are formed. Colleges are filled with different types of social groups that interact and form subcultures. Some of these subcultures are centered around identity markers, like racial, cultural, or sexual identities, while others are grouped around activities like sports, television shows, and student organizations. While conducting interviews, I kept hearing accounts of how factors like population size, institutional policies, and social identifiers were influential to how the social scenes at each college developed as well as students' individual experiences at each institution. I was not surprised by this because many of these themes have been studied and analyzed by scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, Turino, and Green. Students undergoing vastly different experiences within insular

communities of these institutions (i.e. queer communities) is one theme that appeared to resonate throughout all of the conversations I had with students across the three schools.

Music has the power to function both as a social unifier and a determiner of who feels included or excluded from a space. At the three institutions where I conducted my research, academic majors, and campus residence are used as social markers to distinguish groups from one another. This type of collective identity formation is prevalent at colleges because the distinction between the working and personal identities does not exist. What I mean by this is that typically, people are able to maintain a work/life balance that allows their work personalities to be separate from their social ones. This doesn't appear to be the case in these educational ecosystems because the work identity (i.e. academic major) is very much a part of student's social identity and influences the established social hierarchy that regulates the social structure. Delving further into this point, social identifiers, like majors and student organizations, help to further distinguish students from one another, thereby permitting close-knit communities to establish themselves. In this way, the distinctions made within the student communities that exists at these colleges gives students more ways in which to form their social identities within the larger context of their school's identity.

Students' reflections on their school's social life reminded me of the Bourdieusian school of thought about habitus, community, and cultural nobility. The theory of habitus posits that individuals react to their social environments based on their experiences, which then shapes their identity of self (Bourdieu, 1984). The main takeaway of this idea is that the habits people acquire help to build their self-identity. Now, if one were to take this theory and apply it to environments like college campuses, then it becomes clear how group identity formation takes place. In the same way that a person's habits and experiences can create their individual identity, the same occurs for group identity formation. Take for example, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and Smith's group identity as Seven Sisters schools. Their group's identity is based on a shared history as traditionally women's

colleges which they use to distinguish themselves from other institutions of higher learning while concurrently building communities around this identifier. This is where the notion of strategic essentialism, which I mentioned earlier, becomes important. It is a key tool used in community formation and structuring that allows groups to form around common traits and characteristics that are shared by all members. In the case of Bryn Mawr, Smith and Wellesley, strategic essentialism is used by student groups and by the institutions to foster a collective group identity centered around being members of historically women's colleges. By using strategic essentialism to unite individuals around shared social identifiers, these institutions and the student communities that they foster are then able to incorporate their collective identity into a student's habitus.

Based on the current discussion on how historically women's colleges use strategic essentialism to foster community and inform a student's habitus, it is natural to wonder how space ties into this conversation. The interesting thing about collective identities is that spaces can also reflect them because they are not exclusive to groups of people since group identities can be embodied by the space a group occupies. In the same way that music can project a vibe, so can spaces. For example, let's say that we are talking about a room inside a student campus center. The room is used by a variety of student groups and each group has a different relationship to the space. Now, let's say that a black student organization uses the room for their meetings, while a theatre group uses it as their rehearsal space. Each group has a different identity so when they enter the space, the room then takes on that group's identity. This occurs because group identities are comprised of various characteristics and qualities – such as mood, vibe, appearance, etc. – that help to distinguish one group from another.

These shifts exemplify what I refer to as context-dependent spatial relationships, which means that an individual's relationship to a space is influenced by the context in which they were first introduced to said space and interacted with it. My concept of context-dependent spatial

relationships is adapted from Stockfelt's language and provides a framework to describe the relationship of space to identity and also demonstrates that spatial relationships are tied to cultural dependent modes of listening. For instance, if a student is a part of both the black student organization and the theatre group, the student now has two different context-dependent relationships to the room because they have interacted with it under two different circumstances that have allowed them to form different relationships with the space. Thinking about the spatial relationships in this way explicitly connects space to cultural-dependent modes of listening. These two themes will be reintroduced through the narratives of the students I interviewed and will provide the necessary foundation for understanding how queerness relates to context-dependent spatial relationships and culturally-dependent modes of listening.

Separating Queerness from Whiteness

Throughout this thesis, I will explore how theories related to erotic capital, power dynamics, race and policies that regulate social spaces on these campuses align to erase marginalized identities. In her discussion of how James Baldwin's "The Fire Next Time" critiques "how whiteness depends on fetishizations of black sexuality to define itself", queer theorist Alison Reed expands on Baldwin's critique to address how queer theory is dominated by white narratives that rely "on spectacularized blackness to understand itself" (Reed, 2016). Similarly, in her essay titled, "On the Cusp of Deviance: Respectability Politics and the Cultural Marketplace of Sameness", Story also argues that while theoretical discussion around gender and race "ushered in a productive way of rethinking our relationship to 'identity', it also undermined some of the strategies that people of color had developed to speak" to their condition (2016). Story's biggest critique of the identity politics that encompass queer theory is that many of the theorists in the field who are white neglect to address other identities, such as race and class, in their discussions of sexuality (2016). Because of

this, voices representing marginalized groups are often left out of queer narratives and erased from these conversations.

Many of the student accounts I collected reminded me of Reed and Story's analysis of the erasure of POC voices from queer theory narratives. Story states that white queers' attempts to re-classify homosexuality as normative, cultivates "a sanitized version of homosexuality that, in its most insidious instantiation, becomes another form of sexual regulation" which cultural critic Lisa Duggan calls "homonormativity" (Story, 2016). As Story highlights, the problem with this type of rebranding is that by trying to veil queerness in heteronormative ideals so that it can fit into the larger hegemonic society, white queers are indirectly affixing themselves to white supremacy, "often blinding them to their [own] privilege" (Story, 2016). This is evident from POC student accounts that white queer students are unaware of the privilege they possess, and by extension, the power that derives from that privilege. As a result, queer students of color feel unsafe in white queer spaces because they are further objectified and made to feel othered by their white peers.

Beyond the erasure of POC's from queer spaces imagined as white, the students I spoke with also expressed feeling objectified by their white peers. For example, many of the masculine presenting students of color who I spoke with described feeling fetishized and objectified by white queer students who often saw their combined identity of non-white and masculine gender identity as extremely attractive and desirable. This is reminiscent of a larger issue highlighted by queer theorist bell hooks who argues that American society has allowed whites to project sexual fantasies that do not conform with hegemonic white respectability onto historically marginalized bodies – such as black and brown bodies – so that they can live out "a narrative of sexualization disassociated from whiteness" (hooks, 1992). She goes on to demonstrate how this practice has been around since slavery because black and brown bodies were often depicted as not human and deviant. Consequently, the systemic practice of juxtaposing blackness as the antithesis of whiteness further

bolstered the notion that blackness – and really all non-white identities – is inherently deviant. By creating this disposition, systems rooted in whiteness, like white queer culture, allow white people space to act out sexual fantasies in a way that neither challenges white respectability politics, nor aligns them directly with deviancy. Put plainly, hooks is describing how white people use characteristics/habits they associate with blackness (read: deviancy) to mask their whiteness so that they can live out fantasies that are deemed deviant by white societal standards. This relates back to feelings of being objectified in spaces inhabited by their white peers described by students of color during their interviews. Therefore, the objectification students feel likely stems from their white peers projecting their performance of deviance onto their racial identities in such a way that feels fetishizing because their white peers perceive their identities as deviant. This detracts from a POC's level of agency in white spaces and rightly makes them feel inherently uncomfortable.

Summary

In this chapter I have demonstrated how sound, space and racial identity have a huge impact on who is made to feel included/excluded from queer hookup culture. Though Stockfelt's theory on adequate modes of listening provides an essential and valuable framework for conceptualizing music as a mediator of social participation, it lacks the needed vocabulary to address the social isolation felt by POC due to the different listening practices influenced by race. It is clear from interviews with students of color that race impacts their associations and interactions with white spaces at their respective campuses. Therefore, a critique of queer hookup culture at these predominantly white historically women's colleges must include a review of how race influences the social spaces inhabited by queer students of color since race greatly impacts their experiences and whether or not they feel included.

The experiences of non-white students at the three colleges discussed in this ethnography support Reed and Story's theories that the voices of queer POC, in this case students, are largely erased from white social spaces, represented here by PWI's. At their respective colleges, non-white students discussed how they struggle to remain authentic and maintain a sense of self so that their identities do not become subsumed by the values placed on their racial identities by their white peers. This is especially true of queer students of color when they participate in social spaces in these institutions. They often feel othered due to the value placed on their erotic capital derived from being students of color in a white environment. Cohen captures their experiences when she writes, "unexplored has been the role of race and one's relationship to dominant power in constructing the range of public and private possibilities for such fundamental concepts/behaviors as desire, pleasure, and sex" (Cohen, 2004). The relationship between race and dominant power structures is a recurring theme that I will examine in more detail throughout this ethnography. It will be of greater importance in the later chapters as I explore the relationship between sound and space through the lens of student perspectives.

2: An Overview of the Schools

A Summary of the Seven Sisters Legacy

When one hears someone make reference to the Seven Sisters schools, the better known schools, like Wellesley, Smith, and Mount Holyoke, immediately spring to mind. However, the title, "Seven Sisters", was originally used to distinguish Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley Colleges from the 50 other women's colleges that were popping up across the country in the mid to late 19th century (Harwarth et al., 2005). Historians like Irene Harwarth believe that the continued success, and longevity of these historically women's colleges is due in part to their reputations of being centers for women to further advance their education, and in some cases, careers. The Seven Sisters colleges were founded between 1837 and 1889. Their mission was to provide women with educational advancements and similar opportunities that were only afforded to men at the Ivy League schools (Harwarth et al., 2005). Their popularity amongst elite families enabled them to maintain high enrollment rates and consistent attendance – despite declining enrollment amongst many women's colleges at the time (Harwarth et al., 2005).

In many ways, the Seven Sisters colleges were no different from the other women's colleges in the 19th century. They shared common core values, such as fostering environments for education, growth and piety. Religion was one of the guiding values that was present in all aspects of students' academic and social lives. These values, in particular, those governing students' social lives, were important because they greatly influenced the manner in which students were allowed to socialize with one another – some of these practices persist today. Most of these colleges required women to board at the schools – as was a standard practice during this period. The reason was

rooted in strongly held religious beliefs about preserving women's purity (Harwarth et al., 2005). Consequently, student spaces at these historically women's colleges, like dormitory living rooms, were designed to discourage large group gatherings on campus (Harwarth et al., 2005). Students who wanted to engage in large group socializing had no choice but to do so off campus, often times at a neighboring men's college (Harwarth et al., 2005). In many ways, women's colleges better resembled a convent than institutions of learning because preserving women's purity was considered as important as their education. While these practices and beliefs were in line with societal beliefs at the time, many of the choices made in the 19th century, such as the design of social areas, have had a lasting impact on how students who attend those schools socialize today.

The purpose of this ethnography is to explore the relationship between sonic mediation and hookup culture in queer student communities at historically women's colleges. The Seven Sisters colleges that survive today as single-sex institutions are attempting to address this issue; but as we will learn from conversations with students at Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, and Smith colleges, issues surrounding social life, especially queer social life, are deeply influenced by institutional policies, space, and the school's legacies as predominantly white institutions (PWI). Many students of color who attend these PWIs often have difficulty navigating social environments within these institutions because the majority of student spaces were designed for a predominantly white student population. Thus, these spaces do not feel inviting to students of color since they were not originally intended to accommodate them or their needs. Throughout this ethnography, the students of color I spoke with affirmed this point through the narratives of their experiences at their respective schools; this point is further reinforced by the racial demographics of Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, and Smith (Table 1). The quantitative data sourced from student demographic information substantiates the point made by students of color that student spaces (especially queer student spaces) are very white.

In order to understand how queer communities and spaces manifest in these environments, as well as how the histories of these PWIs influence which students feel comfortable engaging in queer spaces, one must first understand the policies and practices that govern social gathering in the three colleges. To do this, I have provided a brief overview of each college, and some of their policies as they relate to student social life. Many of the spaces afforded to students exist within their residence halls. As one will see throughout this ethnography, student body composition plays an integral role in determining who feels comfortable entering and engaging in queer spaces and hookup culture because it frames the social dynamics for students of color in predominantly white spaces.

	White	Asian-American	International	Latinx	Black	Multicultural	Unknown and Pacific Islander
Wellesley	36.4%	20.6%	13.5%	12.6%	6.2%	6%	5%
Bryn Mawr	37%	12.3%	23%	9.2%	6.1%	5.5%	8.2%
Smith	47.7%	9.3%	13.9%	11.5%	6.6%	4.8%	6.9%

Table 1: Composite Overview of the Student Demographics at Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and Smith Colleges[1].

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[1]The Information for this table was gathered from Offices of Institutional Research at Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and Smith Colleges.

Wellesley College: An Overview

Demographic Breakdown

In order to better understand social life at all three institutions, one must first understand the racial backgrounds and identities that comprise student spaces. Located 20 minutes outside Boston, the small, suburban town of Wellesley is home to Wellesley College. Wellesley is one of the better known Seven Sisters because of its many notable and highly esteemed alumnae. Of the 2,500 students who attend the 500 acre college, 36.4% identify as white, 20.6% as Asian-American, 13.5% as international, 12.6% as Hispanic/Latinx, 6.2% as black/African-American/Caribbean-American, 6% as multiracial, and less than 5% as unknown or Pacific Islander (Wellesley College Office of Institutional Research). Because Wellesley has a large student of color population, administrators have been working to make many of its programs and student spaces more inclusive of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, as will be revealed through student accounts, many of the predominantly white spaces that make up the majority of student spaces on campus still do not feel inclusive or welcoming to students of color.

Campus Culture & Climate

Much of Wellesley's social life is dictated by, and structured around, its physical spaces – which are centralized to residence halls. Students who choose to live on campus are housed in one of Wellesley's 20 residence buildings. Social life at Wellesley is partially structured by where one lives on campus. The campus is often discussed by the "side" of campus that one lives on. For example, the west side of campus (west side) is where most of the campus social life takes place, whereas the east side of campus (east side) is quiescent and "dead." Much of the differences in the social energies of east and west sides is driven by their proximities to the academic buildings on campus. Students who prefer a more socially enriched environment tend to live on west side because most student

spaces, like the Lulu Chow Wang Campus Center, and student events, like culture shows and campus parties, are located on west side. At the same time, students who are more interested in academics prefer to live on east side because of its quiet atmosphere and feeling of being separated from the rest of campus. One of the attractions of east side dorms are that they are bigger and are the "newest" dorm buildings on campus. I use the term "new" loosely because the buildings were constructed in the 1970s, which is new compared to the dorm buildings on west side, which were built in the 1910s and 1920s. Although the buildings with "modern" living spaces are a major appeal for some students, they lack accessibility to Wellesley's social scenes that west side dorms afford.

Similar to Smith and Bryn Mawr, Wellesley students complain that their campus' social life is influenced by a "stress culture". Many students point to an intense academic environment fostered by academic policies, rigorous schedules, and peer pressure. Punch's Alley, or the pub as most people call it, is a student run bar and co-op at Wellesley College located on the ground floor of the LuLu Chow Wang Campus Center. It is a social space where students go to escape the stress culture that permeates all spaces on campus including dorms. The pub is the only student space that offers a nightlife scene on campus. Students who staff and run the pub are known as "pubbies" and are responsible for creating weekly pub night themes as well as playlists that people identify as the "vibe" of the pub. To many Wellesley students, the pub is also known as a space that caters to queer students. On Thursday nights, from 10pm-1am, it serves as the epicenter for social gathering and queer hookup culture. Kam, Donna, and Sasha are all students at Wellesley who I interviewed two years ago as part of the ethnography I did about the pub. They used words like "really gay" and "queer vibe" to describe the pub. Kam also mentioned that it's "where you go to hookup with people". Pub nights are a unique part of the Wellesley experience because the atmosphere does not evoke the stress culture found elsewhere on campus. There are several areas on campus that have been designated for socializing and working, but none of them have been designated as a socializing

only space. While the pub does fit into the category of a social space where students occasionally do work, Thursday night is the only time when it becomes a designated queer social space.

Student Groups & Communities

Student organizations (orgs), co-ops, and House Councils (HoCos), offer Wellesley students many options for on campus community engagement. These communities allow students to establish a sense of unity and feelings of connectedness to the college. The plethora of on campus student orgs can be overwhelming for first year students, so much so that many find themselves in search of a community that "fits" what Turino describes as community building through identity formation. Most communities at Wellesley, including student orgs, are formed around social identities that use the "recognition of similar habits or features" and allow students to align themselves to others with similar interests (Turino, 2008). As a result, students may find themselves a part of several different communities.

Wellesley has over 250 student orgs ranging from cultural to political orgs, and everything in between. For many students on campus, organizations are a central part of the Wellesley student social experience and play an integral part in community formation. Roughly 18% of the student orgs at Wellesley are cultural orgs that represent a diversity of identities (Student Organization and Appointments Committee records[2]). For example, there are eight culture orgs specifically for students who identify as students of color and LGBTQIA+. These orgs allow their members to connect with each other through the strategic essentialism of several aspects of their identity such as their shared racial and non-heterosexual identities. While many students of color use these orgs as their primary communities, an equally large number choose not to engage in these spaces because they prefer to join communities that emphasize other aspects of their identities.

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[2] This information was not available on the Student Organization and Appointments (SOAC) website thus I gathered this intel from the College Government Vice President who oversees SOAC.

Another community-forming space are HoCos. They are one of the first communities'
students are introduced to when they arrive at Wellesley. Residential Assistants (RAs) and other
residence life staff oversee these groups and are integral to ensuring that students living in the
different resident halls (res halls) immediately feel integrated into social life at Wellesley. While all
class years are welcomed to participate in HoCos, they are primarily comprised of first-years and
sophomores. This trend occurs because by the time older students reach their sophomore year, they
begin to find other communities to establish themselves within; this allows them to build strong
affinities in communities outside of their res halls.

A set of communities of particular interest to my research are student co-ops. Many of them
happen to be queer-centric spaces that many queer students identify as safe spaces and focal points
for campus queer social life. Wellesley also offers students alternative housing options through co-
ops although students are able to apply to several types of co-ops that are not housing based. Many
co-ops are affiliated with services provided to the larger Wellesley community and are student-run.
For instance, the food-based co-ops, Café Hoop (the hoop) and El Table, offer students coffee
shop-like environments in which to study and socialize concurrently. Most of the students who
work and operate these co-ops identify as LGBTQIA+ and/or people of color (POC). This fact
confirms student perceptions that these are queer spaces that are safe for POC, and thus allows for
more students to find a community within them. A similar form of community building is found in
WZLY (the student-run radio station). Students who occupy these spaces find commonality through
shared interests (i.e. the co-op function) as well as through shared identities (i.e. identifying as
LGBTQIA+). In this way, I believe that co-ops: 1) provide students with a deeper sense of
community compared to some of the other student communities at Wellesley; and 2) create safe
spaces for students of color – especially for those who identify as LGBTQIA+ – who do not find

their "fit" in communities like student orgs that cater to heterosexual students and promote heteronormative values.

Bryn Mawr College: An Overview

Demographic Breakdown

Located in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, Bryn Mawr College is the smallest Seven Sisters school with a student population of 1,325 undergraduate students, and 400 graduate students. Interestingly, Bryn Mawr is the only school within the Seven Sisters consortium to also have both undergraduate and graduate studies programs. While Bryn Mawr's undergraduate school is still traditionally single-sex, its graduate school is co-ed and offers masters and doctoral degrees. It is not as well-known as Wellesley or Smith, but it still has notable and esteemed alumnae. Of the 1,325 undergraduate students who attend the 49 acre campus, 37% identify as white, 23% as international, 12.3% as Asian-American, 9.2% as Hispanic/Latinx, 7.2% as unknown, 6.1% as black/African-American/Caribbean-American, 5.5% as multiracial, and less than 1% as Pacific Islander (Bryn Mawr Office of Institutional Research[3]). Like Wellesley, Bryn Mawr has a large student of color population. Students with whom I have spoken with, like Veronica, a student of South Asian descent and a senior, described Bryn Mawr as having many predominantly white spaces but also mentioned that it has a residence space "called the ECC, which is the Enid Cook Center" [and] is a space "specifically for people who identify within the Black community and the Latinx community." Only students who identify within these diasporas are allowed to live there and access that space. Veronica added that the ECC is "a really nice space" and explained that it fosters close-knit POC community at Bryn Mawr.

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[3] At the time I was collecting this information only the undergraduate demographic information for the 2017-2018 academic year was available.

Campus Culture & Climate

Unlike Wellesley and Smith, Bryn Mawr students don't have a tradition of strong social attachments to residence halls, so it did not offer a clear point of comparison as to what influence residence halls have on the social structure at the college. During my conversation with Veronica, she explained that Bryn Mawr has a big mix of on dorm buildings where students are housed, otherwise students will "live far off campus". When I asked Danielle, a senior at Bryn Mawr, to describe the climate on campus, she switched "to tour guide mode" and explained Bryn Mawr as "a really unique place" because "the juxtaposition of all the different parts of our community make it like a really particular place." She elaborated that being right near Philly contributes to shaping the campus culture. Being part of the consortium with Haverford, Swarthmore, and the University of Pennsylvania also plays a role in defining Bryn Mawr's social and academic culture. She also noted that because Haverford is only five minutes away from Bryn Mawr, the proximity between the two colleges creates an interesting dynamic where many students major and go "back and forth between the two schools". Danielle credited the exchange of students to the:

> interesting dynamic [at Bryn Mawr] because we have Haverford students like really constantly on our campus, but Bryn Mawr still very much maintains a feeling of being Bryn Mawr specific and I think that our honor code and the way we govern ourselves is really unique and also, our traditions and stuff like that too… It's a really particular community and definitely shaped by so many different weird aspects.

When I asked Danielle what social life for queer students looked like, her response was: "Bryn Mawr, as a whole, is very queer and so I mean, a lot of those spaces are very queer spaces including like, the really big parties." Many of the points Danielle raised during our conversation echoed experiences of other Bryn Mawr students with whom I spoke. Veronica affirmed Danielle's account about the size of the student body and its impact on the social dynamics on campus. She added that because Bryn Mawr is a small school, it has "a pretty small community" that's "very insular and that can be nice because you get to kind of know your community pretty well." She went on to explain

that "especially by senior year, you kind of know everybody in your year and you kind of know the community almost fully." This was also emphasized by Danielle who elaborated that:

> people have such different experiences at Bryn Mawr. Like, two friends can have a–or like, two different people that were roommates can have such different experiences like, completely different friend groups, completely different social experiences. Just because there is so [much] variety of what you could do on a Saturday night for instance. Or like, the type of academic experience you have. There are so many choices for such a small school, cause we are crazy small!

In addition, Veronica's assessment of Bryn Mawr's social atmosphere, seems to also echo Danielle's sentiments about the college's academic climate. She mentioned that the academic climate at Bryn Mawr is very high intensity and that students rarely discuss their stress levels with each other. She elaborated that not "talking about how people are doing sometimes is a bit more stressful" because it feels "like people are always very like uptight about academics and kind of putting it first, sometimes to the detriment of mental health." While there appears to be a separation of social and academic life at Bryn Mawr, it also seems like this practice is creating its own challenges for students who do not feel comfortable discussing how academic stress impacts them.

Student Groups & Communities

Unlike Wellesley and Smith where social life is more centered around groups like residence halls and student groups, social life at Bryn Mawr is centered around school traditions which Danielle mentioned "[tends] to draw a good amount of people". One of the traditions Danielle described to me was lantern night where students "stand in rows at sundown in our black robes and then there's people just running and they're also in dark robes and they're putting lanterns behind you...and then everyone's singing in Greek because our school song's in Ancient Greek." Danielle described the experience as "a little scary" and "kind of beautiful" but also "peak cult" – which referred to our conversation on how school traditions often felt like cult induction ceremonies. Lantern night is thought to be one of the college's more formal school traditions because it is

centered around making students feel a part of the Bryn Mawr community. In comparison, Danielle explained that Bryn Mawr's other school traditions are centered around school-wide parties "where pretty much all different social circles end up coming [together for] at least for a little bit." These events "Rox St. Patty's Day, Radnor Halloween, and East vs West", are parties in which all dorms participate. Danielle described them as "very interesting" because they are the only ones where "so many people will show up" but even these social events "aren't what they used to be, like back in the day [because] everyone used to participate and now [they're] less people participating". The drop in event participation is currently being addressed by Bryn Mawr's student government association.

Danielle described Bryn Mawr as lacking a "stronger community feel" because "people are all doing their own thing" and become really invested in what they're doing so "it's hard to get a strong community feeling or get like, a lot of people out for certain things, which is kind of frustrating." Veronica agreed with this sentiment and also explained that social groups do not exist at Bryn Mawr in the conventional way that one would see at other schools. From their accounts, I got the impression that social groups on campus were not stringently defined. Danielle explained that student groups were not as important to students as their friend groups. A student's social identity is closely defined by their network of friends rather than by their activities or residence hall. Both Danielle and Veronica agreed that Bryn Mawr possessed an abundance of individual-centered identities rather than a shared one, which is different from my findings at Smith and Wellesley.

Smith College: An Overview

Demographic Breakdown

Located in Northampton, Massachusetts, Smith College is the largest Seven Sisters school and is best known as having a "hippy-dippy" and "gay" campus atmosphere. Smith rivals Wellesley

in notoriety and has a student population of approximately 2,500 students. The college's reputation

as a prestigious traditionally women's liberal arts college along with its reputation for being very

queer friendly is a big draw for many high school students looking to explore their sexual identity.

Of the 2,500 undergraduate students that attend the 147 acre campus, 47.7% identify as white,

13.9% as international, 11.5% as Hispanic/Latinx, 9.3% as Asian-American, 6.6% as black/African-

American/Caribbean-American, 5.9% as unknown, 4.8% as multiracial, and less than 1% as Pacific

Islander and indigenous/native American (Smith Office of Institutional Research). Unlike Wellesley

and Bryn Mawr, students at Smith who identify as white make up nearly half of the campus

community. Based on my interviews with students at Smith, I got the impression that the college's

predominately white student body has a tremendous impact on its social dynamics. The students I

spoke with, who all identified as students of color, commented that they did not feel comfortable

entering the predominantly white social spaces at Smith. While this sentiment was unique to the

experiences of students of color at all three institutions, their descriptions of their experiences within

queer spaces at Smith were the most negative compared to POC student accounts from both

Wellesley and Bryn Mawr.

Campus Culture & Climate

Similar to Wellesley, the location of houses[4] at Smith greatly impacts social dynamics and

determines who participates in social life on campus. Raina, a sophomore at Smith and a student of

African-descent, gave me a comprehensive breakdown of which residence halls were the focal points

of on campus social life. According to them, where one lives on campus is an important social

identifier because it's "an indicator of what type of person you are... it's like, assessing who you are

through academia, where you live, and then it's where are you from. And that's how I would

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[4] Smith's term for residence halls.

introduce myself." They explained that one's major and where one lives on campus shapes how one

is seen by one's peers because if you're in the humanities, or social sciences, or STEM, you are

"already [separated into] three different baskets" and from there people are then further separated

by where you live on campus. Their description of Smith's social climate was reminiscent of my, and

other students', experiences at Wellesley. They explained that the quad, "which is where the majority

of [Smith] students live" is "where you're going to go to party, and by that I mean, sit in a basement

for forty-five minutes until everyone gets tired at midnight and goes to bed." They described

"another part of campus called Green Street" as the area on campus where one typically finds the

"very quiet [and] introverted students." They noted that people of color "do not live on Green

Street. If you're on Green Street, you watch Doctor Who on Friday nights and bake cupcakes."

Raina lives in a co-op at Smith, which they said was located:

> smack down in the middle of campus so we're not a part of the party scene and we're not a part of the
> quiet scene. We're kind of in our own limbo which can make it very interesting because then people can
> travel to come be in this part of campus but, we're not like amongst a lot of people and we're definitely
> not in a space where you're going to have people opening their doors to tell you to be quiet at 9 PM on
> a Friday.

Raina also described the culture as "really focused on the academic aspect of Smith" and

explained that many of the conversations held between students on campus revolved around "what

classes you're taking, what major you are in," and "do you know this person?" They added that they

"feel that every interaction that [they] participate in…begins from an academic standpoint". They

conceded that their description of Smith's social culture possibly stemmed from their own paranoia.

Raina believed that their peers' inability to separate social from academic life arises from a mentality

of "let me understand you so I can compare myself to you and then I'll get to know you". This then

leads students to ask questions like, "what is your major?" and "what classes are you taking?" They

believed that a culture of students comparing themselves to each other creates a culture where

people talk "about school and you'll never forget that you're at the school". They also added that

"you'll never forget that you're at [Smith] and you'll never forget that this school's primarily a queer

school" because every social interaction is focused on discussing Smith in some capacity. They then

summarized that "the definition of Smith is, 'Where are you studying?' and 'Are you gay?' And you

never forget that in any of your interactions."

When I asked if they felt like students at Smith can't socialize without talking about

academics they agreed and said that they:

> think Smith students want to feel like they're smart and they know that they're smart. Smith students
> are smart, just as I'm sure [Wellesley] students are too but there's an inherent need to prove [themselves],
> and that is because the students here are women and non-binary identifying and there's men here too.

They added that they felt like "much of the AFAB population or the assigned female at birth

population" has "an inherent need to prove [themselves]" which they believed is "the main reason"

for the hyperfocus on academia in Smith's social atmosphere. Raina's point resonated with me and

was echoed by students at Wellesley and Bryn Mawr. A common belief across all three colleges is

that there is too much overlap between the social and academic spheres on campus. Raina's

description of Smith's social scene appears to substantiate Turino's theory on the use of strategic

essentialism which I introduced in Chapter 1. Turino's theory that social groups use strategic

essentialism as a way to differentiate themselves from others by uniting around aspects of identity

that are shared and seen as fundamental to the people in the group is demonstrated here. The

students who attend these traditionally single-sex institutions are predominantly AFAB. Many of

them have been conditioned to socialize through discussing their accomplishments to prove their

self-worth. In spaces like traditionally single-sex colleges, AFAB people manifest this behavior as a

means to grow social capital amongst their peers in social environments; or put plainly, discussing

academia in spaces designated for socializing helps students form connections with each other

because they are bonding over shared experiences. Essentially, Raina is describing how students use academic identities to define their social identities.

Student Groups & Communities

Raina became my de facto tour-guide of Smith's student life. They explained the importance of houses to Smith's communities and how if anyone were to call them dorms, "They will cut you". Smith is home to "about 33 houses on campus" which range from the co-ops to larger houses. The houses are "rooted in tradition so the people who live in that house carry out specific traditions", like hosting house-specific parties. Although students at Wellesley also make strong attachments to their residence halls, I got the impression that Smith students have an even stronger attachment to their residence halls. Initially, I took Raina's remarks to mean that many Smith students consider houses to be very important to their on campus social identities. However, when I spoke with more students, I learned that many students of color did not feel a strong connection to their residence hall. Though the students of color I spoke with mentioned where they lived on campus and how they liked the community in their houses/co-ops, they appeared to have a stronger attachment to student orgs that were meant for them. Wrenn is a sophomore and a student of Latinx-descent. They are part of a campus org called PRISM, which is a student org for queer and trans students of color. They have found their community in PRISM and spoke more about their involvement in the org than their house. I also found this to be true when I spoke to another sophomore named Sonia, who identifies as Black and is also a part of PRISM.

PRISM, along with the Black Students' Association (BSA), the Latin American Students' Association (LASO), the Asian Students' Association (ASA), the Chinese Interregional Student Cultural Org (CISCO), the South Asian Student Association of Smith (EKTA), the Indigenous Smith Students and Allies (ISSA), the International Students' Organization (ISO), the Korean

Students' Association (KSA), the Multiethnic Interracial Smith College (MISC), the Smith

Association of Class Activists (SACA), the Smith African and Caribbean Students' Association

(SACSA), and the Vietnamese Students' Association (VSA) are all classified by Smith College as

"unity organizations". Unity orgs provide group affiliations for students from historically

marginalized backgrounds to gather and create communities that "sponsor fine arts forums,

conferences, cultural celebrations, workshops and other activities" (Smith College Student

Leadership & Cultural Organizations). While these groups serve an important function by creating

spaces for students of similar backgrounds to gather and build community, Wrenn stated that

members of unity orgs often feel tokenized by the college because unity orgs are not allowed to host

events exclusively for their members.

When I asked Wrenn if they knew the reason for Smith's requirement that all campus parties

be open to everyone, I learned that it relates to Smith's event policy that stipulates that all student

groups who received funding are required to make their events open to the entire campus. None of

my interviewees at Wellesley or Bryn Mawr mentioned that their respective school had such as

policy. I got the sense that Smith's use of such a policy was meant to promote and normalize

colorblind inclusivity.

As Story notes, coupling the notion that whiteness is unraced with systems of power, like

white supremacy, allows white people to distance themselves from their racial privilege while

simultaneously designating people of color as the racial other (Story, 2016). Through this racial

dynamic, whites are able to maintain "an economic, social, political, and cultural advantage over

people of color" (Story, 2016). In this instance, the use of policies that create a false sense of

inclusivity further perpetuates this notion of whiteness as normative while simultaneously othering

non-white identities through social barriers. This was one of the many differences I noticed between

Smith, Wellesley, and Bryn Mawr and it made me wonder what social life for students of color at

Smith would be like if they didn't face such stringent institutional policies that systematically disenfranchised them.

Student Life Policies

To better understand how space and music influence and mediate queer social spaces, like parties, at traditionally single-sex institutions, I thought it best to have a working knowledge of their social policies. My research on how these institutions allow for and regulate party spaces included a review of their dorm space, parties, and alcohol & drugs policies. These policies provided useful information about each college's rules and procedures for social interactions. Armed with this information, I then reviewed student interviews in order to determine the degree to which the policies impacted each school's social culture. Initially, I thought that I would find that the policies that regulate student spaces would be uniform across the three colleges because of their Seven Sisters history. Instead, I found that Bryn Mawr's policies were radically different from those at Wellesley and Smith. Since my findings were unexpected, I set out to understand what factors contributed to the differences.

Drug & Alcohol

Because the drug & alcohol policies at all three institutions are so heavily related to their party policies, I started my analysis by examining them and how accessible this information was to students. Initially, I thought that state regulations could be an influential factor. Smith and Wellesley are located in Massachusetts, which has some of the strictest drug, alcohol, and firearm regulations in the country. I thought Massachusetts' state regulations might be a contributing factor as to why both schools' policies governing student spaces and parties differ so greatly from Bryn Mawr's. This

turned out not to be the case. When I read each school's drug & alcohol policies, I was immediately

struck by Bryn Mawr's detailed language and transparency about 1) the intent and purpose of its

drug & alcohol policy; and 2) the types of resources accessible to students to educate them about the

spaces where alcohol consumption is allowed. In addition, student life offices provide training on

how to handle and work with alcohol as well as state and federal regulations regarding drugs. Bryn

Mawr students accessed all of this information in their student handbook, which they receive during

orientation. I have included an excerpt from the Student Handbook section on the Alcohol Policy:

> The Alcohol Policy, in conjunction with planned educational activities and support services, is designed
> to achieve the following goals: to remind students of the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
> and of the Social Honor Code, both of which govern their behavior with respect to alcohol; to stress
> moderation, safety, and individual accountability for those who choose to drink; to maintain a Bi-
> College[5] social atmosphere that is free of coercion for those who choose not to drink and a climate in
> which alcohol is not the focus of parties or other social events; to maintain a Bi-College community in
> which alcohol abuse and its effects are minimal; to provide confidential and effective guidance for those
> with specific needs related to alcohol use and addiction; and to provide information and education
> about the effects of alcohol for all students. (Bryn Mawr Student Handbook, p. 53).

In comparison, Smith's drug and alcohol policies, though centrally located on the college's website,

did not provide a clear or detailed description of the intent and purpose of its drug & alcohol policy.

An excerpt of the policy is provided below:

> No person is allowed to be in possession of an open container or consume alcohol in public areas, with
> the exception of parties registered with the coordinator of house events. Public areas include but are
> not limited to living rooms, lounges, basements, hallways and stairwells…The college prohibits the
> possession of open containers of alcohol outside of residence facilities, including patios, porches and
> walkways. Smith students and guests should not carry drinks or alcohol from one event to another…
> No one may bring alcoholic beverages for personal or group consumption to a Smith party. If a person
> is carrying any alcohol into a party, it must be taken away for disposal. Guests cannot enter a party with
> a backpack or bag that might be transporting alcohol. (Smith College Student Policies Regarding
> Alcohol).

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[5] The word "Bi-College" is used by Bryn Mawr to refer to itself and Haverford College.

While Smith provided students with information on where they could consume or transport alcohol,

it made no reference to state and federal laws governing drugs & alcohol. Smith's alcohol policy

does provide information on institutional resources that are available to students interested in

bartending at social events, or community guidelines in regard to alcohol use and consumption.

Notice, however, that nowhere in this excerpt is there mention of the purpose and intent of the

policy, and that the language used sounds more punitive when compared to Bryn Mawr's. While

Smith's policy does a good job of informing students of what they can't do, it lacks language that

explains the educational objective.

Although Smith's alcohol policy can be found on the college's website, it was not easy to

locate. I dug around on the college's website for some time before I finally found it under the

"student handbook" tab. Initially, I believed that I had discovered an actual student handbook PDF,

as I had on Bryn Mawr's website, but Smith only provided a PDF titled, "Smith College: Handbook

in brief 2018-2019"; the pdf contained some information about the school's code of conduct and

the various buildings on campus. The rest of the document included hyperlinks back to the Smith

College website where policy information about drug & alcohol, and party policies were embedded.

To give some perspective, it took me five minutes to find and download the complete, 117-page

student handbook from Bryn Mawr, whereas it took me five minutes to find Smith's handbook in

brief and 20 minutes searching through all the hyperlinks before I was able to find and access this

information.

Finding Wellesley's policies that govern student spaces and activities around drugs & alcohol

was just as difficult as finding Smith's. However, unlike Smith and Bryn Mawr, Wellesley doesn't

have a student handbook. Of the three schools, Wellesley's website was the most difficult to

navigate. On Wellesley's website, under the student life tab, there is a sub-heading that says

handbook, but when I clicked on the link to access the handbook there was no content about drugs

& alcohol. Instead, I found links to Wellesley's honor code, academic policies and procedures, as well as campus life policies and procedures. When I clicked on the link for campus policies and procedures, I was referred to more links that provided little information and were more vague than those of Bryn Mawr and Smith. After 30 minutes of unsuccessfully searching Wellesley's website for the drug and alcohol policy, I decided to google "Wellesley student drug and alcohol policies". It was then that I found excerpts of the student policies in a downloadable PDF format:

> Wellesley College is committed to providing an environment of well-being, learning, and accountability for its members. To this end, the Wellesley College Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy is grounded in four community standards derived from the Honor Code: (1) compliance with governing law and College policies; (2) respect for the Wellesley College community by minimizing the impact of alcohol and other drug use upon others; (3) care for one's own health and well-being; and (4) prevention of harm and seeking of assistance and support for self or others. This policy informs students of their individual, group, and community responsibilities regarding alcohol and other drugs, the College's response to violations, and the resources available for addressing alcohol and other drug-related concerns. Campus Police and Residential Life Professional Staff have primary responsibility for enforcement of this policy. (Wellesley College Student Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy).

Notice that the language in Wellesley's policy provides information on the purpose of the policy but does not provide information on how students can access the resources mentioned. The biggest difference I noticed when comparing the three policies is that Wellesley and Smith's social policies appear to protect the respective institutions while Bryn Mawr's seems designed to protect students. This contrast can be seen both in the language used in the policies as well as how each college educates its students about their social policies. Additionally, I thought the language used in Wellesley and Smith's policies to be reactive, punitive and framed in a way that absolved the colleges of any responsibility should students violate a federal or state law, or both. Indeed, my sense of Wellesley and Smith's social policies is if students violated the law, the student alone would be accountable for the legal ramifications that attaches to such violation(s). In contrast to Wellesley and Smith, I did not find Bryn Mawr's language to be punitive. Rather, Bryn Mawr's use of proactive and transparent language demonstrates that the college is intentional about educating its students about

the campus' social policies as well as federal and state laws by centralizing the information in a student handbook – which administrators share with all incoming students.

Unlike Massachusetts, Pennsylvania where Bryn Mawr is located, has laxer laws regarding drug and alcohol use and regulation. In Bryn Mawr's Party Policy, it stipulates that guests at wet parties "must be served no more than 4 drinks at any party." Conversely, Wellesley and Smith's party policy follow state law which allows no more than three drinks to be served per hour. Notice that Bryn Mawr's school policy limits serving alcohol to four drinks per party per guest. There are no stipulations or guidelines as to the number of drinks that should be served to students or guests per hour. Given that parties vary in time, a student could theoretically consume four drinks in an hour-long party, be in compliance with Bryn Mawr's alcohol policy and still binge-drink. Because Massachusetts law prohibits servers from serving more than three drinks per hour, the opportunity for binge-drinking at either Wellesley or Smith is limited due to compliance with state laws. Wellesley takes the state law a step further and prohibits student bartenders from serving more than two drinks per hour. This is an important point because alcohol plays a very large role in party culture at colleges and is known to mediate participation in the hookup culture that exists within party spaces. Knowing this, one would imagine that alcohol abuse would be rampant at Bryn Mawr, but according to students, alcohol consumption and responsibility is actually well-regulated due to the administration's proactive education and transparency about the college's alcohol and drug policy.

The differences in the colleges' social policies are highlighted to underscore the tremendous contrasts between each school's governance of drugs and alcohol. The deeper I delved into becoming fluent in each school's student policies, the more I came to realize that, while state law does influence the policies to some extent, their efficacy on the campuses where the policies were not easily accessible was greatly impeded. My experience in trying to locate this information not only

mirrored the reports of the students I spoke with, it also helped me to understand why there was so much misconception among students about them. Students at Bryn Mawr had a complete and accurate understanding of their student policies regarding drugs, alcohol, and party spaces because of the proactive training they received. However, this was not the case with their Wellesley and Smith counterparts. How each school's administration approaches and enforces their social policy plays a role in mediating hookup culture in party spaces on their campuses as well as the level of comfort students of color feel in them.

Dorm Space & Parties

In my interviews with Wellesley students, I came across a rather intriguing fact which had a significant impact on where students congregated for social events. A recurring theme that arose during my conversations with Wellesley students was the belief that parties couldn't happen in the common areas of their dorms. This misunderstanding has the unintended consequence of limiting the number of spaces identified by students as available for large social gatherings on campus. By contrast, Smith students, while better informed about their school's policies, rarely utilize common spaces for parties or more intimate social gatherings because the onus of securing and preparing the spaces required too much institutional oversight. Raina voiced the belief that "much of the issue with Smith's party culture [stems from] the policies" and that it "is probably one of the greatest roots of the issue that I have with Smith parties". They explained the different types of parties that students could have under Smith's party policy and their frustrations with the current system:

> One of them is a house-specific party wherein the houses complete their regular traditions and they're simple parties. They're boring. [The] Smith dining will do special catering for it. It's very lowkey, everything ends at like 11. And that's basically just to uphold the [tradition of having a party] in every house so that when Smith students grow older and they have children, they would go live in the house and do the same traditions that they had done thirty years prior. The other type of party that we have are again, [house] parties. They're registered still, and what I mean by registered is that you fill out a form through the Office of Student Engagement, you inform them that you are having a party, you are telling them that if you want to have a registered party, everyone at campus has to be available to attend

the party. There's no restrictions so, if I wanted to have a party and I only wanted POC, I could not register it. They would not approve my party because it's not open to the white students on campus. So, if I wanted to have a party that was POC-only, it would technically be an illegal party. So, this registered party has campus police on standby outside the house throughout the whole party. Campus police will just sit in their car with their bright lights on and just stand outside any entrance of the house that it's held in. And the parties have to end at about 12:30. Usually Smith students end parties at that time anyway so that's not that big of a deal. And so, those are the two types of parties that you can legally have on campus. Otherwise, you have an unregistered party and that basically just is like–with these registered parties, you can't serve your own alcohol and that is the main proponent of why a registered Smith party is bad, because you cannot serve alcohol at a registered party. So an unregistered party is usually thrown in the basement of these houses…[If] it happens in a basement, maybe there's free liquor and those are bad...The main issue with the policy is [that] there's literal policing at these parties. It's very intimidating to walk up into a house and expect to be relaxed and have fun when there's a [campus police] car waiting outside to get you in trouble at any second. The lights are bright [and] it's a dark, dark, dark campus.

After listening to Raina's experiences, I searched for and found the policy they referenced. It is included below for additional context:

> Each undergraduate Smith student is a member of the social system and is welcome to participate in all social events taking place on campus and in residential houses. The social system is funded through the student activities fee (SAF) and by the college. (Smith College Social Events Policies, Procedures & Guidelines).

Of the three, Smith is the only college with such a policy. Neither Wellesley's nor Bryn Mawr's social policies require a social event to be open to the entire student body. Raina's account shows how Smith's institutional mandate has significant and negative ramifications on social opportunities available to students of color. It is becoming clear to administrators at many PWIs that providing spaces for students of color to gather and socialize is vital to helping them succeed in these institutions. In failing to recognize the unique needs of this population, Smith is not only hinders their social growth and development, the college is also stigmatizes their type of socializing. Raina's account appears to lend credence to this perception.

Raina also explained that under Smith's party policy a gathering of 10 or more students is considered a party. This appeared to be the campus policy that most of the students who I spoke with believed had the greatest influence on the types of social gatherings permitted on campus.

Parties that are not registered with the Office of Student Engagement are deemed "illegal". Since students often have large parties in their rooms, many campus parties are "illegal" as Sonia explained:

> **H**: even if you just have a party or a kickback in your room, you'd have to register it if it's more than 8 people?
> **S**: Yeah, but no one ever does. Like I've had a lot of people in my room before and I, technically, I had eight-plus in my room and I never registered it or anything. People don't really register.

After reading the policy, I concluded that there was some misunderstanding about the number of bodies in a space that constitute a party. Sonia believes that the rule stipulates eight students or more as the requirement for registering a party; however, the policy actually stipulates a gathering of 10 or more. This means that if 11 students gathered in someone's dorm room[6] then, by Smith's party policy, it would be considered a party and must be registered.

> Gatherings of 10 or more students in student rooms or apartments are considered parties and must be registered with the coordinator of house events in the Department of Residence Life. In a residence house, the event must be held in a public space of the house and is not to include the house corridors or student rooms. (Smith College Social Events Policies, Procedures & Guidelines).

As the reader will note, there is a disconnect between the rules that govern student socializing, and the actual types of socialization that occur. It has already been emphasized that Smith's inclusion policy regarding social events is detrimental to fostering events or social environments for non-white students. Here is another example of a policy that further prescribes the types of socializing that are permissible at Smith. While this policy is applicable to all students, it appears to disproportionately limit students of color from creating social spaces because Smith does not set aside areas exclusively for them to congregate as a group. The requirement that any gathering of 10 or more must be open to the entire campus means that if 10 or more students of color, or students from marginalized groups, were to gather for a social purpose, that gathering would be considered "illegal" under this

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[6] According to students, rooms at Smith can hold up to 15-20 people.

policy. Their inability to congregate in spaces set aside exclusively for them creates barriers to

forming community and strengthening bonds around a shared experience. As depicted in the

demographic breakdown in pages 20 and 29, Smith's student body is predominantly white, thus as a

result of raw numbers campus social spaces naturally cater this population. Consequently, as Raina's

narrative indicates, white spaces do not feel safe or welcoming for students of color – especially

queer students of color. In this context, there is much at stake for students of color who do not have

sanctioned spaces to congregate.

Unlike Bryn Mawr or Smith, Wellesley doesn't have a formal policy on parties. The closest it

comes to a formalized policy on party conduct and regulation is its appendix on alcohol use at

student parties found under the student alcohol and drug policy:

> All events sponsored by students at which alcohol will be served must be registered in advance with the
> Office of Student Involvement. These procedures apply to all student events held in Wellesley College
> common spaces, including, but not limited to, parties, receptions, dinners, mixers or other social events
> sponsored by student groups associated with the College. (Wellesley College Student Alcohol and Other
> Drugs Policy, Appendix A).

The policy does not provide a definition of a party; the number of people needed to constitute a

party; or the type of venue. There are several substantial differences between Bryn Mawr, Smith, and

Wellesley's social policies. Wellesley's drug & alcohol policy does not define the types of social

events covered by the policy, neither does the college codify its guidelines or resources so that

students can ensure that they are complying with its social policies. Both Wellesley's and Smith's

policies are open-ended and broad and do little to actually educate students about their

responsibilities at parties; both policies do, however, provide detailed information regarding actions

that count as violations in social settings. In comparison, Bryn Mawr clearly defines the term party as

it relates to its campus:

> A Party is an event, wet (with alcohol) or dry (without alcohol), where 30 or more people gather at one
> time in a residential dorm space. Wet parties cannot be held in public spaces. Public spaces include: The

Campus Center, College Hall, Goodhart, Applebee Barn, Cambrian Row, Schwartz Gymnasium, all corridors, stairwells, langings, basements, attics and courtyards, laundries, all dining halls, Pembroke Dance Studio, classroom buildings, the Computer Center, The Dorothy Vernon Room, Canaday Library, and outdoors on College grounds. (Bryn Mawr Student Handbook, p. 59).

Students who wish to throw a party at Bryn Mawr must have a functioning personnel plan that assigns the roles of host, server, and bouncer. Hosts are given an extensive list of responsibilities that include communicating the party details to the dorm president, as well as coordinating with housekeeping to ensure that the space is restored to its original condition. Additionally, hosts are tasked with managing all the event logistics while server and bouncer responsibilities are restricted to the party itself. Server tasks include serving alcohol to guest that are 21 years or older, monitoring the alcohol consumption of guests during the event, and marking guests' hands every time they are served. The number of hosts, bouncers, and servers required for a party is a function of the size of the party and whether or not alcohol will be served. Bryn Mawr uses a level system to help students understand these rules (Table 2).

Level	Occupancy	Number of Hosts Needed	Number of Bouncers Needed	Number of Servers Needed	Approved Residence Halls
1	30-60 people	2	None	2	Batten, Brecon, Denbigh, Merion, Pembroke East and West, Radnor, Erdman, Rhoads North and South, Rockefeller
2	61-100 people	2	3	2	Erdman, Rhoads North and South, Rockefeller
3	101+ people	Not specified (Hosts must meet with Student Activities and Campus safety 2 weeks prior to event)	Not specified (guests are required to sign in)	Not specified (21+ must wear wristbands)	Not specified

Table 2: Bryn Mawr's Party Levels Policy Overview[7].

Danielle explained that Bryn Mawr students must register parties and that everyone, including "the bouncers, servers, and hosts must "be party-trained, which is just like an online alcohol training" and needs to "wear a button that says Bouncer or Host". Danielle has undergone the party training and told me that the online alcohol training has "some Bryn Mawr specific questions about party rules" and references the party level system in order to assess how well students understand "how many bouncers you need, how many servers you need, and how many hosts you need" for each level. She also recalled that if "it's gonna be a 'dry' party, they don't care. But if it's a 'wet' party, you need servers." Servers are "supposed to like, you know, mark people's hands so they only have three drinks and ID people" but this "never happens" even though servers are "supposed to ID people and just make sure that people are not drinking too much…the bouncers are like at the door making sure that it doesn't go over capacity" but they apparently "don't do a great job of that" because parties are "generally over capacity". She also added that "based on the level of party you're having, the school actually gives you funding to get snacks and non-alcoholic beverages for those parties"; this, to me, demonstrates that Bryn Mawr does promote safe alcohol consumption practices.

As we have seen in this section, the social, drug & alcohol policies of these three institutions has a significant impact on the creation of student social spaces and who feels comfortable participating in them. I believe that it is important to drive home the point that while there are problems that exist in all three institution's policies, Smith's appeared to have the greatest negative impact not only on the ability of students' of color to form inclusive social lives but also their sense of belonging on campus. The biggest lesson that the reader should take away from this discussion of

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[7] Bryn Mawr Student Handbook, p. 60

institutional policies is that there is a correlational relationship between the formation of student culture and institutional policies.

Summary

In this chapter, we have seen how students at the three colleges experience their institutions' policies in both positive and negative ways. Wellesley's and Smith's policies did not provide students with processes and procedures to foster social environments where all students feel welcome and safe, instead their policies relied on state and federal rules to police how and when students participate in social gatherings. This was especially true at Smith where policies, such as requiring all events that received school funding to be open to the entire campus, often resulted in not permitting students of color to "legally" congregate. This mandated inclusivity had the unintended consequence of making students of color feel more marginalized and unsafe since they were not allowed to come together and form community in college sanctioned spaces that are exclusively theirs. Overall, Bryn Mawr's policies seem to prepare students to safely and successfully interact with each other in party environments. Even though all three colleges have policies that in some form or fashion create obstacles for students of color to connect and socialize, the broader challenge for these students is how to navigate their institution's social and party policies in a manner that gives them agency that feels authentic.

3: Extrapolating the Relationship of Sound and Space

Clashes Amongst the Different Social Modes of Listening

Imagine this: you are a college student, it's Friday night, and you and your friends plan to pregame in your room before heading over to a party which you were all invited to. Although you know the party hosts through a mutual friend, you're not quite sure why they invited you and your friends to their party. No one in your group knows what to expect once you all arrive at the party; nonetheless there is excitement and anticipation amongst the group that after a rough week you are all going to let loose and dance.

You want to make a good first impression but you get flustered with your outfit because you want to look good, but not like you've put too much effort into your appearance, so you decide to keep it casual and stick with a T-shirt and jeans combo. Expecting that your friends will want to have a few drinks while they pregame in your room, you make sure the drinks are ready and the playlist for this mini gathering includes songs from Drake, Syd, Raevyn Lanae, Lizzo, Migos, Cassie, Frank Ocean and some current Top 40's. Your friends arrive; after finishing a 6-pack of Angry Orchard Rosé Ciders, they are ready to go to the party. Before leaving your room, you play "Suncity" by Khalid to get everyone excited for this party that your about to embark to. You and your friends start to feel the effects of the alcohol: you are all a little buzzed and slowly start swaying

to the infectious beat. As the song progresses, you begin to relax and allow yourself to be taken in by the music. You're normally self-conscious about how you look when dancing, but in this moment, you don't care because you feel safe to be yourself and let loose in front of your friends. None of them can dance either, so you know that you all probably look ridiculous.

After dancing to two more songs, you all head over to the party where you are greeted by the sounds of people drunkenly yelling along to the lyrics of "Primadonna" by MARINA. This is not what any of you were expecting, but you all decide to give the party a chance. The party is held in the host's room. There are 10 people that you recognize from some of your classes. You go over to the host and thank them for inviting you to their party; you then proceed to find your friends, who have taken up residence in the corner of the room by the window. Up to this point, most of the music that's been played are songs by SOPHIE, MARINA, Natalia Kills, QT, and La Roux. None of these songs are dance music so you are pleasantly surprised when "MIA" by Bad Bunny starts playing. At this point you expect everyone to be on their feet and dancing because this lame gathering is finally starting to feel like a party; except no one does. Instead, everyone is engaged in conversations about the latest protest they attended, or a lecture that they thought was inspiring and thought provoking. At this point, you all agree that the pregame in your room was more fun and decide to leave.

The scenario outlined above is one that is all too familiar to the students I interviewed for this paper. Danielle and Raina, in particular, described nearly identical experiences at parties each attended separately at different institutions. Veronica, Sonia, and Donna also reported similar experiences at parties thrown by their white classmates. The fact that individuals, who do not all attend the same schools, reported similar party experiences is important to emphasize because it demonstrates that music, space, and cultural background greatly influence social behaviors as well as what I call, social modes of listening. In the course of my research, I discovered that sound plays a

prominent role in the students' social life at all three institutions despite their distinct policies around party culture. In all social environments in which students participate, music relates to the social context because it communicates what social behaviors should be expected in a given situation.

Before I discuss music's relationship to queer hookup culture, I believe it's important to 1) establish a baseline understanding about the environments in which it occurs, and 2) discuss the different types of social gatherings that contribute to different queer social environments. In the scenario above, I provided an example of a pregame and a dorm party. Both take place in dorm rooms but are distinguishable from each other because of context and chronology. A pregame can be considered a type of dorm party, however, students would not refer to it as such because pregames are thought of as a distinct type of social event that is done before going to a designated, or primary, social event. As was demonstrated in the scenario above, you and your friends gathered in your dorm room with the intent of attending a party together. Though you all fulfilled your goal of socializing with one another and dancing, attending a pregame was not the main objective of the evening. Rather, it was a vehicle that helped your group reach the end goal of the night: attending the party you were all invited to. This is an important distinction because it relates to context-dependent socializing – which informs a participant of what type of social event they should expect to partake in. As is true with music played in social environments, social events such as dorm parties and pregames, are differentiated from each other by three factors: 1) location, 2) the type of music played, and 3) the context in which the social event takes place. In my example, the first type of social gathering can be distinguished as a pregame because: 1) the location is your room, 2) the artists that you have chosen to play fits the genre-dependent mode of listening, and 3) you and your friends are gathering with the intention to drink and socialize in an intimate setting before heading out to the designated end location – the party to which you were all invited (i.e. context-dependent spatial relationships). Understanding how location, music selection, and the context-dependent

spatial relationship determine what type of gathering occurs is essential for conceptualizing how sound and space create environments where sexual behaviors can manifest.

Parsing Through Ubiquitous Party Culture

Through my interviews, I discovered, that the word "party" is used ubiquitously across all three institutions to define a variety of social gatherings in which students engage. At Bryn Mawr, the word may be used to define one of the school's "culty" traditions, a kick-back, a dorm party, or a dance party. At Smith, "party" is used to describe both "legal" and "illegal" types of social gatherings. At Wellesley, it is used to describe parties thrown by cultural orgs, pub nights, and kick-backs. It's remarkable to observe the meaning students at each school impose on the word party. Consequently, the subtle distinctions that differentiate the many types of socializing that occur on these campuses are lost to outside observers who don't understand the specific cultural lexicons used on each campus. To help guide the reader through these subtleties, I will use narratives gathered from my interviews to provide perspective to help the reader navigate and appreciate the nuances in the terms used to define party culture so that it is clear to the reader that 1) party terminology if influenced by racial identity and music, and 2) these terms differ amongst the three colleges and effects who feels included/excluded in these spaces.

Before delving into this section, I want to note that many terms are used interchangeably by students so the easiest way to follow along is to pay close attention to the context in which the word is used. My interviews illustrate that students generally agree that a party is a type of social gathering where music is played and people either dance or engage in some form of participatory group activity. The problem with such a broad definition is that any social event that is centered around group participation and sound would constitute as a party. I found this to be my biggest obstacle

when trying to comprehend what party culture looks like and how it differs between the three schools.

Party culture is allowed to dominate the social spheres of these institutions because the additional levels of organization that exist within party culture's structure helps to shape the universal understanding of what constitutes as a party. To better explain this point, imagine that party culture is represented by a logic tree. At the top, there is the word "party", which is used to represent the different forms of social gatherings in which students partake. Branching out from the term "party" are the words kickback, dorm party, house party, and other words related to social gatherings that are school-dependent. These terms represent the subcategories of party culture that students use to describe a social gathering. An outside observer may, understandably, be confused by the complexities of such a reference system. This reference system is rather complicated due to the context-dependent nature of the terms and the modes of listening associated with them. Whether it's a kickback, or dorm party, or a house party, or other kind of group socialization, these gatherings all have specific sonic atmospheres associated with them which help participants determine what type of socializing to expect.

These distinctions become further complicated when location is factored into the equation. To give an example, I will use Raina's narrative of how different party locations determine the "feel" of the party:

> the traditional parties that I have been to, which is maybe about 2, [typically have] about 30 people in a basement. So, it's like you're in this huge space and there's not a ton of people. The non-traditional parties I've gone to have still been 30 people but it's in a dorm room....It's in a smaller space [and it] feels more contained [s]o it feels bigger even though it's probably about less or the same amount of people, just in a smaller space.

This sentiment was also echoed by Veronica in the excerpt below:

> **H:** Yeah, so, I feel like that's kind of what happens with party spaces, especially. So like, if you play things like Cotton-eyed Joe during a party, and people are like, "What the fuck, why are you playing

this?", it's because you have a certain social association with it that's just not this situation or context, and you're just like "this is very off, why are you playing this" and it feels off, like I feel this is off.
V: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Cause some nights...like if someone's playing like, kind of Oldies music, the vibe is a lot more calm, and people are kind of studying, and chatting. But on the nights that people play more like R&B type music, people are rowdier! People are like, you know, it's like, a big social space. You know? It changes really drastically.

Here again we see that there appears to be an intrinsic link between space, sound, and to whom the space caters. As shown in Chapter 1, spatial relationships are context dependent and tied to cultural-dependent modes of listening. Veronica and Raina's accounts support my argument because they both show 1) how one's relationship to a space is influenced by the context in which one interacts with a space, and 2) that one's relationship to space is also influenced by music and one's racial identity. Veronica's comment speaks to the former while Raina's comment addresses the latter. The group identity tells participants who to expect in a space and thus determines who is made to feel welcomed in the space. Raina's discomfort at parties populated by predominantly large groups of white queer students highlights that these spaces often feel exclusionary to students of color because they believe that such spaces mainly exist for white students to engage in social activities that are centered around sexual and erotic behaviors. What's important to note here is that these revelations are not unique to Veronica and Raina. This point was amplified for me throughout the interviews with students of color across all three colleges. Additionally, it reinforces my argument that there is an inherent link between racially influenced modes of listening, space, group identity, and who is included and excluded from these spaces.

Building on this theme of context-dependent spatial relationships, I want to turn the reader's attention back to the organization of party culture in order to explain how it is connected to the notion of context-dependent spatial relationships. As stated in Chapter 2, Smith students, or "Smithies" as they call themselves, are very territorial about their houses. I found their strong preference for the term "house" as the chosen identifier for their residence halls, as opposed to "dorm" – as is used by Bryn Mawr and Wellesley – indicative of a conscious choice by the

institution to further differentiate Smith from the other Seven Sisters colleges. One may contend

that by creating this subtle distinction, Smith is trying to present itself as a unique community in

hopes of strengthening the connectedness students feel to the institution. While the motive may be

considered admirable, the results do not reflect the desired outcome.

This disconnect between intent and impact is foregrounded by the organization of Smith

party culture. Raina, Sonia, and Wrenn explained that parties either fall into the domain of "legal"

(registered) or "illegal" (unregistered). "Legal" parties are traditional house parties and other

registered parties, while dorm and basement parties, as well as kickbacks are considered "illegal".

Understanding the differences between types of parties is key to appreciating the disconnect

between institutional policies and student social practices discussed in Chapter 2. Smith students are

more likely to have "illegal" parties because they have more autonomy in those spaces and are

allowed to congregate in whatever manner they choose. As Raina explained earlier, while registered

parties afford benefits like procuring space and funding, they have the unintended consequence of

stigmatizing certain groups of students (like students of color) who gather informally, labeling them

as violators of the school's social policy. As I heard from every Smith student with whom I spoke,

this form of regulation not only creates obstacles and additional challenges for historically

disadvantaged groups, but also forces them to gather in spaces without adequate resources and

which could also be deemed "unsafe". Though it's important to note that this problem is not

exclusive to historically disadvantaged groups, the impact appears to be most felt by students of

color who are presented with little or no options for sanctioned and safe social spaces by their

institution. This raises the question whether institutions, such as Smith, are aware of the social

impact their policies have on historically marginalized students. From Raina and Wrenn's

perspectives it doesn't appear that they do.

Many of the social challenges described by Raina, Sonia and Wrenn are not unique to Smith. From my own experiences and conversations with Wellesley students, many of the obstacles articulated by Wrenn and Raina are also present at Wellesley. For example, finding spaces to host parties is a large problem for Wellesley students. The institution's policies require all events held outside of a student's room be registered with the school through its space reservation website. Although the policy doesn't stipulate that all events must be open to all students, it creates a different barrier to historically marginalized students – one of economics. Students who wish to reserve space for parties on campus must be affiliated with a student organization that has access to funding in order to use the space reservation website. Students who lack such a funding connection only have the option of reserving space in Wellesley's campus center; however, access to this space is very limited since the campus center serves as a central hub for social life. According to students like Donna, the policy requirements create significant challenges for groups that represent queer students of color in particular since they often don't have access to funding. For this reason, many of the parties held by queer students of color are either kickbacks – a social gathering where music is played in the background while everyone engages in conversations. – or dorm parties. While Wellesley doesn't use the "illegal" and "legal" nomenclature that Smith uses, the end result is the same. Both institutions' use of registration systems to reserve spaces sanctioned for student social life greatly impact where students socialize, how they socialize, and with whom they socialize. The effects of such policies are amplified when one considers the impact on the social lives of students on these campuses, as well as the types of groups who benefit from the policies.

As I referenced in Chapter 2, students at Bryn Mawr do not face these challenges because their school's policy does not regulate socializing and parties in the same manner as Smith and Wellesley. Bryn Mawr students are allowed to host parties in any of the dorm spaces on campus and all students have the same access to institutional resources in order to do so. What is interesting to

note, however, is that unlike the administrations at Smith and Wellesley, Bryn Mawr does not

provide institutional distinctions between event type unless they are referring to party tiers.

As mentioned earlier, the term "party" is ubiquitously used at all three schools to refer to

different forms of socializing. At Wellesley and Smith, this in part appears to be driven by policy

distinctions about places where students may socialize. However, the distinctions as to the

subcategories of parties appears to be student driven and not administratively derived. This is an

interesting premise because it suggests that party culture is ubiquitous regardless of administrative

oversight since students are the definers and designators of what is considered party culture. I find

this explanation credible because certain terms, such as kickback, are used in the same way by

students at all three colleges. This shows that there is a universal understanding of how party culture

is organized.

Soundtrack of Queer Nightlife

While variables such as policies and space are important factors in determining who

participates in hookup culture, other factors – such as culturally-dependent modes of listening –

have a greater influence on which spaces feel hospitable. I want to now turn the reader's attention to

the music that is played in queer nightlife spaces. Despite attending different schools, a common

complaint I heard from interviewees was that large queer campus parties were not fun because the

music genre was either Top 40s songs or throwback music. Donna, who is originally from Atlanta,

worked at the pub when they were still a student at Wellesley. When I asked them to describe the

type of music that I would hear if I were to attend a pub night, they responded that the music was

either very dated or a mix of Top 40s songs that recently came out. When I asked if they could give

some examples of what they were referring to, they mentioned that the pub would have Akon, Chris

Brown, and Drake themed pub nights and that "they did a lot of Justin Timberlake nights" as well.

Sonia and Raina also shared similar stories about Smith parties. Raina told me that they felt

like "every Smith party turns into a throwback party without that being announced as the theme."

They explained that the music played was mostly "2007 to 2012 throwback music" which they felt

gave the parties a "middle school vibe, because usually the lights are on [and] not a lot of people are

there, and they're standing and they don't know how to dance." Here's how Raina described the

scene at these types of events:

> **H:** So like, it's not really an environment that lets you have parties even though you technically have
> the space for them.
> **R:** [P]eople don't show up so it's like an empty room with music playing really loudly. It's just people
> standing in a corner, and since it's this really embarrassing old middle school throwback, it's like exactly
> what, you know, a middle school party looks like. It's students standing around like waiting for
> something to happen, waiting for the party to get good. And so it's just people talking like over really
> old music and so what you hear is academic talk and like, Chris Brown from 2009.

When I asked Raina to describe music typically played at these parties, they replied that it

was a mix of mostly throwbacks and some contemporary music. For example, they mentioned that

one "would for sure hear early Lady Gaga [and] Katy Perry" but also added that popular music, like

trap, and a lot of Drake would also be played because the "white people here love Drake so Drake is

at every party." They went on to say that they found this trend "really interesting because it's not

stated in the theme that it's a throwback party but that is what you're hearing." I found Raina's

observation to be really astute because they were speaking to a recurring complaint that I heard

throughout my interviews. Regardless of the school, the music played at parties is dominated by

songs that are at least seven years old even though more contemporary music is available.

Interestingly, Sonia agreed with Raina's observations about Smith parties, but told me that a

different trend occurs at queer parties. She informed me that most of the queer parties turn "into

kick-backs even though they were supposed to be parties". When I asked her to explain what she

meant by this, she recounted that you will hear a lot of pop music, like Charli XCX, or SOPHIE or

"just very weird" music that is "still pop and it's still upbeat but…Very white queer."

Donna, Raina, and Sonia all described these parties as "very white" and that mostly "white queer people" would be present in these spaces. Donna grew up immersed in different cultures where music was an integral part of the fabric used as a link to cultural heritage as well as a social gathering device. The music that they heard in parties at home, like "hip-hop, neo-soul, rap, reggae"– in other words, black music – was strikingly different from the music they heard in the pub. Donna explained that "different genres of black music" were consumed 'by a variety of demographics back home", including white people who lived in the area. Donna continued, "Coming up here, the music that was being played in the pub was like older, and like something that I would consider outdated, like music from like two years ago". To Donna, who was used to hearing recently released music at parties and other social events, "it felt like [the pub] had gone back in time." This speaks to how queer parties, and the hookup culture they foster, is not inclusive to students of color. As I have established, these spaces are predominantly white and thus students of color are not given the option to make similar spatial relationships to these spaces or can translate the social cues embedded within the music because they do not possess the appropriate cultural mode of listening for these white queer environments.

With this in mind, I now draw the reader's attention to one of the sample playlists I was able to procure to better illustrate the point above. According to Danielle there are "a couple students who are known to be really great DJs" at Bryn Mawr. She shared two different Spotify playlists that two of her friends created for parties. Both of her friends are students of color who are highly sought after to spin at house parties because they're "really great at curating playlists" and "people will come to hear them DJ because they know they're going to choose really great music." One of the playlists Danielle shared with me was created by her friend, Asa and is titled, "House Party". It features music from notable 1990's Hip-Hop artists like JAY Z, 50 Cents, N.W.A., 2Pac, Ice Cube, The Notorious B.I.G., Run–D.M.C., Salt-N-Pepa, and Busta Rhymes, as well as songs by B2K, Mary

J. Blige, Sean Paul, Ying Yang Twins, Backstreet Boys, Rihanna, Ja Rule, and Daddy Yankee. Many of the songs on the playlist, like "Promiscuous" by Nelly Furtado, "Bump, Bump, Bump" by B2K, "Check Yo Self" by Ice Cube, "Pon de Replay" by Rihanna, and "Rompe" by Daddy Yankee are at least 10 years old and were popular in the mid/late 1990's and early 2000's. This struck me as strange until Danielle explained that students at Bryn Mawr really love music themed-parties. Asa's playlist was from a party that Danielle attended two years ago where music from the 1990's and early 2000's was the theme. She described the party as "one of the best parties [she's] ever been to" and that "people really loved the music." I heard similar responses from Wellesley and Smith students when discussing theme parties on their campuses. Apparently, students love to attend themed-parties; however, they must be able to understand the theme's cultural context. For example, if someone decides to host a Halloween themed party, most people would know how to dress and what type of social behaviors to expect. In contrast, if someone decides to host an ABBA-themed party, only people familiar with the group and their music would understand the social context relayed by this theme. In this way, theme parties only make sense to participants who possess the appropriate knowledge about that environment.

That said, themed music parties are also popular because they allow students to dress in clothing that typifies a period and gives them an opportunity to dance to music from that time period with their friends. One would not expect themed-parties to be so popular; however, if one were to view it from the lens of Turino's theory of the social participation of music, and Stockfelt's modes of listening, it then makes sense. Musically themed parties are popular on college campuses because they provide important social cues and contextualize the expected rules of participation for the event. For example, Danielle enjoyed 1990's and early 2000's music themed parties because the theme communicated the objective of the party – which was to listen to and dance to 1990's and early 2000's music as they did in middle school. For many, middle school was an important period in

their lives because it was when they began to socialize with their peers in group settings that

foregrounded music (i.e. parties). It also represents a transitional time when they began to explore

forms of socializing that up until that point, was considered exclusively for adults. The onset of

puberty creates the need for additional social rules around bodily autonomy, and boundaries to

become foregrounded in every situation where group activities, like dancing and parties occur. Social

cues and behaviors that were previously given little or no thought suddenly became essential to

understanding what is happening in one's social environment. Behaviors that were previously

considered platonic and socially acceptable, such as approaching someone, were now seen as

romantic gestures and only acceptable in certain social contexts.

Themed parties, like 1990's and early 2000's parties that Danielle attended, puts students at

ease and gives them a sense of comfort due to their longing for a familiar social setting. They know

and understand the rules of engagement in these spaces which eliminates the need to spend time and

energy learning which social behaviors are acceptable, and which are not. In this way, music-

centered party themes reproduce a genre-normative mode of listening that is familiar to participants

and allows them to fully comprehend the social codes embedded within the music played – i.e. the

participant's social mode of listening. Despite themed parties' ability to connect students to the

social rules of engagement, they are not inclusive to everyone because only participants familiar with

the culturally-dependent normative mode of listening are able to understand the theme of the party.

General Climate at Predominantly White Institutions

Throughout my interviews, I consistently heard comments that the majority of the queer

spaces at each institution were very white. Wrenn remarked that they felt that Smith's queer culture

"seems very limited". They noted that "most everyone I would say who goes to Smith is queer,

which is very interesting because it's not that way at a lot of schools", but "when you think about

queer culture at Smith, it doesn't include everyone." Wrenn asked me if I understood what they meant, and I responded that I did. I recounted that during my first visit to Smith in the Fall of 2018, I was struck by the campus' lack of diversity. In retrospect, my initial observation and Wrenn's description of Smith's queer culture made sense because, as the demographic breakdown discussed in Chapter 2 showed, white students comprise the majority of Smith's student body.

When conducting interviews, I was always conscientious of how people responded to my initial question regarding how they would describe the queer culture at their school. Wrenn's response not only gave me a better understanding of the campus but also gave me a sense about how their experiences in this subculture shaped their perceptions of their college experience as a whole. The fact that Wrenn described Smith's queer culture as limited and being very "dominated by white lesbians", showed that they do not feel welcomed, or included, in the queer social scene at Smith because they do not feel they fit into Smith's queer culture standard. When I commented that I, as well as other Wellesley students, shared similar sentiments about the queer culture at Wellesley, Wrenn shook their head in agreement; they went on to remark that they felt that white people are considered "the standard of queerness" and believed that it is what people think of when they envision queerness at Smith. When I commented that it sounds like Smith's queer social hierarchy favors white lesbians, Wrenn enthusiastically agreed, adding that they found this fact "interesting because even though I would say the social hierarchy at Smith is different, it is a lot more...unique. It's not like regular society, I guess being at home" because "you basically cut out all cis men when you have a same-sex society." Wrenn was intrigued by this phenomenon and felt "like that really changes a lot of how people interact with each other" they also added that they felt that Smith's queer culture was "dominated by upper-middle class queer white women."

Something I recognized shortly after beginning each interview was that Wrenn's analysis of Smith's queer culture sounded almost identical to that of students at Wellesley and Bryn Mawr,

which also have predominantly white student populations. Like other predominantly white spaces,

white queer spaces do not afford POCs the same kinds of comfort and privilege that it affords their

white queer counterparts because there is a perception amongst queer POCs that these spaces were

not intended for them. As Wrenn noted, there is often no room for the intersectionality of identities

embodied by non-white and cis-students who try to occupy white queer enclaves. As I illustrated in

Chapter 1, this is connected to a larger social phenomenon that Story critiques in her analysis of the

systemic erasure of privilege whites afford themselves when associating whiteness as unraced while

simultaneously othering non-white identities. Consequently, the message conveyed to queer POCs is

those who wish to inhabit queer spaces must replicate the "standard of queerness" exhibited by the

de facto majority at these schools.

Racial Politics of Sound and the Cultural Backgrounds of Listening

Social modes of listening can be influenced by social identifiers, like queerness and race. As I

have previously stated, there are many factors that go into forming social modes of listening. As we

just saw, context-dependent socializing (i.e. themed parties) can influence how one relates to the

social environment as well as provide a point of reference for how to interpret the social behaviors

displayed in that environment. This raises the question, do queerness and race inform a person's

social mode of listening?

I found out that the answer to my question was yes, it does. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1,

determining the appropriate context-dependent modes of listening is heavily influenced by the

cultural and racial environment in which one grew up. For example, Raina went to a party in their

white friend's dorm room expecting it to be a dorm party but found that it was actually a kick-back.

Raina did not recognize this gathering as a party because music by SOPHIE was playing and

everyone was "sitting around, smoking weed, doing whippets, and literally just sitting and talking."

SOPHIE's sound can be described as experimental electronic music. Picture listening to PC computer game music mixed with EDM and range of disjointed voice samples. That's what it's like to listen to SOPHIE. The problem demonstrated in this example is that there appears to be a misunderstanding between Raina's white friend and Raina about what constitutes a party. For Raina, SOPHIE seems out of place in a party designated for dancing because it doesn't have a clear rhythmic pattern that people can dance to. On the other hand, it fits appropriately into the sonic environment of a kickback because kickbacks are meant to have music played to fill space but not too much that it becomes foregrounded. Music by artists like Solange, Sampha, Raevyn Lanae, and SOPHIE fit the mode of listening associated with kickbacks because they help to create the "chill" and laid back vibe that students of color commonly associate with this form of gathering. By conveying the desired type of socialization through the music selection, students like Raina are able to understand 1) what type of socializing is taking place, and 2) what social behaviors are appropriate to partake in. For all the students of color that I spoke with at Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, or Smith, the party that Raina described would be considered a kick-back because the vibe and sonic atmosphere expressed did not fit their criteria of a party.

By contrast, Sasha, who is a white student from Wellesley who identifies as a woman, stated that her sexuality was "always fluctuating", and she generally goes to pub nights when she has "something hard due that day" or wants "to get a dance workout in." Unlike the other people with whom I spoke, Sasha isn't uncomfortable going to pub nights by herself. She told me that sometimes she "just has the social stamina" to go by herself "and have that awkward period of time" where she has "no idea who is there." Other times she "generally [goes] with a buddy" or the 4 or 5 people with whom she went on a winter session trip. In my conversation with Sasha we mostly talked about her music taste and what she thought about the pub playlists. She described her music taste as "more like alt rock, or oldies and early 2000's," and described the songs played on pub

nights as "definitely not [her] music taste" because it is "more like groovin' music" and not

"jumpable." Like playlists, the presence of a particular group in a party space can affect what music

is played in that space – this relates back to the context-dependent spatial relationships I spoke of in

Chapter 1. Interestingly, all the Wellesley students I interviewed agreed that the rugby team used to

be the initiators of pub nights; a fact that is exemplified by the excerpt of my conversation with

Sasha, below:

> **H:** So, do you think whoever enters pub night kind of shapes the kind of music that's played?
> **S:** Yeah, well for the most part. Like if Frisbee shows up the music stays a little bit more popping. But, if like I don't know. What's like a defining group that makes the music really slow down?
> **H:** I don't know. I just keep hearing that generally whoever starts pub nights is typically rugby and that once rugby shows up then everyone else shows up.
> **S:** Very true, but they show up from the hoop and sometimes they leave and go [back] to the hoop and you're like "where are all the friends?" As soon as there's a bad song everybody leaves and goes to the hoop and then you have to go rile them up and be like "come back!"
> **H:** So, what would you describe as like a bad song?
> **S:** A song that people don't know and people don't really want to dance to.
> **H:** Do you have any examples? Like something that you were just like "yeah, this isn't really a good song to dance to."
> **S:** The problem is that generally if I don't like the song I also don't know the song… So I guess an example would be if Eminem played like that wouldn't be a great song to dance to.
> **H:** So would you call Drake or the Weekend or someone along those lines like "less dancey" or more of a bad song to play?
> **S:** Sometimes I think Drake works but like you can't have multiple Drake songs you know? You have to have like one and then four other songs and then like maybe another.
> **H:** So Drake is more like going to listening parties as opposed to like "I came here to dance."
> **S:** Yeah because his music is just like you're trying to move in a circle and like you really can't because you just end up doing the stupid dance that he does on YouTube.
> **H:** So I guess kind of going back to what you were saying about how when more people show up the music kind of changes and is a little bit more slow, do you notice any kind of change (in the music) when a certain group of people enter? Like does the music change?
> **S:** When people start to enter pub, which is often generally Rugby or Frisbee, the music at first gets faster and gets more dancey.
> **H:** So that's what you would think about as like not good for dancing?

S: I would say that Rihanna could bridge that gap with some of her songs, but not necessarily all of her songs.
H: Like some of her newer stuff not as much?
S: Yeah, like her older stuff yeah. Because that's also stuff that you could scream the lyrics to at the top of your lungs in a drunken stupor, so like yeah. That's sort of like what I'm saying like 2008 to 2010 where people still know the lyrics [to songs].
H: So things that you listened to in like middle school or high school?
S: Yeah! Where you had time to memorize lyrics because you would drive places and things like that.
H: So like things you heard on the radio a lot more?
S: Yeah, I guess like stuff from back in the radio days.

The genre normative mode of listening is influenced by the cultural environment in which an individual grew-up. Both Raina and Sasha enjoy upbeat music, but there are other sonic qualities, such as vibe and feel, that help determine if a song can be, in this example, classified as party music. Music by SOPHIE has an upbeat tempo that can be likened to those found in conventionally agreed upon party songs; however, the other sonic qualities, like feel and the vibe espoused, would not fit the Raina's criteria of what party music sounds like. Comparatively, Sasha would likely define SOPHIE as party music because SOPHIE's music fits Sasha's sonic criteria because it's "jumpable".

Summary

As these accounts demonstrate, music has the power to function both as a social unifier and a signal for who is included or excluded from a space. There are several factors that influence culturally-dependent genre modes of listening, including queerness and race. Raina's and Sasha's stories show that an understanding of the social environment as well as the type of social gathering, are equally important for determining who participates in queer hookup spaces and their level of comfort. This is an important distinction because it relates to context-dependent socializing, which informs a participant of what type of social event they should expect to partake in. As I have

demonstrated, the music played in social settings are differentiated from each other by location, music selection, and its context-dependent mode of listening. Furthermore, we have seen that in all social environments in which students participate, music relates to the social context because it communicates what social behaviors should be expected in a given situation.

The narratives in this chapter emphasize my point that there are many factors that go into forming social modes of listening. In my scenario at the start of the chapter, you and your friends expected the dorm party to be one where you could let loose and dance. However, the musical selection did not meet your culturally-dependent genre mode of listening; though the music from your pregame did. Understanding how location, music selection, and the context-dependent spatial relationship determine what type of gathering occurs is essential for conceptualizing how sound and space create environments where sexual behaviors can manifest.

4: Examining Music's Relationship to Hookup Culture and Erotic Capital

Mediating Hookup Culture Through Sound

Understanding Music's Relationship to Hookup Culture

In the previous chapters, I discussed music's effects on group participation, social identity, and establishing one's level of comfort in social settings. However, music's effect on hookup culture and who chooses to participate in it has yet to be explored in this ethnography. In this chapter, I will examine music's relationship to hookup culture, and the erotic social dynamics that give structure to queer hookup scenes. I incorporate Green's theory of sexual fields and narratives from my interviewees to illustrate music's role in mediating hookup culture and the dynamics of prescribed erotic capital culture. According to Green, erotic worlds are the spaces of sexual sociality (i.e. the site), and an attendant social structure (i.e. the field). They are social arenas organized by "objective historical relations between positions" that are under the "playing field" (Green, 2011). Usually this terminology is used in connection with places such as bars and nightclubs where erotic worlds, also known as sexual fields, manifest themselves (Green, 2008). In subcultures centered around sexual identity and activities, like queer party scenes, identity markers are used as signifiers to determine who is the target audience for these spaces. They are also used as devices to foster a social hierarchy based on shared erotic taste – which Green describes as erotic capital (Turino, 2008). Green draws attention to sexual fields that "reflect the socially constituted desires of erotic participants in an aggregated form, and then transpose these desires into socially stratified institutionalize matrix of

relations" (Green, 2008). Some sexual cultures that express these structures of desire through

eroticized representation, settings, and social scenes, i.e. modern urban nightlife, or college parties,

are necessary for the growth of erotic niches that attract people who share similar erotic tastes and

tendencies. They may even take the form of a structure of desire (Green, 2008). By consciously

choosing details of one's identity to highlight and over which to connect with others, people

involved or associated with certain scenes and subcultures are able to distinguish themselves by

assigning different objects "such as clothing styles, hairstyles, body decoration, speech styles, and

ways of walking" (Turino, 2008) to recognize members of their group. This is, as Green phrases it,

called "Playing the game". It requires the people who participate in erotic spaces to strategically

adjust their style or gender expression through changing their appearance so that they can assimilate

with the field's structure of desire and corresponding tiers of desirability (Green, 2008).

Hooking up is not formulaic. As mentioned in Chapter 1, identity formation of social groups

is a prerequisite for hookup culture that defines who is welcomed to participate in it. As Stockfelt

demonstrated, music can serve, concurrently, as an identity marker in social scenes and a mediator of

social environments. When combined, both elements create a fertile environment for the formation

of hookup culture. Music performs multiple functions within social environments: 1) it acts as a

social identifier, which is a key element in social group formation; 2) it mediates the social

interactions of the participants in the scene; and, 3) it relays important information about the types

of behaviors deemed acceptable in the context of the space. At college parties, music provides party-

goers a common interest (i.e. identity) to which they can all relate, while musical qualities, like lyrics

and tempo, indirectly relay information about the expected social behavior for the environment (i.e.

dancing) and how to interpret them. This suggests that music is also influential to determining one's

erotic capital.

In Chapter 3, Raina, Donna, and Veronica's recollections of parties they've each attended demonstrated how musical selection not only determines whether someone will stay at a party and feel comfortable being in that environment, but that it also impacts a participant's level of comfort engaging in the hookup culture in that space. This relates back to Stockfelt's modes of listening, which I have shown in Chapter 3, is also dependent on the cultural environment in which one was raised. The music one hears growing up influences how one relates to it in later years. When I asked Raina if they felt that the music played at parties catered towards the sports teams that showed up, they responded:

> like every party, the music is catered towards who's showing up. So when you have a large basement party, it is top 40's that a lot of people could briefly recognize. Like everyone knows thank u, next by Ariana Grande. Like whether or not you give a fuck about Ariana Grande like, you know that song. And…The smaller dorm room parties are [usually POC parties]. That music is specifically catered towards POC music, not like Drake music. Like, I don't know. Rico Nasty is there. Something that's specific that you know, mostly POC can identify. And then, at the smaller dorm room parties that are white students, it's like I don't know. SOPHIE…Like obscure experimental pop, like stuff like that.

As Raina put it "every audience has their sound and that's at a party. Every party has its own sound and usually it translates, so if you go to a POC party one week, you're probably going to hear a lot of the same sounds, not necessarily the same songs, but a lot of the same type of music when you go to the next party in like three months." This point is further amplified in this exchange between Raina and I:

> **H**: So would you call that like danceable music or actual party music? How would you classify the music that you hear more in white spaces or white parties?
> **R:** So white spaces and white parties, I would say there are some, like I said, half of it is throwback music and so, half of it is music that is throwbacks that some people dance to out of nostalgia and then the other half of it is not as upbeat as party music. And that's because a lot of people at white parties are talking and so you don't want like, Kodak Black trap music to play over your conversation of like Marxism and so there's that half and half where it's like, you hear Mitski and you hear, Lady Gaga and then you hear like Little Baby.

In my conversation with Donna, they mentioned that when they were a freshman at Wellesley six years ago, similar to Smith, the Wellesley rugby team tended to dominate spaces when they showed up to parties. Over the years, this has become less common, in part because spaces like the pub have begun to cater their music selection to accommodate the multicultural customer base. Music by artists like Charly Black, Nicky Jam, Tinashe, Syd, and Tory Lanez, have become staples on pub night playlists; this switch is due to a change in the composition of the pub. Around the time that rugby was a dominating presence at pub nights, the staff at the pub was also predominantly white; thus their taste in music was aligned with that of the rugby team. This cultural, as well as musical, shift in the pub has had the effect of making pub nights feel more welcoming to diverse students. As we saw in Chapter 3, and is demonstrated here, the music taste of the person in control of the music played at parties has a significant influence on who the music caters to, and who feels comfortable entering that space. Furthermore, this chapter will build upon this discussion of culturally-dependent modes of listening in order to explore its relationship to hookup culture.

Exploring How Power Underlies Hooking Up

An unexpected direction that all my conversations with students took focused on the power dynamics in hookup culture, and how it is used by those who wield it. The differences in who chooses to partake in hookup scenes and who opts out also calls attention to who possesses power to instigate hookup opportunities and what contributes to a person's perceived power. A common question I asked interviewees was how would you describe the queer hookup culture on your campus? By college, the answers I received varied from chaotic to predatory. In Smith's hookup scene, when students on sports teams, like rugby, enter queer spaces, they are afforded high levels of social capital, as well as high levels of erotic capital because of presenting masculine forms of gender expression. According to Raina:

one-fourth of the rugby team that's masc-presenting are the strong forwards, which are like the strongest people on the team and that's what you envision like, they're the ones that tackle you and are buff as shit and they're like super masculine. They're the ones that emulate masculinity the most [both inside and] outside the sport. And they have been the ones that hook-up with first years.

Raina proved to be an invaluable source of information because their decision to remain sober in party environments allowed them to observe behaviors exhibited by party-goers. As such, many of my conclusions about this topic were derived from my discussion with them. Their remarks led to an in-depth conversation that explored how masculinity is exhibited at Smith and how it relates to the performance of masculinity exhibited by cis-men who come to Smith's campus. Wrenn and Raina both stated that, to them, some elements of Smith's hookup culture felt predatory. They attributed their feelings to behaviors exhibited by students who present masculine characteristics. Wrenn explained that the "rugby team is like the center of all the queer hookup culture" at Smith and they cultivate an atmosphere that feels predatory and unsafe. Wrenn was on the rugby team their first year but quit after a semester. They explained that they played rugby in high school so they were excited to learn that Smith had a team. However, upon joining the team, they realized that the team atmosphere was very different from the one they were accustomed to. According to Wrenn, there "was kind of this idea on the rugby team that like, everyone was in an open relationship. People would hookup with each other. It was just like very confusing [because] everyone would always hookup with each other at the parties." Wrenn made sure to emphasize the "everyone" part in their statement in order to highlight that team members would simultaneously hookup with each other at parties. They also explained that "group sex was huge" amongst the team. Donna and Veronica both reported that they observed similar behaviors exhibited by some masculine presenting students at Wellesley and Bryn Mawr, respectively. Though Veronica had no personal experience of this, she did report witnessing instances where several of her friends had been subjected to overtly aggressive behavior by masculine presenting students at parties.

When I asked Wrenn if they felt comfortable engaging in Smith's hookup culture, their response was they did not. They went on to explain that it doesn't "make me feel comfortable" because there's "not really respect for people's autonomy and privacy and, own personal space". They attributed the rugby team's disregard for personal boundaries to its open relationship culture "because if the culture is that everyone is in a relationship but also simultaneously open, it just means that...people feel like they are entitled to you or like, that people are not off-limits". Additionally, they felt that the way masculine presenting individuals, such as themself, are treated often feels "weirdly forward" and objectifying. Wrenn explained that "all of that just makes me uncomfortable so I don't feel particularly comfortable in those spaces or around hookup culture at Smith". Towards the end of our conversation they lamented that they wished "the hookup culture was more healthy" and expressed frustration about the misconception that open relationships lack boundaries. Wrenn further remarked that this contributes to creating a social atmosphere that normalizes and erases sexual assault within the queer community:

> there's this idea that if you're going to get raped or [sexually] assaulted, then it has to be this experience with a scary man…and that's not always the case. [T]here's a lot of non-consensual shit that happens at Smith that people are scared to talk about it and [doesn't get] dealt with well. There's little support and a lot of victim-blaming, which is just really, kind of unfortunate considering the fact that Smith [is] very second-wave feminist. [It's] just so interesting because those things are not even talked about.

The rugby team is an overwhelming presence in queer party spaces and so they become the determinants of the social conventions for any space they inhabit. Therefore, whatever social behavior they engage in is seen as normative. The rugby team's "anything goes" attitude towards open relationships rejects any possibility that open relationships can have established rules of engagement and boundaries that are agreed on by all participants in order for everyone to feel safe.

Raina also reported feeling unsafe in these types of parties, and by extension, hookup spaces at Smith. During my conversation with Raina, I asked them if they had ever felt like the physical

location, or the people who attend basement parties made them feel unsafe and they replied with an

unequivocal "yes". They said that:

> if there's a party, more often than not, there's a sports team attached to it. And, basically what that means is not necessarily the sports team threw the party, [but] that the sports team is showing up at the party. And so, a party will be happening and then all of a sudden, like 23 people show up at one time [which] completely changes the dynamic of the party.

Their explanation made sense to me because they had just explained how the number of guests in

attendance at a party, in addition to the location of the party, shapes how one would perceive their

experience in the party. They continued to describe how the sudden addition of a large group to the

party environment, like a sports team, changes the feel of the party because "all these people know

each other and they're all wasted." Similar to Wrenn, they also identified the rugby team as being a

source of their unease. They explained that if the rugby team decided to show up at a basement

party it suddenly became a rugby party because it "is a really big team" and they now make up half

of the guests in attendance. They also added that the presence of the rugby team at a party more or

less dictates the type of social behaviors that will happen in the space. For example, if the rugby

team shows up at a basement party they will be wasted and "they're all hooking up with each other."

Another cause for Raina's discomfort at parties inhabited by the rugby team were the physical size

of the players and that the team is predominantly white:

> the rugby players are buff as shit. Like, they're so big, trying to move past them or squirm past them, it's just feels uncomfortable because you're like, 'Damn, this person could literally pick me up and just shove me out of the way if I'm like bumping into them too much.' [Even] if it were throwing a simple dorm room party, most of it is POC, it's not explicitly said, like a group of white people come in, it changes the atmosphere. Not in a way that they think is intentional but in a way that this is now their space and this is immediately different. I wouldn't say it makes me feel extremely unsafe because I'm sober so I feel like I have an extremely level head but I'm sure if I was high or drunk, any large group of people or any people that you don't know coming into a space that has been fun finally [and] there's good music finally, and then it immediately changes? That makes it feel more unsafe [and] more insecure, because I know in certain spaces, I can dance in front of people but [there are] spaces where I refuse to dance in front of people. And that's how it feels unsafe for me. [Like] I have to perform.

I followed up and asked Raina what the gender identity of the rugby team was; they replied:

> I know the rugby team has two trans men on it and there's a few non-binary people on the team but a majority of the people on the rugby team are female-identifying people who study biology during the day [who] then change into some shorts and get really like, full of mud...About a fourth of the rugby team makes sense that they play rugby. The other 3/4 of the rugby team, you would never know they play rugby. It's very interesting.

I then asked Raina if some of their discomfort in the presence of the rugby team arose from the team's predatory presentation of masculinity to which they replied that they "never personally experienced [the predatory hookup culture]" because they rarely go to really big parties or attend any rugby events. Reminding me of their of practice to maintain sobriety at parties, they remarked that they are "always sober so I am never in a situation where I'm having random people come up and talk to me because I will never leave the group of people that I'm around cause it'd make me uncomfortable". They went on to say that they understood how the hookup culture could feel predatory for masculine presenting people, like Wrenn, because these individuals are often the most objectified and sought after people in hookup scenes due to the erotic capital ascribed to masculine identities.

> **H:** Hm. So, like, in party settings...Cause, I've been kind of wondering this–cause spaces in Wellesley, people who typically present more masculine seem to have the most attention in party spaces because they're seen as the most attractive ones in the space. Would you say a similar thing happens at Smith, or like, would you say something happens similarly with the rugby team or other sports teams in that way?
>
> **R:** I would absolutely agree. People who are more masculine-presenting immediately get more attention. They're immediately seen as more attractive and that is, I think in any space really, especially prevalent at parties, I would say. It's the way they dress and the way they move, it's just very suave and reminiscent of a man without having to be a guy a...I don't know why masculine-presenting people get so much attention but they do and it's just like, a certain, I don't know, being outward and giving off energy that is just so attractive for most people. Even Wrenn, who is very masculine-presenting, gets so much attention at parties. If I show up at a party with Wrenn, which I always show up at a party with [them], it's like people are like, "Wrenn's here, I want to shake my ass on them." Like, they get so much attention for their short curly masculine hair and like their jaw...Like immediately, they get so much attention.

Raina went on to add that Wrenn's "type of masculinity is informed by their race and therefore makes them different and so, I would say maybe the white masculinity is toxic masculinity" but they wouldn't characterize Wrenn's type of masculinity in that way. They described Wrenn's masculinity as trying to find a middle ground between being trans and Latinx. They gave the analogy of how in the Black community there's this perception that "you can't be Black and gay. You have to make up for [it in some] way" and they believe that Wrenn compensates for this imposed juxtaposition by "being more masculine." Raina's observations about Wrenn appears to align with Story's theory on how race factors into preconceptions about who can be queer or straight. Story argues that white and black versions of respectability politics, like the need for marriage equality, or seeing non-heteronormative identities as abject, help to solidify "the notion that the only 'legitimate' gay identity is a white one and the only legitimate black identity is a straight one" (Story, 2016).

During the course of our discussion about the different types of masculinity they have seen at Smith, Raina and I returned to the recurring theme of students who act entitled to other people's bodies in sexually charged atmospheres like parties, and how this was more commonly propagated by white masculine presenting students. From Wrenn and Raina's comments, it would appear that this behavior is mostly prevalent amongst the rugby players at Smith; however, the rugby team's sense of entitlement to other people's bodies – which arises from the team's open relationship culture – does not appear to be a normative behavior displayed in any of the other hookup cultures mentioned or alluded to by other interviewees. Bearing in mind that this topic had come up at least once in every conversation I had with students from all three institutions, I was curious to learn Raina's thoughts on the subject. They prefaced their response by saying that the "people [they] surround [themselves] with aren't white masc-presenting people" so they couldn't directly speak to whether or not their type of masculinity was toxic; but they added that the "only masc-presenting people that I really know [are] Wrenn and my boyfriend and they're not white people and so, I feel

like their type of masculinity is different" from the masculinity of 'white masc-presenting people".

Though Danielle is white, she does not inhabit a lot of predominantly white spaces at Bryn Mawr

because most of her friends are POC. She could not speak to whether sports teams, like rugby, make

parties feel unsafe because most of the parties she goes to "tend to be hosted by people of color" so

usually they're not many white people present; however, Danielle recalled from her experience that

"sports teams parties [tended] to be more white cause the sport teams tend to be more white

compared to the rest of the campus." From these accounts, it is evident that white queer students,

like those on the rugby team, are unaware of the privilege they possess, and by extension, the power

that derives from that privilege.

Performance of Masculinity and Opting Out of Hookup Culture

Class Year, Rank, and its Role in Hookup Culture Participation

Gender expression, such as masculine presentation, can be influential in determining who is

perceived as attractive, and consequently helps to determine an individual's environment-dependent

erotic capital. However, the role rank (i.e. class year) plays in this dynamic has not been studied as an

influential factor in determining a person's perceived attractiveness. As I discovered, Bryn Mawr,

Wellesley and Smith have very analogous social practices, but their student bodies differed in social

conventions/norms about who is allowed to engage in hookup culture and how. In my conversation

with Veronica, we discussed how the hookup culture at Bryn Mawr looks and who typically engages

in it. She said that seniors and juniors don't typically partake in hookup culture because juniors are

usually abroad and seniors are too preoccupied with graduating so they're not interested in "trying to

be going out all the time". When I enquired if hooking up was more of an activity that freshmen and

sophomores engaged in, she agreed "100%" and said that:

> hook-up culture is not a thing anymore [for seniors], cause everyone's like set, and…The school's too small and at this point, you know everyone's history and you're just like not fucking with that. Like if you're gonna date someone as a senior, it's going to be someone who's like younger than you. You know, but that doesn't even happen that much. So hook-up culture [mostly happens] freshman year.

She described the first-year dating culture as "messy but [forgiving]". By sophomore year it's "messy, and the drama is sowed, and junior year is like, 'Fuck! I need to leave!'" because the campus is so small and sophomore year was such a mess. Another interesting point that was brought up by Veronica during our conversation was that having a small campus community is nice for fostering connections but "has its pros and cons" when it comes to dating and hookup culture. She noted that it's "nice to have a small community because it's comfortable, but again it can be really insular and complicated especially when it comes to hookup culture" because "everyone is connected somehow and that can get messy!" and proceeded to laugh. I shared how the high school I attended had a similar dynamic due to its small class size. I recounted how having a high school comprised of 240 students created an environment where everyone knew each other and resulted in creating a hookup and dating culture that felt very incestuous due to the small dating pool. Veronica enthusiastically agreed and commented that while this was true of the overall experience at Bryn Mawr, it was even more pronounced within the queer community on campus because it "is so much smaller" than the larger Bryn Mawr community "so then it's like there's so much overlap."

Earlier, I posited that there is an inherent link between academic and social life, but I didn't realize the depth of the link. In response to my request to describe Bryn Mawr's hookup culture, Veronica responded that she did not participate in her campus's hookup scenes and that opting out of the school's hookup scene was common among seniors. The reason is due to a shared mindset amongst seniors where everyone is hyper-focused on "academics and [feels] guilty if they do something social". To illustrate her point, Veronica described a campus tradition where everyone "goes a bit crazy [and] everyone's drinking…but the seniors were kind of like trying to stay out of it."

She wasn't sure if this cultural shift by the senior class happened in prior years, or if it's "specific to [her] year". She also noted that she felt this phenomenon "especially [occurred within] the POC community". I remarked that hearing this was interesting because the reverse happens at Wellesley.

Raina described a very different trend at Smith where mostly sophomores and seniors engaged in hooking up while the first years preferred to engage in hookup scenes off-campus.

> from my experience as a first-year, I didn't hookup with anyone [because] I never went to parties like...with the intention of talking to anyone. All of my friends would go off-campus and be with people at a different school and so I think that's what happens your first-year…by your senior year, you're sick of sitting on the bus for 40 minutes to go hook-up when you could hook-up with someone who's you know, a floor below you or like, in the house next to you. It just gets tiring getting on the bus and then having to get back on the bus for another 40 minutes. So I feel like first-years are going off-campus. That's what I remember for all of my friends.

Raina said that the social dynamic of hookup scenes allowed for more "first year-first year, senior-senior, and first year-senior" interactions because "juniors are away, so they don't wanna get into a relationship" and sophomores develop this mentality that "[a]s soon as I become a sophomore, I hate first-years. First-years are annoying." Raina has also opted out of the queer dating and hookup scenes at Smith in part because they are dating someone on campus. Raina explained that they don't "hang out with any sophomores" except for their boyfriend and Wrenn and "even then, me and [Wrenn] hang out with seniors and the seniors that I'm around are hooking up with themselves." The only exception to the trend of seniors hooking-up with seniors that they could think of was the rugby team. Raina was also on the rugby team their first year at Smith and remembered that "there were some first-year senior [relationships]" happening on the team.

In comparison to Bryn Mawr's hookup culture, first years, sophomores, and juniors at Wellesley are hyper-focused on their school work, which in the minds of many students I spoke with contributed to the apparent lack of social life at Wellesley. By the time they are seniors, students are

more willing to socialize and attend parties; they adopt a mentality of it's time to have fun. Donna described this cultural shift as:

> fuck it, let's let loose. We're almost done. We're almost out of here. Let's do everything we wanted to do that we didn't do before because I'm almost done anyway, or you know what? It doesn't make a difference now;

and for many students this cultural shift involves participating in Wellesley's queer hookup scene. Veronica believes there is some overlap between the change in mindsets exhibited by Bryn Mawr and Wellesley seniors, but added that:

> seniors by this point, [are] either like in a relationship or if they're like looking for a relationship, it's [something] short term or something like polyamorous. Or on the other end of the spectrum, it's like, 'Oh, I'm just looking for some hookups.' Like nothing serious. In which case, they'll like go after underclassmen, or maybe like, off-campus people, but it's definitely [more likely to be] underclassmen. And I 'say, go' after because I think there's definitely a, 'Fuck it, let's do this'" because nobody wants to date another senior because "there's too much history…so underclassmen become the next available market.

I told Veronica and Raina that at Wellesley, there is an informal understanding amongst the student body that upperclassmen (including sophomores) should not pursue romantic or sexual relationships with first-years during their first academic year because first-years need time to acclimate and learn their new social environment without also having to experience unwanted social pressure from their older peers. I then asked if their schools had a similar "unspoken" rule. The answers varied. Veronica said that Bryn Mawr has something similar, but also that students have developed a "very nurturing" dating and hookup culture where upperclassmen have a mentality of "Oh, look at the underclassmen having so much fun. That's sweet" and "Fuck yeah, underclassmen. Do your thing." She says that the upperclassmen who choose not to engage in Bryn Mawr's hookup culture do their best to support those who do.

  According to Raina and Wrenn, Smith's "predatory" hookup culture is not protective of underclass students. Raina explained that there is no informal or unspoken rule amongst the student

body that upperclassmen would not engage with first years. They stated that it "is such a shame cause this is an opportunity for people to make it known and let first-years know that it's hard your first-year like you're not emotionally ready to go through all of that." Raina believed that this lack of concern by the student body for the mental state of first years made first year students vulnerable; this is likely the reason Wrenn described Smith's hookup culture as predatory.

These accounts suggest that a correlational relationship may exist between the importance of social accountability each college stresses in its policies, and the actual practice by students. It is also important to highlight the differences in the social structures at Bryn Mawr and Smith. Bryn Mawr's sophomores seem to have the greatest social and erotic capital, while Smith's seniors have greater social and erotic capital due to seniority and age. Though Wellesley's hookup culture is similar to Bryn Mawr's in that they both foster healthy environments for students to engage in, Wellesley's dynamics around erotic capital better resemble Smith's in that Wellesley's seniors have greater social and erotic capital. This trend amongst the colleges demonstrates that gender expression, such as masculine presentation, and class year helps to determine an individual's environment-dependent erotic capital.

Fetishizing POC Masculine Identities

Raina, Wrenn, Veronica and Danielle each spoke of the power wielded by white masculine presenting students in queer hookup culture. They also remarked that the power dynamics associated with such students was negative. These stories, sadly, are all too common within the queer party scenes that exist at the three colleges. However, a detail that stood out to me was the recurring use of the word "entitled". Wrenn, Raina, and Veronica all used this word to describe the behavior exhibited by their white peers. In hopes of better exploring the role gender performance plays in the hookup culture, I asked all my interviewees if there was a certain vibe or gender identity

that is typically seen as more attractive in the queer communities they inhabit. Veronica replied that she's observed that trans, genderfluid and more masc presenting people are "put on this pedestal [and] fawned over in a way that can actually be really uncomfortable" to watch. She recounted that:

> one of [her] good friends who graduated [and was masculine presenting] had a lot of people harass her, and not see it as harassment because they thought they were responding to something but that something was just her presence.

People kept approaching Veronica's friend at parties and "would just kind of walk up to her and try to hookup with her" without asking or receiving consent. I asked Veronica if she noticed if this behavior was perpetuated more by certain groups of students. She prefaced her response by saying she does not frequent white spaces however, she did note that she's witnessed both students of color and white students act in a similar manner. She concluded by saying, "most of the white folk stay within the white queer sphere" so it was hard to say if one group did this more than another.

I followed up by asking if she believed race was also a contributing factor to the exotification of masculine presenting individuals and she responded that she believed it was true for "certain POC aesthetics." She gave an example about a friend who was a senior during her first year at Bryn Mawr. Her friend "was Lebanese and, you know, very beautiful [and] had a charm about her, but the thing that people focused on was the fact that she was Lebanese". The language people used to describe Veronica's friend and fawn "over her was very closely tied to her international identity." Veronica believes that this experience kept happening to her friend because she fit an idealized aesthetic of an artistic POC that was "appealing to white folk". What I believe Veronica meant by this is that POC who cloak themselves with mannerisms and ideals that are ascribed to whiteness but do not fully mask their non-whiteness are seen to have this idealized aesthetic. For example, Wrenn fits this image because they engage in activities typically associated with whiteness, like rugby, but they also retain non-white identifiers, like being visibly brown and speaking Spanish. Similar to

Veronica's Lebanese friend at Bryn Mawr, Wrenn also possesses a racially idealized aesthetic that is considered appealing to white students at Smith. Though masculine presenting students at all three colleges reported feeling that their racial identities appeared to enhance their erotic capital with their white peers. Veronica's Lebanese friend and Wrenn are perhaps the clearest examples of how their racial identities are fetishized and idealized by the white communities at their respective schools. This form of fetishization not only makes masculine presenting students of color, like Wrenn, feel othered, it also contributes to their inherent level of discomfort in white queer spaces.

Veronica explained that she couldn't speak to whether the combination of being a POC who presented in a masculine or gender-nonconforming manner would contribute to hyper-fetishization in predominantly white queer spaces because most of her queer communities are POC so she is "mostly exposed to that insular dynamic". She did say that it sounds plausible to her because "POC who [present] more genderfluid get treated very specifically in a way that's like noticeable." I agreed that her observations made sense and were consistent with observations of the other students whom I interviewed. I added that the subtle differences in exotification of POC and genderfluid individuals was difficult to detect in predominantly white spaces because it's difficult to determine if the exotification derives from a person's racial identity or gender presentation. These students are already hyper-visible and seen as "exotic" because of their racial identity, however, exhibiting a masculine gender identity further enhances their erotic capital and makes students of color even more visible.

Veronica's account about the discomfort her friend felt in white queer spaces is a prime example of the distinctions between essentialism and strategic-essentialism. Her description of the discomfort often felt by POC and genderfluid individuals in white queer environments is rooted in students' discomfort with having their identity essentialized by white students because they find them attractive (i.e. fetishization). On the other hand, if POC students chose to essentialize certain

aspects of their identity then this would be an example of strategic-essentialism because they are choosing to emphasize certain qualities. After listening to Veronica's report, I theorize that for many students of color, their discomfort in white queer spaces originates from feeling that their agency has been diminished or erased by white students who objectify them by essentializing and fetishizing the non-white characteristics of their identities. This isn't unique and represents an argument made by many queer studies theorists. Scholars, like Reed, note that "white queer subjects perform 'discursive blackness' in and through their entrance into queer sexual orientation or gender expression. The disavowal of privilege produces white queers who discursively align themselves with racialized otherness fetishized as a counter hegemonic way of being in the world" (Reed, 2016). In my interviews, which were predominantly with students of color, these types of accounts were all too common and spoke to a larger issue of the different types of fetishization and exotification transgender non-conforming (TGNC) students face when they choose to interact within predominantly queer and white spaces, like parties. It was at this point in our conversation that Raina makes a critical connection between performative masculinity and the erotic capital attributed to POC by white queers.

> **H:** Yeah, Wellesley is very similar and I'm wondering cause you brought up Wrenn, does the cross between masculine-presenting and POC then exacerbate the fetishization and exoticization of the person?
> **R:** Absolutely. Wrenn is hot because they're trans but Wrenn is even hotter because they can speak Spanish. My friend Kam is Black. He's hot because he's trans. He's even more hot because he likes Audre Lorde and talks to white people. The fact that he can be around white people and have white friends means that he's even more attractive because [they] have a chance with him.
> **H:** So, stratifying multiple cultural identities at once or like, being able to inhabit multiple cultural spaces at once increases one's ability to attract, basically.
> **R:** Yes, that is how you get social capital. Can you be smart in a classroom? Can you chill with Black people? Can you run a queer group? Can you do this amazing research? The more that you can do, gives you more social capital. Not only do you know more people but then that presents you as a [smarter] person and that means you're a more valuable person to the academy and that's the person you want to strive to be or at

least be with. In all of this, I've learned that it always goes back to the academy and how much power you have within the academy. It's always how good of an academic candidate you are that will supplement you for success.

H: It's really funny you say that and bring up social capital because there's a theorist that focuses on queer theories that talks about erotic capital and like, what contributes to that and based on what I've heard it sounds like the biggest way to get erotic capital or have maximum erotic capital in queer spaces is to be masculine-presenting, and a POC, and not seen as threatening to whiteness and the white identity.

R: Absolutely! Absolutely! And that is what my friend Kam personifies. He was a part of the rugby team! Like he had every aspect and he's one of the most popular people on campus. There's not like a popular group but every single person on this campus knows who he is. And that's because [of] the way he talks, he does not speak in AAVE...or whatever that stupid academic term is for "ebonics" but he speaks in a way that is accessible for white people while still being different in that he's Black so that means, "Oh, I have a Black friend!" And then he's trans, "Oh! I got a trans friend too." And so that is like, the pinnacle of popularity is to be at all these intersections of oppression but still be at a smart, elite institution.

I found Raina's analysis of Kam's erotic capital comparable to statements made by other students. For instance, Donna reported similar behavioral patterns at Wellesley. They noticed that "androgynous people" who have "feminine features but dress in a masculine manner like soft masc, not even like too hard or something that can be too intimidating, probably has a short haircut and socially attractive features" get the most attention in queer hookup spaces. Donna identifies as non-binary and often presents themself in both a "soft-masc" and "femme" way and describes themself as having "a lot of confidence in what I wear because I know I look good" but stated that "masc-presenting bodies really do get a lot more attention" in queer spaces and that "POC are like hyper-sexualized" and "essentialized to the point where it seems" like there's more "attention placed on their bodies than the actual person." They also reported feeling uncomfortable in these instances because they are aware of the fixation on them and can "feel the eyes on [them]".

An important thing to take away from these two exchanges is how racial characteristics are also essentialized in these narratives. We have seen how strategic essentialism of specific

characteristics and traits can be used to promote group formation through a centralized group identity; however, more interesting to note in these examples is that the fetishization and essentialization of certain racial characteristics is being done by a group to which the individual does not belong. In Raina's and Donna's examples, students of color who either present a masculine gender expression, or identify as TGNC, are commodified and objectified by their white peers who see their racial identities as desirable and extremely attractive.

My interviewees' personal experiences of the queer hookup scenes on their campuses underscores that most of the queer spaces at these traditionally women's colleges are predominantly white. Since the institutions themselves are predominantly white, this makes sense. The resulting dynamic creates an atmosphere that causes students of color to experience multiple levels of discomfort in the predominantly white hookup and party culture that subsist at their institutions. Queer students of color report being made to feel othered and objectified when they enter into predominantly white spaces that cater to queer hookups.

Summary

Personal as well as experiential accounts gathered from interviews, leads me to conclude that an intrinsic power linkage has developed between rank and gender presentation. For instance, Bryn Mawr's sophomores seem to have the greatest social and erotic capital, while Smith's seniors have greater social and erotic capital due to seniority and age. Though Wellesley's hookup culture is similar to Bryn Mawr's in that they both foster healthy environments for students to engage in, Wellesley's dynamics around erotic capital better resemble Smith's in that Wellesley's seniors have greater social and erotic capital. There seems to be many social factors at play in determining a person's perceived erotic capital of which rank (i.e. class year), and gender presentation are primary.

The relationship between gender performance, class year, and erotic capital shows that queer hookup spaces, like parties, can be as influential as music.

Additionally, gender expression, such as masculine presentation, can be influential in determining who is perceived as attractive, and consequently, helps to determine an individual's environment-dependent erotic capital. Wrenn's and Raina's stories address one of my main questions which is: who has erotic capital and who is seen as the most desirable in queer hookup culture? The resounding answer that I received proves that performative masculinity is viewed as the most desirable characteristic in queer groups and whoever dons this presentation is afforded erotic capital. According to Green, presenting oneself in a manner that does not conform to conventional gender roles increases a person's erotic capital in queer spaces since performing deviancy is a highly sought after and attractive trait. At Bryn Mawr, Smith and Wellesley, Green's theory is proven true because in queer party spaces at these colleges the level of attention given to students who present themselves in a gender-nonconforming, or masculine ways is described as attractive.

To trans and masculine presenting students, campus hookup culture can often feel unsafe. Anecdotal accounts lead me to believe that the reason is some students feel there is a lack of mutual understanding around boundaries by those who engage in it. Raina, Wrenn, Donna, and Veronica all described instances in which they personally experienced, or recounted the experience of a friend, who had their personal boundaries ignored by white queer students and were treated as hypersexualized and racialized commodities. Raina felt unsafe in queer party environments because they are uncomfortable dancing in white party spaces dominated by the rugby team. Whereas, Wrenn felt unsafe in queer party environments where hooking up is the primary focus due to the hypervisibility of masculine presentation by many party attendees. As I have shown, the fetishization experienced by masculine presenting students of color not only makes them feel othered, it also contributes to their inherent level of discomfort in white queer spaces.

5: Concluding Remarks

Music is extremely influential for determining and structuring what spaces qualify as party spaces. As the reader has seen, it informs who feels comfortable engaging in the hookup culture within queer party spaces. In this ethnography, I set out to examine music's relationship to queer nightlife and whether or not the relationship is expressed in a similar way at Bryn Mawr, Smith and Wellesley. Specifically, I wanted to explored the relationship between sound and space through the lens and perspective of students of color at these colleges in order to answer these three questions: 1) What effect do school policies have on the formation of party culture; 2) What is the relationship between music, space, and party culture; and 3) what is music's relationship to hookup culture and erotic capital? My data sources consisted primarily of, repurposed data from my earlier ethnography on Punch's Alley, interviews with students at the colleges, and a review of each institution's policy manual governing student life and the use of social spaces.

In Chapter 1, I demonstrated that music, space, and racial identity informs who is made to feel included/excluded from queer hookup culture in PWI spaces. Initially, I drew on the works of literary scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology, sociology, and musicology, in hopes of answering how music functioned in queer hookup spaces; but I quickly realized that the answer was more nuanced and complex than I anticipated. While many of the scholars I referenced were able to provide me with a framework to conceptualize music's relationship to identity formation, space, and social participation, these theories ignored race as a factor that would influence how music is understood as a social mediator. To remedy this gap, I incorporated scholars whose works addressed the links between music and race – thereby providing a more complete reference point from which

to draw conclusions. As shown through Chapter 1, social participation, habitus, erotic capital, gender performance/presentation, and queerness shapes one's experience in hookup culture. The relationship between sound, space and mediation supports my argument that racial identity, along with music, determines who is made to feel included/excluded from queer hookup culture. In addition, I learned that race influences queer social spaces inhabited by queer students of color as well as how they are perceived and treated.

Having addressed the themes and practices that mediate who engages in hookup culture on college campuses, I then turned my attention to the policies used by Bryn Mawr, Smith and Wellesley to regulate student life and social spaces in Chapter 2. Here again, I approached my analysis from the perspective of who engages in hookup culture and their comfort level in doing so. I established that a link exists between each institution's policies and the level of comfort felt by students of color in predominantly white social spaces. My takeaway from the policy analysis was that even though all three colleges have policies that in some form or fashion create obstacles for students of color to connect and socialize, the broader challenge for these students is how to navigate their institution's social and party policies in a manner that gives them agency that feels authentic.

As we saw in Chapter 3, narratives collected from my interviews revealed that an understanding of the social environment as well as the type of social gathering, are equally important for determining who participates in queer hookup spaces and their level of comfort. This is an important distinction because it relates to context-dependent socializing – which informs a participant of what type of social event they should expect to partake in. Furthermore, the narratives show that the social environments in which students participate in– also known as the context-dependent mode of listening – are informed by music related to the social context because it communicates what social behaviors should be expected in a given situation. Understanding how

location, music selection, and the context-dependent spatial relationships determine what type of

gathering occurs is essential for conceptualizing how sound and space create environments where

sexual behaviors can manifest.

While the previous chapters discussed music's effects on group participation, social identity,

and establishing one's level of comfort in social settings, Chapter 4 examined music's effect on

hookup culture and who chooses to participate in it. Using Green's theory of sexual fields, and

narratives from my interviewees, I illustrated that gender expression, such as masculine presentation,

can be influential in determining who is perceived as attractive, and consequently helps to determine

an individual's environment-dependent erotic capital. According to Green, presenting oneself in a

manner that does not conform to conventional gender roles increases one's erotic capital in queer

spaces because performing deviancy is considered a highly sought after and attractive trait. At Bryn

Mawr, Smith and Wellesley, Green's theory is proven true because in queer party spaces the level of

attention given to students who present themselves in a gender-nonconforming, or masculine way is

described as attractive. Clearly the relationship between race and dominant power structures,

coupled with music, has a huge impact on who is made to feel included/excluded from queer

hookup culture.

As I have demonstrated throughout this ethnography, non-white students struggle to remain

authentic and maintain a sense of self so that their identities do not become subsumed by the values

placed on their racial identities by their white peers. Students of color often feel othered due to the

erotic capital prescribed to their intersectional identities as marginalized individuals. As we have seen

throughout this thesis, the results of my research confirm the importance of music to hookup and

party culture. Obviously, the bond between race and music should be further explored as it has been

shown to be a crucial determiner in who feels comfortable in queer spaces that house hookup

culture, but also who is made to feel comfortable in queer hookup culture at predominantly white institutions.

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