Participants from a range of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) and Occupy Oakland (OO) working groups created traditional and new social media to support the movement. They produced newspapers, radio shows, and YouTube channels. They passed out flyers and pamphlets face-to-face at protests. They spread information online using discussion forums and websites. Just some of the art that supported the movement included signs, posters, music recordings, songbooks, banners, videos, buttons, T-shirts, and photographs (for more specific information about the media and cultural products included in this study, see the Methodological Appendix). The Occupy movement embraced one of the most basic and fundamental values of American culture and the internet: freedom of speech. Anyone could create citizen journalism, write a blog, or produce a video about the Occupy mobilizations.

To support the movement’s protest encampments, a couple of men created a video. Soft music plays in the background as the camera pans an Occupy encampment, pausing on close-ups of women laughing, baring their midriffs and cleavage, and tossing their hair. The filmmakers interviewed a few of the women, but others they depicted like models during a fashion shoot. As a companion to the video, the
filmmakers created a website featuring photos of the female activists and encouraged visitors to “like” or vote for their favorite.

The video and website, “Hot Chicks of Occupy Wall Street,” became the subject of intense debate about the movement’s media, culture, strategies, and gender dynamics (McVeigh 2011). Some participants defended the filmmakers, arguing that anyone could develop any kind of media that would publicize the movement. They reasoned that Occupy was a movement with a decentralized leadership structure, which relied on a large, unregulated volunteer network. With a lot of leeway regarding content and political correctness, Occupy participants supported a range of cultural expressions to reflect the movement’s diversity. Some supporters of this view recognized “Hot Chicks” as a gorgeous portrayal of women’s activism. This video brought significant attention to the protest encampments, and, as a by-product, it and the accompanying website became tools for the recruitment of heterosexual men to the protests.

On the other hand, feminists argued that the “Hot Chicks” website likened women to chickens and sexual objects, portraying them as token activists. Feminists criticized the video for featuring primarily thin, young, white women or light-skinned women of color. They argued that the images conformed to gendered, racial, and sexual stereotypes, limiting who counted as beautiful or as legitimate activists. They also suggested that the video and website actually discouraged the participation of women and feminists, especially women of color.

In the encampments and online, participants debated about whether to acknowledge “Hot Chicks” as a contribution to the Occupy movement or to demand that the filmmakers shut down the site. The website and video triggered extensive discussion online about sexism in the media and in social movements. Even the filmmakers acknowledged the controversy, arguing, “Create constructive discussions about the issues you have [with the video]. Because, to be honest, any excuse is a good excuse to bring up the topic of women’s rights.” In response to the “Hot Chicks” media and other sexist cultural products created by chauvinist male activists—or “mactivists,” as some participants labeled them—cisgender and trans women initiated feminist organizations and protests. They networked with established feminist organizations from outside the Occupy movement to address sexist media about the Occupy activists. They also
created their own feminist frames, slogans, flyers, and blogs specific to the Occupy mobilizations, including “Feminist General Assembly” (FemGA) town-hall meetings. FemGA demonstrations targeted sexism and racism within the Occupy movement and in society broadly.

While activists invited 99% of people to participate in the movement, the culture created by some of the participants alienated others. While organizing a massive, decentralized, largely online social movement, most Occupy activists could not—or would not—regulate the media and culture created about it. Free-speech advocates and advocates for a diverse mass movement argued that to create widespread radical change, a social movement needs a large number of diverse people, and participants will create change in many different ways. Yet the controversy over the “Hot Chicks” website is one example of the challenges that Occupy activists confronted as they sought to frame the culture and media of the mass movement. The creators of the “Hot Chicks” website characterized the meaning of inclusivity and exclusivity of the movement in particular ways. Their portrayal of young, conventionally feminine, traditionally sexually appealing, mostly white women activists signaled that the movement was a place for these types of women or for heterosexual men attracted to these women—to the exclusion of anyone else.

**Inclusivity Frames: Conveying the Meanings of Intersectional Praxis**

“Hot Chicks” is one example of how Occupy leaders, the rank and file, and supporters created media and culture to convey particular messages about the movement. They used words and symbols to describe, or “frame,” the meanings of their protests, and they conveyed their grievances, goals, and group identity to mobilize collective action (Snow 2004; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Through language and artistic interpretations of a movement, its activists negotiate its defining features. By engaging in “frame alignment processes,” they modify the frames to motivate volunteers. The media either reinforce the frames created by movement participants or challenge the activists’ framing by developing counterframes, which may motivate activists to revise their frames again (Benford and Snow 2000). A movement’s targets also evaluate these frames to find ways to stifle
its momentum. As participants create media and cultural products, they are constantly presenting interpretations of a mass movement as being exclusive or inclusive. I evaluate the frames within the Occupy movement’s media and cultural products intersectionally to address the following questions: How do gender, race, class, and sexuality processes influence contemporary social movements’ dynamics and cultures? And under what conditions do movements’ cultures exclude or alienate particular individuals and groups?

In addition to a movement’s objectives, frames convey a basis for solidarity. Occupy participants constructed distinct meanings about who should be included or excluded. They represented these meanings discursively and symbolically in the movement’s media and cultural products. Cultural products and media are some of many ways in which activists “negotiate” or continually construct a movement’s collective identity (Taylor and Whittier 1992). “Inclusivity frames” are kinds of collective-action frames that convey a movement’s basis for solidarity. They symbolize the “we” of a movement: who is welcome and included in its organizations. They also often depict the “them” of a movement: who is unwelcome, unnecessary to the goals for social change, or the enemy. This chapter examines three different inclusivity frames that Occupy activists used to signal who to encompass in the mass movement. Each kind of inclusivity frame indicates to what extent participants determined a basis for solidarity by engaging in intersectional praxis.

First, some Occupy-produced media celebrated the 99% identity and encouraged anyone except the wealthiest 1% of people to join. These cultural products and practices signaled for solidarity among nearly everyone according to their economic standing but left open for interpretation who was specifically included or represented. This “99% frame” did not represent an intersectional analysis; instead, it was a universalist frame that characterized solidarity by using a monist analysis of class. Like flawed feminist frames that lump all women into one universal collective without recognizing the many differences among them (Carastathis 2016; Lépinard 2007; Young 1997), the 99% frame fell short of specifically detailing activists’ experiences of inequalities related to gender, race, or sexuality. As a result, it tended to exclude more vulnerable and multiply marginalized groups, which explained their experiences of oppression as a
consequence of not only class inequality but also race, gender, and other structures of inequality.

The second inclusivity frame utilized symbols from the dominant American cultures of whiteness and masculinity. Media and cultural products that engaged a “dominance frame” symbolized the Occupy movement as powerful, a force to be feared, and sometimes violent. Media using the dominance frame conveyed support for aggressive masculinity and whiteness, while portraying the absence of femininity, queerness, and nonwhite cultures. As its name suggests, the frame did not examine multiple forms of inequality but reflected the stories of people from dominant groups. Media and cultural products that used the dominance frame often aggressively critiqued the 1%. However, they did not represent the movement’s collective identity as a diverse “we” fitting for a mass movement of 99% of the people; instead, they suggested that a very specific group of aggressive, usually white, often male protesters were the most necessary participants.

Finally, some media and cultural practices specifically reflected the inclusion of women and genderqueer persons of a range of racial and ethnic identities, people of color of various genders, lesbian and gay participants, people of differing abilities and disabilities, indigenous people, and immigrants. This type of media deployed an “intersectional frame,” signaling solidarity among people of multiple and marginalized identities. In addition, by representing and thereby valuing their specific identities, it called multiply marginalized persons to act (Bernstein 2008; Terriquez 2015). Each of these media and cultural products examined economic inequality as a result of not only class-based structures but also racialized and/or gendered distributions of power. As activists developed intersectional analyses and represented them by using intersectional frames, they created intersectional praxis (Townsend-Bell 2011).

Only media and cultural products that used the intersectional frame fulfilled the intersectional imperative. These media and cultural products symbolized specifically multiple forms of inequality, depicted the lives and stories of people who were multiply marginalized, and encouraged coalition building. When Occupy participants created cultural products and media that specifically represented people who endure multiple forms of inequality, they signaled inclusivity beyond white men. By representing a wider range of
experiences, these media and cultural products framed the collective identity of the movement as diverse. Using an intersectional frame, media and cultural practices signaled support for the Occupy movement and feminist, transgender rights, civil rights, lesbian and gay, and/or other social movements seeking to end forms of inequality and discrimination. The extent to which participants framed media and cultural products to prioritize or exclude particular groups sparked debate and divisions within the broader Occupy movement.

“All Roads Lead to Wall Street”: The Opportunities and Limits of the 99% Frame

Wielding fat-tipped markers, participants scrawled the title of this chapter, “Sorry for the Mess. New Paradigm under Construction,” on the backs of empty cardboard pizza boxes. Protesters held the signs and propped them up as decorations around the encampments. During the first days of the occupations, some participants threw them down and slept on top of them. In 2011, as members of the first widespread social movement to use Facebook extensively for organizing and recruitment, Occupiers posted pictures of protesters holding their signs. Slogans like “Sorry for the Mess. New Paradigm under Construction,” “We are the 99%,” “Looking for a better world,” “Shit is fucked up and Bullshit,” “People over profits!” and even “Wake up!” conveyed an open-ended inclusivity. They framed many messages around the idea that anyone who felt disgruntled and wanted a new kind of social change was welcome—as long as they were not hoarding money and assets as part of the wealthiest 1% of the population.

Throughout this study, I found cultural products and media that framed inclusivity as the 99% indicated that nearly everyone was included—but no one specifically. This 99% frame provided an opportunity for activists to create a hodgepodge of cultural products and online media. The 99% identity was messy, sometimes chaotic, supportive of major economic change, and open to anyone’s interpretation. It encouraged the movement’s supporters to “do whatever you want.”

Often participants used the 99% frame to represent the movement as a space for people of many different identities. For example, the
October 22, 2011, issue of the Occupied Wall Street Journal featured a series of separate photographs of participants holding whiteboards. In each photo, the participant reveals a reason for being part of the 99%. A veteran in fatigues, a young woman wearing a head scarf, a black man with cornrows, a Wall Street worker, and a young woman with blond hair each hold a dry-erase board on which they have written a personal testimony ending with the words “I am the 99%.” The veteran’s board reads, “We didn’t land on Wall St., Wall St. landed on Us! I am the 99%.” Here, the 99% framing provided participants an opportunity to express their unique grievances against economic injustice, yet the whiteboard campaign did not call for coalition building with other social movements or for fighting inequalities beyond economic injustice.

Artists, musicians, and activists amplified the Occupy movement’s 99% frame. For instance, Marion, a white musician and activist since the 1960s, participated in the Zuccotti Park encampment and spent some of his time there photographing creative signs. Later, he used the photographs and slogans to create protest songs to support the movement:

One of my favorite signs was “Stop using the mainstream press as an excuse for your apathy.” I was like, “Oh yeah, that’s right, that’s exactly what I do every time I read the paper.” One of my favorite ones more recently was “Forget the signs, it’s time for action.” Here’s another one: “Lost my job but I found an occupation.” . . . It’s hard to say that you could make a unified statement, although they did in late September come out with little pamphlets, “The Declaration of the Occupation,” so to some extent, this is what people consented to being a part of.

Like many Occupy supporters, Marion appreciated the perceptive, cheeky slogans on signs at the encampments. They endeared him to the demonstrations, and the messages inspired him to create singalongs. Yet he also conveyed some uneasiness about whether these messages, or even “The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City” pamphlet, really signaled a unifying movement. The text that begins “The Declaration” is illuminating:
We the people, acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors . . .

Exemplary of the 99% frame, “The Declaration” argues that all individuals have equal responsibility to create change alongside the whole of the human race. It does not acknowledge the particular hardships or unique contributions of women, people of color, queer people, or anyone else. The statement’s broadness is intended to convey inclusivity. Marion summarizes why he appreciated the broad 99% framing: “Occupy was a way to rephrase everything I already knew. Even anybody who wasn’t in Occupy now talks about the 99%. It was a way of talking about who you are and who is the ultra-rich. It was a reframing that really worked.” The message of class conflict between the “haves” and the “have-nots” resonated with Marion, but the 99% framing did not make him feel particularly represented within the movement. He also revealed that he showed up at encampments, drifted among different groups, and sang some songs, but he was not completely sure that he would even call himself an Occupier. In these examples, the 99% framing addressed only class inequality and did not reflect multiply marginalized individuals’ life stories.

Many all-day protest encampments used the 99% framing to encourage broad participation and address many different grievances simultaneously. Exemplary was the “movement’s birthday” on September 17, 2012, one year after its start. Occupy activists created celebratory protests in many places across the country, with the largest in New York City. Determined to keep up the momentum of the movement, activists gathered for nearly four full days of protests, workshops, and general assemblies. Organizers encouraged mass participation by framing the New York celebration with the slogan, “All Roads Lead to Wall Street.” Interpreting “All Roads” as the opportunity to advocate for many different kinds of social change, participants transformed the “birthday party” into a wild carnival of activism. Some argued for the regulation of greedy big banks, some called for relief from student loans, and some demanded climate
justice and protested the building of the Spectrum pipeline through green spaces and residential areas of Manhattan, and many other causes. Over email discussion lists and social media, organizers encouraged protesters to create small temporary “affinity groups.” Affinity groups were groups of five to twenty protesters who created unique protest performances. The demonstration became a patchwork of all the different affinity groups’ protests. A few of the dozens of affinity groups that participated included Youth Liberation Front (to address students’ concerns), Occupy Faith (a coalition of religious leaders), and the Time’s Up Polar Bears on Bikes (environmental activists). Even though individual protest performances were not driven by an intersectional analysis, taken as a whole, the affinity groups and the mass protests they created addressed several inequalities. Theoretically, anyone was welcome to participate however they wanted. People of marginalized or vulnerable identities were represented at the demonstration if they created an affinity group to represent their interests. Yet no centralized organizing hub orchestrated the affinity groups or checked to see who might be underrepresented. Furthermore, the protests advantaged more experienced, nondisabled activists without child care responsibilities, who could navigate the sometimes-chaotic days of action with many co-occurring meetings and demonstrations.

Cultural events and media that utilized a 99% frame allowed the majority of participants to avoid explicit discussions about sexism, racism, and other dimensions of power. Representative was the 2012 May Day march and rally hosted by Occupy Santa Barbara, which considered some economic grievances among Latinxs. The May Day protest called for support for driver’s licenses for undocumented workers. The daylong protests ended with a citywide vigil for immigrants’ rights. However, most of the promotional materials for the event focused on abstract class issues represented by such slogans as “Greed is not Good.” The movement called for protesters to take action, bring food, march up the main street of the city, and “collaborate about our shared future goals for social, economic, and environmental justice.” The protest included a range of issues and broadly addressed a variety of forms of inequality, yet it ultimately prioritized class issues and marginalized the immigrants’ rights aspects of the day. Due in part to its 99% framing, the May Day calls for collaboration actually
shifted the protest frame away from Latinxs’ grievances. The protest defaulted to grievances about economic inequality in the abstract, thereby limiting opportunities to address the particular inequalities suffered by Latinx and undocumented persons.

More marginal, vulnerable, or oppressed populations could participate in cultural performances and media that used the 99% frame, but their grievances were likely to be subsumed under a broad banner for economic change. Therefore, particular experiences of multiply marginalized persons were likely to remain unseen within media or cultural events using the 99% frame. Angie Beeman (2015, 131) identifies the marginalization of race issues and/or the prioritization of class above racial inequalities as a “racism evasiveness strategy.” In her study of an interracial social movement organization, she observed activists exercising white privilege and developing racist organizations when they did not recognize explicitly racial inequality. I argue that media and cultures that used the open-ended 99% framing did not acknowledge that the 2008 financial crisis disproportionately affected communities of color (Oliver 2008). Protesters often ignored the disproportionate number of foreclosures, unemployed workers, and loss of wealth among communities of color, and especially women of color. Without including gender or race specificity, the 99% framing contrasted strikingly with historic and recent inequalities in black communities, in other communities of color, and among women of color (National Association of Real Estate Brokers 2013; Oliver 2008; Oliver and Shapiro 2006). Such slogans and symbols as “Get money out of politics” or “They got bailed out, we got sold out” did not represent people of color’s or women’s distinct experiences and therefore conveyed exclusivity rather than inclusivity.

The Dominance Frame: Masculinity, Whiteness, and Power on Display

*CCharging Bull* is a large metal statue near Wall Street in New York City’s financial district. It symbolizes a “bull” market, lucrative stock prices, and profits for investors. Bulls also symbolize Wall Street values, such as aggressive capitalism and risk taking. In addition, bulls are male cows used for breeding and therefore have become a prized symbol of masculinity. Most of *Charging Bull* is bronze, but the bull’s
testicles have a golden gleam. Bringing together the ideas of financial success and praise for masculinity, people rub the bull’s testicles for good luck.

As part of the original call to Occupy Wall Street, *Adbusters* magazine “culture jammed,” or created an image to symbolically protest Wall Street. The image depicts a woman performing the ballet position “second arabesque” on top of *Charging Bull*. Her pose symbolizes how protests against Wall Street should follow in the tradition of protests from early 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries and aspire to become a second Arab Uprising. In the image, a fog of tear gas and ten protesters outfitted in black sweatshirts and gas masks surround *Charging Bull* and the dancer. Occupy protest participants and supporters frequently deployed the *Adbusters* image in flyers, posters, signs, T-shirts, and protest art spread online through memes on Facebook. Like many of the symbolic protests included in *Adbusters* (Wettergren 2005), the image of *Charging Bull*, the dancer, tear gas, and protesters critiques power holders while conveying an urgent need for change. The white, lithe, feminine dancer appears strong. She is in control on top of the statue. However, the image also re-inscribes an ideal of white, heterosexual beauty and femininity at the exclusion of fat bodies and people of color. Although the dancer symbolizes the movement as feminine in opposition to the masculine bull, the other protesters in the image are depicted as high-risk-taking, aggressive, likely masculine protesters who wear black hoodies and gas masks to demonstrations. Typically, protesters wear this type of clothing to indicate that they identify as “black bloc anarchists,” who perform acts of civil disobedience. Many anarchist protesters joined and contributed greatly to the Occupy movement (Bray 2013; Gould-Wartofsky 2015; Schneider 2013). Protests that were heavily populated by anarchists, especially in Oakland, often replicated the scene in the poster. The poster symbolizes the people’s power over the finance industry but also idolizes aggressive protesters.

Across many different forms of online and traditional media, Occupy participants modified the *Charging Bull* symbol to critique the financial industry. By appropriating the bull as a symbol of the Occupy movement, protesters also adopted the masculinity and aggression associated with it. Adaptations of the bull image include a poster printed on the back of the first issue of *Occupy! N+1 An OWS-Inspired*
Gazette that depicts a bull muzzled with a belt and the slogan “Money talks… too much. Occupy!” A pamphlet version of “The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City” includes the reproduction of a poster by Josh MacPhee of the Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative suggestive of castrating the bull. The image features the backside of the bull marked with a dotted line, scissors above the bull’s testicles, and the words “Cut This!” Several flyers portray bulls tied with thick ropes, struggling to get free. Protesters’ distain for Charging Bull became so fierce that New York City police barricaded the actual statue for more than a year (Gillham, Edwards, and Noakes 2013). Protests that used the Charging Bull image critiqued the bull as a symbol of the financial industry but also appropriated the masculine aggression it conveyed.

In addition to images of Charging Bull, protesters developed other cultural products and practices to symbolize power and dominance. Some wore men’s suits and masks to mock the 1%, government officials, and bankers. For example, they impersonated President Barack Obama and the banker from the Monopoly board game. They also satirized and demonized corporations. Exemplary was a six-foot-tall puppet inspired by the villain “Bane” from Batman comics. Artist and protester Gan Golan created the puppet to ridicule Massachusetts’s governor Mitt Romney’s company, Bain Capital. Media and cultural products that used the dominance frame usually reflected the actions of white, male, and/or heterosexual cultures rather than those of more vulnerable or marginalized populations.

By depicting the 1% as muscular, masculine, and powerful, media and cultural products reinforced the idea that white men are wealthy and dominant. Men and women in the Alternative Banking Working Group, part of OWS, coordinated a group of women and men artists to design an artistic deck of playing cards called “52 Shades of Greed.” Each card is a stylized flashcard that critiques corporations and individuals responsible for the 2008 financial crisis. The group produced and distributed the decks to publicize harmful practices in the financial industry. For instance, each ace depicts a distinct “toxic institution,” such as Goldman Sachs or Countrywide, and each five card displays a “toxic method,” such as “leverage & looting.” The cards literally demonize such men as Jamie Dimon, the chief executive officer (CEO) of JPMorgan Chase and former chair of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, who is caricatured wearing a suit
while coddling a skeleton and a safe full of money. Only the four queen cards and a sexualized image of a serpent on the “accounting tricks” card (the eight of diamonds) portray images of women; all the other images in the deck depict men, masculine monsters in suits, or objects. Furthermore, the name of the deck of cards is a twist on the title of the erotic novel *50 Shades of Grey*, a story about a wealthy white businessman’s proclivity for sadomasochism and a woman’s submission to him. The novel epitomizes the masculine leisure and erotica that are valued on Wall Street. “52 Shades of Greed” satirizes the title of the novel, drawing on its cultural resonance. Although the deck of cards ingeniously targets and critiques the financial industry, to create cultural resonance, the cards depict masculine images and reinforce the idea that finance is largely a male-dominated context.

Many media and cultural products produced by Occupiers celebrated an emotion culture of anger reflective of the experiences of white men. For example, *The Debt Resisters’ Operations Manual* explains student and medical debt and bankruptcy. It suggests strategies for disputing banks about debt and dealing with credit fraud. Women and men wrote and distributed the material. While the authors provide a wealth of research and information, the manual resonates with the cultures of the financial and banking industries. It draws on the emotion culture of rationality and traditionally masculine anger. The manual suggests that readers write “angry letters,” because the information in the manual should have “made you angry.” It also urges readers to transform shame about debt “into outrage—and that outrage into action” (Debt Resisters 2012, 102). The Debt Resisters argue for Occupy participants and adherents to accept and express their anger. However, the text ignores the gendered and raced consequences that all women—especially women of color—and men of color face when they express their anger in white male-dominated contexts, such as finance and banking. Elite white men may be rewarded for expressing anger (Blee 2002; Messner 1997), but women and racial minorities endure harsh punishments. They may face ostracism or be considered irrational. Beyond being discounted, women and minorities often suffer physical harm or even incarceration if they express anger rather than submission (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Rios 2011). Scholars R. W. Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005) suggest that anger and aggression are emotions representative
of hegemonic masculinity, whereas most women’s anger is considered deviant. When Occupiers created media and culture that drew on the emotion cultures of white men, they used a dominance frame rather than one that was inclusive of women and people of color.

Using the dominance frame, some protesters conveyed their serious desire to take power away from the 1%. Several of the movement’s slogans advocated confrontation, such as, “Hungry? Eat a banker” or “Mass arrests prove our power.” Slogans using the dominance frame emphasized risk taking, aggression, fighting, violence, or confrontations with the police, bankers, and corporations. In mid-2012, the “Fuck the Police” (FTP) movement grew out of a collaboration between Occupy participants, anarchists, and anti-police brutality protesters. The movement condemned police brutality by using aggressive language. Its participants advocated for competition as a strategy to stop repression. The group’s pamphlet reads: “The police exist to protect capitalism and the rich. . . . Revolt!” FTP slogans, such as “Police protecting and serving the shit out of you!” and “You cannot evict an idea,” critiqued police brutality and asserted that activists would pursue their goals despite police threats to forcibly clear the encampments. The majority of Occupy documents about the police portrayed police versus protester aggression.

To legitimately and credibly target the financial industry, Occupy protesters developed media, slogans, and culture that resonated with and drew on the preexisting culture of the finance and banking industries. To change a particular institution, a movement must create claims that resonate within that cultural context (Benford and Snow 2000; McCammon et al. 2007). The civil rights movement amplified black culture, black communities, and the black church (Morris 1986; Robnett 1997). Likewise, the culture of the entertainment industry has infused the Me Too and time’s up movements spearheaded by actresses who oppose sexual harassment, sexual assault, and the gender pay gap. However, for the Occupy movement, the dominance frame based on the culture of Wall Street became problematic. From the Charging Bull symbol to the value assigned to risk taking and aggression, the dominance frame within the Occupy movement mirrored the heavily male-dominated and white-supremacist cultures of the finance industry. Men hold a disproportionate number of investment banking, trading, and finance jobs and earn significantly
higher salaries in these jobs than do women (Fisher 2012; L. Roth 2006). Even through the 1980s, the majority of women who worked on Wall Street were secretaries rather than traders (L. Roth 2006). Jobs in banking and finance are coded as masculine, exemplified by the high value placed on making skilled but risky investments (Porter 2005). Risk taking is considered dominant and valuable because it can yield high profits and is seen as a skill that men possess (Fisher 2012). Even the leisure activities for Wall Street’s male finance and banking employees are notoriously hypermasculine. Such activities as drinking excessively, attending strip clubs, and purchasing the services of sex workers allow men to perform stereotypically masculine behavior. The male-dominated cultural experiences common among men on Wall Street emphasize men’s heterosexual prowess through the commodification and objectification of women’s sexuality. While Occupy protesters opposed the finance and banking industries, the movement worked in, used the language of, and interacted with the symbols and frames of the white male-dominated culture of Wall Street.

Coalition Building with the Intersectional Frame

In contrast to either the 99% frame or dominance frame, when participants created cultural products and media that specifically represented people who endure several forms of inequality, they signaled inclusivity in the movement beyond white men. By creating cultural practices and media with an intersectional frame, they readily worked across social movement boundaries and built coalitions. Using intersectional frames to portray people’s many identities, these activists exemplified Anna Carastathis’s (2016, 185) argument that “identities are potential coalitions . . . [and] grounds for solidarity that reach across and reveal differences within categories of identity.” The power of the intersectional frame to build coalitions would later become evident in the more sustained and diverse Black Lives Matter movement.

Trayvon Martin was a black high school student, walking alone through a Florida neighborhood, wearing a hoodie, eating Skittles candy, when George Zimmerman killed him. Zimmerman, a member of the neighborhood watch group, wrongly suspected that Martin was a criminal when he was really just a student walking home (Bates 2018;
In the summer of 2013, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors drew on their outrage about Martin’s wrongful death and Zimmerman’s acquittal and their love for black people to create Black Lives Matter, a movement that provided an intersectional analysis of the inequalities endured by black people. Although many communities had protested police brutality and violence for decades preceding the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement, these events had rarely received more than local media attention.

Prior to the emergence of Black Lives Matter, in the spring of 2012 experienced civil rights activists, the national InterOccupy network, people of color working groups within the Occupy movement, and activists opposed to police brutality and gun violence joined together to protest “stop-and-frisk” laws. The protests critiqued a policing tactic, now deemed unconstitutional, whereby police officers detained mainly black and Latinx persons without just cause on the streets of New York. Soon after protesting “stop and frisk,” many of these same activists marched while wearing hooded sweatshirts, or “hoodies,” to protest Martin’s February 2012 death. Occupy participants and a range of civil rights and racial justice organizations mobilized hoodie marches to demand justice for Martin. Instead of working within the 99% frame or the dominance frame, participants conceived of inclusivity intersectionally in the “stop-and-frisk” protests and hoodie marches. They analyzed police violence as a combination of class and racial domination and gave particular voice to the experiences of black men. Furthermore, they designed these protests to build relationships between social movements—in this case, the Occupy movement, the anti-police brutality movement, the civil rights movement, and the gun control movement. The hoodie marches and anti-stop-and-frisk demonstrations are exemplary of a different kind of inclusivity. To develop culture and media that used an intersectional frame, Occupy participants often borrowed from other established social movements.

A variety of protests fulfilled the intersectional imperative by specifically identifying multiple forms of inequality, depicting the lives and stories of people who are multiply marginalized, and encouraging coalition building. For example, wearing tutus to impersonate the dancer on top of Charging Bull from the Adbusters call to action became a way to express support for the 99% while also signaling
acceptance of femininity and of cross-dressing. Several gay but also a few heterosexual men and women supported Occupy by dressing up like ballerinas, wearing pink panties and/or skirts or dressing in drag. Russe Guy, a white gay man, explains the utility of cross-dressing during protests:

During a protest, I’ll use cross-dressing for the purposes of attention-getting. It’s pretty cool, though—since I started it, I have gotten a lot of interesting and generally pretty positive reactions from people. On a personal level, it is pretty interesting to hear a guy say that you look hot in your bustier.

Participants who cross-dressed during protest events endorsed the 99% identity, strengthened the movement with their attention-getting participation, and challenged gender essentialism, the idea that anything feminine is only reserved for women’s self-expression. The wearing of tutus or pink panties became an accepted cultural practice that represented the acceptance of feminine and queer participants; drew on and amplified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) movement practices; and, at the same time, brought attention to the 99% identity.

Cultural products and practices that critiqued the 1% and gender essentialism advocated for the acceptance of gender diversity while protesting class inequality. For example, men and women wore Guy Fawkes masks, a masculine, white face with thick black eyebrows, goatee, and mustache popularized in the 2005 movie _V for Vendetta_ and by the Anonymous movement. A few women participants “queered” the masks, adding feminine touches to the masculine features by painting makeup, rainbows, or glitter on the masks or wearing their long hair spilling over them. By mixing feminine and masculine characteristics, they mitigated the dominance frame and instead created an intersectional frame. Exemplary of gender bending and drawing on protest imagery from the Occupy and women’s movements is artist Alexandra Fischer’s poster depicting Rosie the Riveter wearing a Guy Fawkes mask. The poster calls for the 99% to shut down the West Coast ports and “Show your muscle!” Protest performances, cultural symbols, and media that combined traditionally masculine and feminine images to create queer representations
deployed an intersectional frame. The protests supported Occupy, gender-nonconformity, feminism, and LGBTQ goals simultaneously.

Another cultural practice that participants developed to create awareness about gender diversity alongside class inequality was the use of Preferred Gender Pronouns (PGPs). At the beginning of meetings and protest events, they instructed participants to introduce themselves with their names and the gender pronouns that they used to refer to themselves, such as she, he, or they. Genderqueer, transgender, and/or feminist participants and anyone else could state that they would like to be identified with a gender-neutral or genderqueer pronoun, such as “they.” For example, at the start of a working group meeting where participants sat around a table, a facilitator might invite participants to get involved by saying, “To start this meeting, each person please introduce yourself, share your PGP, and let us know what you would like to discuss today.” In turn, each participant would divulge, “Hi, my name is Jasmine, I prefer she or her, and I am here to help plan the May Day rally” or “My name is Andre, I prefer they, and I think we need to spend some time tonight making posters for the march this coming weekend.” There was neither a standard training about how to use gender pronouns nor a requirement to include the cultural practice. Participants who identified themselves as feminist or genderqueer typically introduced it during meetings and events. Rebecca explains how she brought gender pronouns into her theater group’s performance to support Occupy and gender nonconformity:

We did this show called *Jack and the Corporate Beanstalk* where Jack was played by a woman. Whereas the traditional Jack would go by “he,” in our modern retelling of this fairy tale, we could not decide Jack’s gender, so for the most part, we would say Jack’s preferred gender pronoun is “Jack.”

In *Jack and the Corporate Beanstalk*, activists chose to portray the lead as a gender-nonconforming person. In the story, Jack goes to college to find a job and magic beans but encounters a greedy Corporate Giant from whom Jack has to take back the Golden Goose for the 99%. The actors portrayed the hero of the 99%, Jack, as having a third gender identity—“Jack”—rather than identifying as a woman.
Excerpt • Temple University Press

or man. Like the lesbian and gay movements’ “coming-out” strategies that take pride in sexual diversity (Whittier 2012), the use of gender pronouns enabled participants to “come out” to express their gender identity. Activists transformed language about gender to accept people of all gender identities. Contributing to the movement’s prefigurative world, activists used the gender pronouns tactic to challenge the gender binary; even while protesting for economic justice, they embraced gender diversity beyond “she” and “he.” Although the practice was common in contemporary feminist and transgender rights organizations in the 2010s, many activists first learned about using gender pronouns during Occupy protests.

In addition to transforming the movement’s language to recognize inequalities intersectionally, some participants challenged narrowly defined gender expectations for fashion. Sam, a young woman of color in the hundred-plus-degree heat at the Occupy National Gathering (NatGat), removed her shirt and wore rectangular “I ♥ the 99%” stickers over her nipples, dubbing the practice “occupasties.” Five other men and women joined in. Sam wanted to challenge stereotypically feminine ways of dressing that suggested that men were allowed to take off their shirts but women were not. For her, occupasties symbolized human rights and equality. She explained that the action allowed her to advocate for gender equality while supporting the 99%. Likewise, Saige, another woman NatGat attendee, explains, “I was really surprised at how comfortable I felt being shirtless in that environment, because I am usually not even comfortable being shirtless around someone that I’m intimate with, and so it was very liberating for me.” Sam and Saige were like the small but highly visible number of women at Occupy protests in New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, New Orleans, and NatGat who sought to transform the prefigurative culture of the movement by removing their shirts, stripping, or performing burlesque dances to support the movement. Each of these cultural practices united support for Occupy with advocacy for women’s empowerment and queer, feminist, gender nonconformity. Although a few men ogled and sexualized the women, topless women in the Occupy movement channeled the attention they gained by removing their shirts to protest the 1%. They supported a gender-equal prefigurative society and the acceptance of women’s bodies. Topless protests and occupasties borrowed from tactical repertoires used by
members of the European feminist group FEMEN, which shames international leaders and draws attention to human-rights issues by disrobing during global justice protests. The wearing of occupasties created an intersectional frame for the encampment, encouraging a space for feminist, queer, and gender-bending expressions as part of a prefigurative society where women were safe and respected enough to be naked in public without being harassed.

Exemplary of culture and media that addressed economic justice, gender equality, and the specific needs of women participants was Occupy Denver’s “Fishbowl Caucus” event. During the cultural performance, women and transgender persons formed an inner circle and “spoke bitterness”—in other words, they condemned the harassment and inequality they faced in the Occupy movement and in Denver in general. Men listened from an outer circle to learn from women and transgender participants’ experiences. Similarly, Occupy Santa Barbara held a consciousness-raising session about personal space and argued against the sexualization of women in the movement. Participants offered training about the sexist double standard that expects men to greet strangers with handshakes and women to greet strangers, including men, with hugs. The group created an intersectional frame by enforcing a “politics of consent” within the group whereby even friends asked each other whether they would like to hug or just shake hands rather than assume that a woman would like to press her body against someone else’s. Through such feminist rituals as the Fishbowl Caucus and the consciousness-raising session, Occupy participants created intersectional frames within which to explicitly discuss sexism and gender essentialism while mobilizing against class and gender inequality. By adopting the cultural practices of feminist and LGBTQ movements, Occupy participants created an intersectional frame with which to lay the groundwork for coalition building.

When Occupy participants used an intersectional frame for cultural products, artistic actions, and the movement’s language and symbols, they created an atmosphere of inclusivity that extended beyond white men. Using the open and loose structure of the movement to frame culture and media intersectionally, they contributed to transforming gender, race, and sexual inequalities within and beyond the movement. Media and culture that deployed an intersectional
frame recognized specifically individuals who endure class-based injustice and other oppressions simultaneously. While culture and media with an intersectional frame supported Occupy’s goals by stimulating participation, these products also drew on and urged coalition building with LGBTQ, feminist, and racial justice movements.

Conclusion

The media and cultural products created by Occupy participants captivated the U.S. public. In words and symbols, participants framed the meanings of their protests to convey their grievances, goals, and who was included in the movement. The movement’s messages transformed the national discussion about economic inequality, leading the idea of the 99% versus the 1% to become commonplace (Gaby and Caren 2016).

How to frame inclusivity within the Occupy movement was a topic of constant debate. The movement utilized media and culture that reproduced the objectification of women’s bodies, such as the “Hot Chicks of Occupy Wall Street” video and website; advocated for the creation of a “New Paradigm”; celebrated hypermasculinity with images of Charging Bull; and shifted language toward the use of gender pronouns and the recognition of genders beyond just “male” and “female.” Individuals developed the movement’s frames through decentralized social media, within the main movement, and within groups that created oppositional collective identities. The myriad inclusivity frames mirrored the carnival-like, chaotic atmosphere within the Occupy movement in the streets and online. The variability of the movement’s media and culture resulted from lack of oversight from an overarching committee.

Media and cultural practices were intended to encourage massive participation, and they did for a brief time in the fall of 2011. However, the diversity of activists required to create and sustain a mass movement was not adequately represented in media and culture framed by the 99% frame and the dominance frame.

The 99% frame was the most utilized inclusivity frame because of the remarkable idea of “the 99% versus the 1%.” This frame also characterized the loose leadership structure and porous nature of the encampments and online spaces. Creating media and cultural
practices with the 99% frame sometimes allowed individuals or groups to express multiple grievances simultaneously, such as during all-day encampments like the September 2012 birthday party. Yet the 99% frame also ignored the particular experiences of people of color, women, genderqueer persons, and sexual minorities.

The dominance frame prioritized the images and stories of privileged white masculinity. In addition, it reproduced the cultures of Wall Street. Neither the 99% frame nor the dominance frame elaborated meanings about the lives or grievances of women and queer persons of a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds or men of color.

Only media and culture that used the intersectional frame allowed Occupy movement participants to combine their concerns for class, gender, sexual, racial, and other forms of inequality. Participants who represented inequalities intersectionally created media and culture that accomplished the intersectional imperative. When participants framed the movement’s messages as not only being about Occupy or class inequality, they provided opportunities to build coalitions with participants from other contemporary movements.

Occupy activists developed media and culture that became a foundation for the contemporary protest wave. Evaluating inclusivity frames allows us to address these questions: Under what conditions do movement cultures exclude or alienate particular individuals and groups? How do gender, race, class, and sexuality processes influence contemporary social movement dynamics and culture?

Analysis of the Occupy movement’s media and culture suggests several lessons for future social movements. Universalist frames that only vaguely call for solidarity across gender, race, class, and sexual identities do not signal to more marginalized participants that a movement is a welcoming and safe space for their participation and leadership. It will behoove participants in future social movements to not only establish committees that specialize in media development but work with participants to use intersectional praxis as they create citizen journalism, videos, and websites about their movements. Leaders of future movements should respond to media that convey a 99% frame or dominance frame and advocate for the development of intersectional frames. Framing identities and movements as intersectional signals an opportunity for coalition building (Carastathis 2013, 2016). The intersectional frame offers the most opportunities
for building solidarity among people with diverse gender, race, class, and sexual identities.

Citizen journalism and the outpouring of diverse media created by unregulated volunteers, especially on social media, sparked great interest in the Occupy movement. However, some frames created divisions within the movement. Future movements may endure if activists find ways to stimulate voluntary media and culture production as well as guide the movements’ messages toward the intersectional imperative. To do so, movements will need diverse leadership who play a more significant role than voluntary and rotating participants.