

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Minerva Zayas for the degree of Master of Arts in Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies presented on April 28th, 2020.

Title: LGBTQ Latinx Student Activists and Leaders in the State of Oregon: A Preliminary Study.

Abstract approved: _____

Susan M. Shaw

Abstract

In 2016, the Oregon Community Foundation reported that twelve percent of Latinx folks graduated with their bachelor's and/or master's degree compared to the 31 percent of White counterparts (Latinos in Oregon Report, 2016). While Latinx students continue to be the largest minority in the United States, Latinx students enroll in colleges and universities at proportionately smaller numbers. Moreover, queer students often lack necessary support to succeed in academic and social settings within the university. Queer Latinx students find themselves multiply marginalized, particularly when they are campus activists and leaders who often experience frustration, exhaustion, and burnout in their attempts to address social inequality on campus. This study offers a preliminary look into the experiences and needs of queer Latinx student activists and leaders in Oregon and suggests areas for future research with this understudied population.

This study is based on semi-structured interviews of seven queer Latinx students in the state of Oregon who are involved in activism and leadership on their college campuses. By using grounded theory and intersectionality through a feminist lens, this project identifies a number of themes that suggest the need for further research: identity formation and expression, challenges in families and on campus, prejudice and discrimination, activism through art, and support people and systems. Overall, by highlighting major themes found, this preliminary study will allow researchers and scholars to further understand and support queer Latinx students.

©Copyright by Minerva Zayas
April 28, 2020
All Rights Reserved

LGBTQ Latinx Student Activist and Leaders in the State of Oregon: A Preliminary Study

by
Minerva Zayas

A THESIS

Submitted to
Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts
Presented: April 28, 2020
Commencement June 2021

Master of Arts thesis of Minerva Zayas presented on April 28 , 2020

APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies

Director of the School of Language, Culture & Society

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Minerva Zayas, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot put into words how thankful I am for my support system. First of all, I would like to thank my committee. Dr. Susan Bernardin, Dr. Marta Maldonado, and Dr. Tenisha Tevis for their guidance, time and listening ear through my many ideas and especially my advisor Dr. Susan Shaw for her persistence, patience and her motivation that have guided me throughout this whole process. We need more supportive faculty and staff who can genuinely support students.

I would like to thank my family and most specifically *mi mama*. When I felt a bit of the imposter syndrome, she always reminded me to *echarle ganas*, to not give up and that anything is possible. My siblings, Vernardo, Alejandro, Jesse Y Juan for providing kind words (on most days) towards helping me feel connected and remind me how powerful role models are.

To my friends, cohort, past mentors, and my significant other. Edith, Jorge, Micah, Liz, Adri, Ricardo, Ana, Elizabeth, Phaedra, Diane, Maria, Fola, Amrita, Carol, Mia, Lisa and Nette, for their endless support, phone calls during late hours of the night and visits when possible. You remind me of all the potential I have, and why this feminist journey means so much to me. My cohort, Maria, Carol, Fola, Lisa, Nyk and Jeana for their time and energy in our classroom discussions and community gatherings. My significant other Jen, whom I met during this difficult time and transition who has offered me patience, support and unconditional love.

I would have not been able to be where I am at today without the immense support of my undergraduate mentors at Eastern Washington University. Dr. Jessica Willis, Dr. Christina Torress-Garcia, Dr. Mimi Marinucci, and Dr. Susan Ruby. Thank you for offering me endless support and friendship that anything I set my mind to is possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Significance of Research.....	4
Use of Language.....	5
Activism and Leadership	6
At the Intersections: LGBTQ Latinx Students Activist and Leaders in High Education	7
Outline	9
Positionality.....	9
Chapter 2: Literature Review	11
Latinx people in the United States	12
Latinx values	13
Religion and Spirituality.....	14
LGBTQ Leadership and Activism.....	15
Latinx people in Oregon	16
Oregon’s White Supremacist History.....	17
Chicano Student Movement and the Development of Ethnic Studies	18
Student Coalition Building.....	20
Colegio Cesar Chavez.....	21
LGBTQ+ Movements in Oregon	21

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Latinx Students in Higher Education.....	23
Undocumented Students.....	23
LGBTQ and Latinx.....	25
Intersectionality	26
Conclusion.....	31
Chapter 3: Methods.....	32
Grounded theory	32
Data Collection	33
Recruitment.....	34
Interview Questions.....	35
Data Analysis	35
Participants.....	36
Participants Discern Themselves as Leaders and Activist.....	39
Conclusion.....	41
Chapter 4: Findings	42
Navigating Multiple Intersecting Identities in Single-Axis Contexts.....	42
Facing Identity-Based Challenges in Institutions and Personal Relationships	47
Institutional Rules and Campus Climate.....	47
Academic Structures and Language.....	52
Gender Roles, Religion and Family Dynamics.....	58

Nation of Origin and Family’s National Heritage	65
Individual and Systematic Discrimination and Prejudice on Campus	66
Art Activism as a Tool for Self-Expression and Social Change for LGBTQ Latinx Student Leaders and Activist.....	71
Performance.....	71
Poetry	73
The Necessity for a Wide-Ranging Support System for LGBTQ Latinx Student Leaders and Activists	81
Chapter 5 Conclusion.....	85
Limitations.....	87
Suggestions for future research.....	88
References.....	91
Figure 1.Participants.....	38
Appendix: Interview Protocol	98
Recruitment materials	101

DEDICATION

To the outsiders; and those living in a multidimensional world. I see you; and you are not alone.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the distance, I witnessed my mother and her husband drive off as they left my new apartment in rural Oregon. The feeling was almost identical to when my parents dropped me off at Eastern Washington University with boxes and groceries, full of dreams and desires, as a 19 year old college sophomore. Except, this time was different; not only did I have a much better understanding of myself as a queer Latinx woman, but I also had a stronger sense of purpose. It was late August, and here I was venturing about seven hours away from home. A new town, new intention, and a new journey.

What I quickly realized was that my experiences were not solitary. I attempted to find supportive faculty that not only looked like me but were also not overworked with a dozen other Latinx students. I looked for a community that was Latinx focused and supported LGBTQ students. My hopes of finding a supportive network in my graduate program were only to be shattered when a faculty member began to favor some graduate students over others and marginalized students who disagreed with certain perspectives. I felt some identities were prioritized over others, leaving Latinx students marginalized and feeling depressed and anxious.

I soon discovered the reality of a very political space within academia that left me questioning myself as a queer Latinx activist altogether. I began searching for answers and supportive faculty and staff, just to find out that structural racism had created a very toxic and hostile academic environment. Paulo Freire's text comes to mind with his question: "How can the

oppressed as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of the oppressed?” (Freire, 1970).

These experiences are what led me toward the beginning stages of this thesis. Soon I discovered that many queer Latinx students experience the lack of diversity on their campuses and feel a need for a shift on campus. Latinx students face unique challenges when identifying as LGBTQ. It is crucial for LGBTQ Latinx students’ educational success that faculty and staff understand their complex identities and cultural dynamics (Serrano, 2018). The disparities faced by Latinx students in higher education continue to showcase the missing histories, lives, and stories of the multiple intersections that Latinx folks endure and experience. In the state of Oregon, Latinx folks continue to be a growing population, yet one that is still underrepresented in higher education.

Institutions of higher education continue to be predominantly White spaces, ones that often disregard how race, gender, class, and sexuality come into play. In particular, as relates to my study, institutions of higher education are especially inadequate in addressing concerns of LGBTQ Latinx students.

This study draws on intersectionality, taking into account the multiple layers of one's social location in relation to access to social, economic, and political power (Crenshaw, 1991).. Moreover, recognizing the interplay between race, gender, sexuality, and class through the lived experiences of both queer and Latinx students, specifically, would further inform and advance the field of higher education’s understanding about their leadership and/or activism at a college or university.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) originally coined the term intersectionality to describe the lived experiences of African American women. She noted “that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (p. 1244). Vivian May (2015) describes having an “intersectional orientation” as a multidimensional way of understanding our social realities and examining past practices for inclusion. Intersectionality will be vital in understanding the multiple dimensions and layers of the experiences of LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists on college campuses

Intersectionality as a lens is rooted in and ties to structural racism, which is essential in moving toward an antiracist and inclusionary perspective. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, a sociologist who studies the emotional effect of race, provides a structural analysis of racism and examines how our racialized system is based on White supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Moreover, Bonilla-Silva points out notions around “colorblind racism.” Color-blind racism addresses how some society members claim that they “don’t see color” when discussing ethnic and racial identities even though the structures of racism shape all relationships within a White supremacist system. Examining racism as structural helps us understand how discrimination persists across mutually reinforcing institutions such as family, religion, the criminal justice system, the medical system, and higher education.

The writings of Gloria Anzaldúa further inform my work in relation to understanding multiply layered identities within intersecting systems of oppression within what she calls the *mestiza* consciousness. Mestiza consciousness is “a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.” It strives toward breaking down paradigms, “straddling two or more cultures” and

making change in the ways we perceive ourselves, our realities, and behavior (1987). For Anzaldúa, *mestiza* consciousness provides possibility for social change. She writes:

En unas pocas centurias, ‘in a couple of centuries,’ the future will belong to the *mestiza*.

Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos- that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the way we behave- la *mestiza* creates a new consciousness.” (1987)

Anzaldúa’s work is important in conceptualizing and understanding how the *mestiza* consciousness framework relates to queer Latinx students in higher education. Queer Latinx students experience this constant push and pull in multiple directions, even as they use their identities to propel their activism and leadership within the institution of higher education.

Significance of the Research

We already know that many gaps exist in the research literature on queer and Latinx students. However, few studies factor in activist and leadership roles. Therefore, the preliminary research sought to bridge that gap by asking these important questions:

1. What are experiences of queer Latinx student activists and leaders on their college campuses?
2. What do these experiences suggest about what research is essential to address problems and needs faced by queer Latinx student activists and leaders?

These questions are important because answers to them point toward possibilities and solutions to improve access, retention, and support for a highly marginalized population within higher education.

Use of Language

For this study, I use the term “Latinx” to refer to people whose ancestry is from Mexico, Central, and South America. The term “Hispanic” was one of the first terms to identify people from this region. In the 1980s the emergence of the word “Latino” allowed for a distinction between “Latin American” and a U.S born experience among pan-ethnic “Hispanic” groups (2018). In the 2000s, the term “Latinx” emerged to replace the gendered Latino/a. Matinez and Vidal-Ortiz have called “Latinx” a trend and rupture in the historical struggles of Latinx folks. Martinez and Vidal State, “The term Latinx should not be anachronistically forced onto previous categories of analysis and social identity, as it deforms the historical circumstances of those and other social movements” (p. 389). Latinx represents a more inclusive version of Latino/a identity by making linguistic space for trans and gender non-binary people. Scharron-del Rio and Aja (2020) describe “Latinx” as a gender inclusive term that stands in solidarity with Latinx individuals who do not fit into the gender binary, as well as those who do identify as Latinas and Latinos. Ultimately, the use of liberatory language works in conjunction with trans and queer communities, challenges the gendered Spanish language, and encompasses a shift towards inclusion of queer identities within the Latinx community (2020).

Similarly, for this study, the use of “LGBTQ” will be used to encompass a wide range of sexual identities that my participants embrace. The decision to include the “Q” for queer is to stand in solidarity with a term that was once seen as derogatory in nature but has been reclaimed by the community as a way to challenge heteronormativity directly.

Activism and Leadership

This study examined the experiences of self-identified LGBTQ student leaders and activists. While they do exhibit characteristics of activism and leadership as defined by academic literature, they have their own definitions of activism and leadership rooted in their own experiences. Boardas (2013) defines leadership as a collaborative and participatory process that engages and centers people, cooperation, and relationships (Boardas, 2013). According to Boardas, many Latinx values, such as *personalismo* are central in connecting and sharing experiences on a more cultural level. In a study done on Latinx leaders in predominantly White institutions, Lozano found four key themes that define Latinx leadership. These themes are community building, a struggle for change, the need for strength as Latinas/os, and having a sense of urgency and legacy (2015).

Similarly, activism is fluid in its definition. Political activism can take on many shapes and forms for different people. As mentioned by Marquez (2014), “Not every person contributes to a movement or social cause equally or similarly” (p. 50). Marquez further described that activism can appear in waves and at times participation can be much greater. Activism can also depend on whether someone has a chance to participate, and depending if participants of activism have family or work obligations.

For my participants, lines between leadership and activism were often blurred. For most, leadership took the form of working within the institution for change. Activists often worked

within communities outside the university, but in my students' sense of self these lines were never clearly marked. My participants gave a wide range of answers when it came to identifying as a student activist or leader.

At the Intersections: LGBTQ Latinx Students Activists and Leaders in Higher Education

During my experiences as a graduate student in the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies program, I and other LGBTQ Latinx students at times felt dismissed and shut down within our identities when we attempted to bring up issues of inclusion. Interestingly, these experiences foreshadowed what I have found in this research. LGBTQ Latinx students are often forced to choose between their identities in order to feel they belong, even in social justice circles and identity-based groups. This sense of struggle is compounded by participation in activism and leadership, as Lozano notes in a study on Latinx student leadership (2015).

Within higher education, LGBTQ Latinx students face a number of barriers, Ovink (2108) explored Latinx pathways in college, finding that higher levels of poverty may exist within Latino/a communities that lead toward poor educational experience. A majority of Latinx students are typically the first person in their families to attend college, often times leaving Latinx students with unforeseen challenges around family responsibilities, financial direction, and culturally competent mentors and advisors.

Predominantly White institutions have their own unique challenges for Latinx students (Gonzalez, et. al., 2018). First generation Latinx students described the need for visibility within a Latinx Student organization at a predominantly White institution. The participants of this study described feelings of loneliness, isolation, and sadness after beginning their college experience.

However, students involved in the Latino Student Organization at their school felt that space allowed them somewhere to feel more included (2018).

As we know, LGBT people have a unique set of experiences that are based on their social location. (Meyer, 2015). LGBT students on college campuses balance lives filled with course work, family responsibilities and social demands. Most times, this leads to burn out and becoming over committed with social responsibilities (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011). The lack of support that LGBT students face while participating in activist work on their campuses leads students towards feeling overwhelmed under high stress circumstances (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011).

LGBTQ Latinx students then sit at the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality in complicated ways. They are ethnic minorities within LGBTQ groups and sexual minorities within Latinx groups. On campus, they may have to hide or downplay some part of themselves to fit with identity-based groups that are “single-axis” (May 2018), focused only on a single aspect of identity, but as May argues, single-axis thinking does not account for the ways different identities shape another within systems of power.

Because LGBTQ Latinx students face many barriers ranging from the White and heteronormative language of the academy to invisibility in the curriculum to being rejected by their families, many elect to become leaders and activist to try to effect change in their communities and universities. As a queer Latinx student activist myself, I am interested learning about such students’ experiences, including how they navigate barriers in higher education and work to bring about change on their campuses. Rather than focusing only on LGBTQ Latinx students’ experiences, I decided to narrow my focus to specifically queer Latinx activists and leaders because to

understand what happens when these students try to make a differences so we might imagine how universities can support them and their efforts.

Outline

I present my research across five chapters. Chapter One describes the importance of this study and offers a brief overview of the gaps within research and what the study hopes to accomplish. Chapter Two describes the existing Latinx and queer identities within higher education. Chapter Three describes the methods used for the study and provides a brief summary description of participants. Chapter Four focuses on major themes that arose from the interviews and the questions these themes raise for future research. Lastly, chapter Five highlights a need and recommendations for future research.

Positionality

I am a queer Chicana woman, an activist, a poet, and a scholar in the field of women, gender and sexuality studies and the intersecting fields of queer studies, Chicana feminist thought, and Latinx studies. I identify as a feminist, and I am reclaiming what it means to me and how it shapes my own social location in terms of race, gender, and sexuality.

I identify as a queer Chicana woman. As such, I am consciously reclaiming what it means for me to be a Mexican American woman. I am neither Mexican because I am located in the United States, nor am I fully American because I am a physical representation of my parents who are from Mexico. Like Gloria Anzaldúa, I am situating myself in the Borderlands of what it further means to be a queer Woman on Color in the academy. I recognize that I do not fit easily in queer groups that are predominantly White and middle class, nor in Latinx groups that are predominantly

heterosexual. I find myself on the margins of these groups and long for a place that embraces all of my identities—queer, brown, Mexican-American, working class woman.

These socially constructed identities nested within ethnic origins play a role in my activist leadership as I use my voice as a queer Chicana woman to speak up in solidarity with all oppressed groups. This thesis is an outgrowth of my commitments to activism and to other queer Latinx students who strive for success within higher education.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

To be Latinx and LGBTQ is to be an outsider. To understand this contemporary status of LGBTQ and Latinx students, an overview of the history of Latinx and LGBTQ people on campus is necessary. Across the board, students of color struggle in predominantly White institutions of higher education (Beahea, Twale, & Weidman, 2016). While higher education remains an entity that values capitalism, capitalist culture and discourses of neoliberalism, feminisms and critical race theories have attempted to challenge normative culture within higher education (Mohanty, 1987).

LGBTQ Latinx students' experiences are informed by particular trajectories within various resistance movements in higher education--the Civil Rights movement, the Chicano student movement, the women's movement and the LGBTQ movement. While no one of these historical movements fully addresses LGBTQ Latinx students, each contributes to the contemporary context in which LGBTQ Latinx students find themselves. Each of these strands is important to understanding LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists, their histories, and their hoped-for futures.

While little research exists on Latinx or LGBTQ students, literature on LGBTQ Latinx students is almost nonexistent. Drawing on the literature there is on Latinx and LGBTQ students, this thesis aims to add to the research agenda by pointing out the many questions that must be addressed in order to foster inclusion and equity for LGBTQ Latinx students. The gap in the literature about LGBTQ Latinx students is glaring, and so my preliminary research seeks to lay out a way forward with a broad research agenda to begin to fill in the gap.

Latinx People in the United States

Latinx people came into the United States in a number of ways. Mexican Americans had been residing within what was considered Mexico's territory prior to the U.S.-Mexico war of 1846-48 when the border was moved, and they became residents of the United States. Then in 1853, the Mexican President sold other borderlands to the U.S. Entrepreneurs built a number of cigar factories in Florida, Louisiana, and New York in the late 1950s, bringing many Cubans, drawn by tobacco work. Another wave of Cuban migrants arrived in the late 1860s when they rebelled against Spanish rule. (Michell, 2018). Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States during the early 1900's and were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917. (Michell, 2018).

Migrants from Central and South America, especially those from Guatemala and Panama, found their way to West Coast cities. (Michell, 2018). From 1820-2010 almost 22 million people immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, Central, and South America. Almost 5 million of those immigrants came from 1920-1969. From 1970-2010, more than 14 ½ million came to the US. (http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/immigration_data/periods-and-region.htm) U.S. restrictions on immigration plus the increased demand for low-skilled labor led to a greater number of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico and Central America beginning in the 1970s. (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/mexican-and-central-american-immigrants-united-states>)

According to the Migration Policy Institute:

Compared to the US born and other immigrant groups, Mexican and Central American immigrants are younger, more likely to be male, and more likely to be married with children, most of whom are native-born citizens. They have lower education levels than the

US born, and Mexicans in particular have the lowest level of formal education of any immigrant group. Both Mexican and Central American immigrants also have lower levels of English Language proficiency than other immigrants. Their workforce participation rates are very high, but they are concentrated in low-paying jobs; as a consequence, Mexican and Central American immigrants earn income lower than other foreign-born groups and substantially lower than their U.S.-born counterparts. About a quarter of Mexican, Honduran, and Guatemalan immigrants live below the poverty line.

(<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/mexican-and-central-american-immigrants-united-states>).

Second generation Mexican and Central Americans have profiles that are more similar to native-born Americans. Currently, 58.8 million Latinx people live in the United States making up 18.1 percent of the total US population

(<https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=64>).

Latinx Values

Particular values help define Latinx communities in the U.S. These values play an important role in shaping both individuals and communities and inform the ways Latinx people survive and resist.

As a collective culture, Latinx communities connect and work together for the overall wellbeing of the family. An important value that is prevalent within Latinx families is *familismo*. As described by Arredondo et.al, *familismo*, “the valuing of the extended family, is an anchor for individuals who have been socialized in traditional beliefs about the importance of family” (2014). Additionally, Boardas notes how Latino leadership encompasses multifaceted characteristics. For

instance, *personalismo* focuses on “leadership that is evolving and collaborative” (2013). Moreover, this characteristic embodies Latinx values that stem from an understanding of membership within the family rather than from a professional identity (Boardas). Similarly, the National Latina/o Psychological Association, a professional organization composed of Latinx identified psychologists identifies values such as *liderazgo*, *colectivismo*, *simpatia*, *familismo*, *respeto*, *confianza*, and *orgullo* as some of the key characteristics of what it means to be Latinx. (Consoli, et. al.). Being sympathetic, family oriented, understanding of the collective, confident in one's abilities, and being proud of what you believe in are what NLPA have in mind for future Latinx psychologists (Miville et. al, 2017).

Similarly, Campos et al. explored the connection between *familismo* as a socio cultural value and intimate romantic relationships. *Familismo* is interdependent, supportive and provides warmth and comfort in making decisions and sharing obligations (Campos et. al., 2016). Family connectedness includes familial support and inclusiveness that exists within direct and extended family members. Additionally, immigrant families in the United States rely on caregiving of children and elders of extended family members as a form of emotional and financial support and as a way to continue traditional and cultural ties (Falicuo, 2005). These cultural values are also significant in the ways Latinx college students navigate higher education. When a Latinx student enrolls in college, generally speaking, an extended family enrolls as well.

Religion and Spirituality

A significant component of identity for many Latinx people is religion and spirituality. In 2013, the Pew Research center found that 55% of Latinos identify as Catholic (Pew Research Center, 2014). While Protestants make up around one-fourth of the U.S. Hispanic Population,

conservative Protestants, and Latinos that are a part of Mormon groups tend to reject same-sex marriage (Ellison et al, 2011). Regular attending church goers who identify as Catholic also tend to oppose same-sex marriage. However, less frequent church goers tend to be more open to same-sex marriage as political beliefs may not be intertwined with religious ideals (Ellison et al, 2020).

Although many Christian traditions still struggle with LGBTQ identities, the force of religious beliefs against LGBTQ people seems to be waning. Research suggests that among LGBTQ Latinx people, the more family support they feel, the more likely they are to be out to their families and others within social settings (Pastrana, 2015). Interestingly enough, religious participation does not predict the likelihood of Latinx people coming out. Possibly the legalization of same-sex marriage and the growing number of people reporting no religious affiliation have mitigated religious prejudice against LGBTQ people (Pastrana, 2015). Acosta concludes that LGBTQ Latinas desire to be fully seen and accepted by the churches they attended. They want both their religious and sexual identities to be visible (Acosta, 2013). In addition, others draw from traditional Latin American spirituality and religions. Boardas identifies “spirituality as a Celebration” in Latinx culture. For many Latinx people, religion and spirituality are closely related to how they celebrate saints and holidays such as *El dia De Los Muertos* (the Day of the Dead). Religious faith and spirituality also contribute to Latinx courage in social activism, the humility to see others as equal, and the ability to forgive and heal from intergenerational traumas (Boardas, 2013).

LGBTQ Leadership and Activism

Latinx leadership has long been ignored and dismissed in dominant society and histories. Latinx leadership incorporates family values, *comunidad*, and cultural traditions as parts of a larger

and collaborative process that is valued among Latinx people (Boardas, 2013). Latinx leadership is collective, a step-by-step approach that engages the community and builds sympathy toward others (Boardas 2013).

Latinos in general are less likely to be involved in politics because of how gender, language barriers and social economic statuses can affect their daily lives (Montoya, Hardy-Fanta & Garcia, 2000). Latinx women have been found to be more motivated to participate in politics in comparison with their male counterparts (Montoya et. al., 2000). Garcia et al. found, however, that within Latino Greek organizations, and ethnic student organizations, Latino male participation was positively correlated as participants saw themselves as contributors and change agents at their college campuses. Interestingly, the findings from this study identified a contextual difference that is based on the type of institution students attend and geographic location. Participants from PWIs did not discuss how ethnic organizations enhanced their leadership (2017). This may be because PWIs may not have communities that Latinx students feel drawn to.

Latinx People in Oregon

Latinx people who reside in Oregon are predominantly of Mexican descent. Nonetheless, Latinos traveled through Oregon for agricultural work in the 1900s and now reside across Oregon (TOP Report, 2016). Based on the Tracking Oregon's Progress Report in 2016, 12 percent of Oregon's population is of Latinx or Hispanic origin. In many places, Latinos make up a significant portion of the population. For example, Latinos in Malheur and Hood River counties make up one third of the population (TOP Report, 2016). Statewide, about two thirds of Latino Oregonians are born in the United States (TOP Report, 2016).

Oregon's White Supremacist History

The state of Oregon has a long history of racism and active discrimination against people of color. Whites who came to Oregon in the 1840s opposed slavery but also hoped for a White state. In 1857, the legislature voted to ban slavery and free Black people from the state. (Nokes, n.d.) Any Oregonians who owned enslaved people were forced to free them, and the freed Black people had to leave Oregon. Additionally, sundown laws were set in place to continue to eliminate and forcefully remove people of color out of Oregon. Sundown laws communicated that African American, Latinos and Asians must stay out of city limits once the sun went down. In some towns these laws were enforced by violence, while in some cities the laws were virtually ignored (<https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/oregonsocialjustice/oregon-black-laws/>). The Ku Klux Klan began to organize chapters in Oregon in 1921 and boasted of 35,000 members by 1923 (Imarisha, 2013). In 1922, the Klan helped elect Walter M. Pierce as governor. Pierce tacitly supported the Klan and backed anti-Catholic as well as anti-immigrant measures.

In Portland, immigrants of color were banned from businesses and from buying land (Imarisha, 2013). In 1948, many black folks were recruited from the South and brought to Oregon to work in factories. Black people were redlined into Vanport, which was eventually flooded by the Columbia river, leaving 17,000 Black residents homeless. In the late 1950's highways and Memorial Coliseum were built in the thriving Black community of Albina, displacing residents and demolishing the community (Imarisha, 2013).

In 1942, Oregon removed 4,000 people of Japanese descent to internment camps. By 1945, these Japanese prisoners were allowed to leave the camps, but many White Oregonians actively campaigned against their return. Most did return, but they held only a quarter of the property they

had owned before interment. Former governor Pierce said, “We should never be satisfied until every last Jap has been run out of [the] United States and our Constitution changed so they can never get back” (https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/japanese_internment/#.Xtky-UFIBeU).

With this racist history as a backdrop, we can understand the predominance of whiteness in Oregon today. Against this racist history, students of color must navigate predominantly White institutions that are not built to serve their needs.

Chicano Student Movement and the Development of Ethnic Studies

My participants’ and my activism are rooted in a longer history of Latinx student activism. During 1968, more than 15,000 students participated in the East Los Angeles Chicano student walkouts. In this protest, students came together to demand the right to a quality education. Chicano students insisted on recognition, bilingual education, smaller classroom sizes, and emphasis on Chicano histories (Bernard & Solorzano, 2001). Traditionally, education centers comprise White, Western scholarship and ways of knowing. Student walkouts across the country demanded a recentering of the curriculum.

From 1968-69, the Black Student Union, Third World Liberation Front, Latin American Students Organization, and members of the faculty and staff of San Francisco State University, as well as Bay Area community members, organized the longest student strike in history over students of color’s lack of inclusion and misrepresentation in the university’s curriculum and programs. Their demands led to the creation of the nation’s first College of Ethnic Studies. The College now houses Africana Studies, American Indian Studies, Asian American Studies, Latina/Latino Studies, and Race and Resistance Studies. Across the country, other students followed suit demanding ethnic studies programs in colleges and universities.

In April 1969, Chicano college students held a nationwide conference at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). The students adopted the name "Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán" (MEChA) and drafted an educational manifesto. The first MEChA chapters formed on college campuses in California and then expanded to other states. MEChA played a significant role in the founding of Chicano Studies program at many colleges.

The educational and activist histories of Latinx folks are rooted in and transcend institutional frameworks that are centered on an education system defined by westernized scholarship and norms. Ethnic studies departments aim toward the decolonization of spaces and programs themselves in ways that eliminate hierarchies across race and ethnicity, while simultaneously challenging the identity politics the result from oppressions that exist within the education system (Grosfoguel, 2012). Nonetheless, the academy is a place where students of color are doing the physical, emotional, and spiritual work of activism that is time consuming and innovating in ways that future educators are “radicalized” (Armbruster-Sandoval, 2005). In Oregon, ethnic studies or other race/ethnicity-focused academic programs exist at Oregon State University, the University of Oregon, and Portland State University. Portland State University offers a Chicano/Latino Studies program that offers a minor and a certificate. Classes range from Introduction to Chicano/Latino studies to Southwestern Borderlands to Latino Popular culture, and Latinos in the Pacific Northwest. (<https://www.pdx.edu/chla/academic-programs-advising>). Western Oregon University also offers a Latino/Chicano studies minor within the field of social sciences. Classes include Human Migration, Hispanic Civilization, and Culture of Mexico, and Mexico and the Caribbean since Independence (<https://wou.edu/socialscience/degrees-programs/chicano/>). At the University of Oregon, the

Ethnic Studies program offers a variety of courses including Latinx, Black and Indigenous studies. Latinx studies courses include Introduction to Chicanx and Latinx Studies, Race, Sex, and Latinx Culture, and Race, Migrations and Rights. The University also supports a research center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies.

Student Coalition Building

In 1991, the beating of Rodney King by multiple police officers ignited the L.A rebellion riots. African American and Latinx community members came together as they protested the violence born of racial and social inequality (Mora, 2007). A strong coalition already existed among Latinx residents of LA because of their solidarity with the people of Central America during U.S. covert operations during the Regan administration.

In 1994, California's Proposition 187 galvanized residents of all backgrounds as the legislation threatened non-emergency health care, public education, and other services for undocumented people in the state. At the University of California Los Angeles, students came together to create an "emergency coalition" against proposition 187. Throughout the state, high school and college students organized hunger strikes to protest the ballot measure. Through these coalitions, minorities came together and empowered one another through collaboration, culture, and labor (Mora, 2007).

Today we see the rise of graduate student coalitions to address issues of pay and benefits. At this writing, the graduate students at University of California Santa Cruz are demonstrating the importance of student coalitions. During the first week of March of 2020, 80 graduate students were fired for withholding grades in protest against low wages. Graduate students across the nation are working in solidarity and addressing issues of graduate students working for low wages.

Withholding grades, strikes and student walkouts are significant forms of campus activism for higher wages and health care benefits (Dilts & Davis, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/03/09/santa-cruz-strike-graduate-students-unions/>).

Colegio Cesar Chavez

Mt. Angel College, founded in 1888 by Benedictine sisters began as a women's college but evolved into a coed school that offered degrees in the humanities and elementary education. In the early 1970s, the school lost its accreditation due to financial troubles, low enrollment, and infighting over students of color. The new director of Ethnic Affairs, the President, and the chair of the board of trustees supported moves to increase recruitment of Mexican American students and introduce the College Without Walls program that granted credits for community work. The college was renamed Colegio César Chávez in 1973 in honor of the labor leader whose work emphasized struggle in political movements and resistance through education (Maldonado, 2000). The college lasted for a decade before being forced to close because of continuing financial problems, low enrollment, and lack of accreditation.

LGBTQ+ Movements in Oregon

Oregon has, in many ways, been on the frontlines of the fight for LGBTQ rights. The state's first sodomy law was passed in 1853; its 1913 sodomy statute was repealed in 1971. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, LGBTQ people in Oregon started to organize to build community and agitate for LGBTQ rights Oregon decriminalized homosexuality in 1972, more than three decades before the U.S. Supreme Court decriminalized it in all 50 states. In the 1970s, gay men created the first gay community center in the state. . In 1974, the Portland City Council banned job

discrimination based on sexual orientation. As progressive politicians began to address LGBT rights in policy, a backlash ensued.

In the early 1990s, led by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, conservatives placed two ballot measures before voters. Ballot Measure 9 in 1992 would have prevented any entity receiving state funds from promoting, encouraging, or facilitating “homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism, and masochism.” Two years later, Ballot Measure 13 followed. It would have prevented LGBTQ people from receiving minority status. Both measures were defeated. A 1998 Court of Appeals decision required government employers to recognize domestic partnerships and prohibited discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation. It also required public employers to provide benefits to domestic partners. In 2004, Multnomah County issued marriage licenses to same sex couples. Although this appeared as a victory for same sex couples, the victory was short lived. Marriage then was defined as a “civil contract entered into in person by males at least 17 years of age and females at least 17 years of age” (Canty-Jones, 2007). With this being a violation of Oregon state law, Christian groups and the Oregon Family Council collected signatures for a constitutional amendment to ban same sex marriage. In 2005, over 3,000 marriages were nullified that had been done through Multnomah County. In 2007, the legislature approved domestic partnerships, allowing the benefits of same-sex marriage (Canty-Jones, 2007). In 2015, the ruling of *Obergefell v. Hodges* determined that prohibiting same sex marriage was unconstitutional. This led to the legalization of same sex marriage (Boag, 2016).

Not surprisingly, many of Oregon’s universities led the way in addressing LGBTQ issues. The state university system provided domestic partner benefits as early as 2007 according to the Oregon Family Fairness Act (<https://eoa.oregonstate.edu/domestic-partnership-policy>). OSU’s

Women's Resource Center was founded in 2001 and was renamed the Pride Center in 2004 (<https://dce.oregonstate.edu/pc>). Students created a Gay Straight Alliance at Portland Community College in 1997. At the University of Oregon, the Queer Ally Coalition was established in 1992 (<https://dos.uoregon.edu/qac>). At Portland State University, the Queer Resource Center was created in the early 2000s and given a physical home on campus in 2006 (<https://www.pdx.edu/queer/QRCAbout>).

Latinx Students in Higher Education

While Latinx people make up the fastest growing population in the United States, they have significantly lower educational attainment than Whites. One important contributing factor is generational because college age Latinx people often have parents with lower levels of educational attainment (Ovink, 2016). Ovnik (2017) also suggests, “Failing public investments in higher education are a symptom of the ‘corporatization’ of the US education system as higher education is increasingly viewed as a form of *personal* human capital investment that benefits the individual, rather than a *public* investment that benefits society.” Further, Ovink believes that Latinx students would highly benefit from universities that are geared toward serving low-income underrepresented populations. For example, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have higher success rates, compared with Latinx or Black/African American programs in predominantly White institutions that only help a small percentage of students and often continue to target and isolate minority students (2017).

Undocumented Students

While barriers to attending college remain a significant problem for underrepresented students as a whole, undocumented students face additional difficulties. The DREAM Act is one

important factor that has allowed undocumented students to pursue higher education and pay in-state tuition rates as long as students are residents for six years. Nonetheless, the lack of an educational reform has led toward DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). DACA allows undocumented students to have a work visa, pay in-state tuition rates, and access an opportunity to renew their permits (Munoz & Escante, 2015). The risk of deportation, however, continues to be a barrier and varies depending on the state in which one lives (Munoz & Escante, 2015; Ovink 2017). While undocumented students have little to no financial support, they are very resilient. Munoz says his participant Juan “extends the concept of Undocumented Leadership by illustrating lived struggles, but also experiences of resistance through activism” (Munoz & Escante, 2015). So, while undocumented students continue to try to access higher education and lead as activists on their campuses, they live with the ever-present threats of discovery and deportation.

The Trump administration has expressed strong political views against DACA recipients and undocumented immigrants. Trump’s administration threatened to revoke the DACA program in September of 2017. The Ninth Circuit Court of appeals ruled against the ending of DACA as this violates protections for Latinx people under this law (FitzGerald, Lopez and McClean, 2019). Furthermore, with clear racism and discrimination against Mexican immigrants, ICE officials have been ordered to arrest “dangerous criminals” in immigration raids.

From May 5 to June 9, 2019, 2,343 children were separated at the border from their parents under the “zero-tolerance policy.” The purpose of this policy is to stop people from illegal entry into the United States with threats of jail time and child separation (FitzGerald, et. Al., 2019). The separation of families places parents in the criminal justice system, and children are referred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The policy was narrowed as a result of *Ms. L. v ICE*, allowing

families to remain together, but reunification of families and children has been far more difficult than imagined. The conditions that children and families stayed in were inhumane and unsanitary. Children were over-medicated and sexually abused, and their cramped cells are referred to as dog kennels and ICE boxes (FitzGerald, et al, 2019). The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies concluded that mental and physical outcomes of family separations may include depression, anxiety, PTSD, increased heart rate and high blood pressure (2019).

LGBTQ and Latinx

Because most universities are still predominantly White and heteronormative, Latinx and LGBTQ students often struggle to find their place. For LGBTQ Latinx students, these struggles may well be compounded. Campus diversity centers focus on creating space for students of color. This may, however, encourage students to self-segregate. LGBTQ+ friendly campus centers are often predominantly White, and multicultural centers are often heteronormative and lack inclusivity (Javier & Johnson, 2017).

Tijeria-Revilla explored sexual identities within Chicana and Latina women who participated in the Raza Womyn organization. The purpose of this group was to fight collectively against racism and create a safe space to explore and discuss sexual identity (Tijeria-Rivilla, 2009). Interestingly enough, a majority of participants did not identify as LGBTQ or bisexual until their participation in the group. This group allowed for safe exploration and dialogue that led toward a LGBTQ consciousness, and a redefining and questioning of Chicana/o nationalism (Tijeria-Revilla, 2009).

Based on the Social Justice Sexuality studies, Pastrana et al debunked myths about Latinx LGBTQ people (2016). For instance, one myth is “all Latinx people are Catholic.” The reality is

that almost half of Latinx individuals do not identify as Catholic, and/or have no religious affiliation. Religious faith or lack thereof does not seem to affect LGBT Latinx individuals' coming out (Pastrana, 2015). Other research on Latinx LGBTQ students in higher education suggests the need for institutional understanding of intersectionality. The authors suggest the importance of a safe space for LGBTQ+ Latinx students to explore their various identities (Derieg, Rodriguez, & Prieto-Tseregounis, 2017).

Minority stress and related mental health issues have been found to be prevalent for LGBTQ community members in comparison to dominant groups (Chan et. al, 2017, Meyer, 2003). Moreover, Meyer found that minority stress was most prevalent when participants who identified as LGBTQ also experienced prejudice and social stigmas (Meyer, 2003). Mena and Vaccaro found that as students navigated their intersecting identities as LGBTQ and people of color they struggled with mental health issues. As they also engaged in extracurricular activities and battled with external and internal pressures to succeed, they faced greater likelihood of compassion fatigue, burnout, and even suicidal ideation (2016).

Furthermore, Mena and Vaccaro identified the importance of setting limits for self-care and the need for social and emotional support for this population. Bilodeau and Renn noted the importance of LGBT- supportive peer relationships and advisor-student relationships that allow students to develop resilience and positive development (2005).

Intersectionality

To analyze my interviews and suggest a way forward in research on LGBTQ Latinx students, I will rely on theories of intersectionality. This section offers an overview of intersectionality and suggests how an intersectional lens can help us use my preliminary study to

develop a research agenda to explore the experiences of LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists.

The navigation of multiplicity has had a long history in both knowledge production and the lived experiences of women of color. The term “intersectionality” was originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a way to express the violence that African American women experienced in the late 1980’s (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Crenshaw explored the intersections of race and gender in ways that express how our social world is constructed (Crenshaw, 1991). Nonetheless, intersectionality has long been practiced before the term was officially coined. In 1851, Sojourner Truth’s famous speech “Ain’t I a woman?” spoke about the intersections of race and gender. Furthermore, the Combahee River Collective released their 1974 statement on the intersections of race and gender as they struggled through multiple oppressions (Kim & Shaw, 2018).

Crenshaw and others have used intersectionality as a way to understand how structural inequities and social institutions come into play in systems of oppression. Intersectionality, then, is an analytical tool that allows social justice researchers and activists to move from theory to practice by examining the workings of intersecting identities, institutions, and systems. For the purpose of this study, I will use the definition that Kim and Shaw (2018) use in their text:

Intersectionality is a tool for analysis that takes into account the simultaneously experienced multiple social locations, identities, and institutions that shape individual and collective experience within hierarchically structured systems of power and privilege. In other words intersectionality is a lens for understanding how race, gender, social class, sexual identity and other forms of difference work concurrently to shape people and social institutions within multiple relationships of power.

Intersectionality allows us to account for the multiple forms of power and inequality that exist simultaneously at the intersections of identity and systems of power (May, 2015). Bilge and Collins suggest intersectionality can be used as a form of inquiry and praxis working together simultaneously (2016). Scholarship and practice interact and shape one another as practice leads to theory and theory informs practice. (Bilge & Collins 2016). For instance, intersectionality allows us to examine how systems of dominance and democracy work within neoliberalism to constitute laws, policies, and regulation within the United State (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

An important distinction is necessary. In the popular conversation, intersectionality is often framed as identity politics. Collins notes that reducing intersectionality to identity negates its power for deep analysis. “In other words, because too much attention is given to identity, intersectionality underemphasized structural analysis, especially material analysis of class and power” (2016). As social justice has become a topic of interest, intersectionality has become a type of buzzword (Davis 2008, Carastathis, 2016) that is often used without full understanding of its complexity and analysis of power. Furthermore, backlash from the Right has framed intersectionality as a form of victimhood politics. “People who claim identity politics are basically clinging to some sort of victim status--as women, or blacks, or disabled--as the basis of their separate claims for recognition” (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Colleges and universities often struggle within a neoliberal framework to address issues related to specific populations through existing institutional structures without actually challenging the ways the institution itself maintains hierarchy and reproduces power. For instance, institutions that advocate for diversity will often attract students of different backgrounds but will then struggle to provide students with adequate services for “diverse” populations. Furthermore, affirmative

action is often used as a way to defend how public institutions have addressed issues of structural discrimination and oppression (Collins, 2016). These strategies have been largely unsuccessful in creating equitable institutional experiences for diverse students because they fail to address the institutional structures that are barriers to full and equitable participation. Intersectionality offers a much-needed lens for examining how college and university structures and practices fail diverse students. Furthermore, Vivian May suggests ways intersectionality can offer alternative methods toward orienting imagination and practice:

1. *Honor and foster intersectionality's antisubordination orientation;*
2. *Draw on intersectionality's matrix approach to meaningfully engage with heterogeneity, enmeshment, and divergence;*
3. *Take up intersectionality's invitation to follow opacities and to read against the grain;*
4. *Set aside norms emulation as a philosophical/political/research/policy strategy.*

Through these four commitments, May suggests we must pay attention to power relations and our relative positions in them. We must not treat complexity of multidimensional structures as a road block, but rather we must draw on them for meaningful coalitions. Furthermore, we must challenge ourselves with different ways of knowing and epistemological resources (May, 2015). May describes the importance of being flexible in shifting our engagements when unjust behavior or actions take place. We must challenge dominant histories and narratives that exclude marginalized groups and focus on knowledge production that is receptive and dynamic.

May's suggestions invite us to understand oppression as multi-axis and simultaneous. Rather than focusing on one form of difference as explanatory—race or gender or sexuality—May

reminds us that people experience all of these identities simultaneously all the time within unequal and unjust systems of power. Intersectionality allows us to carefully analyze the multiple facets of identity, power, and oppression that occur simultaneously within social institutions, such as the college or university (May, 2015).

Similar to May, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge have provided their own exploration of intersectionality. They outline six components: (1) Social Inequality; (2) Power; (3) Relationality; (4) Social Context; (5) Complexity; and (6) Social Justice. These six components of intersectionality focus our attention on the complex, simultaneous, interrelated, and messy nature of understanding identities and experiences within structures of power and privilege (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

LGBTQ Latinx students exist at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and social class within interlocking systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism within the college/university. Because of this, students of color (as well as women and LGBTQ students) often times find themselves creating coalitions that are identity-based and provide safe spaces that offer inclusion and provide important insights, coping strategies, and mutual support (Carastathis, 2016). Most of the time, however, these spaces are single-axis, focused on one identity—race or gender or sexuality—and are often inadequate to address the simultaneity of race and gender and sexuality within systems of power in the institution.

The scholarship of intersectionality provides a necessary tool for understanding and challenging systems of oppression (Carastathis, 2016), including those within colleges/universities. Because so little research has examined the experiences of LGBTQ Latinx students, this study seeks to begin to fill that gap by offering an intersectional analysis of LGBTQ Latinx student

leaders and activists' experiences as a way to suggest a research agenda for higher education moving forward. Intersectionality will help us make sense of these students' experiences of oppression and resistance at the nexus of identity and power within the institution of higher education and suggest questions that need to be asked in order for colleges and universities to transform themselves to be fully inclusive, equitable, and just.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the minimal research that exists about LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists. This gap in the literature suggests a significant need for an agenda for future research. Intersectionality provides an important theoretical framework for understanding the need for research specific to this group and frames my preliminary study to identify specific areas where more research is needed. In the next chapter, I discuss my methods and introduce my participants.

Chapter 3 Methods

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) suggests, “. . . ideas around class, or sexuality are as critical in shaping the experiences of women of color. The focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” p. 1245). Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa notes, “The new *Mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures” (Anzaldúa, 1987). Anzaldúa provides us with a framework for understanding contradictions and ambiguities in terms of her own queerness as a lesbian woman of color living within the borderlands, both literal and symbolic (Anzaldúa, 1987). Furthermore, Anzaldúa moves us toward conceptualizing complex identity in *Light in the Dark/ Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting identity, spirituality, reality*. Through theorizing the *nos/otras* concept she acknowledges that “We are mutually complicitous—us and them, *nosotros y los otro*, White and colored, straight and queer, Christian and Jew, self and other, oppressor and oppressed. We all of us find ourselves in the position of being simultaneously both insider and outsider” (Anzaldúa, 2015). This experience of being simultaneously insider and outsider is key to understanding the experiences of queer Latinx student leaders and activists. Grounding my research theoretically in intersectionality allows me to explore how these various and simultaneous strands of identity shape experiences for this population of students.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a theory-building approach to research that is “grounded” in data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Rather than beginning with hypotheses to be tested, a grounded theory

approach begins in data collection followed by analysis that builds theory. Denzin and Lincoln suggest a “constructivist” version of this theory that understands knowledge as a socially constructed project, pays attention to the positionality of the researcher, recognizes researcher biases, and understands how power, privilege, and oppression work in the lives of researchers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Irby and Lunenburg also suggest reflexivity as an important component of grounded theory. Reflexivity asks the researcher to be attentive to the ways one’s own experiences, beliefs, and ideas shape research. As an insider/outsider to this research, reflexivity is key to ensuring dependable analysis of the data. As an insider, a queer Latinx student leader/activist myself, I bring experiential knowledge to my research. While this is positive because it allows me an insider’s knowledge of identity issues and campus matters, I must also take care not to impose my own experiences on my participants. I cannot assume sameness and must be careful to let my participants speak for themselves. As an outsider, a graduate student researcher with a background in feminist studies, I also bring a critical lens and invaluable theory to this process of understanding these students’ experiences. Reflexivity about my status as an insider/outsider to the research will help me develop deeply informed theory.

Data Collection

To collect data, I used snowball sampling to identify and invite participants who met the research criteria: (1) queer; (2) Latinx; (3) campus leader and/or activist; and (4) currently enrolled in or a recent graduate from (within two years) an Oregon college or university. I allowed students to define for themselves what constituted a student activist or leader in their experiences. I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven queer Latinx student activists and/or leaders. Semi-structured interviews are important for grounded theory because they allow the interview

protocol to evolve as the researcher does analysis throughout the project. These in-depth interviews seek to understand the lived experiences of the individuals and get at the subjective understandings they bring to their situation or set of circumstances (Hesse-Biber, 2014). As a feminist researcher, I am also especially attuned to the workings of power in research, and so I have tried to build rapport and a sense of trust with participants to blur distinction within the power relationship of interviewer-interviewee (Hesse-Biber, 2014).

Recruitment

My recruitment plan was two-fold. I began with asking LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists whom I was familiar with. In addition, I developed a recruitment flyer and posted it on social media platforms. I also emailed the flyer to LGBTQ and Latinx professors, as well as Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies faculty in the state of Oregon and asked them to share with students. The recruitment flyer can be found on page 98. Through this process, I recruited a total number of seven participants. Three of the participants were graduate students and two participants are from Brazil. This is important as participants attributed their experiences to such references. For example, the graduate students had very bad experiences in their program (They were in a small program and had conflict with a faculty member) that do not necessarily reflect general experiences of LGBTQ Latinx student activists and leaders. Still, they are important stories for understanding what can happen to LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists. Having two participants from Brazil further provides insight into some of the particular struggles of international students. As I will explore later, they explained how they had to struggle with their evolving sense of Latinx identity in the U.S. Collectively, findings clearly point toward important areas for further research.

Interview Questions

Because little research has been done with LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists, through the lens of the frameworks referenced early on, it was important to center such students' experiences. Significantly, I developed questions to inquire about their understanding of their complex and complicated identities. I asked them to identify themselves and to tell me about their LGBTQ Latinx identity in more detail. I also asked them to describe what issues are most important to them as student leaders and activists. As Vivian May (2015) notes intersectionality understands lived experiences as a "push-pull of multiple forms of power" p. 163)

The use of intersectionality framework such as structural racism and *mestiza* consciousness allows me as the researcher to understand my participants' lived experiences as multi-axis and nuanced rather than reducing experiences to a single-axis of race or gender or sexuality. Open-ended questions (See the Appendix) allowed participants to reflect on their own meaning of their identities and experiences and to imagine ways higher education in particular might construct more inclusive and supportive spaces for LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists. The protocol provided a starting place for my conversations with participants, although I often asked follow-up questions for clarification or to encourage greater depth.

Data Analysis

Following the guidelines of grounded theory, I analyzed data as I collected it, refining my questions as I got greater clarity and direction from my analysis. Once I transcribed all of my interviews, I coded the data, first reading the interviews through several times to begin to allow commonalities and ideas to emerge. I then began to identify themes that emerged from these readings and then finally shaped these themes into a conceptual framework that is detailed in

chapter 4. Because the number of my participants is limited, rather than generating theory from the themes I identified in the interviews, I have instead offered my findings as a preliminary study to suggest gaps in knowledge and areas that need further study in future research.

Participants

As mentioned, I interviewed seven participants. Each participant selected a pseudonym that would protect their identity and allow them to be unidentifiable. In this section I give brief participants summaries. Demographic data are in the table below.

Miguel is a 23-year-old fourth year undocumented college student who identifies as a gay Latino man with origins in Mexico. He is most interested in the field of anthropology and the importance of advocacy for people living with HIV/AIDS. Miguel has participated in the Gay-Straight Alliance and Queer Intersections Portland as a part of his activism. The GSA, is a student run organization that supports and brings together LGBTQ+ and allies to work toward social change in their communities (GSA, n.d.). Queer Intersections Portland is a nonprofit organization that supports LGBTQ+ youth who identify within the intersections of race, gender identities, and immigration status (Ritchie, 2015). Prior to picking anthropology as his major, Miguel was interested in nursing. By picking anthropology as his major, Miguel has had the opportunity to use his activism and leadership in his work with HIV/AIDS prevention.

Lola is 22 years old and in her last year of her undergraduate degree. Lola identifies as a bisexual Puerto Rican and Mexican woman. She is a major in public health and ethnic studies and has spoken a great deal about her supportive friends and family. Her most recent activist involvement has been creative expression through poetry and support of mental health awareness.

Furthermore, Lola describes having stepped back from titled roles that would consider her a “leader.” Instead she now focuses on various ways to be a leader in untitled positions.

Miranda is a 28-year-old master’s student in women, gender, and sexuality studies. Miranda notes the difficulty of identity because she is an international student from Brazil. In the U.S. she has also come to identify as Latina. She is bisexual. Her academic work focuses on women who live in the river margins and their access to health care and education. She hopes to incorporate her work into serving Indigenous Brazilian women from her region. Miranda identifies as an activist; however her experiences in the U.S. have made it difficult for her to feel a sense of connectedness towards Latinx and people of color in Oregon.

Veronica Flores is a 24-year-old recent graduate and actively participated in her theatre and women, gender, and sexuality studies majors. Veronica was born in Mexico and identifies as a trans Latinx woman. For Veronica, it was important to discuss bridging the gaps of knowledge and understanding of what LGBTQ communities need on her campus. Furthermore, Veronica found performance and art activism to be her passion, and she participates in drag performances. Veronica describes her experiences with making space and participating in leadership roles for students and LGBTQ+ people of color, and specifically trans individuals who are oftentimes affected by structures of power that work against students with diverse backgrounds.

L is a 33-year-old graduate student in women, gender, and sexuality studies and identifies as pansexual and Latinx. L and I discussed the importance of working from within toward creating change. L is a part of student government at her school and lobbies on behalf of student interests in Salem, Oregon. Furthermore, L describes what her school can do to further support Latinx students at her school by recognizing the lack of diversity. Nonetheless, L uses her intersecting identities to

further support students at a structural level toward challenging staff and administrators at her school.

Neli who is of Mexican origin, identifies as a Latinx bisexual women. She is a 19-year-old sophomore and is working on her major in general social sciences and ethnic studies. Neli and I discussed the difficulties of coming out and self-acceptance of one's sexual identity. Furthermore, Neli describes her leadership and activism as a programmer for the Queer Ally Coalition as she helps educate staff, students and faculty on pronouns and being an effective ally. Neli further describes the importance of building community with Latinx and LGBTQ+ populations at her school.

Eliza is a 34-year-old graduate student in women, gender, and sexuality studies. Eliza identifies as a bisexual Latina women but also understands her identity as a White Brazilian woman. Eliza's is working toward having inclusive curriculum transformation for public schools in Brazil. Eliza, as an international student, has struggled to find community at her school. Furthermore, Eliza describes feeling privileged in her activism as she is a part of a larger women's collective in her hometown. Eliza identifies herself as an activist, but also continues to challenge herself and understand her positionality in an attempt to be a supportive ally for women of color in Brazil.

Figure 1. Participants

#	Part. Name	Age	Gender Identity	Sexual Identity	Racial Identity Ethnicity	Major/ Program Of Study
1.	L	33	Female	Pansexual	Latinx/ White	Woman, Gender & Sexuality Studies

2.	Veronica Flores	24	Female (trans)	Straight	Latinx	Theatre
3.	Miranda	28	Female	Bisexual	Latina/ South American	Woman, Gender & Sexuality Studies
4.	Neli	19	Female	Queer/Bisexual	Latinx/Hispanic	General Social Science, Minor in Ethnic Studies
5.	Miguel	23	cisgender	Gay	Latinx	Anthropology
6.	Eliza	34	Female	Bisexual	Latina/ South American	Women Studies
7.	Lola	22	Female	Bisexual	Puerto Rican, Mexican, White	Public Health & Ethnic Studies

Participants Discern Themselves as Leaders and Activists

L. identified as a student leader as she takes on roles on her campus that involve lobbying and participating in student government. Similarly, Miguel identifies himself as student leader as his work began during high school. Miguel expresses that his leadership allows him to “give back” and address “the representation and need for different identities within the Latinx community.” For Miguel, his leadership work began with being involved with the student council at his school, the GSA, and the Japanese National honors society.

For Veronica, identifying as a student leader or activist was complicated. Veronica engaged in a lot of organizational work on her campus, and she noted it was important to “bring more voices” and create discussions around topics that bridge knowledge gaps and model solidarity.

Most importantly, Veronica mentions that others may have viewed her as an activist; however she would like to “engage people into questioning the system and help them acknowledge the ways we have been taught.” Neli expresses that she identifies as an activist, as her job titles at her school involve activism. Neli works on her program called The Queer Ally Coalition where the program is able to educate staff, students, and faculty on different queer terms, proper use of pronouns, and how to be an effective ally.

Eliza identifies as an activist and describes her work in a feminist collective in Brazil. The collective began as a forum of women that came together to look at their relationships, home dynamics, and the violence they suffered at home. Eliza mentions “I have a strong voice and I can position myself sometimes. I try to share with other people and create dialogue.” For Eliza, creating a communal space and bringing in education towards empowerment is essential in her work as an activist.

Miranda contemplates what it means for her to be a student leader or an activist. “I’m not sure I would understand what a student leader would be. I think of someone super involved in school and I think of this institutionalized person.” However, Miranda considers herself an activist but also reflects on the type of activist she has been. “I feel like I’m more an activist when I’m doing in person and in community work,” Miranda mentions. For Lola, she describes having identified as an “explicit leader with titles” as she’s participated in mentorship programs, volunteer programs, and has facilitated conversations. Rather than trying to put my participants into boxes as activists or leaders based on academic definitions, I let my participants self-identify. All of my participants described themselves as activists or leaders prior to the time of their interview. But

whether they identified as activists or leaders, they faced similar barriers as LGBTQ Latinx students trying to effect change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the methods for this project rooted in grounded theory and intersectionality theory. I use semi-structured interviews to identify themes rooted in my participants' experiences to suggest areas for further research about LGBTQ+ Latinx student leaders and activists. As a member of the group I am studying, I bring an insider/outsider perspective to this research that helps inform my analysis of the gaps in the literature and my participants' interviews. In the next chapter, I identify and explain the themes from these interviews and offer suggestions for areas where further research is needed.

Chapter 4 Findings

A wide range of themes emerged from my interviews with LGBTQ+ Latinx student leaders and activists. While my sample population is too small to create broad generalizations, I can use what I learned from them to suggest directions for much-needed future research. As I discuss these themes in this chapter, I will use an intersectional lens to make sense of what my participants told me. This preliminary data will point us toward broad areas where further research is needed to understand this population of students and to help develop practices on campuses to support LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists.

Navigating Multiple Intersecting Identities in Single-Axis Contexts

How my participants understand their complex identities is a reflection of how personal and social understandings and structures of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality shape one another within systems of oppression. While for them, they are at all times LGBTQ Latinx, “single-axis” (May 2015) thinking often puts them in situations where they are expected to identify as LGBTQ or Latinx but not both. Within dominant White culture, they are the racialized other. Within dominant LGBTQ culture, they are expected to subsume racial identity for LGBTQ solidarity, and within dominant Latinx culture they are expected to deny LGBTQ identities as antithetical to the culture.

Veronica explains:

It really does become a kind of pick a side or take an identity, especially when you have multiple identities. For me, my experience has always been you either pick your queer identity or you pick your racial identity, but you can't have both. Even when you exist in both and you live in both and experience life with all these multiple identities.

She adds that on campus, however, she has seen more efforts among student groups to advocate for LGBTQ inclusion and for LGBTQ students to have greater access to campus resources. Still, she notes, the intersections between racial identity and LGBTQ identity have not yet been recognized and explored as much as she would like to see happen. Veronica's concerns echo Vivian May's reminder that intersectional thinking must address in-group inequities. In other words, Latinx student organizations need to address sexism, homophobia, and transphobia within the group and LGBTQ groups must address racism, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia. (2015).

L. says that they have felt excluded from Latinx communities on campus and therefore have focused on participation in LGBTQ communities:

Unfortunately I am not as involved in any of our Latinx communities at all. It sucks, but at the same time I'm here for two years. Do I want to do that emotional labor when I have all this extra stuff going on? So I stick more to my queer identity, and that's more my focus. I can be queer and Latinx at the pride center. That doesn't even phase me. But to step into Latinx spaces on campus or whatever, yeah, no. I feel this wall come up. I can't be myself. I can but idk it feels like such a conservative space. And it even feels more conservative to me sometimes than other dominant White spaces on campus. Which is very conflicting and it bothers me.

L. adds that Latinx culture was not a strong influence in their household growing up. L's grandparents were Protestant, and L learned about food and bonded with their grandparents' indigenous roots and connections to the land.

Miranda's struggle with identity came mostly with the LGBTQ community in her home country of Brazil. As a bisexual woman, she encountered difficulty in being accepted as bisexual:

I feel like a lot of people talk about how you have to come out. I do believe it's different for bisexual people. There is a lot of discussion around biphobia, if that exists, if it doesn't exist. It's a whole fight. I usually keep quiet. Especially because the thing is, there is a difference. I think there is a problem that you have to prove yourself when you're bi, and I feel like I was always trying to come out to the LGBT community. I was always trying to prove to the LGBT community that I was bi enough. That I dated enough women to be part of the community, but at the same time every time I was with a man, I was considered at that point straight for the LGBT community, and they did not consider me part of it anymore.

Proving identities was a recurring theme in my conversations with my participants. For Neli, her experience with accepting herself as a lighter skinned Latinx person left her contemplating her racial identity as it connects to her LGBTQ work at her school:

I'm fairly light skin, and I'm always having to mitigate this. It's hard to negotiate. It's kind of hard to negotiate the world of being a person of color. Then just being light skin because I face, I guess I'm just not being fully accepted. I face a lot of comments like, 'Oh, you're not a person of color because you're very light-skinned,' or 'You're not White because you're Latinx and you're a person of color.' Also being in queer spaces with my job. I have to hang out in the queer space on campus a lot, just to hold office hours.

Neli says that at work, "There's a pressure that we have to choose one identity over the other."

Interestingly, Neli describes herself as a light skinned Latinx person as affected by colorism.

Typically, colorism describes the ways people of color rank darker skinned people lower than

lighter skinned people within their racial/ethnic groups, but Neli argues that many Latinx people themselves assume Latinx people have darker skin. She adds:

It's always about proving yourself. Where are your parents from? Having to speak Spanish. "Say something in Spanish or speak Mexican." Some people have even said that. Or *me preguntan so tu papa es el gringo* or like, who's the White one? And your parents. Is your mom the Mexican one? A lot of people are like, 'I thought you were White, but then when I heard you speak, it's definitely like you're not that, you're not White.'

Neli recognizes, however, that her experience as a light-skinned Latinx person is not the same as a darker skinned Latinx person who experiences colorism. Neli's struggles reflect the importance of an intersectional lens that can account for the complexity of experiences within systems of power. Neli's response reflects May's both/and approach—Neli can be both oppressed as a Latinx person within White supremacy and privileged within that same system as a light-skinned person.

Miguel recognizes that the struggle for acceptance by one's communities is intertwined with the struggle for self-acceptance. He explains that he used to emphasize that his last name was from Spain to prove he had ancestry from there. He says he identified more with being Spanish than being Mexican because he had been taught that being Mexican was bad. For him, his Mexican identity was also complicated by his undocumented status and his LGBTQ identity. He says:

Accepting my sexuality is what eventually let me accept the other identities that were perceived as deviant or that I thought society perceived as deviant. I finally found this community where I learned to accept what is considered wrong; which is not inherently

wrong. Maybe there's a better way of saying that, but there's nothing necessarily inherently by nature wrong. Which is who I am.

Veronica sees embracing and presenting her identity as a core of her activism. For her, particularly, body politics are important as she makes her identity as a Latinx transwoman visible. Claiming her identity, she says, is a way of asserting agency. "I still feel like my identity is lost or not seen or not heard," she explains. She uses her body as a site of resistance "to show here's another side of being someone with multiple identities and hoping that someone else like that inspires them or wants them to engage in some kind of change." Veronica utilizes what Vivian May (2105) calls the "resistant imaginary." By moving marginalized perspectives to the center, Veronica shows forgotten histories that allow us to take a look at creative possibilities and paths for our futures. Veronica is crafting and reclaiming her body and identity as a form of resistance as she consciously recreates what it means to be a Latinx transwoman.

Intersectionality theory allows us to investigate how students see themselves and how their identities situate them within university systems of power. Power relations and social inequality are ingrained in queer and Latinx histories and are often overlooked by university staff (Collins & Bilge, 2016). LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activist must negotiate the simultaneity of identities at a structural and individual level (May, 2015). Intersectionality theory helps us see the complexities in how LGBTQ Latinx students juggle their evolving identities within social institutions (Bilge & Collins, 2016).

My participants' responses about their identities at the crossroads of gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and class suggest a need for further research about how LGBTQ Latinx students navigate institutions that may treat their experiences as "single-axis" (May 2015) and what

institutions can do to support LGBTQ Latinx students exploring their identities as leaders and activists.

Facing Identity-Based Challenges in Institutions and Personal Relationships

The most consistent theme that arose in the interviews is the challenges, both personal and institutional, that LGBTQ+ Latinx students face while performing their leadership and activism. Students explained they faced structural institutional barriers, problems in institutional climate, challenges in the classroom, and struggles with family and faith. Not all students confronted the same difficulties, but, in one way or another, most of my participants dealt with some complications arising from their identities as LGBTQ Latinx leaders and activists. This is unsurprising given research that suggests both LGBTQ and Latinx students struggle on college campuses in ways specifically related to their intersecting identities (Pertuz, 2018; Serrano, 2018; Matos, 2018). What my preliminary research suggests is that these struggles are complicated by the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality in specific ways that need more exploration by researchers.

Institutional Rules and Campus Climate

While most U.S. colleges and universities are trying to take steps to improve campus climates for diverse students, LGBTQ students and students of color still often face institutional barriers and indifferent if not hostile climates. Although cultural resource centers, residential halls, and minority student organizations exist as supports for diverse students and are labeled “safe spaces,” students still advocate for university administrators to address the lack of diversity at their PWI (Harpalani, 2017).

For example, Latinx students often must interact with university staff and faculty who are not culturally competent. Furthermore, the need for role models among faculty and supportive staff who can motivate and encourage Latino students (Haro, 2004).

Many Latinx students are first generation students who may be unaware of how to navigate higher education. Latinx students must find supportive and active alumni, support groups, and upper class students who can assist in the successful negotiation of campus environments. This form of mentorship is crucial toward survival and success on college campuses (Haro, 2004).

LGBTQ students, likewise, may experience faculty, staff, and peers who express implicit or explicit bias, and, while in Oregon discrimination against LGBTQ people is illegal, subtle forms of discrimination continue, even on college and university campuses. While this study focuses on students in Oregon, I also recognize that 29 US states do not have protections for LGBTQ+ people and so LGBTQ+ students face greater likelihood of overt and institutional discrimination than do the participants in my study.

Students in my study identify a number of ways that institutional rules and practices constituted challenges for them. For example, many participants find themselves questioning the decisions campus administrators made to create “safe space.” Miguel tells me a story that demonstrates how tricky the intersections of race, culture, and sexuality are and how well-meaning university administrators do not always understand the intricacies of the problem.

Miguel witnessed a “secret performance” by a group of football players who dressed in “skinny jeans and crop tops” to dance at a Hawaiian luau. A member of the school’s diversity council even choreographed the dance. Miguel was uncomfortable, both with the cultural appropriation and the implied homo/transphobia of the performance of “gender expression being

used for comedic relief.” Miguel approached the diversity council and later received an email from the choreographer claiming, “That I made an error and I’m uneducated about Hawaiian culture.” Miguel felt that the email was not particularly warm or welcoming of his critique of the performance, and he felt conflicted about even raising the issue because he did not want to be singled out for raising issues. Still, he worries that this interaction reflects the difficulties of holding campus administrators responsible for instances that contribute to an unwelcoming campus climate. L, a student at another institution, reports a similar response, this time from state legislators, when they lobby on behalf of higher education. Again, L notes, people with power do not fully understand the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, and social class for students. L explains:

I am really involved on campus with a lot of student government. I also lobby in Salem on behalf of student interests in regards to tuition hikes, funding, higher education. I feel very passionate about being involved in politics.

At the end of the day you realize that all these senators and representatives are just regular people. That’s like getting past that title. And some of them use that title to kind of intimidate, and lobbying is full of a shit ton of microaggressions. Just brushing it off, like the more I feel the microaggressions, I think people think it’s going to push me away, if anything it adds fuel to my fire. I love being in a space where people feel I shouldn’t be there. Like I am here and I’m going to stay. So get over it.

Both L and Miguel recognize that these experiences advocating for diverse students give them opportunities for activism and leadership. Even though Miguel does not have a formal role in advocacy and feels as though he is being shut out, he still feels the need to express how this is troublesome on his campus. L also has been able to use their formal platform to defend and honor

silenced voices on campus. Students are not the only ones that recognize a need for advocacy and diversity. In a study of 500 university presidents from four year institutions, over one half of respondents indicated that racial diversity and racial climate have been a much greater concern on their campuses in the last three years. This indicates that administrators are aware of racial tensions on their campuses (Harpalani, 2017). Furthermore, Veronica Flores also notes the disconnect between stated commitments to diversity and actual institutional practices:

I think another thing that's important is that link, they want diversity, but then when you try to engage with say one way that they can actually practice diversity, that isn't just, we're going to show you a pamphlet of people that are not necessarily White, to show you that we have diversity in this campus. It's that whole structure of they have power, they have the money and you're paying to be there and you don't have the privileges that they hold for your voice to be reached in the way that you want it to be reached.

As Veronica continues to express to me the lack of structure supporting diverse students and how her campus fails to acknowledge the needs of students, she notes that while campus resource centers provide one institutional structure for supporting diverse students, they are hardly adequate to bring about true inclusion and equity.

Then again that doesn't address the full issue that we're trying to talk about because it still gets swept under the rug and ignored. But they are like 'oh yeah, the gender, sexuality, women's studies is putting on an event. Another thing where the queer resource center is doing another. Anything cool, whatever, as long as it makes us look good'. Then find the moment that we ask for more or we do something as the leader that are shit activist and had us shed a light on the negative aspects of our university. And how it's not necessarily

supporting the students, which should be, particularly the ones with marginalized identity who struggle a lot and ended up either dropping out or transferring or trying to just find their community on campus through other identity based campus organizations and stuff.

She notes that centers are woefully unprepared to deal with students “with multiple identities.” She worries that the current configuration of centers actually pits diverse groups against one another. She argues, “We have our differences and our commonalities, but we need to come together and not just for our commonalities, but for our differences.” What these students are bumping up against is the ways power is fixed in social institutions like higher education. For instance, Bilge and Collins describe the importance of the domains of power across systematic institutions, cultural and interpersonal aspects of ourselves and our society (2016). For instance, within higher education, the presumed identity that represents structures of power is identifying as White, heteronormative, and male. Nonetheless, social domains of power, are not equipped to deal with LGBTQ students’ multiple identities and their experiences with racism and homophobia (2016). Eliza suggests that at least graduate unions have created space for graduate employees to feel support, voice concerns, and exercise leadership. Miguel wishes his campus had a queer resource center working with the multicultural center on his campus. Miranda would like to see more support specifically for international Latinx students. She’s especially concerned about the assumption that Latinx means Mexico, and she notes that institutions needs to pay attention to students from other Latin American countries as well.

The common struggle for these students is with institutions that profess commitment to diversity yet fail to implement these commitments in ways that actually change campus climate and support diverse students. Most of the LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists I interviewed are

looking to create changes that allow marginalized students to feel safe and included as they navigate their identities. As students question how their own marginalized identities are tested, the lack of culturally relevant leadership initiatives constitutes a significant barrier to LGBTQ Latinx students and has a general negative impact on people who are interested in more inclusive leadership (Suarez, 2015).

Academic Structures and Language

Many participants offer examples of how academic environments exacerbate problems for LGBTQ Latinx student activists/leaders. In particular, they note difficulties with curriculum, areas of study, and language. Again, this is unsurprising given the existing literature already notes that LGBTQ and Latinx students do not always find themselves reflected in the curriculum and that particular fields of study are less welcoming of diverse students. Again, for my participants, the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality are key and point to gaps in our understanding of how specifically LGBTQ Latinx student leaders/activists navigate higher education and what structural transformations and resources they might need.

For the past twenty years higher education has attempted to transform curricula to represent to include a greater representation of histories and perspectives. Often this process has been simply additive; histories and/or issues of diverse groups have been tacked onto existing content. Some critics have referred to this process as “Heroes and Holidays.” This “add and stir” (Bailey 2011) approach, however, does not acknowledge the hidden curriculum embedded in the traditional content and educational processes that make “add and stir” ineffective in actually transforming the curriculum.

Another approach asks faculty to re-center curriculum with issues, histories, perspectives, and knowledges of diverse people at the core of the content. Of course, this approach requires a rethinking of entire disciplines, and most faculty have not been trained to do that. Some institutions, such as Oregon State University offer faculty development seminars to assist in this process (<https://red.engr.oregonstate.edu/2019-2020>). Courses range from academic leadership to social justice learning and engagement workshops that can be integrated in classroom settings. Despite efforts to transform curriculum, however, most classrooms still reflect traditional disciplinary (read White, male) standards that create barriers to success for diverse students. While Latinx students are accustomed to navigating their identities in multiple worlds and settings, predominantly White institutions must provide opportunities for Latinx students to thrive as they are reflected in the curriculum on college campuses (Pertuz, 2018). . We know that LGBTQ and Latinx histories and perspectives on racism, cisnormativity, and conforming to heteronormative culture rarely show up in course content (Serrano, 2018). My research suggests we also need to examine how LGBTQ Latinx perspectives are omitted, often, even in classrooms that center feminist, LGBTQ, or critical race content.

Eliza talks specifically about problems of curriculum for LGBTQ Latinx student leaders/activists. Eliza is a graduate teaching assistant in women and gender studies. Eliza is developing a workshop for teachers in Brazil as a way to assist in having a liberatory curriculum for high school students in her country.

She's particularly concerned that her curriculum is inclusive, supportive of students, and liberatory. She wants to offer a curriculum that is responsive to student needs and create a

classroom environment that is warm, welcoming, and supportive for diverse students. She explained:

The hard part is when you're thinking about curriculum transformation. As I'm in the process of developing this curriculum, and I've realized that I don't want it to be a curriculum. I think it needs to be something so organic that people can work with depending on whether they are working with the curriculum or not. If they have better things to work [with], or just share what they're doing. If it's implemented, create a web of reciprocity.

For Eliza the process of curriculum transformation is inherently related to activism outside the classroom. She notes how conversations quickly merge public and private spheres, how talking about personal lives connects with political engagement and underlines the importance of understanding how systems such as religion and politics work to maintain the status quo.

The question of fields of study was another site of struggle in the academy for a number of my participants. Lola explains how the "White side" of her family questions her choice of ethnic studies as a major and applies pressure for her to study something they see as connected to employment. She noted:

On the White side of my family, I'm the first person to go to college, so they ask: what are you going to do with your 'ethnic studies degree or your public health degree? What kind of job are you going to get?' Like to be honest, I don't think the job I want has been created yet and so I'm going to have to like do some work and like work different jobs to figure out career wise. They're like, 'Is that smart? Should you be doing that to be financially stable?' That's not really the point right now but they just don't have to capacity

to understand that because they haven't had certain experiences or they are just stuck in their ways which is okay.

Other participants describe struggles specifically within STEM fields. Lola notes how on the one hand many STEM fields are still predominantly White, straight, and male and on the other STEM fields are constantly trying to recruit more women and people of color into the disciplines. Lola notes the importance of having an advisor who is not only supportive but also shares identities as a contributing factor in her success as an ethnic studies and public health major. Miguel describes how he struggled with aligning his activist commitments with his major:

So I wanted to be a nurse . . . I was kind of at a loss of how to connect my academia with my activism. . . . I was a pre nursing student, and . . . I felt like nursing, wasn't going to be the right path for me at this point in time. So I flipped my academia around to anthropology because I felt that was a more direct access to kind of addressing these issues within, you know, public health or the medical fields.

Both Lola and Miguel ultimately found ways to connect their fields of study and their activism.

Some participants also struggle with integrating their academics with their feminism and activism. Miranda explains how now that she is in school, her feminism feels disconnected from her activism:

. . . it is something that it takes a lot from you, being an activist and a feminist . . . I can't talk about feminism without thinking about activism. The two are very connected to me. But I do consider myself as a feminist, but I do know it takes a lot, and when I think about feminism, like in Brazil it was very different than here.=//. Here I feel like I don't do as

much as I used to do. I feel like the academic field is very disconnected from the community. I miss that part about activism.

I resonated with Miranda's struggle. For me, studying academic feminism has been a transformative experience and one that has given me agency in growing and expanding my knowledge in ways that give a voice to those who are marginalized. At the same time, I've struggled to balance the demands of graduate school with my desire to be involved as an activist and show up in Latinx communities and supporting marginalized groups through volunteer work, poetry workshops, or simply spending time with at-risk LGBTQ youth. Miranda too struggles with being an activist within an institution of higher education:

I don't know if that is the wording. I just think of this institutional person, and I don't consider myself that. And again I'm rethinking my role in the institution. And I'm rethinking my role as a student and as a feminist lately . . . I do consider myself an activist, but I think I've been different types of activist at different moments of my life . . . I feel like I'm more of an activist when I'm doing in person and in community work. I do believe there are ways to have leadership and activism inside of academic institutions. I just think it's really hard, and we have to think of how we use like 'decolonizing and dismantling the institution.

I don't know if I would consider that activism anymore, if we are just doing that for a really small group of people that have access to that. How much of that is really activism?

What my participants describe makes sense from the perspective of intersectionality where identities are constantly being reconstructed as identities and institutions mutually shape and reshape one another (May 2015).

For Miranda and others, language is a significant site of struggle in a number of ways.

Miranda notes that the predominance of English in the university is problematic:

It's important to discuss the language that we use. Not just literally the type of language and how hard it is like the text that we write and everything, but are we writing things in like other languages other than English? Are we going in considering their backgrounds?

Considering their first language and how they write?

Research supports Miranda's contention that language is problematic, including the ways in which it continues to be gendered. Additionally, as Lola notes, for people of color, the use of language in predominantly White contexts is fraught:

The biggest challenge is not worrying about how I am going to be perceived by others. It's so hard not to worry about that, but at the same time I want to say what I want to say, without harming other people. Without people thinking I'm inappropriate or unprofessional. It's not what it is. I'm sick and tired of professional ideals being correlated with blunt straight ideals. But it's like it's not. I was talking the other day about saying the word 'fuck,' and I was like I wish it was used more commonly, in casual conversation, and not always have a negative connotation to aggression and people of color being aggressive. That's what a lot of it is. It's like if you are a person of color and you say the word 'fuck,' you are probably mad, or mean, or uneducated, and I'm like that's not true!

She also notes how language plays a role in stereotyping people of color and how language is connected to ways people perform gender.

For queer Latinx students, these struggles in the academy reflect the intersections of gender, race, and sexuality within predominantly White institutions of higher education. Beyond the typical

college struggles of homework and class schedules, LGBTQ Latinx students navigate a curriculum in which they are largely invisible, academic fields that are unwelcoming or majors not supported by family, constraints of academic structures not built for LGBTQ Latinx students, and tensions between academic work and activism. These spaces in the academy function to discipline students' lives, as Collins and Bilge (2016) suggest by defining what is and is not open to them, what options are or are not afforded them. My interviews suggest a need for further exploration of the specifics of how these struggles work specifically for queer Latinx student leaders/activists and what interventions and transformations are needed to support the academic and activist work of LGBTQ Latinx student leaders/activists.

Gender Roles, Religion and Family Dynamics

In my own family, I am the oldest of five, with four younger brothers. Traditional beliefs about gender shaped me towards performing the gender that was given to me at birth. As I identify as a woman, my gender expression in my family was shaped around being caring, nurturing, and mother-like, and these expectations were further reinforced by the Catholic Church of which we were a part. In fact, I was not able to understand my own sexual identity until I attended college and took my introductory women and gender studies course. I came out to my family during a very traditional Thanksgiving dinner. My mother's initial reaction was that pregnancy would have been a much better option, and she questioned whether I would ever have children.

The connections between gender roles, sexuality, and religion within Latinx families can be intimidating for people who do not identify with gender and sexual norms. Christian churches provide many Latinx people with a place to develop and practice their spirituality and religious

faith, but often these congregations complicate family dynamics for LGBTQ people. L describes their frustration with traditions and gendered expectations within their family:

So many women in my family have college degrees. But it's expected like once you find a husband that's supposed to be more educated than you, all of a sudden, you're the one that has less to sacrifice. So then you're going to stay home and be a wife and a mother. And even when I started my undergrad, someone in my family was like, 'Now you have a chance to like look for a husband there.' It's like that's why I'm not going to school. It makes me so upset that so many college educated women in my family have let all that go for the sake of being like the perfect mom.

Neli's family found out about her sexuality when she left a note from the counseling services at her school that discussed support for LGBTQ people. Neli describes the challenge she faced with her parents discovering her sexuality:

This was the part where [my father] was confusing sexuality and gender. In my parents, in my dad's mind, well, in a lot of my family's mind, it's like, '*si me gustan las mujeres significa que quiero ser hombre y que me quiero vestir como hombre*' ('If I like women, that signifies that I want to be a man, and that I want to dress as a man'). So that's the thought that my mom said that my dad had. And she said that my dad was crying, and saying that he'll never see his daughter in a dress and she still never see her wedding day and he'll never see me have children or whatever. Kind of having these traditional values in his head, replaying and I was like, me trying to, my mom also tried to like talk to my dad about it and tried to smooth things over. My mom was saying, well, you know Neli's bisexual.

Neli's family holds very traditional notions of gender and conflates those with sexuality. So they assume that if she likes women, then she will act like a man or wants to be a man. So Neli decides to challenge her father's ideas about gender and sexuality:

I want to prove my dad wrong. And so I went to prom and I even asked him if he could come with me to pick a prom dress and I got all feminine and wearing a dress and everything for prom. And I did my makeup mainly just prove my father wrong. That no, just because I like women does not mean that I'm going to be dressing as a man or does not mean that I want to be a man.

For Neli, guiding her father in understanding the difference between gender and sexuality was a transformative experience that challenged their relationship. Later on, Neli explains that her father seemed to begin to understand the difference between gender expression and sexual attraction. These intersecting notions about gender and sexuality were a common source of frustration for my participants.

Most people believe that people are the gender they are assigned at birth. Heteronormative assumptions also mean that people expect other people to be straight. These dominant norms also shape Latinx families and traditions. One example is *Mariamismo*, the gendered expectations that Latinx women must be subordinate, quiet, and submissive toward men and uphold and maintain the family (Pertuz, 2018). These intersections of gender and sexuality and family are also complicated by religion for my participants. On the one hand, religious upbringings and participation in a religious congregation are important parts of Latinx culture and values. On the other, religion oftentimes muddles already fraught situations further. Miranda makes this connection:

My family does not talk about sex. My family does not talk about kissing. My family does not talk about anything related to sex. Like if there was a kiss in the movie, I would like turn around, leave the room. If i had seen the movie and I knew there was any scenes with people kissing or having sex coming up, I will find an excuse, or go to the bathroom because it's just too awkward. We can't deal with sexual tension in my family. Religion is too strong.

Yet, religion is also a source that has driven her toward political involvement:

I feel like my activism has started in church. My activism started as charity. You know that's the thing. It started as this idea of I will help people because I'm better than them. You know this very bad idea that I'm helping someone else. But I enjoyed it. I liked participating because it made me feel good, but because I really enjoyed it. Like making soup and going to poor neighborhoods, not because I was like 'Oh I'm not as bad [off],' no not that. But it was like, 'Holy shit! People are living like this, and I didn't even know,' and my parents made me do that since I was very young. I thought it was nice. Not everyone has it as good as you. Like this idea of giving it back. Even though I don't agree with this, your putting yourself on this high horse like 'Oh I'm so charitable' and like not giving a shit about everyone else. That sometimes people do. But I feel like this is where it started for me. And I kind of worked on it throughout my life.

Miranda's contradictory experiences with family and religion inform her activism towards reproductive justice work in Brazil. Although not all LGBTQ people of color have negative experiences with religious identities, some choose to reject religious entities altogether. L, mentions this in their story:

My coming out story was not very nice. Growing up in the Christian church I remember us getting these youth classes, yes, while the adults were having their bible study, and the youth would be separate. And we were having this talk about relationships, and like your body being a temple and all this stuff, and I was about 10? I want to say 10 or 11. I remember asking, 'What about people who like girls but they're girls or boys who like boys?' I remember the youth pastor like right away asking, 'Is that how you feel? Is that what you think?' 'Yes.' And like asking me about it. And then when we all came together the old people and the young people for the sermon part of church, that youth pastor went in front of the whole congregation and outed me basically.

Religion is a powerful institution that shapes other institutions (such as family) and individual lives. Like education, it disciplines people (Collins and Bilge 2016) by constraining choices and promoting ideas about morality, identities, and acceptability. Because many Christian churches oppose same sex relationships, the coming out process can be especially hard for Christian Latinx LGBTQ youth. Certainly, for me, growing up Catholic played a role in my struggles. Apart from attending mass every Sunday and participating in youth groups, my family required me to attend confessions regularly and participate in communion. Interestingly my extended family became much more devoted to the congregation than my own mother. My mother believed in spirituality and continues to be open towards spiritual healing and believes in God as one entity that can be worshiped and loved by anyone. Nonetheless, many traditions such as Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and the day of the Virgin Guadalupe are still celebrated in my mother's household.

For many of my participants, family plays a mixed important role in supporting their senses of gender and sexuality. Lola describes her need to separate from her family, even as she loves them and they love her:

I grew up with the White side of my family, so that led a lot to how I thought and mannerisms and things. And like growing up and like separating myself from them, I used to always feel obligated to them I don't have to feel guilty about my separation. They weren't necessarily what was best for me. Even though they have so much love for me. I still have so much love for them. Like it's okay for that separation to happen.

On a similar note, Veronica Flores describes her struggles to define herself in the midst of her family's expectations:

For me it was people given their womanhood without question. You were a girl; now you're definitely a woman. So for me it was like, okay, I'm now reclick, like #findingmywomanhood, my own culture, and being given this gift for my own culture that isn't coming from my own family or blood related relatives, but from my chosen families, so to speak. . . . My *quinceanera* was like the pinnacle. This is it. This is the time that I get to say, No, for a matter of fact, I am a woman, no matter what you have said.' This happened, this ceremony, this religious ceremony, and we did it our way, and that's that.

Veronica's *quinceanera* experience was the turning point in feeling and identifying as her true self. As she challenged her family and gained her own support system, she redefined what family means for her as she reclaims her identity. So at the moment when traditional womanhood is conferred on her by her community, she embraces the reality of her own sense of gender, no matter how traditional Latinx values attempt to impose cisgender norms.

For many of my participants, challenge to family is a place of ongoing activism. Neli explains how she has felt effective in allowing her activism and leadership to be transformative:

Having these tools that I've definitely picked up with different roles that I have on campus has helped me in particular with my family. They have these biases, or they had biases, I'm not sure where they stand now. [Being a campus leader] has helped me deconstruct different, biases that they may have, especially the gender and sexuality one. I've definitely helped my family understand how both are different from each other and conservative friends I've, with whatever knowledge that I have, I've helped them understand different things.

Similarly, L sees how her activism has had an impact on their family.

The only place I see my activism having a lasting impression is I am the oldest grandchild in my immediate family, and because I was the only openly queer person, within my immediate family, my younger cousins and siblings are coming out with their own identities without shame. I love my family. They are very capitalist in so many ways. Of like not caring [about] stepping on the little man or person to get ahead. So I'm hoping that the younger relatives in my family will realize that that's not the only way to be successful, and success isn't always equal to your bank account. I'm hoping in 5 to 10 years they are doing their own stuff, and I will know that I helped plant that seed.

For my participants, gender, sexuality, family, and religion are all tied up in complicated ways that are both frustrating and encouraging. They have struggled against their families and challenged their families to grow in understanding and acceptance. They have pushed the

boundaries of religious upbringings and institutions and their families' devotion to the church. These experiences have bolstered their activism, and their activism has changed their families.

Nation of Origin and Family's National Heritage

LGBTQ Latinx identity is complicated by students' nation of origin or their family's national heritage. Where they or their family are from matters in how they understand themselves as LGBTQ and Latinx and how they are positioned in relation to social power. Citizenship is an incredibly significant factor in how LGBTQ Latinx identities are constructed. U.S. citizenship bestows access to a number of important rights, namely the right to be in the country, although that does not protect Latinx people from racism and the assumption that they are not citizens. For both non-citizens who are here on a visa or undocumented students, citizenship status can make LGBTQ Latinx identity particularly fraught, particularly with the threat of deportation or refused readmission should they go home.

Both Miranda and Eliza are from Brazil. They note that until coming to the U.S. they did not really identify as Latinx since Brazil is not a Spanish-speaking country. But in coming to the U.S. to study, they both began to see themselves as Latinx as a way to identify with their Latin American nationality, even though they are both seen as White in Brazil. Eliza, however, also has U.S. citizenship. She recognizes that her ability to come to the U.S. to study reflects a certain level of privilege, and she acknowledges that the privilege she has affects her activism. It's a "complicated thing," she explains, "sometimes it's easier if you have some comfort to push further." Her response demonstrates how social power shapes identity and the kinds of spaces people have to act. Because she has U.S. citizenship, she has a different level of safety in speaking out about issues of social justice than a student who is here on a visa or is undocumented.

Miguel emigrated from Mexico at the age of two. Miguel recalls his family being protective of his immigration status. He states: “you can’t share this about yourself, you can’t tell them that you’re not a citizen here because that’s bad and bad things will happen to the family.” Miguel is undocumented, although he is currently enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that gives legal status to immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children. Of course, DACA is under threat by the current administration, and so Miguel’s status is anything but settled. He notes how LGBTQ activism often misses the intersections that define his precarity: “For example, I would always see the Human Rights Campaign advocating for same sex marriage being allowed and stuff like that, but as like a LGBTQ Latinx person, that’s not the only thing that matters to me, considering I am a DACA student or an undocumented individual. So before I’m even concerned about whether or not I can marry someone, it’s whether or not I can remain in this country,”

Miguel’s story highlights the importance of understanding intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and nation. We need further research to explore how being undocumented has specific and different effects on LGBTQ Latinx student leaders. Undoubtedly, the added stresses of worrying about deportation complicate the ways undocumented Latinx students can be engaged publicly in leadership and activism.

Individual and Systemic Discrimination and Prejudice on Campus

Latinx and LGBTQ people experience many forms of individual and systemic prejudice and discrimination. While some of these experiences are overt (name-calling and refusal of service), many are more subtle. In a study of microaggressions against LGBTQ people, Koob and Vaccaro (2019) found common experiences of microassaults and microinvalidations (dismissing

and invalidating LGBTQ people). Buckingham et al (2017) found that communities that received Latinx immigrants were often influenced negatively toward these people because of stereotypical media representations. My participants also experienced prejudice and discrimination as LGBTQ Latinx students.

Miguel's experience illustrates the experience of stereotypes and microaggressions based on racial/ethnic identity:

I'm used to people finding out that I wasn't born here and then they're like, 'What? You speak so well and that doesn't make sense. I just would never have thought that.' Which is interesting to me because it makes me guess what that says about their expectations [about] people who do have an accent. It becomes an automatic assumption about what qualities I must have as a citizen to be here. But in reality it's like I have a multitude of barriers, and yet I'm still here.

Miranda also highlights the problem of stereotyping. She explains, "[P]eople have said to me, 'You probably like Mexican food and stuff like that because you're from Brazil and you are so close to Mexico.' It's so funny to me because sometimes people in the U.S. just imagine that like anything south of the U.S. is just like one big Mexico." She also notes as an international student from Brazil how often she is struck by how racial/ethnic identity is so prominent in interactions in the U.S. She points to boxes on forms that ask about racial/ethnic identity. "Your first identity is always [racial] here. You're Latina first. And it's not a bad identity for me; it's just interesting how that is my first identity here." Miranda illustrates what May describes as an either/or thinking that is "single-axis." Single-axis thinking perpetuates reducing multiple identities to one primary identity (2015). Miranda experiences prejudice by being identified as a Latina first rather than being seen

for all of her identities simultaneously. Single-axis thinking can further perpetuate stereotyping and can overlook one's simultaneous privileges and disadvantages (May, 2015).

Neli finds herself filtering what she says at work. She explains, "It feels like I have to constantly be filtering myself out because if you're talking about racial justice or just White privilege, you have to be careful or else it's like people will later mention it on an evaluation, it feels like, 'Hey, you have to be careful what you say because it may make other coworkers feel uncomfortable' when predominantly my coworkers are White." Neli also notes that racial profiling is "a very big thing in Oregon." Similarly, Miranda explains how fear of offending White people often silences Latinx people. "It's something that completely stops the conversation before it happens. . . . every Latina or Latinx student I know felt like they had to be shut up." She continues, "It just puts you in the position that you need to shut up and listen to other people's experiences that are more important than yours and more valuable than yours. Then other people's opinions that are more valuable than yours and just kinda repeat the colonization cycle."

L., however, refuses to be silent or to yell. They explain that in their activist work they are attentive to engagement in the process in the face of stereotypes:

I just try to stay focused on what my goals are and what kind of person I want to be. I'm hoping that stands out to other people to show them they can be who they are as well. And they don't have to hide or give in to societal expectations. I am soft spoken so people try to overpower me, but I refuse to yell. I want to be heard at my own volume. It's been a challenge, yeah, and there's some people that are in there that are so loud it's like. 'You're loud, but you're not really saying much.'

Many students that are involved in activism and leadership have experienced discrimination of some kind. Urrieta (2009) examines how Chicana/o educators enact agency and resistance within “Whitestream” institutions from which they are culturally and linguistically alienated. He notes how activists must balance “playing the game” and staying true to their own values and identities. On the one hand, they are able to resist and advocate for change, while, on the other, they remain within the institutions they challenge.

Within the institution of education, Miranda and Neli both describe an oppressive silence, one makes them feel as if they are unable to speak up during times of injustice. As students, even as activists, they remain embedded in a system of institutional power that disadvantages LGBTQ students and students of color and is completely unequipped to support LGBTQ Latinx students. Power relations shape institutional arrangements (Collins and Bilge 2016), and for LGBTQ Latinx students that means being situated in complex and constraining ways within universities not build with them in mind. . Nonetheless, my participants enacted agency and worked for change within institutions not necessarily set up for them or welcoming of their differing perspectives. Lola’s experience is a good example of how difficult activist work is for LGBTQ Latinx people. She expected to create a more inclusionary space for LGBTQ+ Latinx students in Panhellenic sororities at her school, but she ended up in a conflict that led to her dismissal from the sorority. Lola was body image coordinator and vice president of chapter development, and she aspired to create a more diverse and inclusive atmosphere for women of color interested in Panhellenic sororities.. She explains:

I was actually kicked out. The circumstances are very disheartening and sad, I truly believe a lot of it has to do with my position in the world. Like being of this identity. It was very

overt, is that the word? Like the people who are in the position of resigning my membership, taking away my membership, probably don't realize how this interplays because they are so privileged in that aspect. But I think about it and I see what's happening. Would this be the same way if I were different? No it wouldn't. It's really hard to come to terms with because especially those people are like my good friends but like what are they going to do. I'm just going to try and be the best version of me I can be.

In her position in the sorority, Lola had tried to support her peers, but overt discrimination prevented her from asking deeper questions and challenging the organization which eventually ousted her. The position that Lola was in was complex for many reasons. Lola described feeling as though her identities as a woman of color and as a bisexual women contributed to her being removed from the sorority. Nonetheless, Lola describes "not feeling understood, and having to always stay quiet and do what they tell me." Lola's efforts in addressing the diversity issues that she described fell between the cracks. In our conversations, Lola continues to describe the misconception of women of color being seen as "loud and rambunctious."

Similar to Lola, Veronica, who is an openly trans woman of color, struggles with the tensions between being an activist and leader and prejudice and discrimination against her within her organization. On her campus, very few people openly identify as LGBTQ Latinx students. She notes that few students of color are on campus anyway, and many of those who are Latinx "perpetuate this exclusionary aspect of we don't want queers within our organization." She says that when she has engaged campus organizations, they have often questioned the need for allyship with LGBTQ students. She finds herself "being kind of the outspoken campus speaker for certain trans issues or racial issues or any kind of issues within the intersections with my own identity or

the realm of student leadership and activism.” She says the work “has rewards and the sense that you do see some opportunities open to you because you are ‘diverse.’ Yet those same opportunities are somewhat exploitative and takes a lot out of you and places you in a position that you probably don't necessarily want to have.” Veronica’s feelings, then, about where she fits in are complex. On the one hand, she describes a growing Latinx campus community that is not accepting of her identity or LGBTQ identities more broadly, and on the other hand Veronica witnesses her activism and leadership being a catalyst that will push for change. My participants’ experiences of discrimination and prejudice suggest a need for more research on how faculty and staff can further support academic and social success for LGBTQ Latinx students. The need for community and leadership engagement opportunities can benefit both predominantly White institutions and Latinx students.

Art Activism as a Tool for Self-Expression and Social Change for LGBTQ Latinx Student Leaders and Activists

In addition to their work on campus, many participants noted that they also practice their activism and leadership in creative ways. Particularly through performance and poetry participants claimed their identities and advocated for change. Art activism is “the ability of art to function as an arena and medium for political protest and social activism” (Groys 2014).

Performance

Many LGBTQ participants talk about reclaiming their identities and finding a sense of belonging within performance. They suggest performing allows them to include traditional and cultural aspects in their leadership and activism. Miguel sees performance as a way to help with the mental and emotional labor required for being involved as a leader on his campus. Miguel points to his experience with drag performance:

I was offered to do this drag show. I wasn't hosting it, but they were allowing certain performers along with these professional drag queens were coming to campus. And ever since then at the end of the day it has given me an opportunity. At the end they had a Q and A and every year we get freshmen or transfer students. So it's just nice [for them] to be exposed to this community

Miguel notes that drag performance has made a difference on his campus. He also says it allows him to showcase what it means to be LGBTQ and Latinx. He adds that he sees drag as a form of leadership and activism. He acknowledges it is not what typically expect when they think about leadership and activism. “What does a wig and eyelashes have to do with our current political state?” he asks. He answers his own question. Drag is about breaking standards of femininity and masculinity and opening up the ways people can express both.

Similarly, Veronica Flores mentions “I loved performing. I loved doing art and, I like being creative.” She points to early feminist influences, like the Japanese anime series, Sailor Moon, and Chicana lesbian feminist Gloria Anzaldúa. She has developed a monologue that describes her experiences as a trans Latina, which she uses to challenge dominant narratives in theater. She explains that the monologue is not only about her experiences as a transwoman or even a trans Latina, but it is also about childhood trauma and the experience of being excluded from her culture and feeling that her womanhood was denied by her culture. Anzaldúa’s borderland theory also plays an important role in the monologue.

Anzaldúa identifies herself as a lesbian and as a mestiza woman who lives within and across borders and constraints within the United States. She writes, “The new *mestiza* copes by

developing a tolerance for contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view” (Anzaldua, 1987).

Anzaldúa’s approach has helped many scholars and activists understand our lived experiences in conjunction with our identities, by always having to negotiate and live within contradictions of U.S. and Mexican culture, religion, homophobia, and sexism (Anzaldua, 1987). Similarly, in my experience as a queer Latinx activist, Anzaldúa’s theory has given me the language to understand my own intersecting identities and my own upbringing within Mexican culture and the Spanish language. Anzaldúa’s theory is helpful in imagining how one fits in within the messiness of identifying within queerness and Mexican and American culture.

Poetry

Many participants write poetry as a form of self-expression and activism. Audre Lorde identifies writing poetry as a survival skill in her essay, “Poetry is not a Luxury” (1985). She explains that poetry is essential to what we envision for our futures; it allows us to put our fears into word, and our feelings into actions. Similar to Lorde, some of my participants identified using poetry in ways that empower them and moves them forward. Gloria Anzaldúa, also bridges the gap from theory formation to creative expression. Her poem “To live in the Borderlands mean you” describes what it means to live with duality of culture, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality:

To live in the borderlands means you
 are neither *hispana india negra espanola*
ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed
 caught in the crossfire between camps
 while carrying all five races on your back

not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,
is no longer speaking to you,

the *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*, that denying the Anglo inside you
is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

Cuando vives en la frontera

people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,

you're a *burra*, *buey*, scapegoat,

forerunner of a new race,

half and half-both woman and man, neither-a new gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to

put *chile* in the borscht,

eat whole wheat *tortillas*,

speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;

be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints;

Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to

resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,

the pull of the gun barrel,

the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands

you are the battleground

where enemies are kin to each other;

you are at home, a stranger,
 the border disputes have been settled
 the volley of shots have scattered the truce
 you are wounded, lost in action
 dead, fighting back;
 To live in the Borderlands means
 the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off
 your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart
 pound you pinch you roll you out
 smelling like white bread but dead;
 To survive the Borderlands
 you must live *sin fronteras*
 be a crossroads (1987).

In her poem, Anzaldúa describes her experience in the late 80's as she battles with accepting and contemplating what it means to live within the borderlands. "To live within the borderlands" suggests that you do not belong to your ethnic/racial ancestors and you find your way within American culture. To live in the borderlands, as Anzaldúa suggests, points toward a new stream of consciousness that creates a new perspective. Anzaldúa's approach towards thoughts, experiences, our identities, and growing pains, are all intertwined within us as it is reflected in her poem and creative work of students from all backgrounds.

Both Veronica Flores and Lola discuss using poetry as a form of expression. Lola explains how her personal growth and development have led her toward creative work in classes and

spoken word performance. She says poetry provides an outlet to talk about issues that are most important to her. She also uses Instagram not only as a tool for social media, but also as a means to share empowering messages and poetry about body image and self-esteem. Lola says her poetry performance makes her feel effective in her leadership:

Whether that's performing at open mic night or being involved on campus doing that. And even in poetry club. Sometimes speaking to them about certain poems I've written or just sharing it, I feel like I've made a difference a little bit. It doesn't have to be some big group of people. Sometimes it can just be a small group of people, and that's totally okay.

Lola, Miguel and Veronica all use art activism as a way to express themselves politically. LGBTQ students of color and professionals also continue to write critical pieces that demonstrate the adage, "the personal is political."

As I situate myself within my own research as an insider/outsider, I find myself identifying with my participants in many ways, including as an activist writer and poet at the intersection of the fields of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Latinx studies. My work is intended to give access to those who are not a part of higher education. At the same time, I ground myself in writing about resistance as a graduate student, and a queer Latinx woman.

Recognition

No soy Cualquiera
 I touch the hot kitchen
 stove
 y
 Me gusta jugar con
 fuego
 I like to play with fire
 In blood, air, and force

Then

I turn the stove off.
 I don't need recognition,
 I need comprehension
 The stove burns quick
 And i turn crisp with the others
 hot, spicy & volatile.

Life affirmations

The waves bring silence
 to my theories
 The cool breeze gives me
 a sense of affirmation
 Green ferns bless my roots
 and those before me
 Introvertedness fills
 my hazy lungs like cool water
 In a hot sauna
 As the first time I came out
 Revelating,
 exciting,
 continuous
 As the clouds fill the atmosphere with wet musk air.

I.II.III.

Delicate scents sit neatly
 On my chest
 Fragile states/
 wash them away
 Repressed memories crawl
 From out of the vatican
 And regrets
 Wash up from
 the deep end.
 Distilled knowledge
 Is too flat;
 And broken stares still rise

A bright light house
 Signals
 The continuation of
 thoughts
 And a longing essence

Being out is not a privilege.
 It's dangerous
 Yet at a cost for some and a murder for others
 Who's to say it's me?
 I'm still living
 To want such a life
 And i'm still breathing
 One breath at a time
 Still fighting
 Still thriving
 Collectively.

What my ancestors reminded me of during Trumpster ERA

My Tias always taught me

To be one that fears no evil
 And especially fears no men
 Men controlled me and 5 other women
 My brothers taught me to stand tall and not dress like a slut

I still did anyway.

My sisters taught me that a coalition
 A support group was all I needed to stay sane from the trash
 When your life is filled with trauma
 When they dont want you here
 And by they
 You know who you are
 My grandma taught me shes always with me
 Mi angel de la guardia
 See they sell you the dream
 But the tears and hard work is sold separately
 The trauma is a life long gift
 Don't forget the PTSD

During the Trumpster era
My struggles taught me

They taught me

That a woman is UNBEARABLE
When she speaks her truth
When she's a puta
When she's a stripper
When she has an abortion
And when she flees her country
When she gives birth
When she gives her sweat
Her health
And lost time never gained
To a MAN
But I ain't no man Hater
TRUST ME.
She gives and gives
To a factory

My mother taught me

She taught me to be
UNICA

the one and only/

The one and only/ to PUSH THE SYSTEM
I Make Physical SPACE for me, for you, for the Trumpster

During my first year of graduate school, I began to question and play with language and words in a much less traditional sense. Having completed undergrad and noticed how feminist ideologies step away from Western theoretical frameworks that disregard literature and work done by qualitative researchers I felt a need to step out of my comfort zone. Through poetry and performance, I have found a new way to express my lived experiences, as a woman of color in the academy, a queer outsider, a Latinx person and as a way to reach folks that are outside of academia. Being able to integrate my poetry in and out of the academy for all to enjoy has been a

way to connect with other Latinx students and people of color who share the same or similar experiences regardless of social and class standing.

Veronica also briefly describes her experience with incorporating poetry into a larger project. By centering her experience as a trans woman, she incorporated intersections of femininity and exclusion within her racial identity into a narrative. Students like Veronica offer their experiences and perspectives into the world. For Veronica, engaging faculty and staff in conversations around how to improve the experiences of transgender of color students is essential even if the message is seen through subtle realms of activism through theater and performance.

Art activism mends and attempts to combine social action and uses art media as a political stance. While art in society is historically seen as useless, political art attempts to challenge the status quo and creates and inspires a new political action (Groys, 2014). LGBTQ Latinx students attempt to find a safe space where they are able to perform their creative work, participate in a poetry slam, engage in a community project, paint a political mural, or write encouraging messages on social media or through a blog post.

My participants are a perfect example of how art activism is useful in having a positive outlet to express themselves. As Veronica stated, “for me it's been within the past kind of a way to escape from all of the negative things around me. Especially when it comes to existing in a culture within another culture.” My participants’ responses point toward the positive effects of art activists and a need for further research around the benefits that art activism can have on LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists as a way to further understand their intersecting identities.

The Necessity for a Wide-Ranging Support System for LGBTQ Latinx Student Leaders and Activists

Finally, my participants talked about the support they both have and need to be successful as student activists and leaders. Family, friends, partners, and university faculty and staff sometimes provide necessary support and sometimes fail to provide what students need.

Battle, Harris, and Pastera (2017) found that 38% of participants feel completely supported by their families, and over 90% are out to their families. Among my participants all are out to their families. Some feel supported as students, although Neli says, “My mom has been a person that I can definitely talk to about what I'm going through. I said earlier, my relationship with my dad was strained a couple years ago, but he's been, he's learned to be more accepting and my relationship with him has gotten better and my parents in general are also my big support system. “In a study on Latinx undergraduate students at predominantly White institutions in the Midwest, Lozano (2105) found that most Latinx students feel supported by their families, even though their families may be not particularly familiar with the college context, students may need to expand a good deal of information about academia to their families.

Participants also describe supportive relationships with university faculty and staff. Lola shares her experience with her advisor with whom she closely identifies:

My advisor is queer and I think Hispanic. I'm not sure what he identifies, but he's the first person that I felt super like ‘You get me. You hear me. You understand what I'm doing.’ He is very welcoming. I think not just with my advisor who I think is a little pot of gold, he's great! But the college of public health has always in my experience been very welcoming

and very aware of the different populations we have on campus because a lot of public health is studying those populations.

Similarly to Lola, Veronica describes her experience with having supportive mentors within her academic life. She explains:

I had mentors, but I feel like they were more friends so to speak. I had a couple of supervisors who, I don't want to say like beat it into me, but tried to help me acknowledge my capacity and trying to have me acknowledge my ability to engage with different people and my ability to think critically and to see the details about certain things. If it weren't for them, I don't think that I would be able to withstand, whatever it is, that is going on right now, not only politically but in my personal life.

Friends are an additional necessary form of support. Neli says that even though she does sometimes feel like an outsider she does “have my close friends who hangout in the queer space. There are some students of color. Some of them are Latinx, and I can rely on them on things like speaking. We motivate each other, and then we also speak our mind freely without any filter.” Likewise, Veronica draws support from her friends, although she does wish they could have shown a greater level of support when she was transitioning. She adds, “But when thinking about student leadership and activism, the work ethic and the abilities to do something, I have that type of support.”

While Neli, Veronica, and Lola describe positive supportive relationships on their campuses, the research suggests that many Latinx students struggle to feel supported, and some may even drop out altogether. Although dropout rates have decreased in the last decade, Latinx

students are still the largest ethnic group enrolling in college and have the lowest graduation rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; Palacios, 2018). Miranda says:

I feel like support has been the hardest part. Nowadays I don't feel like I have a lot of support systems. Most of my support system was back in my country, and I have some friends here in the US that support me and a couple of professors. But like I said it's really hard to consider myself an activist right now. I am hoping when I am done with this degree, to be able to go ahead and go back to having more activist and more community involved work.

Miranda describes the correlation with the lack of support and not feeling like an activist. As activist work takes a lot of emotional and mental energy, the need for support is necessary for students to feel like they can successfully give back to their communities. L adds:

My partner is my support. Like I was saying, I don't really have a support system here on campus. It's hard to find a group that I can share and I don't feel like I'm just complaining. I also do not feel I encounter any people of Latinx or Queer identity that want to be involved in politics in the same sphere that I do. That's what's been hard for me. I'm not finding those groups. And when I do, they are always other White students which is fine, and I talk with them. But it's a very professional way of interacting with each other. We aren't like friends. We're colleagues.

Eliza finds value in trying to support her peers, especially while she's removed from her community while in college. She says she has helped build a network of other graduate students who support one another, and that has made grad school less stressful.

Given the barriers LGBTQ Latinx students face, they need a great deal of support from family, friends, communities, and universities. With a majority of Latinx attendees in higher education who are first generation, Palacios (2018) recommends faculty and staff intercultural awareness and appreciation can help facilitate a much smoother transition on college campuses. Support systems on campuses are encouraged to create opportunities for Latinx students that build their social capital, teach them about stepping out of their comfort zones, encourage practice self-care, and find opportunities for leadership positions. My participants showcase the need for further research in how mentorship programs, supportive faculty and community building early on can offer support and guidance for Latinx student success.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

LGBTQ Latinx student leaders are multifaceted and are engaged in similar struggles on their college campuses. The major themes that arose in this section showcase a need for further research on campus climates and diversity initiatives, how to best support LGBTQ+ Latinx students with challenges, and new and innovative ways that art activism is being used on their campuses. Intersectionality theory has allowed us to see how race, gender, sexuality and class position LGBTQ+ Latinx student leaders and activists in the university and exposed gaps in the literature about these students. The next chapter gathers my recommendations for addressing this gap with a significant list of needed further research.

Because we know so little about the experiences and needs of queer Latinx campus leaders and activists, the purpose of this preliminary study was to identify some of the gaps and offers suggestions for further research. I found that most of my participants experienced frustration with the institution of higher education because they felt it often negated and dismissed experiences of students of color and queer students. In my conversations with participants, I noted a number of themes that suggested areas for further research.

Many of the themes which arose as I talked to my participants were expected, given what we do know about queer and Latinx college students. Central to all of my findings is the idea of intersectionality. Participants grappled with pressure to pick one identity over the other; they often felt as though they were outsiders in both queer and Latinx spaces; they struggled to find support from people who understood what these intersections mean for them. Nonetheless, they found ways to engage in activism, and, in particular, they found strength in expressing themselves through performance and poetry.

I was not surprised to find that one of the most important themes was how participants navigate challenges within their colleges and universities. Often times, campus climates are hostile and unwelcoming for queer and Latinx students in predominantly White institutions (Haro, 2004). Many of my participants also experienced the challenges of universities, faculty, and peers unprepared to address and accept differences. They also bumped up against the structures of racism and heterosexism embedded in institutions. Families also offered challenges for my participants as families struggled with acceptance or the ability to understand college life. Some participants struggled with understanding their racial identity within the United States. Miranda and Eliza identified as whiteWhite international students when they first arrived in the U.S. and then found themselves identifying as Latinx over time. Miguel, someone who's spent a majority of their childhood in the United States, is challenged in a different way because of his citizenship status. This continues to raise questions in regards to how one navigates and is seen through the lens of what is considered to be "other" or an "outsider."

While it is no surprise, many participants experienced different forms of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. While some forms were more subtle, others were more overt. Many participants described feeling that assumptions and expectations were placed on them as queer Latinx student leaders and activists, and they often felt overwhelmed with the burden of leadership and activism. Many struggled with mental health and were working to navigate better boundaries in order to be able to continue their activist work. Many experienced burnout.

In order both to express their identities and engage in activism, many of my participants turned to art. Veronica described her experience with performance and creativity as a way to connect art with activism. She said, "A lot of activism is more of an art or can be seen as an art

statement.” Many of my participants engage their politics through performance theater, art, poetry, and drag performance. This type of political statement has allowed my participants to find new ways to claim their identities and create a powerful influence on an audience.

Mixed responses shed light on the diversity that exists in the type of support that students receive. Many undergraduate students said they have supportive mentors, friends, and community spaces. The graduate students in this study, however, described finding support as a challenge, and they often experienced a disconnect within the community. In contrast, some students did describe the flourishing of a sense of community and the importance of cultural resource centers.

Overall, students voiced the need for colleges and universities to acknowledge the lack of diversity. Moreover, students described wanting to have constructive spaces and communication among staff and administrators in power. Many suggested the need for commitments to resource centers that work with one another across and aware of differences and various forums for engagement and dialogue.

Limitations

Every study comes with limitations. One extensive limitation for this study is the small sample size. Since I was only able to recruit seven participants for my thesis project, I cannot generalize to the larger population of LGBTQ Latinx student activists and leaders. A second limitation is geographic. All of my participants are in school in Oregon, and Oregon’s history and politics shape those experiences in ways that may be very different from other states and regions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Because my research is preliminary at best, suggestions for further research are the heart of my study. Based on the themes identified in my findings, I suggest the following possibilities for future research which should include much larger sample sizes and greater geographic diversity:

1. What are the experiences and needs of LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists on predominantly White campuses?
2. What are the unique challenges LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists face in navigating family relationships, roles, and expectations as student leaders and activists?
3. What role does religion play in the experiences of LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists? How might universities support LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists' religious and spiritual identities and struggles?
4. What are the experiences of undocumented and international LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists? How does their status affect them differently than U.S.-born LGBTQ Latinx students?
5. How do LGBTQ Latinx students navigate institutions that may treat their experiences as "single-axis" (queer or race or gender or class, but not all simultaneously)? What institutional rules, processes, and structures create barriers for LGBTQ Latinx students? What can institutions do to support LGBTQ Latinx students exploring their identities as leaders and activists?
6. How are academic fields welcoming/unwelcoming for LGBTQ Latinx students? Where are LGBTQ Latinx students represented in the curriculum, and where are they omitted? Do LGBTQ Latinx students feel that they are represented in course content?

- Are classrooms inclusive and do they center feminist practices and racial contexts so that LGBTQ Latinx students feel included? How might curricula and disciplines be transformed to reflect LGBTQ Latinx histories and issues?
7. What are LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists' experiences of prejudice and discrimination from faculty, staff, other students, and community members? How can universities develop more supportive climates and educate the community to serve as allies for LGBTQ Latinx students? How can faculty and staff support academic and social success for LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists?
 8. How can faculty and staff develop intercultural awareness and competence to help support LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists, particularly within the relational context of friends, family, community, and the university?
 9. What are the mentorship needs of LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists, and how can universities meet these needs?
 10. What are the positive effects of art activism for LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists? How do LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists understand their work and what might this mean for universities' support of art activism?

In conclusion, this project on LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists in Oregon highlighted their experiences on college campuses and the important work they are doing to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment on their college and university campuses. Although LGBTQ Latinx students experience challenges, this study highlights the resiliency and motivation that students have toward addressing issues of race, gender, class and sexuality on campus. In

response to what they told me, I have provided suggestions for further research that can support academic and social success for LGBTQ Latinx student leaders and activists.

References

Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands: la frontera* (Vol. 3). San Francisco: Aunt Lute.

Anzaldúa, G. (2015). *Light in the dark/Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting identity, spirituality, reality*. Duke University Press.

Acosta, K. L. (2013). *Amigas y amantes: Sexually nonconforming Latinas negotiate family*. Rutgers University Press.

Akhtar, S., & Bertoglia, S. M. (Eds.). (2015). *The American Latino: psychodynamic perspectives on culture and mental health*. Lanham, MD: Rowman et Littlefield.

Basic Rights Oregon. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.basicrights.org/our-power-poder/>

Beatty, C. C., Coronel, E., Escalante, J., Guardia, J. R., Kann, V. M., Lopez, C. B., ... & Suarez, C. E. (2015). *Latina/o college student leadership: Emerging theory, promising practice*. Lexington Books.

Bailey, M. (2011) "All the Digital Humanists Are White, All the Nerds Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave," *Journal of Digital Humanities* 1(1).

Blazak, R.(n.d.). Oregon Citizen's Alliance. In *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 13, 2020, from https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_citizens_alliance/#.XoLKUt_Yq00

Boag P., (2018). Gay and Lesbian rights movements. *The Oregon Encyclopedia* (https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/gay_lesbian_rights_movement/#.XHuz4JjYmF) (published March 2018).

Buckingham, S. L., Emery, L., Godsay, S., Brodsky, A. E., & Scheibler, J. E. (2018). 'You opened my mind': Latinx immigrant and receiving community interactional dynamics in the United States. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(2), 171-186.

Bordas, J. (2013). *The power of Latino leadership: Culture, inclusion, and contribution*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Blazak, R.(n.d.). Oregon Citizen's Alliance. In *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 13, 2020, from https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_citizens_alliance/#.XoLKUt_Yq00

Campos, B., Perez, O. F. R., & Guardino, C. (2016). Familism: A cultural value with implications for romantic relationship quality in US Latinos. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 33(1), 81-100.

Canty-Jones, E. (2004, March 12). *Same-Sex Marriage*. Oregon History Project. https://oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/same-sex-marriage/#.Xnqo79_Yq00

Center for Latino/a & latin American Studies. (n.d).*Mission Statement*. Retrieved April 10, 2020, From <https://cillas.uoregon.edu/about/mission-statement/>

Chavez, H. A. M. (2016). *Factors Influencing the Success of Latino and Latina International Students in Graduate School*. ProQuest LLC. 789 East Eisenhower Parkway, PO Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Carastathis, A. (2016). *Intersectionality: Origins, contestations, horizons*. U of Nebraska Press.

Chapa, J. (2002). Affirmative action, X percent plans, and Latino access to higher education in the twenty-first century. *Latinos: Remaking America*, 375-388.

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. John Wiley & Sons.

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences: Chicano Latino Studies. (n.d.) *Academic Programs & Advising*. Portland State University. <https://www.pdx.edu/chla/academic-programs-advising>

College of Liberal Arts School of Language, Culture, and Society. (n.d).*Ethnic Studies Program Courses*.

<https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/slcs/ethnic-studies/students/ethnic-studies-program-courses>

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford law review*, 1241-1299.

Dilts, R., Davis, D. (2020, March 9). Why we're striking for fair teaching wages at UC Santa Cruz- even with a baby on the way. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/03/09/santa-cruz-strike-graduate-students-unions/>

Domestic Partnership Policy. (1999, June 14). Oregon State University.

<https://eo.oregonstate.edu/domestic-partnership-policy>

B. J., Rodriguez Jr, M. A., & Prieto-Tsergounis, E. (2017). BELONGING TO MORE THAN ONE IDENTITY. *Queer People of Color in Higher Education*, 73.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (Vol. 2). Sage.
- Ellison, C. G., Acevedo, G. A., & Ramos-Wada, A. I. (2011). Religion and attitudes toward same-sex marriage among US Latinos. *Social Science Quarterly*, 92(1), 35-56.
- Falicov, C. J. (2005). Ambiguous Loss: Risk and Resilience in Latino Immigrant Families. *The New Immigration: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, 197.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (MB Ramos, Trans.). *New York: Continuum, 2007.*
- García, Mario T., ed. *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-first Century*. Routledge, 2014.
- Garcia, G. A., Huerta, A. H., Ramirez, J. J., & Patrón, O. E. (2017). Contexts that matter to the leadership development of Latino male college students: A mixed methods perspective. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(1), 1-18.
- Gershon, S. A., Pantoja, A. D., & Taylor, J. B. (2016). God in the barrio?: The determinants of religiosity and civic engagement among Latinos in the United States. *Politics and Religion*, 9(1), 84-110.
- Gomez de la Fuente, M. R. (2016). *Marketing Strategies for Increasing Latino Enrollment in Higher Education*.
- Gonzalez, C., Graber, J., Galvez, D., & Locke, L. A. (2018). They Say They Value Diversity, But I Don't See It": Academic and Social Experiences of First Generation Latinx Students at a Predominately White Midwest Institution'. *Perspectives on Diverse Student Identities in Higher Education: International Perspectives on Equity and Inclusion (Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Volume 14)*. Emerald Publishing Limited, 61-73.
- Glaser, B. G. A. L. (1978). Strauss (1967): The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. *London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson*, 81, 86.
- [GSA Network. \(n.d.\). What is a GSA Club?](https://gsanetwork.org/what-is-a-gsa/)<https://gsanetwork.org/what-is-a-gsa/>
- Hernandez, F., & Murakami, E. (2016). Counterstories about leadership: A Latina school principal's experience from a less documented view in an urban school context. *Education Sciences*, 6(1), 6.

Harris, A., Battle, J., & Pastrana, A. J. (2018). *Queer People of Color: Connected But Not Comfortable*. FirstForumPress, a division of Lynne Rienner Publishers, Incorporated.

Harpalani, V. (2017). 'Safe Spaces' and the Educational Benefits of Diversity.

Haro, R. (2004). Programs and strategies to increase Latino students' educational attainment. *Education and Urban Society*, 36(2), 205-222.

Hannay, J., Dudley, R., Milan, S., & Leibovitz, P. K. (2013). Combining photovoice and focus groups: Engaging Latina teens in community assessment. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 44(3), S215-S224.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (Ed.). (2013). *Feminist research practice: A primer*. Sage Publications.

ID Documents Center Oregon(2019). National Center for Transgender Equality. Retrieved from <https://transequality.org/documents/state/oregon>.

Imarisha, W. [Walidah Imarisha]. (2013, July 13). *Why Aren't There More Black People in Oregon: A Hidden History* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/fo2RVOunsZ8>

Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies. (n.d.) *All ES Courses 2019-2020*. University of Oregon. Retrieved April 10, 2020, from <https://ethnicstudies.uoregon.edu/courses/2019?page=1>

Johnson, Joshua Moon, and Gabriel Javier. [Queer People of Color in Higher Education](#). Contemporary perspectives on LGBTQ advocacy in societies. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc, 2017.

Kamimura-Jimenez, M., & Gonzalez, J. (2018). Understanding PhD Latinx Career Outcomes: A Case Study. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 17(2), 148-168.

Kim, G. J. S., & Shaw, S. M. (2018). *Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide*. Fortress Press.

Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin Press.

Márquez, L. V. (2014). Reinscribing the Voices of La Gente in the Narrative of the Chicano Movement 1. In *The Chicano Movement* (pp. 47-72). Routledge.

May, V. M. (2015). *Pursuing intersectionality, unsettling dominant imaginaries*. Routledge.

Maldonado, C. S. (2000). *Colegio Cesar Chavez, 1973-1983: A Chicano Struggle for Educational Self-Determination*. Latino Communities: Emerging Voices--Political, Social, Cultural, and Legal Issues. A Garland Series.

Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological bulletin*, 129(5), 674.

Miller, R. A., & Vaccaro, A. (2016). Queer student leaders of color: Leadership as authentic, collaborative, culturally competent. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 53(1), 39-50.

Mitchell, P. R. (2017). *Understanding Latino History: Excavating the Past, Examining the Present*. ABC-CLIO.

Miville, M. L., Arredondo, P., Consoli, A. J., Santiago-Rivera, A., Delgado-Romero, E. A., Fuentes, M. A., ... & Cervantes, J. M. (2017). Liderazgo: Culturally grounded leadership and the National Latina/o Psychological Association. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 45(6), 830-856.

Moreno, M. P., & Brunner, K. C. (2010). *Term Paper Resource Guide to Latino History*. ABC-CLIO.

Montoya, L. J., Hardy-Fanta, C., & Garcia, S. (2000). Latina politics: Gender, participation, and leadership. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 33(3), 555-562.

Muñoz, S., & Escalante, J. (2015). Understanding the role of legality in college student engagement for undocumented students. *Latina/o college student leadership: Emerging theory, promising practice*, 153-165.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Zubaan.

Nokes, G.(2018, March 17). *Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon*. The Oregon Encyclopedia. Retrieved June 2, 2020, from https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/exclusion_laws/#.XtgbSDpKjIV

Ovink, S. M. (2017). Race, class, and choice in Latino/a higher education. *New York, NY: Palgrave. doi, 10, 978-1.*

- Pew Research Center. (2014). The shifting religious identity of Latinos in the United States.
- Pertuz, S. B. (2018). Exploring Latinx/a/o identity, cultural values, and success in higher education.
- Pastrana, A. J. (2015). Being out to others: The relative importance of family support, identity and religion for LGBT latina/os. *Latino Studies*, 13(1), 88-112.
- Pastrana Jr, A. J., Battle, J., & Harris, A. (2017). *An examination of Latinx LGBT populations across the United States: Intersections of race and sexuality*. Springer.
- Portland State University. (n.d.) *Queer Resource Center*. Retrieved April 13, 2020, from [hPttps://www.pdx.edu/queer/QRCAbout](https://www.pdx.edu/queer/QRCAbout)
- Rodela, K. C., & Rodriguez-Mojica, C. (2019). Equity Leadership Informed by Community Cultural Wealth: Counterstories of Latinx School Administrators. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 0013161X19847513.
- Ruiz, Vicki. "UNA MUJER SIN FRONTERAS." *Pacific Historical Review* 73.1 (2004): 1-20.
- Renn, K. A., & Bilodeau, B. (2005). Queer student leaders: An exploratory case study of identity development and LGBT student involvement at a Midwestern research university. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 2(4), 49-71.
- Renn, K. A. (2007). LGBT student leaders and queer activists: Identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identified college student leaders and activists. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(3), 311-330.
- Ritchie, R. (2016, October 28). Emerging Leader: Giovanni McKenzie of Queer Intersections Portland. PDX Monthly.<https://www.pdxmonthly.com/news-and-city-life/2015/10/emerging-leader-giovanni-mckenzie-of-queer-intersections-force>
- Skidmore, T. E., Smith, P. H., & Green, J. N. (1992). *Modern latin america* (3rd ed., p. 59). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Santos, C. E., & VanDaalen, R. A. (2018). Associations among psychological distress, high-risk activism, and conflict between ethnic-racial and sexual minority identities in lesbian, gay, bisexual racial/ethnic minority adults. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 65(2), 194.

- Sutter, M., & Perrin, P. B. (2016). Discrimination, mental health, and suicidal ideation among LGBTQ people of color. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 63(1), 98.
- Swank, E., & Fahs, B. (2013). An intersectional analysis of gender and race for sexual minorities who engage in gay and lesbian rights activism. *Sex Roles*, 68(11-12), 660-674.
- Scharrón-del Río, M. R., & Aja, A. A. (2020). Latinx: Inclusive language as liberation praxis. *Journal of Latinx Psychology*, 8(1).
- Scharrón-Del Río, M. R. (2020). Intersectionality Is Not a Choice: Reflections of a Queer Scholar of Color on Teaching, Writing, and Belonging in LGBTQ Studies and Academia. *Journal of homosexuality*, 67(3), 294-304.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban education*, 36(3), 308-342.
- Tijerina-Revilla, A. (2009). Are all Raza womyn queer? An exploration of sexual identities in a Chicana/Latina student organization. *NWSA Journal*, 21(3), 46-62.
- Teitleman A., (2018). The rights of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people. *Oregon State Bar*. Retrieved from https://www.osbar.org/public/legalinfo/1191_LGBTRights.htm
- The History of Social Justice in Oregon. (n.d.). *The Oregon Black Laws*. Oregon State University. <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/oregonsocialjustice/oregon-black-laws/>
- Urrieta, L. (2009). *Working from within: Chicana and Chicano activist educators in Whitestream schools*. University of Arizona Press.
- Vaccaro, A., & Mena, J. A. (2011). It's not burnout, it's more: Queer college activists of color and mental health. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 15(4), 339-367.
- Vaccaro, A., & Koob, R. M. (2019). A critical and intersectional model of LGBTQ microaggressions: Toward a more comprehensive understanding. *Journal of homosexuality*, 66(10), 1317-1344.
- Vidal-Ortiz, S., & Martínez, J. (2018). Latinx thoughts: Latinidad with an X. *Latino Studies*, 16(3), 384-395.

Appendix

Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your Latinx identity? How do you identify yourself? Why?
2. Tell me about your coming out.
3. Do you identify as a feminist? What does feminism mean to you?
4. Do you consider yourself a student leader? An activist? Why or why not?
5. What issues are most important to you as a student leader/activist?
6. What led you to this college/university? This major?
7. Do you find your college/university to be a welcoming place for queer Latinx students?
Why or why not? Can you tell me a story that illustrates?
8. Have your intersecting identities presented you with particular challenges or opportunities as a student?
9. What does activism mean to you? What does leadership mean to you?
10. Tell me about your activism/leadership.
11. How did you become a student activist/leader?
12. Is your work connected to our current political climate? Has it changed for you? Why or why not?
13. What roles do you think your intersecting identities play in your activism/leadership?
14. How do you understand your role(s) working for change at your school? Do you see yourself as an insider or outsider as a leader/activist? Why?
15. Who are your activist/leader role models? And why?

16. Do your academic studies enhance your activism/leadership? Does your activism/leadership enhance your academic studies?
17. What do you hope to accomplish through your activism/leadership?
18. Who is your support system for your activism/leadership?
19. Can you tell me about a time when you felt particularly effective in your activism/leadership?
20. What have been the greatest challenges of your activism/leadership?
21. How have you incorporated your own cultural and traditional elements into your expression of activism/leadership on campus?
22. What more could your college/university do to support queer Latinx students?
23. Do you plan to continue your activism/leadership after graduation/Have you continued your activism/leadership after graduation?
24. How do you imagine your activism/leadership five or ten years down the road?

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH ON
QUEER/LGBTQ+ LATINX STUDENT LEADERS/ACTIVISTS



**LGBTQ+ Latinx
Students'
Experiences in
Leadership and
Activism in Oregon**

Minerva Zayas, student researcher, and Dr. Susan M. Shaw, Oregon State University, PI

If you identify as an **LGBTQ+ Latinx** college student leader and/or activist, we'd like to invite you to participate in a 1 1/2 -2 hour phone, Skype, or in-person interview about your campus and/or community experiences as part of a master's thesis project in Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Oregon State University.

For this project, someone that is **Latinx** is anyone that identifies as Latina/o, Chicana/o, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican Republic, Cuban, from South and Central America.

If you're interested in participating, please contact Minerva Zayas, student researcher, at zayasm@oregonstate.edu.

School of Language, Culture, and Society

Oregon State University, 236 Waldo Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331

T 541-737-3847 | F 541-737-3650 | <http://oregonstate.edu/cla>

Study #8881 Human Research Protection Program Do not use after 01/17/2024

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Queer Latinx Students' Experiences in Leadership and Activism

Principle Investigator: Susan Shaw

Student Investigator: Minerva Zayas

25. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this research study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear.

You are being asked to take part in a research study carried out by a student of Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, USA in order to complete her Master of Arts thesis in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of queer Latinx student leaders and/or activists on college and university campuses in Oregon State.

26. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are receiving this email because you have identified as a queer Latinx student leader and/or activist at a college or university in Oregon or have graduated in the past three years. Your participation in this study is voluntary; participants must be at least 18 years old. If you decide you do not want to complete the interview, you may withdraw at any time. The decision to take part or not take part in this research will not impact the participant's relationship with the student researcher.

27. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

If you accept to be part of this project, you will participate in an in-person, phone, or Skype interview that last approximately two hours. Interviews will be audio recorded and saved on a password protected computer. You will select a pseudonym, and no identifying information will be used in the thesis or any publications arising from this research. You may refuse to answer any question. If you decide you do not want to complete the interview, you may withdraw at any time.

The decision to take part or not take part in the study will not impact your standing in the university.

Your responses will be confidential. There is a chance that we could accidentally disclose information that could identify you.

Although not intended, you may experience some form of stress or discomfort due to the personal nature of the questions being asked, but any expected risk is minimal.

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. If you choose to disclose identifiable information in your responses to open ended questions (e.g. institutional affiliation, workplace, demographic information, names of people, etc.) there is a chance we could disclose information that identifies you. If you are affiliated with OSU, and you provide identifiable information that includes experiences of sexual misconduct or harassment, the study team is required to report this information to the OSU Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA). All information regarding the incident will be divulged per the reporting requirements. If sufficient information is available to initiate an investigation, the individuals may be contacted by the appropriate institutional office regarding the incident.

To participate in the study, you will be audio recorded. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, you should not participate in the study.

We will destroy all identifying information at the conclusion of the study. Once the identifying information is destroyed, we will not be able to remove your information from the larger dataset. The information that you give us will only be used for this study. We will not share information about you with others or use it in future studies without your consent.

This study will become part of the student's master's thesis. The thesis will be stored in the library at Oregon State University.

Your participation indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact the principal and student investigators at sshaw@oregonstate.edu; zayasm@oregonstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

Thank you for your time,

Minerva Zayas

M.A Student; Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Principal Investigator: *Professor Susan Shaw*

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

I _____ (Participant Printed Name), agree to partake in this study and have read the above guidelines.

_____ (Participants signature)

_____ (Co-Investigators Printed Name)

_____ (Co-Investigators Signature)