

Media Effects on the Identity Development of Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals: A Retrospective Study

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Introduction

- Media influences emotional wellbeing of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youth (Bond, 2015).
- Limited research exists that examines the influence of media at the intersection of race and sexual identity.
- Latina/o LGBT individuals are of particular interest.
 - Latina/os account for 17% of the U.S. population in the U.S.
 - Only 5.8% of the speaking characters in film, television, and streaming stories are Latina/o (Smith et al., 2016).
- The purpose of this study is to qualitatively examine how media influenced 18+ year old Latina/o LGBT individuals throughout their adolescence by asking them to think retrospectively about their experiences with and exposure to media.



Research Questions

- RQ1: How has the emotional well being, perceived social support, and identity development differed from White LGBT individuals for Latina/o LGBT individuals?
- RQ2: How has media informed and influenced Latina/o LGBT individuals and their own understanding of their racial and sexual identities through adolescence?
- RQ3: How did media inform and influence Latina/o LGBT youth's emotional well being, beliefs about their social support networks, and their identities through adolescence?

Method

Sample:

- $N = 17$
- Age range = 18-36
- Sexual orientation: Lesbian = 5, Gay = 4, Bisexual = 6, Queer = 2
- Gender identity: Female = 9, Male = 4, Transgender/Non-binary = 4
- Racial identity: Mexican = 14, Mixed race Mexican/Latina/o = 3

Methodology:

- Focus groups
- One-on-one interviews

Theoretical framework:

- Schema & script theory

Discussion

- Participants discussed their religious background unprompted
- Religion was specifically referenced when discussing the coming out process
- A general disconnect existed between cultural identity and sexual identity
- Participants felt that current LGBT representation is primarily White
- Existing racial media representation, according to participants, is stereotypical and/or negative.
- Participants acknowledged specific heteronormative scripts they were expected to follow along with their racial identity requirements reinforced by their surrounding culture.
- Often unprompted, participants described social media being an outlet that allowed them an opportunity to express their sexuality in a safe environment not available in everyday life.

Common Themes

Salience of Religion

- **21 year old, cis lesbian:** "...I was afraid I was like I'm not completely accepted in my religion and my mom made it clear..."
- **19 year old, cis lesbian:** "You go through stage of where you pray the gay away for yourself."
- **19 year old, cis bisexual woman:** "The belief that religious people can't be queer is a big flaw, a myth."
- **30 year old, non-binary queer individual:** "I'm so blinded by the religious aspect of it, I've shut [my parents] down"
- **19 year old, cis gay man:** "No, my [Mexican Catholic] dad, he lives like by that rule we don't talk about it, it's not happening"

Lack of Media Representation

- **30 year old, non-binary queer individual:** "Representation that does exist now is very white and very normative in the sense that a relationship is not a relationship unless you can get married...unless you are mimicking heterosexual life"
- **20 year old, bisexual non-binary queer individual:** "A general rule [in media is that] you can only have one intersection. It's like, if you're gay you can be white, but if you're a person of color you have to be straight to exist and nothing else"
- **22 year old, cis bisexual woman:** "Movies don't show this happy couple you know being two girls, two guys we, we're not being exposed to that as being normal"
- **30 year old, non-binary queer individual:** "[The web series *Brujos* was] the first time I ever actually felt like I could connect to someone with a similar identity and that was just maybe in March when I watched it so, yup 30 years old that's never happened before"

Utility of Social Media

- **30 year old, non-binary queer individual:** "We don't really see [queer] people enjoying life. Like, what does it mean to be queer and joyful? And so I think social media allows us to share that"
- **19 year old, cis bisexual woman:** "Social media does help view our sexuality in a more positive light because like personally being on Twitter very actively like, everyone I follow on Twitter is gay like all I see is gay [stuff] on Twitter like its nothing"
- **19 year old, cis gay man:** "A lot of it comes down to being able to find your people like, you can find your tribe a lot better online than in person, just the sheer reach you have online"
- **25 year old, cis bisexual woman:** "[Social media] really gave me a way, like me a comfort to have [my sexuality] on my [Instagram] like I can display it"

References

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