

An Examination of the Social, Political, and Economic Experiences
of the Latinx LGBTQ Population in Southern California

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LGBTQ Population in Southern California

by

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Part I: Abstract

Latinx LGBTQ communities within the United States are largely underrepresented socially, politically, and economically. This particular group's overlap of race/ethnicity and sexual identity/orientation presents unique challenges for those who identify with this group. This paper closely examines the lived experience of Latinx LGBTQ members in Southern California. Using survey research and elite interviews, I find that LGBTQ Latinxs have high levels of support from some groups, but not others, that their levels of political participation are low, and that they experience equal levels of financial security and financial insecurity. Using Southern California as a case study, this research contributes to our understanding of the lived experience of the Latinx LGBTQ population in the United States.

Part II: Introduction

The term *intersectionality* has been increasing in usage since legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw first controversially used the term in a scholarly essay three decades ago (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality is a term used to refer to the way in which humans' different identities—like race, class, gender, sexuality, and more—intersect in a way that leads to different experiences by different peoples (Crenshaw 1991, 1245). Such overlap of identities affects the way one experiences discrimination within a society politically, socially, or economically.

Over the course of history, both people of color and LGBTQ identifiers in the United States have been familiar with high levels of intolerance, as prejudice has always existed systematically within the USA, including slavery and the implementation of Jim Crow Laws. Racial discrimination remains pervasive on the systematic level, witnessed through, for example, the racial disparities that exist in the mass incarceration of minorities and the pay gap that is at 54 cents for Hispanic women as compared to every dollar a white male makes at the same job (NAACP, 2019; Hegewisch 2017). Similarly, multiple societal and political issues continue to affect the LGBTQ community. The community's problems did not end the day that same-sex

marriage was legalized nationwide in 2015; a history of discriminatory practices towards the LGBTQ community has left many fighting for their rights to be recognized in society as equals, and the fight for this recognition on the systematic level remains unfinished (Finzel, Rochelle, May, 2015). For instance, activists are currently fighting against the transgender military ban that the Trump administration has attempted to implement that could potentially rescind an Obama-era policy that allowed any individual, regardless of gender, to serve in the US military (Evans, 2017).

So, history and modern contexts considered, we are inclined to ask what the social reality looks like for someone who identifies with the intersectional identities of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/identity, or more specifically for the purposes of this research study, that of Latinx and LGBTQ. Not much is known about how often one with this intersection of identities politically participates on average, nor whether they have different economic experiences due to their personal identities than that of the general population. Latinx LGBTQ members contain a combination of the two identities known to have been systematically oppressed over the course of history. Ultimately, the theory of intersectionality would say that this combination of two underrepresented identities is important to identify and to learn about for the sake of inclusion and social equity.

Furthermore, due to their small size and marginalized status, Latinx LGBTQ community members are often overlooked. There are just 1.4 million LGBT¹ Latinx individuals in the United States as of 2014 (Human Rights Campaign, 2014). Thus, “Latinx LGBTQ people are

¹ The Human Rights Campaign’s numerical data did not capture individuals who identify as Queer in their study of the Latinx LGBT population, explaining why the “Q” is left out of their measurement of the Latinx LGBT population. Moving forward, if an organization does not use the Q it is because they did not include this identity into their research study.

more likely to be the subject of assumption than research... More specifically, all too often, while their larger heterosexual Latinx communities fight for racial injustice and the larger White LGBT communities fight for sexual justice, the unique experiences of Latinx LGBTs go unvoiced” (Pastrana, Battle, Harris 2017, 5). The aim of this research design is to explore the distinctive nature of the social, political, and economic experience of Latinx LGBTQs within the context of American society. The question that this research study asks is: what are the social, political, and economic experiences of LGBTQ Latinx community members in Southern California?

Part III: Literature Review

Limited academic literature has been written about Latinx LGBTQ communities in the United States, and no academic literature exists on the experiences of those in Southern California. Development of the understanding of intersectionality, especially that of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/identity, is advancing, however, the literature on the actual intersection of being Latinx and LGBTQ has only been developing for the past two decades. Utilizing intersectional theory will allow for a better understanding of the foundation on which this research is based by focusing on the specific intersections of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/identity. Before mentioning what is already known about the Latinx LGBTQ lifestyle, it is important to mention what Latinx culture looks like to capture the significant influence that family and religion typically have on Latinx lives. In addition to culture, it is also necessary to look at the ways in which the LGBTQ community has been discriminated against socially, politically, and economically in order to understand how sexual orientation/identity affects a person’s experiences.

Intersectional Theory

As previously mentioned, the theory of intersectionality was first mentioned by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in a scholarly article titled “Demarginalizing The Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (Crenshaw 1989). In this paper, Crenshaw proposed that everyone holds different identity markers that cannot exist independently of the other, and each identity informs the other, creating an experience that is different from those with other identities. While Crenshaw was the first to academically name the theory, intersectional theory had been developing two decades before she coined the term when Black women realized that there was no place for them in the Women’s Movement, nor in the Civil Rights Movement (1989). Both movements widely rallied around identity, the first concerned with being a woman and the latter with the struggle of Black lives. However, what these two movements failed to recognize was the intersection of “Black” and “woman,” and it did not take long for Black women to realize that there was no place for them in either movement to be wholly accepted with the intersection in which they embodied. The experience of racism in the Women's Movement and sexism in the Civil Rights Movement encouraged women of color to create a practice that centralizes their experiences. Intersectionality’s first supporters were Black women, but since its first mention in 1989, the theory has proven necessary to understand and accommodate a wider range of difference that exists among us regarding class, age, gender, and in the context of this study, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/identity.

Intersectional theory lies at the foundation of this research study for a variety of reasons. First, intersectional theory recognizes the importance of understanding how a person’s different identities interact with one another. This was not the case before, and the study of intersectional

theory has opened the doors for expanded academic study, especially in areas that focus on minorities and their lived experiences. At the foundation of intersectional theory lies a recognition of the voices that have always existed around us, but have never been recognized in the academic community, as well as in political, economic, and social spheres. The study of intersectional theory has given platform to the voices that have been silenced over the course of history, therefore, this project contributes to the study of intersectional identities in that it studies race/ethnicity in correlation with sexual orientation/identity.

Secondly, although the study of intersectionality theory provides an analytical framework to explain how certain groups have been marginalized due to their identities, intersectionality in practice promotes opportunity for those who have faced intersecting forms of discrimination. Central to the development of social equity is the recognition of difference and how difference plays out in people's lives. Activists and community organizations are calling for more conversation surrounding diversity, and with an intersectional lens, movements can begin to tackle issues of exclusion and make an effort to be more inclusive of others and their experiences.

Latinx Culture²

In order to understand the roles of Latinx LGBTQ family support and the support from a faith community, it is necessary to distinguish and define the values that are held within the larger Latinx culture and population in the United States. Latinxs place a value in family and religion, and for many Latinxs, religion disapproves of LGBTQ identities and lifestyles, so it is

² Instead of saying *Latino* culture, I decide to talk about culture with the inclusion of those who may not identify as Latina or Latino, but also Latinx. This follows the idea that they too may have taken part in and noticed the values and traditions within the larger Latino culture in their lives.

key to give attention to the values held within Latinx culture in order to understand how levels of support will be skewed for this particular community. To assign one dominant culture to the larger Latinx community would be to improperly overgeneralize, as the Latinx population in the United States derives from a multitude of Latin American countries with their own customs and traditions. Still, most Latin American countries do place common emphases on certain practices and values, as the Latinx culture is very much one of structure and expectations.

That being said, Latinxs are known to be highly group-oriented; it is within a group or a larger family setting that Latinx communities place their identity, especially for encouragement, love, comfort, and even financial support (Rios 1994). Familism, a social construct that “encompasses attitudes about the importance of family and behaviors that reflect the way in which family ties are prioritized” is an important aspect and value of the Latinx experience as it also strongly pertains to having more people within your family beyond immediate blood relation (Hernandez, Bamaca-Colbert 2016, 463).

Religion is also an important value and aspect of the Latinx identity. Latinxs are known to heavily identify within different sects of the Christian faith, with 83% of Latinos³ claiming a religious affiliation, compared to that of the general public at 80% (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, and Velasco, 2014). 62% of this group report being Catholic, and 19% of them are Protestant, and only 14% say they do not identify with any religion (2014). Of this group, the Pew Research center saw that 53% of first generation Latinos are accepting towards homosexuality, compared to that of 68% of second generation Latinos and 63% of third generation or higher (2014).

³ The Pew Hispanic Research Survey uses rhetoric of “Latino/a” instead of Latinx.

LGBTQ Discrimination

The LGBTQ population still faces discrimination to this day. LGBTQ Americans are not fully protected from discrimination in 30 states (Freedom for all Americans, 2019). In 28 states, there are “no explicit statewide laws at all protecting people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations” (2019). Discrimination of LGBTQ people extend into the arena of the adoption and foster care system, making it more difficult for same-sex couples to foster or adopt children (Sutter, Perrin 2016, 98). Healthcare is also a concern of the LGBTQ community; finding the right doctor or affirming mental health provider is a careful quest LGBTQ identifiers embark on to avoid being discriminated against (2016).

However, equally important are the economic issues Latinx LGBTQ people face in the United States. According to the SJS Project (Pastrana, Battle, Harris, 2017), economic issues are the most important concern this community faces. This study also captured that LGBTQ adults in general are more likely to be poor than non-LGBT counterparts: 28% of adults have incomes under \$30k, but almost 40% of LGBT adults do (2017). Furthermore, children in gay and lesbian households have poverty rates twice as high (2017).

Intersectionality: On Being LGBTQ and Latinx

Not much academic literature has been written about what life looks like for the average Latinx LGBTQ in the United States, nevertheless in Southern California. Limited research exists on the family life and formations of Latinx LGBTQs, as well as on the role of religion and immigration in their lives. Previous research has indicated a decline in religiosity in the lives of

Latinx LGBTQs and that their reasons for immigration vary from that of the larger Latinx population.

Not much is known about family formations within the Latinx LGBTQ community. The ways in which LGBTQ populations are legally measured have proved to be inadequate because “many people use the same-sex marriage household construct as a way to define... family formations that exist for LGBT people” (Pastrana, Battle, Harris, 2017). This practice weakens the basic understandings of what LGBTQ households look like because “US Census data cannot capture LGBT people who do not live in same-sex households” (2017). The Census also does not include or ask questions pertaining to sexual identity or orientation, leaving out single LGBT people and creating larger gaps in the understandings of LGBTQ people and family formations (2017). Families within the LGBTQ community can also be difficult to narrow down, as families can exist within the community beyond an immediate biological relationship with friends, partners, and more. Still, we know about “29% of male Latinx same-sex couples are raising children and 41.5% of female Latinx same-sex couples are raising children” (Pastrana, Battle, Harris, 2017).

On another note, previous research has shown that there is a decline in religiosity amongst the Latinx LGBTQ community. The Social Justice Sexuality Project⁴ found that Latinx LGBT people attend religious services less frequently among other LGBT people of color (2010). Many factors can influence a person’s decision to not identify with a religion or not attend religious services; arguably, this decline in religiosity can be rooted on the conservative church’s teachings that sometimes condemn LGBTQ lifestyles in its identity and in its practice

⁴ The Social Justice Sexuality Project, or SJS, conducted a nation-wide survey over a twelve-month period in 2010 in which five thousand surveys were taken to measure levels of support from different groups of LGBTQ people of color. Of the five thousand respondents, 1,159 participants reported being Latinx.

because the conservative stance encourages LGBT people of color to either stay closeted in their houses of worship or simply leave them, since no one can be expected to thrive in an area where they are constantly looked down upon (Pastrana, Battle, Harris, 2017, 39). Moreover, amongst all the reasons why people tend to be less accepting towards LGBTQ lifestyles, religiosity ranked first (Pastrana, Battle, Harris 2017).

Additionally, previous academic literature has talked about the reasons why Latinx LGBTQ people immigrate, and how the reasons for the immigration of Latinx LGBTQs differ from the general Latino population that immigrates too (Pastrana, Battle, Harris, 2017). According to the Human Rights Campaign, of the LGBT population in the United States, 267,000 of them are also undocumented (HRC, 2014). However, the amount of undocumented Latinx LGBTQ people in the United States, especially within Southern California, remains unknown. In the United States, “thousands” -- it is unknown how many thousands-- of LGBT people apply for political asylum and on average one thousand are accepted annually (Pastrana, Battle, Harris, 2017, 17). Reasons for immigration of LGBTQ populations can vary—a right to marry and acquire privacy is amongst the various reasons, but since there are currently eighty countries that have laws that discriminate against LGBT people and seven offer capital punishment, immigration may be a primary means of survival (NGLTF 2014).

An understanding of the theory of intersectionality, Latinx culture, LGBTQ discrimination, and background on family life, religion, and immigration within Latinx LGBTQ lives helps inform this research study. Intersectionality, serving as the foundation of this research, encourages the study of marginalized voices to be heard for the sake and development of inclusion and social equity. Moreover, studying Latinx culture highlights the importance and values of conventional forms of family life and religion. To be LGBTQ in the Latinx community

means there may exist a shift in conventional family formations, and a withdrawal from faith communities, which previous studies have not researched in depth. Understanding LGBTQ discrimination is important to distinguish the economic disparities that exist for this group. Therefore, this research would attempt to recognize whether Latinx LGBTQs experience similar disparities or have experiences with discrimination. Furthermore, immigration and undocumentedness are known to have played a significant role in the lives of those in the Latinx community, but what is not known is how immigration and undocumentedness affect the overall political efficacy of those who are Latinx LGBTQs, or whether there exists a disparity in political participation due to experiences with immigration and undocumentedness.

Part IV: Operationalization: *Defining Experience*

Because measuring every social, political, and economic experience of the Latinx LGBTQ is not feasible, the *experiences* of Latinx LGBTQs have been narrowed down to specific aspects of social, political, and economic experiences. Within these three categories is a consideration of the current values and issues that exist societally for the Latinx community and the LGBTQ community as an attempt to capture what life looks for someone in Southern California who holds these identities in tandem.

That being said, the *social experience* that this research aims to measure is that of support amongst family, friends, and faith communities within the population of the Latinx LGBTQ community in Southern California. Measuring support levels from family, friends, and faith communities seems appropriate in the attempt to study the intersectionality of the Latinx experience and the LGBTQ experience because of the current existing emphases on family and religion for support in the Latinx community. Using this emphasis of support will help us understand what support looks like for someone who identifies as LGBTQ, an identity known to

have been previously shunned by the Latinx community. The *political experience* this design attempts to measure is that of the level of political participation amongst the Latinx LGBTQ community in San Diego. Another experience this study will attempt to measure is whether experiences with immigration and undocumented status serve as influential factors in the levels of participation. Finally, the *economic experience* that this design attempts to measure is whether this particular population experiences any sort of financial insecurity or security, workplace discrimination because of their identity as LGBTQ, or workplace discrimination because of race/ethnicity.

Part V: Hypotheses

After careful consideration and deliberation of preliminary research about the Latinx and LGBTQ experience, I have made predictions based on what has been known about the two identities separately and in correlation. The following are listed as the hypotheses of this research study:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will experience low levels of family support.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will experience low levels of support from faith community.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will experience high levels of support from friends.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will engage in moderate levels of political participation.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will experience immigration and undocumented status as influential factors in the levels of political participation.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will experience high levels of economic insecurity.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will experience workplace discrimination because of race/ethnicity.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California will experience workplace discrimination because of identity as LGBTQ.

Part VI: Methodology

This research design utilized three different research methods:

1. Case Study Research
2. Survey Research
3. Elite Interviews

First, this research design chose Southern California as a case study—a region known for its diversity and multicultural vivacity. I define Southern California by the ten most southern counties in the state: San Luis Obispo County, Kern County, Santa Barbara County, Ventura County, Los Angeles County, San Bernardino County, Orange County, Riverside County, San Diego County, and Imperial County. According to the United States Census Bureau, Hispanics and Latinos make up 39.1% of the California state population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The large population of ethnic minorities makes Southern California a suitable case study to examine Latinx LGBTQ populations in their social, political, and economic real-life contexts due to the substantial presence of Latinxs.

Second, a twenty-five question survey was utilized in this research study. The survey was advertised and open to all LGBTQ individuals to take regardless of race or ethnicity, as long as they were over the age of 18 and self identified to live in Southern California. In total, 103 respondents took the survey, however, results are based on the 58 participants who answered “yes” to identifying as Latina/Latino or Latinx; this group of 58 respondents was used as the sample pool in which all related data and analysis to this research study stems from. Lesbian identifiers made up 10 of the respondents, Gay identifiers made up 24 of the respondents, Bisexuals made up 12 of the respondents, Queer identifiers made up 4 of the respondents, and there was 1 transgender identifier. Other LGBTQ+ identifiers included 6 Pansexual identifiers, and 1 Asexual identifier.

The survey was sent to twenty college and university LGBTQ support groups and LGBTQ clubs across Southern California for members of these clubs to take. The survey also “snowballed” to those who identified with the survey’s requirements by word of mouth and by having willing survey participants who live in Southern California share the survey on social media after they themselves took the survey, specifically announced with the condition that one must live in Southern California, identify as LGBTQ, and be over the age of 18 to participate.

Because the survey was sent to colleges and universities and shared onto social media, the ages of the majority of the sample pool are in their twenties. Age, in this case, may be of influence to the results of the survey by skewing results towards directions that may not be entirely representative of the Latinx LGBTQ community in Southern California. That being said,

due to the younger sample size of this study, this research study may better explain the experiences of the younger Latinx LGBTQ populations than that of the older generation⁵.

The survey content asked questions in relation to personal social, political, and economic experiences as someone who identifies as LGBTQ⁶. The survey asked questions related to their identity, such as with what gender they identify, what is their sexual orientation, and most importantly, whether they identify as Latinx. The questions used Likert scaling to rate people's attitudes and opinions on questions that pertained to the extent to which they are "out" to their friends, families, and faith communities, and the level of support they receive from these groups.

Finally, elite interviews were conducted amongst a few of the participants of the survey who chose to follow up with a fifteen-minute phone interview. The survey offered an option for people to follow up with a phone interview if they chose to, with the promise of remaining anonymous throughout their participation of the research study. The intention of conducting phone interviews was to capture personal experiences and information that the survey may have been unable to capture and expand on popular trends that seemed to arise when looking at all the compiled data.

Part VII: Results

Survey Results

When asking participants about what level of support is felt amongst family (H1), faith communities (H2), and friends (H3) as an LGBTQ person, the general trends noted in data

⁵ Controlling for the age of the younger and older respondents could potentially speak into how political, economic, and social experiences differ generationally, however due to the limitations of this study, this could be better measured in another study that acquires a more diverse sample of age.

⁶ The survey was designed so that it could capture all who identify as LGBTQ, regardless of race and ethnicity. It was also designed to capture those who identify as LGBTQ and Latinx. Questions had a "does not apply" option for participants to select if they did not identify with the questions that seemed to expand more on Latinx experiences.

results were high levels of some support from family, low levels of support, as well as a noted irrelevancy, with faith communities, and high amounts of support from friend groups.

	Not Supported	Partially Supported	Completely Supported	Does not apply to me
As an LGBTQ person, how much do you feel supported by your <u>friends</u>?	0%	9.26%	90.74%	0%
As an LGBTQ person, how much do you feel supported by your <u>family</u>?	12.96%	50%	35.19%	1.85%
As an LGBTQ person, how much do you feel supported by your <u>faith community</u>?	22.64%	18.87%	3.77%	54.72%

Table 1: Measuring level of support from family, friends, and faith community

H1 was not supported in that I predicted low levels of family support, mainly due to religious stressors that could decrease family support of Latinx LGBTQs. Instead, by combining “partially supported” and “completely supported,” we find that support from family was felt amongst over 85% of the respondents. Although comparisons may not be exact, measuring attitudes of Latinos towards same-sex marriage provide a basic understanding of favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards support of the LGBTQ community; Pew Research center found that 62% of adults favor same-sex marriage compared to that of that 56% of Hispanics in the United States who support same sex marriage as of 2017, (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, Velasco, 2017). This comparison is helpful in our understanding of how levels of support for the greater LGBTQ community, and potentially that of the Latinx LGBTQ community, may be on the rise

seeing how this study captured that levels of support that are over 85% when combining “partially supported” and “completely supported” categories.

Although results show that there are low levels of support from the respondents’ faith community at 22.64%, data that would support H2, it is also worth noting that over 54% of respondents reported that being a part of a faith community does not apply to them⁷. The top two reasons for those that reported that a faith community does not apply to them were “I am no longer religious” and “I did not feel accepted because of my identity as LGBTQ”. Other responses following were “I just outgrew it,” “I switched religions”, and “I am no longer religious.” One particular participant answered on this question open-endedly by responding simply with “hypocrisy.”

It can be suggested that the low levels of support amongst faith communities and the unpredicted findings of a dissociation from faith communities may suggest that levels of support from faith communities may be rooted in the Catholic and Christian church’s teachings that condemn LGBTQ lifestyles. While many may have expected this, it is an interesting finding given the role that the church has often played in fostering social movement organization. Historically, churches and religious institutions have been a place of organization for many social movements and one might think that the LGBTQ movement would be similar. Looking more specifically into an American context, church was a place of mobilization and organization that ultimately led to the success of the Civil Rights Movement in the 60s, and we witness this in its decision to place Martin Luther King Jr, an American Baptist minister, as the head of the movement (Sunnemark 2004). Similarly, churches also served as a place of social activism to those involved in the Chicano movement in the 60s and 70s (Gómez-Quiñones and Vásquez

⁷ The dissociation from faith communities of Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California, separate from measuring low levels of support from faith communities, could be better researched in another study.

2014). But in our particular case, the rejection by religious institutions of LGBTQ lifestyles as a whole has left a whole group of marginalized people unsupported by one of the most historically popular places of organization and mobilization, so if the majority of Christian and Catholic churches take an anti-LGBTQ stance, Latinx LGBTQ people would most likely not utilize a faith community to promote their social, political, or economic struggles.

Furthermore, also previously mentioned was how integral religion is to the Latinx identity; national data reports that 84% of Latinos in the US say religion is either very important or somewhat important in their lives (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, Velasco, 2017). Controlling for age would allow me to find whether experiences of support felt by faith communities vary generationally, however, the age group above 30 years was too small to be representative of an older generation.

H3, which predicted that Latinx LGBTQs will experience high levels of support from friends, was supported in that 9.2% of respondents reported feeling partially supported and over 90% of respondents reported feeling completely supported from friends. The results are striking and proving so much that one cannot choose their family, but they can choose their friends. This suggests a shift away from faith communities and from family for support, areas highlighted to be of great importance to those who are Latinx, and a shift towards friends for support.

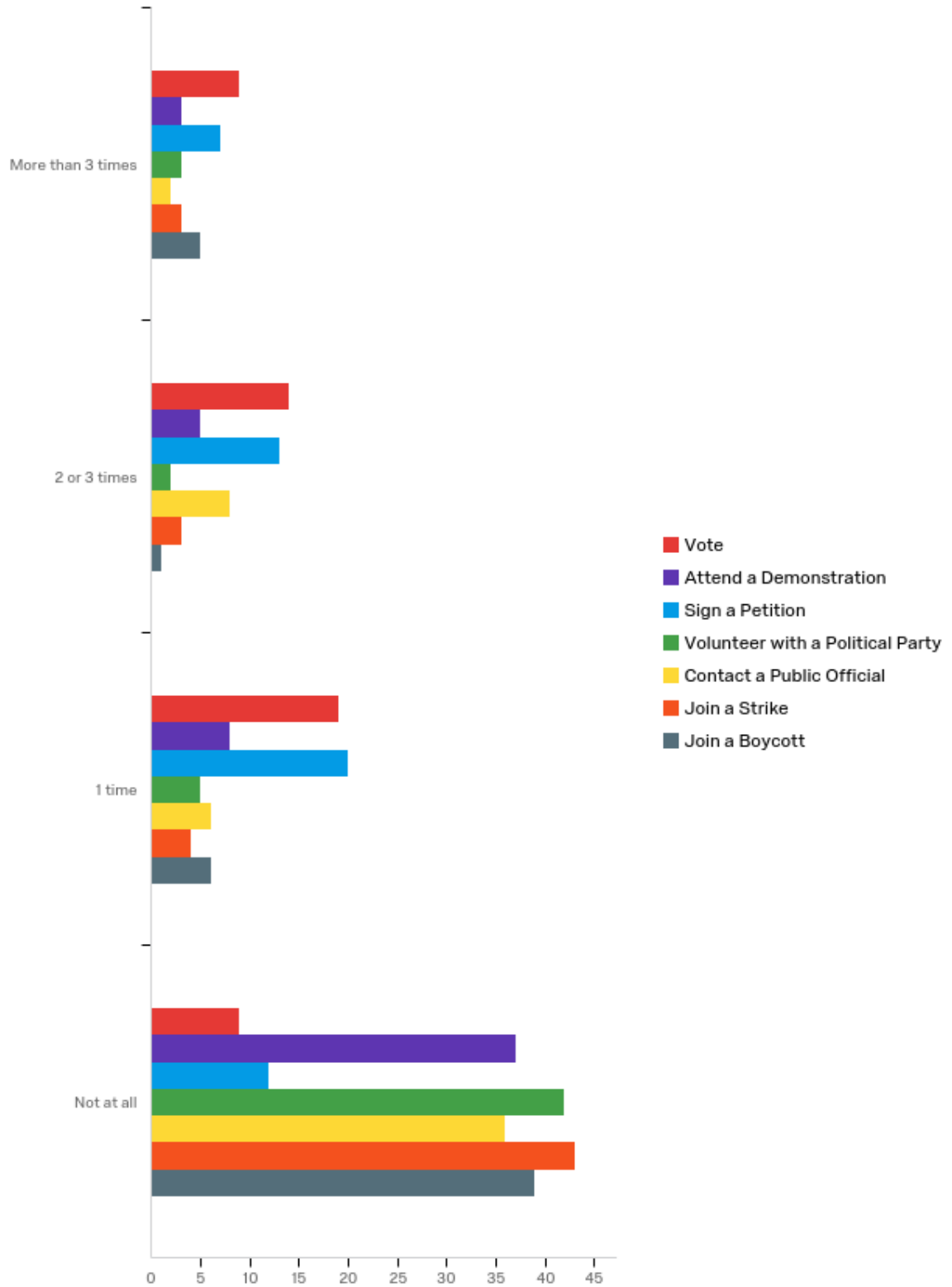
However, something to notice is that Gay identifiers saw the strongest variance of levels of support from their families, friends, and faith communities, if applicable. When controlling for sexual orientation/identity, Gay identifiers reported the lowest levels of support from family, the highest levels of support from friends, and the lowest levels of support from faith communities. The implications of why the levels of support vary so much amongst Gay identifiers in particular this is up for question and should be further studied.

H4, hypothesizing that Latinx LGBTQs will politically participate in moderate levels, was predicted on the facts that Latinxs see low levels of political participation, but LGBTQs see high levels of political participation. Although Latinos make up 12.8% of the electorate and reported their highest turnout yet for the 2018 elections, this demographic has been known to be politically inactive in past elections: in 2014, an estimated “27% of Hispanic eligible voters cast a ballot, a record low and far below the turnout rate among black voters at 41% and white voters at 46%” (Krogstad, Flores, Lopez 2018). LGBTQs, however, are known to be very politically active compared to that of the general population; voter registration rates of the LGBTQ community are at 77%, just a little over the rate among the general public at 74% (Perez, 2014). The political participation levels of Latinx LGBTQs were unknown before this study, and look more like participation levels of the Latinx community than the LGBTQ community. Bar Chart 1 shows the levels in which political participation is low for Latinx LGBTQs.

By looking at Bar Chart 1, we can see that Latinx LGBTQs are just as likely to participate in an unconventional modes of activity as they are in a conventional modes of activity. We can see, however, that although there is not any particular mode of activity this group overwhelmingly participates in, there is heavy participation in attending demonstrations and boycotting. We can also see that there are higher levels of signing petitions and voting than any other modes of activity. In a study focusing on identity, perhaps engaging in activities that seem more anonymous inclines a marginalized group like Latinx LGBTQs to participate.

What could also be driving down the levels of political participation of Latinx LGBTQs is age. According to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 31% of voters ages 18-29 voted in the 2018 midterms. However, this has not always remained so consistent, considering only 21% of eligible voters aged 18-29 voted in the 2014 midterm

elections (CIRCLE 2018). Researchers have been trying for years to find out why youth political participation is low, and activists have been persistently attempting to mobilize the younger generation, and still, youth turnout in low numbers. That being said, because the sample pool of this study was largely under 30 years old, it may not be race/ethnicity driving the numbers down, rather age may account for one of the reasons why political participation is low.



Bar Chart 1: Measuring levels of different modes of political participation within a year of all Latinx LGBTQ survey participants

H5, predicting that Latinx LGBTQs in Southern California will experience high levels of immigration and undocumented status as influential factors in their levels of participation, could only be partially tested due to only four of the respondents reporting as undocumented. I expected to have more undocumented individuals in my sample of Latinx LGBTQ participants. However, without generalizing, the four participants that reported being undocumented also showed low levels of political participation, so while it is not certain to say that undocumented status is influential to levels of political participation, the hypothesis potentially could have been supported with an adequate enough sample size. However, data results did show that immigration is a role that plays into the lives of Latinx LGBTQs. When asking participants if they “were not born in the United States, how many years ago did they immigrate here?” and “If your parents/guardians were not born in the United States, how many years ago did they immigrate here?”, of a sample size of 58 participants, 40 reported that either or both they or their parents had experiences with immigration within the last 30 years. 18 of the 58 in this sample size answered “does not apply to me,” noting that neither they nor their parents had experiences with immigration. Nonetheless, this group too followed the trend of low levels of political participation.

H6, predicting that Latinx LGBTQs will experience high levels of economic insecurity, could not be supported: respondents were evenly split between agreement and disagreement on this, and could not find strong enough support for this hypothesis. When controlling for those who said they live in multi-generational households and whether they felt economically secure, more respondents felt economically secure than not. When controlling for age, respondents who were under the age of 30 and did not live in multi-generational households showed they felt less economically secure by 13.65%, when combining “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”, than

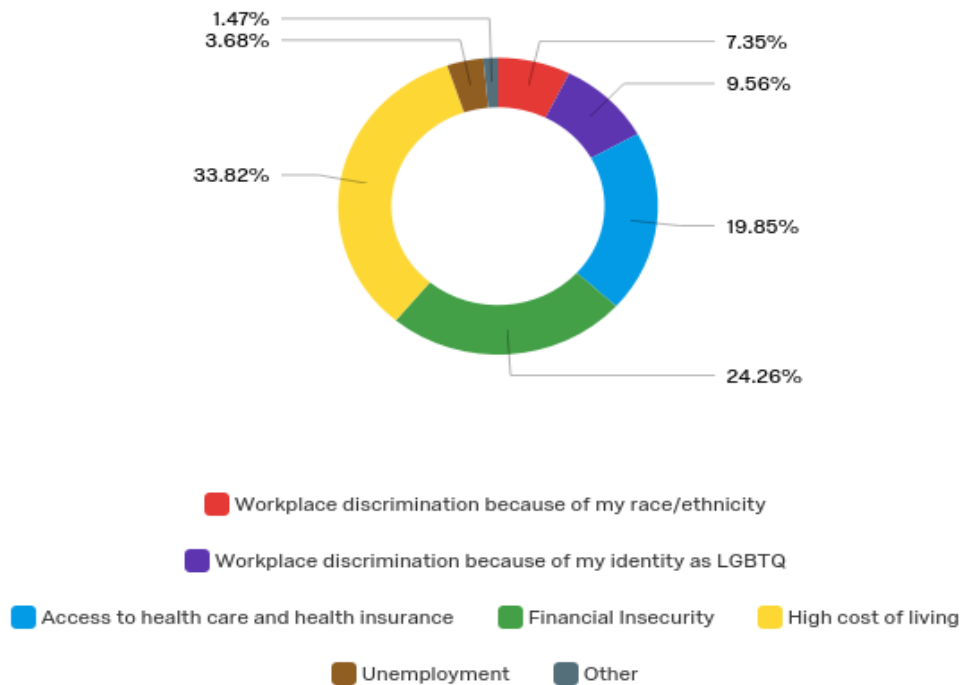
those who lived in multi-generational households (Table 2). However, data still showed that those who reported that they are not providing for dependents followed the trend of being split between agreement and disagreement on levels of economic security. In contrast, the only three respondents who were over the age of 30 reported not living in a multi-generational household and reported feeling economically secure, therefore, no representative conclusion can be drawn on the prediction that their economic security would look vastly different than those of ages under 30.

Do you live in a multi-generational household?	I feel economically secure					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Yes		4.35%	39.13%	21.74%	30.43%	4.35%
No		8%	20%	24%	36%	12%
Total		6.25%	29.17%	22.92%	33.33%	8.33%

Table 2, showing feelings of economic security levels of those who are under 30 and live in a multi-generational household

Moreover, when measuring for whether Latinx LGBTQ individuals in Southern California experience moderate levels of workplace discrimination because of race/ethnicity (H7), I found that this is not an issue that is impacting this community as much as other economic issues are. Pie Chart 1 shows responses when I asked respondents to choose three economic issues that most impact their lives. H7 was not supported in that only 7.35% of respondents said workplace discrimination based on race/ethnicity was one of the economic issues that most impacts their lives. Similarly, H8 could not be supported in that 9.56% of

respondents said workplace discrimination because of identity as LGBTQ was an economic issue that most impacts their lives. Instead, by looking at Pie Chart 1, we see that high cost of living was the economic issue that most impacts the lives of Latinx LGBTQ people in Southern California, which makes sense considering this study was focused on Southern California, a region notorious for having a high cost of living. The next two impactful economic issues shown in the data were also access to healthcare and health insurance, and financial insecurity. Other impactful economic issues included unemployment, and “other” options that included “increasing minimum wage” and “tuition costs”.



Pie Chart 1: Showing economic issues Latinx LGBTQ people feel most impact their lives. Respondents were able to choose three economic issues which they feel most impact their lives. The Pie Chart shows the responses participants chose.

Elite Interview Results

At the end of the survey, respondents had the choice of providing their email addresses for an optional 15-minute follow up phone interview. Requirements for elite interviews were that they be over the age of 18, identify as LGBTQ, and live in Southern California. Of the ten people that provided their email at the end of the survey, two respondents who self identified as Latinx and LGBTQ followed up with phone interviews. Those that were interviewed will be referred to as Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 for anonymity purposes.

First, Respondent 1, who is a 20-year-old Lesbian identifier and also Latinx, responded that they were partially supported by their parents upon coming out as Lesbian, saying the only opposition felt was from their father who is Latino, but none from their mother who is White. Where they felt the most tension, however, was from their faith community; they were very involved in a faith community until coming out as a Lesbian and they were initially rejected. Respondent 1 said that they now have found a new faith community that is more affirming of LGBTQ individuals, and feels completely supported within this new faith community. Moreover, Respondent 1 shared that their Lesbian identity has encouraged them to politically participate more often than not. They shared that they have a passion for public service and helping those in need. Surely, there is a feeling of responsibility for Respondent 1 to act on behalf of those who are like them in sexual identity/orientation and have struggled like them. Lastly, they also reported that cost of living is the issue that most impacts their life, in accordance to the trend that was noted in survey data results.

Secondly, Respondent 2, who is a 21-year-old Lesbian identifier and Latinx, was partially unsupported upon their coming out to their parents. They were quoted saying that their father was supportive of their identity as a Lesbian, but their mother was not supportive due to religious

reasons. Respondent 2 said, “My mom cried and felt like she failed as a parent, but I tried to show her there was nothing wrong with me and I was the same as I’ve always been.” Respondent 2 also mentioned that their only two siblings were completely supported by their identity as a Lesbian. Additionally, Respondent 2 expanded on how they do not politically participate often because they do not trust the system to do what is right, and feels “too uninformed to feel confident enough to have a say in political affairs.” Lastly, in terms of economic security, Respondent 2 said they were not providing for dependents and do not live in a multi-generational household, but reported feeling completely financially secure. “I’ve been on my own since I was 19 out of choice... my job allows me to provide for myself.”

Here, we witness contrasting experiences that speak into the findings of this research study. Respondent 1 receives partial support from their parents, and was initially rejected from their faith community, as many reported in this study, due to their coming out and identity as a Lesbian. Respondent 1, however, did not fall into the trend of low political participation, as they made it known that they felt a responsibility to be a voice for those within the LGBTQ community by their participation. Lastly, Respondent 1 also reported that high cost of living is an economic issue that they feel most impacts their life, as most survey participants agreed. However, although Respondent 2 was partially supported from their family as well, they did follow the trend of low levels of political participation because they felt uninformed, a reason many reported to explain their low levels of political participation. They also reported feeling completely economically secure, unlike respondent 1 who feels high cost of living is an issue that impacts her most.

Clearly noticed in the utilization of elite interviews is the variety of experiences that Latinx LGBTQ people have, especially within the context of Southern California. While a

survey may well be able to capture the variety of experience, it is important for the purposes of this study to also highlight the specific diversity of experience of the Latinx LGBTQ population person to person as well. We can see that although some experiences are relevant to some, they are not relevant to all, and there remains more to be learned about this population in the academic field.

Part VIII: Discussion and Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this research study was to find out more about the social, political, and economic experiences of Latinx LGBTQ individuals in Southern California. First, the social experiences this research measures are that of support from family, friends, and faith communities. Second, the political experiences that are measured are levels of political participation, and levels of influence of immigration and undocumented status. Third, the economic experiences measured in this study are levels of economic insecurity and discrimination based on race/ethnicity or sexual identity/orientation.

Through the usage of case study research, elite interviews, and surveys, it was discovered that LGBTQ Latinxs have high levels of support from friends, higher levels of support from family than initially anticipated, and low levels of support from faith communities, but also a noted disassociation from faith communities for the top two reasons of no longer being religious and not feeling accepted because of an identity as LGBTQ.

The vast differences in the levels of support between family, friends, and faith community suggest that Latinx LGBTQ individuals will go where they feel recognized and seen. We may be able to not choose our family, but we can choose our friends, and friendly support seems more important than ever to this group of people who remain variably unsupported due to

their identities in multiple areas of their lives. Unfortunately, not only did respondents report low levels of support from faith communities, but are experiencing a complete dissociation from one. This disconnection from a faith community is striking, considering Latinx culture largely values religiosity. Religious communities signify respite and peace for many, but the case seems to be the opposite for Latinx LGBTQs.

It was also found that Latinx LGBTQs have low levels of political participation. The reasons for the low levels of political participation may be due to the young sample pool of this study, considering young Americans do not politically participate often. Or, the low levels of participation may be reflected by the trend of their demographic, the Latino community, who has been known to participate in low levels as well. This could be better researched in a more specific study focusing on the modes and levels of participation of the Latinx LGBTQ community.

Furthermore, I also found that Latinx LGBTQs experience equal levels of financial security and financial insecurity. But when controlling for whether they live in multi-generational households, I found that those that reported not living in a multi-generational household also reported higher levels of economic insecurity compared to those who lived in multi-generational households. It was also found that discrimination based on race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/identity did not seem to be as much of a problem as previously predicted. Instead, the leading two reasons of economic insecurity were high cost of living and financial insecurity— answers that may be rooted in California's high cost of living, and also because the majority of the sample pool under 30 may be struggling more with financial security than those of older generations. Further research on the economic and financial security of Latinx LGBTQ

people could be better researched in another study to discover whether economic security looks different to those who are over the age of 30.

By furthering this discussion, many organizations and researchers will be able to better address the needs of this widely underrepresented group. Only a limited amount of academic literature exists on the Latinx LGBTQ community in the United States as a whole, seeing as the SJS was the only nationwide survey conducted on the Latinx LGBTQ population. This research study is the first academic literature to contribute to the study of the Latinx LGBTQ population in Southern California, and it is my hope that my findings provoke researchers to study into this population and their experiences more in depth. While limited academic literature has made this research study difficult to piece together, the larger implications of this research may be suggestive of other Latinx LGBTQ populations throughout the United States.

This study has made a contribution to the study of intersectional theory by studying race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/identity in correlation. With the understanding intersectionality and the overlapping identities the Latinx LGBTQ community contains, the appropriate support and services will be able help these communities to reach their fullest potentials and thrive in a society in which they are better understood and accepted. Current academic literature on Latinx LGBTQs has done what it can to better understand a group that has been silenced for so long, however, it could do more seeing as it is so recent and incomplete. For the purposes of understanding identity, marginalization, and discrimination, the discussion on how to better understand Latinx LGBTQ communities must continue.

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