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Latino/a LGBTQ Migrations

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by

Sarah Victoria Rodriguez
December 2011

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Keywords: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Transgender, Identity, Migration, Latin America, San Francisco, Sexiles, Resettlement

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Advisor

Date

Academic Director

Date

Dean of Arts and Sciences

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents, Amanda and Gilberto Rodriguez. I am forever grateful for the emotional and financial support that has made my education thus far possible. Mom, you are the strongest and smartest woman that I know. You are my inspiration. Dad, your unconditional love means the world to me and even though our political views may differ, we share a spiritual bond so strong that not even politics can sever.

I would also like to thank my advisor Sergio De La Torre, all those who so graciously agreed to participate in this study, and the entire Vega family for all their love and support. This is for you.

Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of Problem

Latin America trails behind developed nations, most notably the United States, in making strides in achieving social justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals. Nevertheless, LGBTQ rights are increasingly being won in Latin America. Countries like Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador have all enacted federal antidiscrimination laws based on sexual orientation; and as recent as 2006 Mexico City approved the Cohabitation Law which grants same-sex couples marital rights similar to those of common-law relationships between heterosexual couples; and by 2009 Mexico had, along with Argentina, Nicaragua, and Panama, granted legal rights to those in same-sex relations (Corrales & Pecheny 2010; Rios 2010; Encarnacion 2011).

However, despite such ground-breaking political achievements in Latin America, wide spread social acceptance of LGBTQ individuals is not evident in every institution, nor in every part of the region. The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) published a shocking report that found in 2005 a gay man was murdered every two days in Latin America for reasons based solely on his sexual orientation (Corrales & Pecheny 2010). Encarnacion (2011) insists that as long as antagonism exists toward LGBTQ population in Latin American society, gay rights are up against risks of backlash that may even contribute to unintended consequences in the very lives of the LGBTQ individuals such rights were meant to protect. This could explain why an increase in anti-gay violence in the region coincides with the gay-rights boom in the region.

Throughout history and into the present day, the Latina/o LGBTQ population in Latin America and the United States has faced countless forms of social abuse and state discrimination on the bases of identities demarcated by sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, class, and citizenship. Friedman (2007) calls an open declaration of one's homosexuality, or the backing of homosexual rights, revolutionary acts in Latin America. The intersecting identities of gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, and nationality are therefore a central theme heavily influencing the conditions of one's social and political experiences in Latin America as well as during and after migration to the United States. Depending on where one falls on the identity spectrum, conditions of life experiences vary from those who do not adhere to heteronormative standards of society, but one trend remains the same for all those who go against heteronormativity – persecution whether social and/or political is inevitable.

For some of the persecuted LGBTQ persons in Latin America, migration to the U.S. presents an ideal route for escaping the strict social constructs of the region. Randazzo (2005) contends that though some persecuted gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals may choose to remain in their countries of origin, in order to join in their country's struggle for LGBTQ equality; the decision to migrate or stay could mean a decision between life or death for others. There is an undeniable interconnectedness between interpersonal violence and state violence in the lives of Latina immigrant women including lesbians, as some scholars have found that Latinas often leave their home countries to flee violence only to find themselves subjected to further violence during their migration north, or after resettlement in the United States (Calvo & Esquibel 2010). The United States has primarily seen an increase of migration from South America, in particular from countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru during the 1970s and 2000s with significant ethnic enclaves spurring up in Chicago, Miami, Houston, and San

Francisco (Ochoa 2010). Historically however, the U.S. has been unreceptive to immigrants, especially in the recent wake of the attacks of September 11. Critics of the Bush administration have pointed out the administration's "justified" implementation of anti-immigration policy, ensuing shortly after the terrorist attacks, has invariably created further barriers for LGBTQ seeking to escape the homophobic persecution they face in their countries of origin (Lewis 2010).

Background and Need for the Study

The nature of the research is to understand the migration and resettlement process of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer persons migrating from Latin America to the San Francisco Bay Area. The research seeks to understand the primary influences for migration. It will compare life in ones respective country of origin against life in the San Francisco Bay Area. The study examines the subjects experience in the areas of: housing, economic stability, health care, and experience in the workforce. Related research indicates that like most immigrants, LGBTQ migrants are similarly motivated to migrate to the United States for better economic opportunities, education, and to reunite with family or friends. The purpose of the current study is to not only document the experiences of a widely ignored segment of the population, but also to serve as a resource for policy makers, grassroots organizations, NGOs, and the community to utilize in determining what areas or services, if any, need to be addressed or require modifications to ensure the proper quality of life for the Latino/a LGBTQ settling in the S.F. Bay Area.

Why is there a need to focus on the queer migrations of the Latino/a population?

Latinos/as have been part of queer migrations settling in San Francisco, since the 1960s yet little

research is compiled on this population (Ramirez 2005). According to the 2000 Census, Latinas/o population continues to grow at its current projected rate, one in four residents of the United States will claim some Latina/o heritage in the next forty years (Asencio & Acosta 2010). What is this population's main motivation behind migration, and have their livelihoods as marginalized persons improved? Is today's San Francisco in fact the gay Mecca some have purported it to be? The vital questions that activists, advocates and policy makers should ask, when determining how to appropriately address LGBTQ concerns and needs. Bluntly put, "absence in the sexuality research literature produced in the social and behavioral sciences has significant repercussions for knowledge production and for the creation of policy" (Asencio & Acosta, 2010, p.4).

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on the immigrant LGBTQ population migrating from Latin America to the San Francisco Bay Area and analyzes their home country experiences with conditions of resettlement in the Bay Area. Measuring "conditions of resettlement" include an examination of migration, health, employment, and housing conditions/experiences both in one's country of origin and within the so-called gay epicenter of the San Francisco Bay Area. The purpose of this study is to understand and document the trials and tribulations of Latino/a LGBTQ migrants so as to learn what, if any, social or political issues LGBTQ advocates and policy makers need to focus on, to address or to add further to the social narrative in queer and immigrant studies.

Research Question

What are the motivations for Latino/a LGBTQ immigration from Latin America to the San Francisco Bay Area and what are their conditions of resettlement?

Theoretical Framework

This study relies heavily on both identity theory and queer theory to understand to personal and social impact sexual orientation has on an individual and collective level. Who we are as individuals is made up of multiple identity markers and the amount of importance we associate with each category varies based on socialization patterns. For instance, our experiences or threats of violence against certain categories of our identity might quickly change our perceived sense of identity. Identity theory assumes that conflict is caused by feelings of threatened identity. The goal of identity theory is to build empathy and reconciliation between conflicting parties through workshops and dialogue. The key is to recognize the core identity needs for all parties (Fisher et al., 2000). In the case of this study, the core identity need is the protection and adherence to human rights laws. “When it comes to rights, we are attracted to the notion of identity – of rights for *us* as members of *our group*” (Wilchins 2004, p.123). Neglecting human rights laws draws the attention of the international community and decreases a nation’s credibility.

Queer theory challenges heteronormativity and is ultimately about politics – the politics of power, identity, language, and difference. As queer theory is relatively new in comparison with other theories, it has been limited to academics of North America and Europe. Theorists debate the stability of categories of identity especially that of gender, ethnicity, and class in the context of cultural and political constructions. The deconstruction of identity markers are often

used a verb termed “queering.” For instance, transgender women could be described as queering masculinity and giving rise to new ways of understanding the construction of sexuality. The deconstruction of Latino/a LGBTQ person’s identity markers allow for a better understanding the complexities of their lived experiences.

Methodology

The location of this case study is San Francisco because as previous researchers have termed it the “gay homeland” or a “gay epicenter,” it serves as an ideal location to find participants. Furthermore, the study presents both quantitative and qualitative research. The survey method was to collect data on experiences and attitudes of study participants. The survey was comprised of multiple choice questions, some of which took on the Likert scaling format, and open ended questions. Interviews were conducted in the participants preferred language of choice—either English or Spanish. The survey and interview asked about the participant’s motivations behind migration, and their housing, economic, and employment conditions, as well as their experience with health care and discrimination in both their country of origin and in the Bay Area. All interviews were conducted in person and lasted anywhere from 30min to one hour, depending on the mood and willingness to share aspects of their personal lives. The interview sites included the San Francisco Public Library, and various other coffee shops and sandwich shops in the San Francisco area.

Participants

The population represented in this data consists of Latinos/as born outside of the United States who were at least eighteen years of age at the time the survey was conducted and self-identified as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or some other non-heterosexual orientation.

Sample Frame

The sampling frame included twelve participants: eight males and four females; eight 18-33 year olds, three 34-50 year olds, and one person 51yr+; one Colombian, one Venezuelan, one Guatemalan, one Puerto Rican, one Uruguayan, four Mexicans, one Brazilian, and one identified only as Latin American; one lesbian, five gay men, three bisexuals, and two queer; five poor or working class, and six middle class.

Sampling Method

Although snowball sampling was used, the majority of participants came from convenience samples using the website Craigslist.com. The posting on Craigslist called for volunteers who met the criteria of the study (adults 18 years of age or older, born in Latin America, currently living in the San Francisco Bay Area, and self identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, or any other non-heterosexual identity) to take part in a research study. Recruitment flyers were also left in-person with organizations/community centers in San Francisco (LGBT Community Center, National Center for Lesbians, and Gay Straight Alliance Network). All subjects responding to ads and flyers were kept in communication with the researchers via email and in person.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the sensitivity immigrant status and sexual orientation disclosure, participants were limited to those willing to trust researchers with personal information. Since most participants were recruited using Craigslist.com, the study was primarily limited in drawing participant interest from individuals able to afford or with access to the internet and who were familiar with the website. Furthermore, the study was also limited to those individuals who had

already “come out of the closet” and accepted their sexual orientation. Also, the results of the recruiting process did not yield any such participants that identified as transgender. Although one transgender woman initially expressed interest in participating in the study, she never followed with personal emails or standard post mail. Her experiences would have brought insight to the life of a recently arrived transgender sex worker from Guatemala.

Significance of the Study

This project will contribute in understanding the level of social and state concern for addressing the political and social rights of the LGBTQ population. With increasing demands from human rights advocates to document and bring justice to wrongfully persecuted individuals, persistent societal and state discrimination of LGBTQ individuals, and the United States’ heightened concern over immigration and citizenship, this project aims at bringing to light substantial research, data, and personal narratives in order to project the most historically accurate and up-to-date information concerning sexual migration from Latin America. The general public, students, researchers, activists, and policy makers are intended to use this information to understand where the primary barriers stand in the way of basic human rights for immigrant LGBTQ persons.

Definition of Terms

Gender- is the performance of one's self identified sex

Heteronormative- is the cultural concept or belief that heterosexuality is the norm and all other forms are viewed as inferior and are marginalized

Identity- can be assumed on an individual and group level; a reflection of who you are

Latino/a- a term used to describe a distinct group of people; has association to a unifying thread more so linking social and political relationship within the U.S. context than cultural similarities tied to Spanish colonization (Asencio& Acosta, 2010)

LGBTQ- acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer

MSM- the acronym researchers use for men who have sex with men

Resettlement process- for the purposes of this project, resettlement process includes conditions of health care, housing, employment, of political rights

Sexiles- persons leaving their country of origin for motivations based on their sexual orientation

Queer- a fluid identity unique to each individual; basically used as an identity detached from the heterosexual or heteronormative

Queer theory- challenges heteronormativity and has its roots in feminist theory

WSW- the acronym researchers use for women who have sex with women

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Most LGBTQ persons immigrate to the United States for the same reasons straight Latinos/as do: jobs, education, family, friends, but also an added incentive—to escape homophobia and live as an open homosexual in the United States (Kirby 2001; Bianchi et al. 2007). However, not much scholarly attention is given to the examination of migration through the lens of sexuality. A substantial amount of studies focusing on migration never control for sexual orientation, so potential data on homosexual subjects and correlations drawn between migration and sexuality are lost. Furthermore, studies on Latino/a sexuality are heavily focused on male homosexuality in such a way that overlooks the equal importance of studies centered on Latino/a bi-sexuality, lesbianism, transgender, and queer orientations. This is not to say that no discourse exists within academia on the matter, but such studies are scarce and outdated—most notably those studies concerning Latina lesbianism and Latino/a bi-sexuality (Manalansan 2006; Asencio & Acosta 2010; Calvo & Esquibel 2010; Munoz-Layboy & Leau 2010; Aponte-Pares et al. 2007; Randazzo 2005).

The literature reviewed in this section will examine aspects of LGBTQ life in both the United States and Latin America. The works in this literature review have a central focus on Latino/a populations. To understand the motivational drive to migrate to the U.S the resettlement process, a review of literature concerning the homosexual climate specifically looking at LGBT political movements and rights, housing conditions, employment, and health care in both regions is necessary. Therefore, I have organized the following literature review into sections as follows:

creative works, immigration, housing, health care, and employment. However, because creative works such as short stories, novels, films, plays are often a reflection or commentary on society and identity formation; and since identity (sexual orientation, gender, class, ethnicity, and citizenship) is the overarching and running theme in each section, I will first begin examining creative works written by or about Latino/a sexuality. Furthermore, each specified section is addressed with a primary focus on how identity and politics inform that section.

Creative Works

Portrayals and references to LGBTQ culture in creative works provide a background for past and current issues Latino LGBTQ face before and after migration. Some scholars have analyzed LGBTQ creative works like short stories, novels, plays and films, for the purpose of gauging running themes and social commentary made on the subject of Latino/a sexuality, migrations, and Latin American popular culture. Ramirez (2005) insists that cultural productions are the major sites where resistance and alternative ways of responding to the state's practice of exclusion and marginalization takes center stage. The cultural productions contain messages and representations of gay culture and the implications of such messages and themes that emerge from these creative works are pertinent to understanding general attitudes of society and LGBTQ themselves. As identity is a focal theme in the literature and the study, it is important to note the trend gay and lesbian authors' trend to frequently focus on the construction of identity in Latin America and the ways in which such constructions are mediated by critical engagement with politics, cultural identity, and personal and collective values (Lipoez-Vicuna 2004). Therefore, most scholars are aware of the multilayered influence of identity on individuals.

LGBTQ desires and experiences as sexiles escaping the homophobic terrains of their home countries is another prevalent theme in the creative works of Latino/as. To name a few, such creative works include *No se lo digas a nadie* [*Don't Tell Anyone*], *Conducta impropia* [*Improper Conduct*], *Fresa y chocolate* [*Strawberries and Chocolate*], *Antes que anochezca* [*Before Night Falls*], and *XXY* (Corrales & Pecheny 2010). The film *No se lo digas a nadie* is based on the autobiography of a Peruvian woman who flees her wealthy family as she struggles with her sexual identity. *Conducta impropia* was a documentary first released in 1984 which revealed the climate of homosexual oppression and abuse in Cuba at the time. *Fresa y chocolate* is a film first released in 1993 also depicting the homophobic climate during Castro's reign in Cuba. The plot centers on one homophobic character's attempt to expose another man as a homosexual and a danger to the communist cause. *Antes que anochezca* is a film released in the United States in 2000, based on the life of Reinaldo Arenas, an exiled Cuban novelist and poet whose writings were censored during Castor's reign. Finally, an Argentinean woman is the writer and director behind the film *XXY* which documents the life and struggles of an intersex (someone born with both female and male genitalia) person born in Argentina who later relocates to Uruguay where she might start over comfortable in a new place as a stranger in a new country.

Other writers have taken to depicting the violence against LGBTQ persons—impacting their political and social conditions. For instance, the play *El Corazon*, produced by two openly gay Latinos, contains themes revolving around violence, shame, and stigma of the body. Ramirez (2005) finds that reflected in the plot of this play are gendered ways through which the state and its forces of repression instill fear in the general population.

In addition, other Latino/a artists have presented political arguments concerning the rights of LGBTQ individuals. Ralph Torjan's film, *Maple Palm*, is significant in that it makes a legal

argument concerning the need for immigration rights for same-sex couples. The film centers on a lesbian couple living in the United States who are the victims of the government's discriminatory practices against homosexuals and immigrants. Films such as *Maple Palm* which contain bold political implications create essential discourse among scholars. In addressing *Maple Palm's* argument, Lewis (2010) calls for the need to form coalitions between queer and immigrant groups. Lewis (2010) finds the current discriminatory practices against binational same-sex couples in the United States disruptive to the paradigm of the family unit to which the national body politic and federal immigration policy are purported to endorse.

Latina Lesbians

Despite the massive lack in empirical research on Latina lesbians, it is interesting to note however that a vast amount of creative works on Latina lesbianism are circulating at film festivals, poetry readings, comedy shows, short stories, anthologies, theatre, performance art, and in a considerable number of novels (Calvo & Esquibel, 2010).

One of the earliest works written about Latina lesbianism is analyzed in Irwin's (2005) work titled "Las inseparables and Other Traces of Modern Lesbianism" which explores the historical underpinnings of lesbianism or what early Mexican texts call "Sapphism" which eludes to the Greek lesbian poetess Sappho. Irwin (2005) finds that texts including aspects of Sapphism had more to do with lesbians as desired subjects than what lesbians do sexually, since what they did sexually was either unknown or simply not discussed. Irwin's (2005) piece is significant because it shows that lesbian homosexuality had remained unconceptualized in the region during the twentieth century.

Other scholars reviewing older creative works have made commentary on the theme of identity. Ofelia Acosta Rodriguez' 1929 novel *La vida manda*[*Life Brings*] is primarily a heterosexual piece written during the height of homophobic sentiment within Cuba's feminist movement. Despite this however, the novel contains undertones of lesbian identity and homoeroticism presented as a subversive alternative to heterosexuality; and although it is a muted theme in the text, it is significant in that it is symbolic of a closeted affirmation of lesbianism aimed toward women in search of self-realization (Menendez 1997). While Mendez (1997) finds that Rodriguez' novel does not explicitly condone homosexuality, neither does the novel exclude it altogether as an ideal model of female identity or womanhood, specifically during a time of lesbian invisibility in Latin American society. Mendez (1997) asserts that Rodriguez' purpose in alluding to the possibility of lesbianism as a liberating identity for women was to intervene in the homophobic debates within Cuba's feminist movement which at the time was adamantly opposed to homosexuality and the idea of welcoming self identified lesbians into the movement.

With the progress LGBTQ activists have brought during the last few decades, recent writers of creative works are now less likely to allude to the theme of lesbianism in their works, instead writing bluntly on queer themes. Scholars have noted the prevalent theme of silence which plays a major role in the creative works of Latina lesbians. Historian Yolanda Leyva writes on the theme of silence regarding Latina lesbianism and the need to explore and understand it. In her short story entitled *Norma*, Leyva writes:

I looked out my window and saw her, Norma Garcia – sixty years old with a still-trim body, a man's haircut, and jeans. I had heard all about her. I knew the story of how forty years earlier she loved a woman named Dora. Everyone knew. *Pero nadie decia nada...* [but none said anything]. That day I started to think about silences in a different way. I stopped imagining silence as the absence of something. Rather I started to listen for what silences held within them. For *lesbianas* Latinas, silence has been an enigma, a survival

strategy, a wall which confines us, the space that protects us. (as cited in Calvo & Esquibel 2010, p.376)

Leyva's short story captures a scenario probably not far from reality present in the Latin community in which lesbianism is downplayed or all together ignored. The narrator moves the audience to question the significance and implications of silence.

This literature review cannot quite possibly analyze every creative work written by or about the Latino/a LGBTQ population, but it is instead intended to present predominant themes in queer works and discourse among scholars that have emerged as a result. Where do creative works seem to suggest Latina lesbianism stands in regards to political and social progress?

Lopez-Vocuna (2004) states that Norma Mogrovejo's *Un amor que se atrevio a decir su nombre: la lucha de las lesbianas y su relacion con los movimientos homosexuales y feministas en America Latina* demonstrates how lesbians throughout Latin America have, with success, utilized feminist spaces to put lesbian issues on the table, organize collectively, and created webs of lesbian solidarity. One performer recalls:

Back in the olden days in San Francisco, the only Latina lesbian artists/performers that I knew were Marga Gomez and myself and that's it[...]Fast-forward 20 years and here we are with a lot more than two Latina lesbian performers doing their thing and proudly. Not only are we performing but we are writing, producing, directing, and teaching. We are using our creative powers to educate, letting people know that Latina lesbians exist and we are not one kind. We are complex just like everybody else. We are very opinionated. But none of us are standing on stage and pointing our fingers at the audience and saying: I'm oppressed and you did it. We are artists telling our stories and we'd like you to listen. (Palacios 2002, p.33)

Progress has obviously taken place in the movement to make queer sexualities visible which is key for the movement as a whole. Further studies however are needed to add to the discourse on Latina lesbianism especially with an increased focus on sexiles.

Immigration

As immigration is a primary subject in the study at hand, the various angles in which scholars have postulated immigration to affect politics, society, and the individual are necessary to review. Pena (2010) identifies a debate among scholars over how immigration and levels of acculturation affect sexual health, gender inequalities, sexual identities, and sexual behaviors. Though copious amounts of research related to migration exist in academia, by and large most of these studies do not account for the connection to studies in sexuality. Because LGBTQ individuals have historically been barred from legally entering the U.S., Luibheid and Cantu (2005) claim that it is only now, after removing such restrictions, that social researchers are beginning to explore the connection between sexuality and migration.

Some of the literature concerning immigration centers on migration patterns and waves. A number of migration scholars believe large migration waves from Mexico first began after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. This early wave of Mexican immigrants was due to the great financial hardships, political unrest, and living conditions in the country, yet not much is known about the hardships LGBTQ migrants faced at the time. Ramirez (2003) identifies one migration wave occurring between 1975 and 1983. During this wave, hundreds of men and women arrived in San Francisco as part of a national and international migration taking place. Manuel Guzman refers to such migrants as “sexiles,” or persons leaving their home countries for motivations based on their sexual orientation. As this particular migration wave subsided, another mass migration wave set into the United States originating from Haiti and Cuba in the early 1980s and 1990s (Salomon 2005). Fussell (2004) argues that there have existed four distinct patterns of migration. However, the study fails to include a variable on sexuality to account for any one of the patterns identified.

Other research concerning immigration focuses on the implication immigrant status has on the attainment of citizenship status. Manalansan (2006) has found that recent works on sexuality and migration, chiefly those that document queer sexualities, have emphasized not only the viability and significance of studies on sexuality, but also its constitutive role in the formation and definitions of citizenship and nation. Although there is undeniable stigma attached to claims of illegal status, and a significant amount of research exists on the topic related to the challenges of citizenship attainment. Despite such extensive research, only a small portion of the literature considers the intersection of sexuality and legal citizenship. With the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) in place, Congress had ensured that immigrant persons identified as homosexual could legally be excluded from eligibility for immigration and naturalization (Somerville 2005). Furthermore, Luibheid and Cantu (2005) insist that:

The two most common ways to become legal permanent resident (LPR) are through direct family ties or sponsorship by an employer. But Lesbian/gay relationships – unlike heterosexual ones – are not recognized as a legitimate basis for acquiring LPR status. This disparity was reinforced in 1996 by the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman for domestic and immigration purposes. (xiii)

Therefore, the literature will expand on the bureaucratic barriers imposed on LGBTQ individual's pursuits to gain legal citizenship status and all the legal benefits that follow this privileged identity.

The literature also seeks to understand how sexuality factors into the decision and conditions surrounding migration to the United States. Kirby (2001) contributes to a rationale that finds class to play a major role in the decision to migrate. Kirby (2001) concludes that while poor immigrants from Latin America rarely migrate purely for gaining sexual freedom they are instead more so driven to migrate out of survival needs. Moreover, middle and upper-class Latinos with greater economic opportunities in their home countries are more likely to immigrate

for the chance to live openly in the United States. Other scholars such as Bianchi et al. (2007) have come to similar conclusions finding poverty, socioeconomic class, political instability and limited educational opportunities are among the major home country factors which frequently provide the impetus to emigrate.

The Politics of Immigration

Immigration scholars have also discussed the implications of immigration on politics and identity. Luidheid and Cantu (2005) claim that international migration and related globalization processes have profoundly altered every aspect of U.S. social, political, economic, and cultural life over the past quarter century. In today's increasingly connected world, Gutierrez (2010) calls the combination of a heightened anti-immigration climate in the United States with increasing globalization in the Western Hemisphere the major factors contributors to the political consequences of sexuality for Latinas/os. What sort of consequences emerge from the role sexuality plays in the political arena?

To understand how the United States has historically treated immigrating homosexuals, some scholars have drawn their attention to the *Boutilier v. INS* case. Buffington (1997) claims that Carlos Roumagnac who was a Porfirian criminologist, journalist, and litterateur, conducted the most exhaustive criminological investigation into sexual deviance during the turn of the century. Roumagnac's inferences became criminological doctrine for later criminologist and by 1935, the links between criminal and sexual deviance had been 'proven' (Buffington 1997). For the purpose of understanding the *Boutilier v. INS* case, sexual deviance and especially homosexuality which criminologists determined was a biological problem is understood as a threat capable of contaminating so-called "healthy" criminals (Buffington 1997). However, while

Congress amended the legislation to exclude and deport aliens with “sexual deviations,” *Boutilier* was nevertheless concerned that the INS would interpret earlier “psychopathic personality” provision as applicable to immigrant homosexual thereby denying requested entry into the United States on such grounds. Stein (2010) basically finds that the Supreme Court’s *Boutilier* decision validated and authorized exercises of state power over those whom the United States classified as aliens, homosexuals, and psychopaths. Although the case is dated, it nevertheless supports sound conclusions still evident in today’s political arena in which queer exclusion functions as state control that ensures what Luibheid and Cantu (2005) call a ‘proper’ sexual and gender order, reproduction of white racial privilege, and exploitation of the poor.

It is an unfortunate fact that immigration historians often overlook the *Boutilier* case, perceiving it as a marginal struggle within immigration discourse, perhaps because it is a case about homosexuality. The early homosexual movement did not view immigration reform as a prime focus at the time either, therefore only minimal research connecting the two fields exists (Stein 2010). However, in bringing the *Boutilier* case to light, Stein (2010) deconstructs the unjust policing of sexual borders and encourages the interdisciplinary route for immigration and queer historians, adding to the emerging discourse between the two fields. Stein (2010) is not alone in his conclusions. Take for instance when Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas ‘came out of the closet’ as not only gay but as also an undocumented immigrant. In ‘coming out of the closet,’ Vargas clearly made the point that immigrant rights were a queer issue too (Parrenas 2011). As other scholars have also noted, there is definitely a growing need for an interdisciplinary direction between immigration and queer studies.

The Politics of Seeking Asylum

Particularly evident in migration discourse is the issue of asylum seekers. The 1980 Refugee Act in the United States established a standard system for processing and admitting refugees and asylum seekers (Cantu, Luibheid & Stern 2005). In upholding international human rights law, the United States introduced a refugee/asylum system which granted entry to the U.S. to those fleeing persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (Luibheid & Cantu, 2005). Randazzo (2005) notes that gay and lesbians seeking asylum must prove their “membership in a particular social group” which includes groups defined by sexual orientation. He goes on to explain that applicants wishing to obtain asylum from the United States government must first prove that they have “well-founded fears of persecution” if they return to their country of origin and such persecution must prove to have occurred on account of the applicant’s race, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation. Furthermore, applicants must also convince an asylum officer or an immigration judge of the truthfulness of their claims (Randazzo 2005).

Not only are Latin Americans the largest national origin group, but they also accounted for the majority of asylum petitions filed in the 1980s and 1990s (Cantu, Luibheid & Stern 2005). The first applicant to receive asylum based on sexual orientation occurred on March 18, 1994 and over the course of three years over sixty people had been granted asylum on the same grounds (Randazzo 2005). Based on these findings it is clear that the asylum process is not impossible; however, the mental anguish from recounting to asylum investigators the physical and mental abuse endured in one’s country of origin is a drawback for asylum applicants. As Latinos/as constitute a rapidly increasing population, one might assume that this group continues to represent a significant portion of applicants and the particular ways in which these asylum

applicants are reviewed have setbacks for those who do not fit investigator's stereotypical image of gayness or lesbianism which are often understood as opposing gender binaries.

Discriminatory practices found on bureaucratic levels are therefore one of the key issues identified and debated over in asylum hearings. Cantu, Luibheid and Stern (2005) find that asylum hearings often reinforce racist colonialist imagery and relations thereby restricting asylum possibilities for men not fitting the image of an effeminate man or femme women not fitting into the butch lesbian stereotype. Some scholars find other discriminatory practices within the asylum process targeting poor and working class applicants. Randazzo (2005) points out that immigrants applying for asylum face such challenge as finding an affordable attorney to guide them through the difficult bureaucratic process, gender-related obstacles, and cultural and legal barriers of proving one's sexual orientation.

In particular, scholars have identified gender based discrimination within the asylum process. For instance, Randazzo (2005) claims that since female immigrants are poorer than their male counterparts, lesbians in turn face difficulties affording an attorney who can successfully represent. Securing an attorney strengthens one's cases substantially, as an attorney is able to locate scarce documents on lesbian human rights abuses or other legal documents that could bring more credibility to a case with more ease than an average person might. Randazzo (2005) and other researchers also note that lesbians face a particular barrier unique to their gender in that courts typically consider human rights abuses such as arrest and torture to be primarily associated with men, and view such persecutions as rape, forced marriage, or honor killings as "private" matters outside the scope of asylum law. Marta Donayre, a Brazilian immigrant to the United States who is public education director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights in San Francisco, elaborates on this stating:

The most common crime against lesbians is rape. Rapist, including police officers, usually tell the victims they are doing it to ‘show them what is good for them’ in addition, most crimes against lesbians occur at the hands of family members, turning the crime into a domestic issue. Gay men, on the other hand, tend to be victimized by strangers, making it easier to report. If a crime against a lesbian is ever reported, it would usually be reported as a rape or as domestic violence, not as a homophobic attack. This blends the crime with overall crimes against women, effectively hiding lesbophobia” (Reding 2010, p.300)

The literature makes clear of the need for further research on the obstacles Latina lesbians face when applying for asylum.

Scholars are generally unified in their claims that though asylum is possible, legal barriers continue to jeopardize the chances for masculine gay men, lesbians and the poor to win asylum cases. Transgender applicants began winning asylum on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender persecution in the 1990s (Salomon 2005). Christina Madrazo, a trans woman from Mexico who suffered great gender repression in her country, fled Mexico and sought protection from U.S. Unfortunately, Madrazo was only subjected to further violation at the hands of U.S. officials at the notorious Krome detention center in Miami. Salomon (2005) calls harassment and mistreatment of female detainees, who account for less than a third of the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) detainees nationwide, a rampant occurrence in INS jails. Madrazo’s claims are not unfamiliar to researchers who are aware of the mass claims made against the INS. What is needed however, are studies on immigration that specifically account for the trans population.

Scholars have identified another bureaucratic barrier which includes the enactment of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) intended to bar immigrants from seeking asylum if they have lived in the United States for over one year, regardless of the strength of their claims (Randazzo 2005). Cantu, Luibheid and Stern (2005) note that the asylum system as is a steadfast part of a governance apparatus engendering racist

colonist images and relations greatly impacting those seeking to take part in the U.S. asylum process.

Immigration and Naturalization Services

The INS has the authority to deport immigrants in the country illegally or who have committed crimes deemed deportable offenses (Salomon 2005). Some immigration scholars have identified the mass abuses committed by INS personnel. For instance, in 1986 the INS specifically began targeting Mexicans for deportation by announcing it would detain all applicants for political asylum entering the country through Texas (Salomon 2005). In only a five month span in the 2000s, the Justice Department filed more than 3,200 allegations against INS personnel committing, among other infractions, sexual assault, drug smuggling, theft, and even murder (Salomon 2005). In addition, human rights organizations have documented of numerous INS abuses targeting asylum seekers (Randazzo 2005). Conditions at INS detention centers are so harsh that “criminal aliens” have reported that they preferred state penitentiaries to INS detention (Salomon 2005). The literature suggests a great need for the restructuring and cleanup of the INS.

The Politics of Citizenship Status

Scholars have recently begun utilizing the concept of cultural citizenship to address claims for political inclusion in the United States (Ramirez 2005). Attainment of citizenship is becoming an increasingly difficult task, as anti-immigrant advocates fight to limit the definition of U.S. citizen to those whose ancestors were Americans. Furthermore, the “low immigration high enforcement” think-tank Center for Immigration Studies wants to limit naturalized

citizenship to those who marry American citizens or young children who have no memory of any other country except America (Parrenas 2011). Arendt's (1973) suggestion that human rights are only meaningful within the context of citizenship rights continues to ring true in the United States and play a role in scholarly interest and research on the matter (as cited in Lewis 2010).

Though activists have assisted in the achievements of new legal enactments that have made it possible for LGBTQ immigrants to legally become citizens, the battle for LGBTQ immigrants not fully won. Luibheid and Cantu (2005) insist:

The production of national sovereignty and citizenship through controlling the entry of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants has resulted in the proliferation of border zones and detention centers, where various categories of suspect people – legal immigrants, asylum seekers, and the undocumented – are detained pending adjudication of their status. (xviii)

Scholars have gone on to compile impressive research documenting the mass discrimination involved in immigration and citizenship discourse. Stein (2010) highlights the prominent notion held by LGBTQ activists who assume that gay rights are protected by the constitution. However, in reality the constitution only grants limited protection to undocumented immigrants.

Lewis (2010) further notes that although there are currently nineteen countries that permit lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens to sponsor partners for purposes of migration, the United States does not. Introduced to Congress in 2000 by House Representative Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), the Uniting American Families Act was a bill aimed at giving same-sex couples the same immigration rights as heterosexuals (Lewis 2000). Like many other scholars, Lewis (2000) finds the significance between the intersection of class and citizenship, particularly as poor or lower class immigrants, when he notes the failure of legislation such as the Uniting American Families Act (UAFAs). The failure of the UAFAs legislation lies in the various accounts of individuals unable to provide adequate financial

support for their foreign partner which only perpetuates existing inequalities along the lines of race, class, gender, and citizenship.

For immigrants unable to secure full citizenship status and seeking the full rights withheld from them due to their illegal citizenship status, acquiring a tourist visa is another solution to their situation. Tourist visa applicants must supply evidence of having such ample funds in their home country that the likelihood of overstaying their visa is minimal at best (Randazzo 2005). However, the drawback to a tourist visa is that it only allows non-U.S. citizens to remain in the country for six months out of the year (Lewis 2010). Unless non-U.S. citizens reside in an affluent area of the country, or happen to live near the border and can cheaply come to and from the US through legal or extralegal means, it is otherwise tremendously difficult for non-U.S. citizens particularly from Mexico, Brazil, and Guatemala to obtain a tourist visa (Lewis 2010).

Resettlement

Scholars have documented the various reasons for immigrant resettlement to the U.S. and even some documenting resettlement specifically to the San Francisco Bay Area. Berude (1982) has found that after World War II the military imposed harsher restrictions on gay personnel, loading many onto “queer ships” which were sent to nearby port cities such as San Francisco. In doing so, the U.S. government seems to have ironically “sponsored a migration of the gay community” (as cited in Howe 2011). Furthermore, Howe (2011) finds that countercultural tendencies informed the construction of San Francisco as a hot spot for thousands of queer people who made the Castro District in the 1970s their new home. Much of this migration must

be understood as a complex set of factors making the progressive ideals of “tolerance,” which have long defined the city’s political atmosphere, a part of the city’s symbolic construction.

Resettlement and the Significance of Networks

A few scholars have examined the networks of resettlement available to LGBTQ immigrants. Most studies on immigrant networks focus on the general population of immigrants and do not control for sexual orientation. In one such study, Menjivar’s (1997) examines situations of kinship assistance and instances of failure on the part of kinship networks to help newly arriving migrants, in the physical and material conditions of the receiving context. Her study has revealed that Mexicans rely most heavily on family networks in the U.S. for assistance after successfully crossing the border. Once making the journey across the border Randazzo (2005) finds that many recently arrived LGBTQ immigrants depend on immigrant communities for support and are therefore hesitant to disclose their sexual orientation with immigrant community for fear of even further marginalization. The complicated and lengthy history of Latino/a migrations to the U.S. has created a large web of formal and informal networks which serve as a vital resource for access to opportunities that make the resettlement process more manageable for immigrants. Esta Noche was the first openly gay Latino bar in the 1970’s and although it was not the place Latina lesbians had hoped it would be for them, it would not be until several years later that lesbian Latinas would create a monthly dancing space of their own in which to socialize and build networks (Ramirez 2003).

Menjivar’s (1997) study finds that due to the highly developed nature of informal ties with family and friends, study participants were able to secure jobs with relative ease. My study will understand if those with an LGBTQ identity within such highly developed networks

encounter a similar ease of finding jobs, adequate housing, and health care, by considering the role sexual orientation plays in the ease of securing a job through familial or friend networks. Do LGBTQ individuals find it necessary to remain closeted with family members, in order to take advantage of familial networks, or do they turn to completely different networks of people – perhaps gay networks?

One of the coping mechanisms that lesbian Latinas frequently utilize to avoid stigmatization from their community is to seek acceptance into other groups or networks where their sexual orientation is more accepted than it is in their family or community (Espin, 1987). In essence, this study will compare and contrast how study participants utilize networks versus how homosexuals utilize networks during the resettlement process. One of the first formal gay networks established for queer Latino/as in San Francisco was the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA). Initially, women were not included in GALA organizational plan and were therefore not deliberately recruited, but Diane Felix fought to ensure that the men in the organization respected her position. Felix even formed a Women's Caucus to ensure that GALA did not ignore Latina women's issues. However, despite Diane's efforts most Latinas felt GALA did not create an ideal space for them and simply refused to make GALA their social or political home (Ramirez 2003).

Discrimination and Resettlement

Herek's (2006) study surveying some 616 northern California residents of Mexican descent has found that those who retained negative attitudes towards homosexuals were older respondents with, more kids, less educated, traditional, and religious respondents. Herek (2006) makes the point that very little empirical evidence has surfaced regarding attitudes towards

homosexuality among those of Mexican descent. Therefore, it is important for academics to delve further into this relatively unexplored topic, as it represents a key element in any study involving the treatment of LGBTQ individuals in already marginalized racial categories. Since this study examines migration patterns and incorporation of LGBTQ persons in San Francisco's workforce, understanding what Herek's (2006) has already put forward is essential for this study and others similar to it.

LGBTQ immigrants from Latin America face not only discrimination in their home countries, but within U.S. LGBT communities that often exclude people of color who were a numerical minority (Randazzo 2005; Espin, 1987). The 1970's gay bar scene in San Francisco was a place where Latinos felt marginalized as Jesus Rodrigo gives his account of it stating:

There were some racist discriminatory practices on the part of the bars in that sometimes they would ask for an inordinate amount of IDs from people of color...They would ask for two, three picture IDs. So it wasn't a very happy time for Latino gays...There were some places that Latinos felt welcome, and people did go to them. But still, we were still a marginal group. The dominant group was still white gay men. (Ramirez 2003, p. 232)

One member of GALA recalls:

The racism in the broader community is in the gay community too. We could all tell you of incidents of racism – the vulgar jokes about Cubans, such as when somebody asks if a person has his houseboy yet. There are those references to 'taco belles' and to the young people in the Mission as 'thuglettes.' (Ramirez 2003, p. 243)

Therefore, inclusion into the gay community was not always an automatic guarantee. It is for this reason that explorations into the impact racial categories have on the LGBTQ inclusion today.

Housing

Few scholars have examined household environments of LGBTQ in Latin America, and though there are several studies examining immigrant housing in the U.S. Such studies do not control for sexual orientation during the data collection process. Researchers investigating the housing condition of LGBTQ in Latin America like Corrales and Pecheny (2010) have found that in general, LGBTQ are likelier to view the household as an uncomfortable or even hostile environment – a place where the consequences of ostracism, harassment, violence, or economic destitution befalls those who exhibit LGBT desires, identities, and behaviors. Solomon's (2005) study documents accounts of homophile abuse in the household in his writings on Madrazo, a Mexican trans woman, who faced lifelong persecution which began the household. As punishment for her gender transgression, Madrazo recalls her physically abusive brothers “beating some machismo” into her (Solomon 2005). Although the abuse of transgender persons in the home is not uncommon, it is key to note that such abuses endured from household or parental homophobia is not often permanent. Frequently, household environments eventually become supportive.

Although scholars find that household abuse is reduced over time, other scholars note another phenomenon occurring among LGBTQ individuals is termed household exodus. Corrales and Pecheny (2010) describe household exodus as the fleeing of one's home or town for the purpose of seeking greater freedom, new experiences, or supportive groups during youth. Furthermore, Corrales and Pecheny (2010) find that while the majority of LGB people leave their households in their twenties, many transgender persons in Latin America report household exodus. They argue that there are several reason for high volumes of LGB individuals who remain in the household despite the discomforts. For instance Corrales and Pecheny (2010) state:

First, incomes are lower and job opportunities are scarcer for young citizens in Latin America. Young people cannot, therefore, afford an independent lifestyle. Second, families still expect unmarried children to stay within the household either as a cultural preference or out of economic necessity. Third, many cities and towns have a housing shortage, forcing different generations to share dwellings.

Understanding previous household conditions is essential in order to measure improvement or degeneration of housing conditions after resettlement.

Scholars who have examined housing conditions after resettlement include Menjivar's (1997) study which has found that most immigrants live in overcrowded housing. Unfortunately, the study does not expand on the experience of such overcrowded living conditions nor are there many other scholars who expand on such issues of LGBTQ housing. Overcrowded household must undoubtedly arouse tension, but how do these tensions differ from one household to the next is an essential question for scholars to explore. This study adds to the understanding of how such household dynamics are played out when LGBTQ occupy the home.

Employment

Some studies have examined workforce participation in the informal sector in Latin America. Bile's (2008) study finds that women comprised the majority of workers in the informal sector, and their participation in this sector was, by-and-large, for the purposes of supplementing household incomes. The overall findings suggest that because of the unpredictable course of the labor market in Latin America within the context of neoliberal reform, there is a high volume of informal work participation that reflects a livelihood strategy based on poor compensation in the labor market rather than scarcity of labor opportunities. Bile's (2008) study, and others like it, serves as an important source for comparing patterns of workforce participation in both regions.

Scholars analyzing the service complex in America, which is dominated by finance, find that it contains large quantities of jobs that involve low-paid manual positions – many of which are held by women and immigrants. Even though immigrant workers and the informal jobs they take on are rarely acknowledge as significant players in the global economy, they are indeed part of the infrastructure of jobs involved in running the global economic system (Sassen, 1998). Researchers are beginning to uncover the significant role immigrants play in participating in the informal labor markets. Copious amounts of literature exist concerning immigrant participation in the informal economy, yet very few studies account for the formal labor market or how sexual orientation impacts workforce conditions and experiences.

Researchers have also examined how societies in both regions have responded to issues LGBTQ employment. Orce finds that a 2006-07 poll measuring the approve rating for homosexuals right to run for public office indicates that in a majority of Latin American countries, sometimes more than 60 percent of respondents, disapproved of extending this basic democratic right to homosexuals. The findings highlight the prevalence of homophobia in the region and illustrate the strong public sentiment to suppress the basic democratic rights of the LGB population (as cited in Corrales & Pecheny 2010). However, the same poll shows that the majority of respondents from the United States express approval. Interestingly, American Airlines became the first major corporation to add gender identity to its Equal Employment Opportunity policies (Wilchins 2000). These findings demonstrate the benefit for homosexuals immigrating to the U.S. and seek employment because as Rapp (2010) reiterates in his findings:

Pedro Julio Serrano became the first openly gay man to run for public office in Puerto Rico when he announced his candidacy for an at-large seat in the common wealth's House of Representatives in 1998. Although he had been a lifelong worker for the New Progressive Party, its leaders failed to support him, some even claiming that they did not know him. (p. 137)

Latinas face similar barriers that gay men encounter, often choosing to remain closeted among family, colleagues, and society, in order to mitigate the risks of jeopardizing not only strong family ties, but also the opportunity to serve their cultural specific community (Espin, 1987). Reding (2010) finds that there are no laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination, in most Latin American countries. This illustrates the danger of damaging one's career, should one openly admit to a queer identity in Latin America. The anxiety of being discovered gay reinforces the motives to seek better employment conditions in the U.S.

Citizenship and Employment

Scholars have written extensively on the issue of LGBTQ employment. Records show that the United States government at one point sought to limit the employment of the queer population in the 1950s. The senate had undertaken an investigation entitled, "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in the U.S. Government" which found:

Homosexuals and other sex perverts are not proper persons to be employed in government for two reasons; first, they are generally unsuitable because they are law violators, social outcasts, and frequent victims of blackmailers; and second, they constitute security risks because their lack of emotional stability and weakness of...moral fiber...[make] them susceptible to the blandishments of the foreign espionage agent. (as cited in Somerville 2005, p. 81)

Stein (2010) finds that the early homophile movement of the U.S. viewed legal reform as an essential part of the movement, especially targeting discriminatory employment practices and anti-homosexual military policies. This was good news for LGBTQ citizens, but left queer immigrants out of the progressive visions of the future. Homosexual activists believed that the movement's strength to make such political reforms possible came from two assumptions: their movement was of and for U.S. citizens, and that the constitution, if properly interpreted and enforced, protected the rights of homosexuals (Stein, 2010).

Kiger's (2004) article identifies a recent trend emerging in American companies which are increasing their efforts to create an attractive workplace for gay candidates. Such companies, for instance, may offer benefits to same-sex partnerships, promote nondiscriminatory policies at work, or offer other services meant to create a gay-friendly atmosphere conducive to a diverse and efficiently run company. Additionally, Kiger (2004) finds that some companies advertise job opportunities through gay publications or participate in job fairs run by gay professionals or student groups. Although there are obviously efforts made to ensure that LGBTQ persons in the community receive equal job opportunities, but there is a failure to address what happens to LGBTQ individuals lacking the legal documentation necessary acquiring employment in the formal job market. Therefore, a problematic situation occurs whereby marginalized immigrants are further marginalized within corporate gay politics as well.

Sex Work

The amount of scholarly debate over sex work is enormous and a substantial portion of such studies include Latino/a populations. A significant number of Latina/os account for those participating in transactional sexual economies which may be attributed to class inequalities and the economic exclusion they face (Munoz-Laboy & Leau 2010). Corrales and Pecheny (2010) have found that sex work is virtually the only source of income for transgender women, due to cultural and psychosocial factors that make incorporation into the formal workforce nearly impossible. In Katsulis' (2008) study on female, male, and transgender sex workers in the border city of Tijuana, finds that male and transgendered sex workers are more likely to fall victim to of police violence, client violence, and violence from strangers. Katsulis' (2008) study demands an improved regulatory system which that allows *all* sex workers the opportunity to register as sex

workers. Because 96% of the females in Katsulis' (2008) study identified as heterosexual, the true extent of the lesbian or transgender experience in the field of sex work remains widely unexplored.

Gender and Employment

The pressure to take on a hypermasculine identity for men in Latin America has tremendous consequences for GBT men in the region. Reding (2010) notes that the rampant ideology of manhood suggests that most Latin American gay and bisexual males, despite the sexual roles they assume in private, are expected to perform in the image of masculinity at all times. Discourse on Latino/a transgression of gender roles demonstrates the clearly social disapproval which affects conditions of and opportunities for employment. Reding's (2010) recent research in Brazil finds that homosexuals, especially those with exaggeratedly effeminate behavior, were usually rejected for employment following interviews with the company psychologists, although these same psychologists deny being prejudiced against homosexuals. He also insists that positions involving heavy interaction with the public, such as sales, are frequently denied to overtly effeminate homosexual job applicants.

The most obvious forms of gender transgression are found in transgender populations. Annick Prieur, a female Norwegian doctoral student who lived with Mema, a male transvestite sex worker in Mexico, has contributed to the increased understanding of transgender life. Mema's home is a sanctuary type space for young effeminate boys who were left with nowhere else to go. In most cases, the boys came from a background of childhood molestation from male relatives such as uncles or brothers, constant physical abuse at the hands of family members or peers, and expelled from their households. For most of these boys, the only two options for

making a living were hairdressing and sex work (Reding 2010). Other scholars identify other employment options for transgender people which include performing in drag shows. Madrazo, a transgender woman from Mexico, had lived what she calls “a miserable existence” in Mexico where she lip-synched her way across the country, performing in drag shows with other trans women. She described her workplace as “a place for [trans women] to cry together, a place for us to have some kind of community” (Salomon 2005, p.23). The literature paints the restrictive and troublesome reality for employment opportunities for LGBTQ who do not adhere to gender roles dictated by their sex and culture. What is lacking in the literature is an understanding of how female transgression of gender roles affects employment outlooks.

Health

The debate over health care rights and services has played a significant social and political role in the lives of the LGBTQ population. Scholars have recently addressed the sour history behind the medicalization of homosexuality in Latin American and the United States. Scholars like Stein (2010) view the *Boutilier v. INS* case as a significant case which highlights the early dispute between one set of scientists who regarded homosexuality to be a psychopathic disorder and other scientists who regarded it merely as undesirable. Many studies have illustrated the increasing concern over the health of the Latino/a population and the present concerns specifically affecting the LGBTQ segment of the population. Gutierrez (2010) finds that despite some advocacy group’s claims behind the present crisis in Latino/a sexual and reproductive health care, health care among the Latino/a population arguably remains a sorely under researched topic in academia. The growing concern for the health of the LGBTQ population

obviously has not translated to a growth in academic research on the matter, so my study will contribute to its limited research.

Health and Gender

Many scholars have examined the influence of gender role analysis in the LGBTQ health discourse. Arevalo and Amaro's (2010) find that in many Latina/o communities, the so-called "normal" gender role is a variable that significantly contributes to homophobic attitudes which in turn impact all aspects of health for lesbian and bisexual Latinas. Arevalo and Amaro (2010) focus on the implications of gender role or stereotype on women. Other scholars have investigated the probability of LGBTQ persons encountering physical and mental abuse for not adhering to the strict gender roles of Latin America. Ortiz-Hernandez and Grandos-Cosme's (2006) study is based on the premise that oppression against LGB has its origin in the gender system; and while researchers did not find a significant difference between the frequency of violence suffered by LB females who considered themselves feminine and violence endured by LB females who perceived themselves as masculine, BG males who perceived themselves as feminine did however endure verbal violence, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and damages, assault and theft of property with more frequency than BG masculine males. Although it is commonplace for researchers to find high rates of homophobic out lash, few studies examine the long lasting mental or physical that may follow such abuse.

Health Insurance

Academics have shown an increased interest in understanding who the uninsured are in comparison to the rest of society. Arevalo and Amaro (2010) indicate that Latino men living in the United States are more likely lack health insurance (45 percent) in comparison to blacks (31 percent), whites (17 percent), or other minority groups (21-26 percent). Arevalo and Amaro(2010), as well as other scholars also find that Latinas in the United States are in a similar situation as far as general lack of health care services among the population is concerned. Gutierrez (2010) contends that not only do Latinas have a higher rate of being uninsured than women form all other racial or ethnic group, stating that in 2002 43 percent of Latinos, 25 percent of whites, and 26 percent of low-income African Americans were uninsured across the nation, but they also have lower rates of preventive care and higher rates of health risk behaviors such as obesity, alcohol, and tobacco use. Then, when scholars such as Vickie M. Mayes break identity down even further and examine sexual orientation, findings indicate a familiar pattern ensued whereby that a significantly higher rate of lesbian and bisexual Latinas lacked a regular source of health care when compared with African-American and Asian lesbian and bisexual women in the United States (As cited in Arevalo and Amaro 2010).

A trend in the literature demonstrates that Latinos in general, no matter the sexual orientation, are far less equipped to deal with serious medical conditions, due to a lack in access to quality health insurance. Arevalo and Amaro (2010) point out that lack of access to health services and low quality of health services are two prevalent characteristics found in Latino/a groups, referencing 2006 data provided by the National Healthcare Disparities Report (NHDH) from the United States Department of Health and Human Services showing that not only are Hispanics (83 percent) among those with the worse access to health care, but Hispanics

(77percent) also receive poorer-quality healthcare in comparison to their white counterparts. Therefore, more studies on the health of the Latino/a LGBTQ population are necessary in order to push policy makers to implement more services or laws intended to alleviate the problem that the mass lack of health insurance is having on gay and straight population.

The Health of “Coming Out”

Some researchers have grappled with how the “coming out” process factors into the manner in which professionals treat and attempt to understand the health and wellness of their LGBTQ clients. Arevalo and Amaro (2010) bring to light some interesting findings from a wellness survey conducted by Joseph F. Morris, Craig R. Waldo, and Ester D. Rothblum on the levels of “being out/outness” on participants. These researchers found that Latinas’ level of outness was not significantly associated with psychological stress, as it was for African American and Euro-American respondents. They have found that the lower the acculturation level and the higher the familial ties or cultural values, the less likely it is for Latinas to embrace their true sexual identity. Other researchers have found that “lesbian women have felt safer coming out within the context of the women’s movement rather than the male-dominated gay movement (Browning et al., 1991). Thus, when making referrals, it is suggested that counselors not assume that a lesbian woman would feel more comfortable in a gay male support group rather than a heterosexual women’s support group (Sager & Schlimmer & Hellmann, 2001). Other scholars have noted that as familial and community cohesiveness serve a major role in the lives of most Hispanic people, the apparent risk of possible rejection or stigmatization by their community is more of a psychological burden for lesbian Latinas than it is for lesbians of other

ethnicities. Therefore, rejection from mainstream society simply does not bear the same weight as rejection from one's own cultural society (Espin, 1987).

Health and Citizenship

Academics have also come to understand another trend in immigrant health which is tied inextricably to citizenship status. At one point, U.S. legislation required immigrants to test negative to HIV antibody tests, in order to qualify for residency status (Ramirez 2005). While this is no longer the case in the U.S., researchers find additional manners in which citizenship status continue to impact the health care for the immigrant community. Gutierrez (2010) cites a 2006 study conducted on Latino/as by the National Council of La Raza which names immigration issues one of the most significant factors preventing a healthy sex life for Latinos/as. The struggle for adequate health care is due to the constant changes in national public health programs bureaucratic efforts to establish and verify citizenship status which creates an uneasy atmosphere for immigrants who overwhelming simply refuse to seek treatment – fearing the chance of deportation.

Although one might assume that community clinics would lessen the problems those uninsured Latino/as face, Gutierrez points to the difficulties immigrants encounter with the health care system. Because community clinics are often government-funded, they are subject to policies demanding disclosure and documentation of clients' citizenship. Furthermore, because Medicaid funding for the treatment provided to undocumented immigrants is already limited, it is easy to understand the major difficulties immigrants face in seeking adequate and affordable health care in the U.S.

Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights

Gutierrez (2010) discerns a prevalent theme within health care discourse focusing on Latinas. This theme revolves mainly around the lack of or refusal of access to adequate services and information on sexual health and reproductive rights. Though access to adequate health care which includes such services as annual pap smears, contraceptives, HIV treatment, and sex education are conducive to an overall healthier living, Gutierrez (2010) states that Latina immigrants are far less likely to receive such reproductive services in comparison to other women living in the United States. Sex education is particularly imperative because as some studies have found, not only do Latinas avoid seeking health care treatment because their inability to communicate with their health care provider in Spanish, but they also avoid screenings such as pap tests believing that the test would be painful, or because they simply did not know where to receive a screening. Gutierrez (2010) also claims that the uninsured, and chiefly Latina immigrants, are among those are more inclined to delay treatment, fail to fill prescriptions, and to neglect important preventive medical procedures.

The 1990s saw a hard time for low-income, same-sex families, and immigrant women, as this period reeled in new welfare reform theoretically initiated to benefit low-income women, but instead only created further social obstacles for nontraditional family units seeking equal rights to safety net programs such as Medicaid. Gutierrez (2010) calls the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 one of the most restrictive welfare reform policies in the nation to date. In practice, PRWORA promoted sexuality only in monogamous and marriage-based relationships. Gutierrez (2010) goes on to describe the implications of PRWORA stating:

PRWORA included such requirements as family cap provisions which deny women benefits for any of their children if they bear another child while on public assistance *except* if they agree to be sterilized or use other long-term methods of birth control [...] This legislation also reinforced the illegitimacy of nontraditional families such as many single-parent households or cohabitating same-sex couples by strictly defining marriage as the legal union of a man and a woman [and] limited previously available Medicaid benefits to five years for those who immigrated after 1996. (p. 98)

Gutierrez therefore brings to light crucial issues in the debate regarding immigrant and women's rights debates centered on health care.

HIV and AIDS

Somerville (2005) finds that the construction of homosexuality in 1952 as a medical pathology functioned as the bases for the exclusion of LGBTQ persons on the grounds of having medical disorder. Other scholars realize the importance of understanding the remedicalization of homosexuality in the context of the AIDS epidemic. Steven Epstein and other scholars argue that because gay men accounted for some of the first people to contract AIDS, the medical health industry in the 1980s framed AIDS as “a gay disease” that has only added further to the medical communities' legacy of the medicalization of homosexuality (Conrad 2007; Ramirez 2005). Specifically, San Francisco's Latino population viewed AIDS as a “gay white disease,” and it was not until gay Latinos began to fall victim to the disease in large numbers that community-based health agencies had no other choice but to respond to the crisis (Ramirez 2005). Today however, medical institutions are well aware that the AIDS epidemic reaches past the gay community alone.

Although AIDS affects more than just the gay community, a vast amount of research exists concerning HIV risk factors for men who have sex with men (MSM). Munoz-Layboy and Leu (2010) find that ethnic minority men, especially Latinos and African Americans, who have

sex with men and women (MSMW) have notably higher incidences of HIV infection than MSM or men who have sex exclusively with women (MSW). Munoz-Layboy and Leau (2010) also discover an alarming trends among convenient samples of bi-sexual men which indicates their inconsistent use of condoms with male and female partners, the seldom disclosure of their sexual orientation, and the higher prevalence of reporting multiple HIV-risk behaviors when compared to exclusively homosexual men.

Other scholars seek to understand the international perspective of concerning the battle against AIDS. The AIDS epidemic in Puerto Rico did two things: it sparked an interest in the LGBTQ community to participate in the national movements, and it also gave the push that gay men needed to begin speaking about their lives as never before demanding the government include them in the national claim to essential services and treatment (Aponte-Pares et al. 2007). Corrales and Pecheny (2010) discern a major flaw in the LGBT rights movement worldwide, calling it too heavily dependent on the shock effect. For instance, they note advances in health care, counseling and rights protection for LGBT citizens occurred in the region only after the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic.

Summary

Throughout U.S history, immigration to the U.S. remains a hotly debated issue that has stirred up controversial practices of border control which excluded the entry of homosexuals, to mass abuses at the hands of INS personnel. Despite such barriers several migration waves originating from Latin America have helped to solidify the Latino population as the largest minority group in the United States. Although research on Latino immigration is vast, the queer segment of this population is largely ignored in academia. The literature presented in this review

aids in the analysis of Latino/a LGBTQ identity. It also demonstrates how the experience of each category of queer identity differs between region, social class, citizenship status, and gender role deviation. Distinguishing these differences assists in determining how varying identities impact the livelihoods of the population and provide rational behind motivations to migrate and subsequent condition of resettlement.

The main political concern lesbians and gay men involves their desire to express their sexual orientations without consequence, and to have their relationships legitimately recognized, while the main political issue for transgender individuals is the recognition of their gender identity, and an end to their exclusion from almost every social domain of life including education, employment, and social networks (Corrales & Pecheny 2010). Though Latin America has made significant legal gains for the queer population, perilous consequences such as beatings, rape, harassment, and ostracism and even murder continue to take president in the region especially for effeminate males.

Chapter III

Data/Findings

Motivations to Immigrate

Table 1 depicts the factors that influenced participants' decisions for immigrating to the United States. Of all respondents surveyed, seven people indicated that the opportunity to secure better employment in the U.S and the belief that the U.S would provide more opportunities for a better living were the major factors influencing their decision to immigrate. Other reasons included the desire to escape homophobia, to join family members already in the U.S, for a better education, to send remittances back to their country of origin, and to experience San Francisco's music and art scene (Table 1).

The vast majority of poor/lower class people surveyed were among those who stated they immigrated to the United States for better employment opportunities. Nick, a middle class gay participant from Puerto Rico, is among the minority middle class participants who immigrated to the U.S. primarily for work. He indicated that those studying biology, as he did, have a difficult time finding jobs in Puerto Rico because the pharmaceutical industry which is the largest employer in the country is closing and merging so, "as a result," he stated, "a lot of students that study biology end up in Wal-Mart. I refused to do that so I left Puerto Rico," he concluded. The study also found that, of the six gay men who participated in the study, half indicated that discrimination was a factor that influenced their decision to migrate. Finally, all five respondents from Mexico stated that the number one reason they or the family members they immigrated with did so out of the need to find better employment opportunities.

TABLE 1 *Frequency Distribution of Reasons for Migration*

| Reasons for migration | <i>f</i> | % |
|---------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Better job | 7 | 21.8 |
| Better opportunity/future | 7 | 21.8 |
| To escape homophobia | 5 | 15.63 |
| To be with family | 3 | 9.38 |
| For a better education | 4 | 12.5 |
| Wanted to leave | 1 | 3.13 |
| Art/music scene in SF | 2 | 6.25 |
| To send money back home | <u>3</u> | <u>9.38</u> |
| Total | 32 | 100 |

TABLE 2 *Frequency Distribution of Networks Used for Finding Employment and Housing*

| Networks Used for Resettlement | <i>f</i> | % |
|--------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Family | 7 | 70 |
| Friends | 2 | 20 |
| Other | <u>1</u> | <u>10</u> |
| Total | 10 | 100 |

Immigrant Networks

Participants were asked who assisted them in securing employment and housing upon arrival. Of the twelve participants who were surveyed, ten answered the question regarding networks.

Carlos, a 44 year old middle class gay man from Colombia, was the only person that indicated an organization (La Raza) had helped with locating housing and a job. Two others stated friends had helped them, while the remaining participants indicated family helped in this resettlement process (Table 2).

Identity and “Coming Out”

Of the twelve LGBTQ who participated in this study, only Nick had “come out of the closet” while living in his home country of Puerto Rico. Most hid their identities from family members, friends, and therapists, attempting to repress their own identities, back in their native homelands. Many described several instances of harsh forms of discrimination and abuses endured growing queer in Latin America. Carlos, the gay man from Colombia who had worked with La Raza after migrating, described what it meant for him to be gay in his country saying, “it means people don’t treat you like a human being” and your identity is “something kept very much a secret.” He added, “Your family judges you, your friends reproach you, your employers and the industry sector rub it in your face,” he stated. Mark, a 43 year old gay man from Uruguay, also described an open gay identity in his country of origin as a dangerous and oppressive thing. Carlos, Mark, and Nick, all recalled being taunted in elementary school and Carlos even spoke briefly about an incident of rape and victimization that he endured at the hands of three young boys in Colombia when he was only seven years old. Nick explained that middle school was the site where he experienced the most discrimination during his school years, even though like Mark, Nick agreed that the discrimination and taunting continued well into high school.

When describing his observation of Puerto Rican society’s view of homosexuals Nick stated, “You can feel and see the discrimination. There is an idea that exists among people about homosexuals that they are too feminine, have HIV, that they wear women’s clothes or tight clothes.” The shame that most LGBTQ participants felt about their identity was also attributed to negative experiences family members. Mark stated, “Speaking with my mother or hanging out with my mother was a constant reminder that I was a freak of nature.” Therefore, it is clear how

“coming out” in Latin America can be quite difficult for some. However, since returning home for the first time last year to visit his family, Mark had noted the progress his mother had made in coming to terms with his sexuality. “At the time I had just broke up with my boyfriend, and she even asked how I was dealing with it, so that was progress,” Mark said with a hint of renewed enthusiasm that had laid in remission up until this point of the interview.

Sometimes “coming out” or “being out” in public locations means facing harsh consequences in Latin America which can in turn affect the “coming out” experience after immigrating to the United States. Carlos claimed that police arrested and detained him and other gay men simply because they were patrons at a suspected gay bar in Colombia. Once at the jail he explained, “They undressed us and left us with only our underwear, and showered us with extremely cold water. They jailed us for three days,” and in a soft timid voice undeniably filled with melancholy he added, “Those are the saddest things that have ever happened to me... the violation when I seven and the treatment I received in jail.” The physical and mental trauma that Carlos experienced impacted his ability to express his true identity as a gay man not only in Colombia, but also when initially arriving in San Francisco. He admitted that, besides his struggles to grasp the English language, “the second biggest obstacles was accepting myself as a gay person in the bay area [and being able to] go out on the streets holding my partner and kissing him in public.”

Three male participants described the discrimination endured from homophobic police officers in Latin America. Following a brutal homophobic attack on the streets of Uruguay, Mark struggled with the decision of whether or not to go to the police and report the incident. After much thought and debate, he finally decided to follow through with filing a report with the police department. He recalled, “The police laughed at me. I made a report and when I asked for

a copy they couldn't find it. The whole time I was making the report the police officer was just laughing." Benny, a 30 year old gay man from Mexico also recalled bad experiences with police in Mexico. He insisted that despite the constant reports he filed with police officers on the physical attacks he faced on the streets, "The [police] *never* helped me," he had said.

For Eddie, a 56 year old self proclaimed she-male from Mexico, growing up with a queer identity was not so bad. He was an older man, interesting, and with plenty to say. He described an incident in high school in the boy's locker rooms where the boys often stared at him while he showered saying things like, "God, you're shaped like a girl! Look at your ass! You're a girl!" However, these remarks did not bother him and he still insisted, "I wasn't teased in high school. I could defend myself. I was more masculine in high school. In my bedroom though, behind closed doors, I was more feminine," Eddie had admitted with ease and confidence. This is similar to what Felix, a 22 year old gay man from Mexico, had reported. "It's not so bad. I feel like it is something that is rarely talked about and LGBTs are left alone most of the time. You'll experience harassment if you are a feminine gay man, but I was not," Felix had noted.

During the interview Eddie had often discussed his sexual orientation as being "this way," but he eventually came to describe his identity in more detail later on in the interview. "I'm a she-male," he had finally told me. "I'm a woman with a penis. That's all...not too different. I swear to God, that's all I am." For as long as he could remember, he never quite liked terming his identity as gay or bisexual. "If you see my body from the waist down, it's shaped like a woman. I'm not kidding you. It looks good," he had said gesturing his thick worn hands from his shoulders down to his waist as if to say, "look at this great body." Anyone he had met for the first time would have been able to sense the great sense of confidence that radiated from him.

Unlike most participants who had difficulty connected with their LGBTQ identities, Eddie had the most trouble with his identity as a Latino immigrant. He explained that the hardest part for him was that “the gay men in San Francisco associate gay Latinos as troublemakers because a lot of Latino men for years had taken advantage of white gay men, and robbed them,” he told me with a serious and concerned look written on his face. He said that in the 1970s and the 1980s there was a rash of straight Latino men who pretended to be gay in order to rob gay white men once they took them home. He claimed that, if you were a new Latino face you were treated differently saying, “If [a Latino] know[s] the white gay men in the clubs, they do okay, but I’m talking about a new guy coming into a club... they are real cautious about them, so in that way there is a wall,” he had said.

Asylum

Of the eight participants who answered whether or not they applied for asylum, three gay men are among the growing number of those seeking and winning asylum cases in the United States on the bases of their sexual orientation. Carlos, who arrived in the U.S. in 2001, was initially unaware that asylum was granted on such grounds and admitted that it was not until after immigrating that the U.S. that he realized such an option was available to him. “I was part of a small gay community at the time and I didn’t know any better,” he had said. It was a friend that had actually told him about the asylum process and referred him an attorney he knew who dealt with such cases. “The attorney interviewed me and took all my information. Finally, I applied due to my situation and I received asylum eight years ago,” he had went on to say with a sense of relief and accomplishment in his tone. On the other hand, as a practicing lawyer in Uruguay, Mark had known full well of his right to apply for asylum but it took a coworker’s blatant

disregard for homosexuality and an attack that nearly claimed Mark's life and the life of his partner that finally pushed him to actually begin filling an application for asylum. Around the same time of his attack, he was part of a research team working with another lawyer. The lawyer at the time "was saying things like, 'that guy is such a faggot!' and 'Oh my god he is a fag!' These comments were coming from supposedly a very well educated lawyer with a lot of experience" Mark emphasized. It was all the evidence he needed come to the realization that Uruguay was just not the best place for him to live.

While each of the asylum applicants interviewed found that though the paperwork was not too bad, the most difficult part for them was the interview portion of the application. "For me, it was the most painful part...to go back and remember everything. The sadness hurts," one participant stated. Another remarked, "When I moved here I tried to forget. I didn't want to remember the things that happened, but in the interview you have to bring everything back. I was very emotional for me." Despite the emotional surge brought on from recounting the lived experiences of homophobia, violence, and discrimination, the asylum applicants all accepted such terms that applying for asylum entailed. "The interviewer has to know if I'm telling the truth. From a legal point of view, I see that is has to be done," said the former lawyer who had applied for asylum in 2001.

Housing

Of nine participants who answered whether or not they felt it was necessary to keep their sexual orientation hidden from those they lived with or neighbors, six of participants strongly believed keeping their sexual orientation a secret minimized the likelihood of problems they would face in Latin America. However, once resettling to the San Francisco Bay Area five

participants continued to believe that it was necessary to withhold their sexual orientation from those they lived with. Of these five participants, two lived with parents who were unaware of their sexual orientation. Another participant lived with a roommate who was not aware of his sexual orientation, and it was not determined why the two remaining participants felt it was necessary to hide their sexuality from those they lived with. One female Brazilian participant who identified as bisexual found that the most difficult part of her current housing situation in San Francisco was having to keep her sexual orientation a secret from her parents.

An interesting finding showed that although fewer respondents felt pressure to keep the true nature of their sexual orientation from those they lived with a secret, the general satisfaction for their housing conditions decreased slightly from seven participants to six participants after immigrating. With regards to housing conditions in San Francisco, one surveyed participant mentioned, “It’s actually worse than where I was living in Mexico.” Unfortunately, because this particular person completed the survey was not personally interviewed, I was not able to probe further into the specifics of how or why housing conditions were worse after resettlement. Meanwhile, two other interviewees claimed that the cost of housing was their major concern. “It costs a lot of money to have decent housing in San Francisco, so you have to have a roommate and that cuts into your privacy. If my roommate left, I was stuck with the full rent,” Nick said. Another respondent agreed that the costly rent for living in the city was a problem. “I cannot make enough to live in a nice place. I’m renting a room in a hotel— not even a room in a house! I share the bathroom with seven people; I have no living room, no kitchen... just a room. It’s really disappointing and most of all hard,” said the former university professor and lawyer.

Every one of the interviewed participants admitted that while they were living in Latin America they shared housing with family members and each one expressed their need to kept

their sexual orientation private from most, if not all, they shared housing with. Then, on the other hand, there is Eddie who recalled being a small boy sitting in the family room of his home in Mexico watching television with his mother and telling her, “He’s handsome,” as he pointed to an actor in one of his mother Mexican soap operas. He recalled how shocked his mother was when she first heard him say that. “What?” she had asked him. “You think *he* is handsome?” she had questioned him again thinking she might have misheard the first time. When Eddie assured her that he had in fact said he thought a man on television was handsome, his mother emphasized, “You better never tell you sisters you are like that.” Eddie had gone on to say that though his mother never really liked the idea of her son’s transgression she was also never really upset about it either. “My mother taught me how to sew behind my sisters’ backs, to iron behind their backs, and do other girl things but without them knowing. She taught me like a girl behind their back. She wanted to keep it a secret,” he had said.

However, after resettling in San Francisco, Eddie had admitted to only having to hide his sexual orientation a few times from people he had lived with, but currently does not have to hide anything as he lives alone. “I’ve lived with roommates and thing like that here in the past and yeah, the ones that aren’t gay you have to hide it from them,” he said. “Some people who aren’t gay don’t like to be around people who can act like that, so you have to keep it real low,” he had said nodding his head up and down matter-of-factly.

Nick had remained “in the closet” for most of his life in Puerto Rico. It was not until his last year in Puerto Rico that he decided to “come out” to everyone in his immediate family with the exception of his father. He recalled, “I was financially dependent on my father. I drove his car and he was giving me money. If I told him, he might not like it and I truly didn’t know how he would react.” It was not until Nick came to San Francisco that he felt he could finally “come

out” to his father. It was on Tuesday when his father found out. After receiving the news, his father’s blood pressure increased dramatically sending him immediately to the hospital which was followed by a few days of depression, Nick had recounted. By Friday however, his father had called him in San Francisco to tell him, “We are going to support you. Your family supports you. There will be no discrimination. I love you, just like I have in the past.” Their relationship remains stable to this day.

Employment

As the majority of participants reported having immigrated to the U.S. in the hopes of finding better employment opportunities, it is important to note that while only four participants felt it was relatively easy to find a job in their home country, but after relocating to the San Francisco Bay Area that number increased to seven participants. Only two participants felt economically stable in Latin America, and after relocating to the U.S. that number rose dramatically to seven participants who now felt economically stable.

Regarding employment, seven participants felt it was necessary to hide their sexual orientation in order to avoid problems in the workplace remained static even after immigrating to the United States. Of all those survey, eight people indicated that they were often targets of discrimination within Latin America’s workforce. Carlos recalled several instances in which he would apply for work in Colombia, but not get hired: “I’m sure it was because they knew I was gay.” While only three of the six gay men in this study reported the need to keep their sexual orientation a secret in Latin America to avoid problems at work, five had admitted that they frequently experienced discrimination at work due to their sexual orientation. As a young boy working in the fields in Mexico, Felix recalled that though he never frequently experienced

harassment over his sexual orientation he did, however, experience the occasional “*no seas maricon*” [don’t be a fag] from other older field workers who taunted him when they thought he was doing something “gay.” Felix also noticed that, “one or two of the slightly more effeminate older men would receive similar forms of harassment from field workers, but “they just ignored the comments and kept working.”

While working at a university in Uruguay, Mark also discussed the need to keep his sexual orientation hidden. He spoke of an incident in which one of his students had come to tell him, “You know there are some female students saying that you are a...” taking a very long pause he hesitantly began again “...saying you are a fag, but don’t worry. I covered up for you,” she had told him. She told the gossiping students that they were wrong about the professor. She told them that she in fact knew that he had a girlfriend who she had once met, so how could he be gay. “That was daily life for me. Forget about being openly gay!” he concluded. While working at a different job, Mark recalled other instances of homophobic remarks in Uruguay’s workforce. One of his supervisors was rumored to have fired someone because he was gay. After AIDS had claimed the life of a gay coworker, another supervisor had commented on the death saying, “It’s better that way. One less problem we have to worry about.” He was shocked at his supervisor’s reaction, which only reinforced the realization that “coming out” simply was not an option for him if he wanted equal treatment in Uruguay’s workforce. “I don’t feel very comfortable telling people I’m gay, but it is much better here. I teach, and I can tell my students that I’m gay when they ask me why I came here,” he said with a sense of relief.

The need to keep their queer sexual orientation a secret for purposes of employment was not a trend across the board however. While living in Mexico, Eddie recalled how he willingly and eagerly found sex work beginning at the young age of nine. According to Eddie, he would

play in the street with the rest of the young boys in the neighborhood and a truck would come to pick them up. “They would take us to a hotel,” he said. “I would enjoy doing those things and yeah, why not? I was going with 22 year old boys, plus they paid us some money. I made some money doing what I enjoyed doing and they were all excited,” he had said casually.

While four of participants reported they did not believe having an open sexual orientation prevented them from easily finding a job in their country of origin, after resettling in the San Francisco Bay Area the percentage of people who did not believe having an open sexual orientation interfered with their career opportunities increased to seven participants. Moreover, the study found that nine of the participants are satisfied with the working conditions in San Francisco. Although Mark was among the majority of respondents satisfied with their working condition in San Francisco and also believed his open sexual orientation as a gay man in the city did not affect his job opportunities, he had instead found that the biggest problem came from his status as an immigrant:

I studied in Uruguay, but what I studied is mainly useless here. The laws here are different than those in Uruguay, so I'd have to study law all over again. I also worked as a University professor, but the Uruguay system is different. You don't get a bachelor's degree in Uruguay, but you cover as much as a bachelor degree. Unfortunately, it's impossible to teach in the U.S without one. I want to go back to study but I can't. It's not unless you have a family or someone to pay for you that you can. I don't want to get loans and be in massive debt over it.

Essentially, Mark gave up a great career and his middle class lifestyle in Latin America to escape homophobia even if it meant dealing with consequences deriving from differing educational systems which vary in validity and practicality.

Health

Several participants in this study attributed the physical and verbal abuse they experienced in Latin America to the state of emotional turmoil that led them onto the couches of psychologists and therapists. Nick recalled going through heavy depression, while living in Puerto Rico. “I had to go to a psychiatrist and I also had to take antidepressant medication. My family did not know I was gay then,” he explained. Mark saw therapists both in Uruguay and in the U.S. He had begun seeing a therapist initially because he was terrified of being gay and had known the harsh realities that might come with it. He recounted an initial visit with a therapist in Uruguay:

The therapist said the straight part of me was the healthy side of me struggling to be straight. He said he would proceed from there. I never went back to him because I said to myself, ‘No. That doesn’t sound right.’ Even though I was struggling, I was educated enough to know that what he was saying was wrong. He was basically saying that homosexuality was a disease.

He was not the only homosexual receiving the same diagnosis because he went on to describe a similar situation a friend of his experienced as well. Around the same time a different therapist had told Mark’s friend that his homosexuality was a form of mental illness. When Mark questioned why his friend bothered to continue seeing that therapist after such a diagnosis, his friend replied that the therapist was good at helping him deal with other issues he was having. Mark shrugged his shoulders and shook his head back and forth in disapproval as he stated that this was therapy, “long... long... after the U.S. had taken it [homosexuality as a mental illness] out of the books, and that by 1999 therapists in Uruguay still considered it an illness.” It was not until Mark had begun therapy in San Francisco that he came to realization that his experiences as a gay man living in Uruguay had affected him more than he had initially thought. He described his experiences with therapists in San Francisco in general positive lights.

The percentage of respondents satisfied with health care in Latin America was similar to the percentage of participants satisfied with health care in the San Francisco Bay Area. Eight of participants were satisfied with health care in both regions. However, the same number of respondents reported that they preferred the health care they received in their country of origin. One participant among the minority of participants who found dissatisfaction over some aspects of the health care they receive in the Bay Area mentioned that, “it could takes up to a month sometimes to even get an appointment!” Valery had explained that this was the primary reason she continued to put off getting the problem with her right ear checked out. Furthermore, she notes that even though there are doctors who speak Spanish, most of them have thick accents and she can understand how this creates barriers for Spanish dominant speakers.

Eddie explains that it is not so much the doctors in San Francisco that he has a problem with, but instead it is those who work in the front offices that are the problem. He stated, “It’s mainly the Latinas in the front office who treat me different, it’s pretty bad. They don’t look at you like you are a client or smile at you. Most Latina women are like that—pretty hard.” He claimed to have never had any problems with the professionals noting that, “They are knowledgeable and took courses on how to treat and understand their gay patients” while those in the front office probably had not which explains their poor attitudes.

Others such as Mark attributed his dissatisfaction with the health care in San Francisco to his lack of health insurance and instead prefer the health care in his home country of Uruguay.

“It’s been horrible,” he had said going on to explain:

I just got a bill from the public hospital today and I’m really stressed out because it was \$450 for cleaning my ears. It’s crazy that you have to pay \$450 for that. I will negotiate and do things, but still... there is not really good coverage for people with low incomes. My feeling is that the U.S. needs a health plan for people who cannot afford it.

However, Mark does not entirely view all health services in San Francisco in negative terms. Mark and Nick praised San Francisco for the many free HIV clinics offered in the city. “I’ve only used it a couple of times. I get tested from time to time and try to be responsible,” Mark said. Before moving to San Francisco, Nick had never even seen clinics that focused on the gay population and finding such numerous clinics in the city had proved a pleasant surprise for him. For those lacking health insurance, the bright side was at least having access to San Francisco’s many free sexual health clinics scattered throughout the city.

Summary

Most participants immigrating to the United States do so for reasons that generally increase some aspect of their lives that could not find fulfillment in their countries of origin. The primary networks used to secure housing and employment upon arrival was largely family networks, reiterating the strong familial ties prevalent in the Latino culture. Applying for asylum was an option that three of the respondents had taken advantage of and though some portions of the application process were emotionally difficult, the end result was worth it for them.

The majority of participants kept their sexual orientations private when living in their country of origin and although after immigrating to the United States, and some felt it remained necessary to hide their sexual orientation. Those who felt it was still necessary to hide their orientation from those they lived with generally tended to live with family in the U.S. The major dissatisfaction regarding housing was generally due to the high cost of rent.

The number of participants who felt it was relatively easy to secure a job increased after immigrating. The majority of participants were also satisfied with their current employment situations. Finally, satisfaction with health care remained stagnant even after migration and when

given the option, the majority of participants had agreed that they preferred the health care from their country of origin. Various reasons were provided to explain aspects of dissatisfaction with health care. Some reasons included: insensitivity at the front offices, language barriers, general lack of insurance, and difficulty securing appointments within in a reasonable timeframe.

Chapter IV

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Discussion

Though Ramirez (2003) identifies migration waves between 1975 to 1983, this study shows that immigrants from all parts of Latin America are continuing to immigrate to the U.S. in waves for a range of reasons—one of which is to escape homophobia, something Ramirez' (2003) study does not take into account. Furthermore, this study found a similar trend Kirby (2001) discusses, in that middle-class homosexuals are more likely to admit to immigrate for more sexual freedom while the poor class commonly immigrates for the desire to secure better life and work opportunities. The study illustrates a direct correlation between class identity and sexual orientation, when explaining motivations to migrate. Such findings also fall in line with queer theorists' understanding of sexual identity as only a partial role of who we are among a myriad of other identities that influence one's subjective reality.

In general, participants in this study were more satisfied after leaving their home countries to resettle in the San Francisco Bay Area. As one participant who applied for asylum stated, "After being homophobic and hating yourself for so long, some 31 years for me, I needed to be at a place where I really felt it was okay to be gay." The three men who applied for and won their asylum cases were all somewhat effeminate men, confirming the conclusions in Cantue, Luibheid, and Stern's (2005) article which call a bulk of asylum hearings prime examples of a system that often reinforces the image of effeminate gay men as ideal candidates for asylum. Though no complex system can function in perfect harmony, this study documents a few success

stories within the judicial system, despite the fact that it continues to function on colonial ideas of the dichotomy of gender expression.

When understanding resettlement and the significance of networks, it is important to mention that while research headed by Menjivar (1997) found the most prevalent networks that immigrants used were networks of friends and family – by and large this study suggested that while networks of friends were utilized, family networks dominated. Although some participants made clear that receiving family members were aware of the transgression of sexual orientation, not all made the distinction clear. Nevertheless, it is fitting to conclude that despite the uncertainty of the receiving families' awareness of participant's sexual orientations, participants remained more inclined to seek assistance from family rather than friends. It was interesting to also find that of the ten participants who responded to this question, only one sought assistance with the resettlement process from an organization.

Furthermore, the experience of racism that Eddie observed within San Francisco's gay community is reminiscent of Ramirez' (2003) claims of the racial friction during the height of GALA. This is something queer theorists would attribute to the dominance of heteronormativity which functions on a white normative framework of group acceptance. White privilege is a concept queer theorists continue to grapple with in the context of LGBTQ lived experiences. The idea of white privilege is also an overlapping concept in identity theory as well. The intersection of race and sexual orientation indeed has an impact on how society organizes and experiences reality. For Eddie and Valery, their ethnic identity as Mexicans served a dominant role in their experiences of discrimination.

The study's findings also agreed with Solomon's (2005) claims as to the improvement or eventual support from initially unsupportive households. For instance, Mark, Nick, and Felix, all claimed that though they received much disagreement and heartache from those they lived with over their sexual orientation, their treatment from family members eventually improved. Though for Nick, this improvement occurred after he had already left the home, nevertheless, his father's acceptance was eventually realized. Although this might not be true for all LGBTQ individuals, the study illustrates the possibility for further correlations with the trend identified in Solomon's (2005) study.

Contrary to the literature stating Latino/as were more likely to lack health insurance, the majority of participants in the study sample had health insurance. Of the nine participants who answered whether or not they had health insurance, six indicated they had. Though there were complaints over some aspects of health care in San Francisco, most participants were generally satisfied with the health care system. None of the respondents who mentioned they received therapy in the U.S. spoke of discrimination from practitioners attributing diagnosis of mental illness to sexual orientation, as they might have a few decades earlier.

Conclusion

Due to the small sample framework, it is difficult to make the claim that the majority of LGBTQ immigrants settle in San Francisco because of its draw as "a gay epicenter." It is, however, undeniable that San Francisco does in fact attract immigrants looking for a new place to resettle. Participants were generally happier living in the San Francisco Bay Area than in their country of origin, even though some complained over the high cost of housing or instances of

racism. Not much can change the high cost of housing in S.F., however a push for higher paying jobs or skills/work training for immigrants are arguably some solutions.

Based on the findings, it follows that male participants who identified as more masculine received considerably less discrimination on the bases of their sexual orientation in Latin America, while male participants describing themselves as more effeminate received the most discrimination. Those who were effeminate were also those who applied for and won asylum cases in the United States. Although the U.S. government had in the past barred homosexuals from immigrating to the country, the government has obviously enacted progressive laws which have opened the doors to granting asylum on the bases of sexual orientation. However, the asylum process could use revamping specifically in terms of case hearings which are currently based on stereotypes of ideal candidates for asylum as the effeminate gay men or butch types. Such stereotypical measurements overlook the silent hardships especially for queer women who have more difficulty providing evidence of their discrimination for case hearings.

The study demonstrates the need to improve the health care system, in order to make it more accessible to immigrants or the poor. It is a shame that though U.S. is a developed country, those hailing from developing nations would still prefer the medical treatment they receive in home countries. Also, it is important to note that the dissatisfaction from the majority of participants does not stem from lack of insurance, as many reported to have insurance. The problem therefore more complicated than some researchers have suggested.

Discrimination whether based on race or sexual orientation still exists. Therefore, the fight for LGBTQ rights is far from over. As Valery stated, “people that think there is no discrimination here just because it’s San Francisco,” but this simply is not the case. Whether in

Latin America or in progressive U.S. cities, scholars, activist, students, and policy makers must take the necessary steps to ensure human rights are respected for marginalized segments of the population.

Recommendations

Latina and transgender individuals prove to be extremely difficult segments of the population to acquire participation from. Therefore, future researchers should give themselves ample time to involve themselves directly in an organization or other social spaces that cater to this community, in order to secure gain access and trust from this population. It is also recommended that future researchers on the LGBTQ community create the question of sexual orientation or gender as an open ended question rather than a multiple choice question. Researchers must be aware that sexuality is a fluid concept and not all non-heterosexual individuals agree with fitting into American categories of sexual orientation. One must consider the varying terminology to describe sexual orientation or gender. As Wilchins (2000) states:

To some degree, queer youth and queer adults are now speaking different languages when it comes to gender. To a middle-aged white lesbian working at the Michigan Womyn's Festival, *trans* summons up an FTM who is taking testosterone. To the 18-year-old she's evicting from the festival for being *trans*, it might mean being a boy *identified dyke*, one who still identifies as lesbian but not necessarily female. (p.30)

Giving individuals the chance to identify with their own terminology allows sexuality researchers to understand the array of categories of identity.

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Appendices

DATA CHART

TABLE 3 Demographic Characteristics of Participants ($n=12$)

| Name | Age | Sex | Socioeconomic status | Sexual Orientation | Country of Origin | Asylum |
|-----------|-----|--------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Alejandra | 18 | Female | Poor/lower class | Bisexual | Brazil | No |
| Valery | 18 | Female | Middle class | Queer | Mexico | No |
| Felix | 22 | Male | Poor/lower class | Gay | Mexico | No |
| Amanda | 24 | Female | Middle class | Lesbian | --- | --- |
| Elias | 25 | Male | Poor/lower class | Bisexual | Mexico | --- |
| Nick | 28 | Male | Poor/lower class | Gay | Puerto Rico | No |
| Benny | 30 | Male | Poor/lower class | Gay | Mexico | Yes |
| Corina | 34 | Female | Poor/lower class | Bisexual | Guatemala | No |
| Stephan | 42 | Male | Poor/lower class | Gay | Venezuela | --- |
| Mark | 43 | Male | Middle class | Gay | Uruguay | Yes |
| Carlos | 44 | Male | Middle class | Gay | Colombia | Yes |
| Eddie | 56 | Male | Poor/lower class | Queer/ She-male | Mexico | No |

FIGURE 1

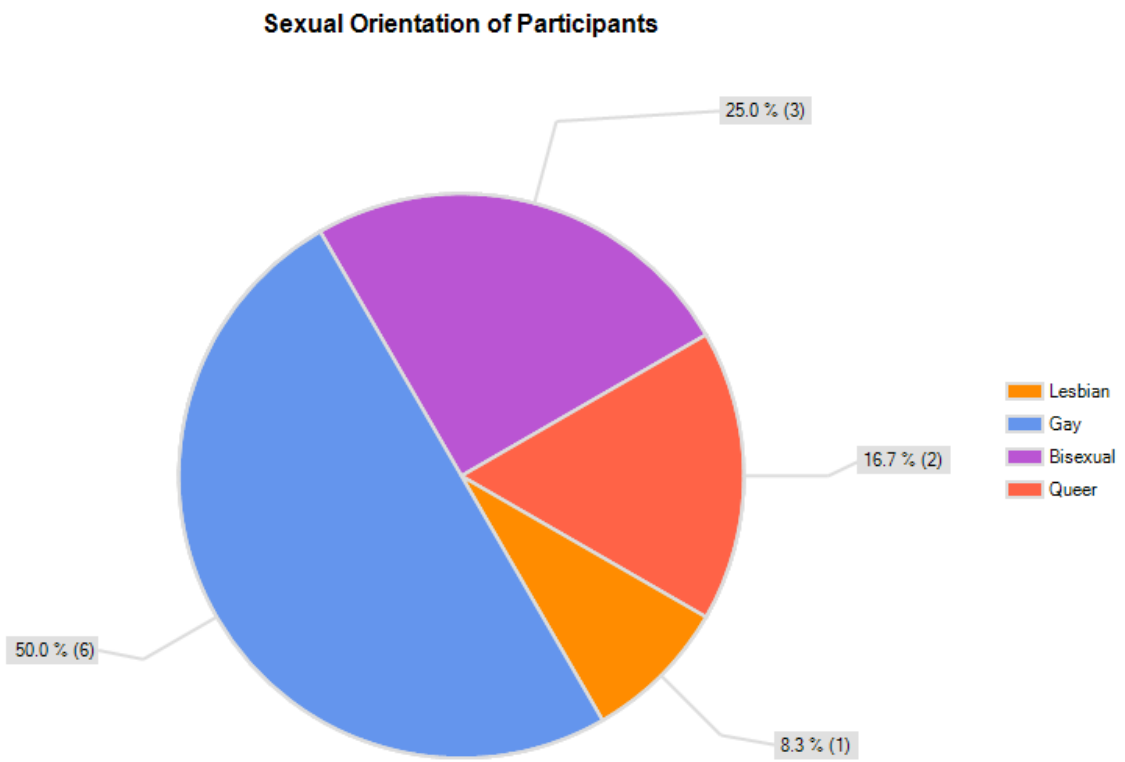


FIGURE 2

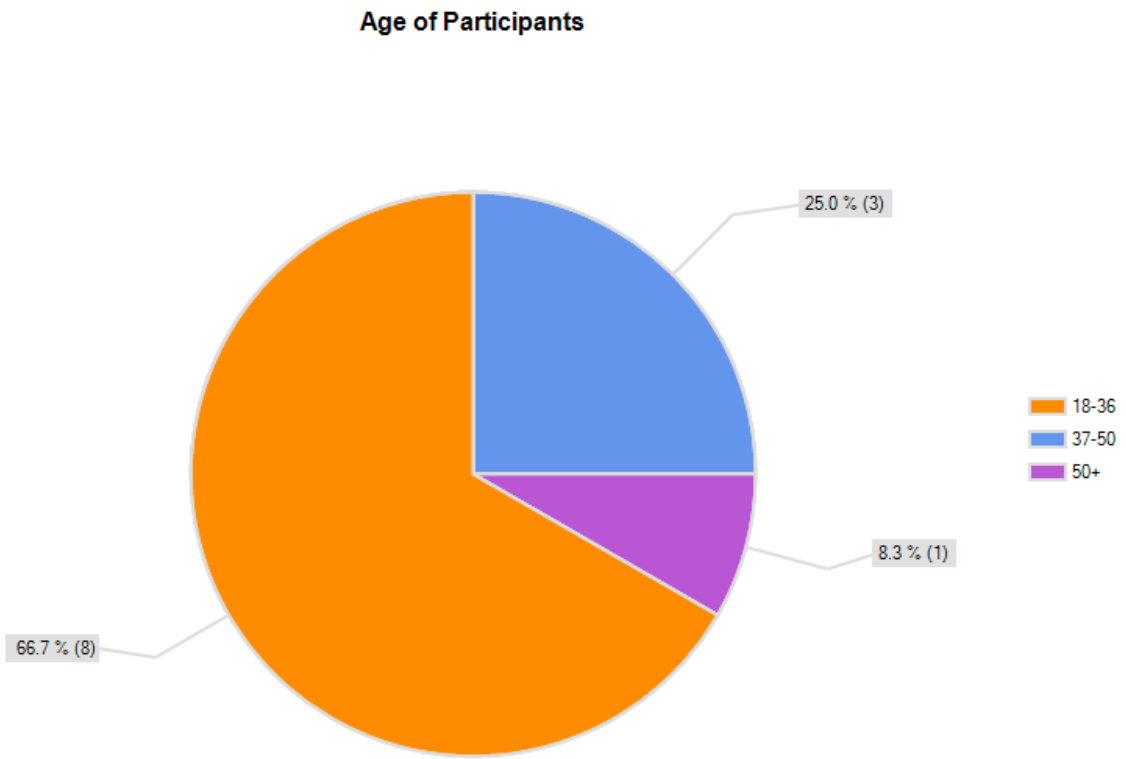
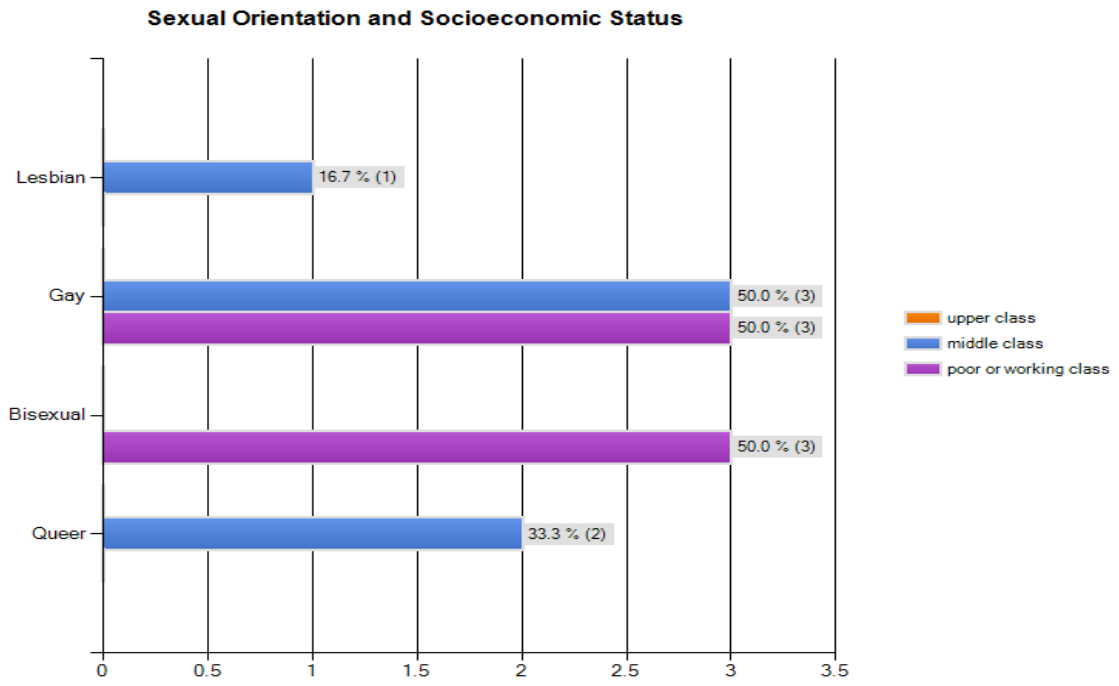


FIGURE 3



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview with Valery

S: What does it mean to you to be queer?

S: Do you know why your parents decided to come specifically to San Francisco?

S: Do you have health insurance?

S: Why do you say you're not satisfied with it?

S: Do you think your doctors understand you or maybe there are some cultural differences?

S: What has been the biggest obstacle for you living in the Bay Area?

S: have you experienced discrimination?

S: Have you come out to your parents about being Queer?

S: Why not?

S: Have you come out to your friends?

S: What type of services should SF introduce to help LGBTQ community living here?

S: What has been the most difficult part of your housing situation?

S: What is your socioeconomic status?

S: When you do decide to go out into the workforce, do you think you will have to hide your sexual orientation?

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED

Interview with Nick (original interview conducted in Spanish)

S: Did you ask for asylum?

S: What does it mean to be gay in Puerto Rico?

S: At what level?

S: The last year you lived in Puerto Rico, how often did you go against gender roles?

S: Did you present yourself different in Puerto Rico?

S: Are there gay bars in Puerto Rico?

S: Do you come from a small town?

S: Why did you decide to live in the Bay Area?

S: What did you expect and not expect about the Bay Area?

S: Was it violent in Puerto Rico?

S: Have you ever been fired from your job due to your sexual orientation in P.R.?

S: Do you have health insurance?

S: What problems have you had in the Bay Area?

S: What type of services should San Francisco introduce or make better for the LGBTQ community here?

S: Where is he from?

S: What has been the most difficult part of your housing situation here?

S: What year did you come to the U.S.?

S: How would you describe the economic status in Puerto Rico?

S: What was your socio economic status before leaving Puerto Rico?

S: In a typical week, how many hours of English/Spanish television do you watch?

S: How many hours of English/Spanish radio do you listen to in a typical week?

S: How long do you spend reading in English/Spanish in a typical week?

S: How many people currently live in your home?

S: Did you think it was necessary to hide your sexual orientation from your housemates in Puerto Rico?

S: So how do your parents feel about your lifestyle, do they know?

S: Is your family religious?

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED

Interview with Mark

S: Did you ask for asylum? How was the process?

S: What does it mean to be gay in Uruguay?

S: Were you “out” in high school?

S: So you didn't come out until you arrived in America?

S: What does it mean to be a gay man in SF?

S: How did you expect SF to be?

S: what did you not expect from SF?

S: Have you ever been fired because of your sexual orientation?

S: Do you have health insurance and how has it been having/not having it?

S: What are the biggest problems that you have faced living here?

S: What type of services should SF introduce to help LGBT in bay area?

S: What has been the most difficult part of maintaining your household?

S: Does class matter in Uruguay if you are gay?

S: Did you know any lesbians in Uruguay? Was it similar struggles they faced?

S: Was there any gay movement there?

S: So you weren't a participant in the parade?

S: Was your attack the main motivation behind your migration?

S: So most gays didn't report violence against them?

S: Do your parents know you are gay?

S: Do your siblings know you're gay?

S: Tell me about your experience being back.

S: Why are you displeased with your current housing conditions?

S: Where did you live when you moved here?

S: Did you ever go to a therapist to deal with the trauma you endured?

S: Do they offer any therapy for LGBTQ people in SF?

S: Is that something you would be interested in?

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED

Interview with Eddie

S: What does it mean to be a gay Latino?

S: What makes you think that?

S: What do you mean? Did you experience that first hand? Do they make you feel unwelcome in their clubs?

S: Why?

S: You were married?

S: ...to a woman?

S: Tell me more about you marriage. Why did you do it?

S: Where do you go now to interact with other gay men?

S: What made you want to come to SF?

S: What was it like being a gay child?

S: What was it like?

S: What was your school experience like?

S: What made them think that?

S: Did they tease you about that?

S: What part of Mexico did you grow up?

S: Was your school experience rough?

S: How did that happen? How did you meet them?

S: Do you have health insurance?

S: Do they treat you different?

S: What are the female doctors?

S: Do you parents know you're gay?

S: Why did she want to hide it?

S: Can you tell me about when your sisters found out and what their reaction was?

S: Do you dress in women's clothes?

S: Why not in public?

S: I'm curious about your relationship with a woman? Did you even like them?

S: Why? Was it to prove something?

S: So I'm curious as to what you identify as.

S: Would you get an operation to be a full woman?

S: And he knew you were a boy?

S: So they weren't doing it to tease you?

S: What has been your biggest obstacle living here in the bay area as a gay Latino

S: What services does San Francisco need to introduce to help LGT community?

S: Do you remember who helped you find housing?

S: Do you feel like you have to hide who you really are from your roommates or neighbors?

S: What was that like?

INTERVIEW WITH EDDIE CONCLUDED

Interview with Carlos (original interview conducted in Spanish)

S: Did you seek asylum?

S: Was applying for asylum easy? Tell me about it.

S: What does it mean to be gay in Colombia?

S: What did you expect and not expect about the Bay Area?

S: Did you ever experience any discrimination while you lived in Colombia? If so, how did it affect you?

S: What happened in jail?

S: Did they tell you why you were taken to jail?

S: How long were you in jail?

S: Is it normal for this to happen/does it still happen?

S: Do you have health insurance?

S: What has been your biggest obstacle, since moving to the San Francisco?

S: Why kind of health insurance do you have?

S: Was it hard to get into it?

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED
