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Constructing Family Among Same-sex Couples:
A Comparative Study of Same-sex Latino and White Couples

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Sandra Marie Loughrin

December 2011

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson
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The Dissertation of Sandra Marie Loughrin is approved:

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University of California, Riverside

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Constructing Family Among Same-sex Couples: A Comparative Study of Same-sex Latino and White Couples

by

Sandra Marie Loughrin

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, December 2011
Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson

This study examines the ways in which queer families construct “family” in light of social and legal constraints through a comparative study of fifteen queer Latinos and fifteen queer Anglos/whites¹ in self-identified committed relationships. I focus on three main aspects within the construction of “family” in everyday life: (1) familial acceptance for current relationships, (2) the social construction of queer or queer/Latino identity, and (3) the meanings of coupling, romantic commitment, and family practices and division of household labor. Findings suggest that queer Latinos’ cultural and familial expectations shape their perceptions of the “coming out” process and familial acceptance for their sexuality. However, fears and anxieties Latinos expressed over social and familial acceptance of their romantic and sexual lives were relatively similar to the stories told by the Anglo sample. Similarly, Latino respondents tended to conflate homophobia within Latino culture with Catholicism. Respondents in the Anglo sample told similar struggles

¹ Anglo is a term commonly used within Latino studies to refer to white or Caucasian people.

with sexual identity and religious opposition. Furthermore, the everyday lives, household division of labor, and the way queer families construct “family” differ little by race/ethnicity. I argue that conceptions of a “traditional Latino family,” “machismo,” and other cultural perceptions of the Latino culture lead queer Latinos to believe they will not be accepted, that their familial acceptance process is more difficult than that of their white counterparts, or that they may face greater opposition from their church or community—regardless of how similar their stories may be to these white counterparts.

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Chapter 1

Constructing Queer Family: An Examination of Latino and White Queer Couples

Introduction

For some time, scholarship in family studies has called for greater attention to diversity and family pluralism. While research on third-world women and transnational families has increased plurality in this scholarship, attention to diversity among same-sex couples has been minimal. In instances where family scholars have examined queer families, they have primarily focused on white, middle-class, well-educated, queer couples (e.g. Carrington 1999; Kurdek 1998, 2004; Lewin 1994; Oswald 2004), leaving minority same-sex couples nearly invisible. Combining insights from Queer Studies and Latino Studies, I examine and compare how Latino and white same-sex couples understand and carry out family life using qualitative research methods.

My research also draws insights from social constructionist perspectives on “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman 1987) as well as intersectional feminist theory, which draws attention to how race, class, and gender inequalities shape social life. It is also informed by the empirical literatures on same-sex families, Latino families, and gay and lesbian Latinos. I argue that the social construction of family and the process by which same-sex couples “do family” is shaped by both legal and social constraints. As of 2011, most U.S. states do not accord same-sex couples the same rights as heterosexual couples to marry and adopt children. Yet, gay and lesbian couples live in a social world dominated by the nuclear family norm, and many same-sex couples construct meanings and social roles that are consistent with that norm. Their conceptions of family and

family practices are often very similar to those commonly found among heterosexual couples. Conversely, many same-sex couples construct family in ways that challenge the heterosexual nuclear family norm. Many Latino same-sex couples construct family in ways that are consistent with familism—a reciprocal sense of commitment, sharing, cooperation, and intimacy that is taken as defining the bonds between family members (Dizzard & Gadlin 1990)—but they also challenge these notions in the everyday process of family life. Either approach results in the construction and reformulation of the family unit and the meanings and rituals associated with being a “family.” For example, the Latino sample interviewed had a tendency to construct family according to different perspectives, characteristics, and political beliefs. That is, there was no evidence that any respondent was vehemently trying to be political and challenge notions of “familism”. Rather, many expressed mixed emotions over a white, heterosexual notion of marriage and familial expectations.

Mainstream LGBT organizations that are dominated by whites often lack the proper tools to address issues that queer Latinos face on an everyday basis. Through this dissertation, I hope to provide an in depth analysis of the self-identified wants, needs, desires and challenges of same-sex Latino couples and how these are both similar and different from that found among white same-sex couples. By documenting these perceived similarities and differences, my research can help LGBT centers to better understand and approach queer Latinos seeking advice and acceptance within their organizations.

Although many of the findings of this dissertation have implications for Latino same-sex couples, Latinos should not be viewed or interpreted as an experimental group. Nor should the white sample in this study be viewed or interpreted as a comparative sample. Therefore, the lives and experiences of queer Anglos should not be considered as a measuring stick in which to compare the experiences of the Latino sample. To do so would only serve to reify stereotypes of Latino culture as backward or abnormal to a more progressive American culture. Rather, my study sought to give equal analysis and comparison of the experiences of both groups, in order to understand the everyday lives of gay and lesbians in light of social and legal constraints.

In this chapter, I first review the current literature on Latino families, queer Latinos, Queer Anglos, and queer families. I argue that these literatures need to be bridged in order to understand how Latino and Anglo same-sex couples “do family” (DeVault 1991; Hochschild 2003). I then describe the data and methods involved in this study.

Theoretical Perspective

My theoretical perspective combines insights from social constructionist approaches to “doing gender,” and intersectional feminist and queer theories and scholarship. For the purpose of this dissertation, conceptions of family, marriage, and gender will be viewed as socially constructed concepts that are actively performed on a daily basis and capable of social change. In this sense, family and gender are concepts and ideals that are socially constructed through everyday social interactions. People hold one another “accountable” for maintaining consistency with them.

Social constructionism arose in feminist theory primarily in opposition to theories on gender essentialism. Essentialism focuses on a belief that there is an immutable, eternal, and transhistorical essence of femaleness and maleness (Kolmar & Bartkowski 2005). Instead, social constructionism takes the stance that one does not have innate maleness or femaleness, but develops these characteristics through a social and cultural process. Developing a social constructionist perspective of gender, West and Zimmerman(1995) argued that we “do gender” through accountability and accomplishment of one’s sex category in everyday social interactions. According to this perspective (hooks 1989; Lorde 1978, Crenshaw 1997; Truth 1851), it is important to study the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which gender is constructed. Additionally, because of inequalities in perceived status and power, and unequal access to resources, social constructionism asserts that our cultural constructions of gender will vary by race, class, sexual orientation, etc.

Likewise, one can “do marriage” or “do family” by way of being held accountable for and accomplishing marriage or family. According to Judith Lorber, the ability to “do” gender—or in this case, family and marriage—is a “process” where “individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in expected ways, and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order” (Lorber 1994: 26). Family becomes a series of performative relational interactions and subjective set of activities whose meanings are made by those who participate in them (Weeks 2004; Weeks 2001: 38). One is not “in” a marriage or a member of a family. Rather, one “does” marriage or family. In this sense, there is no one singular conception or monolithic view of family or

marriage by which one is expected to live. Family, therefore, is based on the activities and everyday practices, even if those practices may be constrained by hegemonic ideologies as well as legal and institutional norms.

Smith (1993) uses the phrase, “the Standard North American Family” or SNAF to refer to a normative conception of family, which she considers to be an ideological code. A normative family is given meaning and that meaning is reproduced in multiple settings. It sees the construction of a normative family not as set of criteria or rules, but rather as a meaning-based structure that is generated and reinforced by syntax, categories, vocabulary, etc. in our everyday lives (52). Constant reinforcement through speech patterns and written words creates a conception of a family unit that marginalizes families that do not match these constructed ideological codes. Often it is not only individuals and families that use the North American Family as a standard by which they measure themselves, but scholars and researchers often examine families in terms of this standard or norm.

Smith (1993) describes this so-called normal family as a “legally married couple sharing a household... the adult male is in paid employment; his earnings provide an economic basis of the household. The adult female may also earn an income, but her primary responsibility is to the care of husband, household and children” (52). Such a description of the family is ridden with ideological codes that differentiate the meanings and gender roles of men and women. Furthermore, the SNAF describes a middle-class standard (since it is assumed that the male can earn enough to provide for his entire family) and a heteronormative standard (since it is assumed that family is constructed by

an adult male and female). Furthermore, it neglects multiple family forms (i.e. single parents, childless couples, children raised by extended family, etc.).

Pyke (2000) argues that hegemonic images of the normal American family are ethnocentric, denigrating the style and beliefs of racial-ethnic minorities, immigrants, gay and lesbians, and single parents while encouraging negative self images among those in family forms that do not match up with the SNAF. Often collectivistic families that promote family interdependence, duty, responsibility, obedience, and commitment to their family, feel marginalized from American, white, middle-class, two-parent, individualistic families that stress more democratic relationships, individual autonomy, psychological well-being, and emotional expressiveness. Many families that do not fit the SNAF norm see themselves as categorically different. Not fitting into the ideological codes of the ideal family type categorically means that their family structure is seen not only as different from the norm, but often as deficient or deviant.

One ideological code generated and reinforced by the SNAF norm is the concept of familism. Dizard and Gadlin (1990: 6) describe familism as “a reciprocal sense of commitment, sharing, cooperation, and intimacy that is taken as defining the bonds between family members... representing the more or less unconstrained acknowledgement of both material and emotional dependency and obligation.” Dizard and Gadlin (1990) take a historical perspective to the evolution of familism in American society. They contend that familism emerged and solidified in the mid-nineteenth century due to two distinct developments: (1) families severed deep emotional ties with extended family and the community in order to fulfill a desire for intimacy and affection within the

nuclear family, and (2) the stability of paid employment and reliance on the economy allowed for more independent and autonomous nuclear families. In this respect, an increase in American familism in the nineteenth century led to an emotionally and financially autonomous nuclear family.

Quantitative scholars (Marsiglia et. al. 2009; Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez 2000; Baca-Zinn 1994) have used the concept of familism as a measure of family involvement that promotes emotional and instrumental support, as well as having familial pride. Accordingly, an increase in familism has been associated with an increase of family unity, interdependence among family members, and an increase in social support (Marsiglia et. al. 207). Familism has been measured in terms of demographic familism (size of the nuclear family), normative familism (value placed on family unity and solidarity), structural familism (multigenerational households and extended family), and behavioral familism (degree of interaction between families and kin networks). Quantitative scholars have used such categories to distinguish differences in the level of familism based on race/ethnicity, class, etc. (Baca-Zinn 1994).

The dissertation seeks to study the way couples “do family” in light of their sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and class. Here, I draw insights from feminist intersectional theories that assert that social life and identity cannot be viewed in terms of sexuality alone, gender alone, ethnicity alone, or class alone. Instead, these interwoven identities and relationships can be best explained through the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality asserts that our lives are not simply shaped by gender inequalities, but also inequalities based on race, class, sexuality, nationality, age, ability and other social

categories, and that such inequalities operate simultaneously rather than separately (Kolmar & Bartkowski 2005: 49). Scholars with a primary focus on intersectionality introduced the concept of “multiple consciousness” (Baca Zinn and Dill 1996), “interlocking systems of oppression” (hooks 1989) and “multiple jeopardy” (King 1988) to account for systems of domination and their salience on an individual who faces oppression on multiple levels. Baca Zinn and Dill (1996) claim that a distinguishing feature of “multiracial feminism” is a recognition of a range of “interlocking inequalities” that allow people to experience their “social location” in terms of the structural relationships of race, class, gender and sexuality. Accordingly, several empirical studies have expanded our understanding of intersectionality by highlighting how men’s and women’s experiences and interactions differs across race (Anzaluda 1987; Baca Zinn 1980; Baca Zinn & Dill 1994; Bettie 2000; Chow 1996; Collins 1998, 1999, 2000; Glenn 2000; hooks 1984; Hurtado 1996; Mirande 1981), class (Acker 2000; Crenshaw 1991; Davis 1981; Luttrell 1989; Pyke 1996), and sexual orientation (Rubin 1993; Takagi 1996; Ward 2004).

Chicana feminist theorists such as Gloria Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga have presented work that reflects borders, homeland, and multiple systems of oppression. Anzaldua (2007) discusses a “mestiza consciousness” that develops from a borderland identity. She argues that Chicana lesbians face multiple systems of oppression due to gender, race, class and sexuality. Chicana lesbians find they have no specific homeland or no culture because they are not accepted by the white gay/lesbian community or by the heterosexual Chicano community.

Collins (1998) describes Black feminist scholars in academia as “outsiders within,” suggesting that a social group’s placement in a specific historical context of gender, race and class inequality gives them a unique and advantageous perspective. Similar to the work of Anzaldua and Moraga, Collins (1999) argues that unequal power relations of gender, race and class produce particular kinds of social locations that are known as “border spaces” (86). According to Collins (1998), these border spaces create systems of inequality by specifying that particular groups have a homeland in which they belong, producing insiders and outsiders.

I argue that intersecting inequalities based on race, gender, class, and sexual orientation significantly affect on the way Latino and white same-sex couples “do family.” Latinos’ social location as gay/lesbian couples of color may very well give them a unique perspective on the meanings of family and the extent to which they identify with familism or a heterosexual nuclear family. Latino same-sex couples may find that they have trouble identifying with their culture due to the fact that they may be rejected or marginalized by their families or the Latino community. Similarly, Latino same-sex couples may have difficulty identifying with white same-sex couples due to their ethnic social location. This inability to identify with white same-sex couples was present in the sample of fifteen Latinos who participated in this study, with many indicating that they expected whites to have an easier time gaining acceptance by their families and community.

Additionally, this dissertation examines the lives of same-sex Anglo couples as they navigate family life in light of social and legal constraints. Much like the Latino

sample, Anglos face the intersection of gender, class and sexuality. This dissertation finds that Anglos have similar difficulties in the “coming out” process and establishment of a sexual identity. The remainder of this chapter will provide a literature review of previous research conducted on queer families, queer Anglos, Latino families, and queer Latinos.

Scholarship on Queer Families

Current literature on same-sex couples and families may provide further insight into the ways that the social and legal system might create further complications for queer couples, in addition to cultural and familial conflicts. Legal issues have affected the gay/lesbian family, both on the level of marriage and adoption rights. As of 2011, only seven states have recognized same-sex marriage. A total of eight states recognize same-sex domestic partnerships and five states recognize civil unions. The most recent legal change for gay and lesbian families was the establishment of legalized same-sex marriage in the state of Vermont (2009), recognition of same-sex marriages in the District of Columbia (2010), and New York (2011) and domestic partnerships in the state of Nevada (2009). The National Center for Lesbian Rights, and The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force organization provide up to date statistics on legal complexities of marriage and adoption, by state. In addition to Vermont, DC and New York, the states of Connecticut (2008), Iowa (2009), Massachusetts (2004), and Maine (2004) also recognize full marriage equality (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 2011).

While marriage and full legal benefits of marriage are legal in six states, “institutionalized partial legalization” of marriage is present by way of civil unions and domestic partnerships (Oswald & Kuvallanks 2008). California (2005), Oregon (2008),

Washington (2008) and Nevada (2009) allow domestic partnerships, while Vermont (2000), New Jersey, Illinois (2011), Delaware (2012), and Hawaii (2012) allow for civil unions (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 2011). Under civil unions, same-sex partners may acquire health care coverage, next-of-kin status, and inheritance rights, depending on the particular jurisdiction in which they reside. However, any benefits acquired are not transferable to other jurisdictions or states. Domestic partnerships grant same-sex couples state-level benefits but restrict federal rights, responsibilities or protections (Oswald and Kovalanka 2008). Similarly, state-level benefits are not transferable to other states or local jurisdictions.

In addition to marriage, states regulate adoption, foster parenting or second-parent adoption for same-sex couples. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 27% of same sex couples have a child under 18 living within their home, 35% of lesbians have a child within the home, and only 16% of gay men have a child within the home (Family Equity Council 2011). Court case and rulings by state and local jurisdictions cause variations in restrictions for adoption. Nebraska restricts gay and lesbian couples from adoption, as well as unmarried couples. The Supreme Court ruled against prohibiting same-sex adoption in Nebraska in 2002. 1977 Florida law and 2000 Mississippi law prohibits gay/lesbian adoption. In 2004, the Attorney General issued prohibition of same-sex adoption in Michigan. Finally, 2000 law in Utah prohibits adoption by unmarried couples. As of 2007, Utah law gives adoption preference to married rather than single adults, thus effecting same-sex parents (NGLTF 2011).

Efforts to restrict lesbians and gays from marrying gained momentum by antigay activists who perceive same-sex couples as different, wrong, or a threat to the sanctity of traditional marriage and “family values” (Oswald, Blume, Marks 2004; Naples 2004). Such activists arose as members of the New Right in the late 1970s and early 1980s and continued into the 1990s by way of the Christian Promise Keepers and Million Man Marchers (Sullivan 2004). By the late 1990s, “traditional family values” ideology emphasized a “normative family structure consisting of a heterosexually married couple with children in which the father maintained—or ‘reclaimed’—a position of authority and responsibility as the head of household,” leaving no room for alternative families (Sullivan 2004: 20). Anti-gay activists promoted various fears of same-sex marriages, including the belief that it is a gateway to polygamy, group marriages and the eventual eradication of traditional marriage (Bolte 1998: 118). Traditional “family values” and conceptions of heterosexual couples as the only acceptable family form lend popular support to such acts as the Defense of Marriage Act (1996) that have slowed the legalization of same-sex marriage and adoption rights at both federal and state levels (Naples 2004: 679; Sullivan 2004: 34). As a result, legal ramifications are both a cause and a consequence of ideology supporting the SNAF and heteronormativity. Because of such legal restrictions, same-sex couples in most states are forced to construct “marriage” and “family” under different legal conditions than heterosexual families and with fewer rights. Many married or couples in a domestic partnership reported that legal benefits, taxes, and living wills were of great concern. Because a large portion of the Anglo

sample was either married or in a domestic partnership, many of the reports and concerns discussed in this dissertations reflect this sample.

Construction of Family, Marriage, and Commitment for Same-Sex Couple

The concept of family and marriage as a social construction allows for the everyday practices of same-sex couples to redefine and reconstruct family life. Weston (1991), "Families We Choose," presents an Anthropological approach to understanding family and kin among her sample of eighty gay and lesbians living in the San Francisco Bay area in the 1980s. Weston suggests that the formation of a gay identity from a straight identity has often been seen in opposition to family. That is, due to the inability to procreate in a fashion individuals are familiar with (assuming they had heterosexual parents) gay and lesbians may feel as if their sexuality excludes them from family life. A further contradiction of "family" and "gay" may also lie in the inability for ones family of origin to provide support or acceptance for individuals after coming out. Weston contends that gay and lesbians develop a "chosen family" based on the individuals who provide support and a general sense of family, thereby reconstituting meanings and definitions of family; "in the Bay Area, families we choose resembled networks in the sense that they could cross household lines, and both were based on ties that radiated outward from individuals like spokes on a wheel...they quite consciously incorporated symbolic demonstrations of love, shared history, material or emotional assistance, and other signs of enduring solidarity" (Weston 1991: 109). Family became kin, and appeared to consist of close friends, members of one's family of origin, lovers/partners and, in some cases, ex-lovers. Therefore meanings of family and family formation are much

more fluid than a biological blood family. Weston suggests that dominant culture representations have asserted that straight is to gay as family is to no family, yet she finds that at a certain point in history gay people began to contend that straight is to gay as blood family is to chosen family (Weston 1991: 29).

Weston's conception of family is based on ideology and family formation. Similar literature on queer families focuses on the construction of family by way of meanings and ideologies in relationship to ceremonies, marriage and domestic partnerships. Gay and lesbian couples find that family life or marriage is constructed in the context of US legal systems and broader cultural ideologies. Standard definitions of "family" and "marriage" complicate the process of defining oneself as a spouse or parent in the same way as a heterosexual man or woman. The Standard North American Family (SNAF), as described by Smith (1987), and conceptions of heteronormativity may lead gay and lesbian couples to see themselves as different than a heterosexual couple. By definition, the SNAF encompasses heteronormativity, an ideology that promotes gender conventionality, heterosexuality, and family traditionalism as the correct way for people to be (Oswald, Blume & Marks 2004:143). In this sense, same-sex couples challenge heteronormativity and the SNAF, regardless if they make the conscious decision to do so or otherwise uphold other aspects of the SNAF. This was particularly true of the younger Latinos interviewed in this study. Many consciously question the SNAF conception of family. However, this may be in large part due to the fact that the younger respondents interviewed were college age and vocal about the unjust nature of Proposition 8. As a

result, they were more likely to question the institution of marriage as well as the concept of a SNAF.

On the other hand, a large portion of family literature on same-sex couples debates whether marriage or having children in a gay/lesbian relationship is simply accommodating or assimilating to the SNAF, heteronormativity, and patriarchy (Lewin 1994, 2001; Naples 2004; Sullivan 2004; Weston 1991). To “do marriage” by legal weddings, civil unions, domestic partnerships, or informal commitment ceremonies can be considered a form of compliance or assimilation, rather than as resistance to heteronormativity.

Wedding ceremonies are expensive and time consuming; yet, by themselves, they provide no legal benefits (Lewin 1998). However, ceremonies can be viewed as rituals that are performative and convey messages about identities and the communities of lesbians and gay men, such as claiming a place in an ethnic community, making statements about relationships to God, situate bonds, and affirm/reject connections to mainstream culture (Lewin 2004: 1001). Couples often desire to be seen as a legitimate couple and as being capable of devotion, loyalty, and commitment (Lewin 2001: 51). Oswald refers to rituals as a sense of belonging for gay and lesbian couples (Oswald 2001: 2002). Hequenbourg (2004) attributes this desire to legitimize a relationship through ceremony as an attempt to normalize an “unscripted” life. She contends that commitment ceremonies—as well as second-parent adoption—“closely parallel normalizing strategies because their ultimate goal is to forge a space for lesbian mothers within existing definitions of motherhood and family” (Hequenbourg 2004: 753).

Due to discrimination against homosexuality by much of the Catholic Church, it may be difficult for Latino couples to conduct ceremonies in a religious institution regardless of the marriage legality of the state in which the couple resides. However, due to familism, queer Latino couples may have a strong desire to conduct commitment ceremonies. Conversely, due to possible shame or guilt from biological families, queer Latinos may choose to actively hide their committed relationships. Further research on the desirability and meanings of commitment ceremonies for queer Latino couples are needed to adequately examine these experiences. Of the fifteen Latinos interviewed in this study, only one had married (although not recognized by the state of California) by church. In this situation, “Carla” noted that a ceremony was important to her and her partner. There was also evidence that she included multiple religious bonding rituals during the ceremony to prove their love and commitment in the eyes of God. Carla also found her ceremony as a key tool in solidifying her partner as her “wife” to her family and friends.

An important aspect of creating an “immediate” family is the decision for gay or lesbian couples to have a child once they are in a committed relationship (via donor, or artificial insemination), to adopt a child that is not related to either partner, to foster a child, or to undergo second-parent adoption of a child born to one partner prior to their current relationship (Patterson 1991). Richards and Hare (1993) address lesbian parents and the ways in which the context of birth affect father and partner involvement in raising a child. They examined children who were born in the context of a previous heterosexual relationship and children who were born or adopted in the context of a lesbian

relationship. Sullivan (2001) refers to the adoptive mother of their partner's biological child as the "modern other mother," or MOM. Findings suggest that birth and adoptive mothers were equally involved in the lives of their children, but partners/ adoptive mothers tended to have less responsibility for the child than birth mothers.

In the context of a same-sex relationship or as a queer single parent, lesbians and gay men establish a sense of "family" with the presence of children. Motherhood/ fatherhood and the desire to be a parent are abundant in literature regarding gay and lesbian families (Goldberg & Allen 2007; Lewin 1993, 1994, 2004; Patterson 2000; Sullivan 2004; Weston 1991). Lewin (1993) found that lesbians desired motherhood as a way to create a "family" in a situation where marriage may be unattainable, as a way to achieve adulthood, social responsibility and as a demonstration that one has "settled down" (51). Due to familism and the importance of families in Latino families the extent to which queer Latino couples desire children may be even greater. This is a rich area of research that has been unaddressed by Latino or family scholars. In addition to desirability, it may be important to note the differences in desired methods of obtaining children (via adoption, surrogates, birth, etc.) for Latinos versus other same-sex couples. However, only one respondent noted that she and her partner were seriously considering children in the near future. In fact, this respondent reported that she was currently taking hormones to prepare for artificial insemination procedures. The remaining group of Latinos interviewed either had no desire for a child, or were more concerned about getting finances and careers in order before seriously considering children. In this sense,

it did not appear that familism or any type of Latino cultural influences had a bearing on child desirability for the Latino respondents.

For most, family and marriage is derived from everyday life, interaction and activities. Same-sex division of household labor falls nicely into the category of everyday activities that serve to construct a sense of family and marital commitment. Household division of labor is abundant in gay and lesbian family literature (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983; Carrigan 1999; Kurdek 1993; Lewin 1993; Moore 2008; Patterson 1998, 2000; Sullivan 1996, 2004; Weeks 2001, 2004; Weston 1991). Perhaps this is because family scholars have found more egalitarian practices in gay and lesbian couples, than in heterosexual couples. From a political and feminist stance, these egalitarian relationships may help to deconstruct gendered roles and tasks, thereby promoting social change and weakening the patriarchal social structure.

When viewing marriage, domestic partnership, motherhood/fatherhood, and household division of labor, it becomes evident that empirical research on queer couples and families of color has been inadequate. Literature on same-sex couples has failed to address the cultural and familial context that Latino men and women may experience within their lifetimes. For example, desires to have children and/or establish a domestic partnership or marriage may be experienced differently by Latino same-sex couples. Similarly, the incorporation of familism may be more prevalent in division of household labor for queer Latinos than the average respondents of current empirical research that is largely comprised of white, middle-class respondents. My study attempts to address this issue through an examination of the social construction of family life for queer Latinos.

Scholarship on Latino/Chicano Families

Current literature on Latino same-sex families is extremely slim, and research on the everyday family lives of same-sex Latino couples is virtually non-existent. However, Scholarship on Latino/Chicano families, which almost entirely focuses on heterosexual couples, may help us to better understand the dynamics within Latino same-sex couples. Due to the fact that Latino families bring cultural variations (perceived notions and actual practices) to the construction of family in the United States, it is important to acknowledge “Latino familism” in relation to “American familism” and a “standard North American family” (Smith 1993).

Literature on Latino familism is quite abundant in family scholarship. Historically, Latino familism has had more negative connotations, such as of reducing Latino men to extreme patriarchs practicing “machismo.” Early discussion of Latino family characteristics has taken the “traditional” model approach, associating Mexican American families with “father dominance, masculine superiority, strict disciplining of children, separation of the sex roles, and an emphasis on submission and obedience to authority figures” (Ramirez 1967: 3). Most of the characteristics of the “traditional” Mexican American family were identified in the social science literature in the late 1950s and early 1960s, describing the Mexican American family as “basically traditional, patriarchal, rooted in rural extended family values, and exhibiting traits which exemplify the ‘culture of poverty’...traits identified as ‘fatalism’, ‘machismo’, ‘superstitiousness,’ ‘religiosity,’ ‘female submissiveness’, [and] ‘present time orientation’” (Vega, Hough & Romero 1983: 195).

By the 1970s, patriarchal concepts of the Mexican American family had come into question by various scholars. Montiel (1970) referred to the “traditional” description of the Mexican American family as the “myth of the Mexican American family” created by the unquestioned conception of the “masculinity cult” of machismo. Montiel further suggests that the concept of machismo is an “abstract, value-laden concept that lacks the empirical referents necessary for the construction of sound explanations” (Montiel 1970: 63). He accuses early studies on the Mexican American family of essentialism by using philosophical or ideological concepts as absolute truths while ignoring empirical evidence that suggests otherwise.

If familism is viewed through a traditional patriarchal lens, it seems natural that the institution of marriage is categorized by strict gender roles, such as women caring for the children, running the household, and men as primary breadwinners. However, negative conceptions of familism have disregarded multiple aspects of Latino family ideology. Most notable is the concept of family as an “emotional support system composed of a cohesive group of lineal and collateral relatives in which members can find help on a regular basis and rely on relatives more than on external sources of support” (Sabogal et.al. 1987: 398). Such emotional support and reliance seems contrary to a male dominated, patriarchal concept of familism. Especially when familism is defined in terms of collective orientation; “familism refers to a collective orientation, as opposed to an individualistic orientation; it implies that family roles are highly valued and family members are oriented more towards the needs of the family unit than to their individual desires” (Landel & Oropesa 2007: 396).

Mirande (1977; 1997) provides explanations for why there appears to be a contradiction where there may not actually be one. Mirande (1997) suggest that the negative “rigid, cold and unstable” view of the Mexican American family and the more positive “warm, nurturing, and cohesive” agree on the characteristics of the family (e.g., “male dominance, rigid sex-age grading so that the older gives orders to the younger, and the men give orders to the women, clearly established patterns of help and mutual aid among family members, and a strong familistic orientation whereby individual needs are subordinated to collective needs”), but simply defer in their interpretations of these differences (Mirande 1977: 751). In terms of a contrast between “machismo” and images of the more supportive Mexican American family, Mirande (1997) suggest that the concept of the “macho” Mexican man has similarly been interpreted with both negative and positive connotations. While previous literature has depicted Mexican men as embracing “machismo” as a mechanism of achieving manhood, Mirande suggests otherwise. In interviews with 105 Mexican born and Mexican American men, Mirande finds that two-thirds of his sample found a “macho” man to have negative (57%) or neutral (11%) connotations, while only 31 % suggested positive connotations. With respect to the family and to machismo, previous literature in the social sciences may simply be overreaching or generalizing specific conceptions of the Mexican American family and Mexican American men to the detriment of their subjects.

Additionally, Vega (1990) discusses a shift from earlier concepts of patriarchal familism to newer concepts of familism as an emotional and social bond to the nuclear and extended family that may be needed in order to take into account the effects of social

and structural elements (e.g., acculturation, urbanization, or migration patterns). Vega (1990) argues that to study the Mexican-American family in a vacuum fails to acknowledge the fact that they are “adaptive, and gender role expectations will change as social conditions require” (Vega 1990: 1020).

Recent research has also disputed the traditional conceptions about the role of men, “machismo”, and submissive women in Chicano and Latino families. Researchers have re-interpreted the term “machismo” so that it is no longer associated with “power, control, and violence” but rather with “honor, respect, and dignity” (South 1993: 360). This change in the use of the concept machismo, and the presentation of familism in a positive light, suggests a change in the perceptions of Latino families among scholars. Kulis et. al. (2008) suggests that gender role themes influencing the gender identity of male and females can be both positive and negative. For instance, “machismo” can be characterized as stereotypically hypermasculine, aggressive/violent, unfaithful, etc., or as honorable, respectful, brave and associated with family responsibility (260). Similarly, female “marianisma” may either be associated with strong and capable women that are able to be proactive as well as provide nurturance for her family, or as a stereotypical passive and subjugated woman. This discrepancy is also present in gender role research on Latino families.

Gender or sex roles within Latino families have been an area of interest in the examination of familism and machismo. Gender role attitudes are often categorized as being either traditional (in which a woman’s expected role is to be a homemaker and men should be the breadwinner), or egalitarian (in which women are expected to share in the

financial support of the family and men to share in housework, child care, etc.) (Corrigan & Konrad 2007). The association of traditional familism, would imply that Mexican American women are more likely to focus their energy on family oriented tasks and have little involvement in paid work outside of the home. However, current research has found Mexican American women removed from a traditionally submissive, caretaker position and into more of an egalitarian position associated with involvement in the work force. Vega (1990) discusses women's involvement in the work force as less of a step to work outside of the home and more as a matter of the availability of jobs. Mexican American women do not choose to work outside of the home based upon notions of freedom and independence from men. Rather, women work outside the home when there are jobs available to them. Patriarchy and dependence are often not a factor in determining whether to enter the work force. In the sense, partnered women, sharing the responsibilities of financial support, should experience more egalitarianism at home and a decrease in domestic chores (Corrigan & Konrad 2007).

Similarly, Mexican American women have been found to be the main decision makers within the household in instances when men and women do not share equally in the decision making process (Vega 1998). Otherwise, the decision making process is believed to be quite egalitarian. South (1993) has suggested that not only is there an egalitarian relationship in the decision making process, but also that female role enhancement challenges various forms of male dominance. South argues that any discrepancies between Mexican American women and white women, in terms of egalitarian relationships, may result from social class and access to extra-domestic

resources rather than from familism or rigid sex/gender roles. Similarly, Coltrane and Valdez (1993) find that Mexican American men and women share household duties and childcare when females contribute to the total family income, contradicting patriarchal concepts and supporting relatively involved fathers (Mirande 1997). They also report that Mexican American families are not entirely egalitarian in all tasks and duties, with men doing less household maintenance than women. However, Valdez and Coltrane (1993) do find relatively even sharing in childcare tasks and decision-making (e.g. finances and major purposes). These findings varied for social class and status of the jobs for the husbands and wives involved in the study.

In a study of 76 Mexican and Mexican American families, Hawkes and Taylor (1975) found that only seven percent of all Mexican American families were husband dominant and three percent were husband semi-dominant, while seventeen percent were wife semi-dominant and three percent were wife dominant. The largest percentages of couples were revealed to be egalitarian (62%). According to Peplau and Campbell (1989), other authors (namely, Cromwell et. al. 1973; Cromwell & Cromwell 1978; Cromwell and King 1979; Zamudio 1986; Zapata & Jaramillo 1981; Baca-Zinn 1980) have repeated this empirical study, finding egalitarian roles to be “the predominant pattern across socioeconomic groups, educational levels, urban-rural residence and region of the country” in Mexican American families (134).

Barajas and Ramirez (2007) suggest that differences in egalitarian and traditional roles may have less to do with concepts of familism and more to do with historical and cultural shifts over generations. Similarly, whereas previous literature suggests a

“home/host” dichotomy, in which host societies offer immigrant women more freedom from gender oppression than home countries, Barajas and Ramirez found that this was not the case. Although older generations of Mexican women held traditional ideals of male dominance, there was a distinct gap between these ideals and what was actually practiced within the household. Many women shared authority and decision making with their husbands. The major discrepancy between Mexican women and Mexican American women lied in household division of labor, finding that, contrary to previous literature, Mexican American women reported more hours of household labor than Mexican women.

Scholarship on Sexual and Racial/Ethnic Identity

As many studies have shown, heterosexism and homophobia is rampant in U.S. culture, affecting queer sexual identity formation across race and ethnicity. Mohr (2004) expands on heterosexist discrimination. He suggests that anti-gay stereotypes that lead to homophobia are part of an American cultural ideology that is reproduced through generations of cultural transmissions found in slang, jokes and “scientific” study of same-sex attraction as deviant or pathological. Therefore, anti-gay stereotypes are social constructions “that perform central functions in maintaining society’s conception of itself” (Mohr 2004: 107). Similar to Smith (1993), Mohr contends that homophobia is legitimized and reinforced in American culture by way of negative stereotypes about non-heterosexual people.

In addition to stereotypes Tomsen and Mason (2001) propose that homophobia is a reaction to sexuality that falls outside the acceptable gendered boundaries. Violence and

other forms of anti-gay hate crimes are a response to gender disorder and may be an attempt to reinforce gender boundaries and hierarchies in a society that allows privileges to heteronormativity. As a result, queer men are more likely to be victims of street attacks than queer women, while queer women are more likely to be the sexual victims of men they know. Masculinity, then, is the attainment and protection of a masculine identity for perpetrators of hate crimes, reinforcing these gender boundaries and hierarchies.

Rust (2006) suggests that the integration of a queer identity for Euro-Americans is far easier than that of an ethnic minority. She contends that “middle-class Euro-Americans experience relatively few difficulties integrating their sexual identities with their cultural backgrounds and other identities...because these identities are already integrated in the LesbBiGay community” (Rust 2006: 291). Although Rust makes a convincing argument for the ease of sexual identity formation of White gays and lesbians, a major limitation of her analysis is in her lack of discussion of the Euro-American cultural identity that she believes is already integrated into the LGBT community. Below, I examine research on the interaction of sexual and racial identities for both whites and racial and ethnic minorities, especially Latinos.

Much of the work on queer identity largely involves the identity politics surrounding the gay rights movements. The establishment of a “gay identity” has historically been related to gay, white and middle-class. D’Emilio (1998) suggests that this image of “gay identity” has been made possible by the effects of capitalism. The rise of capitalism caused men and women to shift from a largely self-sufficient household economy to a capitalist system of free labor, making family more about emotional

satisfaction and happiness than independent units of production. Family life became personal life and work became part of public life. Furthermore, “in divesting the household of its economic independence and fostering the separation of sexuality from procreation, capitalism has created conditions that allow some men and women to organize a person’s life around their erotic/emotional attraction to their own sex” (D’Emilio 1998:134). Therefore capitalism allowed a social space for a gay identity. D’Emilio further argues that “gay identity” has been largely white and male due to white male privilege and the ability to construct personal lives without attachment to women (whereby women are more likely to remain economically dependent on men. White men are more visible than white women).

Armstrong (2002) suggests that gender, race, and class dimensions of gay identity have largely been excluded from a powerful white middle-class male gay political project. This male “gay identity” prompted a larger social and political movement that was primarily concerned with the needs and issues of gay men, setting aside the interest of women and queer people of color. White lesbians felt that their chief concerns, such as child custody issues, were considered peripheral to the gay rights agenda. Queer people of color were further marginalized from the gay agenda, often viewing gay and ethnic/racial minority as mutually exclusive. Minorities were expected to position their gay identity as a master identity and treat their racial identity as secondary. For many minorities, this meant giving up the protection from their racial/ethnic community to be part of an “unfamiliar hostile white world” (Armstrong 2002: 150). In response to the biased political agenda raised by white middle-class men, lesbian separatists combined

with the feminist movement to address marginalized concerns. However, queer women of color found that they were still unable to identify with the needs and concerns of primarily white, middle class women. Additionally, queer women of color found that they were again expected to break from their ethnic community of origin.

Bérubé (2001) provides additional insight into the historical creation of a gay identity by concluding that “gay stays white” (stereotype) for a number of political and social reasons. He argues that the gay community has largely remained fixed on this image of a white, middle-class male consumer through,

making *race analogies*; *mirroring* whiteness of men who run powerful institutions as a strategy for winning credibility, acceptance and integration; *excluding* people of color from gay institutions; *selling* gay as white to raise money, make profit, and gain economic power; and daily wearing the *pale protective coloring* that camouflages the unquestioned assumptions and unearned privileges of gay whiteness (246).

Race analogies include the attempt to draw connections between anti-gay and racial discrimination to fight the military anti-gay ban, without including queer people of color. Exclusion of minorities is most blatant in the 1970s attempt to limit the number of minorities in local gay bars by demanding gay men of color provide three forms of identification upon entrance. The general fear of business owners was that lower-class gay men of color would “turn” the bar, making it less desirable to middle-class gay white men who were willing to spend money. In this sense, gay (white) identity means privileges allowed to white, middle-class men. Halberstam (2005) concurs, placing

“pride” as a form of gay white masculinity designed to regain denied access to privileges white men have come to expect as normal to a patriarchal society.

Due to this sense of white, male privilege, there have been a number of misconceptions about queer identity and homophobia. Smith (1993) suggests that there are four such misconceptions that serve to isolate larger and ethnically/racially diverse groups of gays and lesbians. These include the misconception that sexual oppression is not as serious as other forms of oppression. Sexual oppression is often viewed as a private concern that inevitably leads to ignoring discrimination. Similar to the works of Bérubé (2001) and Armstrong (2002), Smith (1993) proposes that “gay” is associated with White and the middle-class, ignoring women, minorities, working class, etc. Similarly, homosexuality is seen as white disease. The assumption that gay is equivalent to white, often causes queer people of color to feel as if they are traitors to their ethnicity. Lastly, Smith (1993) suggests that expressions of homophobia are considered to be legitimate and acceptable when other forms of discrimination are not. Gay jokes or slurs are widely tolerated, while racial slurs or racial discrimination are admonished.

Returning to ethnic/racial marginalization of queer identity, Rust (2006) suggests that ethnic minorities may cling to their ethnic culture in a desire to preserve ethnic values and traditions. This is because cultural change may reflect a loss of ethnic culture. In many circumstances, homosexuality is seen as a “white disease” or a “white phenomena” causing ethnic minorities to view same-sex desire as buying into white culture and becoming a traitor to ones racial or ethnic group (Rust 2006). Such perceptions of sexuality may lead an individual to feel as though they cannot be one

race/ethnicity and gay, or may feel a stronger need to be part of a more accepting culturally dominant group. Often queer people of color find that they are marginalized from a primarily white LGBT community.

For example, in his examination of 200 gay men, Chong-suk Han (2010) finds that gay minority men are affected by racism and homophobia that “may be multiplicative rather than additive,” meaning that minority gay men encounter racism as a racial minority and homophobia as a sexual minority. Furthermore, Han argues that minority men face racism within the gay community, often being labeled as invisible to the normative, white, upper class, gay men, or as a(n) [exotic] body for consumption (Han 2010: 388).

Ethnic/racial identity is also believed to be very important to queer ethnic minorities who have looked to their community for support. In her qualitative study of 100 queer Black women, Mignon Moore (2011) finds that Black women tend to consider their racial identity and racial group identity with their creation of a lesbian sexual identity. She suggests that her sample developed their lesbian sexual identity primarily in social spaces that were largely African American, rather than Euro-American, mainstream LGBT organizations or communities. Further she suggests that a lesbian sexual identity is developed in respect to historical patterns for Black women. For example, while white lesbian-feminists took a political stance by androgynizing their appearance in the 1970s, Black women did not feel the need to participate in the change of their physical appearance as patterns of work, patriarchy, and gender roles were historically different for African American women and Anglo women. In their in-depth

study of eight gay African American males in predominately white colleges, Goode-Cross and Tager's (2011) respondents also reported greater salience with their racial identity than their sexual identity. Respondents reported that they felt uncomfortable using LGBT resources that were perceived as resources for queer whites. Not only do these studies reflect the intersectional nature of race/ethnicity in the development of a sexual identity, but also suggest that ethnic/racial minority groups may face a greater amount of internalized homophobia. The affects of race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality on Latinos will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Scholarship on Queer Latinos/Chicanos

Current literature in same-sex Latino families is severely lacking, leaving a gap in our understandings of multiple family formations of Latino families. The goal of this section is to address current literature on gay/lesbian sexuality and how heterosexism and homophobia impacts Latinos.

According to traditional conceptions of Latino familism, there is a high value placed on female chastity and sexual socialization that promotes gender role expectations, including norms that promote female reticence and a lack of knowledge about sexuality (Raffaelli & Ontai 2007: 151). Zavella (1997) attributes such ideals to the intertwining of sexuality, gender and nationalism in Mexican society that emerged as a result of Spanish conquest, colonization of indigenous peoples, and a war of independence. She posits that the importance of female chastity in Catholic based discourse is developed from the representation of the Virgin de Guadalupe. This is in direct opposition to doña Marina (Malintzin), a translator for Cortes who betrayed her people though her sexual relations

with Cortez. In this sense, sexual intercourse is perceived as a conquest, violation, and a direct devaluation of women (Zavella 1997: 392).

Such powerful religious beliefs and parental practices that promote sexual ignorance and chastity, lead many Latinas to question their own sexual identity. Many respondents labeled seeking sexual desire as “playing with fire,” meaning that they were toying with an activity that was culturally sanctioned as well as something that was hot or passionate (Zavella 1997).

Contrary to hidden female sexuality and chastity, Latino males’ sexuality promotes promiscuity and dominance. Cantú (2000) suggests that Latino men’s sexual identity is not determined by the biological sex of one’s partner, but by the culturally defined roles of the “activo/passivo,” with the dominant participant labeled fully heterosexual. However, travesties (transvestites) or men who willingly engage in sexual intercourse with other men, are labeled homosexuals or “jotos.” In such instances, a “joto” is not considered a man or a woman, but “an abomination, a curse” (Cantú 1999: 94). However, Cantú’s respondents labeled the “activo/passivo” dichotomy as archaic, specifying that one does not label himself as either, but someone that is more versatile in sexual practices.

In relation to the Latino family, homosexuality is often discouraged or sanctioned. Through his interviews, Cantú found that his respondents often constrained a formation of a sexual identity due to the effects it may have on their family. Almaguer (1993) supports this finding, contending that because Chicano gay men are located in a subordinate racial position they are more dependent on familial relationships for survival

than Anglo gay men. Muñoz-Laboy (2008) asserts that Latinos keep a “low-profile”—have sex with other men without self-identifying as gay, homosexual or bisexual—deliberately because of familism. Those who report higher levels of familism are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and practice a more collectivistic attitude.

Collectivism regulates sexuality by removing sexual orientation from the individual and making “a struggle between placing an individual’s orientation over apparent collective social order” (774). As a result, gay and lesbian Latinos are less likely to demand acceptance or denounce their family for failure to accept their sexuality.

Suppression of a gay identity and keeping a “low-profile” can lead to psychological problems as well as health issues. Cantú (2000) finds that gay Latino men often experience sexism, racism, and homophobia if they resist cultural expectations, and isolation and disconnectedness if there is an attempt to negotiate between cultural expectations and a gay identity. García (1998) suggests that gays and lesbians often face the maintenance of living in three different worlds, the ethnic community, the gay and lesbian community, and the dominant Anglo/heterosexual community (31). Often, their gay identity is not accepted, gaining little support from their family and the Latino community or other social institutions such as the Catholic Church. Similarly, Gay and lesbians not only live on the border of “mainstream white society and Latino communities but also that of mainstream gay and lesbian communities which...are generated by ‘Anglo-American’ identity politics” (Cantú 1999: 113). Cantú argues that one can either find a gay bar or enclave, but not a gay Latino bar, enclave, or community. The inability to find a social place of acceptance generally leads to similar experiences of

loneliness, isolation, and depression. More specifically, through an interview with 18 homosexual/bi-sexual men, Muñoz-Laboy (2008) found three discrepancies between cultural expectations and a gay identity that caused emotional distress. First, the fear of an inability to procreate to protect family honor was strongly expressed in his respondents' narratives. Second, there was a tendency to compartmentalize familism and a sexual-erotic-romantic life. Lastly, shame and guilt resulted after the advent of homosexual activity.

Although previous literature has placed familism in opposition to homosexuality, Cantú (1999) finds that the intertwining of sexuality/gender/power grant honorary acceptance of homosexual activity. For instance, when family members were financially dependent on a gay or lesbian member of their family they, to some extent, were forced to accept that individual's gay identity. However, in many cases there was less of a full acceptance since respondents noted that their sexual identity was still constrained by family obligations.

While conceptions of "machismo" have shifted away from traditional negative connotations, it continues to be associated with Mexican American families that promote strong ties to the nuclear and extended family as opposed to individuality or individual accomplishments. Adherence to a male role in familism may result in a gay male who may chose not to start a family (officially partner with another man or have children in the context of a same-sex relationship) in fear of disappointing or disgracing members of his immediate family or extended blood relatives. This may arise due to a tendency for homosexuality to be viewed as a rejection of traditional family roles and values in Latino

communities and something that is sinful or shameful (García 1998: 33). Most Latino gays and lesbians find that their lives become separated into the heterosexual world that involves their biological family and the (heterosexual) Latino community, and into a homosexual world that is typically hidden. Conversely, a gay man may chose to actively start a family in order to create his own close nuclear family. Similarly, women may choose to partner and have children in the context of a same-sex relationship to accomplish the traditional familistic notion that childbearing and childrearing are the ultimate fulfillment in a woman's life (East 1998).

Current literature on queer families is too limited to draw solid conclusions on Latinos involved in same-sex relationships. Although perceptions and images of what it means to be a man or woman in Latino families is changing and developing, literature proposing what this means for gay and lesbian couples is in dire need. My study adds to this much needed literature through an examination of the gender expectations that queer Latinos and whites face. This study examines partnered respondents desire to marry, obtain a domestic partnership, and/or engage in a commitment ceremony. In instances where the respondent was married or in a domestic partnership, respondents were asked detailed questions about their decision making process. Such valuable information provides insight into marital patterns and feeling about the institution of marriage that have not previously been addressed by scholars.

While much research has been conducted on the Latino family, the notion of sexuality, same-sex couples, and queer families is currently extremely limited in Latino/Chicano studies as well as family studies, more generally. My study finds that

queer Latinos perceived social position influences the way that they navigate through their everyday lives (home, work and in the community). This dissertation focuses on the construction of a queer family through an examination of the (1) the characteristics of a good partner/spouse, (2) division of household labor, and (3) meanings gays and lesbians attach to marriage, domestic partnerships and ceremonies. Focusing on these three main areas, I will argue that the differences between Anglo and Latino construction of family, in light of intersectionality, are quite minimal. The main differences between these groups will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

Methods

This study examines the everyday lives and meanings of “family” for same-sex couples using a sample of 30 individuals in the Inland Empire and surrounding areas. Although literature on transsexual, transgendered and bisexual families is also extremely limited, my dissertation focuses solely on gay and lesbian couples. Given time and resource constraints, I limited the study to white and Latino gay and lesbians to ensure that I had sufficient numbers of informants to make generalizations and comparisons both across these two groups and within them. I explored potential variations in their experiences, such as those based on gender, ethnicity, age, and class. For this study, I chose self-identified gay or lesbians who claimed that they were in committed same-sex relationships. There was no age restriction; young and older couples alike who were committed to a potentially life long partner were included in this study. Couples that had considered or were considering marriage, or have married or obtained a domestic partnership in the state of California were included in the recruitment for this sample.

Additionally, individuals who had not considered either marriage or domestic partnership were also included in this sample. Couples that had children or were interested in having children with their partner and couples that had no interest in having children were also part of the target sample. All participants were Southern California residents, within Los Angeles County, Riverside County, San Bernardino County or Orange County. Due to Latino population demographics in these four counties, the majority of Latinos selected for this study were of Mexican decent.

Recruitment for this study began in March of 2010. In an attempt to recruit participants from these areas, electronic flyers were sent out to campuses/LGBT centers at four ²Universities, as well as non-profit organizations in the greater Los Angeles area. The LGBT center at the University of California, Riverside was particularly helpful with circulating flyers in their monthly newsletters. Approximately five of the Latino respondents reported that they became interested and involved in the study after reading about the project in a newsletter that they received via email. While I sought to enlist the help of various LGBT organizations in Southern California³, the most helpful proved to be Bienestar in Los Angeles. Not only did this organization circulate electronic flyers among their members, but they also sent to numerous flyers advertising this study to LGBT organizations via list-serves. Finally, many of the Anglo samples were recruited by way of snowball sampling from personal acquaintances. Thirteen of the fifteen white respondents were from the networks of three different initial participants in the study.

² University of California, Riverside, University of California, Irvine University of California, Berkeley, and University of California, Davis.

³ Bienestar, LA County HIV Drug and Alcohol Task Force, Gender Equality Resource Center, Queer People of Color, Planned Parenthood LA.

Much like the Latino sample, the remaining two white respondents were recruited by way of list-serves from LGBT organizations.

In total, fifteen queer Latinos participated in the study (five men and ten women) and fifteen queer Anglos participated in the study (five men and ten women). Ages of the Latino respondents ranged from 18 years of age to 36 years of age, with relationships that have lasted anywhere from six months to 16 years. Nine participants were of Mexican decent, with one participant self-identified as Colombian, another self-identified as Puerto Rican, and one of El Salvadorian decent. All but one of the respondents were born in the United States. Educational levels ranged from Associates Degree to Professional Degree, with five respondents currently attending a University. Employed respondents had an average income of \$24,000. Two participants were unemployed. Two respondents were in a registered Domestic Partnership, while eleven respondents considered themselves to be “partnered.”

Ages of the white sample ranged from 19 years of age to 65, with relationships lasting anywhere from 6 months to 11 years. All but two of the Anglo respondents were born in the United States. Both were of European decent. Educational levels ranged from Some College, with three respondents currently attending a University. Employed respondents had an average income of \$54,000. One participant was unemployed. Six respondents were in a registered Domestic Partnership, six were legally married in the state of California, and three respondents considered themselves to be “partnered”. Lastly, although I did recruit a few respondents that were politically active in the gay and lesbian community, most participants considered themselves to be non-activists.

All potential participants voluntarily contacted me through email or by telephone. Upon initial contact, potential respondents were given a recruitment letter, consent form, and short questionnaire. The short questionnaire allowed me to acquire basic demographic information as well as the duration of respondents' relationship, number of children, desire to have children, and marital status. Each respondent then scheduled an interview to be conducted by telephone or face-to-face. All interviews were conducted between March 2010 and July 2011. A majority of the Latino respondents chose phone interviews, while the white respondents tended to request face-to-face interviews. Of the Latino sample, three interviews were conducted in person, while nine interviews were conducted over the phone. Of the white sample, four interviews were conducted over the phone and eleven interviews were conducted in person. Interviews conducted in person were done in public areas (coffee shops in Southern California) or in the respondent's home. Interviews average one hour in length, but ranged from 45 minutes to three hours. Couples participating in this study were interviewed separately in order to ensure that there was a greater likelihood that they would speak openly and candidly about their relationship and division of household labor. I transcribed each participant's interview to ensure strict confidentiality of the participants. Respondents were also given pseudonyms for this purpose.

Due to my limited Spanish speaking ability, all interviews were conducted in English. However, all respondents were fluent in English and were able to effectively conduct the interview without any limitations. Spanish-speaking participants were encouraged to use Spanish words that they were unable to effectively translate into

English during the interview. Such words included Spanish slang. Although my Spanish is limited, my goal was to make each respondent feel comfortable and encourage an open and friendly atmosphere for discussion. The primary goal of these in depth interviews was to gather lengthy and thoughtful responses from the respondents regarding their everyday lives.

Although prior research informed the construction of my interview questionnaire and analysis of my interviews, I also used inductive methods associated with qualitative based grounded theory. Grounded theory enables the researcher to develop substantive theory that meets the criteria for doing “good science,” including assessments of significance, theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification (Strauss & Corbin 1990: 31). The goal of grounded theory is to ask necessary questions of your data, draw categories and comparisons, and search for phenomenon that are difficult to discover without using a structured framework. Filling in these gaps theoretically is merely speculative and may lead to a poorly structured framework as a basis for research. Additionally, grounded theory is often very effective in analyzing data in feminist qualitative research. According to Olesen (2007) grounded theory is useful in studies that problematize gender, its production and performance along with race, class and sexual orientation in material, historical and cultural contexts and in feminist research that regards gender as socially constructed.

The study was gathered primarily through short questionnaires and in depth, qualitative interviews based on open-ended questions (See Appendix E). Interviews

provided a basis for grounded theory methods through recorded dialogue of the interview as well as field notes taken during each interview. Field notes consisted of brief dictation of the interview as well as body language, expressed emotions (laughing, sadness, etc.) and, in the cases where I enter the individual's home, environment. The initial process of using grounded theory methods involved conducting and transcribing the initial three interviews with participants. After the first three interviews were transcribed, I combined field notes taken during the interview to develop initial code notes on potential analytical categories. I also noted how my initial findings compared to existing theories and literature. Using the constant comparative method, initial observations and theories were used to reevaluate the initial questions and format of the interview. After first examination, interview questions were rearranged to facilitate more fluid interviews. Questions were rearranged and a few were dropped from the interview during this process.

As part of "open coding" in grounded theory, I first conceptualized raw data by breaking down observations for memos, examining participant's responses, and labeling phenomenon. For instance, a topic labeled "thoughts on a good partner or spouse" served as a category by which each respondent's answers were compared. The properties of each category were identified, making each category a conceptual element that served to build upon the overall theory of "family construction." Specific categories were established through line-by-line analysis of transcripts.

Additionally, I began to probe further on questions that appeared to resonate with respondents during the first three interviews. Most notably, was the attention paid to

familial acceptance for the respondent's partner. Upon asking such open-ended questions as "tell me about your family of origin," respondents inevitably began to discuss the coming-out process and the ways in which their families had reacted to their relationship with their current partner. After reflecting on their responses, I noted possible follow-up questions that could potentially provide richer data and a theoretical basis for study. I used a similar approach as I interviewed a larger number of respondents, taking care to make use of the constant comparative method of grounded theory.

All interviews with the Latino sample were transcribed, coded and analyzed prior to conducting interviews with the white sample. Once the white interviews were conducted and transcribed, I initially analyzed data solely in an intergroup comparison, similar to what I had done for the Latino sample. Once the intergroup comparison was analyzed and coded, I then proceeded to compare the two groups.

In terms of analytical memos and initial open coding, I developed many categories by which to analyze the everyday family lives of members of queer Latino and Anglo same-sex couples. Additionally, I made use of mapping during the process of writing these memos. I created a visual map organizing conceptual categories and indicators for each category. I found the visual representation of each category was helpful in drawing initial theories and organizing thoughts that would inevitably lead to theoretical conclusions based on the sample of thirty individuals.

Conclusion

This dissertation examines the experiences of Latino and white same-sex couples, their relationships, and their everyday family lives. My research combines insights from

intersectional feminist theory, queer scholarship, Chicano studies, and research on families. In light of legal and social constraints, a primary portion of my research addresses the construction of “family” through marriage/domestic partnerships, household division of labor, and, in some cases, parenthood. This includes beliefs about weddings and the meanings that such a ceremony carries for the couples. This also includes perspectives of what it means to be a good partner, wife, or husband to their significant other. I believe these insights into the family lives of queer Latinos are desperately needed in current literature. Additionally, understanding queer Latinos’ identities and relationships with their family of origin are also important factors in the assessment of the everyday life for queer Latino families and queer families in general. Therefore, this dissertation has three main parts. It begins with a discussion of support for respondents’ current relationship from their family of origin. It then examines the construction of a queer identity or queer Latino identity that is assessed in their daily lives. Finally, this dissertation ends with an exploration of the respondent’s current relationship.

Chapter two explores the importance of familial acceptance and support for the relationships of same-sex Latino and white couples, particularly from their families of origin. All individuals fell into one of three categories at their time of interview: those with full familial support, those who were initially rejected but later gained support from family members, and those who do not have familial support or acceptance. Respondents (white and Latino) with full familial support consider themselves to be “lucky.” Respondents (white and Latino) that gained support over time after many years of being

“out” report constantly searching for evidence of continued support and acceptance. Latino respondents believed that white queers have an easier coming out process as well as an easier time gaining familial acceptance. However, the fifteen Anglos in this sample reported having just as difficult a time through the entire “coming out” process as Latino respondents. Many expressed similar concerns about negative responses from family members. Many in both groups feared telling their parents or siblings of their sexuality or of their current relationship. And, many found acceptance to be an ongoing and, sometimes, never-ending process.

Chapter 3 explores the way queer Latinos and Anglos navigate racial/ethnic, gender, and queer identities within their daily lives, focusing on the perceived expectations among family and in the Latino community. Consistent with previous research, my Latino respondents described experiences with double-marginalization—disidentification with mainstream LGBT community, social stigma from the Latino community in regards to their sexuality, etc.—that were not always properly addressed by mainstream LGBT support groups and organizations. Anglos also expressed many of the same fears and social stigmas described by Latino respondents. Both groups cited religious ideas that portrayed homosexuality as sinful as a source of their social marginalization. Respondents in these groups were Catholic or Protestant for the Latino sample and Catholic, Protestant or Mormon for the white sample. Both white and Latino respondents felt similar opposition to homosexuality contained in their religion.

Chapter 4 explores the way queer Latinos and whites perceived characteristics of a good spouse or partner, equality of household division of labor, and the meanings they

assigned to coupling, marriage and domestic partnership. It also explores common expectations for a successful relationship and the desire for marriage and domestic partnership. These three areas of family life are used to examine the ways in which “family” is socially constructed. Findings suggest that conceptions of marriage, family and a healthy relationship are quite similar for Latinos and whites. In regards to egalitarian relationships, this study finds that respondents tended to suggest that their division of household labor and decision-making power were completely equal, despite reporting circumstances that did not appear to be equal. Often, respondents reasoned why possible inequalities were actually equal or fair. Finally, this chapter finds that meanings of ceremonies, marriage and domestic partnerships are particularly complicated for same-sex couples in the state of California due to the on-going battle with the legalization of same-sex marriage.

Finally, this study suggests that the intersectional nature of the daily lives and experiences of queer people may cause individuals to perceive their social and cultural locations differently. For example, the Latino respondents’ perceptions of a “traditional Latino family” and an “Americanized family” caused them to feel as if incidences of discrimination by family members were a direct result of Latino cultural. Consequently they positively viewed American culture as one that is less homophobic, inevitably assuming that queer whites had an easier experience. In academia, such conceptions of culture are identified as essentializing, reifying and “othering” culture. However, I argue that it is important to address these perceptions as Latino respondents commonly accepted these stereotypes as a way to explain their experiences. In this sense, I am not

blaming Latino culture, but suggesting that we as academics should not ignore the thought process of queer Latinos that may result in feelings of isolation from the Latino community as well as the larger LGBT community.

Chapter 2

More Than “Friends”: The Importance of Familial Support for Same-Sex Latino and White Couples

I sat with my first Latino interviewee, Alfonso, on an unexpectedly cool spring afternoon in Southern California. My first question was designed to be general, open-ended, and I had no clear expectations of what answers or explanations were to follow: “Tell me a little about your family of origin.” After a brief pause, eighteen year-old Alfonso began with the number of siblings he had, remarks about his parents being married for twenty years, then a slow progression into the “coming out” process. Unprovoked and without any guidance Alfonso began talking about the difficulty and anxiety he had experienced when he came out to his siblings and parents earlier that year. Thinking that he had automatically gone into a discussion about the “coming out” process because it was fairly new to him, I did not anticipate this discussion to occur in my next interview. However, much to my surprise, my second interviewee also quickly transitioned from her discussion of basic family information to a discussion of the “coming out” process. With each interview, it became a predictable pattern, one that continued throughout my interviews with Anglo respondents. Interviewees candidly discussed the fears and anxieties associated with “coming out” as well and the fears that came with introducing their families of origin to their current partners. This pattern of responses to such a simple question revealed some of the main concerns about familial acceptance that these respondents were facing in their everyday lives. This chapter focuses these very concerns. In this chapter I examine the perceptions and experiences

with familial support and rejection among same-sex Latino and Anglo couples, and the extent to which those perceptions and experiences are similar or different from one another.

“Coming Out”: Homophobia and Identity Formation

“Gay Identity” Formation and White Privilege

As discussed in Chapter 1, “gay identity” and the gay political agenda has historically been associated with white, middle-class people, leaving little availability to address the needs and concerns of queer people of color. The larger political agenda for gay white males in the 1970s was the desire to become visible. As a result, “closeted” individuals were made to feel detached from the movement (Armstrong 2002). It was also believed that those who did not follow the visibility agenda were suppressing their sexuality and had greater emotional problems. Therefore, “coming out” was believed to be a universal goal of gay rights activist, with many believing that the process of “coming out” was also universal. The process frequently involved breaking from ones community of origin, adopting a gay identity, and joining a gay community (Armstrong 2002). However, while this process was believed to be universal, it did not reflect the experiences of queer people of color. Today, Latinos, like African Americans, Asian Americans, and other ethnic minority groups find there is a disidentification with the larger LGBT community. Due to the intersectional nature of a gay identity and a racial/ethnic identity many minorities find the “coming out” process does not involve breaking form ones community of origin.

According to Gagné, Tweeksbury, and McGaughey (1997), “Traditionally, coming-out processes for gay men and lesbians have been seen as a sequence of psychological and social progressions. The stages of coming out have been conceptualized as (a) self-definition as lesbian or gay, (b) tolerance and acceptance of self-defined identity, (c) regular association with other gay men or lesbians, (d) sexual experimentation, and (e) exploration of gay subcultures (Gagné et. al. 1997: 480). However, Gagné et. al. report that not all queer people progress through these stages at the same speed or order, and often do not have similar outcomes. Furthermore, lesbian women and gay men do not always describe “visibility” as the ultimate goal of being “out.”

This disidentification is also due to a lack of “white privilege” that Anglos often take for granted. White privilege, referred to as “pale protective coloring” (Bérubé 2001), is “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (McIntosh 2004: 188). As a result, queer people of color experience “gay identity” in different ways. They also have diverse structural, historical and cultural backgrounds that may reflect different and diverse homophobic origins. Roman (1993) suggests that white privilege is the “tendency of the multicultural discourse to celebrate diversity without adequately analyzing power differentials among groups positioned by racial categorizations and inequalities... the phrase ‘people of color’ still implies that white culture is the *hidden norm* against which all other racially subordinate groups’ so-called ‘differences’ are measured” (Roman 1993: 71). This allows

Anglos to remove themselves from positions of power, believing that inequalities, oppression and privileges have no bearing on their daily lives and activities (Dyer 2003).

Morris (1997) suggests that due to the intersectional nature of the coming out process, it is important to understand the impact of age, race, ethnicity, religion, geographic location, income, employment and education. According to her work, the coming out process involves four dimensions:

First is sexual identity formation, which encompasses development of lesbian sexuality and awareness of being a lesbian. Second is disclosure of sexual orientation to others. Third is sexual expression and behavior.

Fourth is lesbian consciousness, which refers to how lesbians see themselves in relation to the social environment, including lesbian and gay communities (Morris 1997: 1).

These categories are presented in responses to such classic research models as Cass' six-stage model of establishing a homosexual identity. Cass (1979) presents a linear, six-stage model of identity construction consisting of identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. Using a cross-sectional sample of 143 queer participants, John and Probst (2004) found that the level of advancement through the self-identification continuum is a fluid back-and-forth process until full integration is achieved, at which time the individual is less inclined to revisit previous stages (89). That is, contrary to Cass (1979) Johns and Probst (2004) suggest that respondents who struggle with their sexual identity did so through a cyclical interplay within the first four of Cass' stages. However, when they achieved an active

sexual identity, they were less likely to revisit the first four stages of identity development.

Both Jon and Probst (2004) and Morris (1997) find fault with early models of sexual identity construction and experiences/stages associated with the coming out process—primarily in the fact that they are presented as definitive, static, and do not account for power dynamics that may occur due to intersectionality. Hanley-Hackenbruck (1989) presents a somewhat more fluid model of the coming out process and development of a sexual identity. Using more of a psychological approach to understanding identity formation, Hanley-Hackenbruck (1989) takes into consideration larger possible issues that may arise as a result of race, gender, class, socio-historical context, etc. and “constructs the model around the idea that the stigmatization of lesbianism and gayness needs to be integrated into identity through the coming out process” (Morris 1997: 7). Morris herself presents a multidimensional theoretical framework for understanding the coming out process that takes many of these same elements into consideration. Therefore, the coming out process and sexual identity formation should be examined in light of intersectionality. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the coming out process for both white and Latino respondents, examining the ways in which they interpret familial acceptance or rejection of their sexuality.

Latino Sexual Identity and Homophobia

Previous research on homophobia in the Latino community has often presented sexual identity as being counter to or in opposition to ethnic identity. Cantú (2000) refers to this tendency as examining queer Latino lives with “cultural reductionist” arguments

that lead to “misdiagnosing problems through cultural pathologization [and] reproducing the very inequalities that we strive to address” (243). Thus, Cantú posits that queer Latino identities and issue of intersectionality must be examined from a structural standpoint, rather than as a result of culture. For instance, Cantú (1999) suggests such structural issues as legal status, language, economics/poverty, social class, racism, sexism, education, and even availability to necessary resources should be examined. While I agree that there is a tendency to blame Latino culture for homophobic discrimination that one may feel from family and the Latino community, the stereotypical notion of a “traditional Latino family” and other cultural biases are perceived as real concerns among many queer Latinos. As researchers, the tendency to reify Latino culture may be a misapplication, but these notions, biases, and even stereotypes of Latino culture, Latino families, and even Latino gender roles are prevalent in the minds of queer Latinos. I argue that these perceived notions of Latino culture must be taken into consideration when examining how queer individuals perceive themselves, their identities, and their relationships. Only then can we as scholars address structural issues that may be presenting themselves to queer Latinos as a result of culture.

Feminist and intersectional scholarship highlight processes of cultural reification, which make it difficult for individuals to completely detach their lives and experiences from cultural biases and stereotypes. While Anglos often experienced similar societal discrimination against their sexuality, Chicanos/Latinos attributed homophobia to their cultural heritage. In particular, Latinos/Chicanos in this study believe they face greater rejection from their cultural community and they tend to blame Latino culture (gender

roles, traditional values, “machismo”) for any initial lack of support from their families of origin during the “coming out” process. Furthermore, due to the fact that these perceived barriers are very real to queer Latinos, they may face a greater amount of emotional distress and negative well being than Anglos.

In the course of my study, many Latino respondents indicated that there was a general fear of “coming out” based on the perception that Latino culture is not accepting of homosexuality. Previous studies have taken a historical approach to issues of sexuality, suggesting that colonialism may have had a hand in the homophobia found in Latino culture. In Latin culture, there is a high value placed on female chastity and sexual socialization that promotes gender role expectations, including norms that promote female reticence and a lack of knowledge about sexuality (Raffaelli & Ontai 2007: 151). Zavella (1997) attributes such ideals to the intertwining of sexuality, gender, and nationalism in Mexican society that emerged as a result of Spanish conquest, colonization of indigenous peoples, and a war of independence. She posits that Catholic based discourse places importance of female chastity as a representation of the Virgin de Guadalupe. This is in direct opposition to doña Marina (Malintzin), a translator for Cortes who betrayed her people through her sexual relations with Cortez. In this sense, sexual intercourse is perceived as a conquest, violation, and a direct devaluation of women (Zavella 1997: 392).

Contrary to hidden female sexuality and chastity, Latino males’ sexuality promotes promiscuity and dominance. Using the concept of dona Marina, men must be virile and be able to impregnate their own women (rather than have them stolen). As a

result, men must be active in their sexual promiscuity and produce offspring. To have sexual encounters that are contrary to procreation are seen as contrary to ones cultural duty. Travesties (transvestites) or men who willingly engage in sexual intercourse with other men are labeled homosexuals or “jotos.” In such instances, a “joto” is not considered a man or a woman, but “an abomination, a curse” (Cantú 1999: 94). In most extreme circumstances, a homosexual man is considered to be less than a man (Diaz 1998), or perhaps even less than a woman. Alvarez (1997) suggests that gay men are perceived to be “sexually open” for corruption, similar to that of a female. However, a gay man is further marginalized in that his sexual acts are not procreative. Hence, he is considered to be a national traitor to his people by not being able to reproduce his race.

Cantú (2000) questions these historical and colonial arguments for potential homophobia in Latino culture. He asserts that in order to examine a culture historically for biases suggests that the culture is static, fixed, or incapable of change regardless of time, context, or global influences. Furthermore, he states “cultural arguments abused in this manner suggest that what is different about marginal peoples remains tied to traditional pasts, inherited structures, that either resist or yield to the new but cannot produce it” (Cantú 2000: 227). Such inability to consider change is present when examining contemporary conceptions of the “traditional” Latino family, “familism” or “machismo.”

While familism is generally discussed by scholars as something extremely positive, it places an individual’s homosexuality as a “family problem.” Familism “refers to a collective orientation, as opposed to an individualistic orientation; it implies that

family roles are highly valued and family members are oriented more towards the needs of the family unit than to their individual desires” (Landel & Oropesa 2007: 396). In this sense, homosexuality is not seen as an individual desire, but rather as an aspect of the entire family.

Through his interviews, Cantú (1999) found that his respondents often constrained sexual identity due to the effects it may have on their family. Almaguer (1993) supports this finding, contending that because Chicano gay men are located in a subordinate racial position they are more dependent on familial relationships for survival than Anglo gay men. Moreover, Almaguer (1991) posits that Chicano family life requires allegiance to patriarchal gender relations and to a system of sexual meanings that directly mitigates against the emergence of this alternative basis of self-identity. Muñoz-Laboy (2008) asserts that Latinos keep a “low-profile”—have sex with other men without self-identifying as gay, homosexual or bisexual—deliberately because of familism. Those who report higher levels of familism are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and to practice a more collectivistic attitude. Collectivism regulates sexuality by removing sexual orientation from the individual and making “a struggle between placing an individual’s orientation over the apparent collective social order” (Munoz-Laboy 2008). As a result, gay and lesbian Latinos are less likely to demand acceptance or denounce their family for failure to accept their sexuality. Moreover, Moraga (1993) suggests that it is nearly impossible to sever ties with family members due to the fact that family is often invaluable in helping Latinos navigate through their social world.

Suppression of a gay identity and keeping a “low-profile” can lead to psychological problems as well as health issues. Cantú (2000) finds that gay Latino men often experience sexism, racism, and homophobia if they resist cultural expectations, and isolation and disconnectedness if there is an attempt to negotiate between cultural expectations and a gay identity. García (1998) posits that Latino gays and lesbians often face the maintenance of living in three different worlds, the ethnic community, the gay and lesbian community, and the dominant Anglo/heterosexual community (31). Often, their gay identity is not accepted, gaining little support from their family and the Latino community or such social institutions as the Catholic Church.

Similarly, gay men and lesbians not only live on the border of “mainstream white society and Latino communities but also that of mainstream gay and lesbian communities which...are generated by ‘Anglo-American’ identity politics” (Cantú 1999: 113). During his research Cantú’s respondents suggested that they could either find a gay bar or enclave, but not a gay Latino bar, enclave, or community. Cantú found this isolation and inability to identify with others as the main problem facing his respondents. Rather than cultural barriers, Cantú felt his respondents’ experienced social problems as a result of this isolation, meaning that the problems individuals faced were structural rather than cultural. He posits, “culture is obviously a component of these challenges, but the homophobia, sexism, racism, and poverty that many of these men face are shaped by structural dimensions beyond Latino culture” (Cantú 1999: 113).

The inability to find a social place of acceptance generally leads to similar experiences of loneliness, isolation, and depression. Several studies have been conducted

on this tendency for depression among queer Latinos. In an interview with eighteen homosexual/bi-sexual Latino men, Muñoz-Laboy (2008) found three discrepancies between cultural expectations and a gay identity that caused emotional distress. First, the fear of an inability to procreate to protect family honor was strongly expressed in his respondents' narratives. Second, there was a tendency to compartmentalize familism and a sexual-erotic-romantic life. Lastly, shame and guilt resulted after the advent of homosexual activity.

Additionally, Savin-Williams (2001) argues that emotional distress may lead to suicidal tendencies in queer Latino males. In his study of 164 gay and bisexual youth, he found that African American and Hispanic teenagers were more likely than any other ethnic group to attempt suicide after parents had rejected their sexuality. He suggests that this is because Blacks and Latinos have extremely strong ties to their family while simultaneously not being supported by them. Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez (2009) have similar findings, reporting that familial rejection results in queer Latinos being 5.9 times more depressed, 8.4 times more likely to commit suicide, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior than peers who reported no or low levels of familial rejection.

Research suggests that queer Latinos place a great amount of importance on the support and acceptance of their current relationship from their families of origin. Furthermore, individuals continuously seek acceptance from family members despite initial rejection of their partners and relationships. Yet, these dynamics are also likely to be found among white gays and lesbians as well. In my interviews with fifteen queer

Latinos and fifteen queer whites, I found that familial acceptance of sexuality and support for their current relationship was perceived as a process typically falling into one of three categories (at the time of their interview): acceptance/support, gained acceptance/support, and no acceptance/support. This chapter explores the similarities and differences in perceived familial acceptance/support for queer Latinos and Caucasians.

Familial Support and Acceptance

Many participants in this study suggested that familial support for their relationships had greater importance than the support of their cultural community, church, group of friends, or government/policy initiatives. Respondents expressed a variation of acceptance from their families of origin, sometimes finding acceptance and support of one parent and complete rejection from another. In many instances, respondents had split familial responses to their sexuality and their current relationships.

My interviewees' experiences with particular family members can be understood in terms of one of three categories: (1) full familial acceptance and support of their relationship and partner, (2) acceptance after an initial period of rejection, and (3) complete familial rejection of their relationship. In many circumstances individuals fell into a particular category upon "coming out" to their parents, siblings or extended family members and felt they had switched into another category the longer they were "out". As such, these three categories are not intended to be static categories, but rather positions in time through the coming out process. Respondents' experiences were categorized in terms of their level of familial support at their time of interview. For instance, an individual may have perceived immediate acceptance from her mother after coming out,

and continued acceptance with her current partner. Likewise, that individual may have felt initial rejection from her father after coming out, and have felt she gained more support over time from her father in her current relationship. In this situation, the individual experienced two levels of support from family members: one that has not changed and one that has increased from initial rejection, to a greater sense of support. Additionally, because there are varying levels of acceptance felt by individuals as well as different interpretations of acceptance and support, it is important to note that there is no single strict criteria for “gained support” or “full support.”

This chapter focuses on the affects that acceptance or rejection has on the respondents’ lives, wellbeing, and relationships. Because gained support is typically seen as a “process” for many individuals, it is important to note the effect of age on respondents’ discussion of levels of support for their current partner by their families of origin, and how that effect complicates comparisons across race/ethnicity. Latino respondents were noticeably younger than white respondents. While six Latino interviewees fell between the ages of 18 and 24, only one white interviewee did. Four Latino interviewees were between the ages of 25 and 29. Only two white interviewees fell into this age group. Five Latino respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39, while only two white respondents were in that age group. No Latino respondents were above forty years old, but ten white respondents were older than forty. In order to take into account age discrepancies between respondents, I documented a detailed discussion for individuals whose families have had more time to accept their sexuality.

In what follows, I first explore the experiences of gays and lesbians who received acceptance from family members. Among the entire sample of thirty, only one respondent reported full familial acceptance. Additionally, only one respondent reported full familial rejection of her sexuality. The remaining twenty-eight individuals found a combination of acceptance and rejection from their families of origin. The remainder of this chapter will explore respondents' experiences and reflections on the coming out process. I will begin with those who have experienced immediate acceptance from family members, proceed with those that felt they had gained acceptance from family members, and conclude with those that believed they had not gained acceptance from particular family members.

Acceptance

Only one Latino respondent in this study discussed complete familial acceptance by her family of origin. Rather, Latinos and Anglos alike tended to discuss instances where, for example, one parent was immediately accepting but the other was not, where sibling were accepting when parents were not, or where extended family members were more accepting when parents and sibling were not. Therefore, of the individuals who responded that they experienced immediate acceptance with some family members also reported that they did not find that acceptance with other family members.

In instances where Latinos found immediate acceptance from family members, they often referred to themselves as "lucky." Of the fifteen Latino respondents, only one individual found complete acceptance from her entire family of origin. Emily, 26 reflects:

I feel really, really lucky because I know a lot of people in my same situation that haven't been so lucky...especially with Hispanic families. The culture is so discriminative [sic] against people like us. As far as my family, they are way more accepting than I expected them to be... considering they came from that same culture.

In Emily's reflection of familial acceptance, she refers to the common disconnect between Latino culture and acceptance of homosexuality. Although Emily feels a strong connection to her culture, she acknowledges the possibility that her family may not have been as supportive and understanding of her sexuality based on cultural expectations. However, she finds acceptance from all members of her family, and considers herself to be lucky to have such a supportive family despite being Latino. As a result of familial support, Emily found that she was more comfortable with herself, her sexuality, and her relationship with her partner of three years.

The fact that my parents were accepting of it and the fact that I was accepting of myself when I came out, I really didn't doubt that what I was feeling was wrong. They were really accepting from the get go, I mean not right away, but they were accepting eventually. That helped me really [to be] okay with everything and not be effected by anything socially discriminating. I've never felt that I am a bad person or like, I'm going to hell or anything like that...which comes from discrimination and not accepting people who are different.

Emily attributes much of the support and acceptance of her family members to being more “Americanized” than a typical Chicano family; “my family isn’t old school Mexican, you know. They’ve become more Americanized and are really open to new ideas. I feel really lucky to have been accepted so fast for what I am.”

In fact, Emily was not the only respondent who discussed being more “American” or not a “typical” Latino family. In many instances, respondents felt as though parents and family members were more accepting of their relationships and sexuality when they were more “Americanized.” Such beliefs drew from existing stereotypes of Latino culture being less progressive or open to homosexuality compared to mainstream American culture. However, in three instances, respondents found more support from a parent who was born and raised in Mexico than a parent who was born and raised in the United States. “Americanization” as a reason for acceptance was actually found in fewer instances than support from family members that were born in a foreign country. This suggests that it may be recent immigrants that have less rigid gender roles and expectations than more “Americanized” Chicano families.

Segura (1998) finds a similar occurrence in her work examining the perceptions of motherhood among Mexican and Chicana women. The Mexican women in her sample modeled a “family economy structure” where women were actively involved in the work force and sought extended family members to help with childcare, while the Chicana women embraced the American concept of a male earner of a family wage (Segura 1998: 737). In both these cases, women had diverging perceptions of what it meant to be a good mother. Mexicanas saw motherhood as embracing both employment and childrearing,

while Chicanas saw motherhood as being a mother first and a wage earner second (Segura 1998: 737). Therefore, the women with more “Americanized” concepts of gender roles and expectations appeared to have more rigid roles than that of recent immigrants.

This misconception of a “traditional” family versus an “Americanized” family is also present in Cantú’s elaboration of “othering” cultural discourse. He asserts that, “culture in this (mis)application becomes a defining characteristic of the Other to explain exotic behavior and position-dominant social forms as normative, this is, Western civilization” (Cantú 2000: 228). In this sense, Latino culture is seen as not part of the dominant Western culture and therefore deviating from it. In many circumstances, deviation implies “backward” or “pathological” beliefs. Likewise, because there is a belief that Latino culture is backward, there is a tendency to believe that the dominant culture is progressive. Therefore, it is not surprising that those respondents who felt they were accepted by their families of origin believed their families to be more “Americanized”.

When comparing the responses of my Anglo respondents with those from the Latino sample, I found further evidence of the “othering” of Latino culture by Latino respondents. Like the Latino respondents, white respondents who experienced immediate acceptance felt that they were lucky. Three respondents referred to their situation as not being a “normal” case. In fact, one respondent joked that I would most likely not be able to use her interview because it was so “abnormal.” Abnormal for this respondent meant that her mother and stepfather were extremely supportive of her sexuality after she unofficially came out to them at the age of seventeen. Lisa, 55:

I really don't understand why mom and my stepdad never showed resistance. They knew when my friends spent the night. Maybe I'm lucky. Later in life, when I met Leigh [first wife], my mom became even more accepting of it. If somebody had anything derogatory to say about gay people she would go, "well, my daughter is gay!"

Unlike the "lucky" Latino respondents who were supported by their families, Lisa did not attribute the acceptance she received to a less traditional or more progressive family.

Rather, Lisa asserts that she has no idea why her family was so accepting.

Gained Acceptance

In addition to full acceptance of the respondents' sexuality, many indicated that they also felt "lucky" when they gained acceptance for their relationships and partners after initial hesitance or rejection from some or all of their family members. In both the Anglo and the Latino sample, I found that gained acceptance and support from family members was pivotal to the "coming out" process, by providing them with indications of acceptance for not only their sexuality, but also for their relationships with their long-term partners. Also, in both samples, respondents searched for continued evidence that their families of origin supported their current relationship. Where the samples somewhat differed, was in the effort of the individual to expedite the "coming out" process and search for ways to gain acceptance from family members. In the Latino sample, respondents typically waited for a family member to be more accepting of their relationships/partners, rather than choosing to demand acceptance or sever ties with

family members. In what follows, I will first give an overview of the experiences of the Latino sample and follow with the experiences of those in the white sample.

Jesus, 36, experienced acceptance by his Mexican father and initial rejection by his Mexican mother:

My dad's reaction was not concern, but relief in a way. He's had a lot of gay friends and people in his life. He has maybe six gay cousins, so it was normal territory for him. My mother on the other hand did not talk to me for two months and had trouble with her eldest son being queer. And I left it alone, I didn't push it.

Jesus waited seven years for his mother to show any indication of acceptance or support for his sexuality. He believes his most recent relationship with John, 41, has finally broken the barrier. Within the last year of his relationship, his mother has shown increasing support, indicating that she thinks Jesus and his partner are a "good fit." Jesus has since been overjoyed with the new development and feels it has made his relationship with his mother and his partner much stronger.

An alternative situation was discussed in the white sample. Corey, 28, has been "out" for several years and has still not found the level of acceptance he is hoping for from his family of origin. As such, he has given his family somewhat of an ultimatum:

This Christmas, if he is home, I'm going to tell my parents that either I bring him or I'm not going to come, you know what I mean? I know they need time to deal with it, but I'm not just going to let him spend Christmas by himself. My dad was always supportive when other friends of the

family invited their significant other's to Christmas dinner, like, it was showing the love of Christ. I doubt he will straight out say no, but it will be uncomfortable.

This situation is slightly different than the Latino sample. While many respondents in the Latino sample, such as Jesus, responded that he "didn't push the issue," Corey's plans for Christmas dinner are somewhat of an attempt to expedite the process. Like others, he is searching for indicators, but he is also proactive in facilitating the "process" that many respondents speak of.

For the most part, the process of gaining support from one's family of origin appeared to be quite similar for the Latino and white samples. In fact, most respondents referred to this gained support as a "process" that required continuous work. Mario, 31, "I'm not going to say they are fine with it. They always ask about him [his partner], but it doesn't necessarily mean that they love him to death...It was a process, it started off rocky but they have grown to see he is not just anybody." Mario gradually experienced acceptance and support. In Mario's case, he actively searched for indications of acceptance for his partner and their relationship. The simple act of "asking about him" became an indication that not only did his family acknowledge his partner and their relationship, but that they also cared enough to inquire about him. For Mario and many others, this was the process of acceptance.

Latino respondent Robin, 27, whose family continued to reject her sexuality and her relationship of her partner of two years, discussed a similar indication. According to Robin her family "never asks about Vicki," choosing to avoid their daughters' sexuality

by pretending that it does not exist; “We never talk about her. They never ask. It’s just how are *you* doing? Out of respect and to not cause conflict I don’t push it in their face.”

Although Mario has gained acceptance from his mother and most of his extended family members, the “process” continues for Mario and his father, “My dad didn’t speak to me for two months, and he is the only one that still doesn’t ask about my boyfriend.” Similar to Robin, Mario considered the act of “asking” about one’s romantic partner to be an indication of support. Respondents also felt that in addition to asking about their partners’ well-being, names or titles of their relationship showed another level of support from family members. Vicki, 31, reflects:

My dad’s were a very traditional Mexican family and one uncle and one aunt are gay and they have had long-term partners of 20 or 30 years. And everybody still calls them your “friend” to this day. And even when my Nina, who’s gay, asks me about my girlfriend, she says ‘friend.’

For Vicki (also Latino), acceptance by her family members is slightly more complicated than simply showing their support for her sexuality and her relationship to her partner of two years. Her family of origin refers to her partner as a “friend,” which she believes “cheapens” her relationship or makes her feel as if her family does not see her relationship as something strong or stable. Rather, using the term “friend” implies that it is something temporary (as would be a “friend” in a high school relationship) or something completely non-sexual. For Vicki, her partner is her girlfriend and her family members should identify her as such. She also finds fault with her aunt’s use of the term “friend” to refer to her own partners of 20-30 years. Although Vicki sees her family as

being “Americanized” and therefore progressive, she senses the cultural influence of viewing sexuality as something that is deviant or that should simply not be discussed. She feels an overwhelming sense of acceptance, but continues to feel the cultural barriers that may not result in full acceptance, even from her queer family members. For Vicki, in order to gain “full” acceptance by her family of origin, she wants her relationship to be seen as something that is more than “friends.”

Carla, a 31-year old Latina, discusses a similar situation:

I’m very fortunate in the sense that all of my family is very accepting, now. Even if they weren’t back way [sic] in the beginning, they are now. They are all interconnected. They all know each other. All our family members are friends. And they are all very supportive. I think the wedding really helped us with that [confusion about partner status] where there is no question of ‘how do I introduce you.’ It’s more like ‘look this is my wife.’

Full acceptance of her relationship with her partner of 16 years arose after her family showed acceptance and support *and* her family members began to refer to her partner as “wife.” According to Carla, acceptance was gained after she and her partner had a very large and traditional church wedding. She believed that her wedding was able to reinforce the status of her relationship with her spouse.

Lastly, Mario suggested that acceptance came from family members inviting his partner to family functions:

I didn't, at first, really talk to my family because I was ashamed, but then they started to warm up. They would say, 'we know you're the same person don't be embarrassed' or 'there is no point in being ashamed just come to the party already' [family functions]."

In this circumstance, acceptance was a product of not only acknowledging the respondent's boyfriend, but also formally inviting his partner to family events. For Mario, this appeared to not only legitimize acceptance of his relationship by his family, but also legitimated he and his partner as a couple. In essence, a simple invitation was an indicator of support.

The notion of familial acceptance as a process was prominent in the white sample as well. The only major difference between these two samples was that many respondents in the Anglo sample had children. Therefore, much of their discussion was less about parents and siblings and more about support and acceptance from their children. This situation occurred because the white sample was, on average, older than the Latino sample and three white respondents had been previously married in a heterosexual relationship. The average age of the Latino sample was 26 years old and the average age of the Anglo sample was 43 years old. The Anglo sample had often experienced initial rejection in earlier years and worked through much of the process of acceptance by the time of interview. For instance, Peggy reflected,

They all came around eventually [family of origin]. It's just years have to go by sometimes. Some friends of ours who are younger than we are, we are kind of their support systems while they were telling their families and

they were terrified because their families were very religious. We had to let them know that even though it is bad at the moment, over the years you have a good shot at getting the relationship back. That's my experience.

Whether Latino or white, the "process" of coming out and familial acceptance was nearly identical. However, the Anglo respondents did not discuss these experiences in terms of cultural ideals or norms, but rather simply a fear of being rejected by family members. This same fear of rejection was really at the heart of many of the Latino respondents concerns about their family. The younger Anglo respondents were in much of the same position as the younger Latino respondents in earlier years. Anglo respondent Thomas, 19 had come out to his friends two years before the interview, his mom and brother six months prior to the interview, and his father only two weeks prior to the interview. While he expected the most resistance to be from his father, he found that his father was accepting of his sexuality and was actually waiting for his son to come out to him. His mother, on the other hand, blamed herself for his sexuality and is now working through the process of acceptance. Interestingly, Thomas described the most resistance from his brother whom he described, much like the Latino sample did, as "macho."

My brother, he is kind of more the macho type so he had had to work a lot harder to understand it. But, umh, he is interested and wants to know more. He says he is fine with it, but I can see that he doesn't really understand, I guess.

Four additional white respondents reported that they were going through the early part of the acceptance process at their time of interview. Corey, 28 and white, had come

from a conservative, Christian household and found that his parents and two sisters were in the process of accepting his sexuality and his partner. He found his youngest sister to be quite supportive, but his parents and eldest sister were having difficulties with acceptance. In fact, he notes that he came out to his family three years ago and has found that his parents will not discuss the matter. He refers to this as “the pink elephant in the room”. Like Mario and many in the Latino sample, Corey was searching for indicators of support and noted the progress of his parents.

Actually, they came over to my house this past Christmas. He [his partner] wasn't home but that was still like, big progress because they actually sat at my place and they saw that we share the same bed. So it was like real or whatever, you know. So that was a big step because I know a lot of parents wouldn't have done that.

For Corey, these small indicators show increasing support and possible acceptance in the future despite his current situation.

The remaining three respondents in the early stages of the acceptance process faced initial religious obstacles (each had been raised in the Mormon church), but found that their parents and siblings had gradually become more accepting of their sexuality. In all three circumstances, indications of acceptance by their family of origin arose after they had been in a long-term, committed relationship with their current partners. Darren, 28, “she [mom] is the one that flipped out when I came out. She has never completely come to terms with it, I think. But she has gotten a lot better, especially in the second

year of our relationship [with his husband] because I actually had a relationship in front of her.” Lynn, 34, describes this process in more detail:

I think for our parents and even for our siblings it was an eye opening thing, of realizing, I guess, the reality of it. You know, that this isn’t just an anonymous partisan sin that you get to be judgmental against. This is real people who really love each other and who they really love. And so, they’ve done tremendously well considering. My dad said he didn’t want us to come around any less because of it and my younger sister, especially, had been incredibly accepting.

Lynn’s partner Allison, 32, has found acceptance with the relationship as well. However, she reports that her mother is still in the process of working out support and acceptance. Like many in the Latino sample, she finds instances of a lack of support, while there is also evidence of acceptance. Allison, 32:

My mom does not talk to other people about Lynn, at all! There is a coming out thing for them too and our parents are very much in the closet. I came out to my mom years and years ago so she knows we are together, but my mom hadn’t even told her best friend...but she loves Lynn. She is nicer than I am so she can be nicer to my mom than I will [be]. She really likes Lynn as a person, just not as my partner. And that is the thing. She comes here and stays at our house. She sends Lynn Christmas gifts! She doesn’t do that for any of her other son-in-laws...but she prays for us

everyday. She told me that she prays for us. She prays for us by name and that we will be able to find husbands.

For Allison, the messages of acceptance from her mother is very mixed. Yet, she finds indicators, such as Christmas presents, that are seen as elements of acceptance and progress. Among the Anglo sample, various respondents also noted the importance of gifts and greeting cards from their family of origin to their partners, or to themselves.

Cheryl, 57:

My daughter estranged herself from me for 8 years under the auspice that I was gay. I think there was a lot more going on, but she was married into a fundamentalist, Baptist background with her husband's parents. So they are being told that I'm going to hell and everything that goes along with that. It wasn't until very recently that I have been able to have a relationship with her. Now, it's okay. We're not only talking but she is calling me mom again and she is sending me cards. That is only since November, so it is still fresh and new.

Not a single individual in the Latino sample reported either greeting cards or gifts as indicators of support. However, the greatest indicators of acceptance for both samples were invitations to family functions and familial presence at respondents' weddings or commitment ceremonies. Due to the average age discrepancies between the two samples, discussion of familial presence at these ceremonies was discussed more commonly by the white sample. Again, this may have to do more with the fact that the average age of the white sample was approximately 10 years older than the Latino sample. Therefore, many

white respondents were at an age where they were more likely to be concerned about the legal benefits carried with marriage. In fact, only two respondents in the Latino sample had either had a domestic partnership or a wedding. In the white sample, six individuals were married and six were in a domestic partnership. Among these men and women, familial support for their relationships was reflected in the attendance of their family of origin to their ceremonies or the level of importance they perceived their family members to place on their ceremony. Of the individuals who were legally married in the state of California, many expressed concern over their family members placing as much value on their wedding as they would for a heterosexual wedding.

Alan, 40, made hurried plans to wed his partner on the first day gay marriage was legalized in California and planned a ceremony shortly thereafter.

In December we had a ceremony. Most of our family came except for his aunt and uncle because they said it was against their religion. My youngest brother and his wife found out we had no photographer or florist so they threw something together. My sister-in-law got flowers and made food for everybody in the wedding party and was also the photographer. So she and a guy at our church took a bunch of photos. My best friend went to Costco and got us a sheet cake. His [husband's] parents hosted the reception, which was a big step for them considering that they are Mormon. But they wanted to see their son happy. It took them a while, but by the time we got married they had come around.

For Alan, there were many positive results of the wedding as well as indicators of support. Family members took the initiative and helped organize and pay for elements of the wedding that they themselves could not afford. For Alan, this was an example of family placing as much value and importance on their wedding as they would any heterosexual wedding. Additionally, like Carla, Alan noted that his family was more accepting of their relationship after the wedding and had less ambiguity about what to call them as a couple, “it’s not my partner, it’s not my boyfriend, it’s my husband and that meaning has weight. Really, it [wedding] changed his parent’s attitude in some ways. So it was a big deal, it’s still a big deal.” In this case, Alan and his partner found acceptance through ceremony.

While Alan found that the ceremony solidified his relationship with his partner in the eyes of their families of origin, other Anglo respondents found that family members had difficulty seeing their ceremony or wedding as akin to a heterosexual marriage. Although the family was supportive of the relationship, respondents, such as Annalise, 51, found that the inability to see a gay wedding as akin to a heterosexual wedding was a step back in the process of acceptance:

In my opinion, they were not counting our marriage as important as when Diane’s brother got married. When her brother got married, man the axis of the world stopped turning! Nobody did anything for our wedding. In their opinion a gay wedding wasn’t as important as a heterosexual wedding. Even though, here in California at the time, this was a legal marriage, just like a heterosexual marriage. Nobody saw it like that. No

one could be here. No one could find the time. I felt like they were discounting it and it was very important to Diane and I.

Additionally, absence of a family member from attending her wedding proved to be very hurtful to Diane, 48:

My dad, as much as he loved me, he was really torn about the whole gay marriage issue. It did hurt my feelings that he didn't come, but I've gotten over it now. And with the help of my stepmother he has come a long way since. She really has helped him understand what it means and that it isn't something that we take lightly.

With the help of her stepmother, Diane reported that her father is making progress and recently saw the film, "The Kids are Alright" (2010). This film explores the family dynamics and the relationship of a lesbian couple and their two teenage children. She and her stepmother saw this as a huge step for her father and an indicator that he has "come a long way."

Additionally, even in situations where respondents reported acceptance from family members, wedding and ceremonies reflected some hesitancy in their family members to accept their marriage. Bobbi, 48 had recently found acceptance and support from her father after coming out many years prior to her wedding. After she sent her father an invitation to her wedding she reported:

He said, "why do you have to be so extreme?" That was his response to getting married the first time. He knew I was gay but why did I have to push the envelope and get married. Its like, "its okay that you are gay but

why are you moving into this realm?” But again, there was never going to be a discussion of what that meant. But he was supportive. When he died I wasn’t taken out of the will. I was never thought of as not his child or that he was going to disown me. But there was never that, “whatever you do I’m going to love you no matter what”. I never got the verbal.

For both Latinos and whites, familial acceptance and the process of acceptance by family members were nearly identical. Despite the fact that the Latino sample tended to view culture as a type of impediment to this process, many of the same concerns and indicators of support were present among Anglos. Literature suggests that Latino culture is a hindrance to familial acceptance of homosexuality, and may indeed be on the minds of respondents when reflecting on the process of acceptance or discussing their current process of acceptance. However, responses from my Latino and Anglo informants do not indicate that there was a significant difference between the groups in terms of types of acceptance, level of acceptance, or the length of time that occurred before family members “came around” to acceptance. Both samples considered themselves lucky or even abnormal when family members expressed complete acceptance shortly after coming out. Both samples felt that acceptance was a process that seemed to gradually change over time. Both samples searched for indicators of this change or evidence of continued acceptance. And finally, both were concerned with how family members saw their current relationship with their partner (in terms of value and importance). In this sense, familism really had no bearing on how one’s family of origin would react, nor did it seem to have a bearing on how long acceptance took. In the Anglo sample, just as in

the Latino sample, respondents reported being closeted to specific family members after years of being out to others or even years of living with their current partner. In the end, it appears as if the greatest fear for both groups was a fear of rejection and of continued rejection from family members.

Lack of Acceptance

While many respondents felt that they had some level of support from their family members, three of the fifteen Latino respondents reported that they had no acceptance from at least one member of their families of origin. George, 18, Kathleen, 25 and Angie, 21, all reported that their relationships with their partners had caused problems with their families of origin. However, in all cases, each respondent chose not to demand acceptance from their family members or sever ties. Not one respondent in the white sample reported a complete lack of acceptance from their families of origin. In fact, only one respondent in either the Latino or white sample reported complete rejection. Latina respondent Robin, 27, reported that she had absolutely no acceptance from anyone in her family, other than her brother who is also gay. Although, she reports that she has also found very little support from her brother due to the fact that he is 19 and lives in the Mid-west:

I think it is never going to happen [acceptance]. I think my father is the harder one and I think he will go to his grave resenting the fact that his kids are gay. I think my mother is way more open to just accepting me, but I don't think she will ever accept the relationship. I mean, in a perfect world it would be nice...but, umh, I don't...it would be nice.

Due to the continued rejection of her sexuality and her relationship by her Puerto Rican born parents, Robin has had trouble coming to terms with her own sexuality.

It has a lot to do with, even to this day now, coming to terms, when I refer to my relationship with God, a lot of it in my early 20s had to do with reconciling my faith with my sexuality. Because, it was not necessarily something that was brought up...Sexuality in general, not just homosexuality, was something that was never brought up.

Furthermore, the biggest challenge she expects to face in the future is her relationship with her parents upon the adoption of a child. Robin was raised in a very strict, religious household and is very traditional in much of her ideas about family life. As a result, she would like to have a church wedding and have children in the near future. However, she feels the continued rejection of her sexuality and her relationship presents a very difficult barrier to overcome:

I think one of the definite things that we are going to have to deal with as we get more and more... as we mature in our relationship, is the issue with my parents... because we are going to have kids. And, my parents, my mom, has the right to see my kid. And my dad has the right to see my kid, our kid. And, you know, I have no idea of how we are going to approach it, I don't know how it is going to go. But it is something that we are definitely going to have to cross. Because even though I would love to have the perfect family and have grandpa and grandma come over, that might not be possible. It's going to have to be visiting rights and I am

going to have to be there and watch what my parents are saying to my kid...and even them just meeting her! I don't know if that is going to happen before a kid because I don't think they want to do that.

Many of the other respondents who faced continued rejection from family members also express emotional distress and even guilt as a result of a lack of support.

Latina, Kathleen, 25:

They weren't ever [supportive] since they had any indication that I even liked somebody of the same sex. They would use it against me, my brothers would try to out me. My dad wasn't supportive of it at all and he didn't have any proof. It may have been from his own insecurities because he has two sisters that are lesbians and, I guess, they were disowned from the family back in Mexico.

Similarly, Angie, a 26-year old Latina, finds that her relationship with her partner of four years has denied her access to her newborn niece:

My sister just had a baby and she won't let me see her right now because she doesn't approve of our thing. She's like "just don't talk about it." Because my sister, she doesn't want me or my partner to, like be in front of her and the baby. Like if we confront the baby it's just like me and my partner are friends, not girlfriends or anything because she thinks that, like the baby is going to become gay or something like that.

For Angie, although she still feels like she is part of her family, the rejection of her sexuality and her partner by her family of origin has made her feel like an outsider.

However, she continues to feel such strong ties to her family, particularly her younger siblings, that she laments about the situation but does not discuss her concerns with her family members. As found with Angie and many others who faced a lack of support, continued rejection of participants' relationships and their partners has led many to endure emotional distress, feeling of guilt, and even shame. However, all of those who experienced rejection still held out for some hope of support or acceptance in the future.

Lastly, it is also important to note a lack of support that is generated as a result of individuals who have not yet come out to their parents. Several younger respondents were at the beginning stages of the coming out process. Two Latino respondents, George, 18, and Kioko, 19 and Chicana-Japanese, have not yet come out to their fathers. In both instances there is a fear of rejection and failure. George's hesitation to approach his father resulted from his mother's strict order not to tell his father because it would "kill him." George has been the only child to attend a four-year university in his family, making him what he refers to as "the golden child." He fears his sexuality would reduce his status within his family. Kioko has had a similar issue with her father; she fears that she will disappoint her father and his expectations of her.

Perhaps related to their older ages, the white sample did not contain anyone who reported complete lack of support for their sexuality among their family of origin. Rather, many individuals reported that they had been rejected for many years by specific family members, but had since found acceptance. Alan, 41, reported that his mother, also a lesbian, had a difficult time with his coming out:

I left my ex in May of 2001 and came out in June. My mom said it wasn't true. She was very invested in me succeeding where she had failed. And we would talk on the phone after that we would mostly get into fights. I had an argument with my mom and I told her in not so many words that I was who I was and if she couldn't accept it, I wasn't going to speak to her anymore and I hung up the phone. And that was the last time I talked to her for five years.

In Alan's case, he did not speak to his mother for nearly five years. If I were to have interviewed Alan within that time period, it would most likely have appeared that there was a complete lack of support and rejection of his sexuality and partner. However, Alan was in a different stage in the acceptance process than many of the younger Latino sample. After five years of estrangement from his mother, he found indications of support from her. This was also the case with Cheryl, 57 and white, who was estranged from her daughter for eight years and from her sister for two years.

Other incidences of lack of support may be found in those that refused to come out to specific family members. Annalise, 51 and white, did not come out to her mother in fear that she would be rejected from a parent that was "old school Oklahoma." By this, she meant that her mother was extremely conservative and homophobic. She notes that it was better that she went to her grave not knowing the truth about her sexuality, or even that of her mother's sister. Annalise could not conceive of telling her mother, particularly since Annalise came out when she was in her early forties and her mother was in her eighties.

I lived my life pretty much completely out with the exception of my mom. She died in November and she was almost 91 years old. She thought Diane was my roommate. I have an aunt, my mother's youngest sister, who has been living with the same woman for 40 years. It's very obvious what is going on but nobody talks about it. That is what my mom always thought too [roommates]. But the world knows better. My mother used to say, "It's so sad that your Aunt Sally never found a man to love her." And I used to think, "well yeah, but she found a really great chick!"

Perhaps the only substantial difference between the Latino and the white sample who reported a lack of familial support, was a more assertive demand for acceptance from family members among whites. As evidenced in both the cases of Corey and Alan, a portion of the white sample felt a need to expedite the acceptance process or sever ties until the family member was willing to accept their sexuality. Latinos did not report making similar demands of their family members. However, this could be because they were in earlier stages of the process of "coming out" and gaining acceptance.

Conclusion

Within this study, respondents typically fell into one of three categories based on the level of acceptance or rejection of their romantic relationships among members of their family of origin. The three categories include (1) full acceptance of relationship and partner, (2) acceptance after a period of initial rejection, or (3) rejection of relationship and partner. In many cases, respondents felt some level of acceptance from one parent that was in direct contrast to rejection by the other parent. Some found acceptance in

extended family members or siblings and rejection by parents. In other cases, respondents found that both parents either rejected or accepted and supported their partner and their relationship.

Regardless of the combination of acceptance and rejection they received, white and Latino respondents alike appeared to place an equal amount of importance on either acceptance or rejection by their family of origin. However, there were differences in the experiences reported by my white and Latino respondents. For instance, whether Latinos identified themselves as “lucky” with continued familial support or saw their situation as an “unfortunate” one with no support from family members, most Latino participants remained tied to their families of origin, constantly seeking indications of support and acceptance. Latinos did not report being estranged from family members when there was a lack of acceptance. Rather, they reported that they were in a “don’t ask, don’t tell” phase where their relationships and their sexuality were simply not discussed. In this sense, they lead a “double-life” or kept a “low-profile.” This finding was consistent with previous literature on gay and lesbian Latinos. Many white respondents also had a tendency to seek indications of support and acceptance from family members, but some reported an attempt to expedite the “coming out” process with family members by demanding acceptance, while others remained estranged from family members until there was a certain level of acceptance.

Within these categories many searched for an indication of acceptance and support from their families of origin. For the Latino sample, these resulted in three main areas: (1) asking about one’s partner, (2) acknowledging one’s partner—by name, status

or as a “friend,” and (3) invitation of one’s partner to family functions. The white sample also suggested that greeting cards and gifts for their partner were indicators of support for their relationship by family members. Many of the respondents who have gained acceptance after initial rejection from their family of origin placed a great deal of importance on these signs, as well as other small indications that their family may be working through the process of acceptance. Between both the Latino and Anglo samples, many respondents felt that their family members were never going to explicitly state the acceptance of their partner and instead looked for clues of support from family members during the process of acceptance.

Another difference observed between these two groups is in the use of the term “homophobic.” White respondents were more likely than Latino ones to use the term “homophobic” when describing patterns of behavior of family members that inevitably led to some type of rejection or lack of support. Of the white sample, nearly half of the respondents used the term “homophobic” in some capacity to describe family members or friends that were initially unfavorable to their sexuality or their relationship. Alternatively, only one Latino respondent used the term “homophobic” in her interview. Consequently, the term was used in conjunction with machismo and religion. Susie, 19 suggests:

When I think about it I think about it in comparison to other queer people. I guess, Caucasian queers. I don’t know, I think being a Latino...Latino culture is very, umh, strong. Like there is something that is instilled in us from our childhood. Like machismo and homophobia and religion—you

know, Catholics like myself—it is just a lot harder of a struggle than other [Caucasian] people.

This appeared to be the general sentiment of many Latino respondents. That is, homophobia was almost always implied when using such terms as “traditional,” “machismo,” or “Latino Culture.” In this respect, nearly all respondents appeared to be conflating Latino culture with negative connotations, blaming Latino culture for their lack of acceptance or support from family members. Susie also talks about Latino culture in opposition to American culture. She implies that white people have it much easier as they do not have to deal with homophobia or religion.

However, both Anglo and Latino interviewees experienced a lack of acceptance and support from one’s family of origin. In fact, only one respondent reported full, immediate acceptance from her family of origin. One reported full rejection. The remaining twenty-eight respondents reported varying levels of acceptance and rejection from different family members. As a result, the process of acceptance was equally challenging, proving that time, rather than culture was more likely to produce acceptance when family members initially rejected respondents.

This tendency to blame Latino culture for homophobia and a lack of support from family members is nearly identical to Cantú’s (2000) finding of a cultural deficit model in his study of queer Latinos. However, Cantú speaks mainly to academics studying marginalized groups, suggesting that researchers should not homogenize Latino culture or assume Latino culture is fixed or static. Moreover, he proposes that referring to the “culture as Other” exoticizes Latino culture and contrast it with Western culture. He

argues that because of the tendency to fall into these patterns, Latino culture “has served to ‘other’ by suggesting that deficiencies in ‘Latino culture’ are responsible for nonnormative forms of sexuality, race/ethnicity, and gender” (Cantú 2000: 230). In essence, this type of “othering” produces a cultural deficit model.

Like researchers, many people are apt to perceive Latino culture in terms of a cultural deficit model. That is, many queer Latino and even straight Latinos, have cultural perceptions and expectations of Latino families. Despite the fact that the meanings of “machismo” and “traditional Latino family” is changing in the world of academia, many Latinos, like people in general, still tend to believe negative stereotypes about Latino culture. Many of the Latinos in my sample perceived that their family was not supportive of them in the early stages of the coming out process and they attributed this lack of support to Latino culture. There is a failure to see or examine what Cantú calls the “sociostructural” forces, such as political and economic forces, that may have led family members to initially react in a negative way. Perhaps, respondents found it easier to blame Latino culture as some external entity.

For Example, Cantú suggests that the main sociostructural force that was creating a sense of loneliness and depression among gay Latinos was the feeling of isolation his respondents experienced from the gay community. Cantú found that respondents who sensed an overall lack of support from their family could not find an alternative support system. This was due in part to a lack of defined gay Latino community centers or identification with queer Latinos who were second or third generation, those who recently immigrated, those who were from different Latin countries, those who were of a

different race, etc. As a result, the lack of structural support (in the form of community centers), rather than culture, led to feelings of isolation and depression.

Queer Latinos are often lacking an alternative support system from community centers or outreach programs. In addition to a lack of support from such centers/programs, my study suggests that queer Latinos' perceptions of their culture contribute to their feelings of isolation and depression. A common sentiment among my Latino informants, as evidenced in Susie's quote, is that white queers may have an easier time coming out as well as have an easier time gaining acceptance. The fifteen white respondents in this sample reported having just as difficult of a time through the entire process. Many expressed similar concerns about negative responses from family members. Many feared telling their parents or siblings of their sexuality or of their current relationship. Many found acceptance to be an ongoing and, sometimes, never-ending process. This provides evidence that "cultural othering" is detrimental to queer Latinos. However, this is not to say that every coming out process is the same, nor is the experience of coming out identical for Latinos and Anglos. Likewise, I am not proposing that the experiences of queer Latinos from different Latin origins are identical. Rather, it is important to acknowledge that blaming Latino (or Mexican) culture for the familial rejection of one's sexuality is not telling the whole story. It is simply a starting point for further examination of the sociostructural forces—as proposed by Cantú—that may be occurring in the coming out process and in the lives of queers.

Furthermore, like queer Latinos, Anglos of different demographic locations, social classes, education levels, etc. experience varying levels of homophobia in

American culture. Homophobia is still very much an issue in American culture, although it is usually the last oppression to be mentioned, the last to be taken seriously, and the last to go (Smith 1993). Mythical conceptions that homophobia is no longer a problem can easily be debunked in the recent slough of adolescent gay and lesbian suicides beginning in early 2009. One of the most recent suicides involved 14-year-old Jamey Rodemeyer of Williamsville, New York (Praetorius 2011). Shortly after his suicide, Rodemeyer's parents became strong advocates against bullying in schools, prompting a surge in efforts for middle schools and high schools to address bullying, as well as the public "It Gets Better" campaign.

The white sample appeared to approach familial responses to familial acceptance slightly differently than the Latino sample. They made no real excuses for rejection or lack of acceptance that were directly tied to American culture. Rather, they seemed to feel there was an innate sense of homophobia that family members were dealing with during the process of coming out. This did not mean that they had an easier time during the coming out process or were able to obtain acceptance from hesitant family members at a quicker rate than the Latino sample. However, a noticeable difference between the two samples was that whites reported making considerable efforts to gain acceptance from these family members. As a result, respondents reported being estranged from certain family members for extended periods or time. Additionally, some reported that they had actively tried to seek acceptance by asking members of their family of origin to include their partner in family functions.

Consistent with previous research that suggests that queer Anglos may have greater support in the LGBT community, respondents in the Anglo sample may have been more inclined to distance themselves or demand acceptance from members of their family of origin who had initially rejected their sexual orientation and relationship because of supportive connections to other queer people. In fact, Diane reported that shortly after she came out (in her late 30s), she was “really out” and moved in with two gay men in West Hollywood. There she found a supportive environment, one that was much more nurturing than her hesitant mother and sister.

Similarly, Alan reported that upon coming out and getting out of an unhappy heterosexual marriage, he moved in with two older lesbian women who provided him with the acceptance that he needed at that time in his life. Finally, Lisa reported that gay bars in Los Angeles were a safe haven for her at the age of fifteen, providing her with a comfortable environment to express her sexual identity and gain acceptance. In all of these examples, queer Anglos appeared to have the added benefit of finding a place of acceptance within the LGBT community when they were unsure about their sexual identities or when they were experiencing a lack of support from their families of origin.

Latino respondents may have not had the same abilities to live within a gay friendly community. However, several college age respondents reported being part of their campus LGBT center. Upon interview, George (Latino) reported that he had recently returned from a gay and lesbian youth retreat that was developed by his University LGBT center. Additionally, Latino respondent, Susie reported that she was an active member in an LGBT organization specifically designed for Latinos on her college

campus. Both respondents reported that that felt it not only provided them with a supportive environment, but also provided them with a safe space where they could relate to others facing similar issues. Although their extended social support may not be from a larger LGBT community, such as Diane living in West Hollywood, Latino respondents were equally able to access resources that were available to them. However, these resources were contingent on their status as a student.

Regardless of the fact that many Latinos may be operating under the suspicion that culture was a key factor in determining their process of acceptance from family members, it is still important to note that it is a very real feeling for the person in question. Because there is a perceived difference by queer Latinos, the issue of Latino culture as a factor of acceptance or rejection should still be addressed. We as researchers should acknowledge the “Latino deficit” to the extent that queer Latinos perceive that it exists. It is easy to say that it is really sociostructural factors that are to blame for many of the negative feelings experienced by queer Latinos, but it is another to suggest that we should not examine this issue at all. If nearly all respondents in this study reflected on Latino culture in this negative light and positioned Latino Culture as the “other” of Western culture, then it is important that we reflect on how this type of thinking effects their daily lives and their emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, because it is a very real to many queer Latinos, it should be addressed by LGBT organizations and other services that many queer Latinos seek to make sense of their queer Latino identities.

I propose that future study be conducted on the extent to which Chicanos/Latinos are affected by not only familial rejection, but also perceptions of Latino culture as being

in opposition to their sexual identities. The sociostructural factors affecting queer Latinos should also be explored in greater detail. Levels of stress, shame and guilt may lead to further emotional problems or physical ailments. Furthermore, it may be imperative that LGBT organizations provide additional support for queer Latinos or simply be sensitive to their emotional needs.

Chapter 3

Racial/Ethnic Identity and Queer Identity: A Comparative Sample

Historically, Latinos are often viewed in reference to studies conducted on white samples, such as those focusing on psychological stress, household division of labor and family life, LGBT organizational involvements, etc. According to the 2000 census, same-sex Latino couples are more similar in terms of their demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status to different-sex Latino couples than they are to white same-sex couples. These similarities include their age composition, rates of disability, citizenship status, military status, rates of public assistance use, rates of unemployment, and employment patterns (Gates & Sears 2005). Same-sex Latino couples are less likely to have a college degree than non-Latino same-sex couples (13% to 46%), less likely to be employed (61% to 74%), and to have an average annual household income that is nearly half that of non-Latino same-sex couples (\$51,251 versus \$100,297). Annual household income is nearly identical to that of different-sex Latino couples (\$49,243). Same-sex Latino couples generally differ from different-sex Latino couples in a greater tendency to have a college degree and to speak English. Such differences between same-sex Latino and non-Latino couples lead to important differences in their everyday lives and identities. Among my sample there were similar difference in income. On average, the white respondents had an annual income of \$54,000, while the Latino respondents had an average annual income of \$24,000. This discrepancy was most likely caused by the age gaps of the two samples, with a large number of the Latino sample currently working

toward a Bachelor's degree. However, education levels for these two groups were quite similar.

This chapter examines the social, racial, cultural, and religious issues in the development of a queer identity as were revealed in my interviews with thirty Latinos and Anglos involved in same-sex relationships. Specifically, I examine the ways in which these individuals perceived and experienced social and cultural stigmas. I also compare the experiences and identity development between my Anglo and Latino respondents, identifying both similarities and differences. My findings suggest that while both white and Latino gays and lesbians experienced the strains associated with a heterosexist and homophobic society, Latino respondents experienced the strain of being a “double minority, while Latinas experienced the strain of being a “triple minority.”

Masculinity and Gay Identity Among Whites and Latinos

Studies in masculinities have long depicted masculinity as something that is internally complex and not reduced to a single masculine type (Carrigan et. al. 1985; Connell 1995, 1998, 2000; Mac an Ghail 1994; Messner 1989; Segal 1997). In terms of masculinity, intersectionality assesses the way in which men experience different types of masculinity based on their race, class, or sexuality. In this sense, intersectionality supports the concept of multiple forms of masculinities (Connell 1994, 1995, 2000), or simply, the study of “masculinities” rather than a single, monolithic masculinity. Multiple masculinities addresses the issue of unequal sharing or distribution of male privilege (Messner 1997), but does not see it in terms of being oppressed by sex roles. Rather, it focuses on men's experiences and the economic, political, and legal constraints that result

in discrimination, marginalization, and oppression of men. By no means do men facing these types of discrimination reap the benefits of male privilege. And, if there is evidence of privilege based on gender, it is often overshadowed by the discrimination, marginalization, or oppression faced by these men (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner 1994, Messner 1997).

In fact, it is intersectionality, or viewing the interrelated systems of power and inequality that drastically contributes to defining “masculinities” in current literature. Connell (2002) introduces the concepts of “hegemonic masculinity,” “subordinate masculinity,” “complicit masculinity,” and “marginalized masculinity” in an attempt to account for multiple masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is oppositional to subordinate, complicit, and marginalized masculinities. More specifically, hegemonic masculinity is a combination of gender practices that give legitimacy to patriarchy and guarantees a dominant position over women and marginalized or subordinated men (Connell 2001). It is by no means a “normal” or “standard” masculinity, but rather a form of masculinity that is the most honored or desired (Connell 2000). It is also often not achievable for the majority of men, causing tension with other forms of masculinity (e.g. homophobia), violent outbursts (e.g. domestic violence), or negative self-perceptions (e.g. body image issues). Complicit masculinity refers to men who are not active in pursuing hegemonic masculinity, but comply with hegemonic ideals. Marginalized masculinities refer to men of different races and ethnicities, and acknowledge interwoven systems of power. Lastly, subordinate masculinity refers to homosexuality and is counter to hegemonic masculinity in the sense that it embodies what maleness is not: femininity. Characteristics associated

with homosexuality or subordinate masculinity can be used against heterosexual men in a derogatory way. It is often used as a device to question their legitimacy as a male, thus furthering homophobia and gay violence (Connell 2001).

Historically, homophobia has been attributed to shifts in American culture and social construction of heteronormative gender scripts and displays for men and women (Katz 1983; Kimmel 2006; Nardi 2000). Kimmel (2006) traces the historic construction of masculinity and how it became intertwined with homophobia. He contends that during the late 18th century and early 19th century, the rural, land-owning “genteel patriarch” and the urban, merchant “heroic artisan” both supported participatory democracy and individual autonomy. However, by the 1830s the genteel patriarch and the heroic artisan were replaced by “marketplace man,” with an identity based on success, wealth, power, and status. With the development of “marketplace man” the genteel patriarch became anachronistic to a new form of masculinity, often depicting them as feminized dandies. The “heroic artisan” became the worker, wage slave, or dispossessed proletarian to “capitalist man.” With the development of capitalist man was also the development of a new form of masculinity and gender script for men. It further created grounds for exclusion of others, such as women, non-white men, non-native born men, and homosexuals (Kimmel 2006).

By the 19th century conceptions of masculinity became a product of the conflation of gender and sexual orientation. Nardi (2000) suggests that this conflation brought about “sexual perversion” as being in opposition to normative masculinity. That is, those who suffered from sexual perversion “wore clothes and hairstyles, undertook the work, played

the games, gestured, walked, talked, drank the drinks, acted the political role, performed the sexual acts, and felt the emotions of the ‘other’ sex” (2). This allowed for any deviation (i.e. mannish females or effeminate males) to be interpreted by larger American culture as threats to traditional masculinity and femininity.

By the early 20th century definitions and terms began to distinguish different types of homosexual men. Effeminate men became referred to as “fairies,” “queens,” “faggots,” “nances,” and “pansies” (Nardi 2000). “Queers” were defined as men who were interested in the same-sex but not interested in effeminate men, while “trades” were defined as men who accepted sexual relationships with other men (Chauncey 1994). Both “queers” and “trades” were able to maintain a normative presentation of masculinity through their everyday demeanors and sexual roles. The 1960s marked a change in the conception of sexual orientation and gender into a binary: heterosexual (straight) or homosexual (gay). “Gay” thus became a term that placed “effeminate men, trades, and queers” into a single category (Chauncey 1994). By the 1970s the gay rights movement placed effeminate men in opposition to gay men who presented a masculine display. According to Nardi (2000), manly gay men established themselves as “clones,” or “manliest of men with gym defined bodies, blue collar clothing, short hair, mustaches, etc.” (12). R.W. Connell (1992) refers to this concept as enacting a “very straight gay,” in which men enact both a hegemonic masculinity and a gay masculinity in their everyday lives.

Consequently, male sexual scripts become important in enacting male hegemonic masculinity for gay men. In terms of sexuality, men are expected to follow the “adventure

script” in which men play the active role by seeking sex for adventure (Mutchler 2000). Men are often rewarded for being promiscuous and are held accountable and stigmatized as fags or losers for not being sexually adventurous. Therefore, “gay and bisexual men are subordinated in the hegemonic masculine hierarchy because they violate the explicit requirements of heterosexuality” (Mutchler 2000: 17).

Additionally, men are expected to simultaneously sow their oats while promising to settle down in a monogamous relationship. Gay men face similar sexual scripts, posing sex for adventure as an integral part of manhood (Mutchler 2000). Yet, gay men also face the script of settling down in a committed, monogamous relationship. In his study of thirty gay white and Latino 18-24 year-olds, Mutchler (2000) suggests that white and Latino men maintain sexual practices that are shaped by gender-based expectations for sexual activity and sexual scripts. He found that both white and Latino men in his sample practiced sexual promiscuity, but often felt shame and confusion shortly thereafter due to sexual stigmas and internalized homophobia. Additionally, he found that his respondents maintained a desire to enact the sexual script of a romantic relationship or romantic love with “Mr. Right” (Mutchler 2000).

Such research suggests that not only is there a larger history of homophobia, gender scripts, and definitions of masculinity in American culture, but also that white men and men of color may perceive and internalize such conceptions of gay/straight, homophobia, etc. in their everyday lives. As queer men of color, gay Latinos are not only placed against a hegemonic norm of masculinity, but also find they are in a subordinated and marginalized position of masculinity. This is particularly difficult in cultures that

have a more traditional gender ideology that prescribes more rigid stereotypes and gender role norms (Saez et. al. 2009). The concept of “machismo,” characterized as stereotypically hypermasculine, aggressive/violent, unfaithful, etcetera (Kulis et. al. 2008), has been widely contested with research that finds “machismo” as being associated with honor, respect, bravery, and family responsibility. Nevertheless, the dominance of hegemonic norms of masculinity is present among Latino men. According to Carrier (1995), “although not all males in Mexico aspire to actually play the macho role in its extreme form, the available evidence suggests that the full concept of machismo continues to operate as a principal force dominating the learned part of the Mexican male gender role” (4). Similarly, Saez et. al. (2009) claims that current research suggests that Latino males may endorse greater levels of traditional masculine ideology than any other group. Masculinity thus proves to be an important part of male identity regardless of sexual orientation.

For example, in his ethnographic study of nine gay Latino men, Kutz (1999) gathered respondents’ four main criteria for a dominant Latino masculinity. They included (1) expectations of marriage and family, (2) expectations of masculine pastimes—sports, (3) expectations of a successful, well-paying career, and (4) expectations of sexual promiscuity with women. Kutz (1999) suggests that gay Latino men feel pressure to marry in their early twenties or fear the stigma of being called a “raro,” one who is odd or out of the ordinary. If he is not married by the time he is forty, there is a definite risk that he will be labeled as gay. To avoid such stigma, men may opt to marry women to maintain their masculinity and placate their families of origin.

Similarly, through an interview with 18 homosexual/bi-sexual Latino men, Muñoz-Laboy (2008) found that respondents had a fear of an inability to procreate to protect family honor. Procreation, something seen a typical of a man, is in direct contrast to Latino male homosexuality, causing men to be perceived as a traitor to his culture and religion because his sexual acts do not contribute to the reproduction of family and community (Alvarez 1997). Kutz (1999) also finds that masculinity is associated with sports, being athletic and tough, as well as obtaining a career that produces a family wage. Finally, respondents suggested that failure to exhibit male promiscuity would result in suspicions about their non-heterosexual orientation. Men were expected to not only be sexually knowledgeable, but also to verbally discuss sex related topics with other men.

Guarnero and Flaskerud (2008) find that being “macho” (a real man’s man) and being in control are key elements to a Latino man’s masculinity; often traits that are considered null if one is queer. Failure to meet with such expectations often result in more than just negative labeling, but also stereotypes about how queer men act. Queer Latino men are often expected to be extremely feminine or to be a stereotypically flamboyant gay man. In many respects, if one is queer he is automatically expected to forgo all masculinity. In the most extreme circumstances, the negative connotations of a homosexual man is that he is less than a man (Diaz 1998), or perhaps even less than a woman. Alvarez (1997) suggests that gay men are perceived to be “sexually open” for corruption, similar to that of a female.

Homosexuality in men is often associated with the expectations that he will engage in cross-dressing and child molestation, and that he is degenerate, vicious,

immoral, degenerate, flamboyant, and dresses and lives as a woman (Carrier 1995; Guarnero 2007). As previously stated, a tactic to combat such stereotypes would be to marry a woman and live a sexual life hidden from one's family. Muñoz-Laboy (2008) asserts that Latinos keep a "low-profile"—have sex with other men without self-identifying as gay, homosexual or bisexual—deliberately because of such stigmas. Queer Latino men also find ways to engage in sexual behavior with other men while simultaneously considering themselves to be "straight." Almaguer (1993) suggests that the dominant position during the sexual encounter maintains definitions of traditional masculinity. Similarly, Cantú (2000) suggests that Latino men's sexual identity is determined not by the biological sex of the sexual partner but the culturally defined roles of the "activo/passivo," with the dominant participant labeled fully heterosexual. It is only the man in the passive role, the "chigado" (the fucked one), that is considered to be homosexual because he leaves his body open to conquest by another man.

The social stigma of being the "passivo" is apparent in the large body of words associated with a queer male in Latin cultures (Murray and Dynes 1995). In fact, there are some 106 derogatory terms for being the receiver of a male/male sexual encounter in the Spanish language. Terms tend to fall into three main categories: (1) words that are associated with flamboyance, such as "mariposa" (butterfly) or "joto" (effeminate), (2) words that are associated with being out of the ordinary, such as "maricon" (queer) or "raro" (rare), and (3) words that are associated with being sexually dominated or conquered, such as "chigado" (one being fucked by a "chignon"). Tellingly, there are only 25 words for one who penetrates another man. These terms also fall into three

distinct categories: (1) words that refer to the strength/dominance of the man, such as “cabron” (male goat fucker/ “muy macho”), (2) words that refer to the mastery of sexual knowledge, such as “chapero” (hustler), and (3) words that refer directly to insertion, such as “chingon” (hole stuffer).

Gender and Lesbian Identity among Whites and Latinos

While literature is quite abundant on queer masculinity, research on “queer femininity,” let alone Latina lesbianism is more limited. Literature on queer Latinas generally tends to focus on the Latina experiences and sources for empowerment (e.g. Anzaldua 1993; Moraga 2000) rather than empirical research on queer Latinas. Additionally, literature on white lesbians tends to focus on feminist debates when discussing issues of identity. This section will present a brief review of current literature on gender and identity among Anglo and Latina lesbians.

Mutchler (2000) suggests “the traditional script for doing feminine sex is referred to as romantic love...in line with this script girls are encouraged to save sexual intercourse for a special person” (16). Additionally, women are expected to take responsibility for their reproduction, birth control, children and child care, pleasing their sexual partners, playing a passive role, and save their virginity until marriage. Women are admonished for indulging in their sexual desires or losing their virginity prior to marriage. Women are expected to maintain the patriarchal gender order through passivity, purity, and maintaining monogamous relationships whereby they care for children. Furthermore, women are expected to maintain this order by first being sexually attracted to men. Lesbians violate this cultural rule; by “crossing the boundaries of gender

role expectations, lesbians are deemed defective women who want to be men and socially subordinate to heterosexual women” (Greene 2000: 241). Greene (2000) supposes that heterosexual women are subordinated to heterosexual men, thereby lesbian women are subordinated to heterosexual men and heterosexual women, placing them further down in the social hierarchy than women who adhere to traditional sex role and gender expectations.

Similarly, Mohr (1988) suggests that anti-gay stereotypes surrounding gender identification are mechanisms for reinforcing gender power differentials in society by implying that if one is “free to chose their social roles independently of gender, many guiding social divisions, both domestic and commercial, might be threatened” (Mohr 1988: 524). He posits that there are two groups of anti-gay stereotypes that work to reinforce powerful gender roles in society. The first group reflects “mistakes” in gender identity, implying that lesbians want to be, look like, or act like men, while men want to be, look like, or act like women. Labels such as “bulldykes” or “diesel dykes” are associated with this stereotypical image of women while “queen,” “fairies,” or “nellies” are associated with images of men. These are perhaps the most common stereotypes about queer people that reflect gender bending. A second category is the presentation of gays as “pervasive, sinister, conspiratorial and a corruptive threat” (Mohr 1988: 523), in order to stereotype gay men as sex-crazed maniacs, child molesters or civilization destroyers. Such extreme negative stereotypes serve to displace potential familial problems (incest, child abuse, spousal abuse, etc.) with an outside source. This

displacement allows the belief that problems of the family are a result of external sources rather than internal issues.

Halberstam (2005) suggest that butch lesbianism, a physical display that is incongruent to socially acceptable role expectations often leads to shame and guilt. Accordingly shame does not arise from being masculine, but from her inability to “become properly feminine”; “butchness gives rise to the blues, to rage, and finally to a political sensibility shared by other female subjects who experience themselves as disenfranchised—namely, feminism” (Halberstam 2005; 226). Alternatively, “femme” lesbians, who enact stereotypical feminine displays, are accused of reinforcing a patriarchal and gendered norm. Lee (1996) suggests that the image of a butch lesbian has greater acceptance in American culture, with queerness being conflated with lesbianism and lesbianism being conflated with butch. She asserts that stereotypes associated with “femme” lesbians and bisexual women include “that they are inauthentic lesbians, who want to pass as straight, that they are not feminist and are not politicized, that they are indeed weak, duped, apolitical and traitorous” (Lee 1996: 122). Much as in the case of effeminate males and “clones” traditional gender display and reinforcement of traditional gender scripts contribute to stigmas and debates within the LGBT community.

Many of the gender scripts and expectations found in American culture are also present in Latino culture, with a historical variation. In terms of intersectionality, Latina lesbians face not only issues surrounding gender/patriarchy and sexual orientation, but also race/ethnicity. According to traditional conceptions of familism, there is a high value placed on female chastity and sexual socialization that promotes gender role expectations,

including norms that promote female reticence and a lack of knowledge about sexuality (Raffaelli & Ontai 2007: 151). Women who are sexually experienced are termed, *la Malinche* or “*la Chigada*” (the fucked one), a woman with oral and vaginal openness (Alvarez 1997: 2). Notions of the male “*Chingon*” and masculine characteristics also arise from this image of *La Malinche*. Alvarez (1997) suggests that Latino men must dis-identify with *La Malinche* by taking the role that is in direct contrast of “*la Chingada*”—the dominator/penetrator.

With female expectations of chastity and passivity, being a “good” woman “comes down to the basic belief that a woman cannot be considered a prime sexual target and still be considered ‘good’”(Carrier 1995: 5). Even with the prospects of marriage or formal engagement, Latinas are expected to maintain their chastity, while her male partner is allowed to pursue other sexual endeavors. However, such strict adherence to chastity is considered to be outdated by younger generations of Latinos, including lesbians.

Such powerful beliefs that promote sexual ignorance and chastity lead many queer Latinas to morally question their sexual identity. Zavella (1997) suggests that lesbian Latinas see sexual desire as “playing with fire”—meaning that her respondents believed they were toying with an activity that was culturally sanctioned as well as something that was hot or passionate. María Pérez, a lesbian respondent in Zavella’s (1997) sample, reported that she used virgin honor to her advantage, noting that she coved up her homosexuality by telling potential male lovers that she was protecting her honor. Similarly, Turner (2003) posits that gender double standards in Latino culture may

result in praising queer Latinas for not chasing men. There is little empirical research on social responses to homosexuality among Latinas. Yet, Turner's (2003) argument suggests that lesbianism does not receive the same amount of negative responses as male homosexuality among Latinos because the lack of outwardly heterosexual behavior among Latinas does not fall entirely outside the realm of gender expectations.

However, Latina lesbians still find their sexuality is generally not accepted by the Latino community. Within the Spanish language, there are eighteen terms to describe a Latina lesbian, they include: (1) words that signify masculinity, such as "bucha" (butch), "hombrecito" (little man) or "marimacha" ("macho"/dyke), and (2) words that refer to difference, such as "rara" (rare one) or "jota" (queer). Perhaps fewer words and negative association with these words may be indicative of greater acceptance for Latinas than Latinos.

The intersection of a gender, sexuality, race and class is abundant within the literature but often places gay/lesbian minorities in opposition with American cultural perspectives on both homosexuality and heterosexuality. For example, Takagi (1996) places gay/lesbian Asian Americans on the margin of the gay community and the Asian-American community, indicating that they are forced into a subculture with which they often do not identify. Lee (1996) takes a similar approach, suggesting that the white butch/femme stereotype of lesbian women make women of color invisible in the homosexual community, while also remaining invisible in the heterosexual community where Asian women are viewed in terms of their racial stereotypes (passive, hyper feminine, exotic) or their racial identity. In response to the invisibility of lesbian

minorities, Greene (2000) advocates for a “consolidated personal identity” for African-American lesbians (as well as all women of color) based on race, gender, and sexuality. This identity should be a reflection of the impact of dominant culture on women’s lives, African-American culture, and relationships with family, community, and partners.

Intersectionality: Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality

Issues of negotiating identities in a doubly marginalized position—and triply in the case of Latinas—posit that queer Latinos may face greater emotional distress and negative well being than queer non-Latinos. Issues of depression and overall negative well-being can result from numerous obstacles that queer Latinos face within their everyday lives. This includes the challenges of maintaining a gender identity that is consistent with socially acceptable behavior by the Latino community. As discussed in Chapter 2, feelings of rejection from family members can cause severe emotional distress, resulting in occurrences of depression, higher risk of suicide, greater risk of illegal drug use and greater risk of precarious sexual behavior in comparison to heterosexuals (Ryan et. al. 2009; Savin-Williams 2001).

Depression and other negative psychological problems may also result from the rejection of one’s cultural community. Guarnero and Flaskerud (2008) also posit that lack of community support, use of language to denigrate queer Latinos, notions of hegemonic masculinity in the Latino community, and racism/discrimination from mainstream society also place queer Latinos at risk. While issues of masculinity and language have been discussed at great length, it is important to note the negative effects of feeling outside of one’s cultural community as well as the LGBT community. In terms of family and

community, Guarnero's (2007) study of 28 Latino gay men finds that a poor self-esteem resulted from living in the periphery of the family and the community. Similarly, in their study of 106 queer Latinos, Zea, Reisen, and Poppen (1999) examined collective identity and collective self-esteem in relation to one's membership in the Latino LGB community. They found (1) Latinos who expressed high levels of self-worth in the LGB community had high levels of self esteem, (2) high evaluations of the LGB community decreased incidences of depression, and (3) Latinos who felt their queer Latino identity was very important to them had high levels of depression. This suggests that feeling connected with the broader LGBT community can be very beneficial to one's sense of self-worth and self-esteem. However, Latinos often find that gay and lesbians not only live on the border of "mainstream white society and Latino communities but also that of mainstream gay and lesbian communities which...are generated by 'Anglo-American' identity politics" (Cantú 1999: 113). The inability to find a social place of acceptance generally leads to similar experiences of loneliness, isolation, and depression.

Outright discrimination for one's ethnicity can also be experienced in the LGBT community, leaving Latinos with a negative sense of self-worth. Using surveys, Ibanez et.al (2009) assessed self-reported experiences with racism in a sample of 911 Latino gay men in three major metropolitan areas across the United States. Findings suggests that racial discrimination was experienced with the LGBT community for Latinos who had lived longer in the United States, those with darker skin, and those who had more Indigenous features. About 58% of those surveyed reported incidences of racism in the

LGBT community, causing lower self-esteem. Feelings of rejection and low self-esteem were found to inevitably lead to a tendency to engage in risky sexual behavior.

In what follows I will examine the effects of gendered expectations of Anglo and Latino respondents, focusing on familial and community responses to deviation from these expectations. I will also present a brief discussion of sexual identity formation based on these expectations as well as religious affiliation. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the integration of sexual identities and racial/ethnic identities among respondents.

Gender Expectations and Identity Formation

Defining Queer: Gender Expectations and Gender Deviation Among Latina/os

Nearly all Latino respondents were keenly aware of the struggle that they personally faced, or that other queer Latinos faced, in being simultaneously queer and Latino. Angie, 21 said:

My family, I think that is what they are really upset about; that I am Mexican and that I am gay...because I know that, my friend makes fun of me because she is white. She says 'If I had a gay son I would throw him a gay coming out party.' And I'm like, that's weird, my parents were like 'don't tell anybody.' Because that's how it is.

Angie thus perceives that things are very different for lesbians and gays, depending on if they are white or Latino. Of the respondents in this sample, only two of the 15 respondents interviewed felt comfortable with both their homosexual and Latino identities and felt equally involved in both the Latino and LGBT community. Two

individuals felt solely attached to the Latino community and identified more with their cultural identity than with their queer identity. Most of my respondents (eleven) identified more with the LGBT community than with their ethnic community. Many of these latter respondents chose to be involved in LGBT organizations. Incidentally, many of these latter respondents felt somewhat alienated from the Latino community and had difficulty with their ethnic identities. Lastly, one bi-racial individual, who was of both Mexican and Japanese heritage, had difficulty with both her ethnic and queer identities. Below, I explore in greater depth the negotiation of cultural identity and sexual identity in the everyday lives of queer Latinos.

Similar to previous literature on queer Latinos, many respondents suggested that their cultural heritage is complex and affects their everyday lives. Cultural upbringing, the Latino community, hegemonic gender expectations and Catholic ideology are all perceived by informants to have some sort of influence on the population sample of this study. In many circumstances, respondents felt that being Latino was distinctly different than other racial/ethnic groups. One respondent said:

When I think about it [being queer and Latino], I think about it in comparison to other queer people. I guess, who are Caucasian queer. I don't know. I think like being Latino, the culture is very, ummh, strong. Like there is something that is instilled in us from our childhood. Like machismo and homophobia and religion—you know? Catholics, like myself, it is just a lot harder of a struggle than [for] other people.

In this quote, Susie, 19, reviews her struggle as a queer Latina in relation to characteristics of Latino culture that may be different from non-Latinos. She points out reoccurring themes of rejection based on Catholic religious ideas, cultural upbringing, and issues of “machismo” or traditional gender role expectations. Machismo, in particular, was a great concern for many female respondents. Susie, 19 reflected on machismo in her family:

I think my brothers, well they ‘know’ but they never talk about it and I’ve never come out to them. But my oldest brother is really homophobic and I think that has a lot to do with ‘machismo’ and the way that my dad raised him.

Kathleen, 25: “There was a lot of hostility growing up in my family. My father was very into ‘machismo’ and my mother was very submissive, but she worked hard.”

The concept of machismo within the family brought many to view their family home life as traditional. For instance, Kathleen felt the machismo had directly affected her life while living with her family of origin, “there was a lot of verbal abuse and lots of control and I felt it was directed towards me because I was a girl.” The feelings of limitations based on being female in a more traditional household were also reflected in the responses of Madison, 33 and Angie, 21. Within her household of three younger male siblings, Madison felt her life was more restricted than her younger brothers; “I had to fight tooth and nail for equality growing up and I always got, ‘well he [is] a boy’ [when she questioned her parents about gender inequality].” For Madison, issues of gender inequality included the expectation to tend to the household after school, not attending

school functions or participating in extra curricular activities, and spending time with her family on weekends, rather than friends. She commented that these were expectations that did not hold true for her male siblings.

Angie attributes this gender inequality in the household to over-protective immigrant parents with strong values. These values included gender role expectations similar to those found in Madison's household, as well as expectations to live with her parents until she married. As a result, Angie felt restricted; they [her parents] were brought up in like, I don't know how to say it, 'un rancho.' Like a small little place in Mexico so they like had strong values and stuff. But it wasn't like religious, just strict." Additionally, machismo and experiences in a "traditional" household had a direct effect on some of the respondents, making it difficult to come to terms with their sexual identity. Kathleen reflected:

I think possibly I grew up having strong feelings towards females and I always thought that them holding me back from that [in order to] fit the tone and the stereotype of Hispanics and 'machismo' and everything and I think that had a little bit to do with me thinking about if this is something I was born with.

Within this sample, Latinos felt that their cultural identity was heavily intertwined with machismo, conceptions of a traditional Latino family, and gender role expectations. As a result, many women expressed their sentiments on growing up in an environment that was not always favorable to females. In Kathleen's case, these expectations caused an internal struggle with sexuality and heteronormativity. A common sentiment was that

being queer was in direct opposition to the traditional Latino family or with machismo. In fact, respondents suggested that parents were often confused by what it meant to be a gay man or a lesbian woman due to a more traditional way of thinking about male and female gender expectations.

Several respondents reported that one major aspect of being part of a Latino family was the misconception of what it meant to be gay or lesbian. Similar to previous literature on gay Latinos, Mario found that his parents were in denial of his sexuality because he was not stereotypically “gay”; “They see other gay guys in Colombia and they see the stereotypical feminized gay men. They didn’t see ‘straight’ acting gay men so they kept saying ‘well, you’re not gay!’” In this instance, the stereotype of the effeminate gay man, the “maricon,” had his family questioning his sexuality.

Many familial responses to female respondents’ sexuality were shaped by previous assumptions about lesbian women. Susie, 19 reported, “I’m not butch or feminine, I guess I’m somewhere in between. But we’ve had arguments. He [her father] brings in ‘well what are you doing? Are you trying to be the man?’ And I was really shaken. I guess his masculinity was threatened by me being a lesbian.” In Susie’s case, her father had a conception of a female lesbian as being “la bucha” or “la marimacha.” In instances where she and her father had arguments, this concept was immediately used. Perhaps as evidence that Susie was acting out of an expected gender norm, her father attributed any uncharacteristic behavior to her sexuality. In fact, while the numbers of terms for lesbian are far less than that of gay men, many of the female terms refer to women as being akin to men (i.e. “hombrecito,” “buchas,” “marimachas,” etc.). The

existence of various words to describe a masculine woman or a lesbian in the Spanish language, may signify the increased importance of gender role expectations for Latinas.

Similar to previous studies on queer Latinos, respondents indicated that there were clear expectations from their family and community regarding their sexuality. For the five gay Latinos interviewed in this study, three expressed a familial expectation of extreme femininity. In fact, one participant responded that his family continuously argued that he could not have possibly been queer because he did not “act” gay.

An expectation for Latinas is the “Marianisma” concept of female complicity and chastity. While there was not clear indication of female expectations of chastity from their families of origin, three of the female participants responded that family members has difficulty with them not being entirely living up to feminine expectations. In one instance, a respondent reported that her father felt threatened by her assertive behavior during an argument and suggested that she was trying to “be the man.” This is very similar to the concept of the derogatory word “hombrecito” (little man) discussed in previous literature.

Defining Queer: Gender Expectations and Gender Deviation Among Whites

Many similar stories of rejection and misunderstanding of gay and lesbian identity surfaced within the white sample. Various respondents attributed misconceptions of the meaning of gay, lesbian or queer to religion. Darren, 28, Lynn, 34 and Bobbi, 48 all reported incidences of naïvity towards homosexuality on the part of their families and themselves. Darren:

My identity with being gay was kind of weird. Like seriously, this is how sheltered I was. When I was growing up I thought being gay meant you dressed like a woman and danced in a parade once a year. Like seriously, that's what I thought. And I didn't see myself that way because at the time I didn't do that...I didn't really connect myself to "gay" or "fag" really because I didn't understand what those words meant.

Darren goes on to report that his Mormon parents had a similar conception of a gay man:

When I was 14 I discovered that there was such a thing as [gay] porn, so I got some. I had some on my computer and at one point my father's computer broke down so he had to take mine to use for work...so he found them [the pictures] and my parents sat me down and asked me if I was gay. And like I told you, I didn't understand what that meant. I told them no and my mother believed me. My father was like "uh-huh" and wasn't surprised when I came out to him later.

Lynn, also a Mormon, had similar difficulty with defining what it meant to be gay.

According to Lynn, the Mormon religion taught that it was "not okay to be gay," and often caused confusing misconceptions about gays and lesbians, "I grew up thinking that gay people live alone in dark, creepy houses. That is literally what I thought! High hedges, solitude, no friends, house stinks, have dogs and cats, but no friends." Similar to the Latino sample, Lynn and Darren had stereotypical images of homosexuality. In fact, Darren had a concept of "gay" that was quite similar to Mario's family.

Lastly, Bobbi, who was raised in a Catholic household, grew up “feeling different” but did not have the vocabulary to define her attraction to the same-sex.

According to Bobbi,

I dated guys intermittently but it was more like I was hanging out with a group of people. I never heard the word gay or lesbian or homosexual until college, so I had no clue! I was raised Catholic for 18 years...It must have been in a moderate to semi-liberal Catholic approach to education because nobody ever brought the topic up. There was sort of this out of sight, out of mind, like it didn't exist.

For Bobbi, not only did she lack the knowledge of what it meant to be gay/lesbian or have a negative conception of homosexuality, but she was also unaware that there were terms for individuals who were attracted to the same-sex.

Respondents in the white sample also expressed concern for the derogatory use of terms to attribute behavior what was outside gender norms. While derogatory use of “faggot” and “dyke” were found in the white sample, these terms were not used in association with behavior that was contrary to gender role expectations. Rather, two female respondents reported that family members had used the word “dyke” to suggest deviance or atypical behavior that needed addressing. Lisa, “My dad came back into the picture with his new wife when I was 17 and they were always drinking. So we would be in a restaurant and she would be like, ‘you’re a fucking dyke,’[and] my dad, slobbering in his cocktail, would laugh.” In this sense, Lisa’s alcoholic step-mother would use “dyke” as an insult to direct deviant behavior away from herself and suggest that Lisa was the

individual who was problematic or atypical. “Dyke” was used as a method of implying atypical gendered behavior, yet was not used as blatantly as found in the experiences of Latinas in this study.

Cheryl, 57, found that her Catholic sister expressed her religious sentiment for homosexuality through a similar comment. Upon purchasing a home with her partner, Cheryl asked her sister for help moving, “so she announced to the rest of the family that she was coming over to unpack, but she was going to wear her dike kicking boots to do it.” In this instance “dyke” was used not as comment to deflect attention from her own deficiencies, but to invoke a religious opposition to her sister’s sexuality. In a sense, she was suggesting that she was going to “wear her dyke kicking boots” to stomp out something deviant or out of the ordinary. In this case, there was a threat of violence that is also attached to “dyke” and the implied stereotype of gender deviant behavior.

Both these uses of “dyke” are quite different from that found in the Latino sample. In the Anglo sample, the use of derogatory vocabulary to define female homosexuality was directly in relation to gender role expectations. The use of “dyke” in Cheryl’s situation appeared to be more of an expression of homophobia, a threat of violence, and an extreme way to express her lack of acceptance for her sister’s sexuality. There did not appear to a threat of directly challenging masculinity or femininity, but rather an indirect threat of breaking unscripted gender behavior that is indicative of homophobia in American culture. This homophobic slur is particularly alarming considering a family member, who may lack awareness of the fears that many gay and lesbians may have of anti-gay violence, is inadvertently using a threat of violence.

Religion and Sexual Identity

Religion and Acceptance of Queer Identity Among Latina/os

Previous literature has suggested that in addition to family and community expectations, Latinos often confront religious opposition with their sexual identities. For the most part, respondents considered themselves to be non-practicing Catholics or non-religious. Only one of the Latino respondents was active in her religious identity. Similarly, fourteen of the fifteen Latino respondents indicated that their parents were also non-practicing Catholics. However, even though respondents indicated that their parents did not attend church regularly, five of the respondents reported that their parents used religion and the bible as a defense of why their children should not give in to same-sex attraction or why being queer was “just a phase.” In fact, two Latino respondents reported that their mothers had directly quoted scripture from the bible when their child first came out to them. These findings do appear to hold true to previous literature that indicates that religion may play an important part in the lives of queer Latinos.

Perhaps the deviation from previous literature lies in the fact that the Latino sample interviewed for this study had a tendency to conflate religion and culture. For the fourteen Latino Catholics interviewed the conflation of Catholicism and Latino culture left them feeling as though their culture inherently denied their sexuality. Most respondents felt that coming out to family and friends would be a challenge due to being part of a “traditional Latino family.” The belief that there would be a lack of acceptance among family members largely emerged as a result of respondents feeling as though culture and religion were intertwined. This may perhaps have set them up for resentment

of Catholicism and religion, in general. As a result, they were more likely to define themselves as non-practicing. In most circumstances, respondents felt as though they had a spiritual connection to God, but found organized religion, rules, and regulations to be hurtful, biased, and unjust to homosexuality.

Many respondents believed that much of the traditional family values and characteristics of their families were shaped by their religious beliefs. Jesus, 36 claimed that, “Sometimes there are things that are very anachronistic about the Latino community... I do recognize that with them comes a lot of conservatism. That is what they were raised in and the religious environment they were raised in. I consider it very alienating to me.” Within this quote, Jesus touches upon that larger problem of religion in the lives of the Latino community and among queer Latinos. He discusses a deep connection to Catholic values and his religious upbringing. Furthermore, it is these values that he considers to be outdated.

A vast majority of the Latino respondents in this study had been raised in Catholic families but considered themselves to be “non-practicing,” “Catholic by default,” or even “recovering Catholics.” Similarly, with the exception of one Latino respondent, fourteen remarked that their parents were not active in the Catholic Church, but still considered themselves to be Catholic.

For most Latino respondents, religion became a sign of rejection rather than a guide for spiritual connection. Due to rules and beliefs about homosexuality in Catholicism many respondents found that family members often used religion as a tool for rejecting homosexual behavior. Respondents typically reported that family used

religion and the bible as reasons they should not practice homosexuality. Susie reported that biblical verses were thrown at her in response to her coming out. Similarly, Kioko, 19 responded:

When I came out she kept bringing that up, “you’re going to hell.” Or like “God frowns on that.” But I mean, it is not like she was a huge practicing Catholic! I found it really hypocritical because when she was young she had a best friend—and I still see her sometimes with him—he’s gay. And she says she was part of that crowd. She says ‘you know I experimented...and you’re not really gay because I’m not.’ So if she really thought it was bad, she wouldn’t have tried it or have friends who are gay.

In Kioko’s case, her mother, a non-practicing Catholic, used religion as a means to scare her daughter away from homosexuality, while rationalizing that her daughter was not truly queer. As a result, Kioko suspects that her mother may be a closeted lesbian and using religious beliefs and values to rationalize and deny her own sexuality.

In addition to Kioko, two other interviewees reported a similar situation with their fathers. Carla, 31 reported,

My father was never okay with it [homosexuality], which I find ironic because he was bisexual himself. Me coming out to him was him coming out to me. He told me a little bit about his past and his lovers. He wasn’t thrilled about it either. His whole thing was that he was still a man and he considered himself straight even though he had male lovers.

Perhaps, similar to Kioko's mother, Carla's father had felt religious pressures or pressures to conform to hegemonic norms of Latino masculinity that directly contributed to denial of his own sexuality and disapproval of his daughter's sexuality.

Interestingly, in fourteen of fifteen cases, issues of religion were discussed as an extension to Latino culture rather than as a factor in itself. These findings suggest that Latinos, who may not be practicing Catholics, evoke the connection between Latino identity and religion when they believe it to be necessary. Accordingly, Latinos may be unable to disentangle the meaning of sexuality in Latino culture and in religion. Moreover, religion appears to be used as a means to express cultural ideology while cultural ideology is simultaneously used as a means to express religion.

Although only one of the respondents in the Latino sample currently defined herself as religious (Protestant) a majority of respondents identified themselves as spiritual. By saying "I don't practice, but I'm spiritual" (Emily, 26) many of the respondents attempted to remove religious identity from Latino Culture. Yet, for many, having a religious identity or actively identifying oneself as Catholic carries the connotation of conservatism and homophobia. As Susie, 19, suggests, "Machismo, homophobia and religion, you know, Catholics like myself, it is just a lot harder of a struggle than other people [non-Latinos queers]." Again, there is a direct association with Latino culture and religion. Because of this association many in the Latino sample tended to feel that non-Latino queers had an easier time with their sexuality identity.

Religion and Acceptance of Queer Identity Among Whites

In contrast to Latina/os' perception that white queers had an easier time with the sexual identity, the white sample had a much more difficult time reconciling their religious identity with their sexual identity. In fact, for more than half the Anglo sample, religion and religiosity appeared to have been very important in the past or currently important in their lives.

Of fifteen white respondents nine had been active members of a religious faith in their childhood or young adulthood, continue to be part of a religious faith, or continue to struggle with their religious identity. Three of these individuals identified themselves as Catholic, three as Protestant, and three as Mormon. For all nine of these respondents, religion had been a large part of their childhood and early adulthood. For three of the nine respondents, religion had become a safe haven from a dysfunctional family life.

According to Fionna, 65,

It was a very unhealthy atmosphere in my house. A lot of squabbling, animosity, and a lot of unhappy people...I was very religious in my youth and that was an escape. I'd go to church before...believe me they were some of my happier times. When you don't have any other sanctuary then church is perfectly acceptable. You just go and sit in the quiet. It was an escape. It was very peaceful.

Similarly, Peggy 55, describes her teenage experiences with Campus Crusade for Christ as a respite from her alcoholic father and schizophrenic mother,

The only reason I made it through high school was because I became very, very religious. I was Christian. That kind of helped me make sense of the world...I am really grateful that that is what I did, instead of getting into sex and drugs and drinking. It was actually a way of individuating myself from my parents that actually didn't hurt me very much. Maybe I was a fanatic for a while, but I actually survived a pretty rough adolescence fairly unscathed.

Finally, Cheryl, 57, refers to religion as an escape from her abusive father and dismissive mother; "I took solace in church growing up. I was Christian at the time and was seeking solace in the religion to the point where my faith became toxic. I say this because it inundated every facet of my life to the point that you can't think outside of the box."

For all three of these women, religion not only became a means for escape from a dysfunctional family, but also a guide by which to navigate their lives. Because Fionna was Catholic and both Cheryl and Peggy were Protestant, their religion initially prevented them from coming out earlier in life. All three women followed their religious doctrine, married men and had children. Peggy:

The problem with all that is I totally believed in women's submissive roles to their husbands. When I was 16, I read *The Christian Family* and it described this hierarchical God at the top, the husband covering the wife, and then the wife being submissive. I thought, 'that is what was wrong with my family, they aren't doing it God's way'. So when I grew up, I did it God's way.

Cheryl, Peggy and Fionna were all in unhappy, heterosexual marriages but were afraid to go against the religious identity that had helped them navigate through their early years. Cheryl:

I found myself deduced to my knees, crying hysterically thinking I don't know what God wants me to do. At that point I had a sense of freedom. I said to myself, "if I am really a child of God, then you wouldn't be putting me through this and I wouldn't be living like this". So I was done. I just washed my hands and sought to get a divorce.

Currently, all three women do not identify as religious and are non-practicing. Like many in the Latino sample, the women still feel they are spiritual, rather than religious. Fionna suggest, "I'm not observant anymore and I don't believe in Catholicism anymore. I developed a religious approach that was very spiritually oriented rather than rule oriented." After sampling several religions including Wiccan [based on Pagan religious theology], Peggy has developed a similar opinion on religion:

So currently it is really abstract for me. I don't practice it anymore, but I'm fond of it. I feel like these systems work for people. It is a belief system, a system of symbols that gets at the deepest spiritual part of us. Whatever system you want to use to get at that, what ever fits your life best, that is what you should use. Right now, for me, I am in the more abstract place of seeing it contained within the person.

For these women, religion had guided them through their formative years, but had restricted them from having the kind of life (especially the kind of romantic and sexual

life) that was good for their emotional and psychological wellbeing. However, falling out of the religious faith did not appear to be a result of the coming out process or rejection of the perceived homophobia within either Christianity or Catholicism. Rather, these women had reached a point in their lives where they became comfortable with their sexual identity and a non-doctrinal spiritual identity.

A continuing struggle with sexual identity and spiritual identity was perhaps most present in the lives of Lynn, 32, Allison, 34 (both Mormon), and Corey, 28 (Christian). Lynn and Allison had both grown up in the Mormon Church and believed they were raised in a “Mormon bubble.” When these women were teenagers, they individually expressed sexual interest in women, thus prompting their parents to enroll them in Mormon youth counseling for homosexual desires, referred to as SSA (Same-Sex Attraction). Allison:

It’s a huge deal in the Mormon community, “oh you are suffering from SSA?” So I [was] in therapy because the church is very strongly against homosexuality. My mom put me in it...I got a boyfriend, I started dating him and I was like, wait a second, this isn’t it! But I went for a very long time trying to change.

Lynn had a similar experience with counseling and believed that after counseling and participating in an 18-month Mission to spread the word of God, she would return home and marry a man. Lynn, “I didn’t even come out to myself until I was 23. I mean, I am Mormon so that is a big reason why I waited. Because there was a lot of tension, I guess,

with the church and gay people as it were. So it was just fear of rejection that really made me wait so long.”

What is perhaps most interesting about Allison and Lynn’s experience is that they very much continue to identify with the Mormon Church. In fact, many of the problems they have in their relationship revolve around the church not identifying them as a legitimate couple. Lynn:

It is really hard now because I feel like I will always be Mormon. Like it was a very significant self-identifier for me for many, many years. But, I can’t practice it. We can’t go to church together, like formally. Like there is nothing that says we can’t, but it would be incredibly awkward. So it’s like in my heart I still am Mormon, but it is something I will never be fully able to participate in again.

Religious acceptance or finding a religious identity in light of his sexuality is also a concern for Corey, 28. Corey was raised in a conservative Christian household and attended Christian schools from kindergarten to high school. Early on, Corey resented heavy religious affiliation within the family:

So, I think when I was in 3rd grade I told my parents that I wasn’t following their faith. That was like the biggest thing I could have said to them. Well, because I was like struggling with my orientation already so at the time I was brought up that it was wrong, that it’s a sin, and that created a lot of animosity.

However, unlike the experiences of Fionna, Cheryl or Peggy, Corey currently considers himself to be a practicing Christian and is searching for a gay affirming church that mixes traditional Christian service with modern concepts on religion. In this sense, Corey is looking for a way to reconcile his spiritual identity with his sexually identity. This search for a perfect balance is present in his desire to marry in a church (if he finds the right one) and raise his children with Christian morals and beliefs (if he were to have children).

The notion of spirituality and the desire to attend religious services was also present in Oedi, 46. Like many in the Latino sample, Oedi was raised Catholic but now considers himself to be spiritual, rather than religious. Like Corey, Oedi enjoys church and many of the values and belief systems behind organized religion. However, he finds it difficult to participate in a belief system that openly discriminates against his sexual identity.

I had a priest get really upset with me and say, “you’re going to burn in hell.” And I said, “whatever.” So I, at one time, lost faith in the church. I don’t go to church anymore. I just think that they’re just kind of two faced. I really believe in it. I like the church for the aspect of going, the pomp and circumstance of church, but not the talky downy to you aspect of it. If all I had to do was go and do the stuff and not have to listen to anybody give me their opinion, I would love it.

Additionally, similar to many in the Latino sample, the greatest opposition or rejection of the respondent’s sexuality came from family members that were very religious. For example, Corey’s highly conservative Christian parents where initially

outraged when their son moved in with his partner. Cheryl's highly Catholic sister initially rejected Cheryl's relationship with her partner and refused to speak to her for nearly three years. Cheryl's own daughter had married a Baptist man and refused to speak to her mother for 8 years. Thus, for both the Latino and Anglo samples, the stronger the religious tie of a family member, the more likely they experienced initial rejection from that family member. Similarly, the more religious the family member the more likely that it will take longer for him or her to accept one's sexual identity.

In contrast to the Latino sample, the white sample was more open to religious affiliation. In fact, many white respondents were either practicing or had been active members of the church in the past. In comparison, Latinos tended to be biased against religion. Of all fifteen respondents, Corey was the only white participant who noted that his parents came from a conservative, Republican, Christian household. As a result the moment he began to question his sexual identity, he also began to question his religious identity. He built an early resentment for the church as a result of his knowledge that the church would not be accepting of his sexuality. This occurrence may also be true for Latinos. Although many Latinos felt that their parents were not highly religious, the conflation of culture and religion led Latinos to believe that their families may not accept them, may not accept their sexuality, of fear possible discrimination from the Latino community. This may also be the reason why white respondents were more inclined to have a religious affiliation at some point in their lives.

Sexual Identity, Community and the Workplace: Comparing White and Latino Experiences

Both Anglo and Latino respondents also discussed sexual identity in reference to the workplace. To some degree, respondents felt as though the workplace was another area of “coming out.” Woods (1993) presents a close examination of the work lives of seventy gay men residing in ten states: California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia. Through these national studies, he argues that homophobia affects the professional lives of most gay men in America. In his sample, Woods reports that 7% were convinced they had lost a prior job due to homophobic prejudice of a boss or client, 14% feared they would be fired or forced to resign if their sexual identity was known, and 97% of his sample felt that their sexuality had, at some point, cost them a promotion, raise or a relationship with a potential mentor (Woods 1993: 10). Additionally, he notes that according to various studies throughout the 1980s and 1990s, one-third of gays and lesbians believed they were discriminated against on the job. In a Philadelphia study of 860 males and 553 females, conducted in 1992 by Gross and Aurand, 30% of gay men and 24% of lesbians reported they experienced employment discrimination, 76% of men and 81% of women remained in the closet and work, and 78% of men and 87% of women feared they would be the victims of job discrimination if their sexual orientation was known to others (Woods 1993: 8).

Below, I consider the extent to which Latinos and whites in my sample perceived homophobic discrimination within their communities and how they responded to the

actual or potential discrimination that they faced. I first discuss the experiences of Latinos in the Latino community and on the job, then follow with that of the white sample.

For many Latino respondents, living and working within a Latino community has been the biggest challenge for their sexual identity. Respondents typically felt they found greater support within the LGBT community, choosing to be part of events, groups, and organizations that addressed their sexuality. However, Latino respondents such as Susie and Kioko have felt that it is extremely important to have a supportive environment that addresses both their ethnic and sexual identities. As a result, both have become very involved with a University organization, La Falimia, which is targeted to the queer Latino population on campus. For others, finding an environment that supports both their cultural identity and their sexuality was more complicated.

In terms of living in a Latino community, Emily, 25 and Kathleen, 25 had very similar experiences. According to Kathleen,

I live in East LA and that is a very predominantly Hispanic area. It is very cultural and everybody speaks Spanish. A lot of kids everywhere are part of very traditional families. I feel very out of place, but at the same time I don't feel any less a part...I feel very connected to the culture.

In this instance, Kathleen feels out of place but very much attached to her Mexican heritage. Such conflict has made her want to stay within her ethnic community, but she remains cautious. Her partner, Kathleen, feels the same pressures, "the community where I live now, you don't see many same-sex couples so public display of affection is always something I've had a big issue with."

For others, living in a community that is highly conservative has also created added stress to their lives. Madison, 33, claimed that,

When we moved here we immediately noticed the typical Riverside conservative mentality. We would call the people of Moreno Valley ‘Muvalleros,’ because you had a combination of your ‘rancheros’ and ... your Caucasians with mullets.

However, Madison did comment that her neighborhood is getting increasingly progressive, with visible gay and lesbian couples within her community, a realization that has made her feel more comfortable with the purchase of a home in this area. Similarly, Jesus, 36 has found that living among conservative Latinos has caused him to re-evaluate his cultural identity.

In some ways I have a close affinity and I want to defend Latinos. And in some ways I feel the opposite inside...and I want to take the devil’s advocate position. Saying, ‘why not be critical of immigration—is it necessarily a good thing?’ Especially when you consider that those Latinos are voting against my favor. I would say I am left leaning, but my stances have changed politically. Certainly on immigration, because I used to relate myself as an immigrant and I saw what my parents came through, and their experiences as farm workers, and there was a tendency to defend immigrants. But it is not so black and white.

Although Jesus feels very close to his roots and his ethnic community, he feels torn by the conservative nature of newly immigrated Latinos and newly naturalized citizens who disapprove of queers and who vote against such issues as gay marriage.

Perhaps the greatest cause of identity conflict was present in the subsample of individuals who worked in the Latino community. All of those who worked in the Latino community or directly with a large group of Latinos on a daily basis did not disclose their sexuality. Many even felt they had to directly chosen the Latino community over the LGBT community. For example, John, 28, a native of Southern California, recently obtained a job as a speech pathologist in a rural Latino community in Washington State.

Minorities who are also gay, they feel like they have to choose one or the other and you can never be fully a part of one group. I feel, especially in Washington state where the minority population is still more of an immigrant community that hasn't been here for multiple generations like they have in California, that they do not have the same resources to advocate for themselves that the gay community might have. Although, at the same time, I definitely keep up with what is going on in the gay community. But as far as participating in demonstrations or something like that, I feel much more of a need to do that for the Latino immigrant cause. For others, nondisclosure of their sexual orientation was seen as critical to success in their profession. Carla, 31 reported that,

I was a health care assistant [for 10 years] so I would do the medical procedures, catheterization and such, so I would get really personal with

their kids. My hands are on them, they are on their privates, and I see their children at their most vulnerable point in their lives. I wouldn't even want to have to deal with some parent having a problem with the fact that, because I'm gay, I'm going to be a pedophile or that they are going to feel uncomfortable with me having any contact with their child. So I just avoid it altogether. That is 10 years of avoiding.

Jesus, 36 said, "I work in a hospital, so I wonder what this 'Señora' in her 60s would say if she knew she had a queer guy telling her, 'if you don't get your diabetes under control you are going to lose your leg.' I know that conversation would not go well." A similar issue is present in both Jesus and Carla's reflections. They believed that their position as a medical professional would come into question by Latino patients simply because they were queer.

Finally, some Latino respondents did not disclose their identity due to fear of being delegitimized in their profession or stigmatized within their community. Rather, they did not disclose their sexual identity simply because they considered it to be no one's business but their own. Madison, 33, said:

I've never not gotten a job because of my sexuality. I've never not been able to sit somewhere because of my sexuality. But at the same time, at my work, I've never been out and openly gay. And it is not that I am trying to hide it, but I don't think it is my coworkers' business. I don't ask them, 'are you straight'?

Although Madison does not work within the Latino community, she did report a tendency to refrain from outing herself at work.

For the most part, the Latinos interviewed in this sample were most concerned about being out in the work force, particularly for those working in the Latino community. In the sample of fifteen Latino respondents, three worked directly with Latinos living in underprivileged Latino communities. Two were educators in the Los Angeles school system (one as a nurse and another as a counselor) while one worked in the health profession at a clinic serving a Latino neighborhood. In all instances, respondents feared that clients' knowledge of their sexuality would be highly problematic. For the remainder of the employed sample of this study, none had disclosed their sexuality. However, disclosure was out of personal choice or the notion of "it's none of their business" rather than a genuine fears that their co-workers would question their legitimacy in their current profession or fear for their jobs.

White respondents faced similar fears and insecurities. Of the fifteen interviews, nearly all were out, in some fashion, at work. Three respondents were full time students and two were unemployed at the time of their interview. Three of the respondents taught at a university and found academics to be a very comfortable environment in which to be out. An additional respondent was a staff member for a university, also finding it a comfortable environment to tell her co-workers. Oedi, who works in the entertainment industry, also found the work "coming out process" to be quite easy in his work environment.

Anglo respondents also faced a similar question of “to be out or not to be out” at work. Decisions about being or not being out depended on the nature of the workplace and possible ramifications of being out. For example, two Anglo respondents felt that being out at work would greatly compromise their work environments. Corey, 28, works in juvenile detention center in San Bernardino County:

I work with kids in the live-in units. The majority of officers are women so I’m responsible for monitoring the showers. They don’t have any stalls or any dividers or anything...I am at the point right now where I don’t care if the staff knows, but I expect the worse case scenario. Like they won’t want to work with me or they will talk crap behind my back and the kids will hear. So I might get complaints. The juvenile detention center is already a hostile environment so if a kid found out he might challenge me just for the hell of it.

Although Corey’s experience is unique to what he describes as a generally homophobic law enforcement where the staff frequently use terms like “faggot,” the fear of complications that could arise from being out in the work place are very real. Lisa, 55, recalls her experience working as an esthetician in Los Angeles County:

Doing facials and body waxing, the last thing somebody wants to hear while you are doing body waxing is “I’m gay.” But the guys that I would wax were like, “okay that’s great” because it took some of the awkwardness away. I waxed their privates and they thought it was okay.

They could let all their junk hang out. But it was different for the women clients.

Annalise, 51, has a similar problem teaching cosmetology at a community college in Riverside County:

I don't tell the kids I am gay. I work with 99% female students so I just don't want any discomfort from female students. I don't want them thinking in any way, shape or form...anything...I just don't need it. But every once in a while I do have my boys that come through classes; my cute little gay boys that want to be a stylist. I usually tell them that I am gay.

In all three cases, respondents reported a fear of being out at work due to the nature of the environment. Each suggested that the comfort level of inmates, clients, or students would be breached if they were fully out. However, with both female respondents, the decision to be out varied depending on the circumstances. These findings suggest that it may be the nature of the job, rather than ethnicity or culture that have a large bearing on whether one decides to be out at work.

Latino and Anglo respondents had similar concerns about self-disclosure at work. Perhaps the most difficult scenario for disclosure that was reported in this sample was the respondent who worked in law enforcement. Due to the nature of the police force, Corey (white) found his work place to be hostile to both gays and lesbians, even going so far as to use the term "faggot" as a means to reprimand boys in juvenile detention centers. Both Latinos and Anglos appear to weigh the costs, benefits, and circumstances surrounding

disclosure at work. However, Latinos tend to be more concerned about possible discrimination by individuals in the Latino community, a concern not commonly held among whites. This is evident in the fact that Corey primarily works with Latino and African American juveniles. However, his primary concern was not how each of these racial or ethnic groups view homosexuality, but rather how teenage males perceive homosexuality.

Conclusion

For many respondents in this study, establishing a sexual identity was interconnected with their other identities based on race/ethnicity, religion, and occupation. This chapter began with a discussion of the perceived expectations of being queer by families of origin, as well as individual's own perceptions and expectations. Findings suggest that Latino respondents generally felt there were specific expectations of gay and lesbian behavior. Latinos felt that their families of origin had a general expectation of flamboyance and other outward expressions of femininity. These results were consistent with literature on Latinos noted at the beginning of this chapter. It is also consistent with Mohr's (1988) study of stereotypes. Latinos typically fell into the first of the two discussed anti-gay stereotypes. That is, the expectation of a "queen" or "Nellie." As previously discussed, such stereotypes serve to question gender deviant behavior and reinforce societal gendered power differentials. Latinas found that their families of origin often blatantly commented on a deviation in gender role/behavior expectations. Most notably was a Latina who reported that her father claimed she was "trying to be the man."

Similar to Latino men, Latinas reported findings that were consistent with the stereotype of “alleged mistakes in an individual’s gender identity” (Mohr 1988: 523).

Anglo women reported similar findings, but were more likely to experience implied slurs to gender nonconformity rather than blatant comments on “trying to be a man.” White women reported the use of the term “dyke” on several occasions, specifying that family members had used this term to emotionally hurt them. However, the use of “dyke” by family members implies that there is gender deviant behavior.

Another difference worth mentioning between these two samples was the tendency for Anglos to report that their families of origin, as well as they themselves, had negative connotations of what it meant to be gay. While Latinos reported the stereotype of gendered expectations attached to homosexuality (women trying to be men, men trying to be women) Anglo men and women alike reported the stereotype of being “pervasive,” “sinister,” etc. suggested by Mohr (1998). In fact, two of the Anglo respondents reported this negative conception of gays and lesbians, suggesting that gays should be reclusive. One Latino respondent, who worked with children in a Latino community, suggested that she did not disclose her sexual identity for fear that she may be accused of child molestation. Another Latino respondent, who also worked in a middle school in a predominantly Latino community, suggested that he was selective about who he disclosed his sexual identity with because it was just “easier for the parents.”

Religious ideas also appeared to have a large bearing on respondents’ sexual identity. For the fourteen Latino Catholics interviewed the conflation of Catholicism and Latino culture left them feeling as though their culture inherently denied their sexuality.

Additionally, respondents felt that coming out to family and friends was a challenge due to being part of a “traditional Latino family.” The belief emerged as a result of intertwining culture and religion. This may perhaps have set them up for resentment of Catholicism and religion, in general. As a result, Latinos were more likely to define themselves as non-practicing, default Catholics (by title only, not practice) or even “recovering Catholics.” In most circumstances, respondents felt as though they had a spiritual connection to God, but found organized religion, rules, and regulations to be hurtful, biased, and unjust to homosexuality.

Literature suggests that individuals of an ethnic minority group often internalize negative stereotypes about one’s culture or race (Baker 1983; Essed 1991; Pyke & Dang 2003; Russell, Wilson and Hall 1991). Accordingly, “subordinates, often without a conscious awareness of doing so, justify the oppression of their group with a belief in their own inferiority” (Pyke & Dang 2003: 168). The process of internalizing racial/ethnic oppression is referred to as internalized racism. Similarly, internalized homophobia refers to “an internalization of negative attitudes and assumptions concerning lesbianism [queerness]” (Healy 1999). Perhaps what we see in this sample of fifteen Latinos is a combination of internalized racism and internalized homophobia. Religion and thus homophobia is conflated with culture, leading Latinos to internalize a type of ethnic homophobia. In essence, Latino respondents had a tendency to essentialize Latino culture and religion.

The Anglo respondents in this study appeared to have a different conception of religion that can possibly be tied to the fact that American culture is not automatically

conflated with religiosity. While it can be argued that many of the anti-gay attitudes and homophobia found in American culture has, to some extent, a religious basis, I am suggesting that American culture is not tied to religion in the same way that Catholicism is often tied to Latino culture. As a result, findings suggest that whites are more open to religious affiliation than the Latino sample. In fact, as previously discussed, three white respondents reported seeking church as a sanctuary from an undesirable family life. Four other whites reported a desire to attend church and considered themselves to be a “practicing” member of their religious affiliation.

Lastly, it is important to note that many of the negative experiences that Latino respondents attributed to Latino culture were also present in the Anglo sample. For instance, issues of “machismo,” characterized by workaholic fathers that were disciplinarians, or perhaps even abusive alcoholics, were present in the white sample. However, white respondents typically referred to this behavior as a result of being from a “dysfunctional family.” In fact, eight of the fifteen Anglo respondents reported that they were from a dysfunctional family. Two respondents reported that their fathers were in the military and had very clear disciplinary parenting practices and gender expectations within the home. Three respondents reported that their fathers were belligerent alcoholics who disciplined their children through violence and demanded subservient wives and children.

In addition to machismo, Latinos described the concept of a “traditional Latino family” as something that was very similar to Anglos’ description of a “conservative” family. Each were rule based, characterized by discipline, and contained more traditional

gender roles. In fact white respondent, Diane, 48 reported that her mother-in-law went to the grave not knowing her daughter was a lesbian,

We didn't share our lifestyle with her mom because she was old school Oklahoma. She didn't understand that type of lifestyle and in the past she would make remarks that were not so nice. We figured, she thinks I'm her roommate, that I'm her best friend, we're just going to leave that can of worms alone.

This inability to disclose one's sexuality to a "traditional" parent was also reported by George and Kioko in the Latino sample.

Many Latino and Anglo respondents reported similar issues, dilemmas, and fears when discussing the incongruity of their cultural and sexual identities. Chapter 2 suggests that the Latino and Anglo samples have similar experiences with the coming out process and fear of rejection by family members. However, what may separate these two groups significantly is the tendency for Latinos to seek evidence or answers for this rejection within their culture. This chapter further documents this tendency to blame Latino culture, but does so in reference to gendered expectations, religious identity, and work life identity. In light of these findings, I argue that the tension between sexual identity and cultural identity extends further than familial acceptance and rejection. Rather, the tendency to essentialize Latino culture extends to multiple facets of one's everyday life. In light of these findings, I believe it is important for LGBT organizations

to be attuned to stressors experienced by many Latinos that result from the perceived contradiction between their cultural and sexual identities, as well as internalized ethnic homophobia.

Chapter 4

“Doing Family”: Coupling, Commitment and the Construction of Family

This chapter examines the everyday lives and meanings that are involved in “doing family” and socially constructing the family lives of Latino and white same-sex couples. Specifically, I focus upon the desired characteristics in one’s partner that are perceived to make a strong, loving, and long-lasting relationship. Second, this chapter examines perceived egalitarianism. Finally, this chapter focuses on political, legal, cultural, and symbolic meanings of coupling, weddings, domestic partnership, and marriage. Before discussing my interview findings, I first put them into context of previous research on these three topics.

My findings suggest that the household division of labor and perception of marriage among my informants are congruent with literature previously conducted on same-sex white couples, and to some extent, literature on heterosexual Latino couples. These studies suggest that same-sex couples have a general perception of equality, although they may often not be as egalitarian as respondents suggest. Additionally, studies on Latino heterosexual couples suggest that Latinos have more egalitarian relationships than previously reported. I also found that the desirable characteristics of one’s partner among same-sex couples are similar among Latinos and Anglos, and are consistent with that found among white heterosexual couples.

Definitions of a Good Partner/Spouse

Countless research has been dedicated to identifying key components of successful marriages (i.e. Collins & Coltrane 1991; Fennell 1993; Kurdek 1991; Lewis &

Spanier 1979; Robinson & Blanton 1993). Using a sample of 147 couples in long-term relationships (long-term defined as 20 or more years), Fennell (1993) created a list of the top ten characteristics of successful marriages as: (1) commitment, (2) loyalty, (3) strong moral values, (4) respect, (5) sexual fidelity, (6) desire to be a good parent, (7) faith in God, (8) good companion, (9) strong moral values, (10) willingness to forgive and be forgiven. Barich and Bieibly (1996) conducted one of the most extensive studies on characteristics of a successful marriage. They conducted an opinion poll of college-aged students in 1967 and 1994, asking them what they considered to be important for a successful marriage. Researchers asked students to rank order 11 characteristics in order of most importance, finding that love and affection were considered most important in both years. Characteristics, according to average ranking, included: (1) amount of love and affection, (2) healthy and happy children, (3) companionship, (4) emotional security, (5) satisfactory sexual relations, (6) common interests and activities, (7) personality development, (8) economic security, (9) moral and religious unity, (10) Maintenance of a home (Barich & Bieibly 1996). While these studies primarily focus on heterosexual couples, characteristics of partner desirability resonate with studies on same-sex couples, as well as my interviewees.

For example, Peplau and Cochran (1988) asked 128 gay men to rate 23 statements, on a 9-point scale. Respondents chose which statement they felt were most relevant to their romantic/sexual relationship. Findings suggest that the greatest importance were “being able to talk about my most intimate feelings, each of us being able to have our own career, sexual compatibility, having a supportive groups of friends

as well as my romantic/sexual partner, having an egalitarian relationship,” while those of least importance were “both partners being equally involved in gay political activities, having similar political attitudes, and being able to have sexual relations with people other than my partner” (Peplau and Cochran 1988: 200-201).

The notable differences between these studies are the concern with parenting skills and relationship to God reflected in Fennell’s work. Barich and Bieby’s (1996) study also presents the importance of parenthood/children and religion as characteristics of a successful marriage. Similarities between these studies include autonomy, love, and companionship. In my sample of thirty respondents, not a single individual discussed parenting practices or one’s relationship to God. Answers were slightly more similar to those provided by Peplau and Cochran (1998). However, differences in responses in my sample may be due in large part to the open-endedness of my question. Each of these previous studies had already established categories by which their respondents were asked to rank order in terms of importance. Because my question was entirely open-ended, respondents had a greater tendency to speak of personal characteristics rather than familial and religious ones, or even about sexual satisfaction with their relationship.

Each of the thirty respondents in this study was asked, “What do you think it means to be a good partner or spouse?” Because the question was open-ended, respondents described twenty-three different characteristics (See Table 1). The ten most common characteristics included: (1) having open communication, (2) being honest with one another, (3) being there for each other—physically and financially, (4) being supportive of each others decisions and choices, (5) being yourself/ comfortable with one

another, (6) being supportive of one another, (7) having faith in one another, (8) being loyal, (9) being individually independent, and (10) being caring or loving.

The white (27%) and Latino (40%) samples both placed good communication as the most important characteristic of being a good partner or spouse. Of the Latinos who found communication to be important, many noted that their relationships were not perfect, but good communication helped to alleviate some of the misunderstandings that cause conflict or quarrels between couples. When asked what she thought made a good spouse or partner, Kathleen, 25 responded, “A lot of commitment and trust, of course, and lots of communication. If we are going to disagree, at least we agree that we are going to disagree. Coming to an understanding with each other on that, that makes a good relationship.” For Kathleen, a common understanding of a potentially negative situation can be alleviated by properly communicating with one another. Similarly, Jesus, 35, also sees proper communication as something that can alleviate conflict or tension in the relationship.

I would say open communication [is important]. Most recently, this is why we have been quarrelling, actually. I am hotheaded. I’m a Scorpio, so I am very opinionated on things. If I have a bad day you might get a whiff of it. And poor Johnny, he has gotten a little of that. I’m really trying to work on it. For me, that makes a meaningful relationship; that is the heart of it.

For Jesus, it is important that his partner tell him when issues, such as anger or hostility are affecting their relationship. He admits that being hotheaded and quick to take anger and frustration out on his partner is part of his personality flaw. In order to make a

stronger and healthier relationship, they have an agreement to openly discuss such issues as they come about. In this instance, communication is about constantly reevaluating behavior and interaction and fixing a potential problem before it becomes a major issue in the relationship.

For two respondents, communication was discussed as something more than conflict resolution. Rather, proper communication was used as a way to understand their relationship. In one instance, a respondent noted that communication is key to navigating through a relationship that is somewhat foreign to her. Angie, 21, is in her first long-term, same-sex relationship with her partner of four years. While she and her partner have been together for the majority of her adult dating life, she still feels as though it is something new. She had only previously dated men and currently does not know many same-sex couples. Therefore, her only exposure to same-sex couples is based on personal experience. As a result, she seems to feel as though she lacks the experience of what to expect in her current relationship. But, like others, she emphasizes the importance of good communication to her current relationship.

It sounds all cliché, but communication really is the key. Because we talk about the straight relationships we had before and it was like always ‘oh, whatever, the guy is there’. But with us, it’s like, we are best friends. We’re like always together. You can even go to the same restroom, you know what I mean? It’s like we are always together so it’s a lot of communication.

As a result, she feels there is a greater amount of communication with her female partner than any of her previous male partners, making her relationship feel stronger and more stable.

Madison, 31 also touches upon the notion that communication is relevant and perhaps more visible in same-sex couples in general. Madison is also in her first long-term relationship with a woman. As a result, she distinguishes between her current relationship and her past relationships with men.

I don't think they're [men] as sensitive. They are not as intuitive, they are not as comforting. Maybe it is just the guys I dated, but a woman knows what a woman wants, so it is natural just to give it rather than pretending to listen while the sports are on. I look at my brother and his relationship with his wife. She'll be talking to him and he will completely tune her out. And I'm like, are you serious? They can't communicate.

For Madison, better communication arises from women having a greater understanding of the needs and wants of their partner. In addition to the natural communication that one gains from a same-sex relationship, Madison and her partner also attend monthly couples counseling to further strengthen their relationship through communication.

Similar to the Latino sample, the white sample felt that open communication was also a tool for conflict resolution, or stopping conflict before it could arise, as well as a means to understand the needs, wants, and emotional state of each others' partner. Lynn and Cory both describe the need for proper

communication in order establish a relationship with as little conflict as possible.

Lynn, 34,

Communication, communication, communication! Communication is probably like foundationally most important...like, I've been having a lot of frustrations at work because I have two part-time jobs at two different schools. So it's been cool to see how well... there have been experiences where I've been in the wrong and my partner has been able to see underneath the surface of my actions. That it had nothing to do with her or nothing to do with us, but it was just me being in a bad space. Even when it's not explicit [communication] helps us be on the same page.

In this case, Lynn felt that proper communication allowed a greater understanding of her emotional state. She and her partner were able to maintain a strong relationship and avoid possible complications or conflict due to her erratic behavior caused by an outside force. Instead, she felt her partner was "on the same page" with her. Corey, 28, also described the potential for conflict resolution,

You always need communication. We are constantly communicating and a lot of people don't. Especially when you don't want a lot of problems. Because if you don't animosity will build up and you have an argument. One person won't have a clue, you know, about why you are mad, because you don't communicate.

Proper communication to avoid conflict was also present in two other respondents, who indicated that communication was key in maintaining their home as well as a happy life. Allison 32,

I think the main thing is love, then you build on that and you bring in being able to talk to each other. Not just hear each other, but actually talk and listen. To be able to communicate and actually hear what the other person is trying to say. To think about them and how they are doing. I mean, I think about that a lot. Like I think I'm hungry, I bet Lynn is hungry, I should make some food. You know what I mean.

In Allison's case, communication becomes a means to be attentive to the needs of her partner. They communicate, they listen to one another, and they are able understand the possible needs and wants of the other individual. Diane's concept of the benefits of proper communication is similar to Allison. Diane, 48,

Communication is key. And the same things I see in her, I try to do. As far as doing stuff around the house, she doesn't have to tell me to do anything. I grew up in a house that was constantly clean. We were vacuuming every day and I have grown to be a bit of a neat freak. I know that. But its like I see it and I do it, she doesn't have to beg me to clean up.

For Diane, proper communication also means being attentive to the needs of her partner, and being able to preempt possible conversations about household division of labor.

Additional common responses to the characteristics of a good partner combined such notions as "being there" for one another, depending on each other, and

complimenting one another, while still maintaining one's own independence. For instance, Carla, 31 responds:

[Being a good partner is] to be someone's best friend. I think that is number one. And I think that is why our marriage has worked so well. We are very yin and yang. And of course, what I lack, she has. And we balance each other out very well. But also because we have been really, really good friends for so long...so being there for somebody, loving somebody, taking care of somebody, being able to depend on them, being faithful and honest, and patient. There is so much that goes into a good marriage.

Carla suggests that a strong relationship comes from being able to balance each other out, be great friends, and by supporting one another on many levels. The idea of emotional support for choices and decisions, and being complimentary to one another also resonated with other respondents. Kioko, 20, responds, "for me [a good partner is] someone who is there for you and supportive of your own goals; someone who compliments you and is good in your life, and your well-being." For Kioko, it was important that her relationship did not include negative mental consequences that result from being in an overbearing relationship. Elle, 21 has a similar response:

Someone who is not controlling, not policing how I live my life and who my friends are. Supportive of everything I do, supportive of all my endeavors. There for me even if I make a wrong choice or decision. Like

my partner, she has been there for me even when I did fuck up my life.

Yeah, all those things.

In Elle's case, her ideal partner allows her to be independent, but is still able to be supportive of her choices and decisions. Elle and Kioko seem to have the same general concept of the making of a good partner and solid relationship.

Emotional support for one's choices and decisions was also important for four respondents in the Anglo sample. Three of the four respondents noted that they either supported or felt support from their partners upon re-enrolling in college classes or perusing professional degrees later in life. Oedi, 46, has recently made the decision to enroll in community college courses with the hope that he will transfer to a four-year university. He feels that the encouragement and emotional support he is currently receiving from his partner has been very positive to their relationship. Lisa, 55 has also had a similar experience, finding that her wife was entirely supportive of her quitting her job as an esthetician to pursue a bachelor's degree at a four year university. Diane, 48, also commented that her support for her partner's decision to return to school proved to be very positive for their relationship. In fact, Diane admires the fact that her 51-year-old wife has returned to school,

She likes to achieve things and grow and learn. I love the fact that she is back in school. I always try to encourage her. She is a go-getter as well and she takes the initiative to do things and doesn't have to be told. That is one of the many wonderful qualities that I see in her.

While many Anglo respondents also noted that support for choices and decisions was important in their relationship, most seemed to report that support was also in the form of “being there” for their partner physically and financially. The Latino sample tended to use the term “being there” to describe the physical presence of their partner. However, the Anglo sample tended to describe “being there” in more financial terms. Fionna, 65,

She has been through some awful stuff and we just support one another.

We support one another no matter what. I was laid off twice. She never pushed me. She never put me under more stress than I was under, because I am the major wage earner in the house.

In Fionna’s case, she feels her partner has been supportive of her emotionally and has also been there for her financially in the event of a job loss. Support and “being there” for a spouse during economic hardships also resonated with Diane and Oedi, both white. Diane noted that her partner has been with her through very difficult times and supported her financially when necessary. Although Diane is grateful to her partner, she also feels guilty for not being able to share household expenses equally:

The hardest thing, of course, as for many couples, are finances. It’s really tough when I’m not bringing in what I would like or what I need to. And we struggle. That bothers me a lot because I want to be responsible and I’ve had my ups and downs within the last 4-5 years. My car was re-po[ssess]ed in 2008 because my hours were cut at work. That is the

hardest part, I think. It really is a tough time. I try, when I can, to make it up in other ways [household chores].

Additionally, Oedi recently had an incident with his partner of two years.

Although he and his partner have been living together, he noted that he was still unsure of the long-term potential and seriousness of their relationship. The weekend prior to our interview, Oedi had taken his partner to the hospital for an emergency medical procedure,

This weekend proved it [relationship status]. When the bill came and he didn't have the money to do it and I had just gotten paid that day. I just handed over my card because that's what partners do. He was hurt, it needed to be done, he needed me, so here, take it out of my paycheck. It was caring for him, I was calming him down. Just being there and learning how to be there for him was eye opening.

Oedi felt a combination of emotional support and "being there" physically and financially was a sign that he was ready for a serious relationship with his partner. On the day of the interview, Oedi also reflected on the importance of physically "being there" for his partner,

Last night I worked 8pm to 5:40 am. I got home at 6am, slept for three hours and got up to run errands with him today. But the whole thing is that [is] where I believe a good partner comes from. It's being there for your partner. He was there when I needed a car. I'm there when he needs his support.

In many respects, Oedi's current realization of the depth of his relationship revolves around support and "being there" for his partner. The multitude of levels of support and being there are typical of many of the respondents, Latino or Anglo. Yet, the concept of "being there" for one's partner financially was only present in the Anglo sample. Perhaps this was due in large part to the younger average age of the Latino respondents. For example, three of the Latino respondents were between the ages of 18 and 20—all relying on their families of origin for financial support. Similarly, because the average age of the Anglo respondents was older than that of the Latino sample, they were more likely to be employed and less likely to be financially dependent on their families of origin. In fact, only one Anglo respondent reported being financially dependent on his parents. Findings suggest that Anglos respondents in this study are more likely to place a greater importance on financial support than Latinos.

Although many respondents felt they wanted unconditional support from their partners, for many, there was a quest for independence and also having a partner that was equally independent. In the Latino sample, Vicki, 31, sums it up best:

I've always disliked the idea that people partner up because two halves make a whole. To me, I'm already whole and $1 + 1 = 2$, not $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} =$ a whole. To me, there are so many people that see their lives as incomplete without a partner and they need someone to feel whole. To me that doesn't make any sense. How can you find a partner when you don't love yourself? It's like that cliché, how can you love someone else if you don't

love yourself? How could you be the best partner you can be to someone if you are not right with yourself first?

A similar sentiment was found in the Anglo sample. Annalise, 51,

I didn't take Diane to raise; she isn't my child. Some people look at marriage like you take this person to raise. They are now your responsibility. Diane is my spouse and my partner. So my opinion is to support and care and love that person 100%. But that doesn't necessarily mean being a parent to that person and there is a distinct difference. Being in a relationship with someone is not 50/50, it is 100/100. You have to give 100%. The other person has to give 100%. Because if you don't, something will start to lag.

Both women feel as if a relationship means you are complete and independent of one another prior to committing to one another. As such, when in a relationship, the partnership remains equal, with each person giving 100% to the relationship. Both women find fault with the notion that you are incomplete without your partner or that you should be responsible for your partner. From their perspective, feeling as if you lack something yourself or that you must take responsibility for another person (because they are lacking something), will inevitably lead to problems within the relationship.

But independence goes further than just feeling like you must solely depend on one another. For Jesus having boundaries with his current partner allows them to remain independent and to maintain a strong relationship. During our conversation, Jesus commented that he and his partner are in the first long-term, committed relationship that

either of them have had in the past five years. Jesus is 35 years old and his partner is 45. Both men have each been living on their own for several years. As a result, they made the conscious decision to rent a two-bedroom apartment so that each could have their own room and own space. While they alternate whose room they will be spending the night in, they feel this arrangement is necessary at this point in their lives. Jesus believes that maintaining boundaries, and giving each other space has allowed them to maintain a strong and respectful relationship. Such discussion of boundaries and space was not present in the Anglo sample.

Lastly, being comfortable with one another, or “being yourself,” was reported by one-third of the Latino respondents (2/3 of respondents when honesty is included). The ability to be able to express your personality, thoughts, feelings, goals, and simply be emotionally vulnerable to your partner was key for many Latino respondents. They felt that being open, honest, and “true to who you were” in front of your partner, made for a healthy relationship. According to Emily, 26,

Always, just the fact of being yourself and not hiding anything. Being real with them. Being open and just being vulnerable with that person is really important too. Just making sure that you feel comfortable to talk to them about any type of problem. The openness, I think those are the top things that keep a relationship together.

Mario, 31, has a similar suggestion, “He should be himself and not have a façade and be able to make me feel comfortable enough to make me tell him everything, and he tells me everything.” Both respondents speak to the comfort level they expect with their partners.

Mario also presents a humorous antidote on the importance of being comfortable with one another:

I was talking to my cousin about this the other day and I asked him how do you know when this person is the right one. And he said, “Well, if you are able to pass gas in front of them then you are good.” I was like, that is a little over the top, but okay. And my mom had a similar story. She said that when she and my dad first got married they had horrible stomachaches. So they went to the doctor and they were trying to figure out what it was. They questioned what they were eating, what they were cooking, how they were cooking and there was no problem. And she said, “Well I’m embarrassed to fart in front of him.”

Although humorous, Mario’s story presents an interesting problem that can arise from not being comfortable with your partner. In his parent’s case, there were health issues caused by feeling uncomfortable with one’s self and one’s partner.

While “being yourself” or “being comfortable with one another” was noted frequently by the Latino sample it was noted less frequently by the white sample. In fact only one respondent suggested that “being yourself” was an important characteristic of being a good spouse. Fionna, 65,

First of all, very important, actually this is something we struggle with because we are very different. It is really important to accept your partner who and where they are now. And to be able to love them as they are now, not as how you wish they were. That is really core. And the times we have

had problems was because one was trying to change the other. Or, one was not able to accept the other the way they were. That is when we have problems or when we have a conflict. Usually Sylvia is trying to change me. She is always trying to make me pick stuff off the floor more. I am messy, but to hear her talk, you would think I was a complete sloven.

In her response, Fionna combines issues of being comfortable with one another, being yourself, and being able to accept your partner. For Fionna, being comfortable with one's self in a relationship means not only being able to be yourself, but also being accepted for who you are.

When constructing a perception of family and family life, it is often necessary to speculate the characteristics of a good relationship. Many tend to judge their own relationship to some perceived standard of what they believe makes a good partner. Previous literature has shown that long-term marital satisfaction is predicated on specific characteristics of an individual and of the relationship (Collins & Coltrane 1991; Fennell 1993; Kurdek 1991; Lewis & Spanier 1979; Robinson & Blanton 1993). Prior studies (Fennell 1993) suggest that characteristics range anywhere from commitment to one another, to faith in God.

While the responses for both the Latino and Anglo sample were somewhat similar, it is important to note the characteristics that were present solely among one sample. Characteristics such as (1) being honest with one another, (2) having faith in one another, (3) being committed to one another, (4) being respectful of one another, (5) being able to learn from one another, and (6) being each other's best friend, were only

present in the Latino sample. It is interesting to note that “being honest with one another” and “having faith in one another” were the most frequently reported characteristics of a good spouse among Latinos. Because the Latino sample tended to be younger, with many respondents in relatively newer long-term relationships, the Latino sample may be more concerned with fidelity and reporting such concerns in the form of “honesty” and “faith.” Those in longer relationships and who are older seemed to have less of a concern with fidelity and more concern with finances.

Within the Latino group, the duration of relationships ranged from three months to fourteen years, while the Anglo group ranged from three months to eleven years. Regardless of the length of the relationship or racial background, desired characteristics of a partner appeared to be consistent. Surprisingly, younger individuals and those involved in newer relationships stressed independence just as frequently as the individuals involved in longer relationship or older individuals. The only noticeable difference is that those in longer relationships and those in their thirties, had a greater tendency to supply a relationship story with their desired characteristics. The younger respondents (ages 18 and 19) had a greater tendency to categorize or use single word characteristics when responding to my questions.

Household Division of Labor

For most, a sense of family and marital commitment is derived from everyday life, interaction and activities, including the division of household labor. Current patterns of household division of labor among heterosexual couples stress that housework has become more equal than in the past. Robinson and Goldberg (1997) report that women’s

housework has declined from 24 hours per week in 1965 to sixteen hours per week in 1985. In fact, by 1985 employed women were doing one-third less housework than non-employed women. However, such patterns may be misleading. Coltrane and Collins (2003) report that according to the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), the amount of time men spent doing housework has increased slightly, but housework largely continues to remain unequally distributed with women doing two to three times as much housework as men. Blair and Lichter (1991), used data from the 1988 National Survey of Families and Households to examine housework patterns of 3,190 married and co-habiting couples. Findings showed that women attended to chores such as cooking (96%), dishwashing (92%), vacuuming (90%), and bed making (94%), while men attended to household repairs (86%), lawn mowing (75%), and snow shoveling (77%). Findings suggest that not only are women doing more of the household chores, but also these household chores are typically gendered.

There are many implications for such discrepancies in household division of labor. One such result is that the partner with the most power will be the one who sets the terms by which the couple may split household chores. Because men often have greater earnings than women, they have more social power in the relationship and are often allowed to “opt out” of doing everyday household chores (Coltrane and Collins 2003). Additionally, men and women may not believe that men “opt out” of these chores. Using data from the 1988 NSFH, Lennon and Rosenfield (1994) find that although 88% of women and 78% of men believed that women attended to more household chores, 60% of women and 71% of men believed that their division of household labor was “fair”.

Moreover, women did not recognize household division of labor as being unequal or unfair until they were responsible for more than two-thirds of household chores.

Coltrane and Collins (2003) present several theories that address current household division of labor patterns. They include: relative resource model (a person with more income will do less housework), time available theories (a person who spends more time at work spends less time with daily housework), economic dependency model (women exchange household labor for economic support from men), gender ideology (people conform to gender segregation of work if they were brought up to believe in this family dynamic), and marital economy of gratitude (men and women do not argue over who does what, but giving and receiving gratitude (Brines 1994; Coltrane and Collins 2003; Hochschild 2003)). Although these theories are generally discussed in terms of heterosexual couples, many of these patterns and dynamics are applicable to same-sex couples.

Household division of labor is a common topic in gay and lesbian family literature. Perhaps this is because family scholars have found more egalitarian practices in gay and lesbian couples than in heterosexual couples (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983; Carrigan 1999; Kurdek 1993; Lewin 1993; Moore 2008; Patterson 1998, 2000; Sullivan 1996, 2004; Weeks 2001, 2004; Weston 1991). From a political and feminist stance, these egalitarian relationships may help to deconstruct gendered roles and tasks, thereby promoting social change and weakening the patriarchal social structure.

Housework and the division of domestic labor are the primary focus of Carrington's (1999) research on same-sex family life. Expanding on Devault's (1991)

insights in *Feeding the Family* to encompass gay and lesbian couples, Carrington portrays housework and the division of domestic labor as a form of “feeding” or maintaining family life. He stresses “like all of the forms of domestic labor, the environment, performance, and management of housework provides another opportunity for the production of family.” The consistent and continuous performance of housework creates and sustains a set of material and social relationships that “many lesbian family members interpret as family...leading to the conception that their lesbian family is a legitimate family” (Carrington 1999: 106). Similarly, division of domestic labor and the idealized perception of egalitarian relationships in same-sex couples also serves to legitimize family. Because literature comparing homosexual and heterosexual couples has established same-sex couples as more egalitarian, a persistent commitment to viewing one’s own relationship and other same-sex couples’ relationships as egalitarian, often exists among lesbian and gay families. However, the reality is that same-sex couples are not entirely egalitarian. For many, especially gay men, there is a reliance on the service economy to do many of the menial household chores or a tendency to downsize living spaces to do less work. Both produce the image of egalitarianism within couples even though they rely on broader market inequalities to get the housework done. Another way that an image of egalitarianism is produced is through specialization patterns. In these situations, one partner “specializes” in one form of domesticity and is employed part-time, while the other partner “specializes” in a less time consuming form of domesticity and is employed for longer hours. Because gay and lesbian families perceive themselves as egalitarian, such “specialized” division of labor is seen as “equal”—although

Carrington comments that what they really mean is “fair” (Carrington 1999: 187). Past research on same-sex couples thus suggests that everyday household maintenance helps to create and maintain a sense of family and committed relationships based on egalitarian principles, even if actual practices vary across couples.

Carrington (1999) also discusses the ways in which paid labor and wages may have an effect on household division of labor for same-sex couples. He argues that affluent lesbian and gay families create a greater sense of equality than those who may be struggling financially. For instance, lesbians familiar with the gender pay gap may expect that they will earn less as a couple. In fact, Carrington (1999) reports that lesbian families tend to have fewer resources and face more socioeconomic inequalities than heterosexual couples and gay men. As a result, women may spend more time in the work force in order to compensate an expected lower annual income and less time on domestic chores at home. This leaves little time to complete domestic chores within the household. Consequently, lower income lesbian couples may struggle with division of household labor and inevitably produce strained relationships. Carrington (1999) finds that this may also be the case with minority couples, as they have a greater tendency to face socioeconomic problems than whites. For Carrington, the problem for low-income lesbian couples and minorities seems to lie in the belief that egalitarianism is the norm for same-sex couples and that individuals have a choice to place value on work life or home life. He concludes, “such an emphasis fails to acknowledge the structures of constraint at work in people’s lives, particularly in the lives of working/services class families, where choices are greatly constrained by economic necessity” (Carrington 1999: 307).

Therefore, low-income couples are more likely to face strains in their relationship than more affluent couples.

When viewing marriage, domestic partnership, and household division of labor, it becomes evident that empirical research on queer couples and families of color has been inadequate. Literature on same-sex couples has failed to address the cultural and familial context that Latino men and women may experience within their lifetimes. For example, desires to have children and/or establish a domestic partnership or marriage may be experienced differently by Latino same-sex couples than white ones.

Research on heterosexual Latino couples also finds them to be relatively egalitarian when compared with white heterosexual couples, which also suggests that queer Latino homes may be more egalitarian than queer Anglo ones. In terms of egalitarian heterosexual Latino households, Hawkes and Taylor (1975) found that only seven percent of all Mexican American families were husband dominant and three percent were husband semi-dominant, while seventeen percent were wife semi-dominant and three percent were wife dominant. The largest percentages of couples were revealed to be egalitarian (62%). Peplau and Campbell (1989: 134) further report that various other authors (Cromwell et. al. 1973; Cromwell & Cromwell 1978; Cromwell and King 1979; Zamudio 1986; Zapata & Jaramillo 1981; Baca-Zinn 1980) have repeated this empirical study, finding egalitarian roles to be “the predominant pattern across socioeconomic groups, educational levels, urban-rural residence and region of the country” in Mexican American families.

Barajas and Ramirez (2007) claim that differences in egalitarian and traditional roles may have less to do with concepts of familism and more to do with historical and cultural shifts over generations. For instance, although older generations of Mexican women hold traditional ideals of male dominance, there was a distinct gap between these ideals and what is actually practiced within the household. This was often in conjunction with women working outside of the home to contribute to a family wage. As a result, many women share authority and decision-making with their husbands.

South (1993) has argued that not only is there an egalitarian relationship in the decision making process, but also that female role enhancement challenges various forms of male dominance. South argues that any discrepancies between Mexican American women and white women, in terms of egalitarian relationships, may result from social class and access to extra-domestic resources rather than from familism or rigid sex/gender roles. Similarly, Coltrane and Valdez (1993) find that Mexican American men and women are more likely to share household duties and childcare more equally when females contribute to the total family income, contradicting patriarchal concepts and supporting relatively involved fathers (Mirande 1997). They also report that Mexican American families are not entirely egalitarian in all tasks and duties, with men doing less household maintenance tasks. Men were more likely to care for children than conduct household tasks such as cleaning or cooking. However, Valdez and Coltrane (1993) do find relatively even sharing in childcare tasks and decision-making (e.g. finances and major purposes). These findings varied for social class and status of the jobs for the husbands and wives involved in the study.

Beginning in the early 1980s few studies have been conducted regarding household division of labor among same sex couples. Early findings suggest that same-sex couples tend to have a more egalitarian household division of labor than heterosexual couples (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983). More recent research suggests that such previous research has caused equal expectations in same-sex families, even when equality may not be present in the relationship (Carrington 1999). As previously discussed, same-sex couples may perceive equality in the household division of labor through outsourcing to the service industry (via housekeepers) or by establishing “specialized roles,” where the individual who makes more money or works longer hours outside of the home is delegated less housework. Carrington (1999) describes this phenomenon as being “fair,” not “equal.” Within my sample of fifteen Latinos, only one reported the use of hired outside help. Similarly, only one couple in the Anglo sample reported hired help. As a result, perceived equality may come from the “specialized role” phenomenon for the remaining individuals.

Of the fifteen Latinos, 1/3 of the sample did reside with their long-term partner at the time of their interview. Therefore, only six individuals and two couples (2/3 of the total sample) shared their household tasks. Of the 2/3 that did share a household, three suggested that their division of household labor was entirely egalitarian. One respondent reported that he felt the division of labor was equal, but was not sure that his partner felt the same. Another reported that the division of household labor was “equal” (or fair) given each other’s workload. Still another claimed that the division of household labor was equal, but also that he tended to do the more “female gendered” housework than his

partner. Of the two couples interviewed, each individual's account of the household division of labor differed from that of their partner, with one suggesting a more egalitarian housework than the other.

Of the fifteen Anglo individuals involved in this study, fourteen resided with their partners. Two were interviewed independent of their partner and the remaining twelve respondents were interviewed as couples (six couples total). The two respondents that were interviewed independently of their partner both felt as if their household division of labor was equal. Unlike the Latinos, all Anglo couples seemed to have the same views as their partner of their household division of labor. Only one couple seemed to have a somewhat different view. Two couples felt their household division of labor was egalitarian. The three remaining couples felt their household division of labor was relatively equal or "fair." Two of these couples suggested that any unequal distribution was due to one partner working more hours outside of the home. The remaining couple indicated that the unequal household division of labor was due to one partner's medical/psychological condition.

Perceived Equality

Of the ten Latino respondents who were living together, three (30%) felt that their current relationship was entirely egalitarian. For the most part, participants responded that they generally switched off between household chores, rather than having designated chores for each individual. For instance Elle, 21 responded:

We both split up cooking and washing dishes. We always go half-and-half for groceries. It is very balanced. We both take turns doing laundry. And it

is never, like we take tabs on who is doing what. Our room is messy as can be, but we both take turns cleaning our sides of the room.

Angie, 21 describes a similar pattern, with the exception of a few designated tasks:

We just live in a little small room so I always clean the room. When she gets home she cooks. So she makes food and stuff like that. I pretty much just do the laundry. But right now I clean and I do that because I know she works and she gets tired. So I do that if I have the time and if not, like if she didn't work that day and I am in school, she'll have it done when I get home. So we kind of just switch off.

Carla, 31 years old, reports something very similar to Angie. She and her partner have a perceived egalitarian relationship, with the exception of a few tasks:

Our relationship to us is very liquid. We don't stick to any labels. Sometimes we get a lot of questions like "who's the guy and who's the girl" and it doesn't work that way in our marriage at all. For us, whoever comes home first cooks. Whoever cooks doesn't have to clean. I do laundry but I don't clean the bathroom—she cleans the bathroom. We have somebody that cleans our house so we don't have to deal with the rest of the house. We have a gardener, but even if we didn't, I love planting and she has mowed the lawn before. There really is no designated task for anybody.

Of the ten individuals in this sample, Carla was the only respondent who reported having hired help within the home. Although she sees her relationship as completely egalitarian,

the presence of hired help presents less housework and yard work for both her and her partner. In this instance, Carla's perception of her relationship may be skewed, as she and her partner are not dividing the tasks amongst themselves. As a result, the remaining tasks are divided pretty evenly between her and her partner. Similarly, only one couple in the Anglo group reported that they had hired help with household tasks. However, unlike Carla and her partner, Sylvia and her partner Fionna did not experience an entirely egalitarian division of household labor.

Of the white sample that was interviewed independently of their partner, two felt that their relationship was relatively egalitarian. Oedi, 46 felt that his relationship was a good balance considering he and his partner both had erratic work schedules. Oedi works at a local amusement park and his partner is currently a full-time graduate student and lectures part-time at local universities. As a result, each of their hours vary, making it difficult for them to set a clear cleaning schedule. As Oedi describes,

We share. I do the dishes, I put the dishes in the dishwasher and I put them away. My schedule fluctuates so much, so like Sunday I will work for 3pm- 11:30pm, then Monday I have to be at work at 9am. And it's like I will have overnight shifts then a day shift. My room is a mess, but I help when I can. I like to do the driving. So I drive, I put the dishes away and I clean up the kitchen sometimes. He pays the rent, the car payments, the insurance and I pay the telephone, cable, water, and the other bills. I make crap money so he pays the bulk. I feed the cat. I make the coffee...you know, little things like that.

According to Oedi, many of the household tasks are equally shared, as is the allocation of expenses relative to each other's wages. A second respondent, Corey, 28, also felt that his relationship with his partner was egalitarian based on the amount of work done in relation to hectic work schedules.

He works longer hours at a time. He works 14-15 hour days when he is away on business. Sometimes I have to work double-shifts, so 16 hours at a time. It just depends. I guess it's equal though. As far as the chores, it's funny. We are both men so we just don't do it...well until it gets really bad. Where, I think it is interesting for us is we don't argue about it. So it's kind of like "as is." When one of use gets sick of it we will clean.

Both Corey and his partner have hectic, long work schedules that leave little time to complete household chores. As a result, they clean when necessary and typically split up the tasks equally.

Of the six white couples in this sample, two felt that their relationship was egalitarian. For example, Lynn 34 and her partner Allison, 32 seemed to have a similar perception of the distribution of labor. Lynn, 34,

There is stuff that neither of us like doing, like mopping the floor. That gets done when it really, really needs to be done. Grocery shopping, we do together. Any kind of shopping we do together. Anytime the laundry gets to be, like we need 'chones', then one of us will do it. ...There are some things that tend to fall to one or the other, like I can't do yard maintenance the way Allison can. Like physical stuff she does and mental

stuff I do. So like most of the financial stuff I take care of. And then as far as housework, vacuuming, emptying the dishwasher, is whoever is home to do it.

In their case, Lynn and Allison feel as if their relationship is relatively egalitarian with the exception of a few designated household tasks. Most household tasks are either split equally or are done by whichever partner has time to do it. For them, this system feels equal and they note that they have not fallen into a situation where one has done more of her fair share. Although there are some tasks that fall to Allison (household maintenance) and Lynn (finances), they happily report that everything is “pretty equal.”

Latino respondent Jesus, 35, contends that the household division of labor is slightly more complicated than equal or not equal. He feels that they split designated tasks equally (one individual is not assigned easier tasks) but that his partner may not perceive their relationship as being entirely egalitarian:

We split on vacuuming. We split the gardening. He waters the plants and I keep them healthy. Most of the other chores are pretty [evenly] split. We don't do each other's laundry. I've done it before because he has asked me, but he has had issues. He is very particular about how he folds. [As for] a clean house, we have discussions on what is borderline OCD and what is acceptable. He is quite the neat freak and I've gotten my earful about cleanliness. His mother never kept an organized house, so he did the opposite. And it has kind of gotten on my nerves. He is very particular and

I come home and one of my shoes is in the hallway and another is in the bedroom or whatever.

While Jesus feels that things are split pretty evenly, he also feels that differing conceptions of the meaning of “clean” cause his partner to do more work within the home. In this instance, the respondent himself questions its perceived equality.

Inequalities arising from different perceptions of cleanliness were also present in the white sample. Sylvia, 53 and Fionna, 65 feel they have a relatively egalitarian relationship with the exception of one thing, Sylvia is a “cleaning barbarian.” Sylvia,

Even when I am studying for exams I must clean and cook *after* she finishes cooking and cleaning. I clean like a barbarian. I do not understand how people can live in dirt. It is terrible. I cannot understand how people can call themselves human beings then live in filth. Apart from aesthetics, it’s a matter of basic hygiene!

Fionna admits that Sylvia’s meaning of “clean” is slightly extreme. However, despite the fact that Sylvia cleans *after* she has already cleaned does not seem to change the opinion of their relationship as egalitarian.

What is perhaps most notable about this sample is the tendency for respondents to suggest that their relationship is equal, but follow with examples of potential ways in which their distribution of household labor is not distributed equally. Of those who discussed equality in household division of labor, most specified that they had “no designated tasks”. That is, of the Latino and white respondents in this study, individuals implied that they had no specific gender roles. The most common responses of

participants who reported equality where, that they “do the chores together” or that “we really don’t have designated tasks”. In most circumstances, such a report of doing chores together without assigned tasks was followed closely with, “but I tend to do this” or “s(he) tends to do that”. Even in the case where a respondent reported that she does the “mental stuff” while her partner does the “more physical yard stuff,” the respondent made a point to mention that she too has attended to yard maintenance in the past. Her partner, who agreed with this assessment, also noted that she has been responsible for more of the “mental stuff” in the past, with negative results. In fact, she joked, “If I did the taxes we would probably get audited”. Furthermore, deviations from an egalitarian relationship were attributed by the Latino and white sample to the personal quirks of their loved ones. This was evident in the case of white respondent Fionna and Latino respondent Jesus.

Perceived Equality?

Of the ten Latino respondents that were residing together at the time of the interview, two felt their relationship was equal (or fair), but also that they were doing more than their designated or fair share. Madison, 33, is a full-time student residing with her partner of 14 years. Her partner has just completed a M.A. and is currently employed, working 40+ hours per week. Due to her partner’s hectic work schedule, Madison has taken over many chores within the home:

It kind of goes in waves. If I am home on summer break, yeah I will do it because what else am I going to do? If I’m on vacation, I’m on vacation, I’m not going to clean. So she picks up on weekends and I pick up during the week. We kind of have certain jobs. Like, I will vacuum. We both

load the dishwasher. She does the sheets and I do the rest of the laundry. For the most part, she cleans the bathroom. But if the shower needs to be cleaned then I will do it. So I would say she thinks it is unequal, but I would say considering our workload, that it is equal.

Madison's situation is almost identical to the "specialized role" phenomenon described by Carrington (1999). By her own admission, her involvement is dependent on each other's workloads. Her partner is delegated smaller portions of the household tasks. However, Madison asserts that the division is equal, although she probably means "fair." This is also apparent in her statement:

Because she is at work all day, the little things that people don't notice that have to be done, I do. And, she doesn't notice it. She thinks that I don't do anything. And I'm like, what do you think I am doing, sitting on my ass all day eating bon bons? No! You think you have tampons because they walk here?

Again, although Madison may claim that the relationship is equal, there is tension within the household caused by her partner not realizing the tasks, chores, and errands she completes on a daily basis.

John, 29, also feels his relationship is egalitarian, but has concerns about the tasks he is responsible for:

I would say that Jay works longer hours and I primarily do the cooking. But when I cook, he does the dishes and vice-versa. We both do our own laundry. We both clean around the house. We have a lot of plants that I

take care of. We have a cat and we both share responsibilities with her. I feel [it is] pretty equal. I feel like I take on more of what is typically consider[ed] the female roles in household responsibilities. But at the same time as the more educated [one] and having the higher income, I also feel that I am not put into a more passive or submissive role.

In this instance, John feels he has an egalitarian relationship with his partner, but is somewhat disturbed by the fact that he is typically in charge of more feminine tasks. John seems to compensate for attending to “female tasks” by having a greater education and a higher income than his partner. In this case, it appears as if John is reinforcing his masculine identity in a situation where it may be threatened by his constant completion of typically feminine tasks. John’s situation is very similar to that of heterosexual couples with wives who out earn their husbands. Studies suggest that professional women tend to compensate for their higher wages by doing more household task, rather than fewer (as a “relative resource model” would imply) (Biernat & Wortman 1991; Coltrane 2000; Deutsch et. al. 1993; Hochschild 2003).

Of the fourteen white respondents that resided together, six respondents (three couples) felt that their household division of labor was equal. However, their responses came with some disclaimers. Lisa, 55 and her partner Bobbi, 48, felt that they had a pretty good distribution of household labor, but they tended to have specialized tasks. Lisa is a full time student and Bobbi has a medical practice in Los Angeles. Although this means that Lisa spends more time at home, she feels household tasks do not unfairly fall

upon her because she is “home to do them.” Rather, they report that Bobbi tends to pick up the slack on the weekends.

It’s pretty even. It comes down more to personality. She is a big doer.

We’ll start the day; we’ll get the chores done because there are so many animals. But I don’t feel that it needs to get done in a certain amount of time. Its more of someone is coming over versus she feels it has to be done. The tortoise and the hare! She’s more of a tomboy, so she’s out doing the yard. I don’t mind doing the yard but she typically has more time to do it on the weekends. I’m always trying to catch up with what I have to do for school. We will “divide and conquer,” mostly. If I come home first then I will get dinner ready.

Although Lisa feels their relationship is egalitarian, she admits that certain personality traits and characteristics make it so that she tends to do a little less than her spouse. Because her partner is more likely to take the initiative when cleaning, she doesn’t always feel certain household tasks need to be done. In this sense, she feels the relationship is equal. Bobbi feels similar, suggesting, “this is where we are both at in our relationship. It is about partnership, so I strive for that. There is going to be imbalances or shifts, we already know that and we work on it.”

Diane, 48 and her partner Annalise, 51, have a slightly more complex perspective on household division of labor. Diane was recently laid off and repeatedly expressed shame and guilt as a result of her inability to help with household expenses. As a result,

she has recently begun to do odd jobs for friends, take community college classes, and actively maintain the household. Diane says,

Because I'm not working I'm the only one who tends to do household things. I cut the grass—because I'm home more than Annalise—I'll step in and do the cleaning and the laundry and things like that because her schedule is hectic. We'll both cook, sometimes we will go out to dinner, some nights I'll cook or she will cook. We try to split everything equally, to some degree, as far as that goes. But, I struggle with self-esteem. This bothers me at times and she does know that. Her income is much better.

While Diane admits that most of the household tasks tend to fall upon her, she still describes the division of household labor as “equal, to some degree.” In this sense, like Madison, she may feel this arrangement is more “fair” than it is equal. Because she is currently unemployed and her spouse is currently working two jobs, she feels as if the distribution of household labor is distributed fairly in relation to their work obligations. Annalise takes a somewhat similar perspective of their relationship suggesting that Diane tends to do more work because she “has more time to take care of the house.” She comments,

If the situation was turned, I mean, I have cleaned this house...there isn't an inch of this house that I ain't cleaned at one time or another. So we fill in the gaps. Like, I make more money so when we go on vacation I pay for it. It's one of those things. If one person can't fill in then you fill in.

Annalise also feels that the relationship is equal (or perhaps fair) because they fill in each other's needs. Of all the respondents in this sample, Diane and Annalise were perhaps closest to the notion of a traditional model of household division of labor. That is, a primary wage earner and a primary homemaker. However, it is important to note that Diane does feel inadequate with her current inability to contribute to household expenses. Similarly, because Diane felt the need to explain that she has previously cleaned the house and would be the primary homemaker if the situation were reversed, implies that she may not be entirely comfortable with the arrangement as well. It is almost as if Diane feels she is taking advantage of Annalise as her provider and Annalise feels she is taking advantage of Diane as a homemaker. These mixed feeling about equality may arise from a need or a desire to have a more even distribution of household chores as well as income.

The previous discussion of respondents who perceived their relationships to be equal had a tendency to reason aspects that may have been unequal, attributing them to personal quirks or defending designated tasks by claiming to have done them in the past. Respondents, who perceived equality despite unequal division of labor and, in some cases, financial power and/or decision-making power, seemed to follow a similar thought process. In many circumstances, both Latino and white respondents said equal when they described division of household tasks as "fair". Accordingly, much of the "fairness" seemed to depend on who worked more hours outside of the home (and therefore had less time for household maintenance) and who had a larger income. Consequently, one respondent in the Latino sample and one respondent in the Anglo sample noted that their

relationship was egalitarian, but later proceeded to describe annoyances that they had experienced due to their partner's inability to see how much they were actually doing at home.

In one instance, Diane and Annalise both reported that their relationship was egalitarian, but was based more on a traditional model (breadwinner/homemaker) due to Diane's recent layoff. What is most notable about this couple is that they appeared to be uncomfortable with this distribution of household labor. Like many respondents, Annalise suggested that she had cleaned every inch of her home in the past. Additionally, she seemed to defend her position as the primary wage earner by minimizing the importance of her role. Diane, also appeared to be uncomfortable with the arrangement and openly expressed guilt over her job loss. What seemed to be more evident in this couple than in any of the previous examples was the possibility that they were uncomfortable with power dynamics within their home. When asked about decision-making, trip-planning, and major purchases, they both reported that they made decision and major purchases equally. The only difference was that Annalise tended to pay for vacations or major purchases because she was more financially stable. Between household division of labor and decision-making power, Annalise and Denise appeared to try very hard to maintain an egalitarian household.

This appeared to also be the case with the remainder of the respondents. All 30 individuals—white and Latino—reported that decision-making power involved with major purchases and vacations was shared equally. Respondents often discussed how their preferences complimented each other well. For example, a common response was

that one partner loved looking for bargains and deals while the other liked planning routes or destinations. In this sense, a tendency towards more egalitarian relationships appeared to be a major concern in both samples. However, potential questioning of egalitarianism versus “fairness” is much more visible in the respondents discussion of household maintenance. While there may be power differentials based on decision-making in the respondents’ relationship, it was much more difficult to find such differentials in participants’ responses.

Unequal Perceptions of Equality

While the majority of couples involved in this study tended to report relatively egalitarian relationships, three couples (one white, two Latino) suggested that their relationships might not be egalitarian. However, in all three circumstances unequal division of labor was discussed through their responses rather than by specifically stating that their relationship was unequal.

Of the ten Latinos that fit the criteria for this sample, four completed the interview as couples. The first couple, Robin and Vicki, has lived together for the past 2 years. Vicki is currently employed and is in the process of becoming a fulltime law school student. Although Vicki works fulltime, she is able to work from home for a company stationed in Northern California. Robin works fulltime outside of the home. Although Robin acknowledges that Vicki does more of the cleaning, she generally attributes it to two factors, (1) Vicki spends more time at home, and (2) Vicki defines “clean” differently than she does. Robin, 28:

She works at home so she spends all her time at home. I work in the mall so I spend a lot of time out and about. My idea of cleaning is her idea of sloppiness. She tends to get irritated faster with messiness and cleans it up before I get a handle on it. The cleaning and that sort of thing. She cleans a lot more than I do. She also has three cats. And I am not a cat person. I mean, I love her cats but I don't feel the need to clean up after them. So she does a lot of de-hairing the couch and stuff like that. She has a long list of things she does in the morning. She vacuums the carpet and the couch.

Two possible outcomes can result from Robin's perception of equal division of household labor. First, similar to Jesus and Fionna, she acknowledges that Vicki does more cleaning because she has a lower threshold for messiness. Secondly, according to the "specialized role" phenomenon, Vicki spends more time at home and therefore Robin should be entitled to less household chores.

Vicki, 31, sees matters very similarly:

I'm the cleaner. So a lot of things factor in to that. I am just a cleaner. I have different standard from most people. It is not that she is messy or that I am expected to clean up after her, it is just that I end up doing it. But there are some times when I'm like, "dude, can you wash your own dishes today?" I'd say its probably a combination of its my personality and it might be a little more of my role in the relationship.

However, similar to Madison, Vicki does express indication of annoyance at the amount of work that she is expected to complete at home:

We do a pretty good amount of laundry sharing. I actually work from home so it is a lot easier for me to pick up things like that. You know, when the laundry is over flowing? So it makes a little more sense to me. But it can also be kind of annoying. You know, sometimes she is not thinking and she will ask me to do something for her as if it were nothing. And I feel like “do you think I sit around our home all day and do nothing? I am working just like you are.” I just happen to do my work at home. I can’t be running around doing errands all day. I am getting paid to do my job.

The second couple, Kathleen and Emily, has lived together for the past 3 years. Kathleen is currently unemployed, but maintains the apartment complex that her family owns. Emily is currently employed and working fulltime outside of the home. Emily, 26:

Right now my partner is unemployed and I am working part-time. So we try to divide up the chores. When my partner is at home, she will clean and try to keep things tidy. When I get home I will help with the cleaning too. Typically we do everything together. We do the grocery shopping together. We try to split up the chores around the house pretty evenly. There are things I do that she doesn’t. I’m better at fixing things and hooking up the electronics. She is more outdoorsy. She will go out and clean the yard for like five hours.

In this instance, Emily discusses a relatively egalitarian household where most tasks are evenly shared. Perhaps the only indication of an unequal distribution is with yard work. Accordingly, Emily sees attending to yard work as something that Kathleen enjoys, because she is “outdoorsy”. Kathleen, 25:

At first I wish that we could have always done it together. But, the way it ends up shaping up is that I end up being the one that washes dishes, cleans the bathroom, takes care of the animals...although she does somewhat share the duty. She cooks more. She does more of the cooking and the shopping for the groceries. As far as washing, we'll do it together since it is both of our clothes. Yard work is me. Sometimes I just say, “come out here and sit down on a chair and watch me”. But she will do her thing and go and play video games. I do the yard work and take out the trash. As far as organizing and cooking, it's her.

According to Kathleen, the household distribution of tasks appears less than equal. They split laundry equally. Emily cooks and shops for groceries, but the remaining tasks tend to fall on Kathleen.

Of the six couples that were part of the Anglo sample, only one couple had a different perception of their household division of labor. Alan, 40, and husband Darren, 28, find that Alan, a full-time graduate student and part-time lecturer, has also become the primary partner in charge of household tasks. Darren, a former student, is currently unemployed and fulfills small tasks, such as changing the cat litter and taking out the trash. However, despite his description of the household division of labor, Alan never

says that their relationship is unequal. Rather, Alan attributes the discrepancy in household chores to Darren's ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). Alan,

My partner has ADHD, so getting the initiative out of him is difficult.

Today he knew we were having guests, so if he has a reason to do it he will do it. But for him, if there is no point in getting things done there is no reason to do things... He can't drive because of his condition, so I am the only one who drives. A lot of the stuff just falls to me because I can drive and he can't. On the other hand, his main division of labor is not cleaning but keeping me sane when I am stressed.

Although Alan suggests that he is mostly responsible for nearly all household chores and later admits that he "feels pressure to be the breadwinner," Alan feels his efforts are reciprocated in the amount of emotional support Darren provides. Alan concludes, "I like having him at home when I come home and he is always there." Alan does recognize that he is the primary breadwinner and also maintains the house. However, Darren does not appear to have the same perception. Although he does mention that his ADHD makes it difficult to remember what needs to be done around the house, he notes that he is responsible for many household tasks, including, caring for their cat, taking out the trash, doing laundry, washing dishes, and other small maintenance tasks.

With all three of these couples there are very different perceptions of the division of household labor. This suggests that similar to Carrington's (1999) study, same-sex couples may not be as egalitarian as they are often perceived to be in the LGBT community. In terms of perceived and actual egalitarianism, there appear to be few

differences between household division of labor among Latino and white respondents in this sample. Perhaps the only noticeable difference between the two samples was the tendency for white respondents to be more forthcoming about their finances. While the Latino sample primarily discussed division of household tasks, the Anglo sample had a greater tendency to focus on which partner was the primary wage earner in relation to their household division of labor.

It is likely that this pattern emerged due to the fact that there appeared to be significantly larger wage gaps among white partners than there were between Latino partners. For instance, four white couples reported having one partner who was working full-time and a second partner who was either unemployed or a full-time student. Finances among the Latino sample were similarly discussed in two instances where one partner was working full-time and the other partner was a full-time student or unemployed. This pattern may have also emerged due to the fact that there were a greater number of students interviewed in the Latino sample who were also involved in a relationship with another student. Finally this pattern may have emerged because many of the Latino interviews reflected the experiences of only one partner. In fact, the Anglo group consisted of three singles (partner's were not willing to participate) and six couples. The Latino group consisted of two couples and eleven singles. As such, the partnered interviewed in the Latino sample may have been the primary wage earner and may felt less compelled to discuss finances.

In addition to perceived conceptions of family life, the household division of labor is important in the social construction of family. Building from Devault's (1991)

insights, Carrington (1999) suggests that household labor is important in the lives of same-sex couples because it is a form of “feeding the family,” “doing family,” or maintaining family life. Everyday interaction and negotiation of household division of labor is used to create a sense of family. My informants did not describe their household division of labor or family meals as a means to create a sense of family. Nevertheless, they may unconsciously experience this phenomenon through everyday interaction, thus establishing family life.

Rather, patterns of egalitarianism among the sample in this study were consistent with that of previous literature on the perceived equality within gay and lesbian households in general. Indeed, Carla’s experience of egalitarianism seemed to be consistent with Carrington’s (1999) findings of perceived egalitarianism as a result of outsourcing household chores to domestic services. However, Sylvia and Fionna (both white) are somewhat contrary to these findings. Although Fionna and Sylvia had hired a domestic worker to clean their home once a week, they found that their division of household labor was still unequal. Both women felt this was due to Fionna’s tendency to “clean like a barbarian” regardless of the house needed to be cleaned or not. In this sense, personality may also be a factor in unequal distribution of household labor. Latino respondent Jesus similarly discussed this issue, indicating that his partner’s idea of clean meant that his partner did slightly more cleaning.

Several couples within the study were also consistent with findings of “specialized roles” and a tendency to equate “equal” with “fair.” In fact, some form of this phenomenon appeared to be in both the recollections of the Latino and Anglo

sample. Perhaps the most telling story of “perceived” egalitarianism is found in the discrepancies between accounts of household division of labor between the two Latino couples interviewed. In both cases, one partner felt as though their relationship was completely egalitarian, while the other expressed doubts.

One of the major differences between the two samples is the tendency for the Anglo sample to report similar interpretations of the household division of labor. The only exception to this was the case of Alan and Darren. Similar to the Latino couples, Alan suggested that the division of labor in their household was not entirely equal, while Darren felt it was perhaps slightly more equal. Although, Darren did attest to the fact that remembering to do household chores was difficult with Attention Deficit Hyper Active disorder.

Lastly, in terms of the Latino sample, current literature conducted on Latino heterosexual couples has found that, contrary to previous assumptions of male-dominant households, a majority of Latinos have egalitarian relationships with egalitarian roles being the predominant pattern across socioeconomic groups, education levels, urban-rural residence, or region (Cromwell et. al. 1973; Cromwell & Cromwell 1978; Cromwell and King 1979; Peplau and Campbell 1989; Zamudio 1986; Zapata & Jaramillo 1981; Baca-Zinn 1980). Such examples of egalitarianism are evident in the current Latino sample. All fifteen Latino respondents reported equality in decision-making and financial purchases. Additionally, the sample presented several accounts of either egalitarianism or expectations of egalitarianism. It is likely that the desire for an egalitarian relationship

among my Latino sample is a product of both the changing patterns of Latino gender roles, the expectation of a same-sex relationship, or a combination of both factors.

Perhaps the most notable contribution this study makes to previous research on same-sex families is combining a discussion of what it means to be a good partner with that of a discussion on household division of labor and perceived egalitarianism in the home. Carrington (1999) suggests that more affluent same-sex couples rely more heavily on the service industry to establish perceived egalitarian relationships. Conversely, couples that struggle financially have difficulty maintaining the perception of egalitarianism and will inevitably face strain in their relationship. Carrington (1999: 306) states, “creating family demands domesticity, while at the same time the reigning ideals demand egalitarianism,” suggesting that this combination may lead to the demise of the relationship. My conversations with three lesbian couples facing financial difficulties showed that this may not be entirely true. Lynn and Allison, Diane and Annalise, and Sylvia and Fionna all recently faced financial hardships due to the economic crisis. Lynn works two different part-time jobs that are 100 miles apart, often finding that she must travel from one job to the other immediately after she leaves her first job. Allison works, on average, 40-50 hours a week in a high stress job as a social worker. Recently Lynn has been incredibly tired and stressed due to her commute and hectic work schedule. As discussed above, she and her partner feel that proper communication, “being there” physically for one another, and providing emotional support for one another have helped them work together through these difficult circumstances. As a result, they feel their relationship is still egalitarian and that they are stronger for communicating and working

with each other through a stressful period. In this case, proper communication did not allow the relationship to falter simply because they were having financial issues that led Lynn to take two part-time jobs.

Similarly, Diane reported that she was laid off from her job some six months prior to the interview. Although she struggled with self-esteem in her inability to contribute to their household earnings, Diane compensated for her layoff by taking odd jobs, enrolling in community college courses, and handling nearly all of the household maintenance tasks. Her partner, Annalise, discussed a similar story, indicating that she knew her partner was upset with her job loss and she admired the fact that her spouse took the initiative to use her layoff as an opportunity to go back to school. Although their experience would be categorized more as “fair” than equal according to Carrington (1999), their relationship is stable, solid, and functioning. They do not seem to have preconceived notions of what their household division of labor should look like. Rather, they see their relationship in terms of what opportunities were available to them. Like Lynn and Allison, Annalise and Diane also reported that they felt proper communication, “being there,” and being supportive were all important aspects of being a good spouse.

Finally, Sylvia and Fiona describe a relationship that has faced many financial obstacles in the past. Fiona, the primary wage earner in their household was laid off twice in the past five years. The most recent layoff was a little over a year ago. She notes that during the layoff and the process of finding a job, Sylvia never pushed her, pressured her, or made her feel inadequate. Like the other two couples, she felt they communicated well and were supportive of one another through this process. Fiona has since found a

good paying job and they are once again financially secure. However, during the period of financial uncertainty they suggest that there was never a danger of their relationship ending.

These three couples suggest that Carrington's (1999) argument may not adequately explain the familial dynamics for those experiencing socioeconomic problems. While Carrington's work would suggest that these women were in danger of relationship strain or demise, these women reported that financial strains showed they had a strong and reciprocal relationship based on communication and support. My findings suggest that when examining same-sex couples that experience financial hardships, it is important to be aware of the characteristics of the couple, their conception of a good spouse, and their capacity to be flexible and to reevaluate their day-to-day lives in the event of unexpected socioeconomic difficulties. Future research in lesbian couples, minorities, and low-income families may contribute more fully to these new findings. It might be valuable to conduct qualitative research with Latino and Anglo couples who have recently experienced job loss or a similar socioeconomic problem.

Coupling, Marriage and Partnership

It is overly optimistic to reason that family is simply what you make of it. Instead, research on gay and lesbian couples suggests that family life or marriage is constructed, and constrained, in the context of US legal and social systems. In fact, a large portion of family literature on same-sex couples debates whether marriage or having children in a gay/lesbian relationship is simply assimilating to heteronormativity or mainstream cultural ideologies of family (Lewin 1994, 2001; Naples 2004; Sullivan 2004; Weston

1991). To “do marriage” by legal weddings, civil unions, domestic partnerships, or informal commitment ceremonies can be considered a form of compliance or assimilation to, rather than as resistance from, heteronormativity.

Marriage and weddings for same-sex couples is more than just an argument between resistance and compliance to a traditional family structure. In most cases, ceremonies are expensive and time consuming; yet they provide no legal benefits (Lewin 1998). However, ceremonies can be viewed as important rituals that are performative and convey messages about the identities and the communities of lesbians and gay men, such as claiming a place in an ethnic community, making statements about relationships to God, publicly pronounce bonds, and affirm/reject connections to mainstream culture (Lewin 2004: 1001). Couples often desire to be seen as a legitimate couple and as being capable of devotion, loyalty, and commitment (Lewin 2001: 51). Oswald refers to rituals as a sense of belonging for gay and lesbian couples (Oswald 2001, 2002). Hequenbourg (2004) attributes this desire to legitimize a relationship through ceremony as an attempt to normalize an “unscripted” life. She contends that commitment ceremonies—as well as second-parent adoption—“closely parallel normalizing strategies because their ultimate goal is to forge a space for lesbian mothers within existing definitions of motherhood and family” (Hequenbourg 2004: 753).

Marriage and ceremonies have also been described as a form of legitimacy for same-sex couples that are culturally granted rather than legally granted. In her study of 41 women and 20 men in the Chicago metropolitan area, Hull (2006) presents two arguments about the relationship between the legal and cultural meanings of same-sex

marriage. First, she argues that marriage remains a powerful cultural model even when legal rights are not recognized by the state. As a result, Hull describes cultural enactments of marriage as a form of “political action.” Second, she argues that the cultural power of the law allows heterosexual couples legal benefits as well as social legitimacy, rights that same-sex couples are unable to legally acquire. As such, “legal recognition would render same-sex couples socially normal and culturally equal to heterosexual married people” (Hull 2006: 3). Among her sample, Hull’s respondents reported that same-sex couples needed legal recognition and preferred the option to marry rather than obtain a domestic partnership or civil union. Respondents offered three main benefits of legal recognition of marriage: “the legal and financial benefits, principles of equality and fairness, and the symbolic importance of inclusion in the institution” (Hull 2006: 24). In many respects, her respondents felt as if “inclusion” grants full equality, therefore her sample found ceremonies enact a type of “cultural legality.” Her argument both implies that respondents grant cultural and legal power to the law and that they view cultural practices (marriages that are not legally recognized by the state in which they reside) as a form of political action—although not all of her respondents recognized it as such.

Ceremonies may prove to be an important part of establishing a commitment to one another or look to culture for legitimacy when legal legitimacy is absent. However, legal benefits and recognition of one’s marital status by the state in which he/she resides was incredibly important to my respondents. Legally, domestic partnerships grant same-sex couples some or all of state-level benefits provided to married couples but they do not provide them with the same federal rights, responsibilities, or protections (Oswald and

Kuvalanka 2008). State-level benefits are not transferable to other states or local jurisdictions. According to the State of California Tax Franchise Board legal benefits are granted to same-sex marriages performed between June 16, 2008 and before November 5, 2008. Each couple has the same tax benefits and requirements of any married heterosexual taxpayer. This section provides an examination of the legal, social and cultural meanings behind ceremonies, marriage and domestic partnerships.

The Married or Domestic Partners

At the time of interview, a large number of Anglo respondents were legally married in the state of California or had obtained a domestic partnership, while a minority of the Latino respondents had done so. Again, this discrepancy between the two samples may be a result of the average age of the individuals in each sample. Of the fifteen Latinos, half responded that they would like to marry in the future. Two of the Latinos respondents were married or in a domestic partnership. One respondent had obtained a domestic partnership as a means for legal benefits at the time of the interview. One respondent had a marital ceremony one year prior to her interview, but the legal status of her marriage was not recognized by the state of California. Therefore, of the thirteen remaining Latinos, five commented that they would like to obtain a domestic partnership as something that was either the next step in the process of coupling, or as a means of obtaining legal benefits.

One important aspect to note is that fourteen of the fifteen Latino respondents were born inside of the United States and one respondent, born outside of the US, had obtained citizenship status. Therefore, none of my Latino respondents reported marriage

or domestic partnership status as a pathway to legal migration or citizenship. Due to the large number of immigration/migration in the state of California, this may be a future avenue to explore with recently migrated queer Latinos or those without citizenship status.

Among the Anglo sample, six out of my fifteen respondents were legally married in the state of California, six were in a domestic partnership, and three were living together but were neither married or in a domestic partnership. Of the three respondents who were living together, one would be eager to marry if same-sex marriage were legalized. The remaining two respondents noted that they would consider a domestic partnership or marriage in the future, but were unsure if they would be doing so with their current partner.

Of the fifteen Latino respondents, Carla, 33, was the only participant who reported undergoing a marital ceremony. Carla and her partner married in a large ceremony at a LGBT friendly church:

We had our wedding at a church in Los Angeles. We had the wedding inside and the reception outside. A priest did it. Our whole families were there. It was a walking down the aisle, exchanging of rings, and the big party that goes along with it afterwards. It was like any traditional wedding.

Although the marriage is not recognized by the state of California, Carla feels that the religious ceremony was something that affirmed their relationship on many levels. She and her partner included several elements to the wedding, such as the Mexican tradition

of being lassoed, in order to display their commitment in multiple forms. She also gives the example of “jumping the broom,” a tradition that has English and American roots:

And we jumped the broom, for a number of reasons. One, it was a political reason. It’s like, ok yeah, we are getting married, but literally the government won’t see us as getting married. So it fits the whole tradition. But it is also a Wiccan tradition. So there were a couple things here and there that you wouldn’t think of assimilating, that we involved.

For Carla, the act of jumping the broom signified a political statement regarding the state of legalized marriage in California, while the act of lassoing symbolized a spiritual affirmation of their union and ethnic identity. In this instance, Carla’s ceremony resembles both an affirmation and a rejection of mainstream American and Latino culture. She also referred to it as a way to affirm their relationship in the eyes of her family; “I think the wedding really helped us with that [confusion about partner status] where there is no question of ‘how do I introduce you.’ It’s more like ‘look this is my wife.’”

Of the three white couples that were married at the time of the interview, all three seemed to have a different story to tell as to why they decided to marry. Similar to Carla, Diane and Annalise felt that their marriage was a formal declaration of their relationship status to family and friends. Although they planned a small ceremony, they had an initial expectation for family members to be involved and treat their marriage as they would any heterosexual marriage. According to Annalise, their plans did not turn out exactly as they anticipated and very few family members attended their ceremony:

In their opinion a gay wedding wasn't as important as a heterosexual wedding. Even though here is California at that time, this was a legal marriage, just exactly like a heterosexual marriage, nobody saw it like that. It just wasn't important. No one could be here. No one could find the time.

For Alan and his husband Daren, the marriage was more of a symbol of political freedom. Alan and his partner engaged in a courthouse marriage the day after gay marriage was legalized and had a second ceremony shortly thereafter as a celebration of their relationship with their families. However, the freedom to finally marry was extremely important in their decision making process. Alan, 40,

We got married the day it was legal. I have a yahoo alert and a google alert about same-sex marriage so that I can always see what is going on. I texted him that day with "want to get married?" We had talked about it for months and within a month we knew it was what we wanted. So I texted him "want to get married" and he texted back, "oh my God, can we?"

Also, similar to Carla, Alan felt that the ceremony helped his family realize the level of commitment that he and his partner had for one another. Of the ceremony he remarks, "it's not my partner, it's not my boyfriend, it's my husband and that meaning has weight. Really, it changed his parent's attitude in some ways. So it was a big deal, it's still a big deal." In his eyes, marriage was a chance for he and his husband to celebrate their relationship, to practice political freedom, and to announce their marital commitment to their families. In this case, the ceremony was extremely important for Darren's family

who had previously been uneasy about their Mormon son in a gay relationship. According to Alan, “his mother is a Utah Mormon and his father is a twenties convert Mormon, so those types are the most fundamental. But they wanted to see their son happy...by the time we got married they had come around.”

Finally, for Lisa and Bobbi, marriage was an opportunity to finally legally marry, as well as an opportunity for them to celebrate their relationship. They had previously been in domestic partnerships, but felt that the opportunity to marry should not be wasted. Bobbi, 48,

June 1st was the first day you could get your license. So we talked about it and we thought, “yeah this is going to get voted against.” So we just had a feeling. Let’s do it sooner than later so we can at least enjoy the experience before the voters rescind it. But they didn’t rescind the people that got married. So we do have a legal document with[in] the state of California.

Although the initial thought was to marry while they had the opportunity, Bobbi and Lisa feel there is something intimate and special about the relationship. Although they don’t feel marriage made their love for each other any stronger or that it was necessary to legally commit to one another, they secretly celebrate their marriage each year. It was a happy memory for them and they seem to keep that memory for themselves, rather than make a stronger political, social or familial statement. As Bobbi explains,

The following year, every year now, we have a ritual where we have a party to celebrate. We invite people over, but we don’t tell anyone it is our

anniversary. Although, it kind of gets out. We didn't want it to be about gifts or marriage or anything like that. We want it to be a celebration for us. Something we can secretly share with others.

Of the four couples (seven respondents) that were married in the sample of thirty, many felt that the marriage carried different and complex meanings. Some chose to view marriage as a political or social statement/opportunity, some felt that it carried symbolic meaning for family and friends, some felt that it held special meanings for themselves. However, it is important to note that it never appeared as if there was only one reason why a couple chose to marry. That is, it wasn't strictly political or strictly symbolic of their relationship. Rather, marriage carried multiple and complex meanings for individuals, regardless of age, race/ethnicity, or gender.

In addition to the three white couples that were married, three additional couples were involved in Domestic Partnerships. Of the three couples, two felt that a domestic partnership was a great way to receive various benefits (although in their opinions, not enough benefits). Sylvia 53, and Fionna, 65, reported that they entered a domestic partnership for the legal and health benefits provided by Fionna's employer. Fionna claims that,

We obtained a domestic partnership for medical insurance. We put her on my insurance. It was for legal stuff; otherwise we wouldn't have done it. But I'm stuck with her anyways, so it works...that is until she finds a girl who looks like Jennifer Lopez. Then suddenly we are just pals again [laugh].

In fact, both Fiona and Sylvia report that they have no interest in getting married. Both women feel as if marriage is not a necessary element for legitimizing a relationship or measuring the strength of their commitment to one another. Fiona responds, “I mean, I think people should be married if they want to be married. I hear people say they feel different when they are married, but I don’t feel less committed to Sylvia than I did to my husband.” Fiona has a slightly more opinionated view of marriage, suggesting that marriage is really an American cultural construct that has no real meaning:

I don’t think being married is a particularly big achievement in life. I’m not very thrilled about the idea and, in a way, I don’t understand people’s obsession with marriage...we are European. We are different. You know where is the difference? The difference is that in Europe the priority of kids was study, study, study, study, do something with your life, get a job, then all that stuff. Here, I see it start from an early age, get married, family, get married, family! Girls are obsessed with weddings. It is terrible!

For both Sylvia and Fiona, marriage has little importance other than as a means to obtain legal benefits. As a result, they feel a domestic partnership is sufficient to achieve this task.

Lynn, 34, and Allison, 32, had a somewhat different perspective on marriage. Lynn and Allison (white) obtained a domestic partnership in 2005 and, although they had talked about marriage in the five-month legal period in 2008, they chose not to marry. This decision was primarily based friends that had been married in San Francisco in

2005, only to have their marriage annulled by the state of California. Rather than experience something similar, Lynn and Allison decided not to marry. Through their interview they gave some indication that it is a decision they now regret. There is also apprehension to marry due to their highly religious family members. As Lynn describes,

We've talked about the ceremony a lot. It's hard because we have family members who pretty much explicitly said they would not come or that they would have to pray about whether or not they should come. I guess at this point, yes, we would definitely have a ceremony it is just a question of how expansive it would be. It is hard to think in terms of what our sisters have done with their marriages, knowing that the scale wouldn't be anything close to that.

In this case, Lynn and Allison do have a desire to marry and have a ceremony. However their religious ties have them questioning the type of ceremony they would be able have (in comparison to their sisters' weddings) and familial involvement in the ceremony.

Lynn and Allison would not be able to marry by church. Although they report members of their immediate families have become increasing supportive of their relationship, they doubted that their families would be supportive financially, through involvement/planning or in attendance at their wedding.

Additionally, during Allison's interview, she expressed concern about the legal rights they would actually have. Although they are in a domestic partnership, she worries about the possibility that one of them will be critically injured while traveling to a different state or country. Allison says,

My main worry with legal issues is that we don't have a living will and that I am very worried that if something were to happen to her or something were to happen to me, I don't have the right to say what happens next as her domestic partner. I would be very concerned about a hospital or institution saying I am not the next of kin. That is a huge concern I have, next of kin. We need to get a living will then I won't be worried about that.

For Allison, marriage is more than a ceremony or commitment to one another. A heterosexual marriage is the only marital outcome that would allow benefits to cross California borders and give them truly equal benefits. Instead, she worries about drafting a living will to obtain the benefits that are lacking from their domestic partnership.

The Partnered

The majority of the Latino sample (thirteen) were involved in committed relationships without having either a domestic partnership or being married. This discrepancy may again be due to the fact that the Latino sample was significantly younger than the white sample. However, the amount of respondents who were able to debate the potential of marriage or domestic partnerships gives a nice contrast to those who had already made the decision. Many of these respondents reported equally complex feelings about marriage, domestic partnership, and remaining in a committed relationship. Some discussed the political and social implications, as well as the symbolic meanings of these various kinds of relationships for members of their family of origin and for themselves. Both Anglo and Latino respondents who were partnered openly

discussed their feelings about marriage and domestic partnerships in the state of California.

One white respondent felt that marriage and domestic partnerships were a huge life decision. Growing up in a conservative Christian household, Corey, 28 holds ideals about marriage that involve meanings, values, and commitments. As he says,

I am one that if I get married I want it to last for life. I'm not one of those who would easily consider divorce. I'm not gung-ho on jumping into it.

Out of anyone that I've ever dated, he would be the one. But, as of right now, it's just not really in my head. I don't know though. He wants to get married and it has only been two years. I feel like it is still too soon. I

can't complain about the relationship, but I'm not there yet.

Corey was perhaps the only respondent who discussed marriage in this respect. He further comments that he would be open to marriage and a ceremony, but seems to feel as if marriage carries heavy meanings with it and he is not yet ready for that level of commitment.

Oedi, also part of the Anglo sample, reported that he would like a wedding in the future. Oedi indicated that he would like to be legally married and have a large ceremony to invite friends and family and have a wonderful time celebrating their life together. His partner had recently asked him to sign a domestic partnership agreement and to celebrate this with a ceremony. However, he indicated that he did not want to get married if it was simply a symbolic commitment ceremony (he refers to this as a "hand-fastening"). This

was a realization he seemed to come to only while discussing his feelings during the interview:

Wow, it could just be a commitment ceremony! But I want it [to be] legal, I want the [legal] paper. I want it to be official and real. I want to be Mr. so and so. I never imagined before that I would want to be a Mister anything. You know, you're right, that is really, really strange because I would want a ceremony. But, yeah, so why wouldn't I want to have a hand fastening? That's weird!

During the interview, Oedi realized that marriage, ceremonies, and family commitment meant more to him than just legal benefits, paperwork, or showing family members and friends that he and his partner were committed to each other. Rather, Oedi had a conception of a wedding/marriage that was tied to the legal meaning that currently only benefits heterosexual couples in the state of California. In this sense, his refusal to enter a domestic partnership or engage in a commitment ceremony was a political statement. His response was similar to Hull's (2006) study on legal and cultural meanings of same-sex marriage. For Oedi, marriage itself is a political statement that should grant he and his partner legal and financial benefits, as well as legitimacy. Consequently, he does not seem to see a ceremony, which may carry cultural legitimacy, as carrying the same meanings as a marriage legally recognized by the state.

Latino respondent, John (29) is currently in a committed relationship but feels as though marriage may not be a possibility due to legal restrictions. Although John

expresses his desire to marry his current partner, John was previously married and had extremely mixed feelings about his motives to marry his first husband. John:

I most definitely would. But because it is illegal in Washington State, I am not as eager. When I was previously married, [it was] during the time when they started challenging it in San Francisco.... So even though we kind of knew that it would end up being overturned, most likely, we wanted to be a part of it. We went and got married in Portland when marriage licenses were being issued. Whereas now, since it is not as historic and it's not legally recognized, I am not as eager.

For John, the strength of his relationship with his current partner is not predicated on marriage, but rather on the current emotional bond they share. Instead, marriage is strictly seen as a means of obtaining legal benefits and proclaiming a certain legal status within the state. His lack of eagerness to marry could be viewed as a political statement. He is expressing his desire for same-sex married couples to be given the same legal rights as heterosexual ones and views same-sex marriage outside of the law as inferior.

The concept of marriage as something that affirms mainstream ideology was on the minds of many other respondents. Kioko, one of the youngest Latino participants in the sample, saw marriage as an affirmation of mainstream cultural expectations. She was very optimistic,

Marriage isn't total[ly] necessary, but I like the idea of it. I've always wanted to get married. I think it would be nice to say "I want to be with you for the rest of my life." I think that is pretty. It is a big step to say that

there is no doubt of my mind that I would ever leave you. And of course all the legal benefits to being married.

For Kioko, marriage appears to be largely symbolic. It is something that affirms a connection or commitment to one's partner. However, she comments that marriage is not entirely necessary, but does provide legal benefits.

The disjuncture between marriage as something symbolic and as something that is not entirely necessary but provides legal benefits was also present in other participants' responses. Latino respondent, Mario, 31, also struggles with the symbolic meaning of marriage. During our conversation Mario begins with talking about marriage as something that affirms traditional cultural expectations:

I don't really feel people, even heterosexual couples, should live by societal expectations. It depends on who you are and what kind of couple you are. As long as everything is good between the two of you, then that is between the two of you. I don't think anybody else has a say.

However, he later questions the legitimacy of cultural expectations for queers:

We've talked about it, but more so the marriage than the domestic partnership. But we always play around with who is going to give who the ring. I mean, we grow up without any real models or role models for dating, or going out. So we pretty much just play it by ear. And I think every gay relationship is different. And then we didn't see the role models on TV until recently in the movies and everything. So that all has an effect on the decision-making.

In this sense, marriage between two men appears to be discussed as something that goes beyond cultural expectations, especially those regarding gender roles within romantic relationships. That is, gender roles and expectations within same-sex relationships are not as clear-cut as they are for heterosexual relationships. Perhaps this desire to have legal rights without a “cultural expectation” may be the reason this couple is considering a domestic partnership. His discussion on the lack of role models for queer individuals is also reminiscent of Hequenbourg’s (2004) conception of marital ceremonies as a way to normalize an unscripted life or fit current definitions of family. It appears that Mario wants to get married even though it isn’t expected. He concludes:

We don’t feel like there is any real expectation for us because we don’t have to get married. We would love to one day. We want a beach wedding. We love the beach! We would definitely want everyone to be barefoot. We don’t know what beach yet, but it is what we want. We haven’t decided if I will be wearing white or he will be wearing black, but we will both be wearing pants and a dress shirt.

Mario and his partner are still envisioning their ideal marital ceremony, but their plans for a ‘barefoot’ wedding in formal attire, combines both conventional and unconventional elements. In contrast, respondent Vicki, feels that marriage is something that largely affirms a mainstream cultural ideology:

I’ve always been pretty ambivalent about the whole marriage thing. There is a lot of stuff in terms of tradition that seems really silly to me. And, you know, there are parts of it that I could approach from a political standpoint

and talk about it in terms of an institution, but even on a real basic level it seems so silly to spend all that money. I have always thought that if I got married I would have a big ole' casual party. And I feel the same way about my funeral. It's just the way I look at things. Things that blindly follow tradition don't make sense.

For Vicki, issues surrounding a traditional marriage are not only problematic for queer couples, but all couples in general. However, it is difficult to determine whether her perception of traditional marriage is entirely devoid of political ideology.

Lastly, two Latinos felt that, rather than marriage, a domestic partnership was the next logical step in their relationship. Emily responds:

I do want to get married...I think eventually that it is going to happen. But, for now, we've been talking about just doing something to further strengthen our bond. So, to become more serious, the next step would be to get a [domestic] partnership. Just to have a legally binding thing. That is what we think about in the near future. And eventually I'm sure we will want to think about getting married.

In this case, a domestic partnership is seen as something both legal as well as symbolic through her assertion that it will strengthen the bond between her and her partner. For Jesus, a domestic partnership is also seen as a step in the process of strengthening their relationship:

We were recently involved in a car wreck, nothing major, but it got me to thinking. "Honey, what is going to happen? What if? I certainly am going

to want you to be there every step of the way.” My parents are important to me, but he is my life. I honestly think that we need to start thinking about that and he is. He’s older than I am, he is 45, and so we are definitely thinking about it as the next logical step.

While Emily sees domestic partnership as the next logical step, Jesus also recognizes the legal protection that will be given to him and his partner as a result of a domestic partnership. For both, it is a logical next step in their respective relationships, but Emily tends to see it as something more symbolic than Jesus. In fact, Jesus feels that it is not a domestic partnership or marriage that binds or legitimizes a relationship, but rather a declaration to friends and family of the seriousness of their relationship.

Once we were moved [in together] we talked more about what it means to be in a committed relationship. We started with him introducing his friends and me introducing my friends. Then hosting housewarmings. We then told our friends who are in long-term committed relationships that this is what we wanted.

While Jesus is still open to the possibility of marriage, he feels his relationship is stable, strong, and not lacking any symbolic traditional understandings of a partnership based on mainstream cultural ideology.

My sample of thirty respondents provides interesting insight into the meanings gay and lesbian individuals carry with such terms as marriage, wedding, ceremony, and domestic partnership. Domestic partnerships, marriage and ceremonies were discussed as a form of constructing family life. Such ceremonies are a means to situation bonds,

confirm identities (LGBT, ethnic), make a statement of commitment to God, normalize an unscripted life, and to either affirm or reject mainstream culture (Hequenbourg 2001; Lewin 1998). Among both Latino and white respondents, the meaning of weddings, marriage, and domestic partnership appear to be complex and multifaceted. While some did feel that marriage/weddings were important to establish their relationship with their partner or make a statement to their families of origin, society or God, not one respondent had a simple, distinct meaning of marriage. Of those that were legally married in the state of California, respondents noted that they married for a combination of social and familial reasons. Those who entered into a legal domestic partnership also had complex stories of the meaning behind their decisions. Although the most common reason for obtaining a domestic partnership was to gain legal benefits, one couple did also indicate that they might consider marriage in the future, and several saw it as a stepping-stone to full marriage.

Of those who were not involved in a domestic partnership or marriage, many found the decision to marry, not marry, establish a domestic partnership, or not establish a domestic partnership, rather complex. White respondents who were partnered and living together varied in how they approached these questions compared to Latinos. Two white men both noted that they carried somewhat traditional values associated with a “heterosexual” marriage. One respondent indicated that he had turned down his partner’s request to establish a legal domestic partnership because he wanted the legal marriage, ceremony, and everything that should come with a typical heterosexual marriage.

Among the Latino sample, there appeared to be a greater tendency to struggle with the conception of wanting a somewhat traditional heterosexual image of a wedding ceremony and negatively judging the institution of marriage. Latino respondents' youth and university attendance might have contributed to their greater skepticism of the institution of marriage compared to the white respondents, who tended to be older and no longer students. The Latino sample also tended to be more politically involved in LGBT issues than white respondents, with nearly half of the Latino sample active within an LGBT organization. Only two of the fifteen Anglo respondents in this study reported involvement with an LGBT organization.

Most importantly, the Latino and Anglo samples have very similar perceptions and meanings of marriage, domestic partnerships and long term committed relationships. Compared to whites, Latinos had no greater tendency to desire marriage or domestic partnership. In fact, among this sample, Latinos were more apt to question the institution of marriage than whites. It appears that for queers, in general, marriage, weddings, and domestic partnerships carry heavy meanings and connotations that are internally debated as well as questioned in larger society. Future research in this area should concentrate on the question of whether the tendency to reject the mainstream (heterosexual) ideology of marriage is greater among queers than heterosexuals and how it varies across age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Also of interest are the ways in which restrictions on legalized marriage among same-sex couples shape such attitudes.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined three major aspects of family life among same-sex couples. Conceptions of what it means to be a good spouse reflect expectations for a successful partnership. Attitudes towards marriage and domestic partnership further reveal what it means to construct a family or legitimize a current relationship. Finally, household division of labor reveals the everyday practices of “doing family.” Together, these views and activities show the ways in which “family” is socially constructed in this sample of fifteen queer Latinos and fifteen queer white respondents.

Previous studies on heterosexual and same-sex couples have presented numerous characteristics on the makings of a good relationship and a good spouse. However, many of these studies were based on rank ordering of characteristics that researchers found to be important. My study took a slightly different approach by making the question open-ended. As a result, respondents typically described characteristics of their partner that solely reflected personality traits pertinent to a strong relationship. Not a single respondent mentioned parenting skills, commitment to God, or sexual satisfaction during the interview. Rather, respondents focused on such traits as communication, support, and “being there” for one another. Both the Latino and Anglo respondents felt that proper communication was key to a strong relationship and a good spouse.

Small differences in respondents’ answers were found between the Latino and white samples. Most notably was the higher number of Latinos who reported honesty and trust as a main characteristic of a good spouse. It is highly possible that the concern with trusting one’s partner was discussed within the Latino sample due to their average age. In

fact, one Latino respondent, age 19, reported that he was a somewhat jealous person and had been struggling with trust issues. Latinos were also more likely to characterize emotional and physical support as a desirable characteristic more frequently than the white sample. Conversely, the white sample discussed financial support more frequently than the Latino sample.

The second portion of this chapter examined “doing family” through an analysis of respondents’ reports of household division of labor and decision-making. My findings were consistent with previous studies, most notably Carrington (1999), which suggests gay and lesbian couples have a tendency to report equality in division of household labor and decision making, even when it may not be entirely equal. However, through an in-depth examination of the everyday household activities of respondents, I believe this study provides further insight into this phenomenon. In particular, the ways in which respondents rationalized equality despite reporting circumstances that did not entirely appear equal. This was mainly done through rationalizing previous responsibilities for household tasks, as well as reasoning previous responsibilities for designated tasks. The first of which was most apparent in the case of Annalise and Diane. Diane had recently been laid off and was responsible for nearly all household chores. However, both women reported that their household division of labor was egalitarian. In an attempt to diffuse the possible issue of inequality, Annalise did not discuss her job or commitments outside of work, but spoke of cleaning every inch of the house they shared together in the past. It was almost as if the attempt to diffuse the possibility of inequality meant that Annalise

was diffusing the power dynamic within the relationship by suggesting she was equally capable of maintaining the household—a typically female responsibility.

Several couples also seemed to suggest that their relationship was completely equal despite reporting that each partner was responsible for specific household tasks. A majority of the couples, white and Latino, reported that one partner was responsible for yard maintenance. Only one couple in both the Latino and Anglo sample reported sharing this particular household task. Yet, respondents who were not responsible for yard maintenance reported that they had been responsible for it in the past. Once again, it seems as if though the couples that reported designated task attempted to diffuse potential inequality by claiming it was also their responsibility at one point in time. In a sense, they were suggesting equality and breaking down possible (gendered) power dynamics within the relationship. Similarly, in cases where household tasks appeared to be designated to one partner, it was suggested that his/her partner enjoyed that specific task. Therefore, it became more about person choice and less about having a particular task assigned to one individual.

The Latino and Anglo samples were very similar in their answers regarding household division of labor and decision-making. Perhaps the only difference between the two samples was that the Latino sample appeared more vocal about potential inequalities. Although they were still less likely to specifically state, “I do more,” four of the Latino respondents reported that they felt their partners were unaware of just how much work they were doing at home. In one such instance, Madison, complained that her partner must think that tampons miraculously appear in their cupboard. Respondents from

the Anglo sample appeared to be more aware of the potential for inequality and addressed it as such. Therefore, there was a greater tendency among the Anglos to rationalize their partners income relative to their own, as well as the longer hours that their partner worked outside of the home, when suggesting that their relationship was egalitarian. These findings suggests that although a relative resource model, time available theory, or even a gender ideology model may seem to be reflected in this study, respondents were additionally concerned with rationalizing equality (or inequality) of housework. This seemed to go beyond issues of “fairness” as discussed by research on heterosexual couples, where one partner does not feel the relationship is unfair until she is responsible for more than 2/3 of household tasks (Rosenfield 1994).

Finally, this chapter ended with a thorough examination of the meanings attached to ceremony, marriage, and domestic partnership. Hull (2000) suggests that ceremonies are a way of culturally legitimizing a relationship when legal measures fail to do so. Her major findings suggest that (1) marriage is a powerful cultural model for same-sex couples even when legal rights are not recognized and (2) the cultural power of the law allows heterosexual couples legal benefits as well as social legitimacy that is denied to same-sex couples. Findings from my study suggest that marriage is indeed a powerful cultural model for same-sex couples, but marriage, ceremony, and domestic partnership tend to carry a variety of meanings for respondents. While many respondents in the Latino sample did feel that gay and lesbian couples should have the right to marry, many questioned marriage as an institution. In fact, only two Latinos in the study had married or entered a domestic partnership at the time of interview. Only one respondent, Carla,

had married by way of a relatively large church ceremony. Although her marriage was not recognized by the state of California, Carla's reasons for marrying were quite consistent with Hull's study. In some ways Carla was partaking in political action while culturally legitimizing her relationship with her partner.

Of the Anglo sample, only one respondent discussed a ceremony as something that should culturally and legally legitimize a relationship. That is, although his partner of two years has, on multiple occasions, suggested that they have a hand-fasting ceremony Odei feels as though the ceremony will not legally legitimize their relationship since he will not be able to access the benefits of a heterosexual couple. In this sense, political action is the choice to not have a ceremony.

Additionally, many of the Anglo respondents reported obtaining a domestic partnership as a means to acquire legal benefits. This was also the case with Latino respondent, Madison. However, even though one white couple had obtained a domestic partnership, she was still concerned that she would be denied legal rights in the event of an emergency or if there was perhaps a tragic accident while they were in another state. Her proposed solution was to acquiring a living will. In this sense, although there may be some cultural legitimacy acquired with a ceremony and legal legitimacy with a domestic partnership, there remains the potential to be denied legal legitimacy.

These results deviate from Hull's findings in that they are slightly more complicated due to the multiple possibilities of marriage, domestic partnership, or ceremony in the state of California. In fact, some were married legally (although not recognized in other states) and others were married, had a ceremony, but their marriage

was not recognized by the state of California. Some had been legally married but did not have a ceremony. Some had a domestic partnership, but no ceremony attached. Some had a domestic partnership with no ceremony. Others had a ceremony with no marriage or domestic partnership. Lastly, some did not marry, have a domestic partnership, or have a ceremony. This suggests that, in states with a continuing battle for marital equality, the process of marriage, domestic partnership and ceremonies may be more complicated than states that have not experienced this type of legal rollercoaster for marital rights. As a result of these findings, I suggest viable future research would be a comparison of the legal and cultural perceptions of marriage for same-sex couples in states that have granted marriages, domestic partnerships and civil unions and states that have not.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?

This dissertation provides a comparative study of fifteen Latinos and fifteen whites in self-identified committed same-sex relationships and examines the ways in which these individuals construct “family” in light of social and legal constraints. When I began this study in early 2010 I initially planned to focus solely on the experiences of Latinos. I had three main concerns: (1) current research on queer Latinos primarily focuses on Latino sexuality without exploring the ways that the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality affects their relationships with their families of origin and partner/spouses, (2) there was a need to discover how queer Latinos navigate their lives and identities within Latino families, and (3) academic literature lacks research that addresses queer Latino families, not just Latino families, queer families, *or* Latino sexuality. However, by only interviewing Latinos, my findings began to feel like they existed in a vacuum. I soon realized that the best course of action to understanding the everyday lives and experiences of Latinos was to also examine the experiences of other racial/ethnic groups. Additionally, I encounter a tremendous amount of difficulty recruiting Latino respondents, leaving me to question if I would find similar difficulties with other ethnic/racial groups. For the purpose of this study I included a sample of fifteen white respondents to gain a better sense of the lives, experiences, and challenges that queer people face in light of social and legal constraints and to put my findings on Latino same-sex couples into comparative perspective. As a result, I feel the data and findings discussed in this dissertation are much richer and compelling than I could have previously imagined.

In this study, I focused on three main aspects within the construction of “family” in everyday life of Latinos and white same-sex couples: (1) familial acceptance for current relationships, (2) the social construction of queer or queer/Latino identity, and (3) the meanings of coupling, romantic commitment, and family practices and division of household labor.

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 are dedicated to identity formation, with a particular focus on its intersectional nature. In particular, I examined how sexual identity and ethnic/racial identity were interwoven. Chapter 4 is dedicated to an examination of the everyday lives of queer people in long-term committed relationships. A primary area of consideration in this study is the extent to which culture—American and Latino—and sexual identity are present in their lives or influence such concepts as what it means to be a good partner/spouse, patterns of division of household labor, and meanings attached to ceremonies (including weddings), domestic partnerships, and marriages.

Three common themes were found in Latinos’ discussions of their experiences as homosexuals: (1) Latinos tend to discuss initial lack of support for their same-sex relationship from their families of origin in relation to Latino culture—gender roles, traditional values, “machismo”, etc., (2) Latinos believed they faced a greater rejection from their cultural community than their Anglo counterpart, and (3) Latinos look to culture to explain difficulties establishing a queer Latino identity. Findings suggest that queer Latinos’ cultural and familial expectations shape their perceptions of the “coming out” process and familial acceptance for their sexuality. However, fears and anxieties Latinos expressed over social and familial acceptance of their romantic and sexual lives

were relatively similar to the stories told by the white sample. Similarly, Latino respondents tended to conflate homophobia with Latino culture and with Catholicism. One aspect of this study worth noting is the tendency for queer Latinos to not only conflate culture with religion, but also to automatically attribute incidences of gender discrimination, opposition to homosexuality, or familial rejection of partners/spouses to being Latino, being part of a “traditional Mexican (Latino) family” or to “machismo.” In this sense, being part of a Latino family does indeed carry expectations of religious-based homophobia, traditional gender roles, strict rules, and adherence to authority. Even in situations where individuals felt their families did not fit the Latino family stereotype, they were quick to specify that their family was atypical or “Americanized.” I found that conceptions of a “traditional Latino family,” “machismo,” and other cultural perceptions of the Latino culture lead queer Latinos to believe they will not be accepted, that their familial acceptance process is more difficult than that of their Anglo counterparts, or that they may face greater opposition from their church or community—regardless of how similar their stories may be to these Anglo counterparts.

The first two chapters also provided three major findings regarding Anglos’ experiences: (1) many whites faced homophobia and social stigmas related to their sexual orientation upon initially coming out to members of their families of origin, (2) whites did not blame homophobia found in American culture for initial rejection or lack of acceptance for their sexual orientation from members of their families of origin, therefore they did not perceive that culture was key in forming a sexual identity, and (3) whites did not always conflate American culture with religion or homophobia as an imperative of

religion, thereby allowing them to be more open to religious practices. Findings show that queer Anglos often faced a difficult coming out process that sometimes lasted for decades before acceptance was gained from specific family members. However, among white respondents, there appeared to be a greater tendency to expedite the coming out process by demanding acceptance from family members (i.e. demanding that a partner be invited to Christmas dinner). Anglos also reported being estranged from family members who refused to accept their sexual orientation or their relationship with their current partner. Neither of these experiences was reported among Latino interviewees. Instead Latinos remained closely tied to their families but did not talk about their partners. Many Latino respondents referred to this as a “don’t ask, don’t tell period.” Anglos also reported a tendency to seek support and acceptance from LGBT communities, with many moving into gay friendly neighborhood, such as West Hollywood, or finding roommates that were also queer.

Additionally, I found that queer Anglos who did not find acceptance from their families of origin did not blame American culture, but rather sought refuge in the LGBT community, or in religion. In fact, many of the Anglos involved in this sample claimed a religious affiliation despite the fact that their churches rejected homosexuality. I believe this tendency to be open to religion is a result of being able to disconnect homophobia from religion as well as disconnect religion from American culture. This is in contrast to the Latino respondents’ tendency to conflate culture with religion and thus, homophobia, resulting in reported detachment from organized religion.

Chapter 4 examined three major aspects of family life among same-sex couples. It began with an examination of the conceptions of what it means to be a good partner or spouse, followed with a discussion of decision-making and division of household labor for same-sex couples, and ended with attitudes towards marriage and domestic partnership. Together, these views and activities show the ways in which “family” is socially constructed in this sample of fifteen queer Latinos and fifteen queer white respondents.

Major findings from this chapter propose that conceptions of marriage, conception of family and conceptions of being in a healthy relationship are quite similar for Latinos and whites. This study finds that consistent with previous studies on division of household labor, respondents tended to suggest that their relationships were egalitarian despite reporting circumstances that did not appear entirely equal. Both Latino and white respondents appeared to rationalize potential inequality in three main ways, (1) rationalizing previous responsibility for all household tasks, (2) rationalizing previous responsibility for designated tasks, and (3) rationalizing partner’s enjoyment of a designated task. All three appeared to be mechanisms for diffusing tension caused by unequal division of household labor or for neutralizing possible power differentials caused by wage earning gaps between the couple or “gendered” tasks being designated to one partner.

Chapter 4 concludes with a discussion of ceremonies, marriage and domestic partnership in relationship to “doing family”. Findings suggest that meanings of ceremony, marriage and domestic partnerships are particularly complicated for same-sex

couples in the state of California. Two couples (four respondents) in this study were legally married in the state of California. However, because there was no indication of how long the window would be open to marry, both had legally married but the rush to do so had prevented them from planning a ceremony. Similarly, one couple chose not to legally marry because they feared being put through the agony of the state repealing their marriage. Instead, the couple opted for a domestic partnership without a ceremony. They plan to have a ceremony sometime in the next few years. As is evident with just a few of my respondents experiences, marriage, domestic partnerships and ceremonies are more than simply choosing to conduct a ceremony to culturally legitimize a relationship when one cannot be legally granted. Instead, respondents seem to actively make “marital” decision based on multiple levels of legal, social, and cultural rationality.

One major finding as a result of this study, that I believe is a core contribution to current literature, is a discussion of the way that intersectionality influences the perception that different ethnic/racial groups may have of the coming out process and identity formation. My findings suggest that Latinos and whites in same-sex relationships have similar experiences with the coming out process and fear of rejection by family members. However, what may separate these two groups significantly is the tendency for Latinos to seek evidence or answers for this rejection within their culture. This is not to say that Latinos face an identical coming out process as non-Latino whites. This would be a grave overgeneralization. For Latinos, the perceived tension between sexual identity and cultural identity is very real and must be dealt with by LGBT organization and other

agencies designed to provide support for gay and lesbians in a different manner than non-Latinos.

We must acknowledge the perceived role of culture in this process. There are cultural meanings of “Latino” or Latino culture that are present in the minds of queer Latinos. However, culture is not the whole story. Both samples reported that they had similar difficulties in the coming out process. Cantú (1999) suggests that there are structural issues, rather than cultural issues at play. Respondents in this study may be facing structural forces that are automatically attributed to being from a Latino family or being a part of Latino culture. These may be religious based, economic, educational, or even demographic.

Of course, I am not arguing that the “coming out” process, identity formation, or the everyday lives are the same for all queer people. Acknowledging that queer whites report having just as difficult a time in the coming out process as Latinos, does not mean that cultural or structural differences have no effect on this process or how it is perceived and experienced. White and Latino participants responded to the challenge of this process differently. Anglos were more apt to demand acceptance or detach from their family of origin, reporting long periods of estrangement from specific family members. There is obviously a difference between the two samples in this respect. Additionally, I am not arguing that Latinos are responsible for their own oppression or inability to integrate their ethnic identity with their sexual identity. What many Latinos may be facing is a type of internalized racism that creates a tendency to “other” Latino culture. As a result, “othering” may have an effect on the way Latinos perceive the challenges they face in

their everyday lives. The lives and experiences of queer Anglos should not be considered as a measuring stick in which to compare the experiences of the Latino sample. To do so would be academic “othering” and only serve to reify stereotypes of Latino culture as backward, abnormal, and immensely traditional to a more progressive American culture. Rather, my study sought to give equal analysis and comparison of the experiences of both groups, in order to understand the everyday lives of gay and lesbians in light of social and legal constraints.

My findings suggest that Latino queers reify stereotypes of Latinos by assuming Latino culture and family members will be more homophobic than ‘American’ culture or white family members. This finding is particularly important because although current academic literature on Latino families has reported that the “traditional Latino family” and “machismo” are largely myths, Latinos still have a tendency to buy into these very stereotypes. Scholars should not “other” Latino culture by reifying these particular stereotypes, but it is equally important that we acknowledge that they do exist—to the extent that Latinos perceive them to be real. Researchers should acknowledge these differences in perception. Researchers should focus on sociostructural constraints as a cause of discrimination and feelings of isolation, but we should also acknowledge the role of culture and how queer Latinos perceive these problems and their causes.

As such, it is important to examine the structural differences that may be involved in identity construction and sense of belonging. The sociostructural factors leading to their current situation should be explored in greater detail and fleshed out to ensure that Latinos are not blaming their culture for the depression, stress, or negative well-being

they are experiencing during the process of acceptance by family members. Levels of stress, shame, and guilt may lead to further emotional problems or physical ailments. For instance, Savin-Williams' (2001) argues that emotional distress may lead to suicidal tendencies in queer Latino males, and Ryan et.al. (2009) suggest that familial rejection results in queer Latinos being 5.9 times more depressed, 8.4 times more likely to commit suicide, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior than peers who reported no or low levels of familial rejection. Furthermore, it may be imperative that LGBT organizations provide additional support for queer Latinos or simply be sensitive to their emotional needs. Latinos' perception of cultural difficulties and differences is real and should be addressed by LGBT centers to better help Latino members.

This study also has many implications for future research on queer people of color, particularly Latinos. When examining issues of cultural identity and intersectionality it is important that we do not reify or "other" specific cultures. However, when conducting empirical research it is also important to stay attune to respondents' perceptions about their culture. In this study, Latino respondents tended to perceive Latino culture in contrast to American culture. For researchers to deny such perceptions in fear of reinforcing racial/ethnic stereotypes is to deny the lived experience and perceptions of Latinos and other racial and ethnic minorities.

This dissertation also has implications for whites, particularly in response to critical race/critical whiteness studies. Doane (2003) contends,

The mainstream and normalization of whiteness has in turn had important implications for a white racial consciousness. Unlike members of the subordinate groups, whites are less likely to feel socially and culturally ‘different’ in their everyday experiences and much less likely to have experienced significant prejudice, discrimination or disadvantage as a result of their race” (7).

If whites are less likely to feel socially and culturally different, then the invisibility of whiteness may allow them to feel as if there is no “culture” by which to identify. That is, there are no cultural standards that serve as a basis for comparison. The normalcy of whiteness, the white privilege, and the invisibility of whiteness allows for white culture to remain unrecognized and unidentifiable.

Respondents in my sample experience a detachment of religion from American culture because there is no “culture” by which they can attach it to. Therefore, respondents are inactively discussing white privilege when they discuss religious ties. Similarly, they are discussing white privilege when they discuss finding support in the LGBT community when their families of origin are not supportive of their sexuality. White privilege, in this case, is enacted by identifying with a larger LGBT cultural community that is largely white. The influence of white privilege may also be present in white respondent’s discussion of discrimination. The Latino sample tended to report greater incidences of discrimination and homophobia, while white respondents reported few incidences. The only notable instance was an Anglo respondent whose car was vandalized over, what he believed, was a bumper sticker on Proposition 8. If white

respondents were less likely to experience prejudice, discrimination or disadvantage as a result of their race, they may not be as attune to such discrimination as a result of their sexuality. Future study should examine the extent to which “whiteness” is present and “white privilege” is enacted.

Limits of this study

There are, of course, various limitations of my study that are worth considering. As a married heterosexual Mexican-American, I was only a partial insider to one of the two groups that I was studying. This places me as an “insider” from an ethnic perspective for my Latino respondents, but an “outsider” based on my sexual orientation. I was even more of an outsider for my white respondents. This made recruiting interviewees difficult (Baca Zinn 1979; Collins 199, 2004; Naples 1996). Scholars such as Nancy Naples and Maxine Baca Zinn have reported difficulties in doing research on ethnic communities. Baca Zinn (1979) found that although she was a Chicana, she was not perceived as an insider due to her position as a researcher. In this case, she found that she had to prove her ethnic identity to her sampled community. I experienced a somewhat similar situation due to my inability to speak fluent Spanish. This also limited the kinds of respondents that I could include in my sample. However, an even greater difficulty with outsider/insider status arose from my heterosexual identity. In certain circumstances, I fear I was perceived as an outsider that was misinformed or had an agenda that was not in the best interest of the gay and lesbian community.

I found it extremely difficult to find queer Latinos who were willing to participate in this study. Recruiting and interviewing my sample of fifteen Latinos in same-sex

relationships took nearly one year, and finding Latino respondents over the age of 35 proved to be nearly impossible. Additionally, although University of California LGBT centers were tremendously helpful in the recruitment process of Latino respondents, my Latino sample inevitably ended up being much younger than my white sample as most respondents many respondents were college aged. While I did acquire initial interest from several Latinos of various ages, many of the Latinos over the age of 35 dropped out of the study prior to the interview. Three potential respondents indicated that they had been overwhelmed with work or family obligations; one respondent stated that he was no longer interested and one respondent did not answer her phone for a scheduled interview. Alternatively, the Anglo sample was much easier to recruit, taking slightly over three months to recruit and interview all fifteen participants. I was also able to interview a sample of Anglos with a greater age range than the Latino sample, with the youngest being 19 and oldest being 65. This made it difficult to compare older white with older Latino respondents or to understand the experiences of older Latinos. My inability to gather data from older generations of queer Latinos made it more difficult to fully understand how Latinos in same-sex couples divide household labor and childcare. However, the age discrepancy was taken into careful consideration when analyzing the results of this study.

As I did not interview a Latino respondent over the age of 35, it is difficult to give a definitive answer as to why this group may have been hesitant to participate. I can only speculate that younger individuals and those in college were more receptive to being part of a research study, especially one carried out by a young researcher. Older generations

may be less receptive to discussing their private lives with a complete stranger and young scholar. Many of the Latino respondents did report that they felt there was a heavy distinction between their sexual identification and that of older generations. For example, one Latina reported that her lesbian aunt still referred to her long-term partner as her “friend”. In this instance, a younger Latino felt that older generations of queer Latinos were still wary of sexual identification and being completely “out”. My inexperience in interviewing also made it more difficult to establish as much rapport with my initial interviewees as later ones. As I became more comfortable with conducting interviews, I seemed to build a greater rapport with later participants in the study. Later respondents (primarily white respondents) also consented to face-to-face interviews, which made building rapport with them easier. As a result, I seemed to gain greater acceptance from later informants and these respondents were more likely to refer me to other friends in their social networks compared to my initial informants.

Further involvement with local LGBT centers, agencies, and organizations that are sensitive to the needs of queer Latinos might have helped me to recruit more queer Latinos. I believe gathering the trust of a population of individuals via visibility within their community may be key to gaining the consent of a sample that may not be responsive to, or even wary of, academic research. I was able to gain greater initial trust among my white informants and they were more willing to refer me to other potential respondents.

An additional limitation in this study also arises from another important difference between my two groups of respondents. Slightly less than half (6 of 15) the

Latino respondents resided in the greater Los Angeles area, while the remaining nine Latinos resided in the Inland Empire. In contrast, all white respondents resided in the Inland Empire. Only one of the Latino respondents residing in the greater Los Angeles area reported living in a “gay friendly” neighborhood, while three of the Latino respondents lived in East Los Angeles, a primarily Latino community that they believed was not accommodating to homosexuality. As a result, the Latino respondents that lived in primarily Latino communities appeared to be more conscious of evidence of homophobia or discrimination than those who lived in gay friendly neighborhoods. For instance, six of my Anglo respondents resided in a three-mile radius of one another. Among the first five interviewees very few incidences of discrimination were reported. Upon interviewing the final respondent that lived in this area, she informed me that her community was largely gay and lesbian friendly with a couple on living in “every two or three houses”. As a result, respondents who lived in such areas felt more comfortable and inevitably either did not run across incidences of homophobia or discrimination, or they are less aware of such incidences.

A final shortcoming of this study was that I did not ask white respondents to address issues of “whiteness,” benefits of being a queer white, or the invisibility of “white” in the gay and lesbian community. I believe addressing these issues with respondents would have allowed for greater comparison with the Latino sample, particularly in recognizing the ways in which homophobia in American society has affected their lives socially, legally, and culturally.

Avenues for future research

My research focused on the experiences of Latinos and Anglos in same-sex relationships within California. Future study in this area should examine the experiences of other same-sex couples within other racial and ethnic groups and in different states and countries. Of particular interest would be an examination of the integration of ethnic/racial identity and sexual identity for African American and Asian Americans in the United States. It would be important to address to what extent each racial/ethnic group felt their race/culture had influenced the response of their families of origin to their sexual orientation, the coming out process, or their relationship with their partners. Particularly, it would be important to identify if, like Latinos, other racial/ethnic minorities attribute acceptance or rejection by their families of origin to their ethnic culture rather than to homophobia within the broader national culture.

Another possible avenue for future research would be to examine potential generational differences of Latinos and if perceptions of Latino culture or American culture changed by generation. Do newly immigrated Latinos expect more opposition or less opposition to their sexuality from their families of origin? Do second and third generation Latinos tend to “other” Latino culture more so than first generations, 1.5 generations or newly immigrated Latinos? Do second and third generation queer Latino families have more or less egalitarian households than first generation, 1.5 generation, or newly immigrated Latinos? Previous literature may suggest that newly immigrated Latinos may face greater challenges as they may feel as outsiders within the Latino

community or even among queer Latinos in the United States. Such questions were not addressed in this study because information was not collected on immigration status.

Greater research is also needed on the role of religion and religiosity of respondents in shaping the identities and family lives of gays and lesbians in same-sex couples. As part of this study, I interviewed three Mormons who left the church shortly after coming out to their friends and family. What was most notable about this small sample was the dedication that they had to their faith despite the Mormon Church's opposition to homosexuality. In fact, two of the respondents felt a deep connection to the church and regretted that they could no longer be part of it. This response was quite different than that of the Latinos in the sample who equated Latino culture with religion and religion with homophobia. Not a single Catholic respondent reported that they were a part of the church or had any desire to be part of a church in the future. I believe there is potential for a rich and compelling study of the strength of religiosity among queers of different faith backgrounds. Why might some gays and lesbians remain tied to particular religious institutions while others reject those institutions and how do various religious institutions respond to sexual diversity? How does religious identity intersect with sexual identity? Does the process of sexual identity formation and the coming out process vary across religious backgrounds? How do queer people's conceptions of family formation (marriage and children) vary across religious affiliations? These are all questions that are worth exploring.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table 1. “What do you think it means to be a good partner or spouse?”

<i>Responses</i>	<i>White Respondents</i>	<i>Latino Respondents</i>
Have Open Communication	4*	6*
Be Honest with One Another	0	5*
Be Yourself/ Comfortable With One Another	1	5*
Be there for Each Other	4*	4*
Supportive of One Another	4*	4*
Have Faith in One Another	0	4*
Trusting of One Another	0	3
Loyal	1	3
Compliment Each Other/ Balance Each Other Out	1	2
Individually Independent	3*	2
Committed to One Another	0	2
Respectful of One Another	0	2
Considerate of One Another/Understanding	1	2
Caring/loving	4*	2
Patient With One Another	2	1
Able to Learn From One Another	0	1
Positive Regard for Each Others Well-being	1	1
Thoughtful	2	1
Be Each other’s Best Friend	0	1
Physical Attraction	2	0
Compromise	2	0
Good Sense of Humor	2	0

Note: * denotes top five answers for each sample.

Table 2a: Latino Respondents, Basic Information, Part 1 of 2

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Partner's Age</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Salary</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Prior Marriage</i>	<i>Length of relationship</i>	<i>Have child</i>	<i>Want child with current partner</i>	<i>Want child in future</i>
George (M)	18	19	Chicano	Currently Enrolled in B.A. program	Full-Time Student \$0	Partnered, Not living together	No	3 months	No	Unsure	Yes
Jesus (M)	36	45	Chicano	M.B.A., M.A.	\$37,800	Partnered, living together	No	1 year	No	No	Unsure
Mario (M)	31	---	Colombian American	B.A.	\$41,000	Partnered, not living together	No	5 years	No	Yes	Yes
Vicki (F)	31	28	Chicano	B.A.	\$24,000	Partnered, Living together	No	2 years	No	Yes	Yes
Robin (F)	28	31	Puerto Rican American	A.A.	\$29,000	Partnered, Living Together	No	2 years	No	Yes	Yes
Alfonso (M)	18	19	Chicano	Currently Enrolled in a B.A. program	Full-Time Student \$0	Partnered, Not living together	No	9 months	No	Unsure	Yes
Carla (F)	31	33	Chicano El Salvadorian	A.A.	---	Married, Living together	No	16 years	No	Yes	Yes
Angie (F)	21	23	Chicano	Currently Enrolled in a B.A. program	Full-Time Student PT \$6,000	Partnered, Living together	No	4 years	No	Unsure	Yes

Table 2b: Latino Respondents, Basic Information, Part 2 of 2

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Partner's Age</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Salary</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Prior Marriage</i>	<i>Length of relationship</i>	<i>Have child</i>	<i>Want child with current partner</i>	<i>Want child in future</i>
Emily (F)	26	25	Chicano	M.A.	\$25,000	Partnered, Living together	No	3 years	No	Unsure	Unsure
Kathleen (F)	25	26	Chicano	Some College	\$20,000	Partnered, Living together	No	3 years	No	Yes	Yes
Madison (F)	33	33	Chicano Guatemalan	Currently Enrolled in a B.A. Program	Full-Time Student PT \$7,000	Domestic Partnership	No	14 years	No	Unsure	Unsure
John (M)	29	---	Chicano	M.A.	\$58,000	Partnered, Living together	No	2 years	Yes	Yes	Yes
Susie (F)	22	20	Chicano	Currently Enrolled in B.A. Program	Full-Time Student \$0	Partnered, Not Living together	No	8 months	No	Yes	Yes
Kioko (F)	20	22	Chicano Japanese American	Currently Enrolled in B.A. Program	Full-Time Student \$0	Partnered, Not Living Together	No	8 months	No	Yes	Yes
Elle (F)	21	---	Chicano	Currently Enrolled in a B.A. Program	Full-Time Student PT \$7,000	Partnered, Living Together	No	1.5 years	No	Yes	Yes

--- undisclosed information

Table 3a: White Respondents, Basic Information, Part 1 of 2

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Partner's Age</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Salary</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Prior Marriage</i>	<i>Length of relationship</i>	<i>Have child</i>	<i>Want child with current partner</i>	<i>Want child in future</i>
Tomas (M)	19	18	White/Japanese	Currently Enrolled in B.A program	Full-Time Student \$0	Partnered, Not living together	No	3 months	No	Unsure	Yes
Corey (M)	28	38	White	B.A.	\$50,000 +	Partnered, living together	No	2 year	No	Yes	Yes
Oedi (M)	46	40	White	High School Diploma	\$26,000	Partnered, living together	No	2 years	No Yes (partner)	No	No
Alan (M)	40	28	White	M.A., Currently Enrolled in PhD program	\$26,000	Married	Yes	8 years	Yes	No	No
Darren (M)	28	40	White	Some College	Un-employed	Married	No	8 years	No Yes (partner)	No	No
Peggy (F)	55	57	White	Doctorate	\$83,000	Domestic Partnership	Yes	11 years	Yes (partner) Yes (adopted together)	No	No
Cheryl (F)	57	55	White	Professional Degree	\$55,000	Domestic Partnership	Yes	11 years	Yes (partner) Yes (adopted together)	No	No
Fionna (F)	65	53	White/English	Professional Degree	\$56,000	Domestic Partnership	Yes	11 years	Yes (partner) Yes (partner)	No	No

Table 3b: White Respondents, Basic Information, Part 2 of 2

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Partner's Age</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Salary</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Prior Marriage</i>	<i>Length of relationship</i>	<i>Have child</i>	<i>Want child with current partner</i>	<i>Want child in future</i>
Silvia (F)	53	65	White/Serbian	Professional Degree	\$35,000	Domestic Partnership	No	11 years	Yes Yes (partner)	No	No
Diane (F)	51	48	White	Some College	\$90,000	Married	No	9 years	No	No	No
Annalise (F)	48	51	White	Currently Enrolled in a B.A. Program	Full-Time Student \$0	Married	Yes	9 years	No	No	No
Bobbi (F)	48	55	White	Professional Degree	\$90,000	Married	Yes	7 years	No	Yes	Unsure
Lisa (F)	55	48	White	Married	Full-Time Student \$0	Married	Yes	7 years	No	Unsure	Unsure
Lynn (F)	32	34	White	Professional Degree, M.S.W	\$30,000	Domestic Partnership	No	8 years	No	Unsure	Unsure
Allison (F)	34	32	White	Professional Degree, PhD	\$60,000	Domestic Partnership	No	8 years	No	Unsure	Unsure

--- undisclosed information

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

Purpose: I am a graduate student of Sociology who is writing a dissertation that examines the everyday life of same-sex couples in light of social and legal constraints.

Eligibility: In order to be part of this study, participants must either be:

(1) Latino/Chicano

(2) Anglo/White *and* have a partner who is Anglo/White

All participants must be in a self-identified committed same-sex relationship and desire a potentially life-long partnership.

Participation: Participants should be able to dedicate approximately 1 hour of their time to a short questionnaire and interview. Due to geographical constraints, all interviews will be conducted by telephone. Participants will be asked to talk about themselves, their families of origin, their ethnicity and their relationship with their partner.

Contact: If you are interested in this study, know anyone who may be interested, or have any questions, please contact Sandra Loughrin at smloughrin@gmail.com or (408) 657-9337. Sandra Loughrin is a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Riverside.

Atención: Necesito Participantes de Investigación

Propósito: Soy una estudiante de postgrado de Sociología. Estoy escribiendo mi disertación sobre la vida cotidiana de las parejas del mismo-sexo Latinos/ Chicanos que se enfrentan a obstáculos sociales y legales.

Elegibilidad: Los participantes deben ser Latinos/Chicanos o que tengan una pareja que es Latina/Chicana. Todos los participantes deben estar en una relación de compromiso o que sean una pareja de larga duración.

Participación: La participación requiere de un breve cuestionario, seguido por una entrevista aproximadamente de una hora.

Contacto: Si estas interesado en participar en este estudio, por favor contactar con Sandra Loughrin al (408) 657-9337 o por email a smloughrin@gmail.com. Sandra Loughrin es una estudiante de doctorado en la Universidad de California, Riverside.

Appendix C: Research Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of California at Riverside. In fulfillment of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on the family life of same-sex Latino/Chicano and Anglo/Caucasian couples. As part of the research process, I will be conducting interviews in order to collect your thoughts on marriage, family, and childbirth and/or adoption.

Each interview will last between 45 minutes and 1 hour. I will digitally record each interview and transcribe it at a later time. Your name and any personal information I obtain will remain entirely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used within the dissertation in instances where I refer to any statements or comments you have made.

If any questions during the interview make you feel uncomfortable or seem invasive, you can decline to answer. There is also no reward for participating in this study and no penalty for withdrawing. If you feel as if participating in this study is not for you, you can withdraw at any time.

I appreciate your interest in this study. If you are interested in participating or have any question please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sandra Loughrin

Doctoral Candidate, Sociology Department
University of California, Riverside
Phone: 408.657.9337
smloughrin@gmail.com

Appendix D: Respondent Questionnaire

Name _____

Demographics

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your sex? Male Female
3. What is your ethnicity? _____
4. What is your highest level of education?
 High School Diploma
 Associates Degree
 Some College
 Bachelor's Degree
 Professional Degree
5. What is your approximate annual income? \$ _____

Partnership

6. What is your current marital status?
 Partnered
 Domestic Partnership
 Married
7. Do you live with your current partner? Yes No
8. Approximately how long have you and your partner been a couple?

9. Have you ever been married before? Yes No

Children

10. Do you currently have children? (If No, skip to question 11) Yes No
 - a. Are you the primary guardian? Yes No
 - b. How many children do you have? _____

c. How many children in your home are under the age of 18? _____

d. Is your child/children from a previous relationship? Yes No

e. Did you birth/adopt your child in your current relationship? Yes No

11. Would you like to have a child with your current partner?

Yes No Unsure

12. Would you like to have a child in the future?

Yes No Unsure

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Family of Origin

1. Tell me a little bit about your family. Parents, siblings. Tell me about your childhood, growing up, etc.
2. Do you think your childhood and family was ideal? *If so*, why? How is it preferable to alternatives? *If not*, why not? What would you prefer as an ideal family?
3. What challenges have you encountered or do you experience associated with creating and maintaining your family?
4. How does your family of origin (i.e., mother, father, siblings) feel about your relationship with _____? Are they supportive of you as a couple or not supportive of your relationship? Please provide specific examples [of their support or lack of support]? How does your family of origin feel about your children (or your desire to have or not have children)?
5. Repeat question #18 for their in-laws.
6. Who has provided you the most support as a family? Who has provided you the least support as a family? Please give specific examples of how this support or lack of support was expressed.
7. What do you consider to be the best things about being part of a family?

Marriage /Domestic Partnership/ Partnering

8. From my initial personal information form, I see here that you and your partner are
 - (a) *married*. What was this process like? What type of wedding was it? Why did you decide to do it this way?
 - (b) in a *domestic partnership*. What was this process like? Did you have any type of celebration with friends or family after you made it official?

(c) in a *long-term relationship*. Do you, as a couple, ever consider marriage or domestic partnership?

9. What do you think it means to be a good partner or spouse?

Household Division of Labor

10. Now let's talk a little about your day-to-day life. What is the division of household labor like in your household? Who is responsible for what?
11. Who tends to work more hours or spend more time outside of the home?
12. *If children [or other dependents, such as aging parents or younger siblings] are present in the home*—How is taking care of your child [or other dependent] split up? Who is responsible for what aspects of child/elder care?
13. Who typically does the decision making for your household? Who is typically responsible for making financial decisions such as purchasing large items or planning vacations?
14. Do you and your partner typically celebrate an anniversary? What does it typically entail?

Children

15. Do you plan on having children in the future? How do you plan to have children?
16. Do you feel children are an important addition to you and your couples' partnership?
17. What do you feel makes a good parent? Are there any parenting skills from your own parents that you hope to use with your child?
- a. *If children are present in the household*—How do you feel you measure up to these standards

Legal Issues

18. IF NOT INTERESTED IN MARRIAGE/DP: How do you feel about other same-sex couples wanting to marry or to form a domestic partnership?

19. Have you or any of your friends been affected by Proposition 8. What has been your experience as a Californian in this debate?

Race/Ethnicity

20. Okay, so you are Latino/Mexican/Chicano. Do you feel your ethnicity has influenced your relationship to _____?

21. Do you have any attachments to the Chicano/Latino community?

Discrimination

22. What do you consider to be the biggest challenges that you and your partner face as a same-sex couple?

23. Have you and your partner personally felt discriminated against because of your relationship? How, when, why?

24. Have you or your partner ever been discriminated against because of your sexual orientation? How, when, why?