

THE TIE THAT BINDS US TOGETHER: QUEER FILIPINA/X AMERICANS,  
KINSHIP, AND SURVIVAL

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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of  
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In partial fulfillment of  
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Master of Arts

In

Sexuality Studies

by

Tiffany Marie Mendoza

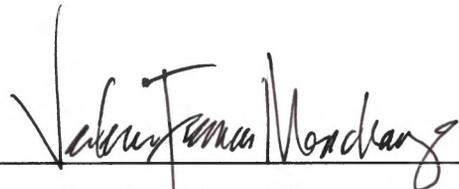
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## CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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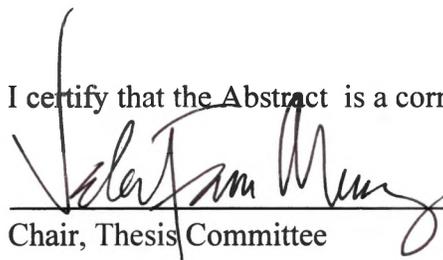
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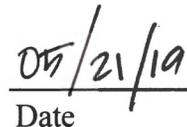
THE TIE THAT BINDS US TOGETHER: QUEER FILIPINA/X AMERICANS,  
KINSHIP, AND SURVIVAL

Tiffany Marie Mendoza  
San Francisco, California  
2019

Acts of care, intimacy, and struggle are practiced outside of ascribed traditional family structures. Queer kinship is cultivated and nurtured by folks—biological or non-biological, queer or non-queer—who intentionally choose to be in each other’s lives. Queer kinship not only operates based on the identities of queer or non-queer people, but rather the practices, commitments, and shared values and principles of everyone involved. In an exploratory study, I centralize queer Filipina/x experiences with queerness and queer kinship to argue that queer kinship is an intimate site of care, resilience, resistance, and struggle. I assert that queer kinship and the practices involved are material responses to current social, political, and economic conditions. Additionally, I build on using “queer” as an identity marker, rather, I highlight the material manifestations of queerness through mundane care practices and the collective process of unlearning internalized homophobia. Participants in the study demonstrate that they build genuine and intentional long-lasting relationships with one another for the purpose of fighting for a socially just future.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

  
Chair, Thesis Committee

  
Date

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Methodology .....	6
Literature Review.....	10
Chapter 1 .....	
“I can be any of those things at any different times”: Queer’s sexual fluidity .....	22
“I’m in a process of embracing my queerness”: Internalized struggles.....	27
“An other, but queer I feel like is a special other”: Political potentials of queer...32	
Chapter 2.....	
“I think in a lot of ways that’s what chosen fam is”: Queer definitions of family 37	
“It’s like consensus building”: Mundane care practices of queer kinship .....	46
“I internalized that so hard”: Growing from internalized struggles.....	52
Chapter 3.....	
The many different ways, shapes, and forms of intimacy in the struggle .....	60
“It’s somehow formed such beautiful unity between a lot of us”: Beauty in the face of state violence.....	64
“What is the tie that binds all of us?”: Shared values and principles for survival .67	
Conclusion .....	75
References.....	79

## INTRODUCTION

While sitting in a small office room in the middle of an early summer day, a committed and humble student organizer expressed, “It’s like something in the air brought us together.” This was vocalized out in the open to be shared and felt amongst a group of five queer and non-queer Filipina student organizers living in the Bay Area. Their identities as queer or non-queer is not the sole factor in bringing them together in that meeting or in their organizing work. In that room, folks emulated a sense of family that was not induced by biological relations, but rather, a queerly or non-normative practice of choosing one another to be in their lives based off shared values and a genuine desire to build relationships with one another. Through that, queer kinship, queer family, chosen family, and community materially manifests.

As one of the queer Filipinas sitting in that small office room, my desire to explore different, yet possibly similar experiences of family that other queer-identified Filipino/a/x folks experienced throughout their lives, was generated. Throughout my research, the following questions guided me and participants: What causes queer Filipina/x Americans to cultivate and foster networks of queer kinship? What strategies are practiced by queer Filipina/x Americans to sustain their relationships? How do queer Filipina/x Americans remain resilient with each other during times of increasing attacks on their communities? Participants explore these questions with each other while being reminded of joyful, yet difficult times around embracing queerness, unequal family

dynamics, struggling through unlearning said dynamics, and practicing how to build collective love.

The main objective of my research is to highlight the experiences of queer Filipina/x Americans, their knowledge and practices of survival through various modalities of collective-self-care. To understand participant's experiences—Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, and Monet—I draw on scholars situated in queer theory and critical Filipino/a/x studies. Similar to José Esteban Muñoz, I depart from using queerness as an identity marker, and instead, apply it as a framework or a feeling to signify that something in the present is missing; there is something *more* in the future that participants are striving for—a queer futurity (Muñoz, 2009). Through this longing, queerness becomes a *doing*, an act towards something more. I argue that the *doing* in queerness, the act towards something more is rooted in concrete social, political, and economic conditions that urge participants and their communities to take action. Additionally, Muñoz theorizes that queerness can never be touched, only felt. In my research and in collaboration with participants, we challenge that idea. Participants and I argue that the genuinely mundane practices that participants act out to care for one another are material manifestations of queerness in the present. These materially mundane care practices are building blocks for the future—a *just* future.

To better understand the nuances of participant's mundane care practices, I draw on Martin Manalansan's theory of mess—the *stuff* of queer migratory lives—which embodies and memorializes the differentially lived experiences of queer Filipinos

(Manalansan, 2014). As an analytical framework, mess amplifies the everyday desires, feelings, and practices of queer Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Americans as they reimagine and create alternative modalities of intimacy and kinship. Additionally, mess is rooted in diasporic experiences that reflect the social, political, and economic conditions of individuals and communities who have transnational ties to their current geographic location and their homelands, such as the Philippines. Moreover, I argue that by looking at the daily and messy practices of Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, Monet, and their kinship ties, this provides a glimpse into the creative, genuine, and intentional ways queer Filipina/x folks are caring for one another in their relationships and within the larger Filipino community.

My own process of learning about the term queer, then identifying as and embracing queerness began as an individual process. It wasn't until my first semester of graduate school that I was welcomed into a larger network of dedicated, humble, and kind folks who selflessly commit themselves to fighting for the rights and welfare of communities that hold a lot of trauma. From then on, I experienced a collective shift with Filipinos/as/xs who identify as queer and non-queer. Through them, I was politicized, educated about the rich revolutionary history of our people—Filipinos—and consolidated into a mass movement that emphasizes collective care as self-care. I have shared countless car rides with Syd and Monet, made jokes with a mouth full of tortang talong with Sebastian and Jackie, and taken group selfies with Sal after a march. These are some of the various ways that participants, chosen family, queer kinship, and queer family care

for, spend time with, and value one another. Through my interactions and activities with them—other queer and non-queer kasamas (Tagalog for “comrades”) and friends—I came into my own and experienced the joys, challenges, and roots of collective life.

Through paired interviews, participants illuminate the collective process of queer kinship (Wilson, Onwuegbuzie, & Manning, 2016). Paired participants—Sebastian and Jackie, Syd and Monet—make sense of their queer identities and their experiences with chosen and blood-related family with one another. Given that I was studying the ways in which queer kinship was built amongst participants, paired interviews not only allow participants to openly reflect on their own personal experiences, but also find parallels in each other’s stories to connect and further build their relationships. They acknowledge and affirm each other’s struggles, get to the root causes of their traumas, and make sense of their experiences in relation to one another.

Paired interviews reflect participants’ experiences with one another and the people they’ve chosen to hold close in their lives. Participants offer car rides to one another on days when an action is being held. In these car rides, people are checking in with each other, asking about each other’s day, and gauging where people are mentally, emotionally, and physically. Participants go out to bars where their friend is DJing a set, buy each other drinks, and try to balance their social life and political work. Participants also text their friends to ask if they’re free for lunch or dinner. Similar to paired interviews, these experiences are done with one another. However, not every experience participants share are collective practices. They might have been individual, isolating,

and lonely, but through their commitment, shared values, and genuine love for one another, queer identity and queer kinship becomes a collective practice towards building a compassionate, rightfully just future.

In the pages that follow, participants invite me and each other to reflect on experiences filled with joy and struggle around queerness, queer kinship, and material manifestations that are responses to participants' desires for something *more*. In chapter 1, participants reflect on how they first learned about the term queer—where they were, what queer meant to them—and internalized struggles that participants came face-to-face with in their processes of coming to identify as queer. Additionally, participants speak on the political potential of the term queer and the power that queer's fluidity holds. In chapter 2, participants come to learn about queerness and embrace queerness in relation to one another. Queerness moves on from being an individuated process, to a collective process. Participants go in-depth about personal redefinitions of family, the mundane care practices that go into building genuine and long-lasting relationships, and the process of unlearning internalized struggles around unequal family dynamics. In chapter 3, participants emphasize the importance of shared values, shared principles, and shared political goals as the tie that binds them together. During a time of worsening social, political, and economic conditions in the United States and in the Philippines, participants understand the need to build strong unities to survive. Participants and their queer kinship, queer family, and chosen family take care of one another and protect one another to continue the fight for a brighter and *just* future.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to better understand the experiences of queerness, queer kinship, and how mundane activities serve as survival tactics, I utilize qualitative methods of data collection. Throughout the month of July 2018—the summer before my second year of graduate school—I conducted three open-ended and semi-structured individual or paired interviews with five participants. The participants stretch from 1.5 to 2<sup>nd</sup> generation born and identify as queer Filipina/x and Filipina/x American with ages ranging from early 20s to late 40s. Participants live throughout the Bay Area—Oakland, San Francisco, and Daly City. Participants are part of a larger interconnected network of Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x American community members. As a queer Filipina American who is part of this community, I engaged in snowball and convenience sampling to recruit fellow community members that expressed interest in my research. Not only do participants live a one-way MUNI or BART ticket away from one another, they all at one point or many, politically organize with their respective political organizations throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

Political organizing is challenging and intimate work. It is collective work. I wanted the interview process, and overall study design to reflect the intimacy, complexity, and collectivity of participants' labor. For my research, I conducted one individual interview and two paired interviews. A paired interview—also called paired depth interviewing—is defined as one researcher interviewing two participants together to create an intimate conversation that produces shared themes (Houssart & Evens, 2011;

Wilson et al., 2016). This method allows semi-structured interviews to flow more like memories unfolding through storytelling between two participants with a pre-existing relationship.

While paired interviews offer logistical benefits, such as being able to distinguish who is talking when transcribing, this often unnoticed qualitative method creates an attentive and compassionate interview process meant to focus on the connectedness of experiences, memories, and physicality of interviewees. Paired interviews allow me to observe the unspoken forms of storytelling: the subtle, yet sharp glances between two comrades in love as they listen to each other expand on queers' fluidity, or an exchange of nods between two friends sharing a plate of spam and egg fried rice as they insist on the other one sharing their response first. These forms of subtleness are not only sites of knowledge, but they hold memories and histories of their relationship with each other, shared identities and more—all of which co-construct the interview and produce themes. Additionally, paired interviews reflect the collective nature of this project; participants find parallels and make sense of their identities and experiences in relation to one another.

Interviews took place in locations most convenient to participants. Locations include a meeting room inside of a building shared by two organizations in downtown San Francisco, a home in Oakland where I somehow end up entering through the kitchen door, and a home in San Francisco that belongs to a mutual friend of two participants. Before pressing record on my Voice Recorder iPhone app, participants and I went over

informed consent; as part of the formality, I asked for their signatures and provided copies of the informed consent.

Interviews, whether for a job or research are typically tense and the interactions reflect that: the interviewer asks a question and the interviewee responds in hopes of providing the right response. I didn't want my interviews to reflect that structure. With each question I asked, participants guided me through the interview. It was common for me and participants to gather around for *kainan* (sharing a meal) to go along with *kuwentohan* (talk story). This was a way for all of us to *be with* each other—a shared togetherness—throughout the interview process. Kuwentohan is a way of preserving rich stories, histories, heritage, and Filipino core values (Francisco, 2014). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states, “the story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.” Sharing food or stories—often times both—is part of a larger Filipino core cultural value: the importance of togetherness and collectivity.

Length of interviews typically ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and were held early in the day, due to many of the participants work schedules. During interviews, I asked participants to explore personal meanings of queer, intimacy, processes of queer kinship, ways of sustaining close relationships, and the importance of such relationships during politically agitating times. Before wrapping up interviews, I asked participants if they had final questions, comments or thoughts and I thanked them endlessly for their participation. During each interview, I would jot down fieldnotes of what stood out to

me, such as keywords and themes that stretched across all interviews. I reflected on my fieldnotes after each interview and again before the next to further develop my interview guide (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

After conducting all three interviews, I began the transcribing process. I manually transcribed each interview on Google Docs and used ExpressScribe to transfer audio recordings of the interviews onto my laptop. I chose to transcribe the interviews verbatim to include all of the laughter, changes in tone, and pronunciation of words for purposes of reliving each interview when I revisited them. As I transcribed each interview, I used grounded theory to pick out possible themes that organically came from all three interviews (Charmaz, 2006).

All themes came from and were built upon participant interviews through open, axial, and selective coding (Charmaz, 2006). First, I used open coding as I read through interviews and pulled out broad possible themes. Second, after compiling a list, I used axial coding to relate themes to one another and identified three overarching themes: "queer," "queer kinship," and "survival." Lastly, I used selective coding to pull out data that would fall under any of the three themes, as sub-themes. There are three sub-themes for each of the larger themes. For "queer," the sub-themes are learning about queer, identifying as queer, and embracing queerness. Similarly, for "queer kinship" the sub-themes consist of definitions of queer kinship, mundane activities, and internalized struggles around family. For the final theme, "survival" is made up of different forms of intimacy, joys and struggles amidst state violence, and shared values and principles. In

the following chapters, participants' experiences and voices are amplified throughout all themes and sub-themes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The term *queer* continues to garner attention for its fluidity from academics and activists who both identify with and write about queer identity. Queer is a politicized sexual identity that is used to describe a person's desires, appearance, analytical framework, and material realities (Cohen, 1997). Similar to queer, queer kinship is fluid in its meanings, practices, and formations. Queer kinship or as it is most notably known as, chosen family, stretches the fixed definition of family—who is legally recognized as being part of a traditional family, and the ways people learn to acknowledge family structures (Weston, 1997).

Often enough, scholarship on queer kinship looks at various reasons why queer subjects pursue and create alternative forms of family, the practices of creating non-normative families, and broad descriptions of queer subjects themselves (i.e. their nuclear family background, “coming out” as lesbian, gay, bisexual or elsewhere on the spectrum). I assert that exploring only a broad understanding of queer subjects participating in queer kinship fails to highlight the complexities of queer subject identities, particularly queer diasporic subjects whose identities are entangled within histories of imperialism,

colonialism, and other “isms.” These complexities offer further insight into the lives of queer diasporic subjects and the systemic forces that continue to haunt and impact their identities.

Queer Filipino/a/x people are creatively cultivating and fostering networks of queer kinship outside of traditional family models to navigate and survive impacts from capitalism, patriarchy, and homophobia. Much like their own identities, queer kinship among queer-identified Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Americans hold many complexities. Queer Filipino/a/x people hold histories of colonialism and imperialism that continue to affect them today. However, queer Filipino/a/x people also hold rich revolutionary histories that inform their desire and urgency to participate in collective spaces. During a time of increasing attacks on marginalized and oppressed communities, collectivity is vitally important. Queer kinship is an intimate site of care, resilience, resistance and struggle. It is a sanctuary space bounded by the differentially lived experiences of each Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x American.

While queer identity has been theorized extensively, within the literature there is a lack of nuance around queer subjects’ lived embodiments and sexual subjectivities. Despite queer being so fluid, its fluidity isn’t vividly described or shown in material forms in academic literature. Queer is most commonly used as a theoretical framework or an identity; the practices that can come from living embodiments of queer are not highlighted. A lack of nuance strips a person of their autonomy and doesn’t acknowledge the body as a real, living person who endures struggles at the hands of systemic forces.

Critical Filipino/a/x studies theorizes lived experiences with the use of transnational praxis and critical frameworks, such as critical race theory (Crenshaw, 1995) to distinctly describe how Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Americans understand their racially, gendered, and sexualized lives “on the ground” (Viola, 2012). I strongly urge for an analytical bridging of queer studies and critical Filipino/a/x studies to move forward with an increasingly nuanced and collective theoretical praxis. I situate my work on that bridge. I argue that the use of a queerly transnational analytic can offer steps towards a more critical and compassionate representation of queerness, locally and globally. Furthermore, this argument will contribute to research on queer kinship, critical Filipino/a/x studies, and a broader understanding of diasporic imaginaries as a way to queerly build community, articulate complex identities, and navigate survival within oppressive institutions.

Scholars of color, such as Cathy Cohen have challenged discourses around queer identity, which centers experiences of white, cis, middle class men and women. Dominant discourses often leave out narratives of QTGNCPoC who are undocumented, working class, and navigating survival. In “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” Cathy Cohen explores the political potential of queer. Cohen argues that queerness has not taken steps towards its potential to challenge systems that feed off the oppression and marginalization of queer subjects, within a heteronormative culture. In order to understand queer more broadly and its political potential, an intersectional analysis is imperative in recognizing the various systems of

oppression that regulate and police the lives of most people in vulnerable communities (Cohen, 1997; Crenshaw, 1991). From there, queer as a radical politics can operate on recognizing the lived experiences of existing within and resisting multiple connected practices of domination and normalization. In the same vein, a radical queer politics rejects the idea that the ultimate goal of liberation is assimilating into and replicating dominant institutions that allow systems of oppression to persist and operate. Although Cohen doesn't explicitly bring forth queer transnational subjectivities, her thinking around the use of queer is a way to push forward a radical political agenda for queer activists.

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), José Esteban Muñoz argues that “queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality and concrete possibility for another world.” Queerness offers windows of opportunity to create alternatives—alternative ways of being in the world and various modalities of self-care as ways to survive. Muñoz creatively lays out queerness as an ideality; it is not yet here, and it may never be touched, only felt. Put in another way, the purpose of queer is not to serve as an identity category, but rather, as a motive, a political longing that comes out of concrete rooted political struggle (Muñoz, 2009). In summary, Muñoz's imagining of queer futurity looks forward, on the horizon. It utilizes the past and future to reject the present and bring forth the potentiality of an *other* world.

While Muñoz described queerness as an ideality that may never be touched, but can be felt, I argue that critical Filipino/a/x studies scholars have documented material

manifestations of what queerness might look like in the flesh. In *The Labor of Care: Filipina Migrants and Transnational Families in the Digital Age* (2018), Valerie Francisco-Menchavez introduces “communities of care”—intimate kinship networks that are cultivated and fostered by Filipina migrants in response to political and economic conditions—as a framework that “allows us to see Filipina migrants as diasporic subjects who construct their own brands of care, and use transnational sensibilities to relate to one another, this forming both practical and affective bonds of support.” I assert that communities of care are an example of a queerly alternative way of being in the world and surviving. Filipina migrants and mothers care for each other via affirming their traumas and offering a sense of familial feeling when sharing congratulatory news of their families in the Philippines (Francisco-Menchavez, 2018). Whether it’s sharing a plate of *pancit*, singing loudly into a microphone with laughs and cheers in the background, or understanding each other’s struggles through political organizing, these are material acts of performing queerness, which are essential for building community; they can be touched and felt.

The daily mundane activities that occur in the lives of queer subjects, such as queer Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Americans are often unexplored, resulting in missed opportunities to connect everyday life, intimacy, and diasporic queer identity formation (Manalansan, 2015). In “Migrancy, Modernity, Mobility: Quotidian Struggles and Queer Diasporic Intimacy” (2015), Martin F. Manalansan troubles ideas around centralizing queer subjects within organized public spaces, as if the self and community unfold with

each other. I assert the following: the need for a micro sociological examination, and that the intricacies of mundane activities recognizes the ways queer diasporic subjects negotiate normalized practices. In addition, I argue that queer kinship does not erase the complexities of queer subjects, but instead, queer kinship is a point of convergence where negotiations between queerly quotidian habits and normalized practices meet.

Organized spaces are a point of convergence for queer diasporic subjects to engage in community building through intimate practices of queer kinship. In the introduction of *Diasporic Intimacies: Queer Filipinos and Canadian Imaginaries* (2018), Robert Diaz creatively describes *Pardz Night* (women's night), an event that has been organized since the 1990s with the intent of bringing together lesbian, queer, and trans Filipinos/as/xs to connect and have fun amid their quotidian demands. On this particular night, collective spirits are high and various intimacies illuminate from queer diasporic subjects gyrating on the dance floor (Diaz et al., 2018). Spaces like *Pardz Night* provide a sense of identification among queer diasporic subjects. Diaz uses this event as a way to set the stage and bring forth intimacies that are created and shared amongst a collective. These intimacies sound like laughter, look like dancing, smell like food being shared with each other. Collective practices such as these are acts of resistance and longing for something more. Not only are these collective practices, they are also sensual. They are an erotic desire that materially manifests as dancing or food and draws queer Filipino/a/x people to one another, as if they're bounded by shared identities or struggles around being torn from their homeland. Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Canadian scholars who

contribute to *Diasporic Intimacies* “foregrounds non-normative kinship structures, collectivities, and affinities that survive and thrive as queer people of color animate their multiple meanings” (Diaz et al., 2018).

In response to the intimate practices that Diaz animates in his introduction, I believe these are the connections of everyday life, intimacy, and diasporic identity formation that Manalansan urges scholars to explore to better understand the nuances of queer diasporic subjects (Manalansan, 2015). Another example of *doing* queer kinship is illuminated through the cultivation and updating of *swardspeak*, a culturally and historically coded language used by Filipino gay men in the Philippine diaspora (Manalansan, 2003). *Swardspeak* opens a space for Filipino gay men to articulate their identity and experiences in the Philippines and in the diaspora. These spaces work as a meeting point for their homeland and home abroad identities.

Drawing upon Juana Rodríguez’s (2003) queer conceptualization of *latinidad*, *swardspeak* contains its own histories of colonialism, forced migration, displacement, and struggles of belonging. Manalansan argues that Filipino gay men use *swardspeak* to showcase their complicated relationship with the nation and to resist dominant assimilation practices, such as translating into and speaking English. I assert that language can create alternative ways of being in the world. Through *swardspeak*, Filipino gay men are creating worlds that provide community and survival.

My proposal to move forward with a queerly transnational analytic in queer studies and sexuality studies literature—with the assistance of critical Filipino/a/x studies frameworks—builds upon Manalansan’s theory of “mess” (Manalansan, 2014). In “The ‘Stuff’ of Archives: Mess, Migration, and Queer Lives,” Manalansan expands feminist scholars’ argument that archives are a site for gendered and erotically charged energies, meanings, and other bodily processes of marginalized subjects by looking at the “quotidian within the messy physical, symbolic, and emotional arrangements of objects, bodies, and spaces in queer immigrant lives” (Manalansan, 2014). Mess—the *stuff* of queer archives—embodies and memorializes histories that acknowledge the differentially lived experiences and embodiments of queer Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Americans as they reimagine modalities of intimacy and kinship.

Robert Diaz draws upon Manalansan’s concept of *mess*, to animate the differentially lived experiences of Filipino/a/x Canadians whose narratives articulate new possibilities of intimacy and kin under neoliberal and multicultural states (Diaz, 2016). By bridging the messiness of a shared identity, multiple experiences of disempowerment and trauma, queer Filipinos/as/xs in Canada and the United States are reimagining new possibilities of care, intimacy, and kinship as acts of resistance and solidarity. Mess as an analytical framework amplifies often unrecognized everyday desires, feelings, and practices that provide an entry point into a queerly transnational analytic to locate, validate, and weave together the existences of queer subjects living in and out of the diaspora.

While mess offers an optic into a queerly transnational analytic, the desires, reimagining, and vibrantly non-normative practices of care and kinship are what Marissa Largo calls a *de-colonial aesthetic* that “rearticulates multiple colonial histories as a means to interrogate colonial practices that are systemic, transtemporal, and transnational” (Largo, 2015). In other words, the everyday activities and practices of queer diasporic subjects, such as dancing or cooking together, which are othered and policed by local and global powers can be rearticulated as decolonizing practices.

Everyday non-normative practices should be seen as everyday decolonizing practices. Rallies, protests, various organized spaces, and other public sites of resistance are often the most visible forms of coalition building and togetherness. However, other public sites of resistance are also quiet and relaxed, which are valuable processes of learning and enacting change (Hunt & Holmes, 2015). As if in conversation with all of the scholars mentioned throughout my literature review, Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes (2015) elaborate on multiple scholars’ take on a decolonial queer politic, which is “not only anti-normative, but actively engages with anti-colonial, critical race and Indigenous theories and geopolitical issues such as imperialism, colonialism, globalization, migration, neoliberalism, and nationalism.” A queer politic not only utilizes agendas around anti-imperialism or anti-capitalism, it also centralizes the generative and healing possibilities of individuals and communities, and the care that goes into these practices.

Queer looks to muddy up sexual identities, categories, and desires inscribed by hierarchal, patriarchal, and colonialist powers to in turn, rearticulate those norms as

abnormal. Decolonization is determined to unlearn said practices, while also acknowledging and bringing to the forefront histories of Indigenous communities that continue to be affected by settler colonialism. While queer and decolonize are separate terms and have separate agendas, respectively, everyday (queer) decolonizing practices are unfolding across various spaces. Whether linking arms with a comrade to create a blockade or winding down from the day with loved ones—everyday or once a month—these are practices performed by often unacknowledged individuals and communities.

My intent here is not only to highlight the narratives and practices of queer kinship among queer subjects, particularly queer Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Americans, or to animate the seemingly mundane ways of surviving in the world by queering, or disrupting traditional hetero- and homo- normative beliefs, nor is my only intent to point fingers at U.S. imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, neoliberalism, globalization, and so many others that feed off the oppression of vulnerable communities, albeit this is extremely important. I want to compassionately place names, real life experiences, and nuanced complexities to the bodies that are tirelessly theorized not only in queer studies and sexuality studies, but across disciplines.

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), Jasbir Puar suggests moving away from intersectionality to *assemblages*. Assemblages look at metaphysical entities, such as affectivities, movements, energies, intensities and the like (Puar, 2007). However, I argue that assemblages take away the nuances and living actualities of a body by not thinking of what directly impacts them. The “body” is a

living person with a name, has relationships—biological or chosen—and has their own experiences; the body is more than just a theoretical subject that used in literature. While affectivities provide ontological insights, such as metaphysical understandings, essences or a *feeling*, they don't acknowledge the body as, for example, a queer migrant who was forced to leave their homeland due to dire economic and political conditions. In summary, assemblages animate the immateriality of people, rather than material experiences, traumas, and living embodiments of people.

Puar lacks a reframing of what about the body should be focused on: the material existence. E. Patrick Johnson's (2001) reconfiguration of queer studies into *quare* studies compelled me to think more critically about the theorized body across disciplines. In "'Quare' studies, or (almost) everything I know about queer studies I learned from my grandmother," Johnson believes that the body "has to be theorized in ways that not only describe the ways in which it is brought into being, but what it *does* once it is constituted..." The physical body of queer subjects, particularly queers of color, is often neglected in literature. It remains static, when in reality, the physical body is a moving theory. Similarly, J.S. Allen (2012) draws upon Xavier Livermon's (2012) concept of a "cultural labor of black queerness" in which "black queer persons deploy their complexly constructed identities for political ends that, without [this] theorization, observers might not recognize as politics." The body doesn't need a physical stage to perform, rather, embodiments such as physically being in close proximity to one another, offering a car ride home late at night or bringing food to share for dinner are all acts of embodied

resistance done collectively. These are some of the creative ways that queer Filipino/a/x people practice building and being in queer kinship with one another to sustain their relationships. Queer Filipino/a/x people not only acknowledge, affirm, and value one another in queer kinship, they also work towards creating generative and healing relationships.

Queer Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x Americans move around with their nuanced complexities and converge on special occasions or everyday occasions. Whether they're chanting outside of a consulate building to demand U.S troops out of the Philippines or sitting in an office space waiting for a meeting to begin, these are resilient acts of intimacy, care, and queer kinship. These spaces and doings, as mundane as some might seem are ways of being in the world, surviving with one another. Furthermore, throughout my research and beyond, I not only urge academics to recognize "the presence of the transnational in every moment, even 'at home,' and the rapidity of popular forms of (uneven) global exchange" (Allen, 2012) as mobile, but I also hope to boldly highlight queer Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x American experiences and knowledge of survival through various modalities of collective-self-care, such as queer kinship.

## CHAPTER 1

**“I can be any of those things at any different times”: Queer’s sexual fluidity**

If we’re talking about queerness in terms of like people’s experiences, I think queerness is like a way to talk about one’s like gender, sexuality, or orientation to the world that has alienated them from what is normal, or alienated them from what is expected from them, their body, and how they act, and who they’re attracted to, and how they act towards people that they’re creating intimacy with. To be queer is to be creating new possibilities for how you relate to other people, whether that’s because of the gender that you’re presenting as or the gender that someone else who you love is or whatever. I think that’s my basic answer, if you feel queer, if you feel like you’re not fitting within what society is expecting of you in terms of how you act based on gender and sexuality, you have the right to claim that term and that word. You have the right to claim it.

I start with a quote from Sal, a queer non-binary Pilipinx person in their early 20s who I’ve shared space with at countless community events that range from doing security for a contingent that their organization was leading, to exchanging hugs at a musical event across the Oakland bridge. Sal’s outfits are always on point. Vibrant shirt buttoned up to the top, sometimes tucked in and sometimes hanging out, Clarks to get them moving from one meeting to the next, and hair either cleanly faded, or grown out to an awkward “I don’t know what to do with this” length. Sal’s queer narrative is one of the five narratives that will be stretched out across the following pages. Similar to the other four participants, Sal speaks with enthusiasm and vulnerability while they reflect on the fluidity of queer, the trials and errors of queer kinship, and its unfolding processes. In the

following pages, participants share with me and each other how they learned about the term queer, came to identify as queer, and the process of embracing queerness.

Queer takes on a multitude of meanings and manifests in a variety of forms. For example, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, queer was used to shame people with same-sex desires or relationships. Moving onward into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, queer was reclaimed by members of Queer Nation to deliberately be used as a political alternative to mainstream LGBT liberalism in the community (Berlant & Freeman, 1992). The term queer has become relational to non-normativity, an alternative to binaries, and an identity that individuals and groups can nestle into, and from there, make sense of the world around them. In the following chapters, I build upon queer as an identity marker and depart from it as only in relation to sexuality, to highlight its political potentials and material manifestations.

Through participant narratives, they are aware of the changes from derogatory slang, to reclamation, and the post-reclamation possibilities that allow them to bring more fluidity into their lives. While queer is a site of multiplicity, for participants, sexuality and identity is a common entry point into the vastness of queerness. When asked what queer meant to them, participants' responses reflect the nuances of coming to learn about queer as an identity and the heteronormative discourses that are weakened through this discovery.

Syd, a queer-identified Filipina in her late twenties shares her experience learning about the term queer,

I feel like when you are queer identified, you tend to learn all these other terms first, like lesbian, gay, and then bisexual, but you never know about these terms that don't place you in a certain category, like in such a boxed category. When I learned about what queer was, I was like, "What?" There's something that doesn't box me into any identity. I can be anything. I can be any of those things at any different times, because I feel like my sexual orientation or the way I identify as has transformed throughout my whole life, like if I knew what queer was I would have not limited myself to just one identity term. I feel like queer gives you more room to be fluid in your life, so queer to me just means that I don't have to label myself to one thing, and understanding that identities can change, like how fluid you are with your sexuality can change.

Queer operates as a category that simultaneously holds other identities. A person's chosen sexual identity can act as a way for that person to make sense of themselves, whether inside or outside of binaries. For Syd, queer is a term that reflects their process of learning about dominant identities, such as lesbian, gay, and bisexual, but not identifying as them. Additionally, queer can hold all of those labels and not limit a person to settle on one identity. Similarly, Sebastian, a queer-identified Filipina in her early 40s explains,

I felt actually pressured to have some sort of identity and it was like, well... I've been with men, but I'm now attracted to women, does that mean I'm bisexual? And that was just the language in terms of how to put a label on it and for queer when it was introduced as reclaiming in terms of the umbrella term for LGBTSTGNC and all that, I felt it was more suited for me in a sense of it being a box, but not a box, right?

Both Syd and Sebastian speak about queer's uniqueness as it being a boxed category that can be checked off on a list, but it's a box that expands to accommodate a person or group's abundance of desires around sexuality. Participants felt they needed to identify with a sexuality that defined their same-sex or opposite-sex attractions and desires. However, upon learning about the term queer, which encompasses all sexual desires and gender expressions, Syd and Sebastian explore themselves in relation to the term. Monet, a queer-identified Afro-Pinay in her early 20s recalls how she first began to identify as queer,

I just remember taking this class about queer theory and realizing that you can also maybe even be attracted to the opposite sex and still be queer. My sexuality is fluid. I remember there was this girl who came into my work and we were talking and chilling. I was like, "Oh shit. I'm actually attracted to this person." It was a weird experience where I was like, "Oh shit. I'm actually... I'm like freakin' queer." I guess that's the only way I could explain it because then I think being queer is different for everyone, or how they got there is obviously different.

In relation to Syd and Sebastian's experiences of learning about the term queer, then identifying as queer, Monet's comment, "I think being queer is different for everyone," reflects its fluidity. Monet's experience learning about queer in a queer theory class, then coming to identify as queer through her attraction towards a girl animates the many real-life experiences of learning about and identifying as queer. In addition to learning about the term queer in her class, Monet also understands queerness in relation to heteronormativity and whiteness,

Even the way that you perform your gender or even during sex, like having sex there's ways to do it in a heteronormative way. Also, being a woman of color, I feel like your sexuality is already othered compared to like a white hetero cis man.

Monet not only utilizes queerness as a way to describe her sexuality and desires, but also to acknowledge and resist her place in a patriarchal, white, cisgender, and heteronormative society.

Queer not only provides Syd, Sebastian, and Monet an expanding box that holds all of their identities, it also provides them an entry point into being critical of interlocking forms of domination and normalization around sexuality. For example, Monet juxtaposes her identity as a queer woman of color who challenges heteronormativity and whiteness. Queer is an increasingly expansive and fluid box. It allows participants to be critical of and problematize categories and labels enforced by heteronormativity and gender norms. However, queer is not only an identity category or a box to expand, it is a way for participants to express themselves fluidly, the best they know how. Additionally, throughout participant interviews, queerness in relation to their Filipina/x identity was not prevalent. I theorize that participants' Filipina/x identity was already established within themselves before they began to process learning about and coming to identify as queer.

**“I’m in a process of embracing my queerness”: Internalized struggles**

Participants spoke openly and in detail about coming into their queer identities. For example, Sebastian recalled the city where she first learned the term. Syd spoke about her older brother who’s also queer and the positive influence that had on her to embrace her queerness. Syd goes on to say,

For me, embracing my queerness I feel like it’s a process, but when you get more and more comfortable, the more and more you embrace it, it’s like you go through a period of self-realization. I felt like I was being more myself and feeling really, really, really happy and proud of myself.

Syd, Sebastian, and Monet had different experiences being introduced to the term queer. From there, it seems that the process of coming into their full-self by embracing their queerness to the fullest was on the horizon. However, while these narratives of comfortability stretch throughout all interviews, there were also moments of resurfacing shame. Not only were participants learning to embrace their queerness, they were also acknowledging and understanding their own internalized struggles around their identities. Jackie goes on to say,

I didn’t even understand what queer meant until later on in life and actually in my late 20s when I was also okay with that part of me coming out. I knew at a younger age and I also knew when I was in college and away from my family. That’s when I started to discover or allow for those parts of me to even just be seen by myself. Um, and even then it was like a suppressed thing. It was something that wasn’t allowed. I was policing

myself, so I think queerness is really about accepting yourself and allowing yourself to come out in different ways and that also it is something that doesn't just happen once, you know, it continues to unfold.

The process of embracing queerness is not solely a positive experience. It is not always a linear progression. There can be challenges that come with it and participants explore that. Even though Jackie's queerness existed internally, she suppressed it enough to not be fully visible to herself. The concept of queerness unfolding, or "allowing yourself to come out in different ways" manifests in multiple forms, such as Jackie's suppression and policing of her sexuality. I theorize that there might be cultural factors involved, such as religion—Catholicism—and the stigma that's ascribed to same-sex desires.

In another conversation, Jackie talks about her and Sebastian's process of starting a family. Jackie says,

There was this body work that just really shook me and I woke up in the middle of the night and I was flashing back to some bizarre memories and it was also during the time when I was also really suppressing that part of myself, just the most simple part of myself, my gender, sexuality and just like questioning it and then also I didn't need anyone to tell me anymore what was wrong or right. I was telling myself that in that moment there I had so much internalized homophobia.

Similar to how Monet understood her queerness in relation to heteronormativity, through Jackie's own process, she has come to embrace her queerness through understanding her internal struggles around her gender and sexuality. Jackie's struggles might have been

related to stigma around same-sex desires or negative narratives that she might have heard growing up. Narratives around the process of embracing queerness don't often detail feelings of internal shame, homophobia, sexism, and others that arise within themselves due to systems of domination and normalization, such as colonialism, capitalism, and other forms of imperialism. Monet goes on to say,

I remember that class I took was only a couple months ago, so it's something very new to me. I have been better at embracing it and actually, also because before when I started identifying as queer, I didn't even talk about it with my friends or anything. I feel like also because I'm still a cis woman, I still conform in a lot of ways. I think it's a lot of internalized stuff, like internalized misogyny and sexism, and also a lot of internalized heteronormativity, and even with language sometimes—language I use—so it's been hard because I don't want to feel like I'm taking up space sometimes.

In response to Monet, Syd affirms her process, “But you know, you're understanding that you're combating those things if you're realizing you do them.” Monet responds, “I think I'm in a process of embracing my queerness. I think that's the way I've been trying to embrace it is like combating those ideals.” Additionally, Monet says, “I feel like also being queer is like feeling more comfortable in your body and yeah, that's something I've been trying to focus on.” This exchange opens up a space for Monet's internalized struggles to be acknowledged out in the open, and Syd's affirmation validates Monet's own process of embracing her queerness. I assert that Syd and Monet's exchange of affirmation is a practice of queer kinship and an act towards building genuine and intentional relationships with one another.

Jackie and Monet's struggles around various forms of oppression did not manifest abruptly, or out of nowhere. Internalized homophobia, misogyny, sexism, and western beauty standards are products of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and empire—all of which are related to colonialism and an inheritance of a colonial mentality. These systems are meant to police the bodies of queer communities into further marginalization. Additionally, conversations around internal struggles were described by Jackie and Monet on individual bases. Embracing queerness with or without support from another person or community support shapes participants' experiences. For example, Syd describes the support of her queer older brother,

I've been embracing my queerness because I also have a queer brother and that really helped and impacted me to embrace it in a really positive way, because me and him struggled. We struggled it together. We both came out at the same time even though he's 10 years older than me. We both came out to our parents the same time in our family, so it was because of that bond and that understanding with someone who's also struggling with it. It helped me embrace it even better, I guess.

The process of embracing queerness is often an individual experience and is talked about as such. It's an experience of coming into your own personhood—yourself—which can feel daunting and uncertain without support. Syd and her older brother not only supported each other when coming out to their parents together, they also learned to embrace their queerness and come to terms with their identities through struggling together.

On the other hand, this type of queer sibling bond was not a common experience throughout participant narratives. Sebastian explains,

I think in different moments it's even the internal trying to embrace it because it's hard. I think it's just the experiences, the hurts, the pains, and the community, you know, because often times I think about how it's difficult to embrace alone, right? So like being at my church growing up was my community, my home before the movement, and it was a community and place that really hurt and didn't accept me for just being gay. When I go back home I don't feel like I embrace my queerness the same way that I am with my queer family or with some kasamas or even with different places it doesn't feel safe. I think it matters in terms of is it safe to embrace? Or do I feel alone and I'm protecting myself.

Similar to other participants, Sebastian found community with queer, trans, cisgender, and straight folks later in their lives, even amongst each other in their respective political organizations. However, solely focusing on participants' beginning processes of embracing their queerness, a majority embraced alone. In Sebastian's experience, the church she grew up in and the location she grew up in was and remains a hurtful experience and memory for her. There was a lack of community support. Additionally, Sebastian brings up an important point: the extent to which a queer person embraces their queerness depends on any given number of things. Sebastian goes on to say,

I think there's different ways and I think surrounding myself with people, of course, like with my partner I feel not safer, but I feel like I could be queer, obviously, you know. But in different family settings or different places I make that choice of not to really expose myself so much in a way to keep ourselves safe. I think it just matters. It matters in terms of where I'm at. We'd probably act differently in a different country, depending on

what kind of laws they have. I think it just matters what's around us and who's around us or if we're in the comfort of our home or if we're surrounded with a bunch of white straight dudes that are drunk. Definitely embracing our queerness would look very different. We might leave,  
*//Sebastian and Jackie laughing//* let's get out of here!

Coming to identify as queer and learning to embrace queerness is not always a positive or linear progression. It's not always about showing pride, being loud and proud or other notions that might romanticize the process of coming into your own as a queer person, particularly a queer Pinxy—whose identity is entangled within histories of trauma—navigating through the everyday societal injustices and violence that come from the state, abroad, and intergenerationally. It's a matter of safety, survival, and hyper-awareness of surrounding conditions that might limit queer people's embrace of their own queerness. While Sebastian's experience of embracing alone is in contrast with Syd's experience, it's of utmost importance to vocalize and bring attention to the differing, yet sometimes similar ways queer people of color, particularly queer Filipina and Filipinx Americans begin to embrace their queerness and the various factors that shape their experiences.

**“An other, but queer, I feel like is a special other”:** Political potentials of queer

But I think that was only possible because of queer imagination, because of what people saw possible when other people could not even imagine that as a reality. That's what I want queerness to be, like always pushing the boundary of what can happen and that's a painful existence and that's why we also need to get really good at being joyful and struggling in a good way with one another, because queerness is always going to be a

thing that people are not ready for unless they're there with us and eventually they'll get there with us, but it's not going to be easy because what we're doing is purposefully not what is normal or acceptable. I think that's a function of how queerness is freeing people.

- Sal

Queer, only five letters long, offers so much. Queer is multifaceted. Queer is a term that can be used as an identity for a person to make sense of their sexuality, desires, their expressions—however that looks like. Queer can be reframed, shifted or departed from sexuality to become a *doing*, an act towards something more. The title of this section comes from Syd. In full, Syd says, “An other, but queer I feel like is a special other. It doesn't demonize you. It doesn't stigmatize you. It's just so important to build so much power in that kind of thing.” This section is meant to move forward from thinking of queer as solely a sexual identity. This section, much like queer itself, holds onto its roots: participants learning about the term queer, embracing it as their identity, and now, utilizing its political potential to disrupt patriarchy, criticize hetero and homo normative practices, and to uncover and acknowledge queer as an *other* way of being, thriving, and surviving in the world. Sebastian expands on queer's political potential,

It really is a definition that it's more political of not going against what's normal, but really just identifying where I'm part of a larger community that actually is trying to challenge the society of needing for us to put ourselves in a box, so I think queer makes me feel more of not just as my identity, but feeling like I am a part of a different community that's not just with straight folks, but it also is with allies, you know, so I think it's a very political term that I feel like makes me feel like it's accepting all of

me, um from coming out until even surviving what does it actually mean to be queer in a very straight world.

Queer provides not only a space created by one or more other folks to talk through experiences and struggles, it also provides a larger community to identify and challenge powers of domination and normalization. When queer communities create their own spaces to cultivate power, liberation, and self-determination in a society that does not recognize the rights and welfare of queer people, they are able to acknowledge within themselves and affirm one another of the radical potentials that queerness can build within the self and collectively.

In order to build upon queer's political potential, it's vitally important to learn about the rich histories of queer and trans resistances, collective work, and the sacrifices that were made for current communities to be able to expand and utilize queerness as not only a grounding point, but a political tool and process. In Filipino culture, there are terms such as *bakla* and *bakla tibo* to describe gay and lesbian identified people. Accessibility to cultural terms and other nuances, such as queer, is a privilege, especially with its expansive and fluid meanings. Jackie expands further and says,

For us and our generation, we have that privilege of people having come before us to really expand what this means to us and our community, you know, and really needing to honor that and remember what kinds of sacrifices that the queer and trans folks have given us, you know, like they fought, they did a lot to fight for that and like of course there's a legacy that comes with that. I think there's also this like, I feel like a duty to carry

it in a way where it's like really defending our right to be who we are, you know, because really that's what it comes down to.

Given that queer was used as a derogatory slang and has become known and used as a liberating term for queer communities, queer people inherently take on the responsibility to learn and push forth the legacies of queer and trans elders. That is where the process of queer politicization begins—at the very beginning of queer history. Sal explains,

You have the responsibility to understand the historical lineage that has brought us here. I think that's where my personal inclination lies because I think that it's important to leave the term open and responsive to people and we cannot do that if we erase the political process, historical process that has allowed queerness to become what it is. To me, queerness is less about the specificity of this gender and this gender and this type of love and whatever. It's less about marriage and more about revolution. I'm less invested in queers being able to access systems that replicate harm and I'm more invested in queers relinquishing harmful power and taking up power that restores humanity so that we can all act right with one another, so that we can do things in a good way that doesn't have to rely on these systems that don't serve us, that harm us, that harm other people, whatever. I don't want queerness to be striving towards assimilation or striving towards a normal that will only marginalize other people. I think queerness has to stay weird. I think queerness has to and does continue to push boundaries of what is acceptable, what is okay, what is revolutionary, what is not, until all people are free. Until all people are free, I think queerness has to be playing on the edges of and does play on the edges of what is possible.

Sal speaks on the political potential of queerness and its objective to “stay weird” in their comment, “I'm more invested in queers relinquishing harmful power and taking up power that restores humanity ... I don't want queerness to be striving towards

assimilation or striving towards a normal that will only marginalize other people.”

Queerness continues to push boundaries and thrives outside of systems that don't protect them. Instead, folks utilize queer's political potential to care for one another and validate each other's existence. To reach queer's political potential or enter into a beginning process of politicization, it starts with learning about the historical lineage, then and now. From there, queer can be utilized as a framework, a lens to see society as its real self—heavily heteronormative and unaccommodating, uncompassionate towards queer communities and all marginalized communities. Queer as a political tool provides a critical analysis, a tool that can identify and hold accountable the systems that seek to harm vulnerable communities, and to ensure that queer people don't assimilate into or replicate these violent systems, which is also a process.

Queer and queerness hold power that is cultivated, fostered, and practiced by queer-identified people. Queerness disrupts traditional binaries, such as male and female or straight and gay. Queerness also disrupts institutions, such as traditional family structures that only acknowledge biological or blood-related members. While it's important to keep queer open as an identity that can be reclaimed and molded to fit the wants and desires of the person holding onto the term, it's equally, or even more important to learn about how queerness came to be in its present form: a reclaimed identity that actively remolds itself for the betterment of the self and community.

It's important not to romanticize queerness and its fluidity. Participants' narratives suggest that the process of embracing queerness can be painful and difficult to

struggle with, especially when alone. On the other hand, referring back to Syd's description of queer being a "special other," that is also what queerness is. It's special. It unfolds at any moment and pushes boundaries. It's never a single moment; it's many moments. Queerness operates on creativity, dreaming, and imagination for the sole purpose of survival, to fight for a *just* society.

## CHAPTER 2

### **"I think in a lot of ways that's what chosen fam is": Queer definitions of family**

Chosen family, or what I have come to know as queer kinship, is an extension of the term queer (Weston, 1997). It enacts the *doing* of queer—an act towards something more than just related to sexuality. In the previous chapter, participants reexplored and shared with each other their relationships to the term queer and how the process of coming to identify as and embrace queerness was an individual process. While participants spoke about their queer identity separate from their Filipina/x identity, participants' experiences of queer kinship read as a "coming-to" process that eventually led them to find one another in queer, Filipino/a/x, and API spaces. I suggest that readers move onward from thinking of queer as strictly related to sexuality, rather, frame queerness as a political tool that analyzes, identifies, and challenges dominant structures that tell queer people, particularly queer people of color that they are not worthy or meant

to survive in a capitalist and patriarchal society—one that extends overseas to the Philippines. In the following pages, participants will share their unique take on queer kinship—how they define it and who is part of their kinship networks—the mundane care practices that queer kinship operates on, and the various material spaces that queer kinship provides participants to acknowledge and unlearn internalized struggles of the institution of family. Sal speaks on the shift from individual processes of queerness to queerness in relation to kinship and community building,

I think queer fam to me is rooted in a value and rooted in the value of interdependence. I talk about interdependence a lot in my work because I think interdependence is political. I think that queer fam is the recognition that none of us can get by purely on our own and we need each other to survive. We don't need each other for everything, but us coming together to support one another when systems on the ideological level like capitalism, and systems on the institutional level like the government or health care, and systems even on the interpersonal level like blood family...like when those aren't enough to see us or to support us, interdependence and chosen fam, queer fam, those things come through to reinforce our wholeness when nothing else can hold that complexity.

Throughout Sal's interview, their commitment to interdependence within queer community spaces is always expressed abundantly with care and compassion. Sal speaks with affirmation and consideration when sharing their personal beliefs and experiences of what chosen family, queer kinship, and queer fam means to them. It's as if they are sharing how far they have come in their own process of queerness in relation to community. Furthermore, queerness is no longer an individual process, but rather an

entry point into engaging queerness as a collective process, where queer people must depend on each other, value and affirm each other, in order to navigate and survive within oppressive systems. From here on out, I invite readers to reframe queer and queerness from an individual process to a more community-oriented practice that is constantly unfolding as acts of self-determination, resistance, and resilience, particularly among queer Filipina/x Americans.

Queer kinship's fluidity manifests in participants' choice to use chosen family, queer family, queer kinship, and family interchangeably. They either meant different things to identify groups during particular times in their lives, or all in relation to each other. When asked what chosen family means to her, Sebastian goes on to say,

I think before I used to say my chosen family when thinking if they're not blood related. In New York, I was like, oh I have my own chosen family who's queer, but now I really just call them my family. I think that it doesn't matter if they're not blood related and they actually are the people who have really been there in different ways. I think our movement is our family, but there's certain people in the movement who we feel closer to, who we work closely with, who really understand and support kind of like our relationship and stuff. I think it continues to be a bunch of people that play very different roles in our lives, because there's our kasamas, the movement, there's queer family who are specifically queer people who are in our family, and then there really is our community. There's a lot of folks and when I think of queer family or chosen family, they play very different roles. I think that's something that's really beautiful about not just being in the movement but redefining or defining what family means.

Sebastian uses different group names to reference various people throughout her life. At the end of the day, while some people might have made up Sebastian's chosen family and specifically, queer-identified people made up her queer family, these various groups are all considered her family. Whether groups are called chosen family, queer family, queer kinship or family, participants and their loved ones collectively and mutually choose each other to push the boundaries of normative family models. In addition, it's not the individuals themselves or their identities that define kinship networks, rather it's the activities they engage in with each other, and how folks choose to show up for one another.

Sal, Sebastian, and Monet are all part of progressive Filipino/a and Asian and Pacific Islander political organizations. Many of them refer to each other and other political organizational members as *kasama* (Tagalog for comrade). Both Sebastian and Syd spoke about the varying and important roles that *kasamas* play in their lives and their respective experiences of queer kinship. Syd also has different names for the various groups of friends throughout her life, starting from the time she first identified as queer. Syd says,

I had so many different names for groups. I've been out since I was 15, so of course I had blood fam, that's like my brother and other queer people in my family, like my grandpa, my aunt that I didn't even get to meet until last year, but I knew she was queer and just knowing the fact that she was queer, even though I hadn't met her, I was like, yay, I'm accepted in certain ways with my family through my blood fam. There's some people that are really going to understand me in a different way. And then I got older. I was realizing I didn't have a lot of queer friends, so I sought them

out and then they became my chosen fam, because they're in so many ways what my family couldn't provide for me, like that kind of understanding, especially because they're people within my age range. My brother is 10 years older than me. Different struggles and also because we have a generation gap, so of course you're going to want to seek people that relate to you and are around the same generation as you, so like dealing with the same things. But for me, because I was just so social at meeting hella gay people, other queer people, I went through so many different circles of queer families. And then I got close to my best friend, who's really, not just chosen family, but she's my family, and she just happens to identify as queer too. And then I have queer kasamas. Some of them I'm not even super close to, but I admire them for being the queer kasamas that they are and making me feel like there's a place for me in those places.

Syd's biological family played a formative role in supporting her sexual identity. Syd was the only participant who spoke about other queer-identified family members, which might have provided comfort in how she made sense of her queer identity within her biological family structure and for her to move onward and seek out queer friends who were closer in age and shared similar struggles. Similar to Sebastian, Syd mentions she went through "many different circles of queer families," which might relate to what Sebastian said about different groups playing various roles in her life. Syd realized there were certain things that her family could not provide her in terms of similar struggles, shared interests, and possibly various types of emotional support without a generational gap.

I pointed out to Syd that it sounds like she had different names for different dynamics. She responded, "Yes. I don't mean to compartmentalize things, it's just that I

have different categories for different groups that I'm in. They're all very much important to me, just in different ways. But I feel like all of those groups have contributed to how I've accepted myself as being queer." Similar to participants' process of embracing their queerness, I assert that participants' process of queer kinship is relational. Not only do Syd and Sebastian have different categories for different groups and they're important in different ways, these many circles of chosen family, queer family, and queer kinship serve as a collective process of understanding themselves within a community, or various communities.

In relation, yet also in contrast to Syd's experiences with her family, Jackie says,

If I were to think about what helped me be resilient when I was younger, it was also my cousins, some of my friends at school, and it's like from a young age you can learn about what it means to have family outside of the home. I think I was still 18 when I moved here from LA, so very quickly I had to learn what it meant to have people around me who weren't my blood family, and so I learned during that time to lean on other people and also learn from them how they were with their families, which was also different from me and I think that was also a fragile time. It was a time when I had realized how much was coming up for me during that time and it was a fragile and tender and time of discovery, so a lot of like, "Cool, I get to live my life, yay!" And then also a lot of shame that came out during that time, which it helped to have people around me to chip away at it little by little.

Jackie identifies her cousins as a form of chosen family, not only for her, but also for her cousins, who as recent migrants or children of recent migrants learned early on the importance of looking out for one another in a foreign country. After moving from Los

Angeles to the Bay Area, Jackie learned to lean on people during a fragile time when she was confronted by her own internal shame. This shame might have manifested from being apart from her family, and also learning how to express and embrace her complex identities apart from her family. For Jackie, her chosen family consisted of extended family, such as her cousins and friends at school. While she didn't mention how they helped her to be resilient when she was younger, her cousins and school friends might have showed up for her and cared for her in ways that her immediate biological family wasn't able to.

Following Sebastian, Syd, and Jackie's experiences of different groups throughout their lives. Monet says,

I guess would say there might be different groups of people in my life, but I just consider them all family at the end of the day. My roommates are a big part of it too, and kasamas, of course. I think it's more like because each one of these groups are people who have contributed to my identity and maybe some of them aren't queer, but a lot of them have contributed in a way of making me feel whole and making me feel comfortable. There are spaces where I feel comfortable in my body and it's not like a certain place, but it's like being with them in different ways, like with the kasamas and with my roommates in different ways. They're just family to me, to be honest.

Not all of Monet's roommates, nor do all kasamas identify as queer. In this case, Monet's redefinition of family, or the ways she makes sense of queer kinship is based on how comfortable and whole she feels with other people, regardless of whether or not they identify as queer, non-Black or non-Filipino. Similar to Syd, Monet also brought up the notion of space, and feeling like there is a place for them in a given space. While I don't

assume they're speaking of actual locations that can be found using an address, I theorize that feelings of space in a place is created by people at any moment. For example, if Monet is out with her roommates, feeling comfortable and whole in different ways, that itself is a space that is materially created by the various people in her life. It's not about the actual location, but rather the space that kinship networks can create through comfort, shared struggles and values, laughter, and activities. Once again, this itself is a collectively queer act to not only resist dominant narratives of family, but to weaken and push the boundaries of fixed systems.

As Monet mentioned, not everyone in her kinship groups share similar backgrounds or struggles, but they contribute to her sense of identity. In the same vein, one of Sal's experiences of unconscious queer kinship, which they didn't realize was a queer way of connecting with people or one of the many forms that chosen family can manifest, further emphasizes that queer kinship is not solely based on queer identity, but also the queer acts and roles that people play out. Sal shares,

All the teachers at my school, like every day, right around lunch someone would pull me out of class and I'd get called to someone's classroom and they'd be like, "Hey, go to the hallway. Go to the teacher's lounge," and they would bring extra food for me to have during lunch. I was the first student from my high school to get into a fancy college. The last day of school, my teachers once again called me into one of their classrooms and they were like, "Hey, we're just so proud of you that you're going off and following your dreams and getting out of this place and it's amazing," and then they pulled out a box and I open it and pulled out a laptop. These are teachers. They don't get paid a lot of money. They got this nice little Acer laptop and everyone at the stupid bougie school had a MacBook, but I

didn't care because I was like, "Oh my god, I have a laptop." People really did that. Those people really were my family. Even if they didn't know all that was going on in my life, or even if the wholeness that I think I get now in so many ways wasn't there, they cared for me and they didn't expect anything in return. They were able to fill needs that I had with compassion, love, and desire for me to succeed. I think in a lot of ways that's what chosen fam is. It was this cohort of four middle aged teachers who just cared that I survived. I think there's small pockets of that throughout my life that I wouldn't have recognized as queer fam, because the other people aren't queer or whatever. I think that interaction and the values behind them say more about the queerness of the family structure than it does about the literal identities of people involved.

Often times, chosen family and queer kinship is associated with close friends that a person spends a lot of time with or a cultivation of meaningful connections with people. For Sal, the interactions they had with teachers who were concerned for their wellbeing and rooted for them throughout high school was not just a manifestation of chosen family, but a queer way of analyzing and critiquing the institution of family. The teachers were not related to each other, nor were they related to Sal, and yet they looked out and cared for Sal in ways that a lawfully recognized family would presumably care for a biologically related person. Acts of care, intimacy, and struggle exist outside of normalized family structures. Participants and I assert that chosen family, queer family, and queer kinship operate not on the identities of people involved in these communities, but on the practices, commitments, and values of people involved, for the sake of each person's survival and the ability to thrive with one another.

Participants' experiences of chosen family, queer family, and queer kinship is similar to their processes of embracing queerness. Participants move on from the individual process of learning about and embracing queerness, to how their queerness operates in relation to others. Participants reminisce about the various dynamics, categories, and roles that different groups played throughout their lives. I theorize that participants' experiences of chosen family—who participated and the interactions—ultimately leads them to utilize their queerness as a political tool to acknowledge the many ways that queer kinship is cultivated by the selfless and intentional doings of all people involved. From this point on, I think that participants experience a multitude of various queer kinship networks, which ultimately lead them to their current organizing communities. Queerness and queer kinship highlight and bring to the front, the bold ways that queer Filipina/x Americans, particularly throughout these pages, are interrogating and from there, creating their own ways of surviving collectively.

#### **“It’s like consensus building”: Mundane care practices of queer kinship**

Seemingly mundane activities, such as sitting around with another person, or cooking for a small dinner party might be overlooked as practices that sustain relationships and provide opportunities to cultivate and foster intimate connections with one another. As queer Filipina/x Americans, participants make sense of how daily practices, which translate into acts of care, allow them to thrive, and live in a society that does not replicate the same care that participants selflessly offer to their friends, kasamas, roommates, and families. The mundane practices that participants engage in not only

offer insight into the labor that goes into building and sustaining queer kinship ties, but also the intentionality and collectivity that goes into building relationships.

Sal shares the various activities they engage in with queer family,

I think queer fam means people driving you to the hospital when you need it or coming over when you're sick or remembering your boba order during a breakup. Anything like that to the biggest things, like locking down in front of the ICE building with you, so you can stop deportations of other people that you love and care about. I think all of those things from the most seemingly small acts to the largest political act—all of those things are what I see as how queer fam exists in the world and the possibilities that entails.

These mundane ways of living and interacting with queer family exists in limitless forms.

Similarly, Monet shares her practices,

When we all get off work, one of the things we do is come home and sit on the couch for hours until 2am after we get off work and just talk about what happened during our days, listen to music. That's just one of our, kind of like a ritual, just a thing that we do every day. Sit on the couch, hang out, eat food together.

The act of driving a loved one to the hospital, remembering someone's boba order during a potentially difficult time in that person's life or strategically sitting in a circle with arms locked in front of U.S. Immigrant and Customs Enforcement are material doings of queer kinship and how participants care for their friends, kasamas, and loved ones. Not one act is more salient than the other and each works interconnectedly as a practice of consensus

building—a mutual understanding and commitment to be in each other’s lives. Monet and her roommates, quite simply, enjoy hanging out with each other, being with one another, and checking in on how their day was. These late-night check-ins are filled with food, music, attentive listening, and genuine curiosity over each other’s days. These acts of care not only sustain Monet’s relationships, they also keep Monet and her roommates grounded in each other.

Sal and Monet’s mundane care practices with their queer family and roommates range from small to large acts, all of which I assert are political and unfold in many forms. For participants, finding ways to build with each other, whether through listening to music late at night or ordering boba, these are practices that are purposefully used to sustain long-term relationships with one another. Another example of how participants go about engaging in mundane care practices takes shape in the process of thinking about someone, reaching out to them, and being intentional about investing time into that relationship or multiple relationships. With Sebastian’s contribution, Jackie goes on to say,

Jackie: I think about it when there has been time that has passed and I’m like, “Oh my god. I haven’t seen them in a while.” That’s sort of when I try to just reach out and be like, “Hey, it’s been a while,” but they’re always in my mind. I always keep them in my heart and in my mind trying to make it more of a regular thing, because it’s not just about maintaining the relationship. It’s about also letting them know that I’m invested in them and telling them that I want them to invest in me too. I also need them in my life. I mean we try to have family fun days with some of our

genderqueer kiddos, kasamas kiddos that we want to be in their lives, and we'll try to have family fun day at the lake, or...

Sebastian: The pool.

Jackie: The pool, or...

Sebastian: Tahoe.

Jackie: Yeah, Tahoe *//laughing//* we're by the lake, so we try to also let folks know, "Hey, we're out here if you want to hang out."

Early on in their interview, Jackie and Sebastian spoke about their process of starting a family, and possibly welcoming a child into their lives and community. This exchange not only illustrates their endearment for each other, but also their intentions behind wanting to maintain the relationships in their lives. Jackie and Sebastian are a generation in age older than the other participants and are the only participants who speak about their process of starting a family together. In relation, one of their ways of sustaining their queer kinship ties is to not only reach out to friends about planning family fun days and spending time with friends' children, but to be intentional and straight forward about the importance of these relationships in their lives. There is a mutual understanding of commitment. Furthermore, mundane practices allow participants to show their commitment to their queer family, queer kinship, chosen family, and family.

The mundane aspects of life that participants engage in are not activities that occur solely in the moment or happen once. Sal and their friends blocking a federal building, Monet and her roommates' late-night ritual, Sebastian and Jackie's family fun days are all what Sal mentioned as activities ranging from "the most seemingly small acts

to the largest political act.” All of these acts from politically small to politically large are building blocks to lay down the foundation of a supportive and caring long-term future with participants’ respective queer kinship networks. These acts also illustrate the many ways that queer family forms connect with each other. Sal discusses more about queer family practices and the skills that are learned and applied towards relationships,

I think the part about queer fam is you get to create what your shared practices are together and even if you don’t like it all the time, it’s like consensus building. It’s a skill that actually needs to be practiced for our long-term future. Self-governance in family is a practice and is a condition that we all need to get used to more. For me, I think some of the ways that it looks like are weekly hangouts at a bar where we know the bartender or coming together every year on those holidays and no one wants to go back to their family, or no one can go back to their blood family. Sometimes it looks like celebrating people’s transitions in life, right? Whether they’re having a kid, or leaving their job, or starting school, and really celebrating them in a way that is so uniquely them. I think all of those things that mark transition points in life and celebrate the mundane aspects of life. I think queer fam and the practices in queer family hold both of those things really well.

By no means is participants’ examples of what kinds of practices they share with their chosen folks meant to romanticize any aspect of their lives. As Sal said, folks don’t have to favor every shared practice. The practice of being in queer kinship with people is not a simple linear progression, which is why it takes the entire collective to build with each other and consent to practices that will advocate for their own self-governance in the long-run. These skills are vitally important for folks’ survival. Queer folks, such as Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, and Monet navigating daily injustices and state violence must

learn to depend on each another, celebrate each other, enjoy the mundane aspects of life with each other, and uplift each other through the many trials and errors of queer kinship. Trial and error processes are not the only beautiful things about queer kinship. It's a challenge that must be acknowledged and worked through with chosen folks, for the sake of their survival.

For participants, a lot of their queer family, queer kinship, chosen family, and family are made up of people that they organize with in their respective political organizations. When thinking about the challenges, yet also the intimate moments of collectively organizing toward genuine social change, relationships don't just centralize themselves for the sake of upholding these bonds. Jackie goes on to say, "a lot of the people that we're invested in are also in the same fight, and I think that's also a part of maintaining the relationship. It's not just about our personal relationship, it's also about what we're invested in, in our life." Participants' relationships that create communities of queer kinship, queer family, and chosen family are grounded in the fight for self-determination and genuine liberation of the Filipino people and all oppressed people. Mutual commitment is not only limited to relationships, but also to the personal and collective objectives for a socially just future. Many of the chosen folks in participants' lives are brought together and bounded by interpersonal and generational trauma, histories of occupation, labor exploitation, and the proud revolutionary history of their people that Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, and Monet carry with them in their daily lives.

### **“I internalized that so hard”: Growing from internalized struggles**

In the previous chapter, participants shared how queerness acts as a political tool and critical lens to identify and acknowledge their own internalized struggles around sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and their identities in relation to heteronormativity and heterosexuality. In the same vein, participants also talk through experiences of various relationships throughout their lives and the ways that normative family structures and Filipino culture inform their previous relationships and continue to inform their relationships with each other, as *kasamas*, and with their respective kinships. In order to foster current relationships that participants commit to, there are processes of trial and error, extended moments of unlearning what was ingrained early on before participants grew into themselves with community, and the necessary skills and practices that go into caring for each other and all relationships.

Sal shares their reflections on experiences with blood family and normative family ideals in relation to being Filipino,

I think the idea of nuclear family is one that is based off of like shallow expectations and sense of duty, rather than sense of desire. For myself, especially being Filipino, I think there's a sense of one, you ride or die for your blood family, and two, if you have any problems you keep it in the family; no one else can know. That's weakness; never ask for help. I internalized that so hard. I think that creates a lifelong process for me to unlearn. I'm sure other people have their own things unique to their families or cultures. I was taught to expect so much from people who didn't care about me and I was taught to expect that I had to be there for people who didn't see all of who I was. That doesn't mean that everyone should just dispose of people who don't see who they are, but there's a

point at which I had to decide to make boundaries for myself about what would allow me to survive. Like what was uncomfortable, versus what was dangerous?

I argue there is a sense of commitment rooted in family that is born out of obligation. There is an unspoken commitment to solve any problem with each other even if these problems occur within or outside of the family, as long as other people don't know. In a sense, Sal was socialized into thinking that their biological family was the only community they had or truly needed, despite Sal not feeling cared for by their blood family. Sal says, "I'm sure other people have their own things unique to their families or cultures." I feel it is important to consider that Sal's blood family might have experienced and internalized similar beliefs about what family means, especially as Filipinos. Sal acknowledges the importance of creating boundaries for themselves for their own sense of desire, and ultimately, for their survival.

Similarly, Monet and Syd had a conversation around juxtaposing their blood family and chosen families. Sal, Monet, and Syd feel that at times their commitment to blood family is based out of obligation and requirement—because these people are legally seen as family, that is the most important commonality that connects one another—rather than a mutual understanding and desire to commit to each other's growth and genuinely want to be in each other's lives. Monet and Syd go on to say,

Monet: When I was growing up, my mom used to say that to me too. I mean, she's met all my friends, my roommates, yeah and I know she

thinks, because she loves y'all like a lot, she thinks definitely different about it now. She's met you and she thinks of y'all as her family too and she gets so excited and I know she wants to visit, but yeah, she used to say that too, because it's family, like blood.

Syd: And if you deconstruct that, your mom learned that from her family, you know. It's like because now her meeting your other families, now she has a better understanding of it. That it doesn't have to be that way. It's so limiting to grow up thinking that the only people who are going to be there for you are your blood family.

Monet: And I think though that even for some of our parents, I don't know, because actually for my mom that was her only family, unfortunately, but there was a lot of shit that happened in her family and stuff, like a lot of stuff that was going on, but that was actually her only family, other than me and my sister.

Monet and Syd unpack the complexities and nuances that are entangled within internalizing intergenerational expectations of family, especially families that hold traumatic histories of forced migration and separation that still continue to this day. Monet takes into account her mom's shift in how she sees Monet's kasamas, friends, and roommates. By witnessing how Monet communicates, spends time with, and lives with close people in her life, Monet's mom also unlearns expectations of blood family through Monet's relationships. To be in kapwa with each other and to share one or plural identities with each other is a Filipino core cultural value that highlights the strength and resiliency that is embedded in the Filipino community. In relation, the reason(s) why people choose to be in kapwa with each other should be central in maintaining relationships.

In the same conversation, Monet speaks about her roommates and the process of learning to be vulnerable with each other, and how vulnerability also becomes a healing process that identifies feudality—unequal power dynamics—in blood family dynamics, which can manifest in queer kinship. Monet expands more,

What helps us sustain is that we do try our best to be vulnerable with each other, because we all come from different backgrounds and I think that's even with kasamas. Lately, we've been more vulnerable with each other and I feel like in a way it becomes healing a lot and even with my roommates when we get into fights. I remember last night me and my friend were talking about my roommate who's queer as well and how we always fight and stuff, and we come from different backgrounds where we're used to very bad kind of toxic family environments in a sense when it comes to arguments and stuff. We're very kind of hard headed and we're very defensive sometimes, so we kind of combat each other, because after we argue we always just like, "Wow that was never worth it," and we always make up and we always talk about it. I feel like that's a healing thing for us to go through these arguments, but still end up being able to heal from it, because a lot of the times with our own families, we go through these arguments and then it's whatever, like we don't talk about it, or we forget about it.

Monet and her roommates come from different backgrounds, yet also share similar upbringings around being in toxic family environments and how it influences the ways they argue with each other. From this, Monet and her roommates collectively combat arguments by being vulnerable with each other and communicating through these arguments. This work might allow Monet and her roommates to uncover the root causes of their arguments and to grow with each other to continue nurturing their relationships. With her roommates' participation, Monet challenges the idea of an unspoken

agreement—there is an unspoken mutual understanding that no one will bring up that argument, try to assess what led up to it, and consider people’s feelings involved. Instead, Monet and her roommates choose to reflect on previous arguments to better themselves and their kinship network. Furthermore, Monet’s vulnerability with her roommates and kasamas provides an opportunity for her to engage in a process of unlearning internalized expectations that weaken the sustainability and commitment of all relationships involved. Following up with Monet’s response, Syd adds,

Syd: Or you’re expected to still love each other.

Monet: Yeah, yeah! Exactly and that’s how my family was at times, so it was like that healing process. That was just an example of a way is just being very vulnerable and letting our guards down I feel like.

Syd: Yeah just to kind of piggyback the one you said, because I resonated a lot with what you said. It’s like different from nuclear families because the whole vulnerability part. Sometimes we’re not vulnerable with our blood fam, or they don’t give us the opportunity to because we’re kind of seen as in a feudal way. We’re not seen as equal or whole people. You’re kind of just a part of a whole, but with chosen families and kasamas, you feel equally a part of something, like you’re more willing to struggle things out and be more vulnerable, because you know that you want to love each other at the end of the day, not that you’re required to. And that struggle and that feeling that you want to be, or you want to sustain this level of comfortability with someone, I think that’s what sustains relationships because you’re constantly in a process of struggling and healing things with your folks and that’s totally how I feel with kasamas and my really close queer friends. There’s this mutual understanding that we all want to be in each other’s lives.

It seems that Monet, Syd, and Sal share similar experiences of feeling like they can't wholeheartedly open themselves up to their blood family with fear of not being seen, heard or cared for. Monet is able to challenge herself with her roommates and kasamas to be more vulnerable and participate in the cultivation of a space or community that is committed to the betterment and active growth of folks' internalized familial expectations towards more long-term sustainable care practices. Sustainable care practices manifest as attentive listening when Monet, her roommates or kasamas are talking about their day or sharing food with one another over laughter.

Syd's comment, "or you're expected to still love each other," contributes to the feudal nature of participants' experiences with their blood family. In feudal relationships, there's an unequal power dynamic. One or multiple persons hold more power over a group of people. Feudal or unequal dynamics don't create room for individuals to be vulnerable with each other, which might prompt individuals to seek relationships outside of blood families. While more can be theorized to make sense of why Sal, Monet, and Syd feel more comfortable being vulnerable with friends, roommates, and kasamas, it should be noted that each participant has their own unique relationship to their blood family dynamics.

Participants circle back to this *mutual understanding* that themselves and their chosen families want to be in each other's lives. There's a tie that binds them together. Participants understand that their love for their chosen families is not out of obligation. There is no legal bond weaving them together. Rather, they feel comfortable or possibly

uncomfortable to struggle things out and be vulnerable, but with the care of chosen families, that discomfort transitions into a comfortable process of unlearning for self and collective growth.

Whether through struggling things out and being more vulnerable with chosen family or participants acknowledging their blood family might have learned the same internalized feudal dynamics, both contribute to participants learning about relationships. Jackie goes on to say,

Chosen family, or queer kinship teaches me a lot about relationships. It's totally something that I'm continuing to learn and wanting to learn more and more about and how I could really apply what it does mean to really have a family that functions based on love and honesty and the trust that may have not always been there in the definition of family for me. I also know and have seen family relate with each other out of guilt, out of obligation, out of all of these things that allow people to survive, but in that, how do you really live your life? How do you love another person? How do you receive love? Those are all things that aren't always taught to us at a young age, especially too, coming from communities that have a lot of trauma, and it's like how do you find that light and that seed of hope and love from communities who suffer a lot of trauma, you know? I think that also comes into practice. It comes into being able to figure out different ways.

Similar to Sal, Monet, and Syd, Jackie also speaks on blood family relationships operating out of obligation and guilt, which limits people from growing, living full lives with autonomy, and most importantly, surviving. In addition to Sal, Jackie also touches on the various traumas that affect her communities, such as the Filipino community and

LGBTQ community. Both communities hold histories of oppression and unjust violence which might have been passed down intergenerationally. Outside of blood family, participants are able to practice with their chosen families on how to hold traumatic experiences and inheritances, and also towards healing. That is another mutual understanding: a collective healing practice. Despite generational gaps among participants, all of them are at their own, yet similar processes of unlearning and learning how to be in and navigate relationships that may or may not come with trauma.

It can be difficult to imagine a family outside of blood family or to imagine and create relationships that operate on honest communication, transparency, vulnerability, intimacy, and mutual care. Sal says,

The process of finding chosen family or queer family for me has been the process of realizing that being safe around people didn't mean I always had to teeter the line between uncomfortable and dangerous. That I could actually be safe around people, which was really not afforded to me for such a long time and I think that once I was finally able to trust in people and trust that people would hold me and would show up for me and if they would do something nice for me, it was not out of obligation and it was not building a big debt that I would have to pay back later in my life, really freed up how I was able to interact with other people and interact with the world. I wish all relationships were like that. I wish blood family was like that, but the reality is that it's not. I think for a lot of queer and trans folks it's really not. It's almost like it feels really hard to imagine a world outside of that blood family dynamic if you're never experienced anything of it. I think I was really lucky to find people who showed me possibilities outside of that and once I realized that I could intentionally choose and not just have to settle because of culture, family expectations, societal expectations, I had no reason to go back.

Sal mentioned earlier that they internalized feudal expectations that came with “you ride or die for your blood family,” without knowing or experiencing genuine and mutually committed relationships with people outside of legal ties. In addition to Sal, participants go through their own processes of being with blood family and acknowledging that blood family can’t always or may never offer emotional, mental, and physical support that some participants felt they had to push aside; especially for some queer and trans individuals who are rejected by their families for wanting to live out their full selves outside of heteronormative constraints. Chosen family, queer family, and queer kinship show participants the possibilities of generative and healing relationships outside of traditional family structures. Additionally, even though participants are part of a larger collective, they are seen as whole people by their chosen folks.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The many different ways, shapes, and forms of intimacy in the struggle**

The collective practice of queer kinship from an individuated queerness is joyous, hurtful, full of growth and struggle. In the previous chapter, participants illuminate the many ways that queer kinship encourages them to explore vulnerability with their respective families. Through vulnerability, Sal, Syd, Monet, Jackie, and Sebastian unlearn internalized unequal and obligatory family dynamics. In addition to vulnerability,

intimacy is rooted in relationships that participants cultivate and foster with one another. There is something intimate about being able to choose who a person wants to grow and struggle with. There is something intimate about being bounded by shared values and commitments. Also, there is something intimate about being mutually committed to another person or many people, for the purpose of getting through the day and surviving with each other to continue the fight for self-determination and liberation of all marginalized communities. When asked what she thought of intimacy, especially in relationships, Jackie says,

I really think it's just building love with one another and taking care of one another in many different ways and shapes and forms. So, feeling like it's not going over and beyond because it's reciprocal and it's something that really maintains our relationships and stuff, so it's feeding our relationships and having us to be able to grow closer with one another. I think often times people feel that intimacy is just between lovers or people who are in romantic relationships when intimacy is really deep, being in the movement is really deep. Being in the struggle is also very intimate and is very much bounded by our class love, so I think that's what I think of in terms of your questions and stuff. We're fortunate because of our family—the queer people in our movement. We have abundant love in our lives and I think it really is about making the time to acknowledge them and to take care of them because in our work it's easy to just be in the grind of things and sometimes that's the piece that people forget about: how do we not maintain or sustain, but continue to be gentle and love one another? Because the struggle really is a struggle! It's difficult, especially when we're experiencing different traumas that's happening in the homeland or right here in Oakland, so taking time to really take care of one another is really important, because that's how we take care of the movement.

Intimacy takes on different meanings, shapes, and forms. It seems that intimacy, more broadly and fluidly, is meant to combat unequal family dynamics that were discussed in the previous chapter. Intimacy should not be an expectation or one-sided, rather “it’s reciprocal and it’s something that really maintains our relationships and stuff, so it’s feeding our relationships and having us to be able to grow closer with one another.” I argue that intimacy operates on a mutual understanding to genuinely grow close with one another and to be intentional about how folks are building love, especially when there is trauma involved. When Jackie mentions “class love,” she refers to mutual understanding—a type of genuine and intentional building of love that is based on shared values and principles which emerge from similar histories and experiences of struggle. This type of love moves onward from shallow expectations and trying to keep relationships afloat, but rather, acknowledging and practicing what types of care work are best suited for certain relationships. Class love, intimacy, and vulnerability are some of the many proponents that go into genuine community building.

Sal shares some of the ways mutual understanding, intimacy, and vulnerability materially manifest in their relationships,

I think intimacy also looks like someone’s ability to cry in front of other people, or to be held by another person, or to feel messy with someone else, or to feel like you’re talking and with no aim. You don’t have the answers, but you’re just talking. I think it looks like knowing what someone else’s schedule is, so that when they go, “oh, what am I doing tonight?” Someone else goes, “this is what you’re doing tonight,” and you go, “oh yeah.” It means knowing people’s dietary restrictions or access needs, so they don’t have to be the only ones advocating for themselves in

a space. I think it looks like sharing the things that you're challenging yourself to grow from with your friends, with your queer family so that they can hold you accountable to those things and help you actually achieve your goals. I think queer family also looks like holding someone accountable when they've fucked up, when they have hurt other people, when they've been violent or abusive. Queer family is also the body of people that ideally doesn't just throw someone away, but helps them be better, helps them acknowledge what they've done so that they don't fuck up again in the same way and that they're actually taking accountability for the harm that they've caused in communities. Yeah, so I think that intimacy is so key to understanding how people are functioning and how they want to be functioning and in many different ways and in many different levels. I want to aspire to having intimacy with plenty of different folks and in different ways and I hope that it doesn't have to just look one way.

In relation to the beginning of Jackie's quote, Sal animates the different ways queer families, queer kinship, chosen families are "building love with one another and taking care of one another in many different ways and shapes and forms." I argue that intimacy is a process that takes time, patience, and compassion. Intimacy can also be a challenge, especially when folks might not have experienced or learned that intimacy should not be harmful or limited to one person. Sal shows that intimacy is not solely for romantic relationships or about physical closeness, such as sex. Rather, Sal suggests that intimacy looks like every day mundane and difficult practices, such as friends crying in front of each other, remembering people's dietary restrictions or access needs, and keeping community members accountable for their behaviors that might be rooted in painful experiences.

These intimate practices are not limited to one person. Sal mentions that “intimacy is so key to understanding how people are functioning and how they want to be functioning and in many different ways and in many different levels.” Additionally, intimacy is vital for survival. Its vitality is key to understanding how participants and their kinship ties are surviving, and how they want to survive, with whom and for what reasons.

**“It’s somehow formed such beautiful unity between a lot of us”: Beauty in the face of state violence**

In the months prior to conducting interviews with participants, various social, political, and economic events induced the worsening conditions of queer and trans folks, immigrants of color, poor and working-class families, and undocumented students. Many communities that Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, and Monet build relationships with were facing attacks at the hands of violent systems in the United States and abroad. Months after sharing meals and stories with participants, the rescinding of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Executive Order 13769 (Muslim ban), unlawful and forced detainment and deportations of children and families, the growing number of Filipinos who are forced to leave the Philippines every day, and other painful events continue to affect participants and their families—chosen and blood-related. Through these interviews, even though they took place on different days, times, and locations, participants were collectively in conversation with each other. They spoke about their commitment for one another, their unified commitment to break the chains of

imperialism, patriarchy, transphobia, and other systemic forces that participants are determined to dismantle. This is intimate and challenging work, which for Syd, has strengthened her relationships,

All these issues have definitely made my relationships stronger, because we've all felt connected to it in some ways. We're fighting against a lot of these issues. We're always combating and teaching about not being Islamophobic or not being transphobic or fighting and asserting the rights of transgender and other Arab and Muslim people that are obviously in the margins. I don't know. For me, I feel like it's gotten us really stronger. For example, us. We've been constantly fighting these things through our organizing work and I feel like has created deeper bonds between us because we're all informing one another of how these issues are impacting our lives and then we're actually taking action against it, like being able to express how agitated and irritated we are that these things are happening, and then collectivizing and mobilizing out and doing something about it. I feel like those experiences have really shaped us to be a closer-knit group. Despite how angry and agitating everything is, it's somehow formed such beautiful unity between a lot of us and even my friends that aren't kasamas that I'm really close to. I've had these conversations about how shitty the rescinding of DACA is and how shitty family separation is and having this conversation with my blood fam too. All these issues have been creating those spaces with people that I love. It's been really impactful, and even in ways that you can't really... it's so surprising to me that people don't think that these things impact their lives or their relationships with people because it does. It impacts how you feel on the day-to-day, like these large issues. Yeah, with relationships with people that are really really feeling it because they're in those. They're being directly impacted by these larger issues. It makes you want to care for them or tend to those relationships even more, like to fully support them and really connect and connect our struggles.

The practice of embracing queerness, acknowledging and unlearning internalized struggles, being vulnerable and intimate with kasamas, friends, queer family, chosen family, and even blood family are all building practices to cultivate and foster closeness with one another. For Syd, teaching one another to not be Islamophobic or transphobic, and to fight for the rights and welfare of allied communities can be agitating and tough work. However, there's a genuine shared commitment that comes out of violent and oppressive forces. There is an abundance of care, love, commitment, and collective struggle that is forged into building long-lasting relationships and strong communities that fight with and for each other's livelihoods.

Alternative modalities of family, such as queer kinship, queer family, and chosen family are not random manifestations. They are material manifestations of queerness in the present—queer as material. They are created as a response and act as a strategy to resist state violence, such as no access to healthcare, lack of quality education, labor exploitation, unlivable wages, racial and sexual discrimination, increase of police militarization on school campuses and neighborhoods—to name a few. Syd goes on to say,

These are all violence from the state, like the state violence all affecting us and it's all of us protecting one another from the state violence, because who's going to protect us than each other? We're always stronger together, so of course we're going to want to. This is the time to build these relationships, or sustain these relationships, because we know we need to be united in this.

The fight for a just and lasting peace for vulnerable communities in the United States and in people's respective homelands is rooted in shared values and principles or what Jackie mentions earlier, "class love." There is a mutual understanding to protect one another, not just during a time of increasing attacks on communities, but also in the crevices of everyday mundane life. From the smallest act, to the largest political act, there is an urgent need to tend to each other, so communities can unite genuinely and intentionally to build a broad front against injustices from state violence.

**"What is the tie that binds all of us?": Shared values and principles for survival**

Throughout the previous pages and chapters, participants have either explicitly or alluded to survival. Similar to queer identity and the process of embracing queerness as an individual process, then shifting into the collective process of queer kinship, I argue that survival is also a process. For participants, survival starts off as an individual need. The process starts off with a queer Filipina/x American who is trying to make sense of their multifaceted identity, whether it's first learning to identify as Filipino/a/x, then coming to terms with their sexuality or gender, and possibly trying to make sense of both identities together: not just queer and Filipina/x, but a queer Filipina/x American. I feel that participants being able to identify and comfortably acknowledge their identities can be a form of survival; it's one way for folks to make sense of themselves in relation to one another in a challenging society.

There's a shift or an acknowledgement that something is missing. Participants seek out and experience queer relationships outside of biological families. By exploring relationships outside of blood family, participants are able to unlearn internalized unequal family dynamics, make sense of themselves and be seen as whole people by others who genuinely want to build relationships with one another and not out of obligation. To put it simply, Sal says, "I think that queer survival would not be possible without queer family." The practice of acknowledging and unlearning internalized struggles for the betterment of building genuine relationships is an act of survival. Mundane care practices, such as listening to music and talking through each other's day at 2am, remembering someone's boba order, or cooking and sharing food with one another are all acts of survival. Participants and their kinship ties are participating in what José Esteban Muñoz (2009) defines as "queer worldmaking." Queer worldmaking is inherent to queer survival. In support of that, Sal explains,

They've [queer people] had to create new complete worlds sometimes for how they're supposed to be in the world and how they're supposed to access things in the world. That's looked a lot of different ways. Queer people have practiced conflict resolution, have practiced restorative justice, have practiced transformation and I think that they've only been able to do that because of how interlocking our survival is and if that wasn't the case, there would just be so fewer queer folks who have survived to tell their stories, not even that there's as many of them as there should be. I think that people rely on queer family to get by when there's a lot of reasons that would lead to their complete dismissal otherwise.

Practices of queer worldmaking manifest as conflict resolution, restorative justice, and transformation. For example, getting boba tea for someone who went through a breakup or acknowledging someone's abusive behavior in the community and supporting their efforts to unlearn those behaviors are building blocks for a queer futurity—a brighter future (Muñoz, 2009). These practices are vital, because they help queer folks, participants, and their kinship ties to not only survive with one another, but to also affirm and value each other's existence.

At the end of each interview, I ask participants, “Why is chosen family important?” For Sal, it was a simple, yet piercing response, “I think that queer survival would not be possible without queer family.” For Syd, she reflected on the person she was on that day, sitting around a kitchen table with an almost finished plate of spam and egg fried rice, and sharing stories with two other queer Pinays. Syd went on to say,

If I didn't have all of these queer families in every aspect of my life or throughout the years, damn I would be a different person. Again, like you [Monet] mentioned, healing spaces. I wouldn't have those healing spaces. I probably would be a completely different person. I'd probably be unwilling to really express myself, not even just my queer identity, but express my day-to-day feelings and struggles. I'd probably be a closed off person, so it's really important to me because it's opened me up. It's opened me up to be the person I am today and who I want to struggle to be constantly with people that I really hold valuable. I keep mentioning the word valuable, because these relationships are very valuable to me.

Syd's process of becoming who she was that day, and who she challenges herself to be currently and beyond is a reflection of the many collective practices that were

explored in the previous chapter. I feel that because Syd's relationships are valuable to her, she feels comfortable and at ease to be vulnerable in healing spaces, and to unlearn any internalized struggles that might come up with her chosen families. As for Monet, she also reflected on how she felt before finding her chosen families and the importance of them,

I think it is definitely survival. I think about the time before I even had these families and how lonely I felt when talking about all these larger issues when it comes to racism, transphobia, and homophobia. There's the time before you even realize those things are actually real, like racism is real, homophobia, transphobia, like these things that you're feeling and what is the root cause of them. And once you see that these are the root causes and these are very large issues, and then you don't have family, or you don't have these families, that is very hard to deal with. I remember understanding these things, making these connections at one point in my life, and I didn't really have a family in that sense. I felt really lonely and very kind of depressed a lot and kind of felt hopeless, and once I found these families, it was like another reason to keep fighting. So yeah, I definitely think it is for survival and definitely for healing.

Monet's response brings me back to my first chapter when she reflected on how she understood her queer identity in relation to heteronormativity. While she didn't mention feeling lonely through that exploration, I wonder if these same feelings of hopelessness that she mentions was also present during that time. It seems that when Monet found her chosen families and is now able to relate to others through shared identities, she's been able to have open conversations around racism, transphobia, homophobia, and larger issues that might make a person feel unheard, or not valued.

Through these conversations with them, or with other queer and non-queer people, Monet is able to heal, and ultimately, survive through relatability with other queer people, specifically queer Filipina/x Americans who might share similar struggles. Monet's exposure to chosen families and building close relationships gives her another reason to keep fighting to dismantle the larger issues that she came to realize exists and affects not only her, but her loved ones.

Even though Syd, Monet, Jackie, and Sebastian's paired interviews were conducted on different days and in different cities, they were in conversation with each other. While both pairs are a generation in age apart, the stories and experiences that all four of them shared with each other, Syd and Monet, Jackie and Sebastian had parallels. It's as if they were reflections of each other going through separate, yet similar experiences of queerness and understanding the importance of building genuine relationships as an act of care and love. In an intimate exchange of shared values, mutual understandings of love for each other, and a mutual commitment to serve the Filipino people, Sebastian and Jackie go on to say,

Sebastian: We're fortunate because that's how people find purpose and survive. For some people who don't have particular relationships, have community, they don't find that there's a purpose, or they don't feel love, and love goes a long way. I mean even throughout this interview I was having all of these flashbacks of people in my life, even though not all of them are in there, it's like, we're so lucky to feel pain because there is love there, or to be loved by our family and struggle. I mean it's important because it fills and gives you purpose and brings life. It brings so much joy and also struggle and growth, so I think that family is never perfect.

Community is never perfect. Relationships aren't perfect, but at least you're doing it with someone.

Jackie: I agree with that. I think that especially in the work that we do, we see a lot. We see a lot. We can feel a lot. We can be sort of the vessels that receive some of the hardest news in the world and have to respond to it, and even though sometimes it's hard that we don't always get to have that consistent time with our chosen family, or even blood family, like any of our family. It's even more important to figure out how we can invest that time knowing that is a part of our survival. It's a part of changing this world, like when you choose people, when you choose people to be in your life, it's because you fundamentally share something, right? Whether it's your views on the world, or you're able to give something to each other. There's a mutual love, respect that comes with that, and I think that we need more of that in this world. It's a tough world.

Similar to how Syd and Monet feel they can grow, struggle, and heal with kasamas, close queer friends, and other loved ones, Sebastian found a sense of purpose with her community. While I won't be focusing on people who have yet to find particular relationships or communities in this chapter, it serves as a reminder that there are people who Sal, Syd, Monet, Jackie, Sebastian, and I have yet to reach. As Sebastian mentioned, relationships and communities aren't perfect. I would also add they're meant to be challenging and supportive of the other person or multiple people, as a way to practice generative and healing strategies for self and collective growth. Queer kinship, chosen families, and relationships don't operate solely on a purpose. Time that is spent together, acknowledging one another, and letting folks know they are purposefully in a person's life, because something is shared between or amongst people is part of survival. I argue that, that mutual love and respect that comes with it, is what feeds Sal, Syd, Monet,

Jackie, and Sebastian's purpose that comes with their communities. As Jackie says, "It's a tough world," and participants, their chosen families and loved ones must rely on each other to take care of not only themselves, but their larger communities.

All of the participants are queer Filipina/x Americans who politically organize with their respective organizations, and all happen to be interconnected within a larger Filipino community. The relationships that participants build and hold close to them are essential to any movement towards social, political, and economic change. There must be a shared vision, a mutual understanding, and an unwavering commitment amongst everyone involved for that change to be achieved. It takes unity, and genuine connections. Jackie goes on to say,

The things that we're fighting against, they're tough. We're taking on some really big tasks in our lives and have people who share similar values and principles. It's such a key part of our work and I think about some of the greatest revolutionaries in our history, in the history of our people—Filipinos—and some of them still living and still going at it and being able to dream of a society that works. I think that you can't just come up with those visions unless you're really connected with people. Call it chosen family, call it queer kinship, call it those different things and everything, but you know, it really is, like, what is the tie that binds all of us that will help us really invest in the future. Yes, there's a lot of rotten things happening, and it's really messed up and then you think about the movement and how vibrant it is and how much it's growing, how much people are invested in it and not even just Filipinos think that it's worth investing in, because it's a contribution to this worldwide struggle. For me, that's hope. It really is those long-invested relationships that we have that really give that to us every day. Without our relationships, without our fundamental values, without the things we share with people, without our

shared visions and all of that, like what are we without those things that we can dream up?

While it takes one individual to think of an idea or a vision, it takes a community or a movement to collectively strategize and mobilize with each other towards achieving a shared vision. Jackie says, “Call it chosen family, call it queer kinship, call it those different things and everything, but you know, it really is, like, what is the tie that binds all of us that will help us really invest in the future.” I argue that queer family, queer kinship, chosen family, and other alternatives to blood family are material manifestations of people’s desires for something more—a shared vision for wanting something more. In order to achieve a shared vision, people must invest time, energy, care, and hope into one another, to cultivate and foster long-lasting relationships. Sal, Syd, Monet, Jackie, and Sebastian’s commitments to one another, their shared values and principles, their mutual understanding to build genuinely, intimately, and vulnerably with communities, strengthens the tie that binds them together. Without all of those, queer survival and queer kinship would not be possible.

## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of my project and before I sat down with participants to talk through their experiences with the term queer—how they came to identify as queer and also embrace queerness—and the internalized struggles they came face-to-face with throughout their processes, I didn't think of it as an individual process. The same can be said about the collective process participants' experience with queer kinship—how they found family outside of traditional family models and the struggles they continue to unlearn—and the many ways, shapes, and forms that sustain and affirm their relationships with one another and all kinship ties. In relation to participants, the process of coming to identify as queer is an individual process. Moving onward and still in relation to the individuality of queer, the process of finding then nurturing relationships as a queer Filipina/x with other queer, non-queer, and non-Filipino folks becomes a collective process that depends on the mutual collaboration of all relationships involved. While that became the starting point of my research, I eventually found that queerness and queer kinship are also processes of politicization rooted in shared values and principles, mutual understandings and commitments to build genuine and liberating relationships for the overall purpose of imagining and fighting for a *just* future.

The growth, struggle, joys, and challenges that Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, and Monet experience around queerness and queer kinship supports my argument that queer kinship is an intimate site of care, resilience, resistance, and struggle. Throughout the chapters, participants explore and utilize queer's expansive fluidity—the different

meanings, shapes, forms, and identities. Queer can be a category for participants to make sense of their identities, while also not feeling pressure to define themselves as one specific label. The process of identifying as queer then embracing queerness came with internalized struggles. Participants understand their queer identity and embrace queerness in relation to internalized misogyny, sexism, homophobia, heteronormativity, and self-suppression around gender and sexuality.

While participants reflect on their experiences and feelings around queerness, they also share the act of performing queerness. Queer can be reframed, shifted, and departed from sexuality to become a material doing—an act towards something more that is rooted in social, economic, and political conditions. The utilization of queerness as a material force is the shift from an individual process to a collective practice of queer kinship. Collective practices look like daily mundane activities, such as offering someone a car ride home, hanging out in the living room late at night and checking in about folks' days, or helping out with childcare at community events. Moreover, collective practices also take shape in the form of vulnerability, such as openly talking about internalized struggles for the purpose of unlearning them with one another. Those are collective moments of intimacy, clarity, and commitment to one another through mundane care practices.

The overall objective of my project is not only to highlight the creative ways that participants and their kinship ties care for one another, but to show through storytelling that queerness, queer kinship, chosen family, and non-traditional family models are

responses to dire social, political and economic conditions. I assert that queerness and queer kinship hold more than just theoretical knowledge; they can produce material forces that Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, and Monet practice and nurture, particularly with their kinship ties. Queer kinship, particularly among queer Filipina/x participants is rooted in diasporic experiences—the violent history and trauma of the Filipino people. However, there is more to participants than their trauma. This project, in collaboration with participants, holds their trauma while also giving life to joyful and resilient ways that they collectively struggle with one another. It is their shared values and principles that bind them together. It is a mutual understanding to commit to building genuine, intentional, and long-lasting relationships with one another to survive and continue the fight for genuine liberation for all oppressed peoples.

While my project centralizes the experiences and narratives of queer Filipina/x folks, participants' spoke more about their queer identity than their Filipina/x identity. I tried to theorize around this and acknowledged that my interview questions did not ask about queerness and Filipina/x identity together or in relation to each other. In theory, similar to queerness and queer kinship being a process, it is possible that participants coming to understand and embrace their Filipina/x identity is its own process—first being an individual process then shifting towards a collective process. Moving onward, I would ask questions that reflect queer Filipino/a/x identity as together, rather than separate to better understand the nuances of queer diasporic narratives, practices, and experiences. Moreover, the many joys, growth, and struggles that Sal, Sebastian, Jackie, Syd, and

Monet share throughout the chapters are real, material practices of theory. While I believe it's important to show the various ways that folks who are living in the margins are challenging systems, staying resilient, and finding joy in the struggle, I also believe it's important to acknowledge why participants and their loved ones are rising, resisting, and uniting with one another. Readers, community members, solidarity allies, and others must question and identify what queer kinship, queer family, chosen family, and communities outside of traditional family models are a response to—forced migration, imperialism and occupation, gentrification, and unlivable wages, to name a few. From there, that is when the tie that binds us together—shared values, principles, and a mutual understanding that more needs to be done—becomes the charge that ignites folks to take action.

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