“THE BEST THING THAT’S HAPPENED IN MY LIFE”: THE JOURNEY TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF ONE’S LGBTQ CHILD IN A SAMPLE OF CUBAN-AMERICANS AND PUERTO RICANS

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“THE BEST THING THAT’S HAPPENED IN MY LIFE”: THE JOURNEY TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF ONE’S LGBTQ CHILD IN A SAMPLE OF CUBAN-AMERICANS AND PUERTO RICANS

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Sharon Scales Rostosky, Professor of Counseling Psychology and Dr. Ellen D. B. Riggle, Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies and Political Science

Lexington, Kentucky

2018

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“THE BEST THING THAT’S HAPPENED IN MY LIFE”: THE JOURNEY TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF ONE’S LGBTQ CHILD IN A SAMPLE OF CUBAN-AMERICANS AND PUERTO RICANS

Acceptance by a parental figure is one of the most important protective factors for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) youth and young adults (e.g., Ryan, 2009, 2010). Lack of parental acceptance may lead to a disruption in parent-child relationships and may increase risk for maladaptive behaviors and poorer psychosocial outcomes in LGBTQ youth (e.g., Bouris et al., 2010). Researchers have called for more inclusive samples and methods to better understand the experiences of families from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (e.g., Heatherington & Lavner 2008). Specific to Latinas/os, cultural factors and theoretically informed interventions that facilitate parental acceptance need systematic investigation (e.g., Ryan, 2009, 2010).

The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) examine the cultural strengths and challenges that influence Cuban-American and Puerto Rican parental figures’ journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child; (b) explore how these parental figures reach acceptance; and (c) assess for the impact of an expressive writing (EW) exercise on the affect of these parental figures. Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPART) and family stress theory were used as a frame for the analysis of the process of acceptance toward one’s LGBTQ child in this sample of Cuban-American and Puerto Rican parental figures. Thirty participants completed a writing intervention after the initial prescreening. The writing intervention asked participants to write a letter about their journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child, including the aspects of their heritage, cultural beliefs, and values that facilitated this process.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013) guided the research design and analysis. The following themes helped parental figures accept their child: (a) family (support, maintaining family unity); (b) interactions with LGBTQ people; (c) resisting and embracing Latina/o gender norms (caballerismo, marianismo); (d) cultural dissonance; and (e) immigration and the American dream. In addition, the following themes described the process of how these parental figures navigated acceptance toward their child: (a) noticing and attempting to change gender atypical behaviors and/or presentation; (b) initial reactions (negative reactions, immediate acceptance); (c) adjusting to the child’s LGBTQ identity; (d) seeking out resources about LGBTQ
identity; (e) increasing awareness of LGBTQ oppression; (f) reframing religious and/or spiritual values and beliefs and working through religious and/or spiritual conflict; (g) coping and reframing machismo; (h) balancing family dynamics; (i) highlighting the positive identities in one’s child; (j) learning lessons from one’s child; and (k) benefitting from acceptance. Pre and post affect ratings using the writing intervention illustrated that Cuban-American parental figures were significantly happier and less anxious after writing their acceptance narrative. Although not statistically significant, Puerto Rican parental figures reported increased happiness and decreased anxiousness after writing their acceptance narrative. Implications for psychological practice with Latina/o parents who recently learned about their child’s LGBTQ identity will be discussed.

KEYWORDS: LGBTQ, primary parental acceptance, Latina/o cultural values, writing intervention, positive psychology
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To the participants of this study, thank you for sharing with me your story. I will forever be thankful for allowing me to better understand your struggles and passion toward accepting your LGBTQ child. Loving and dedicated parental figures like yourselves make a more inclusive Latina/o community. I am hopeful that one day all Latina/o parents of LGBTQ children will affirm and celebrate their child’s authentic self without hesitations.
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Chapter One: Introduction, Literature Review, and Theoretical Underpinnings

Problem Statement

The literature on parental acceptance of LGBTQ children has focused on two areas: (a) the perspective of the LGBTQ child regarding their parental figures’ knowledge and response to their sexual and/or gender identity; and (b) the process of acceptance among parental figures of LGBTQ children. Most studies have focused on the perspective of the LGBTQ child and not that of the parental figure although recent research shows that parental figures experience intense emotional reactions and navigate a complex process of acceptance upon discovering their child’s non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity (Chrisler, 2017; Rosenkrantz et al., under review). Overall, studies have found positive associations between parental support and LGBTQ youth and young adults’ psychological well-being (e.g., Bebes, Samarova, Shilo, & Diamond, 2015; Bouris et al., 2010; D’Amico, Julien, Tremblay, & Chartrand, 2015; Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, & Nye, 1999; Sheets & Mohr, 2009; Ueno, 2005). Unfortunately, most samples in studies that have explored the process of acceptance among parental figures of LGBT children are predominantly non-Hispanic White; thus, they fail to include the lived experiences and cultural values of racial and ethnic minority individuals. As a result, researchers have called for inclusive methods of understanding parental acceptance that considers the experiences of individuals from different ethnic and racial backgrounds (e.g., Heatherington & Lavner 2008; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004).

Research suggests that expressive writing (EW) is an effective way of organizing complex emotional experiences (e.g., Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker, 1997). Expressing one’s feelings in writing may lead to increased psychological positive
outcomes and overall well-being (e.g., Smyth & Pennebaker, 2012). A small body of research has demonstrated that EW can be an effective intervention in reducing stress related to sexual identity and increasing self-esteem, positive LGBTQ identity, and overall psychological well-being with LGBTQ individuals (e.g., Lewis et al., 2005; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2010; Riggle, Gonzalez, Rostosky, & Black, 2014). Similarly, EW has been an effective intervention in reducing trauma symptoms over time and overall psychological symptoms of general anxiety and distress with Hispanic/Latina/o individuals (e.g., Hirai, Skidmore, Clum, & Dolma, 2012; Valdez, 2009). This body of research suggests that EW may be useful in facilitating parental figures’ positive emotions in relation to their child’s LGBTQ identity.

**Study Significance**

According to the Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs (Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs, 2009), Counseling Psychologists’ (CPs) core values are grounded in respect for cultural diversity, social justice, and providing a voice to marginalized and oppressed communities. Furthermore, CPs are called to promote the following: (a) healthy development across the life span; (b) individual and societal growth; (c) strengths and positive coping in the context of the person’s cultural environments; (d) cultural and individual diversity; and (e) positive interventions (Packard, 2009). Considering that the proposed project uses a positive and strength-based intervention to increase knowledge of a culturally diverse and marginalized group within an oppressed community, this project aligns with the core CP values listed above.

This project directly focuses on a challenging family issue related to LGBTQ individuals in an under-researched and underserved population. Also, this project
addresses a gap in the LGBTQ children and parental acceptance literature by focusing on
two specific Latina/o subgroups (i.e., Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans) for the
purpose of exploring the cultural strengths and positive experiences of these parental
figures that can benefit families with LGBTQ children. Although parental acceptance is
one of the most important factors that contribute to healthy psychosocial outcomes in
LGBTQ individuals, “the role of familismo within Latina/o populations seldom includes
sexuality in general and LGBTQ issues in specific” (Pastrana, 2015, p. 91). Therefore,
the results of this project will inform much needed, culturally-appropriate interventions to
promote parental acceptance of LGBTQ children in Cuban-American and Puerto Rican
communities and thereby enhance the resilience and strength of these families. The
findings from this dissertation project will serve as a starting point for future studies to
determine the cultural relevance and effectiveness of EW using larger samples and
comparison groups.

By further exploring the experiences of parental figures who are accepting of their
LGBTQ child, CPs and other helping professionals can better understand the processes
involved in parental acceptance, especially among underrepresented and marginalized
groups. This project used a positive psychology, strengths-based conceptual framework
to illuminate the cultural resources, values, strengths, and resiliencies that help promote
parental acceptance among sub-groups of Latinas/os. Furthermore, it used an empirically
validated mode of intervention to explore change in affect that result when parental
figures are asked to generate a positive written narrative about their LGBTQ child.
Parental Acceptance and LGBTQ Youth: The Child’s Perspective

The literature on parental acceptance of LGBTQ individuals from the perspective of the LGBTQ child has focused on two main areas: (a) parental figures’ knowledge and response to their child’s sexual or gender identity and (b) the state of the relationship between the child and parental figure (e.g., support, caring, connectedness, conflict) as a result of the disclosure and its effects on the psychological well-being of the child (Bouris et al., 2010). The following section summarizes research findings on three major areas of LGBTQ youth and parental acceptance: (a) psychological distress; (b) risky health behaviors; and (c) victimization.

**Psychological distress.** In the LGBTQ youth and parental acceptance literature, researchers have extensively explored the consequences of parental acceptance and rejection on different levels of psychological distress (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and attempts) experienced by the LGBTQ child. Overall, studies have found a correlation between parental support and LGBTQ psychological distress level in youth. That is, negative parental responses and lack of support lead to psychological distress in LGBTQ youth (e.g., Bebes, et al., 2015; D’Amico & Julien, 2012; D’Amico et al., 2015; Floyd et al., 1999; Hall, 2017; Institute of Medicine [IM], 2011; Needham & Austin, 2010; Resnick et al., 1997; Savin-Williams, 1989; Sheets & Mohr, 2009; Ueno, 2005). For example, in a recent meta-analysis of 35 studies, Hall (2017) found that across these studies parental rejection was a psychological risk factor for depression among LGBTQ youth. Additionally, some studies have explored parental acceptance and psychological distress in relation to each parental figure (e.g., D’Amico et al. 2015; Floyd et al., 1999; Savin-Williams, 1989). Research suggests that mothers and fathers tend to
respond differently and that, compared to having none or one accepting parental figure, having two accepting parents leads to better psychological adjustment (e.g., suicidal ideation, discomfort with sexual orientation) among LGBTQ youth (Bouris et al., 2010; D’Amico & Julien, 2012).

In a retrospective study of 224 LGB youths (52% Latina/o), ages 21-25, Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez (2009) explored how parental rejection of their child’s sexual identity affected the emotional health of LGB young adults. Past parental rejection was associated with being currently depressed, increased suicidal ideation, and previous suicide attempts. In a similar study of 245 LGBT youths (50% Latina/o), ages 21-25, Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez (2010) found that family acceptance in adolescence was associated with positive health outcomes including self-esteem and general health. Also, parental acceptance served as a protective factor for negative health outcomes such as depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.

In a recent cross-sectional study of 519 LGB youths (7% Latina/o), ages 14-19, Dickenson and Huebner (2015) explored how parental support moderates the relationship between LGB youth’s sense of identity and mental health outcomes. This study found that participants who perceived more family support showed lower levels of depressive symptoms, less internalized homophobia, and were more open with their sexual identity. On the other hand, adolescents who perceived having less family support had higher levels of depressive symptoms (Dickenson & Huebner, 2015). In a similar study of 245 LGBT youths (51.4% Latina/o), ages 21-25, Snapp, Watson, Russell, Diaz, and Ryan (2015) found that perceived parental acceptance was linked to higher levels of self-esteem. Furthermore, in a study of 66 transgender youths (28.8% Latina/o), ages 12-24,
Simons, Schrager, Clark, Belzer, and Olson (2013) found that parental support was significantly associated with fewer depressive symptoms. These findings are consistent with other studies in the parental acceptance literature that have concluded that when LGBT youth experience higher levels of acceptance by their parental figures they report a stronger sense of identity, lower incidents of internalized homonegativity (negative views about one’s own non-heterosexual identity; Fassinger & Miller, 1996), and decreased levels of distress (e.g., Bregman, Malik, Page, Makynen, & Lindah, 2013; Darby-Mullins & Murdock, 2007; D’Amico & Julien, 2012; Mustanski, Newcomb, & Garofalo, 2011).

Mixed-method and longitudinal studies have also demonstrated the importance of parental acceptance to the well-being of LGBT youth. For example, in a mixed-method study of 53 parent-youth dyads (percentage of Latina/o sample not reported), D’Amico and colleagues (2015) examined how parental reactions to their child's sexual identity affected the psychological well-being of the youth. D’Amico and colleagues (2015) asked LGB youth to complete a set of questionnaires about their sexual identity and their coming out experiences. Then, youth were asked to identify one of two of their parental figures to participate in semi-structured interviews about their reactions to their child coming out. All youth self-identified as LGB and were out to their parents at the time of the study. This study found that the higher the father’s and the mother’s support was, the lower the youth’s fear of disclosure. Furthermore, in a longitudinal study of 196 LGB youths (38% Latina/o), ages 15-19, D’Augelli, Grossman, Starks, and Sinclair (2010) explored how parents' knowledge of their child's sexual identity influenced youth’s sexual identity development and psychosocial adjustment as reported by the child. This study found that youth whose parents knew about their sexual identity at the start of the
study had the least fear of parental rejection or harassment related to their sexual identity (D’Augelli et al., 2010). Also, internalized homonegativity scores decreased for youth whose parents learned of their sexual identity during the study, regardless of the parents’ reaction. Thus, being out is important for LGB youth (D’Augelli et al., 2010).

Additionally, LGB youth whose parents had more time with the knowledge of their children’s sexual identity prior to the beginning of the study reported higher parental support and less fear of future harassment or rejection (D’Augelli et al., 2010).

**Risky health behaviors.** The LGBTQ parental acceptance literature has explored the connection between parents’ knowledge and values and LGBTQ youth risky health behaviors. The most commonly measured variables related to risky health behaviors are substance abuse and risky sexual behaviors. Overall, studies have found that parental acceptance of a child’s sexual or gender identity serves as a buffer against using substances and risky sexual behaviors (e.g., Ackard, Fedio, Neumark-Sztainer, & Britt, 2008; Bouris et al., 2010; D’Amico & Julien, 2012; Ford et al., 2005; O’Donnell et al., 2002; Padilla, Crisp, & Rew, 2010; Ryan et al., 2009, 2010; Shilo & Savaya, 2011). That is, parental support of a child’s sexual or gender identity reduces the likelihood that LGBTQ youth will use substances or engage in risky sexual behaviors.

In the studies by Ryan and colleagues (2009, 2010), the relationship between perceived parental acceptance and risky health behaviors (i.e., risky sexual behaviors and substance abuse) was measured. Parental rejection was associated with having unprotected sex, using illicit substances, and substance abuse issues (Ryan et al., 2009, 2010). In addition, in a cross-sectional study of 1,906 LGBTQ youths (percentage of Latina/o sample not reported), ages 12-17, Padilla and colleagues (2010) explored the
extent to which family support moderated substance abuse among LGB youth. This study found that adolescents who reported that their mothers reacted positively to their sexual or gender identity were less likely to use substances compared to those who were not out to their parents or whose parents did not react positively to their sexual or gender identity. Similarly, Willoughby, Doty, and Malik (2010) found that lower levels of perceived parental support was related to increased substance abuse problems. Resnick and colleagues (1997) found that sexual minority high school students’ rating of the quality of the parent-child relationship was associated with alcohol and marijuana use. These findings are consistent with other studies that have found an association between those who perceived lack of parental support and higher incidents of alcohol and drug consumption, smoking, and increased sexual behaviors (e.g., D’Amico & Julien, 2012; Condit, Kitaji, Drabble, & Trocki, 2011; Flentje, Heck, & Sorensen, 2015; Newcomb, Heinz, Brikett, & Mustanski, 2014).

**Victimization.** LGB victimization is defined as verbal and physical abuse, with most studies focusing on physical abuse (e.g., Bouris et al., 2010; D’Augelli et al., 2005; D’Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006; D’Augelli et al., 2010; D’Augelli, Hershberger, & Pikington, 1998; IM, 2011; Willoughby et al., 2010). Overall, these studies have found perceived parental rejection to be associated with LGBTQ youth reports of victimization.

In a study of 361 LGB youths (29% Latina/o), ages 15-19, D’Augelli and colleagues (2005) explored the relationship between a LGB child’s gender atypical behavior (“acting” differently than societal expectations of how one should express their gender), perceived parental acceptance, and victimization reported by LGB youth. This study found that verbal abuse (i.e., calling their child derogatory names such as “sissy” or
“tomboy”) and physical abuse increased when a parent became aware of their child’s sexual identity (D’Augelli et al., 2005). These findings of verbal and physical abuse by parents are consistent with a study by D’Augelli and colleagues (1998), who found more reported incidents of physical and verbal abuse by parents among youth who had disclosed their sexual identity. In a more recent study of 55 transgender youths (40% Latina/o), ages 15-21, Grossman, D’Augelli, and Frank (2011) explored how parental abuse influenced the psychological well-being of transgender youth. The majority of participants reported that their parents’ immediate reactions to their gender identity were to engage in verbal and physical abuse. Participants who displayed more gender atypical behaviors (measured by self-reported dressing other than expected gender) reported higher levels of victimization.

**Latina/o LGBTQ youth and parental acceptance and rejection.** Few studies include sufficient numbers of racial and ethnic minority parents and sexual minority youth to run separate analyses for the intersection of these identities. Several researchers have suggested that there are interactions between race and ethnicity and sexual and gender identity that need to be further explored. Specifically, some researchers have concluded that cultural and familial values influence the extent to which sexual and gender minority youths come out to their parents and the consequences for such disclosure (Bouris et al. 2010; Diamond, Butterworth, & Allen, 2012; Grov, Bimbi, Nanin, & Parsons, 2006; Rosario et al., 2004; Snapp et al., 2015). Also, other researchers have explicitly noted the need for studies to include the experiences of LGBTQ people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds (e.g., Heatherington & Lavner 2008; Rosario et al., 2004).
Specific to Latinas/os, parental acceptance appears to be of great concern for LGBTQ Latina/o youth. In a presentation during the 2013 Human Rights Campaign (HRC) conference, when asked to describe the most difficult problem they face as a result of their sexual or gender identity, LGBTQ Latina/o youth ($N=555$) reported a lack of parental acceptance as their number one issue (Kane, Nicoll, Kahn, & Groves, 2013). However, empirical literature on the topic is limited and contradictory at times. In a recent study, Richter, Lindal, and Malik (2017) explored how ethnicity is related to parental rejection in a sample of White and multiethnic (i.e., Latina/o, Black, multiethnic) participants, including 90 parents (30% Latina/o) and their 90 LGB children (35.6% Latina/o). This study found that ethnic parents reported greater parental rejection and homonegativity compared to their White counterparts. Also, ethnic minority parents endorsed more traditional gender roles than White parents (Richter et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that all three ethnic minority groups were grouped together and, therefore, specific differences among ethnic and racial minority participants were not provided.

In a Latina/o subsample, Latino males reported the highest number of negative family reactions to their sexual identity and the highest rate of depression and suicidal ideation when compared to their White and Latina female counterparts (Ryan et al., 2009). In a separate study, Latina/o adolescents reported lower levels of parental acceptance than their White counterparts (Ryan et al., 2010). However, the Latina/o participants whose parents were accepting of their LGBT identity showed higher self-esteem than their White counterparts (Ryan et al., 2010). On the other hand, in the study by Snapp and colleagues (2015), the Latina/o participants reported lower self-esteem than
their White counterparts, including those who reported high levels of parental acceptance. Additionally, in the study by Bregman and colleagues (2013), Latina/o participants reported similar levels of parental support and rejection as their White counterparts. Inconsistencies in findings across these studies suggest that there might be cultural factors among Latinas/os that are not being assessed.

One qualitative study provides insight about the experiences of Latina/o sexual minority youth within the context of Latina/o culture. In interviews with 25 bisexual Latino youth, ages 15-19, Muñoz-Laboy and colleagues (2009) explored the influence of families on bisexual Latinos’ sense of sexual identity and general emotional well-being. The majority of these youth described experiences of parental rejection. Regardless of whether they perceived their parents as accepting or rejecting, these youth described a strong emotional connection to their families. While participants perceived that family closeness provided them with overall emotional support, it also provoked great stress and caused them to disengage or avoid conversations about their sexual identity in order to avoid coming across as falta de respeto (disrespectful) to their parents. Interestingly, for most participants, a lack of family acceptance did not affect their positive regard for their family (Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2009).

In summary, only a few studies have examined LGBTQ Latina/o youths’ perceptions of parental acceptance. The historical and cultural factors that contribute to Latina/o parents rejecting or accepting their LGBTQ child are important to understand. For example, it is important to understand how gender socialization (i.e., machismo, caballerismo, marianismo) and family values contribute to the tensions that Latina/o
parents might need to confront and resolve in order to support their child’s LGBTQ identity.

Parental Acceptance and LGBTQ Youth: The Parental Figure’s Perspective

Although extensive research exists on the consequences of parental acceptance and rejection on LGBTQ individuals from the perspective of the LGBTQ individual (e.g., Bouris et al., 2010), less is known about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals as they navigate their own processes toward accepting their child. However, the existing literature on the experiences of parental figures has concluded that parental acceptance and/or rejection is not dichotomous (i.e., accept or reject; Goodrich, 2009) but rather a journey or process. In a review of 19 studies and three books about the experiences of parents of LGB children, Chrisler (2017) presented a comprehensive theoretical framework about the experiences of parents of LGB children upon finding out about their child’s non-heterosexual identity. Chrisler’s (2017) proposed framework, grounded in theories that have been used to discuss parental acceptance from the parent’s perspective and empirical research about the experiences of parents of LGB children, includes: (a) context (e.g., individual characteristics vs. interactions with different people in the parent’s life); (b) child’s observed behaviors and interest, (c) suspicion of the child’s LGB identity; (d) confirmation of the child’s LGB identity; (e) appraisal of newly learned information; (f) parent response (i.e., positive, negative, neutral, or a combination thereof); (g) coping behaviors (i.e., cognitive and behavioral), and (h) reappraisal of the child’s disclosure and creation of new meaning about their child’s identity.

In a current systematic review of 41 empirical studies about the experiences of parents of LGBTQ individuals (Rosenkrantz et al., under review) revealed four themes
and 15 subthemes about the parental figures’ process toward acceptance: (a) initial reactions (intense positive and negative emotional reactions, cognitive dissonance, lack of knowledge); (b) process of transformation (seeking out resources and re-evaluation of one’s beliefs, seeking community support and making contacts, confronting oppression and stigma, developing empathy); (c) positive outcomes (relational benefits, activism, reevaluating and re-envisioning their child’s identity); and (d) factors affecting the process of acceptance (time, gender, religion, suspicion of child’s LGBT identity, attempting to find the sources of the child’s LGBT identity). It is important to note that there was a striking absence of non-White and ethnically diverse participants in these studies. Twenty-two out of 41 studies either had a 100% White sample or the authors did not provide racial and ethnic information about the participants. Specifically, across studies the racial background of participants included 1,614 White parents compared to 106 non-White parents (e.g., Black, Hispanic, Asian). Of the studies that reported a combination of White and racially and ethnically diverse participants, the range of White participants was between 43% to 97%, and racially and ethnically diverse participants ranged between 3% to 57%. Furthermore, only 10 studies reported having a sample of Latinas/os or Hispanics with a range between 0.9% and 10%.

The systematic review by Rosenkrantz and colleagues (under review) expanded on Chrisler’s review by focusing on both sexual and gender diverse children, by including more empirical studies (i.e., analyzed literature changes of 28 years of research vs. 16 years), and compared the literature on parents with sexual minority and gender expansive children. With consideration to the more expansive search and comprehensive
explanation of themes across the literature by Rosenkrantz and colleagues (under review), the following sections will summarize the main findings by their review.

**Initial reactions.** Most parents experienced intense emotional reactions consistent with feelings of grief and loss (e.g., Aveline, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Bucher, 2014; Menvielle & Tuerk, 2002; Oswald, 2000; Pearlman, 2005; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Pyne, 2016; Platero, 2014; Riggs & Due, 2014; Saltzburg, 2004, 2009; Tyler, 2015; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011) while some parents expressed immediate acceptance and unconditional love (Horn & Wong, 2016; Kane, 2006; Kuvalanka, Weiner, & Mahan, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2006; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Some parents struggled to challenge their negative beliefs and previously formed schemas of what it means to be an LGBT person (e.g., Bernstein, 1990; Bertone & Franchi, 2014; Broad, 2011; D'Amico et al., 2015; Fields, 2001; Gray, Sweeney, Randazzo, & Levitt, 2015; Gregor, Hingley-Jones, & Davidson, 2015; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Hom, 1994; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2006; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Platero, 2014; Saltzburg, 2004, 2009; Tyler, 2015; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011; Wren, 2002). Furthermore, parents’ lack of knowledge about the LGBTQ community and lack of access to this information influenced their initial reactions toward their child (e.g., Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Conley, 2011; Fields, 2001; Freedman, 2008; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Hom, 1994; Horn & Wong, 2016; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Saltzburg, 2004, 2009; Gregor et al., 2015; Platero, 2014; Pyne, 2016).

**Transformation process.** Many parents sought out resources (e.g., books, Internet) to help them better understand LGBT identity and, as a result, were able to successfully challenge their previous beliefs and values about LGBT people and work toward accepting their child (e.g., Aveline, 2006; Baptist & Allen, 2008; Gonzalez et al.,
2013; Goodrich, 2009; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010; Grafsky, 2014; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Menvielle, 2009; Oswald, 2000; Pearlman, 2005; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Platero, 2014; Saltzburg, 2004; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011; Wren, 2002). Also in their journey to acceptance, many parents seemed to seek out information and support from LGBT-related organizations (e.g., PFLAG) and LGBT people (e.g., D'Amico et al, 2015; Freedman, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010; Gray et al., 2015; Horn & Wong, 2016; Lee & Lee, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Oswald, 2000; Pearlman, 2005; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Sansfaçon, Robichaud, Dumais-Michaud, 2015; Tyler, 2015). Parents often faced stigma from multiple sources such as professional, religious communities, and family members as a result of their LGBT child’s identity (e.g., Gray et al., 2015; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Hom, 1994; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2006; Oswald, 2000; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Platero, 2014; Pyne, 2016; Riggs & Due, 2014; Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Tyler, 2015). Furthermore, many parental figures seemed to experience a newly found sense of empathy toward their LGBT child and the LGBT community as a result of learning about LGBT oppression and experiencing stigma themselves (e.g., Bertone & Franchi, 2014; Broad, 2011; Freedman, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gray et al., 2015; Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Tyler, 2015; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011; Wren, 2002).

Positive outcomes. Parent-child relationships and communication improved as a result of the parent’s journey toward acceptance of their LGBT child (e.g., Ben-Ari, 1995; Fields, 2001; Freedman, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Grafsky, 2014; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Horn & Wong, 2016; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Lee & Lee,
Many parents became activists as a result of integrating positive aspects of their religious values and unconditional love and acceptance toward their LGBT child (e.g., Bertone & Franchi, 2014; Broad, 2011; D'Amico et al., 2015; Fields, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gray et al., 2015; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Hom, 1994; Horn & Wong, 2016; Lee & Lee, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Oswald, 2000; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Platero, 2014; Pyne, 2016). Parental figures were able to re-envision their child’s future (e.g., having romantic partners, getting married) as an LGBT person without mourning the loss of who they thought their child was (e.g., Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Bertone & Franchi, 2014; Fields, 2001; Grafsky, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2006; Pearlman, 2005; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011).

Factors that affect the process of acceptance. Across studies, time seems to be instrumental in parents being able to accept their child’s sexual and gender identity (e.g., Belsky & Diamond, 2015; Ben-Ari, 1995; Bucher, 2014; Freedman, 2008; Grafsky, 2014; Hom, 1994; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Pearlman, 2005; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Riggs & Due, 2014; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Also, while findings across studies are mixed, gender seems to play an important role (e.g., Ben-Ari, 1995; Bucher, 2014; Conley, 2011; D'Amico et al., 2015; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Kane, 2006; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2006; Lin & Hudley, 2009; Riggs & Due, 2014; Saltzburg, 2004; Wren, 2002). Religion and spirituality was also a challenge and a source of support for parents (e.g., Baptist & Allen, 2008; Belsky & Diamond, 2015; Bernstein, 1990; Bertone & Franchi, 2014; Broad, 2011; Freedman, 2008; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Oswald, 2000; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). In addition, parents who had suspicion of
their child’s sexual and/or gender identity (e.g., gender atypical behaviors) seem to have accepted their child’s sexual and/or gender identity faster (e.g., Aveline, 2006; Baptist & Allen, 2008; Goodrich, 2009; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010; Hom, 1994; Lee & Lee, 2006; Pearlman, 2005; Platero, 2014; Saltzburg, 20049; Tyler, 2015; Wren, 2002).

Limitations. In the systematic review by Rosenkrantz and colleagues (under review), 41 empirical studies, including 32 qualitative studies, four quantitative studies, and five mixed-methods studies were analyzed. The number of participants in these studies varied greatly, depending on the study design. Specifically, the range of participants for qualitative studies was between four and 142, the range of participants for quantitative studies was between 57 and 450, and the range of participants for mixed methods was between 27 and 61. Also, only three studies focused on racial or ethnic minority groups: two studies of an Asian American sample, Hom (1994; $N = 13$) and Lin and Hudley (2009; $N = 8$), and one study of a Spanish sample (i.e., participants from Spain), Platero (2014; $N = 12$). Although one study recruited a sample of Hispanic (Spanish) participants (i.e., Platero, 2014), there are distinctions between the heritage of Hispanics and Latinas/os. Hispanic refers to a person who has Spanish-speaking origins and includes people from the country of Spain (e.g., Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009). On the other hand, Latina/o refers to people with Latin American origins not including Spain (e.g., Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009). Due to a history of colonization by Spain in Latin America (e.g., Falicov, 2014), some Latinas/os do not embrace the term Hispanic when identifying their ethnic identity. Therefore, it is plausible to say that, to date, no study has explored the experiences of Latina/o parental figures as they navigate the process of accepting the sexual and/or gender diversity of their LGBTQ child.
With respect to gender diversity across studies, there was a visible absence of the experiences of fathers, or male parental figures, with 11 studies sampling only mothers or using general terms such as “parents”. Of the studies that included fathers or male parental figures, the range of fathers was between 6% and 49% percent. Noticeably, one mixed methods study, Bucher (2014; \(N = 50\)) and one qualitative study, Horn and Wong (2016; \(N = 5\)), sampled fathers only.

**Latina/o Values and Parent-Child Relationship**

The following sections will provide an overview of key Latina/o cultural values and beliefs most relevant to this project. Specifically, gender norms and socialization (machismo, caballerismo, marianismo), familismo, and spirituality are discussed. Although limited, available empirical findings on Latinas/os and LGBTQ individuals are included.

**Gender norms and socialization.** While the intersection of gender socialization and sexual and gender identity issues is scarce in Latina/o literature (Pastrana, 2015), gender socialization is perhaps the one concept that provides the most insight into the tensions that Latina/o parents might have to grapple with and resolve in order to support their child’s LGBTQ identity. This literature on gender socialization focuses mainly on: (a) risky sexual behaviors and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs; e.g., Marín, Gómez, Tschann, & Gregorich, 1997); (b) substance abuse (e.g., Fiorentino, Berger, & Ramirez, 2007; Kulis, Marsiglia, Lingard, Nieri, & Nagoshi, 2008; Soto et al., 2011); (c) therapeutic practices (e.g., Comas-Díaz, 1987; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001); and (d) parents’ reinforcement of gender norms and different expectations for males and females (e.g., Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009; Umaña-Taylor, Alfaro, Bámaca,
& Guimond, 2009). While all of these topics are important in understanding the complexities of Latinas/os’ gender socialization, this section will summarize Latinas/os’ gender socialization and its role in the parent-child relationship.

Latina/o gender socialization has traditionally enforced mutually exclusive behaviors that men and women are expected to perform in order to stay within their assigned gender box (Diaz, Miville, & Gil, 2013; Mayo, 1997; Mirande, 1997; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001; Saez, Casado, & Wade, 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). These traditional beliefs about gender have influenced how Latina/o families teach their children what it means to be a woman or a man and regulate behavior that is not congruent with strict gender norms (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Mayo, 1997; Mirande, 1997; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Saez et al., 2009). For example, in a retrospective study of 166 college age adults, Raffaelli and Ontai (2004) assessed gender-related socialization in Latina/o families. Adolescents in Latina/o households were expected to engage in different activities depending on their gender (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Specifically, females were expected to learn how to tend to the house chores while males were expected to do more labor intensive work outside of the house. Also, males were given more freedom to socialize with friends while female interactions with others outside of the family were highly monitored by parents, particularly interactions with males (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). In another study of 224 Latinas/os and 160 Americans, Hovell and colleagues (1994) explored the relationship between gender norms and adolescents’ sexual behavior. This study found that Latina/o parents were more rigid about sexuality depending on gender. In other words, Latina female adolescents
(compared to Latino male adolescents) reported higher levels of parental involvement in their sexuality (Hovell et al., 1994).

Most research on Latinas/os and gender socialization has focused mainly on the strict socialization of males and females and on the negative outcomes of gender norms and socialization (e.g., Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Céspedes & Huey, 2008; Mirande, 1997; Zayas, Kaplan, Turner, Romano, & Gonzalez-Ramos, 2000). For example, in a study of 130 Latina/o adolescents, Céspedes and Huey (2008) found that participants who did not adhere to parents’ gender role expectations reported more depression, especially among females, which led to family disruption and conflict. On the other hand, recent studies show that Latina/o gender socialization is more fluid and less rigid (e.g., Arcinega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008) and have explored the positive aspects of gender socialization among Latinas/os (e.g., Falicov, 2010; Rodriguez, Castillo, & Gandara, 2013; Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002). Considering the richness of the literature, an overview of how the cultural values of *machismo*, *caballerismo*, and *marianismo* interact to shape Latina/o views of gender socialization is warranted.

**The dimensions of Latino masculinity: machismo and caballerismo.** Although *machismo* (derived from the Spanish word “*macho*” or male) is a widely cited concept when discussing gender socialization among Latinos, a single definition of *machismo* does not exist (Mirande, 1997). However, there are commonly agreed traditional characteristics that define *machismo*: (a) aggressive behaviors; (b) avoidance of all things feminine; (c) the need to restrict one’s emotional life; (d) emphasis on toughness; (e) the need to be self-reliant; (f) emphasis on achieving status; and (g) fear and hatred toward homosexuality (e.g., Ingoldsby, 1991; Mayo, 1997; Saez et al., 2009). While many of the
characteristics of *machismo* listed above are similar to those of hypermasculinity, researchers have called for an understanding of the historic context of colonization in order to fully understand how this concept of hypermasculinity is different in Latina/o culture (e.g., Gonzalez, 2000; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Diaz and colleagues (2013) and Mirande (1997) explain that colonization and oppressive forces in Latin America for over 500 years have contributed to males’ assertion of toughness and dominant behavior and the need to defend their masculinity at all costs. To this end, *machismo* is conceptualized not only as an individual value, but as a collective value within Latina/o culture.

Researchers have argued that Latino men are able to adopt less dominant forms of masculinity while still endorsing aspects of *machismo*. For example, some Latinos who exhibit *machismo* report higher degrees of loyalty and emotional closeness rather than the traditional expectations of aggressive behavior (e.g., Arcinega et al., 2008; Torres et al., 2002). A study by Arcinega and colleagues (2008) revealed two independent factors associated with *machismo*: (a) traditional values of hypermasculinity (described above); and (b) family connection, social responsibility, and the ability to make close emotional connections to others. The latter part of this definition is referred to as *caballerismo* (deriving from the Spanish word *caballero* or gentleman). In their study, Arcinega and colleagues (2008) also found that participants who subscribed to the more traditional form of *machismo* (hypermasculinity) reported higher levels of aggressive and antisocial behavior, arrests, and alcohol consumption. On the other hand, participants who exhibited higher levels of *caballerismo* reported higher levels of problem-solving and a greater emotional connection to others (Arcinega et al., 2008). Similar findings were
reported in a study by Estrada and Arciniega (2015), where higher levels of *caballerismo* were positively correlated with higher levels of social support and life satisfaction among Latino males. In another study of 70 Mexican men, Ojeda and Piña-Watson (2014) examined the role of Latino masculinity on the self-esteem of Mexican men. This study found that men who endorsed higher levels of *caballerismo* and lower levels of *machismo* also reported higher self-esteem. Interestingly, participants who endorsed higher levels of both *machismo* and *caballerismo* reported the highest levels of self-esteem (Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2014). Therefore, despite these two values of masculinity being conceptualized differently, both of these values are an important part of Latino identity.

*Latino masculinity and parent-child relationships.* Some scholars have argued that Latino boys learn traditional values of *machismo* from parents at a very early age (e.g., Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992; Mora, 2013). For example, in a longitudinal qualitative study of 10 Latino boys, ages 11-14, Mora (2013) explored masculinity and views on homosexuality among Latino boys born in the United States. They found that boys engaged in hypermasculine behaviors throughout the course of the study, and they cited specific cultural views on gender socialization to account for their behavior (i.e., accusing other boys of not being Latino enough because they were acting like a “faggot”). Furthermore, all acts of asserting one’s masculine behavior were rooted in the belief that if you were not a “man”, you were gay and that being gay was not desirable. Moreover, boys reported that the values and behavior of *machismo* were taught and encouraged by their parents (Mora, 2013).
**Marianismo.** While the terms *machismo* and *caballerismo* are used to explain gender socialization among Latino men, the term *marianismo* (deriving from *La Virgen María*, or Virgin Mary) is used to explain the gender role socialization of Latinas (e.g., Gil & Vazquez, 1996). *Marianismo* refers to expectations that women be what the Virgin Mary represents in Latina/o culture: (a) devoted to family and husband; (b) selfless; (c) soft-spoken; (d) self-sacrificing; (e) humble; and (f) sexually pure (e.g., Castillo, Perez, Castillo, & Ghosheh, 2010; Gil & Vazquez, 1996). On the other hand, women are expected to make decisions in relation to their role as a mother and wife, thus, having the responsibility over the well-being of the children and the family unit (e.g., Castillo et al., 2010; Lavrin, 2004).

**Marianismo and parent-child relationships.** The concept of *marianismo* influences how older women in Latina/o culture (e.g., mothers, grandmothers, aunts) shape the behavioral expectation of female adolescents within the larger Latina/o culture, especially in relation to their sexuality (Carranza, 2013; Gil & Vasquez, 1996; Hirsch, Higgins, Bentley, & Nathanson, 2002). For example, in a qualitative study of 16 daughters and 16 mothers, Carranza (2013) explored the transmission of *marianismo* from mother to daughter. This study found that the most important values passed down from mothers to daughters were the values of chastity, respect, and obedience. Mothers reported that they used different aspects of *marianismo* to teach their daughters the importance of maintaining their cultural identity. In a more recent study of 524 Mexican-American male and female adolescents, Piña-Watson, Castillo, Jung, Ojeda, and Castillo-Reyes (2014) explored the different aspects of *marianismo*. They found that all Latina/o adolescents are taught expectations for women within the Latina/o community at a very
early age. Specifically, male adolescents endorsed subordination and silence related to 
*mariánismo* and expected women to endorse this value as part of feminine identity while 
Latinas endorsed only the aspects related to family and spirituality (Piña-Watson et al., 
2014). A possible explanation for this difference in the beliefs is the ways they are 
socialized (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). These findings support those of Castillo and 
colleagues (2010) who found that *mariánismo* is a “multidimensional construct” (p. 173) 
and not all dimensions of the traditional definition of *mariánismo* are endorsed by all 
Latinas.

It is important to note that not all members of the Latina/o community embrace 
the traditional and strict forms of gender socialization that have been highlighted in older 
studies of Latinas/os and gender socialization. Also, Latinas/os are not a homogenous 
group and, therefore, there are within group differences that could influence gender 
socialization (Falicov, 2014; Organista, 2007). In sum, gender socialization in Latina/o 
culture can be a source of both conflict and support in parent-child relationships.

*Gender socialization and the LGBTQ community.* Gender socialization in 
Latina/o culture provides support at the individual and familial level. However, these 
practices could psychologically and physically undermine the well-being of LGBTQ 
Latinas/os (e.g., Garcia, Skay, Sieving, Naughton, & Bearinger, 2008). Therefore, an 
understanding of Latina/o values of *machismo, caballerismo,* and *mariánismo* may help 
explain the tensions that Latina/o parents may have to grapple with and resolve in order 
to support their child’s LGBTQ identity.

Traditional gender roles, such as *machismo,* have been associated with less 
tolerance toward LGBTQ people within Latina/o culture (e.g., Ahrold & Meston, 2010;
Kurtz, 1999; Hirai, Winkel, & Popan, 2014). For example, in a study of 330 Latina/o college students, Hirai and colleagues (2014) explored the relationship between *machismo* and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Those students who exhibited higher levels of *machismo* also exhibited more negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians (Hirai et al., 2014). Furthermore, while Hirai and colleagues (2014) did not inquire about gender atypical behavior, much of the literature on Latina/o gay men and lesbian women is highly influenced by gender norms and often attributes gay and lesbian individuals’ gender atypical behavior (erroneously) to sexual identity (e.g., Bonilla & Porter, 1990; Estrada, Rigali-Oiler, Arciniega, & Tracey, 2011; Lumsden, 1996; Mirande, 1997). Therefore, not all gays and lesbians are equally stigmatized. For example, for Latinas/os the difference between *un hombre homosexual* (gay man) and a *maricón, loca, or joto* (faggot) is gender atypical behavior (e.g., Kurtz, 1999; Hirai et al., 2014; Lumsden, 1996; Mirande, 1997). *Un hombre homosexual* displays masculine behavior (as prescribed by *machismo*) and a *maricón, loca, or joto* displays “feminine” behavior. The same rule applies to lesbians, where *una mujer lesbiana* (a lesbian woman) displays feminine behavior and a *marimacha* (butch lesbian woman) displays “manly” behavior (e.g., Espín, 1997). Peña-Talamantes (2013) further explains that the label of gay or lesbian is not as important in Latina/o culture as how others perceive your sexual roles based on your gender typical or atypical behavior. For example, a feminine man is perceived to be the *pasivo* (passive or receptive) partner while a more masculine man is perceived to be the *activo* (active or insertive) partner (Kurtz, 1999; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). For Latinas/os, being perceived as a feminine man is synonymous with allowing another man to penetrate you and is more negatively evaluated than gay or lesbian, which
may not contradict the aggressive and hypermasculine behaviors required for *machismo* (e.g., Kurtz, 1999; Lumsden, 1996).

Unfortunately, those Latinas/os whose gender behavior is perceived as atypical experience great stress and negative consequences (e.g., Kurtz, 1999; Lumsden, 1996; Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Sandfort, Melendez, & Diaz, 2007). For example, a study of 912 self-identified gay and bisexual Latino men who lived in predominantly Latina/o communities found that those men who identified as more feminine experienced greater levels of harassment, physical abuse, and distress (Sandfort et al., 2007).

**Familismo.** *Familismo* is a shared value among Latina/o family members, where participation, loyalty, solidarity, and overall welfare of the family unit are more important than the needs of the individual (e.g., Ayón, Marsiglia, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2010; Miranda, Bilot, Peluso, Berman, & Van Meek, 2006). In the context of Latinas/os, extended family members and close friends (who are also regarded as part of the family) participate equally in the family unit and their opinions have equal influence (e.g., Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Researchers have argued that as a construct, *familismo* has two dimensions: (a) attitudinal *familismo* and (b) behavioral *familismo* (Keefe, 1980; Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Attitudinal *familismo* refers to solidarity, interconnectedness, reciprocity, and family honor (Steidel & Contreras, 2003). On the other hand, behavioral *familismo* refers to actions that reinforce the beliefs explained by attitudinal *familismo* (e.g., Villarreal, Blozis, & Widaman, 2005).

**Familismo and parent-child relationships.** *Familismo* is a source of both conflict and support for Latina/o youth. Higher levels of *familismo* serves as a protective factor and a source of resilience for Latina/o youth in the United States, and is associated with
fewer depressive symptoms (e.g., Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005),
higher levels of social support (e.g., Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda, & Yoshikawa, 2013),
higher levels of self-esteem (e.g., Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004), less substance abuse
(e.g., Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000), and better general mental health (e.g., Chavez-Korell,
Benson-Flórez, Rendón, & Farías, 2014). For example, in a qualitative study with 23
families (Mexicans and Dominicans; mothers and their children), Calzada and colleagues
(2013) found that familismo expressed in financial support, shared living, shared daily
activities, and help with immigration procedures all served as a source of social support
for all participants (Calzada et al., 2013).

Research also shows gaps in levels of familismo between parent and child are
associated with higher levels of substance abuse (e.g., Goldbach, Cardoso, Cervantes, &
Duan, 2015), depression (e.g., Romero & Roberts, 2003), and suicidal ideation and
attempts (e.g., Baumann, Kuhlberg, & Zayas, 2010) among Latina/o youth. For example,
in a study of 193 Mexican Americans and 199 Mexicans college students, Hérnandez,
Ramírez, García, and Flynn (2010) found that high levels of familismo led to higher
psychological distress for Mexican American and Mexican college students. The authors
assert that it is possible that the different expectations of keeping the family harmony (an
aspect of familismo) and acculturation might create conflict and distress in Latina/o youth
(Hérnandez et al., 2010). Studies show that Latina/o youth in the United States show
higher levels of acculturation than their parents, which may contribute to a discrepant
levels of familismo (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014; McQueen, Getz, & Bray, 2003; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008).
**Familismo, LGBT Latinas/os, and parent-child relationships.** Unfortunately, most studies on Latinas/os and *familismo* presume that participants are heterosexual. However, some studies have provided insight into the importance of parent-child relationships among LGBT Latinas/os and their parents. For example, in the study by Muñoz-Laboy and colleagues (2009) presented earlier in this chapter, participants (i.e., bisexual Latino youth) reported that even when parents had negative reactions to their sexual identity they still had a strong sense of *familismo*. Similar findings were reported in a qualitative study of 16 Cuban-American lesbians (Espín, 1997). While the lesbian women in this study reported distress as a result of their family’s rejection of their sexual identity, their family’s rejection did not break the family bond (Espín, 1997).

**Latinas/os and religion and spirituality.** Religion is an important aspect of Latina/o culture. Latinas/os self-identify with the following religious affiliations: (a) 53% Catholic; (b) 25% Protestant; (c) 6% with non-Christian religion; and (d) 12% as unaffiliated (Malavé & Giordani, 2015). Although surveys show an increase in Latinas/os leaving Catholicism and converting to Evangelicalism (Malavé & Giordani, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2013), Catholicism is still the predominant religious denomination. For Latinas/os, Catholicism provides structure not only for the individual but for the group. For example, Sunday mass, religious holiday celebrations, and community activities bring families and friends together (Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009). Also, similar to other Christian denominations, Catholicism emphasizes concepts of heaven, hell, shame, guilt, and salvation, which are linked to certain behavior (Falicov, 2014).

An important part of Catholicism is its devotion to different rituals and
celebrations centered around the Virgin Mary and santos (saints). It is usual for Catholic Latinas/os to make promesas (promises) and offerings to saints and have elaborate celebrations on specific dates to honor the life and miracles of Virgin Mary and different saints (Espinosa, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009). However, not all self-identified Catholics engage in the required practices of the religion (e.g., going to church on a regular basis, baptism, communion; Organista, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009).

**Cuban and Puerto Rican cultural similarities and differences.** While there are cultural values that Latinas/os generally share (e.g., machismo, caballerismo, marianismo, familismo, religiosity), there are also salient differences (e.g., historical context) among different Latina/o groups that should be taken into consideration (Falicov, 2014; Organista, 2007). Much of the empirical literature about the experiences of Latinas/os in the United States has focused on Mexicans and Mexican-Americans or small samples with Latinas/os of Caribbean-descent (e.g., Cuellar et al., 1995; Estrada et al., 2011; Piña-Watson et al., 2014). Few studies have focused on Cuban-American and Puerto Rican Latinas/os.

Cuba and Puerto Rico are two Latin American countries located in the Caribbean. These two islands are predominantly Spanish-speaking, have a similar racial make-up and family structure (collectivist; e.g., Araujo-Dawson, 2015), and share similar customs (e.g., Catholicism as the primary religious background, food, music; Falicov, 2014).

While these two countries share many traditions and customs, there are significant differences in their sociopolitical history that have influenced views on LGBTQ issues (e.g., Falicov, 2014; Organista, 2007). As a territory of the United States since 1898, Puerto Ricans have been governed by the laws of the U.S. and have had easier access to
U.S. culture including U.S.-based LGBTQ culture. LGBTQ rights in Puerto Rico include non-discrimination protections and adoption and marriage rights for same-sex couples. On the other hand, Cuba has been a communist state since 1959 with limited access to western cultures and LGBTQ rights movements. In Cuba, for example, from 1959 through the early 1970s, anyone who was thought to be “homosexual” could be placed in state run work camps as they were considered to be “enemies” of the revolution and a negative consequence of capitalism (e.g., Guerra, 2010). In these working camps, those perceived to be gay were accused to “being fairy” and forced to behave in what the government perceived to be standard masculine behavior (Guerra, 2010). While tolerance of LGBTQ individuals has grown and rights have been recently expanded in Cuba due to newly developed interest by certain governmental officials, LGBTQ individuals lack marriage equality and other rights. In sum, Cuban-Americans and Puerto-Ricans share many similar cultural values with regard to familismo and gender roles, yet there are differences (e.g., sociopolitical background) that may include different cultural strengths and challenges related to parenting LGBTQ children. These communities, which have lacked attention in the psychological research on LGBT families, are the focus of this project.

**Cubans and Cuban-Americans and different immigration patterns.** Although the general literature on Latinas/os tends to refer to Cuban-Americans and Cubans as one homogenous group (Organista, 2007), there are salient differences within this subgroup of Latinas/os (e.g., Bonnin, 2001; Boswell, 2002; Eckstein & Barberia, 2002; Falicov, 2014) that are crucial to understanding socio-political differences between these groups. Some researchers have categorized the experiences of Cuban-Americans into two
different waves (Azicri & Baloyra, 1981; Behar & León, 1994; Falicov, 2014). Wave one of Cuban-Americans refers to those who left Cuba immediately after the Castro Revolution of 1959 (e.g., Falicov, 2014; Gonzalez-Pando, 1998; Méndez, 1994). This wave of Cuban-Americans consisted of mostly White and upper-middle class individuals. Many of these Cuban-Americans were business owners who had connections to wealthy Americans (Falicov, 2014; Organista, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009). The racial and economic privileges of this wave of Cuban-Americans positioned them at an economic advantage, including in the political arena (Organista, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009). Acculturation by this wave of Cuban-Americans was easy and fast due to economic opportunities offered by the United States (e.g., Boswell, 2002; Falicov, 2014).

Wave two of Cuban-Americans refers to the immigration of Cubans beginning in the late-1970s/early-1980s until now (Colon & Sardinas, 2004; Falicov, 2014; Gonzalez-Pando, 1998). This wave of Cuban-Americans was more racially diverse and, unlike the first wave of Cuban-Americans who immigrated to the United for political reasons, moved to the United States for economic reasons, similar to other subgroups of Latinas/os (Falicov, 2014). Also, this wave of Cubans lived under the Castro regime for many years before arriving to the United States.

Taking these differences into consideration, it is plausible that Cubans living on the island and Cuban-Americans living in the United States will both have a hard time grappling with acceptance of LGBTQ identities. However, considering the United States’ more progressive stances toward LGBTQ identity, I posit that acculturation will play a role such that, higher levels of acculturation could potentially lead to higher levels of acceptance of LGBTQ identity.
Theoretical Foundations

A strong theoretical framework is needed to better conceptualize and understand the why and how behind parental acceptance and rejection of LGBTQ individuals in Cuban-American and Puerto Rican communities. Unfortunately, most of the studies on parental acceptance and LGBTQ youth have been exploratory and lack a theoretical foundation for hypothesis testing (Willoughby, Doty, & Malik, 2008). Some researchers are calling for family-based theories to be used to better understand parental acceptance and rejection of their LGBT child (Willoughby et al., 2008).

The following sections summarize two theories from the family psychology literature on parent-child relationships that might be useful for understanding why Cuban-American and Puerto Rican parents might be motivated to support their LGBTQ child’s identity. Specifically an overview of interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory and family stress theory will be presented.

**Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPART).** Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPART; Rohner, 1980, 1986; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978) attempts to explain the causes of rejection and acceptance among interpersonal relationships throughout the lifespan. Before proceeding with this section it is important to note that IPART is a recent evolution of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PART; Rohner, 2016). PART has been used to explain many interpersonal relationships, not simply parent and child relationships (e.g., Parmar & Rohner, 2008; Ripoll-Nunez & Alvarez, 2008; Rohner, Melendez, & Kraimer-Rickaby, 2008); therefore, it was renamed IPART. However, Rohner (2016) asserts this new name does not contradict the original assumptions of PART. Simply put, although this theory has expanded to include other
forms of relationships, it still applies to parent-child relationship. Rohner (2016) states that, “Despite this change in name and emphasis, significant portions of the theory continue to feature the effects, causes, and other correlates of children’s perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection, and of adults’ remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood” (p.1). Thus, the following summary focuses on the application of this theory to parental acceptance and rejection of their child.

IPART is divided into three sub-theories: (a) personality, (b) coping, and (c) sociocultural. The personality sub-theory asks two essential questions: (a) do children everywhere, regardless of culture, ethnicity and racial background, and gender, need parental love and affection?; and (b) Do all children respond psychologically in a similar way to parental rejection and acceptance? The coping sub-theory explicates the construct of resilience among children and adults who have been rejected. Finally, the sociocultural sub-theory explains the reasons why some parents are warm and loving while others are distant, aggressive, and neglecting (Rohner, 1975, 1980, 1986, 1999, 2004; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2005; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978). Since this project focused on the experiences of parental figures, not those of their children, the sociocultural sub-theory is emphasized. A description of what constitutes acceptance and rejection, or what this theory deems the warmth dimensions of parenting, will be presented first in order to better understand how these terms are conceptualized in IPART.

**Warmth dimension of parenting.** The actions of acceptance or rejection constitute the warmth dimension of parenting. Accepting parents are defined by IPART as those who show their love or affection toward children either physically, verbally, or
both, resulting in the child feeling loved and accepted (e.g., Rohner, 1975, 1986, 1994, 2004; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978). Some examples of affection are hugging, kissing, and saying pleasant things about and to one’s child. Alternatively, a rejecting parent is one who dislikes, disapproves, and/or resents their child. Rohner (1977) explains that rejection is shown in four different expressions: (a) cold and unaffectionate; (b) hostile and aggressive; (c) indifferent and/or neglectful; and (d) undifferentiated. While cold, hostility, and indifference are internal psychological processes and feelings, lack of affection, aggression, and neglect are external behaviors (e.g., Rohner, 1986, 1994, 2004; Rohner & Khaleque, 2010; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978). For example, hostile parents are likely to be aggressive toward their child and indifferent parents are likely to be neglectful of their child. Undifferentiated rejection refers to the child’s perception that their parent does not care about them. Furthermore, more than one of these processes may take place at the same time (e.g., parents can be both aggressive and neglectful; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978).

Acceptance and rejection is a continuous process (e.g., Rohner et al., 2012). That is, children experience more or less love and affection by parents at different milestones of their development. Rather than classifying a parent as completely rejecting or accepting, the warmth dimension of parenting is a continuum with acceptance and rejection at opposite ends (e.g., Rohner, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1986, 2004; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978). Furthermore, parental acceptance or rejection is viewed from two different perspectives: (a) the child’s experience (the phenomenological perspective); and/or (b) an outsider’s observation (the behavioral perspective). Therefore, parental acceptance or rejection is both a specific set of parental behaviors and how the child
perceives and interprets such behaviors (e.g., Rohner, 1980, 1986, 2004; Rohner et al., 2012).

Although studies have shown that aspects of acceptance and rejection are found across cultures (e.g., Chen, Rubin, & Li 1997; Rohner, 1980; Rohner & Chaki-Sircar, 1988), the way they are manifested varies from one culture to another. For example, while studying mother-child relationships in a small town in Bangladesh, Rohner and Chaki-Sircar (1988) observed that in Bengali culture a significant form of praise by a mother is offering her daughter a peeled and seeded orange. With this said, a cautionary note in IPART is that acceptance and rejection have different meanings across cultures. Therefore, one must thoroughly understand the culture and understand the child’s perception of acceptance or rejection before labeling a parent’s actions (e.g., Rohner, 1986, 1994; Rohner et al., 2012).

**Sociocultural sub-theory.** The sociocultural sub-theory explains the reasons why some parents are warm and loving while others are distant, aggressive, and neglecting (e.g., Rohner, 1975, 1986; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978). This sub-theory strives to predict societal causes that lead parents to act in an accepting or rejecting manner (Rohner et al., 2012). Integrating Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological model and Berry and Poortinga’s (2006) eco-cultural model, Rohner (1986, 2004) explains that parental acceptance or rejection takes place in a complex ecological context such as societal institutions, family structures, economic situations, communities, and political organizations. Therefore, IPART posits that parental acceptance and rejection is shaped by social/cultural antecedents that influence a parent’s behavior (Rohner, 1980, 1986, 2004; Rohner, Bourque, & Elordi, 1996; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978). Furthermore, IPART suggests that
parents who isolate themselves and have more rigid belief systems are more likely to reject their child (Rohner, 1986; Rohner et al., 1996).

This sub-theory suggests that parents are not only affected by their interactions and experiences with their child, but also by other experiences in their environment. Institutionalized expressive systems refer to a parents’ internal symbolic psychological states formed over time within a specific society (Rohner, 1980, 1986, 2004; Rohner et al., 1996; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978). Examples of institutionalized expressive systems are religious traditions and one’s perception of gender socialization (e.g., Bierman, 2005). It is important to note that expressive systems change, although slowly, as societal beliefs and behaviors change over time.

**Family stress theory.** Stress has broadly and commonly been defined as a stimulus, an inner state, and physical responses to a stimulus or situation at the individual level (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974; Price, Price, & McKenry, 2010). It was not until 1949, with the publication of the book *Families Undress Stress* by Reuben Hill (referred to as the father of family stress research), that researchers started to move away from the individual level to conceptualize stress at the family level (e.g., Boss, 2002, 2006). The concept that families can be under stress operates under the assumptions that families: (a) are a living organism with structure; (b) maintain a series of functions that facilitate growth; and (c) are the product of individuals within the family and the wider societal systems (Hills, 1949, 1958, 1971).

At the core of family stress theory is Hills’ (1949, 1958, 1971) ABC-X model of family stress and crisis. Although this model has been expanded over the years (e.g., Boss, 2002; McCubbin & Patterson, 1982), the basic principles of the ABC-X model are
still the basis for understanding family stress and coping. The four major factors in this model are: (a) the stressor, or event that causes significant change(s) in a family (factor A); (b) the family’s resources to cope with the stressors (factor B); (c) the family’s definition or meaning applied to the event that caused the stressor (factor C); and (d) stress or crisis (factor X) (see Figure 3.2; Boss, 1992, 2002, 2006; Hills, 1971). In 1982, McCubbin and Patterson expanded the basic model described above and added factors that contribute to post-crisis/post-stress or what is known as the Double ABC-X model. The Double ABC-X model attempts to explain how families are able to adapt and cope with stress or crisis (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

**Factor X: parental stress.** According to Hills (1949), stress is a change in the family’s current state and the family’s response to a stressor, or a series of stressors. Stress is not inherently bad. Instead, it is the degree of stress, how much disruption it causes the family unit, the family’s level of resources (factor B), and the family’s definition (factor C) that makes stress positive or negative (e.g., Boss, 2002; Hills, 1949, 1958; McKenry & Price, 2005).

Considering Hills (1949) definition of stress, many researchers posit that parenting in itself is a potential stressor. Parental stress refers to a negative emotional reaction(s) as the result of caring for a child and the responsibilities that come along with such care (e.g., Baker et al., 2003; Crnic, Gaze, & Hoffman, 2005; Crnic & Low, 2002). Researchers have found that parental stress has the potential to disrupt multiple relationships within the family unit including parent-child relationships (e.g., Crnic et al., 2005; Kremer-Sadlik & Paugh, 2007). Specific to parent-child relationships, parental stress has the potential of affecting the emotional, social, and cognitive development of
children (e.g., Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Peterson, 2005). For example, in a meta-analysis of 23 studies, Jones and Prinz (2005) concluded that parental psychological functioning is directly linked to a child’s functioning, including behavior, emotional adjustment, and school achievement, among other factors. On the other hand, parents’ positive and accepting behaviors led to higher self-esteem, effective social skills, and academic success among children (e.g., Bush & Peterson, 2008; Hennon & Wilson, 2008; Peterson, 2005). However, the degree to which stress affects the parent-child relationship is influenced by the stressor (factor A), the resources available to parents (factor B), and the meaning parents give to stressors (factor C).

**Factor A: parental stressors.** Parental stressors refer to events that are significant enough to bring feelings of tension and cause considerable changes within the parent-child relationship and/or the family unit (McCubbin & Patterson, 1986; McKenry & Price, 2005; Patterson, 2002). Although stressors threaten the current state of the family unit, stressors alone do not have the ability to bring stress to the family. Stressors are neutral events that may or may not produce stress (e.g., Crnic et al., 2005; Peterson, Hennon, & Knox, 2010; Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Also, as described by McKenry and Price (2005) and Patterson (2002), many stressors accumulate over time, or “pile up,” as parents are presented with multiple demands. Researchers have classified stressors into three main categories: (a) normative stressors; (b) nonnormative stressors; and (c) chronic stressors (McCubbin & Patterson, 1986; McKenry & Price, 2005; Peterson et al., 2010). It is important to note that there are stressors that fall under more than one category; thus, these classifications are not always mutually exclusive.
Normative stressors include daily hassles and developmental transitions. Daily hassles refer to normal activities such as managing a job and caregiving demands (e.g., Crnic et al., 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Developmental transitions refer to the different developing characteristics of a child that presents challenges to the parents and the parent-child relationship (e.g., Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). An example of a developmental transition is when immigrant family members experience stress due to different acculturation levels among parents and children, which, in turn, has the potential to affect negatively the parent-child relationship (e.g., Radina, Wilson, Hennon, 2008).

Nonnormative stressors encompass stressors that are not predictable and have the potential to cause disruption in the parent-child relationship (e.g., Boss, 2002; McKenry & Price, 2005; Miller, Sage, & Winward, 2005). According to Peterson and colleagues (2010), nonnormative stressors include off-time developments and initial awareness or diagnosis. Off-time developments are when life events that are anticipated happen at an unpredictable time (e.g., Miller et al., 2005). An example of off-time development stressors is parents learning that a teenage daughter is pregnant and that they will be grandparents at an earlier age (Miller et al., 2005). Initial awareness of diagnosis refers to a parent’s learning about an unexpected circumstance or diagnosis involving their child (e.g., Boss, 2006). Learning about a child’s physical illness and poor mental health is an example (e.g., Baker et al., 2003; Caldwell, Horne, Davidson, & Quinn, 2007).

Chronic stressors are circumstances that occur over an extended period of time, are hard to correct, and can have debilitating effects on the parent-child relationship (e.g., Boss, 2002; Peterson et al., 2010). Some examples of chronic stressors are poverty,
immigration, on-going marital problems, and parents’ inability to spend quality time with their child as result of work and other demands (e.g., Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 2002). Also, when nonnormative stressors (discussed above) are severe and become persistent, they can become chronic stressors (Boss, 2002). Given the information presented in this paragraph, I posit that parental figures might categorized having an LGBTQ child as a stressor.

**Factor B: parental resources.** Provided the aforementioned stressors, it is important to consider the resources available to parents. Resources include the strengths that parents and the family unit have available to them that modifies a particular stressful situation. Parental resources may reduce the level of disruption that stressors cause in the parent-child relationship (Boss, 1992, 2002; Patterson, 2002). Resources are the characteristics, qualities, and abilities of the parent and the family unit to mitigate the negative effects of a stressor(s) and are classified by their origin with three main categories of the origin of resources: (a) personal; (b) familial; and (c) social (e.g., McCubin & Patterson, 1986; Patterson, 2002).

Personal resources refer to a parent’s physical and mental health (e.g., self-efficacy, self-esteem, positive outlook to life), financial situation, and interpersonal knowledge and skills (e.g., Coleman & Karraker, 1998; Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Family stress researchers argue that parental mental health is perhaps the most important component in creating and fostering a healthy parent-child relationship (e.g., Bush & Peterson, 2008; Grusec & Davidoc, 2007). For example, a parent who is empathic, warm, secure, mature, expresses affection, and is firm and in control of their actions is
better able to manage stressful parenting situations and empower their child (e.g., Grusec & Davidoc, 2007).

Familial resources include emotional (i.e., caring behavior) and/or instrumental (i.e., tangible assistance) support from immediate and extended family members (Boss, 2002; Peterson et al., 2010). Researchers have found that familial financial and emotional support, advice, and encouragement, among other resources, reduce parental psychological stress and enhance the quality of parenting and parent-child relationship (Crnic et al., 2005; Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1996; Radina et al., 2008; Shumow & Lomax, 2002).

Social support is another key resource. Although social support is secondary to familial support (Boss, 2002; Patterson, 2002; Peterson et al., 2010), researchers have concluded that support from individuals outside the boundaries of the family unit (e.g., friends, coworkers) has the ability to reduce parental distress and encourage parents to be more nurturing to their children (Crnic & Low, 2002; Hennon & Wilson, 2008; Pierce et al., 1996). Personal, family, and social support are important parental resources.

**Factor C: parental meanings.** As it has been noted, stressors by themselves are neutral and do not necessarily create stress or crisis. Therefore, it is how parents define and give meaning to different stressors (positive, negative, neutral) that leads to stress (e.g., Boss, 2002, 2006; McCubbin & Patterson, 1986). Hennon and colleagues (2009) evaluate stressors as benign, challenging, threatening, harmful, or loss-filled. A stressor is benign if parents do not judge it as negative or deleterious to the family unit. On the other hand, challenges are stressors that parents judge to be difficult but possible to manage. Threatening stressors are future circumstances that parents perceive could harm
the family. Finally, harm or loss refers to a situation that has already happened and parents perceive it to have caused disruption in the family (Hennon et al., 2009).

Depending on their cultural background and their available resources, parents may categorize an identical stressor differently (Boss, 2002; Peterson et al., 2010). A specific stressor often cited in the literature is when children deviate from what parents consider to be normal behavior, which results in either positive or negative reactions from parents. According to research, the more a child deviates from what parents consider acceptable behavior, the more stress parents experience, and the more the parent-child relationship is affected (e.g., Goodnow, 2002; Spring, Rosen, & Matheson, 2002). As such, the perspective of parents is important.

**Double ABC-X model.** McCubbin and Patterson (1982) expanded Hill’s ABC-X model by adding post-crisis/post-stress factors and developed what is known as the double ABC-X model. First, the double A refers to the “pile up” of stressors and accounts for unresolved aspects of the initial stressor and changes in the family unit unrelated to the initial stressor and the results of the family’s efforts to cope with the pile up of stressors. Second, the double B includes the resources the family had prior to the initial stressor and the resources the family acquired as a result of the stressor. Third, the double C refers to the parental meanings based on the perception of the original stressor and the new stressful situation or crisis. Fourth, the double X refers to the family’s initial response to the stress or the adaptation and coping or adaptation/maladaptation that results (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

**Parental coping and adaptation.** In recent years, the study of family stress theory has focused on how families manage, cope, and adapt to different stressful situations.
According to McKenry and Price (2005) and Patterson (2002), coping involves altering one’s interpretation of stress and managing feelings and emotions about stressful situations. Specific to parental coping, McKenry and Price (2005) argue that parents must actively define stressors and stress and take concrete steps to manage it. However, coping strategies are specific to the cultural background and values of the family (e.g., Hennon & Wilson, 2008). For example, studies of Latinas/os parents have found that they use support from family members and links to the community to cope with stressors (e.g., Hennon et al., 2007).

While most of the current literature has focused on coping, adaptation helps families move forward from stressful situations (Boss, 2006; Bush & Peterson, 2008). Adaptation refers to the parents’ ability to recover from stress. According to McCubbin and Patterson (1986), families recover when they address the stressors and return to the same state prior to the stressor or develop new resources and new definitions that change their appraisals of the stressor.

**Systemic-level context of heteronormativity.** Although the macrosystem of oppression is not explicitly recognized as a factor that could influence a family’s response to stressors in family stress theory, it is important to acknowledge systemic heteronormativity as a factor that could influence parental acceptance of one’s LGBTQ child. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the macrosystem refers to cultural and societal beliefs (both explicit and implicit) that influence an individual’s development and perception of what is normal within a given environment. In the widely cited article by Bronfenbrenner (1977), the author notes that macrosystems are “of special importance in determining how a child and his or her caretakers are treated and interact with each
other in different types of settings” (pg. 515). Therefore, it is crucial to take into
consideration how heteronormativity might influence the resources, meaning, and coping
mechanisms of parental figures of LGBTQ children, thus, affecting their process of
acceptance and parent-child relationship.

Expressive Writing to Increase Parental Acceptance

Expressive writing (EW) may help organize complex emotional experiences and
promote coping and adaptation. EW requires participants to disclose, in writing, their
deepest and intimate thoughts surrounding an experience they consider to be significant
or traumatic (e.g., Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker, 1997). Research shows that
while it is typical for individuals who experience stigmatizing and difficult events to want
to keep the event to themselves, such concealment is likely to lead to negative mental
health outcomes (Larson & Chastain, 1990). Therefore, expressing one’s feelings and
emotions can lead to increased insight and improved psychological positive outcomes
and overall well-being (e.g., Smyth & Pennebaker, 2012). EW has proven to be an
effective intervention that improves the psychological well-being of patients in medical
settings (e.g., Rodriguez, Young, Neighbors, Campbell, & Lu, 2015; Zhou, Wu, An, &
Li, 2015) and college students with emotional concerns (e.g., Greenberg & Stone, 1992).

EW is consistent with McAdams’ (2001, 2006) Narrative Theory, which suggests
that being able to understand one’s own narratives and life stories helps individuals
construct new meanings and enhances well-being. In addition, Barbara Fredrickson’s
activating positive emotions enhances further positive emotions and allows the person to
access an array of thoughts and actions that lead to creative thinking, reversing the effects
of past and current negative emotions and promoting psychological resiliency.

EW has been used with LGBTQ and Latina/o or Hispanic samples. For instance, EW has been effective in reducing perceived stress among LGBTQ-identified people (e.g., Lewis et al., 2005; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2010) and in reducing acculturative and psychological stress in Latina/o- and Hispanic-identified people (e.g., Hirai et al., 2012; Valdez, 2009). In the study by Lewis and colleagues (2005), the authors investigated whether engaging in an EW intervention facilitated coping with sexual minority stress and improved the psychological well-being of lesbian women. Specifically, 76 lesbian-identified participants were assigned to either a control group or an EW group and were instructed to write six journal entries. The participants in the EW group were asked to reflect about stressful and traumatic experiences related to their sexual orientation. Findings showed that writing about traumatic events related to sexual orientation reduced perceived stress over a two month period for those participants who were less open about their sexual orientation and allowed them to cope with stressors related to their sexual orientation (Lewis et al., 2005). In a similar study, 77 gay-identified men were randomly assigned to two groups, with one group instructed to write about traumatic gay-related experiences (EW intervention group) and the other one (control group) asked to write about what they did that day (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2010). Participants who wrote about stress related to their sexual orientation reported significantly greater openness about their sexual orientation three months following writing than participants who wrote about their daily activities. Also, those who wrote about a more severe topic were more likely to disclose their sexual orientation to at least one other person over the following three months. In addition, three months after the writing intervention, those participants
with lower initial levels of social support reported a higher proportion of gay friends (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2010).

Regarding EW as an effective intervention with Latina/o- and Hispanic-identified people, Hirai and colleagues (2012) assigned 104 Hispanic-identified participants to write about a traumatic event, with one group asked to focus on their emotions and the other one asked to focus on facts related to that event. While both groups showed reduced symptoms of trauma over a five weeks period, the group that focused on their feelings reported significantly less symptoms of trauma than the group that focused on facts (Hirai et al., 2012).

While few in number, some studies have explored the effectiveness of using a writing exercise to focus on positive meanings of LGBTQ identities (e.g., Riggle et al., 2014). For example, in the study by Riggle and colleagues (2014), after a 30-minute talk about the positive aspects of being LGBTQQ or an ally (A), participants were asked to write narratives about how this experience impacted their own identity as LGBTQQA. Expanding on previous interview studies, an on-line study asked parents to describe the positive aspects of parenting a LGBTQQ child in brief, open-ended responses (Gonzalez et al., 2013), which demonstrated the possible utility of this methodology to understand parental acceptance. These studies suggest that EW may be useful in facilitating positive emotion in relation to a child’s LGBTQ identity and/or their own identity.

**The Current Study**

This study explored the cultural strengths that Cuban-American and Puerto Rican parental figures incorporate into their acceptance narratives in an expressive writing exercise and the impact of this exercise on their feelings toward their LGBTQ child.
**Research questions and hypothesis.** The following research questions guided this study: (1) What cultural strengths and challenges influenced Cuban-American and Puerto Rican parental figures’ journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child? and (2) What is the impact of an expressive writing exercise on the affect of parents? I hypothesized, consistent with other studies that have used EW as an intervention (e.g., Hirai et al., 2012; Riggle et al., 2014; Valdez, 2009), that parental figures’ positive feelings (i.e., happiness) toward their child will increase and negative feelings (i.e., anger, anxiety/sadness) will decrease as a result of writing about their journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child.
Chapter Two: Method

Participants

Participants in the study ($N = 30$) were self-identified Cuban-American ($n = 19$) and Puerto Rican ($n = 11$) parental figures (i.e., mothers, fathers, aunts) of at least one LGBTQ child (see Table 2.1 for complete participant demographic information). The study sample consisted of 17 mothers, 9 fathers, and 4 aunts. The age range for participants was 38-76 years old with an average age of 52.60 (SD = 7.76). With respect to location, at the time of the study, participants resided in mainland United States ($n = 22$), including Florida ($n = 20$), New York ($n = 1$), and Kentucky ($n = 1$), as well as the island of Puerto Rico ($n = 8$). The majority of Cuban-American participants ($n = 17$) reported being first generation (i.e., the participant and one or more of their parents were born outside of the United States), one participant was second generation (i.e., the participant was born in the United States, but one parent was born outside of the United States), and one participant was “other” (participant did not explain their rationale for this selection). The majority of Puerto Rican participants ($n = 8$) resided in Puerto Rico (i.e., island Puerto Ricans) while three resided in mainland United States (i.e., mainland Puerto Ricans).

Regarding the child’s sexual and gender identity, 24 identified their child as gay men, six as lesbians, three as transgender male, and one as gender fluid. Some parental figures reported having more than one child who identified as a sexual and/or gender minority. The child’s age of disclosure to the parental figure ranged from 11 to 26 years of age.

With respect to race, 18 identified as White, 5 as Cuban, 2 as Puerto Rican, 2 as
Mestiza/o (mix of indigenous and White European; Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, & Organista, 2014), 1 as Mulato/a (mix of European and African ancestry; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014), 1 as Hispanic/Latina/o, and 1 as Black. While Cuban and Puerto Rican are labels that connote nationality and not race, research suggests that it is common for Latinas/os to identify their birth-place as their racial identity (Delgado-Romero, Nevels, Capielo, Galván, & Torres, 2013; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2009). Keeping this in consideration, I kept the same labels participants used to describe their race.

Regarding education level, 3 attended high school, 5 competed high school or GED, 8 some college or technical school, 6 a college degree, 2 some post-bac or graduate program, 5 advanced college degree, and 1 “other.” With respect to relationship status, 21 reported being married, 7 divorced, and 2 cohabitating with significant other.

With respect to religious identity, 16 identified as Catholic, 5 belief in a higher power (i.e., God), 3 as Christian, 1 as Yoruba (Afro-Cuban religion with main ritualistic characteristics include a combination of African rituals and Catholicism; Thornton, 2016), 1 as Pentecostal, 1 as Evangelical, 2 as atheist, and 1 as spiritual. When asked how often they attended religious services, 7 reported never, 2 less than once a year, 10 about once or twice a year, 5 several times a year, 1 about once a month, 2 nearly every week, and 3 every week.

Procedures

Recruitment. Participants were eligible to participate if: (a) they were of Cuban-American or Puerto Rican descent, (b) identified as a parent or parental figure (i.e., aunts or uncles) of an LGBTQ person, and (c) they were at least 18 years old. In Latina/o culture, extended family members actively participate in the family unit and their
opinions and actions weigh as much as those of immediate family members (Falicov, 2014). Therefore, aunts and uncles who reported being emotionally close and who experienced a personal journey toward accepting their nephew and/or niece’s sexual and/or gender identity were considered “parental figures”. Because of the difference in generation and developmental life stage, grandparents were not eligible to participate in the study.

For this project, recruitment was conducted using two approaches: targeted and snowball. Regarding targeted recruitment, I used a local and national strategy. At the local level, I contacted Latina/o organizations such as the Hispanic Latino Coalition of Louisville, a non-profit organization responding to the needs of the growing Latina/o population. Also, I was able to publish the announcement, both in English and Spanish, in La Voz, a bi-weekly bilingual newspaper in Lexington with over 15,000 readers.

At a national level, I directly contacted administrators of 25 Latina/o organizations located in major cities with a significant number of Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans (Miami, Florida; Orlando, Florida; Tampa, Florida; New York City, New York; Los Angeles, California). I also contacted administrators from Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) located in major cities with a significant number of Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans (Miami, Florida; Orlando, Florida; Tampa, Florida; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; New York City, New York; Queens, New York; Los Angeles, California; San Juan, Puerto Rico). I emailed the study announcement to 30 Latina/o, LGBTQ, Latina/o LGBTQ, parents of LGBTQ, and Latina/o parents of LGBTQ youth groups on Facebook and Twitter. As a member of the National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA) and co-chair of NLPA’s LGBTQ
interest group, *Orgullo* (Pride), I was able to advertise and recruit potential participants through this medium. Finally, I distributed the approved study flyer during the 2016 biennial NLPA conference (a conference that brings together over 600 Latina/o researchers, scholars, clinicians, and activists), which took place during the months of September and October in Orlando, Florida. I specifically distributed flyers (in English and Spanish) during LGBTQ-related and/or Puerto Rican or Cuban/Cuban-American related presentations.

Regarding snowball sampling (Gardner, 2009), I asked parental figures of LGBTQ people and LGBTQ people to forward the study information to others who might be eligible and willing to participate. As a gay Cuban-American I have connections to the Latina/o community (mostly in Florida), many of whom identify as Cuban-American and Puerto Rican. I used my contacts to help disseminate my study announcement and to help recruit eligible parental figures who met the criteria for the study. I directly contacted LGBTQ Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans whom I have known for years and/or their parents and asked them to disseminate my dissertation announcement and/or provide me with the names and contact information of people they thought would be good candidates for the study. Although not originally anticipated, these connections led me to contacts in Puerto Rico, where the majority of the Puerto Rican participants resided at the time of the study.

Snowball sampling proved to be the most effective method of recruiting participants who met the criteria for this project. There are two specific reasons why this method proved to be the most effective: (a) this project focused on a specific, narrow, and hard-to-find population (i.e., accepting Cuban-American and Puerto Rican parents of
LGBTQQ people willing to share their experiences); and (b) LGBT issues are not openly discussed in Latino/a communities (Pastrana, 2015). Therefore, making connections through social networks and building a strong rapport with participants, who later contacted other potential participants through “word-of-mouth”, was crucial.

Prescreening. After interested participants contacted me via email or phone call, a prescreening session took place over the phone (see appendix F for the English and Spanish versions). The reason for this prescreening was: (a) to build rapport; (b) to assess participants’ self-disclosed identity as an accepting parental figure; (c) gather basic demographic questions from participants (e.g., age, race, state or country of residence, perception of child’s sexual and or gender identity); (d) to answer questions about the purpose of the study and the procedures and gauge willingness to participate; and (e) to find out the participant’s preferred method of completing the intervention (i.e., mail or online Qualtrics link). Although it was my intention for the prescreening sessions to last no more than 5-10 minutes, about half of the participants engaged in extensive conversations and had multiple questions about the purpose of the study and the researcher’s own experience with the topic that resulted in the prescreening sessions lasting between 15-50 minutes. It was clear that the topic was very sensitive to most participants and, therefore, it was crucial for me to take the time to answer all questions thoroughly and engage in some self-disclosures (e.g., talk about my own experiences as a Cuban-American gay man with accepting parents) in order to build a strong rapport so that participants would complete all parts of the study. While is not clear if engaging in longer prescreening sessions had an impact on the outcome of the study, these longer screening sessions could have impacted the length and the level of details provided by the
participants in the written narratives. For example, a participant who provided specific
details over the phone about their struggle to accept their LGBTQ child might have found
it redundant to provide such details again in writing.

Of the original 36 individuals who expressed interest, six people either did not
complete the online Qualtrics survey or did not return completed forms. The remaining
30 participants completed the study, with seven participants electing to complete the
study by U.S. mail. It took participants approximately one to three weeks to complete the
study after the prescreening took place. Participants who elected to complete the study
by mail took longer. I sent email reminders and/or called participants directly two weeks
after the link was emailed to them or protocols were mailed to them. This follow-up
contact allowed me to answer any further questions and remind participants to complete
the study as soon as possible. Data collection took place between March and October
2016.

Field notes. In qualitative research, field notes are a rich source of data that
allows researchers to better analyze the research question(s) being explored (Creswell,
2007). During the screening process, I collected field notes on a separate, de-identified
document. The field notes facilitated the analytical process. Specifically, the field notes
allowed me to ask follow-up questions about the participant’s role as a parental figure of
an LGBTQ child. Also, detailed field notes allowed me to begin to understand aspects of
the parents’ cultural context before they completed the writing intervention.

Overall, there were salient pieces of information that were shared during the
screening process that help contextualize the results. First, the information that
participants shared was consistent with themes in the general literature on parental
acceptance from the parental figure’s perspective. For example, participants shared feelings of unconditional love for their child, their reframing of oppressive religious values toward LGBTQ individuals, and learning empathy from their child. Second, the screening session led to a discussion between the primary investigator and the participants about Latina/o-specific cultural factors that might have facilitated parental acceptance for these participants. Specifically, participants spoke at great length about the influence of gender norms and gender socialization in Latina/o culture, the role of Catholicism, *familismo*, and the importance of *respeto* (cultural emphasis on respect for authority and hierarchical framework in the family; e.g., Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010). Overall, these field notes helped me, as the investigator, clarify and contextualize the written narratives described in the results.

**Measures**

**Demographic questions.** A brief questionnaire was administered after the screening and before completing the Parental feelings inventory (PFI), pretest. Questions included: (a) education level; (b) relationship status; (c) religious/spiritual identity; (d) frequency of attendance to religious services; and (e) generational status. (See appendix A for English and Spanish versions.)

**Dependent variable.** Parental affect was measured qualitatively and quantitatively. The Parental feelings inventory (PFI), a 26-item rating scale designed to assess parental emotions within the parenting role, was adopted from Bradley, Hurwitz, Harvey, Hodgson, and Perugini (2013). Instructions were modified to direct participants to think specifically about their LGBTQ child when answering each question. This scale was administered before and after the expressive writing intervention (see appendix B for
English and Spanish versions). Specifically, instructions read, “Using the scale below as a guide, rate the degree to which you are experiencing each of these emotions toward your LGBTQ child right now.” Items consisted of 26 feeling words that were clustered into three categories that yielded the most interpretable factors: (a) Angry, (b) Happy, and (c) Anxious/Sad. The Angry category included six words such as angry, frustrated, and irritated. The Happy category included 11 words such as cheerful, excited, and pleased. The Anxious/Sad category included nine words such as afraid, hopeless, and scared.

Participants’ rated each feeling word on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). In the original study, items were added to make three scores, and it showed a good internal consistency for both mothers (Cronbach’s α = 0.85) and fathers (α = 0.87) (Bradley et al., 2013). For the sample in this study there was a high internal consistency coefficients for all three categories: Angry (Cronbach’s α = 0.92), (b) Happy (Cronbach’s α = 0.89), and (c) Anxious/Sad (Cronbach’s α = 0.81).

Participants were allowed to complete the PFI in either English or Spanish. To make sure I was accurately translating all items in the scale from English to Spanish, I consulted with two professionals who hold a Masters degree in Spanish Language, have over 15 years of experience teaching Spanish at the secondary level, and are both Spanish-native speakers (both of Caribbean descent as well). Each of us translated the scale items to Spanish individually and resolved any discrepancy in our translations. A total of 23 participants opted to complete the PFI in Spanish.

Following the expressive writing exercise, participants responded to the following, “Please share a short description of the feelings you experienced as a result of writing your story. As you wrote about your journey toward accepting your LGBTQ
child, what emotions did you experience?” (See appendix D for Spanish version.)

**Expressive writing intervention.** The written narrative response constituted the expressive writing intervention. The letter was analyzed to answer the first research question of this study. The instructions for the expressive writing intervention read:

Please write a letter to another parent, someone like yourself, describing your journey toward accepting your own LGBTQQ child/young adult. In your letter, please include the aspects of your heritage, cultural beliefs and values as a [Cuban- or Puerto Rican-] American parent that have helped you on this journey. Feel free to provide specific examples that might help the other parent understand your journey. You can take as long as you want to write this letter. You do not need to finish your letter in one sitting.

(See appendix C for Spanish version.)

Participants were allowed to complete the expressive writing exercise in either English or Spanish. This accommodation allowed participants to express their ideas and feelings without the restriction of language. A total of 23 participants opted to complete writing exercise in Spanish.

Once all data were collected, organized, and de-identified, two advanced doctoral students from the Hispanic Studies Department at the University of Kentucky completed the translations from Spanish to English and a back-translation from English to Spanish to double check for translation accuracy. These two individuals were highly recommended by the Hispanic Studies Department Chair and had significant experiences doing translation work. After their translations were completed, I read each original piece of writing and the provided translations for accuracy of the final product. As a
fluent bilingual (reading, writing, and comprehension) of Caribbean-descent (Cuban- the cultural heritage of the participants in this study), I am familiar with the cultural and linguistic nuances of the Spanish spoken in this part of Latin America. Minor revisions (e.g., word-choice that did not accurately capture a particular idea) were resolved by consultation with the translators (see Figure 2.1).

**Data Analytic Procedure**

All of the qualitative data were analyzed using Dedoose, a web-based coding application commonly used among qualitative researchers. Access to this application made the initial coding, subsequent revisions, and consolidation of the data easier to manage. Also, this program allowed access to multiple reports (e.g., code excepts, descriptors) that made writing results more efficient and accurate.

To address the first research question (i.e., What cultural strengths and challenges influenced Cuban-American and Puerto Rican parental figures’ journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child?), the content of the expressive writing exercise was subjected to a rigorous systematic qualitative analysis procedure. Results were analyzed for content. First, I used a conventional approach to qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to identify what factors facilitated acceptance by these parents. This approach involved highlighting words and/or sentences from the text that appeared to capture specific concepts about the research question at hand, labeling codes that emerge, sorting codes into categories, and grouping codes into meaningful clusters before arriving at final definitions for categories and subcategories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Patton, 2002).

This type of content analysis allows researchers to gain direct information from
participants without having preconceived categories or preconceived ideas about a specific phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Second, to deepen the understanding of the participants’ cultural strengths and challenges as they navigated their acceptance process toward their LGBTQ child, the content of the letter was analyzed for how these parental figures accepted their LGBTQ child. For this analysis, thematic analysis was used. This chosen methodology assumes that people construct their own reality based on their unique experiences and express that meaning in a social context (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). Consistent with this paradigm, thematic analysis is a systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns, or themes, within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).

I began by reading all responses to the letters in order to get a broad idea of the dataset. Afterward, Dr. Rostosky and I individually reviewed all of the letters. Each response was divided into interpretable units of text that express one idea, called meaning units (Giorgi, 1985). A meaning unit was a phrase, a sentence, or more than one sentence. We coded each meaning unit from respondents into the initial set of themes using a constant comparative process. Next, I met with Dr. Rostosky to discuss our impressions and agree on an initial set of themes. Overlap and discrepancies were addressed and we went one more time through the data together in order to consolidate, create new themes, and eliminate themes as needed. Coding was reviewed and revised one more time using input from an independent auditor (Dr. Riggle), discussion of discrepancies, and an iterative process of coding and re-coding until a parsimonious thematic structure of the data was finalized. The auditor read the coded data and provided feedback and suggestions for revisions. Revisions were made accordingly,
including consolidating, creating new themes, and eliminating themes as needed (see Figure 2.2).

To ensure the validity of the identified themes, Drs. Rostosky and Riggle reviewed all of my coding prior to finalizing the thematic structure of the data. Prior to and throughout the analytic process, I maintained a reflective journal to record and bracket my preconceptions and expectations to discuss with my dissertation research advisors. This standard procedure in qualitative analyses helped me monitor and reflect on the potential influence of my own social identity as a Cuban-American gay man as I coded and interpreted the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).

The second research question (i.e., What is the impact of an expressive writing exercise on the affect of parents?), was addressed qualitatively and quantitatively. First, the open-ended question about parental perceptions about the impact of the expressive writing exercise was qualitatively coded for content using a conventional approach to qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In addition, the PFI pre- and posttest ratings were analyzed for differences in parental emotions toward their LGBTQ child as a result of the EW intervention. First, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to test between group differences (Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans) on their pretest and posttest feeling scores toward their child. Second, a paired sample t test was used to detect change in feeling scores after the participants completed the intervention (i.e., written exercise).
Table 2.1 Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Relationship to Child</th>
<th>Child’s Sexual and/or Gender Identity</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Generational Status (Cuban-American Sample Only) OR Island vs. Mainland Puerto Ricans</th>
<th>Religious Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Aunt</td>
<td>Gay</td>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>Florida</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Cuban-American</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
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<td>New York</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
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<td>Advanced College Degree</td>
<td>Mainland Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Mother</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Mestiza</td>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>Mainland Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
</tr>
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<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Mestiza</td>
<td>Advanced College Degree</td>
<td>Island Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
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<td>Other: Sixth Grade</td>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>Believe in God</td>
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<td>Atheist</td>
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<td>Gay</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Island Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Christian</td>
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<td>Gay</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>Island Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Christian</td>
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<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>High School or GED</td>
<td>Island Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Christian</td>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<tr>
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Figure 2.1 Translation of Spanish Qualitative Data

Data Organization

• Data were collected, organized, and de-identified
• Spanish narratives \((n = 23)\) are separated from the English narratives \((n = 7)\) and saved into another document

Spanish - English Translation

• Two advanced doctoral students from the Hispanic Studies Department at the University of Kentucky completed the translations from Spanish to English
• Each student is assigned half of the Spanish narratives

English - Spanish Back Translation

• Same two advanced doctoral students perform a back-translation of their original assigned narratives from English to Spanish
• Back translation is checked for accuracy

Main Researcher Checks for Accuracy

• The primary researcher read each set of Spanish - English and English - Spanish translation for accuracy

Inaccuracies Reconciliation

• Primary researcher and translators meet to reconcile minor discrepancies
• Main researcher has final say
Figure 2.2 Qualitative Data Analytic Procedures

Data Familiarization
- Primary researcher read all letters in order to get a broad idea of the dataset

Generating Initial Codes
- Two individual researchers individually reviewed all of the letters
- Each response was divided into interpretable units of text that expressed one idea
- Each meaning unit was coded into an initial set of meaningful groups

Searching for Themes
- Individually, both researchers analyzed codes and placed them into an initial set of themes

Reviewing Themes
- Both researchers met to discuss and agree on initial themes
- Overlap and discrepancies were addressed

Naming Themes
- Both researchers analyzed the date together a second time
- Initial themes were consolidated and eliminated as needed
- New themes are created

Independent Auditor
- Coding was reviewed by an independent auditor who provided feedback for revisions
- Revisions were made- consolidating and creating and eliminating themes as needed
- Parsimonious thematic structure of the data was finalized
Chapter Three: Results

In this chapter a content and thematic analysis of the writing intervention (i.e., letters) is presented. Quotes are provided to illustrate each theme and sub-theme. For the purpose of confidentiality, no participants’ names are disclosed in these quotes. Instead, demographic information is presented for each quote including: (a) nationality (Cuban-American or Puerto Rican); (b) relationship to child (mother, father, aunt); (c) age; and (d) state or territory of residence. Findings for the first research question are presented in a content analysis (participants’ disclosure of what elements facilitated acceptance) using a conventional analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and then a process analysis using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013) of how these parental figures worked toward acceptance. Letters ranged from one short paragraph (approximately four sentences) to over two and half pages in length, with most letters approximately one typed page (approximately 500 words). In the interest of uniformity, the following criteria will be used for the description of the percentages presented for each theme: (a) A Few = 2-9 participants; (b) Some = 10-15 participants; and (c) Many or most = 16-30 participants. The findings for the second research question about the impact of the writing intervention on parents’ feelings toward their child is presented next.

What Helped Parental Figures Accept Their Child?

The content analysis included the following themes and subthemes: (a) family (support, maintaining family unity); (b) interactions with LGBTQ people; (c) resisting and embracing Latina/o gender norms (caballerismo, marianismo); (d) cultural dissonance; and (e) immigration and the American dream. See table 3.1 for a summary of themes and number of participants.
**Family.** Some parental figures \((n = 15)\) found family members and/or maintaining the family unity (i.e., *Familismo*) to be a strong motivator to accept their child’s sexual and/or gender identity.

**Support.** Some participants \((n = 12)\) provided extensive examples of support received from immediate and extended family members as they navigated their process of acceptance. Family members played a crucial role in validating the feelings of these parental figures and/or challenged these parental figures ambivalence about accepting their child’s sexual orientation. The following three examples describe support received from the participants’ other child some of whom role-modeled a supportive response. A Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 65, from Florida stated:

Something else that helped me out was that my daughter, his cousin, told me that he told her that he was a homosexual and that she accepted him. She told me that times have changed and I shouldn’t judge anyone based off of their attraction to someone of the same sex. Really, it helped me to know that my daughter accepted him and it relieved me.

Similarly, a Puerto Rican mother (of a lesbian), 56, from Florida reported:

One day my other daughter asked me what bothered me most about the situation and I told her: “I don’t want anybody to do anything bad to my youngest daughter.” She responded: “Think about what you’re saying and reflect on all that’s happened.” And then I understood: I was the one hurting my daughter because I wasn’t accepting her just as she is.

A Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida wrote:
After a few minutes that seemed an eternity my youngest son [name] approached his brother and gave him a hug and then he looked at us at his mother and me and told us that he had gay friends and that his brother was not different, that he loved his brother.

In addition, other participants discussed receiving support from their parents (their child’s grandparents) as they processed their child’s disclosure. For instance, a Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida wrote:

My mom told me that even though she didn’t understand much of what was going on, that my responsibility as a mother is to support my children no matter what they do. My mother also reminded me that family unity is one of the most important things … and that I should support [him] in this transformation because blood is blood and a mother never turns her back on her child.

Other participants received support for themselves and their child from the entire family unit or multiple family members. A Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 45, from Florida stated, “But all the members of the family, aunts and cousins, just accept him and love him as he is with the great love that he has for us all.” Some family members were instrumental in helping participants process their ambivalence toward accepting their child. The following two examples exemplify the crucial role that family members played in facilitating acceptance in the parental figure toward their child. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 53, from Florida described:

My family spoke with me a lot and they made me see how mistaken I was, and the great error I was committing because I was only valuing his sexual preference
and not the human values that my son has and the great love that [he] has for me and I for him.

A Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida described:

The family took the news better than I had [thought]... I remember that my father called me and told me that he was my son and that I had to love no matter the circumstance. I was very taken aback that he would say such a thing to me given that as I told you while I was growing up my father was always a womanizer. In that moment I realized that all of my fears about what the family was going to say were not real and I felt vey badly because a large part of the reaction to my son was based on what [I was] thinking about what everyone else was going to say.

**Maintaining family unity.** A few participants ($n = 8$) noted that they were motivated to accept their child in order to keep harmony in the family. A Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 52, from Kentucky stated, “The best thing you can do is understand where your child is coming from… and show that family comes before everything.” Similarly, Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida said, “Family is the most sacred thing that a person has and everything else is secondary.”

Other parental figures specifically linked their sense of identity as Latinas/os to their values of family and parenthood. For example, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida, shared, “Being Latino I believe that gave me a good foundation about love and family, about parenthood, that have given me the acceptance that I need to love my son now and always.”

Other participants specifically wrote about accepting their child in order to set an example for their other children and to keep the family unit intact and free of prejudice.
An internal sense of responsibility, or knowing that they were responsible for fostering a welcoming environment within their family unit might have helped these parents accept their child. For instance, a Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 51, from Puerto Rico, shared:

In my home there was always a message of unity. [My wife and children] were taught to be conscious that if they do good, you will receive good in return… I have never hidden from my younger children that their older brother is gay. Believe me that this is going to generate an environment free of prejudice towards other human beings no matter who they are. Sometimes I ask myself if I am normal or if I am doing things wrong. But believe me that my home is a home of fraternal love, love shared by us all. Remember that we raise children and we instill values into them so that they will be good people not perfect people.

Another Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man, transgender man, and gender fluid child), 51, from Puerto Rico, shared:

I have brought up my children in what we like to call "the village system" we have very open communication about everything and our core values are humanist and inclusive so being gay was never an issue in our household. [They] grew up without the need for a closet so we respected [their] process … until [they were] ready to communicate [their] sexual identity.

**Interactions with LGBTQ people.** Two parental figures recalled previous interactions with LGBTQ people and discussed how these interactions helped them have a positive view of their child after their disclosure of their sexual and/or gender identity.
For example, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man and lesbian), 53, from Puerto Rico stated:

When I was 38 I began to study nursing and the only person that afforded me friendship was a 50-year-old man who was gay, he became my best friend and he taught me that by being gay he did not stop being a decent person and productive in society. I received an extraordinary [transformation] by means of him regarding this topic, and I still maintain his friendship.

A Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 56, from Florida wrote, “As a teenager I had many friends some were gay and never did I feel or see them any different from myself, they were my friends period.”

Resisting and embracing Latina/o gender norms. Most parental figures ($n = 19$) discussed either having to endorse or reject, or both, preconceived notions and beliefs about gender norms within the context of Latina/o culture in order to accept their child. Specifically, participants disclosed endorsing characteristics of *caballerismo* and *marianismo*.

*Caballerismo.* Many fathers ($n = 6$) discussed the importance of loyalty and family and emotional connections as their main motivation for accepting their child’s sexual and gender identity, rejecting traditional dominant narratives of Latino hypermasculinity. For example, a Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 40, from Puerto Rico stated:

I gave him a kiss and a hug, I expressed to him that I loved him, that I respected his sexuality and that he could count on us. The love that I have for my son is
much more important than sexual orientation or the comments that may be said about him.

Other fathers acknowledged and showed pride in being the one parent who showed immediate support and acceptance toward their child. Some father figures specifically endorsed and provided examples of less restrictive characteristics of what it means to be a male in the Latina/o culture as the main vehicle toward accepting their child. For instance, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida said, “Being Latino I believe that gave me a good foundation about love and family, about parenthood, that have given me the acceptance that I need to love my son now and always.” Furthermore, some participants rejected the traditional narratives of machismo in Latina/o culture and instead cited other Latina/o cultural values that allowed them to accept their child. That is, whereas machismo posits that men avoid and move away from all things that are “homosexual”, these parents rejected this notion and moved towards understanding what is to be a sexual and gender minority. A Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida, highlighted this concept:

You may think that because I am Latino I could be Machista, but thanks to God I am not like that, neither my family, my parents were always flexible, and a little bit ahead of their time, they always put family first and they taught me to love and accept people the way they are.

Marianismo. Most mothers and maternal figures (n = 13) discussed the importance of devotion to family, including their child, selflessness, and the self-sacrificing expectations of Latina women as a crucial component of their journey toward acceptance. For example, a Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 65, from Florida said:
After a few weeks passed and I thought about it more, I said that, as a mom, if I didn’t accept him, who would? Especially considering that other people in the family took it really bad. I was also raised (to believe) that as a mother it’s not important how your kids are, we have to support them and if my daughter was like that, well, I would have to support her as well. So, although it made me really sad, I had to put my emotions to the side and support him since you never know what he’s going through.

Other participants cited their unconditional love as a mother or maternal figure as the most important reason for acceptance. The following example from a Puerto Rican mother (of a lesbian), 38, from Puerto Rico highlights how unconditional love was the strongest reason and motivation for accepting one child’s sexual and gender identity:

I always say that the love of a mother is unexplainable. We want all that’s good for our children and I believe that if my daughter had the type of trust to tell me that she’s a lesbian it’s because I’ve earned her trust.

Similarly, a Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida said, “Right now, what I can tell you is that the love of a mother has no limits and that’s why I support [him].”

Many mothers and maternal figures sacrificed their own views and relationships with others, regardless of potential consequences. For instance, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 52, from Florida stated that, “As mothers in the end we need to sacrifice ourselves for our children…, we have to keep our families united.” Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 48, from Florida talked about sacrificing her own marriage in order to prioritize her role as a mother and accept her son:
I was always clear that my marriage would vanish but it did not matter whatever I had to go through nor what I had to face for my child… and always supported and protected [him], always instilling the best values.

Other mothers and maternal figures wrote about their children’s happiness as one of their main reasons for acceptance, and as their duty as women. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a lesbian), 51, from Florida stated:

And the most important thing to a mother is to have her children, healthy, safe and happy… As I, who gave her life, I am going to ask her to follow her happiness. In the end we the parents go first so I choose to see my daughter happy at my side and see her every chance I can and support her in her decisions. And one day to be at her wedding and to raise my grandchildren as they come. Because the most important thing of all is that she is my daughter, and she always will be. As she is I love her, I adore her and I support her.

Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 50, from Florida noted that her son’s happiness was her priority in her life, “He was my son and I would face anyone or anything for him. I reassured him that I would never stop loving him and I would always be there for him, I wanted him to be happy.”

**Cultural dissonance.** Some parental figures \((n = 11)\) revealed a sense of discomfort and disharmony as result their culture’s negative messages about sexual and/or gender minorities and their personal feelings of love and acceptance toward their child. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 60, from Florida shared:

I was born in Cuba and I was raised with the machista concept that women are for men, that sexual tendency is very criticized, judged, and in general those people
are isolated because of their sexual tastes. When my son spoke about his preferences I felt very bad, very unnoticed, very conflicted given that where I lived that was not understood.

Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 52, from Florida wrote:

Our culture could be described in one word it is ‘machista’… gay people in our country are a target for taunting and they see them as if they were the worst of the world… [LGBTQ] are rejected by Cuban society; because from when we are born they tell us that what is normal is a man and a woman, or rather, that gays are not normal people in society… having a homosexual son is the worst that can happen.

Similarly, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida disclosed having to reject derogatory language used in his culture to refer to gay people:

It is very common in Cuban culture in which there is a lot of machismo to think that homosexual people are different and a lot of people call them faggots… it is the word that many Cubans use to refer to a man who likes other men.

**Immigration and the American dream.** A few parents \( n = 5 \) drew their reasons for immigrating to the United States as a motivator to accept their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. Specifically, these parental figures discussed coming to the United States to provide their child a better future and not wanting to deviate from this vision upon learning their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida stated, “My mother always told me that she brought me to this country to have better opportunities and seeing that my [son] is educated and a professional, well, I feel like I have to support [him].”

Similarly, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida shared
I have two children and my children [were] 10 and 13 when my wife and I came to the United States in order to give my children a better life because the economic problems in Cuba were very bad… and… my wife and I always thought that my oldest son was a bit effeminate…

Two other parental figures discussed immigrating to the United States at the cost of being away from the family unit to provide their child a better future and to protect them from what they perceived to be a negative environment for LGBTQ people. For instance, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 52, from Florida wrote:

Even though his grandparents (my parents) suffered a lot when we left the country they always supported me and told me that I had to do what was best for my son. The truth is that many times I considered not coming to this country but my mother told me that she supported me and that she would have done the same for me. This made me happy and sad at once because we weren’t going to see each other anymore but happiness at knowing that I could talk to my mother about how I felt about the situation and knowing that she supported me and my son. I can tell you that I can communicate to any mother that it was worth it to leave my country and leave behind that machista society so they did not reject my son, which is the most special thing I carry with me. The truth is that I let many tears fall but out of happiness given that I could see that my sacrifice of leaving my country and moving away from my family was not in vain.

Similarly, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 48, from Florida shared:

After a few years I received [the invitation] from my mother, who had been in the United States more than 20 years, [to come to the US]. Finally came time to
reconnect with her and to have someone who would support and help me to face all adversities. I felt content and completely happy because I had the satisfaction of being able to give my children a better education and better future, especially my gay son, since then I knew with certainty, because then I knew it for sure since I had the greatest, his confession.

**How Do Parental Figures Navigate Acceptance?**

The process analysis included the following themes and subthemes: (a) noticing and attempting to change gender atypical behaviors and/or presentation; (b) initial reactions (negative reactions, immediate acceptance); (c) adjusting to the child’s LGBTQ identity; (d) seeking out resources about LGBTQ identity; (e) increasing awareness of LGBTQ oppression; (f) religion and spirituality (re-framing religious and/or spiritual values and beliefs, working through religious and/or spiritual conflict); (g) coping and re-framing *machismo*; (h) balancing family dynamics; (i) highlighting the positive identities in one’s child; (j) learning lessons from one’s child; and (k) benefitting from acceptance. See table 3.2 for a summary of themes and number of participants.

**Noticing and attempting to change gender atypical behaviors and/or presentation.** As part of their acceptance process, a few participants (*n* = 7) reflected on their child’s gender atypical behaviors and gender expression that they attributed to their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. This reflection was usually disclosed in parts of the letter where participants discussed early suspicions of their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida stated, “I have known since adolescence … and it took me some time to accept the situation although I knew that something was different about her because she was
never very feminine.” Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 53, from Florida recalled, “My son ever since he was born had effeminate tendencies.” Similarly, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 55, from Florida shared,

> My mother, my mother-in-law and my oldest son constantly worried about the way my son acted and they attempted to get me to do something about it… When my son was four years old the teacher of the young children’s group spoke with me about my son’s effeminate behavior.

A Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 45, from Florida disclosed, “From an early age we all saw that he was a naughty boy that didn’t tire from doing bad things. Even so, his mannerisms were very effeminate and not appropriate for a boy.”

A few parental figures ($n = 4$) cited specific attempts to change their child’s gender atypical behavior, mostly by seeking professional help, thinking at the time this would help “fix” their child. These participants described these early behaviors in their process of acceptance. For instance, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 55, from Florida wrote:

> I decided to look for medical help and I took him to one of the best pediatric hospitals in La Havana. A doctor of psychiatry there treated him and said that I should try to distance myself from him so that he wouldn’t act that way and try to be as normal around everyone as possible, but that if he was going to be gay, there wasn’t any way to avoid it. I did just that.

Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 52, from Florida stated, “When he was 5, the psychologist suggested that I put him in men’s sports or in karate and that he should always be with his dad with the male figure.” Similarly, a Cuban-American father
(of a gay man), 50, from Florida discussed engaging in gender-typical activities in order to change the child’s atypical behaviors, “These thoughts forced me to want my son to do masculine activities like play ball.”

**Initial reactions.** Some parental figures \( n = 15 \) described their initial reactions to their child’s disclosure of their sexual and/or gender identity. Reactions ranged from initial rejection to immediate acceptance, with one parental figure taking a neutral stance in order to take more time to process and express their feelings. Common negative reactions included feelings of shock, sadness, stress, disbelief, and symptoms of physical illness. Some parental figures asked their child to leave the home while others were concerned about the perception of those around them. Also, other parental figures expressed feelings of relief, while one participant reported staying silent after the disclosure. Some differences in parental figures’ initial reactions depended on the gender of the child. In this sample, fathers were more likely than maternal figures to blame themselves for their son’s non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity and mothers were more likely than father’s to blame themselves for their daughter’s non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity.

**Negative reactions.** Some participants \( n = 11 \) expressed negative initial reactions upon learning about their child’s sexual and gender identity. For example, a Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 65, from Florida, shared, “When my nephew first told me that he was homosexual, to tell the truth, I took it pretty hard and cried a lot.” Similarly, a Cuban-American mother (of a lesbian), 56, from Florida, stated, “I still remember the day that I confirmed that my youngest daughter was gay. I had just finished teaching and I opened an email that she sent me. It was a mix of sadness, anger,
uncertainty and, overall, impotence.” A Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida wrote:

In 2015, just before Mother’s Day, [he] spoke with me about changing and becoming a man. For me, this was much more difficult than when she told me she was a lesbian. When I confirmed it, already having had the suspicion because she’d been dressing this way for a while, I became depressed, I wasn’t able to eat, I didn’t want to see anyone, I couldn’t go out, and I couldn’t even go to church, which I attend every week. I just wanted to be alone, sleep as though it was all a dream, considering that I would cry when I was awake.

A Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 53, from Florida shared how her negative reactions led her to expel her son from her house:

When my son spoke about his preferences I felt very bad, very unnoticed, very conflicted given that where I lived that was not understood, in fact I rejected him and even came to kick him out of my house (for a short time).

Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 58, from Florida wrote:

I started crying because I was nervous myself. As I started to read the letter, there were 3 words that would change our lives and our relationship forever. It said; "I am Gay"! You can not imagine the disbelief, Gay? How can you be Gay? I fell to the floor crying. This was the most horrible thing he could have told me. The worst moment of my life. Impossible to understand or accept… I wept, he wept… I was in shock. After a few hours I left (devastated) and went home. I nearly fell on the floor as I walked into my house.
Immediate acceptance. A few parents ($n = 3$) said that they accepted their child from the first moment they disclosed their sexual and/or gender identity. The following quotes highlight parental figures’ immediate understanding, relief, and verbal and physical acts of acceptance immediately after disclosure by the child. For instance, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 50, from Puerto Rico wrote:

The day that my son told us perhaps the biggest secret that he had and the big weight that he carried on his shoulders, I was recuperating from an operation… But everything went well, we listened to him and respected the moment, of course! Because what’s most important to me is the love I feel for my children.

Another Puerto Rican father (of a lesbian), 62, from Florida shared feeling relief from his daughter’s disclosure:

The day that my wife confirmed that one of my daughters was gay was a relief. It was like receiving bad news that I had been silently waiting to hear for a long time because I didn’t know how my wife would take it.

Similarly, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 56, from Puerto Rico wrote:

His greatest fear [was that] he had disappointed me, that would I stop loving him because of who he was. My God, I wouldn't change him for any other person in this world. He was my son and I would face anyone or anything for him. As I reassured him that I would never stop loving him and I would always be there for him, I wanted him to be happy. I wanted him to love and feel love and to me it didn't matter if it was a man or a woman. I did tell him I needed to know who was in his life when that time came. I told him his happiness was my happiness.
Adjusting to the child’s LGBTQ identity. Some parental figures \((n = 14)\) experienced a period of adjustment to their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. These parents provided detailed information about how their feelings, emotions, and interactions with their child evolved over time and how they arrived at acceptance. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 53, from Florida wrote, “During the time when I rejected him I did not live, it was a time of much suffering for me, because I adore my two children. I accepted my son and that was the best thing I’ve done.”

Some parents showed that their attitudes and behaviors changed from seeking professional help to change their child’s sexual and/or gender identity to realizing that supporting their child was the most important thing. A Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 54, from Florida stated:

Since the beginning it was not easy to accept him. We even took him to a psychologist because we thought that at the time it was a sickness. Never get hung up and always put your children above everyone else and teach them to live in society. Give them a lot of support as a father, not looking at but accepting their sexual inclination…Today I feel proud for understanding him, even being a man at that time I accepted him better than his mother did because he had the honesty to tell us about his sexual inclination.

Similarly, other parents processed feelings of prejudice and self-blame in order to arrive at acceptance. For instance, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 53, and lesbian from Puerto Rico stated:

My heart did not accept having another gay child, I only thought that I had done something wrong in order for them both to be gay. Clearly I was saying that I was
not prejudiced but apparently my heart, my subconscious still would not accept it… If some other parent reads my letter and is going through a similar situation, support your children, they are valuable people, and it is not a question of tolerating, it is a question of loving, of supporting, of looking after, of protecting. Some parents saw the passage of time as an important element in their process toward acceptance. A Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida stated, “It took me almost a year to be able to talk with my son face to face about his preferences.” Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 58, from Florida shared:

We continued to try to rebuild our relationship through the years and I tried to understand my son. Lucky I have evolved and learned a great deal. I accepted it a little more every day… After a few more years, my son had a new relationship, I met his partner as soon as I found out about him… I was having a relationship with my son and his partner and believe it or not, I was enjoying it and was happy…

Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 50, from Florida shared:

I later began to accept it because I could not change things thinking it was a temporary phase in his life. At the end I realized that he was my son and that I loved him dearly. I had to learn to accept it. I had to show him that no matter what his choice was I still loved him and accepted his choice.

Seeking out resources about LGBTQ identity. A few parental figures ($n = 3$) sought out resources, including literature and other educational sources and community connections to learn more and accept their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. For example, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man and a lesbian), 53, from Puerto Rico
shared, “I dedicated myself to reading about this topic.” Similarly, a Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 57, from New York stated, “I continued to read and to teach about diversity, multiculturalism and prejudice. This exposed [me] to ideas from the seminal thinkers in the field.” In addition, one participant contacted the local PFLAG group for support and further information about her child’s sexual and gender identity, and eventually became an active member. This participant, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man, transgender man, and gender fluid child), 51, from Puerto Rico, shared:

That's where PFLAG came into play. The information they provided us with was key in achieving the acceptance and love we all deserve from our family members regardless of our sexual orientation or identity… I became involved with PFLAG when my oldest child came out to me as a gay in 10th grade while attending an all boys Catholic school.

**Increasing awareness of LGBTQ oppression.** Some participants \( n = 11 \) became aware of systemic oppression toward LGBTQ people, both within mainstream and Latina/o culture, after their child’s disclosure. As a result, they had to work through mixed feelings (e.g., fear, anxiety) about their child. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 60, from Florida wrote:

I instantaneously only thought about what the world would have destined for him because of his sexual preference (and pardon me if this is not the correct term), but this does not make us different, it does not make us better or worse people. This was always clear to me, because in my childhood and adolescence I studied in an arts school and lived daily with boys and girls that revealed themselves as gay in many ways and for many cultural reasons, full up with social prejudices,
they are to a certain point an object of taunting and discrimination, and I saw how many of them defended themselves and used their artistic talents to gain respect as people and human beings. This experience I believe was very useful when the time came to accept my son when he revealed the subject [of the present letter] to me.

A Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 60, from Puerto Rico acknowledged the struggle her son would face as an LGBTQ person as a result of systemic oppression, “He was facing a world people reject the LGBTQQ, people refusing to see one another as people and nothing else, forgetting race, color, religion, sexual orientation.” Similarly, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida shared:

I know that he is only 16 years old, and sadly in our society there are many places where being LGBTQ is not well accepted and I worry about him, having to suffer discrimination at some point in his life, I really hope it does not happen.

Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 50, from Florida stated, “Later became worried of how society, family, and friends would treat him. Did not want to see him hurt. Did not want people to treat him differently or reject him.” Other participants specifically expressed concern with the oppressive nature of their culture toward LGBTQ people and encouraged other parents to become agents of change within their culture. A Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 52, from Florida suggested:

Given that our cultures in general are very machista and having a homosexual son is the worst that can happen it is our job to change these prejudices and teach our children to be themselves and accept themselves regardless of those views. And in whatever way we can, shape the perceptions of those that are close to us so that
little by little we can spread the love and acceptance we all deserve as individuals and human beings.

**Religion and spirituality.** Some participants \((n = 13)\) credited their religious and/or spiritual beliefs as a source of support and/or conflict in accepting their child with multiple participants discussing both aspects of support and conflict at different stages of their acceptance journey. Specifically, participants discussed reframing religious and/or spiritual beliefs, values, and negative messages from religious leaders as a crucial task that facilitated their acceptance of their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. Some participants disclosed that religious values and beliefs were a source of conflict they had to work through.

**Reframing religious and/or spiritual values and beliefs.** A few participants \((n = 7)\) re-interpreted religious and spiritual messages in a positive manner in order to accept their child. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida used religious teachings to find acceptance toward her son, “The Bible teaches us to love the prodigal and not judge and I can’t think of anyone to love unconditionally more than [my son].” Similarly, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 50, from Puerto Rico said, “In terms of religion, all I can say is that God is love and loves us all equally.”

Rather than viewing their child’s sexual and gender identity as deviating from a higher power’s original plan or creation, other parents wrote about their child as exactly the person their higher power created. For example, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man and a lesbian), 53, from Puerto Rico stated, “My children are the gift that God gave me.” Another Cuban-American father (of a lesbian and transgender man), 76, from Florida said, “We should love our children just as God sent them to us.” Similarly, a Puerto
Rican mother (of a lesbian), 38, from Puerto Rico shared, “I think that God gives special children to special parents and I was one of those special mothers.”

In addition, a Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 40, from Puerto Rico wrote about his son as a gift from a higher power, “The first thing I thought of was the marvelous son that God had given us, a loveable child, a talented young man…”

**Working through religious and/or spiritual conflict.** A few participants ($n = 8$) disclosed that religious values and beliefs were a source of conflict they had to grapple with to accept their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. For example, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man and lesbian), 53, from Puerto Rico wrote, “I remind you all [that I am] from a Christian family, where they say that that is a ‘sin’ and being that they were both gay, this was not acceptable.” Also, the following examples highlight how parents and parental figures had to reconcile religious values they were taught. A Puerto Rican mother (of a lesbian), 56, from Florida disclosed having to navigate and reconcile religious values she was taught, “Although I’m not religious and wasn’t at the time, I come from a family in which religion was the most important thing and homosexuality was a mortal sin.” Similarly, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 56, from Puerto Rico said:

I am a 56 year old Puerto Rican woman with strong Christian beliefs, growing up in a household where being Gay was never spoken of or seen in public. I was taught that a man and a woman would fall in love get married have children and form a family, I never saw it any other way.
Other parental figures described how religious teachings contributed to their heterosexist views and reactions to their child’s sexual and gender identity. A Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 57, from New York explained:

I [want] to share my experience in coming to terms with my own heterosexism born out of the messages I received from my parents and the Catholic church. These experiences formed the foundation for my reaction to discovering that my son is gay.

**Coping and reframing machismo:** Some participants ($n = 12$), discussed having to cope with, challenge, and/or reject machista attitudes from family and community members and/or acknowledge systemic machismo within their cultural context as they came to accept their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. For example, a Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 45, from Florida explained how her brother still refuses to acknowledge his son’s sexual orientation as a result of a strong sense of machismo, “But as with any story, his father, my brother, doesn’t know or pretends not to, due to his machismo and has been very distant and cruel.”

Other participants discussed having to reframe cultural messages of what it means to be a Latino male in order to accept their child. A Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 57, from New York stated:

Although I was inculcated the traditional gender roles defined by machismo… I could not reconcile the inconsistencies that I saw in my everyday life. If a "macho" were so strong and resilient why couldn't he cook for himself and do his own laundry. Why'd he need a woman for these things?
Some parental figures acknowledged the need to reject their culture’s views of *machismo* in order to accept their child and fight for their child’s equality. For instance, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man and a lesbian), 53, from Puerto Rico stated, “Puerto Rican and Cuban culture are [machista] cultures, we have to break with this so that society follows the [good] example and we can live in a world of equality.” In addition, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 48, from Florida said:

I always knew what I had to face in such a *machista* society such as the one that exists in Cuba… but it did not matter whatever I had to go through nor what I had to face for my child to be happy and always feel supported and protected…

**Balancing family dynamics.** As discussed above, most participants identified family members as a direct source of support or conflict (i.e., content). However, some \((n = 11)\) had to balance family dynamics or family members’ different opinions about LGBTQ people and issues. These parents struggled to acknowledge and honor the varying views about sexual and gender identity of the family while working through their own acceptance process. For example, a Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 65, from Florida attempted to normalize the different views of family members while still showing support for her nephew:

I don’t want to say anything bad about my family considering that we all have our way of thinking and many accepted him as time went on and it’s normal that some people don’t accept him. It’s also something really difficult to accept and that’s normal.

Another Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida was fearful of the family’s reaction and the possible consequences of disclosing her son’s
gender identity, “I decided to speak with my mom and my sister. I was afraid to hear their reactions because I didn’t want to lose my family because of this situation.” In addition, other participants disclosed their process leading up to their decision to disclose their child’s sexual and/or gender identity to other family members. For example, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 61, from Florida shared:

Upon seeing that my son never changed his behavior, well I felt very badly as a father because I thought that my wife and my family were going to think that my son wasn’t masculine and that it was my fault.

Similarly, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 60, from Florida wrote:

I am not saying that it was easy, I also thought of his brother, of how this could the very solid relationship that exists between them, (that God’s grace has maintained and it remains excellent), of how his relationships with other families and friends were going to be, and I gave him my blessing and I continued to give him all of my love and he deserves my respect.

Some other participants acknowledged that although some family members had made progress toward their own process of acceptance, they continued to struggle to balance keeping family harmony while continuing to show support for their child. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 58, from Florida wrote:

I have a stubborn husband who after all these years continues to struggle with the fact that our son is gay. He has made some improvements though. Our son is able to come over to our house with his boyfriend. He doesn't engage them in conversation… but he tries to be more open-minded. I still have hopes that he'll open up even more even if it takes another 20yrs.
Another Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida shared that there has varying levels of acceptance within the family and the emotional toll, on him and his child, associated with having to navigate these differing views:

My closest relatives (Mother, Brother, Nephews, Sister in law) they have all been accepting with him, they love him very much, but there is a big part of my family that is very religious, they visit the Pentecostal Church and with them is a different story... Other difficult experience was when my son decided to start telling the rest of the family... the hardest part is the emotions, every time he decide to come out to somebody there are tears.

A Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 50, from Florida said she was still figuring out how to move forward with disclosing her child’s sexual and/or gender identity to the members of the family while keeping in mind that her child comes first:

Since he has been at a distance for school and work I did not have to face the need to disclose the information to his grandmother or other family/friends. When the time comes I will disclose it and support him. Friends and family would have to accept it or no longer be part of my life. My son comes before anyone else.

Highlighted the positive identities in one’s child. Many parental figures (n = 17) talked about their child as a person with many positive qualities. For these parents, part of their acceptance process included realizing that their child’s sexual and/or gender identity is only a part of who they are. The following quotes highlight how these parents realized that their child’s humanity, achievements, and accomplishments were more important than their newly revealed (or confirmed) sexual and/or gender identity. For example, a Puerto Rican father (of a lesbian), 62, from Florida wrote:
My daughter is gay, but she’s also a good daughter that hasn’t given me any problems. She’s a professional and is always listening to her parents and what I like most about her is that she always consults me when she’s going to make important decisions. I feel very proud of my daughter and I feel very happy having been at her wedding.

Similarly, a Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 45, from Florida wrote:

It’s his life, his sexual decision, he’s a good person, perseverant and tenacious, with much more integrity than other people and a lot of love for those who are around him. I feel proud to be his aunt and I would never reject him or anyone for their sexual orientation.

Another Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 48, from Florida wrote:

He is a wonderful human being that is truly a loving person. We have always accepted his beliefs and his way of living. He currently is married and has a child with his partner. They are truly amazing parents.

A Puerto Rican mother (of a lesbian), 38, from Puerto Rico wrote:

I love my daughter and she’s a very loving, affectionate woman who worries about what I think, she worries if I’m sick, if I’m sad. She even tells me that she loves me every day. When she’s not at home, she texts me to say she misses me. She has so many beautiful things in her heart.

Some other participants shared realizing that their child’s disclosure did not change anything about who they are as a person and did not change their views about their child. For instance, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida wrote:
I am very proud of my son, [being] gay does not change anything in his life, only his choice of a partner, he is exactly the same person I saw being born. He is an excellent student, mature, respectful, and I love him with all my heart.

Another Cuban-American mother (of a lesbian), 51, from Florida wrote:

Her sexual preference did not change the woman that I raised but only provided different paths and she is not doing anything illegal, she does not do wrong and does not use nor sell drugs. She is on a good path. Basically she is a good person and wants to do well.

A few other parents specifically cited their child’s scholastic success as a source of pride.

A Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida stated, “[He’s] always been very studious and has a Master’s degree and a good job and she takes care of herself… seeing that my daughter is educated and a professional, well, I feel like I have to support her.” Similarly, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man and lesbian), 53, from Puerto Rico shared:

Today she is a young college student and has a part-time job and her preferences have not affected at all the marvelous human being that she is… I am very proud of both of them, my son is in his fourth year of university and works as a tutor at the same university, he is a stable and successful man.

**Learning lessons from one’s child.** A few parents ($n = 7$) learned lessons from their child about acceptance and compassion for others, especially toward the LGBTQ community, and these lessons impacted their journey toward acceptance. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a lesbian), 51, from Florida wrote:
I learned [the] hard way that happiness at this age is in the power to smile sincerely, to be happy in one’s heart and to do good without worrying who’s watching. That woman that told me her painful truth is my daughter after all, I gave her life I raised her to do good and her tastes were different. That is what I learned she had different tastes but she has a good heart, she brings happiness to everyone, she loves sincerely, she helps you unconditionally, she always supports you and would give her life for her family.

Another Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida discussed not only learning to accept his son but also other sexual minorities:

Today I do not let anyone say anything about my son [nor] about any homosexual or gay person. I no longer live with any expectation of what others are going to say. I learned that I have to love my son today and always.

In addition, other participants wrote that learning from their child is a continuous, life-long process. For instance, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 50, from Florida stated, “I tell my son that I love him more than my life and I’m thankful that teaches me daily how to grow and be a better human being. Similarly, a Puerto Rican mother (of a lesbian), 56, from Florida shared:

This is a long process, with highs and lows; with adjustments, full of emotions, but overall it’s a process of introspection. I learned what unconditional love really is. This revelation made me stronger and more human, I feel more decent, more human, a better mother. My daughter is my daughter. Being gay doesn’t change that.
Benefitting from acceptance. Most parental figures \((n = 17)\) talked about their current relationship with their child and the relational benefits of acceptance. Many participants specifically discussed a more positive interpersonal relationship and stronger family cohesion as a result of accepting their child’s sexual and gender identity. For example, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 50, from Puerto Rico wrote:

Nowadays I am in good communication with my son. There may be things that he doesn’t tell me but I know that he’s happy and relaxed. He still doesn’t have a partner, but when he does, I know that he’ll become another son to me.

Another a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 53, from Florida stated, “Today I support him in everything, we live me, my husband (who is not his father but also supports him as I do) and him with his partner, and all four of us mutually help one another.” Another Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 54, from Florida shared, “Today I feel proud for understanding him, even being a man at that time I accepted him better than his mother did because he had the honesty to tell us about his sexual inclination….”. In addition, a Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida discussed his experience of going from rejection to current unconditional love and acceptance, “We both suffered a lot that year we were not speaking. I love my son and I will always love him, no matter what others say.”

Some parental figures referred to specific life events they have enjoyed as a result of their current relationship and acceptance of their child. A Cuban-American mother (of a lesbian), 56, from Florida stated:

Just over a year ago, we attended my daughter’s wedding. Just like any proud mother, I walked by her side and (she) received my blessing. After this whole
process, my family is not like it was before, but stronger because the ties that bind us are stronger than others’ opinions. Our ties aren’t based solely upon acceptance, but rather on the celebration of who we are. Another Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida disclosed currently having a genuine and open relationship with his child as a direct result of his acceptance process:

I like to communicate as much as possible with him, I like to talk to him about sexual experiences, about using protection, I also tell him that I want to be part of his life experiences, that when he decide to have a partner I want to be introduced to his partner. In general that my door is always open for him.

Similarly, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 55, from Florida stated, “He’s the best son in the world and says that I’m the companion in his adventures.” Another Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 65, from Florida shared, “He knows that he can talk to me whenever he wants to. I also love his partner a lot, they’re both very decent and educated people.”

Impact of Writing Intervention

All participants completed the PFI scale before and after writing the letter about their journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child. Twenty-four participants provided a response to the open-ended question about feelings associated with writing the letter about their journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child.

Group differences. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test group differences (Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans) in their feelings toward their child (see Table 3.3). There were significant differences in happiness and anger in both the pretest and posttest
subscales scores on the PFI, with Cuban-Americans being happier and less angry than the Puerto Ricans (Happiness: pretest: $F(1,28) = 7.22, p < .012$; posttest: $F(1,28) = 4.12, p < .052$; Anger: pretest: $F(1,28) = 8.04, p < .008$; posttest: $F(1,28) = 10.80, p < .003$).

However, there were no significant group differences in either pretest or posttest of the Anxiety/Sadness subscale (pretest: $F(1,28) = 3.78, p < .062$; posttest: $F(1,28) = 1.62, p < .213$).

**Pretest and posttest differences.** Paired $t$ tests were performed to examine the effect of the writing intervention on parents’ feelings of happiness, anxiety/sadness, and anger across time. For the Cuban-American sample, parental figures were significantly happier ($t = -2.42, p < .026$) and less anxious and sad ($t = 4.25, p < .000$) after they wrote their acceptance narrative (see Table 3.4). Anger decreased (pretest: $M = 2.04$; posttest: $M = 1.84$), however this was not statistically significant ($t = 1.49, p < .153$). For the Puerto Rican sample, although happiness increased (pretest: $M = 6.29$; posttest: $M = 6.42$) and anxiety decreased (pretest: $M = 1.54$; posttest: $M = 1.37$) after they wrote their acceptance narrative, these were not statistically significant (see Table 3.5). There was not enough variance in the anger score for a statistical analysis to be performed with the Puerto Rican sample. That is, all Puerto Rican participants’ feelings of anger did not change between the pretest and posttest (i.e., pretest: $M = 1.00$; posttest: $M = 1.00$).

**Qualitative analysis of the impact of the writing intervention.** Participant responses ($n = 24$) to an open-ended prompt were analyzed to further understand how the writing exercise affected emotions. Responses were analyzed for content. Similar to the approach used to analyze the research question about cultural strengths and challenges that parental figures experienced, the content of the narrative was subjected to a
systematic qualitative analysis procedure (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach involved highlighting words and/or sentences from the text that appear to capture specific concepts about the research question at hand, label codes that emerge, sort codes into categories, and group codes into meaningful clusters before arriving at final definitions for categories and subcategories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Patton, 2002). The responses ranged from two words to two sentences with most responses approximately one sentence in length. Findings indicated that participants experienced: (a) mixed feelings; (b) happiness, pride and peace; and (c) satisfaction and relief.

**Mixed feelings.** Some parental figures \((n = 11)\) expressed multiple feelings as a result of writing their narrative. Some of these feelings included happiness, love, sadness, relaxation, and anxiety. For example, a Cuban-American mother (of a transgender man), 61, from Florida wrote:

> Writing this letter brought a lot of sad feelings and I experience a little bit of anxiety. But I liked thinking in the process that my daughter, now a son is going through and think regarding what I have gone through as a mother. In this moment I feel relaxed and ready to continue to support my [son].

A Puerto Rican mother (of a lesbian), 38, from Puerto Rico wrote:

> My feeling is of a little bit of sadness because in that moment I thought of what it would have been of my daughter if I would have not accepted her and how it would have affected her. I thought of the sadness of each person who is not accepted by his or her parents or society… But I also feel happy to be able to express my love toward her in this moment and through words, and I hope other people understand how important our LGBT children are.
A Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 44, from Florida stated, “I felt a bit of anxiety having to experience the whole journey again, but at the same time affirmation of my feelings of love and acceptance towards my son.” Similarly, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 50, from Florida shared, “[I] felt hurt but at the same time felt comfortable with the journey. I currently feel at peace.”

Other parents found it useful to be able to re-experience these mixed feelings as they wrote their narratives. For example, a Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 57, from New York stated:

It was useful to recreate my process for coming to terms with my son, how it was influenced by my family and how I grew up. I was still saddened that some in my family could not accept him and fearful that it is still a homophobic world. I am happy that we do have an open relationship.

Another Cuban-American father (of a gay man), 50, from Florida expressed feelings of nostalgia, sadness, and happiness as he reflected on his behavior toward their child:

I felt a little nostalgic of remembering a sad story about my behavior toward my son, but I am also thankful for the opportunity to tell my story. I only hope it helps another father who might find himself in the same situation I found myself in when my son told me he was a homosexual. I feel happy to see that my son is a happy person.

**Happiness, pride, and peace.** Other participants \((n = 10)\) expressed only positive feelings as a result of reflecting and writing about their process toward accepting their LGBTQ child. The following quotes highlight participants’ feelings of happiness, pride,
and peace. A Cuban-American aunt (of a gay man), 65, from Florida wrote, “I feel very happy of accepting him and that I was able to be by his side to support him.” Another Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 52, from Kentucky shared, “I feel very proud because I know that I have a good son… I know he is happy and being successful, and that is all a mother could ask for.” In addition, a Puerto Rican mother (of a gay man), 56, from Puerto Rico stated, “Seeing the courage my son endured as his family and express himself as who he is makes me proud. A proud [mom].” Furthermore, a Puerto Rican father (of a gay man), 40, from Puerto Rico wrote:

The feelings that I experienced during this process were of great peace, tranquility, and happiness, as I had the opportunity to participate in this study and express the love toward my son and my support. [I was able to] express to other parents how was my experience and to let them know to love their children and to support them. Our children need us to demonstrate to them that we will always love them, regardless of what they decide to do with their life.

**Satisfaction and Relief.** A few participants ($n = 3$) shared feelings of satisfaction and relief as a result of writing their narratives of acceptance. For instance, a Cuban-American mother (of a gay man), 58, from Florida stated, “Relief and content on how much I have learned, changed and accepted my son.” Also, a Puerto Rican mother (of a lesbian), 56, from Florida wrote, “Is always good to express emotions, is a catharsis. I feel satisfied and pleased.” Finally, a Puerto Rican father (of gay man), 51, form Puerto Rico shared, “I can say that [what] I previously shared came out of my heart!”
Table 3.1 Content Analysis of What Helped Parental Figures Accept Their Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and Subthemes</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining family unit</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with LGBTQ people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisting and embracing Latina/o gender norms</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Caballerismo</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Marianismo</em></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural dissonance</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and the American dream</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Process Analysis of How Parental Figures Navigated Acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and Subthemes</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noticing and attempting to change gender atypical behaviors and/or presentation.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial reactions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative reactions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate acceptance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting to the child’s LGBTQ identity</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking out resources about LGBTQ identity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing awareness of LGBTQ oppression</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion and spirituality</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reframing religious and/or spiritual values and beliefs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working through religious and/or spiritual conflict</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping and reframing <em>machismo</em></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing family dynamics</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlighting the positive identities in one’s child</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning lessons from one’s child</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefitting from acceptance</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 ANOVA Summary of Parental Feelings Pretest and Posttest Differences Between Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSB</td>
<td>SSW</td>
<td>SST</td>
<td>df1</td>
<td>df2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>SSB</td>
<td>SSW</td>
<td>SST</td>
<td>df1</td>
<td>df2</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety/Sadness</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>21.16</td>
<td>24.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>12.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.27</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>8.32</td>
<td>32.28</td>
<td>40.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>35.17</td>
<td>40.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40.34</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>26.44</td>
<td>34.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SSB = Sum of Squares Between Groups; SSW = Sum of Squares Within; SST = Sum of Squares Total
### Table 3.4 Descriptive Statistics and Paired t-test Results for Cuban-Americans Feelings Toward Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Pretest M</th>
<th>Pretest SD</th>
<th>Posttest M</th>
<th>Posttest SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>95% CI for Mean Difference</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety/Sadness</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.25, .73</td>
<td>4.25**</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-0.68, -0.05</td>
<td>-2.42*</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-0.08, .49</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05.  
** p < .01.

### Table 3.5 Descriptive Statistics and Paired t-test Results for Puerto Ricans Feelings Toward Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Pretest M</th>
<th>Pretest SD</th>
<th>Posttest M</th>
<th>Posttest SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>95% CI for Mean Difference</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety/Sadness</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-0.22, .54</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-0.29, .03</td>
<td>-1.84</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four: Discussion

This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the findings from this project. First, findings are linked to the general literature on parental acceptance from the parental figure’s perspective and Latina/o cultural values. Findings are contextualized and explicated using interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPART; Rohner, 1980, 1986, 2016) and family stress theory (Hills, 1949, 1971; McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). Second, I present the clinical implications for practitioners working with Latina/o parents who recently learned about their child’s LGBT identity. Finally, the strengths and limitations of the current project and future research directions are discussed.

Initial Reactions and Adjusting to a Child’s Sexual and Gender Identity

Half of the participants discussed intense emotional reactions (i.e., positive, negative) upon learning about their child’s sexual or gender identity. Whereas some parental figures experienced negative emotional reactions (e.g., shock, sadness, stress, disbelief), others immediately accepted their child and supported their LGBTQ identity. These findings are consistent with the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals after the child has disclosed their identity. For example, in the systematic literature review by Rosenkrantz and colleagues (under review), in 34 out of 41 studies parents discussed negative feelings (e.g., grief, loss, denial, guilt, and shock) or strong support and positive reactions after their child disclosed their sexual and gender identity.

After initial reactions and throughout the process of acceptance, participants engaged in a process of adjusting to their child’s sexual and gender identity, which eventually resulted in acceptance. Many participants provided details about different
behaviors they engaged in to better understand their child’s disclosure (e.g., reflecting on their child’s atypical behaviors or attempting to change the child’s behavior). It is important to note that even the parents who engaged in rather drastic measures (e.g., taking one’s child to a psychologist in order to be “fixed”), expressed the need to, at the time, do what they thought was best for their child. In other words, whether it was pushing their child to participate actively in sports stereotypical of a particular gender (e.g., karate or baseball for males) or taking their child to a psychiatrist, these parents genuinely believed that they were doing what was best for their child considering their sociocultural context and resources and information available to them at the time.

These findings are consistent with the general literature on parental acceptance from the perspective of the parent. Studies by Fields (2001), Hill and Menvielle (2009), Kuvalanka and colleagues (2014), and Wren (2002) found that parents lacked understanding of the difference between sexual and gender identity and how these concepts impacted their LGBT child. A similar pattern was observed among participants in this study. Participants often perceived gender atypical behaviors as a sign of non-heterosexual identity and made attempts to change such behaviors. Also, findings by Bernstein (1990), Bertoni and Franchi (2014), Goodrich (2009), Gray and colleagues (2015), Pearlman (2005), and Tyler (2015) found that part of parents’ adjustment to their child’s sexual and gender identity involved reconciling their own misconceptions about gender and sexuality. These studies provide an explanation as to why some participants in this study conflated gender, gender expression, and sexuality and how this lack of information impacted their acceptance narratives.
Consistent with IPART general assumption that parental figures show behaviors that are rejecting or accepting of their child, some parents in this study were rejecting of their child’s sexual and/or gender identity while others immediately accepted them. In addition, participants in this study discussed at great length their involvement as important attachment figures in their child’s life before and after disclosure of their non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity. Also, this theory emphasizes the importance of parental internal and external behaviors that convey acceptance or rejection toward the child. Participants in this study described specific behaviors they engaged in to better understand and/or change their child’s identity (external; e.g., taking their child to see a psychologist because of their sexual or gender identity) and their intense emotional reactions (internal; e.g., surprise, disbelief, shock) after the child’s disclosure and throughout the process of acceptance.

Family stress theory helps us understand how a child’s disclosure of LGBTQ identity is an event and a source of stress for parental figures. Whether parental figures in this study perceived this event to be negative (feelings of rejection, self-blame, and attempts to change the child) or positive (immediate acceptance), most recalled experiencing some level of distress.

It is important to acknowledge the role that heteronormativity played in the initial reactions of these parental figures. These parental figures considered their child’s LGBTQ identity to be an event, which speaks to society’s beliefs that heterosexual and/or cisgender identities is the norm and LGBTQ identity is something that parental figures grapple with and process. Systemic oppression toward LGBTQ identities allows parental figures to not experience discomfort or distress if their child identifies as heterosexual.
and/or cisgender. Furthermore, parents’ ability to cope and adapt to life stressors is an important component of family stress theory. The narratives of the participants in this study suggest that these parental figures were able to work actively toward altering their interpretation of the stressor (i.e., disclosure of their child’s LGBTQ identity) by taking concrete steps (e.g., seeking help for their child) to cope with the current stressor. As described earlier, although some of the actions taken by these parental figures might not have been positive, one may conclude that these parental figures were attempting to do what they believed was best to manage the perceived stress of having an LGBTQ child.

**Influence of Religion and Spirituality**

For some participants, their religious and/or spiritual beliefs and teachings acted as a source of support and/or conflict. Specifically, many of these participants had to work actively to reframe negative religious beliefs they were taught about LGBTQ people in order to adapt and cope with their child’s disclosure and, eventually, arrive at a place of acceptance. These findings are consistent with the literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. In the systematic literature review by Rosenkrantz and colleagues (under review), the researchers found that in 14 out of 41 studies parents discussed religion and spirituality as a source of support and challenge. For example, in the studies by Belsky and Diamond (2015), Bernstein (1990), and Freedman (2008), parents struggled to reconcile their love for their child with beliefs that LGBT identity is a sin or a choice.

Consistent with IPART’s sociocultural sub-theory, the process of acceptance for participants in this study was influenced by religious and spiritual beliefs to which they had been exposed within their Latina/o communities. Parental figures in this study
discussed how their religious and spiritual communities had a direct impact on their initial reactions and process toward acceptance. As discussed earlier in this paper, religion and spirituality is an important group value for Latinas/os. Therefore, participants’ struggles with religious values and teachings (especially Catholicism), illustrate the importance of ecological context and societal institutions that influence parental acceptance or rejection.

Family stress theory emphasis on social support as a key resource in accepting or rejecting one’s child, helps us understand how religion and spirituality are a source of stress and a resource, sometimes both, that allowed parental figures in this study to reframe how they viewed and regarded their personal relationship with their child. Also, the findings in this study support family stress theory’s tenet that stressors (the child’s disclosure in this study) have the potential of disrupting the parent-child relationship and the family unit as a whole.

**Awareness of Oppression and Exposure to LGBTQ People Facilitates Parental Acceptance**

In this study, some parental figures discussed how awareness of systemic oppression toward LGBTQ people, including *machista* attitudes within Latina/o culture, facilitated their process of acceptance. Some other participants shared how previous interactions with LGBTQ people also allowed them to accept more easily their child’s sexual and gender identity. These participants often wanted to provide a different and more positive experience to their child since they would have to endure oppression from society at large and within Latina/o culture. These findings are similar to the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. For example,
colleagues (2015), Horn and Wong (2016), Kane (2006), and Kuvalanka and colleagues
(2014), revealed that awareness of LGBTQ oppression helped parents be empathetic
toward their child.

On the other hand, these findings are different than the general literature about the
experiences of predominantly White parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. Participants
in this study were specifically concerned about their child’s safety and well-being as part
of the heterosexist society at large and also within their Latina/o communities. Similar
findings about parental figure’s concerns with their child’s safety within their own racial
and ethnic community were reported in two studies of racial and ethnic minorities (Hom,
1994; Lin & Hudley, 2009). Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that ethnic and racial
minority parents might have to cope with an extra layer of stress as they navigate their
process of acceptance.

IPART’s sociocultural sub-theory helps us understand how ecological contexts,
family structures, and communities influence parental acceptance and rejection. Previous
exposure to LGBTQ people and issues seemed to have played a crucial role in these
parental figures’ decision to accept their child’s sexual or gender identity. Because these
parents had witnessed oppression toward LGBTQ people within the larger mainstream
society and/or the Latina/o community, they made a conscious decision to embrace their
child’s identity.

Consistent with family stress theory’s emphasis on interpersonal knowledge as a
personal resource and focus on how families manage, cope, and adapt to stressors, some
participants in this study were able to use previous knowledge about and experiences
with LGBT oppression to cope and adapt to their child’s disclosure and/or accept their LGBT identity immediately.

Influential Characteristics of Latina/o Culture

*Machismo: A source of stress for parental figures of LGBTQ children.* Some participants in this study discussed *machismo* as a systemic cultural stressor that they had to reject in order to accept their child’s sexual and gender identity. These participants cited examples of *machismo* at the individual level (being exposed to *machista* attitudes and behaviors from specific family members) and collective level (awareness of hardships their child would face within the Latina/o culture as a result of *machismo*). These findings are similar to those found in the studies by Hom (1994) and Lin and Hudley (2009) with Asian American parents. Participants in these two studies discussed having to work through different cultural expectations related to their child’s sexual and/or gender identity in order to accept their child.

In addition, the findings in this study are a significant and unique contribution to the Latina/o literature about the relationship between the different dimensions of *machismo* and parental acceptance of one’s LGBTQ child. Specifically, similar to the findings in a study by Estrada and Arciniega (2015), this study indicate that parental figures who endorsed lower levels of *machismo* had higher emotional connection to the group and to their child.

Considering these findings through a lens of family stress theory, we can see how *machismo* was a stressor that, at times, threatened the parent-child relationship and created significant tension among family members. For example, some parents provided rich narratives about having to conceal their child’s identity in front of some family
members for fear of rejection of their child. Other parents specifically cited *machismo* as the source of family member’s rejection of their child. These participants’ rejection of the traditional role of *machismo*, both at an individual and collective level, allowed parental figures to cope and adapt to their child’s sexual and gender identity.

**Marianismo: The central role of maternal figures.** Most maternal figures in this study provided rich examples of how their role as a woman within the context of Latina/o culture played an important role in their process of acceptance. Whether these participants struggled with the disclosure of their child’s identity (and took time to reach acceptance) or immediately accepted them, they seemed to embrace acceptance as an inevitable aspect of being a Latina.

These findings are a significant contribution to the literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. To be clear, the contribution of these findings is not that only Latinas show unconditional love and support for their LGBTQ child. Some studies found in the general parental acceptance literature show that unconditional love is part of maternal figures’ acceptance process (e.g., Fields, 2001; Hom, 1994; Horn & Wong, 2016; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Pyne, 2016; Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Wren, 2002). However, whereas the general literature presents findings of unconditional love toward one’s LGBTQ child as an individual decision, the maternal figures in this study understood unconditional love toward their child as directly related to their role as a woman within their Latina/o culture (i.e., *marianismo*).

A specific and unique finding in this study about maternal figures is their willingness to sacrifice their own views and personal relationships with others, regardless of potential consequences, to accept their child’s sexual and gender identity. This finding
is not surprising considering that women within Latina/o culture are often seen as the
gatekeepers and protectors of the family unit and are expected to make decisions that
prioritize the well-being of their children and family unit overall (Castillo et al., 2010).

IPART’s sociocultural sub-theory assumption that parental figures’ interactions
with their child are influenced by their environment (ecological context), helps us
understand how Latina/o gender norms influenced how maternal figures navigated their
process of acceptance toward their LGBTQ child. For example, the cultural expectation
of being self-sacrificing and putting the well-being of their child above anything else
helps explain why these maternal figures’ narratives reflected unconditional acceptance
as a duty. Many of these maternal figures specifically used the word “duty” or
acceptance toward their child as inevitable. Both mothers and aunts in this study
endorsed this gender cultural norm. Similar to mothers, aunts in this study also discussed
their duty as a Latina in their acceptance narratives.

Family stress theory’s emphasis on how parental figures make meanings and cope
with stressors allows us to further understand the findings from the maternal figures in
this study. For example, it can be argued that although these participants struggled to
accept their child’s sexual and/or gender identity, Latina/o community cultural
expectations about the role of women allowed them to cope and adapt with the disclosure
and move toward acceptance of their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. On the other
hand, it is plausible to assume that these same gender expectations caused some level of
stress on these participants. For instance, some of these maternal figures had to navigate
feelings of love and support while coping with their husbands’ rejection of their child.
Considering the emphasis on women as caretakers, their duty as maternal figures and wives were sometimes at odds, which created significant stress.

**The active role of fathers: Challenging traditional Latino gender roles.** Most paternal figures provided narratives about the importance of accepting their child’s sexual and gender identity and actively working toward reframing cultural expectations about what it means to be a male in Latina/o culture. These participants described behaviors (e.g., kissing, hugging, verbal expression of love) that directly challenged the stereotypical role of the aggressive and homophobic Latino male and instead endorsed behaviors congruent with family and emotional connections (e.g., *caballerismo*). They often acknowledging that their behaviors were at odds with their cultural expectations.

While the general literature provides narratives of accepting fathers, the participants in this study were able to link their acceptance toward their LGBTQ child to Latina/o cultural norms and beliefs. This study makes an important contribution to the literature about the experiences of ethnic and racial minority fathers of LGBTQ individuals.

These findings are a significant and unique contribution to the Latina/o literature about the relationship between gender norms and parent-child relationship among fathers of LGBTQ children. Besides the study of twelve Hispanic (Spanish) fathers (Platero, 2014), this study is the only other study with a significant number of Latino fathers (*n* = 9). In light of the documented differences between Hispanics and Latinas/os, this is the only available study that has allowed us to understand how Latina/o gender norms play a role for paternal figures in their process of accepting their LGBTQ child.
Similar to the discussion presented earlier on how the experiences with their environment affected the acceptance narratives of maternal figures, IPART’s sociocultural sub-theory emphasis on the ecological contexts where parental figures find themselves helps us better understand how gender norms shaped the accepting narratives of these fathers. For instance, the fathers in this study provided examples of having to refrain and/or reject strict gender norms imposed by their culture and find the positive dimensions of what it means to be a male within Latino culture in order to accept their LGBT child. To clarify, these participants did not reject their culture. Many discussed pride in their cultural and ethnic identity. Instead, these fathers subscribed to the positive aspects of being a Latino male (e.g., keeping family unity, setting a good example for their children) in order to accept their LGBT child.

From the lens of family stress theory, we can see how the fathers in this study were able to find positive meanings to the stressor of their child’s disclosure while still abiding by their culture’s expectations of them as males (e.g., being motivated to accept their child in order to keep the family unit together). Also, consistent with family stress theory’s different categories of resources, we can see how these participants’ reframe of their role as fathers is a positive personal resource that allowed them to cope and adapt to their child’s disclosure and have a positive relationship with their child.

**Familismo: Importance of family values and beliefs and community resources.** The influence of family members and family values were prominent in the narratives of some participants in this study. Family values were a source of support for parental figures in this study. Some participants saw their family members’ support as a crucial element in helping them work through mixed feelings about their child’s sexual
and/or gender identity. Support from family members often helped them move away from rejection and closer to acceptance. Also, some of these parental figures cited Latina/o family values (e.g., family cohesion, setting a good example for their children) as a motivation to accept their child. Overall, participants provided rich narratives about having to balance family members’ support, or lack thereof, and family values throughout their process of acceptance.

These findings are different from the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. Although studies found in the general literature have discussed family members as both a source of support and stressor for parental figures of LGBTQ individuals (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Broad, 2011; Gray et al., 2015; Lee & Lee, 2006; Hom, 1994; Lee & Lee, 2006), participants in this study have directly linked their acceptance narratives to family values and beliefs within the Latina/o culture. While the general literature has mostly discussed the reactions of family members toward participants’ children, it has not directly discussed how these family reactions are linked, or not, to family values and beliefs in context of the culture where they find themselves. For example, detailed narratives about acceptance of one’s child in order to keep the family harmony seem to be a unique finding of this study.

In addition, most of the studies in the general literature either only addressed immediate family members (e.g., husband, wife, children) or made a distinction between those who they considered to be immediate vs. extended family members. The participants in this study did not categorize family members. These parental figures seemed to have similar emotional reactions about family as a source of support or stress regardless of if it was one’s mother or one’s close friend. This finding is not surprising
considering that in Latina/o culture, extended family members and close friends have equal participation in the family unit (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994).

Moreover, the findings in this study are both similar and different to the findings in the Latina/o psychology literature about *familismo* as both a source of support and stressor in parent-child relationships. Consistent with this body of research, family values were also a source of support and conflict for the participants in this study. However, to date, I have not been able to locate any study that has discussed the Latina/o value of *familismo* in the context of parental acceptance toward one’s LGBTQ child. Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution to this body of literature.

A salient difference between the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals and the findings in this study is the discrepancy between family and community as a source of support. Whereas the general literature has found that seeking out LGBTQ community resources seems to be a key component of the parental acceptance process, only three participants in this study provided brief narratives about seeking out LGBTQ community resources for knowledge and personal connections. In the systematic literature review by Rosenkrantz and colleagues (under review), while 25 studies discussed parents connecting with LGBTQ community resources to learn more about their child’s sexual or gender identity, only six studies discussed family members’ reactions. As we can see, while parents in the general literature seek community resources as a source of knowledge, coping, and adaptation, the parents in this study did not mention stepping out of the family unit for support.

A study by Huebner, Rullo, Thoma, McGarrity, and Mackenzie (2013) might provide further insight regarding the findings in this study about participants’ lack of
seeking community resources. Huebner and colleagues (2013) tested the effects of an online intervention (i.e., *Lead with Love*, a documentary) on education, formal support, and increase self-efficacy for parents of LGB children. An interesting finding of this study was that compared to other participants, Latina/o parents were more likely to leave the study prematurely and not complete the follow-up questions (Huebner et al., 2013). While the reason for the lack of participation from Latinas/os is unknown, I will argue that Latina/o parents of LGBTQ children did not find that this resource accurately represented their needs or did not feel comfortable sharing their feelings with those outside the family unit. Another possible explanation as to why the participants in the present study did not seek more community resources is that, perhaps, LGBTQ resources are not readily available in Latina/o communities.

IPART sociocultural sub-theory emphasizes family structure as an important ecological context that affects rejecting and accepting behaviors from parents. Support from family members played an important role in the acceptance narratives from the participants in this study. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that having the approval of the group was instrumental for these parental figures to move away from rejection and toward acceptance. Some participants in this study specifically described how family members helped them see how “wrong [they] were” for not accepting their child sexual and/or gender identity.

The narratives of acceptance from parental figures in this study support family stress theory’s assumption that support from immediate and extended family members may reduce parental psychological stress and enhance the quality of parent-child relationships. Family members were instrumental in helping participants cope and adapt
to the stressor of having an LGBTQ child. In addition, the findings in this study about parental figures seeking out resources, although few, is congruent with this theory’s claim that social support reduces parental stress and encourages nurturing behaviors toward their child. Furthermore, family stress theory posits that social resources are secondary to familial support. Interestingly, family support was more important than social support in this study but not in the general literature about parental acceptance.

**Immigration as an act of sacrifice and coping with cultural dissonance.** A few participants in this study cited immigrating to the United States as motivator to accept their child’s sexual and/or gender identity. These parental figures seemed to have found rejecting their child contradictory to the American dream of coming to the United States to provide their child a better future. Some of these participants provided details about sacrificing being closer to family and their homeland so their child could grow up in a society that is less hostile and oppressive toward LGBTQ people.

Some participants expressed a sense of disharmony and mixed feelings as a result of their culture’s negative messages about sexual and/or gender minorities. These participants provided vivid details about feeling fearful for their child considering their culture’s oppressive views of LGBTQ people as second-class citizens. It should be noted that all of these participants were Cuban-Americans. In consideration of the different sociopolitical climates between Cuba and Puerto Rico discussed earlier, it is not surprising that the Cuban-American participants in this study were afraid for their gender atypical child to grow up in a country that is oppressive toward LGBTQ people. For example, Puerto Ricans have been subjected to the laws of the U.S. and have had easier
access to U.S. culture while Cuba has been a communist state since 1959 with limited access to western cultures where LGBTQ rights movements have been visible.

None of the studies found in the general literature, including the three studies of ethnic and racial minority participants (Hom, 1994; Lin & Hudley, 2009; Platero, 2014) have provided narratives about the significance of immigration in the accepting process of parents of LGBT individuals. These findings also make a significant and unique contribution to the Latina/o literature about how cultural values affect the parent-child relationship. To date, I have not been able to find any study that explores parent-child relationship between parental figures and their LGBT child in relation to immigration.

Consistent with IPART’s emphasis on different behaviors that motivate parents to be accepting or rejecting, parents’ reflections about their immigration stories to the United States motivated their acceptance. As these parental figures navigated their acceptance journey, their reasons for immigrating to the United States (e.g., provide their children a better future) facilitated accepting behaviors. IPART’s sociocultural sub-theory provides a frame for understanding the immigration experience as providing meaning to support facilitated acceptance. This sub-theory specifically mentions political organizations and structures as an ecological contextual factor that promotes parental acceptance and rejection. Some of these participants provided examples of hostile environments in their country of origin that motivated them to immigrate to the United States, which in turn served as an internal behavior that facilitated acceptance.

Using a family stress theory lens, reflections about personal reasons for immigrating to the United States seemed to alleviate the stressor of learning about their child’s LGBTQ identity. To this end, we can see how the meaning of immigration served
as a resource that allowed these participants to cope and adapt to their child’s non-heterosexual non-cisgender identity.

**Latina/o culture and systemic-level context of heteronormativity.** Although explicated in the context of Latina/o cultural values, heteronormativity was present in the narratives of the participants in this study. That is, participants often described Latina/o systemic cultural values and beliefs (e.g., gender norms, religion and spirituality) as obstacles to either overcome or reframe in order to accept their child’s sexual or gender identity. As described earlier, these parental figures struggled to incorporate their child’s LGBTQ identity into the context of their cultural values, pointing to a lack of understanding of LGBTQ identity in the context of Latina/o cultural values and beliefs and the assumption that heterosexual and/or cisgender identities are the norm.

On the other hand, parental figures in this study were able to reframe heteronormative cultural values, reconcile cultural values with their child’s LGBTQ identity, and arrive at a place of acceptance. These actions are consistent with the main tenets of Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. Through their journey of acceptance, parental figures were able to access positive emotions that allowed them to reverse past negative emotions toward their child and challenge different microsystems within the larger system.

**Relational Benefits of Parental Acceptance**

Most participants in this study provided rich narratives about the benefits of accepting their child’s sexual and/or gender identity and their current parent-child relationship. Some of these participants explicitly cited learning positive lessons about love and acceptance toward their child and other LGBTQ people. Undoubtedly, despite
the fact that these participants had (and continue) to overcome multiple obstacles to accepting their child’s sexual and gender identity, such as reconciling personal and cultural values, they were able to develop a positive interpersonal relationship with their child, foster a strong and cohesive family unit, and take a proud and affirming stance toward their child’s sexual and gender identity. These findings are consistent with the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. For example, in the studies by Goodrich (2009), Grafsky (2014), Gray and colleagues (2015), and Wakeley and Tuason (2011), participants reported that their parent-child communication improved as a result of accepting their child’s sexual and/or gender identity.

IPART theory assumes that acceptance and rejection is a continuous process, and that parents are more loving or rejecting at different milestones of their child’s development. Most of the participants in this study were able to move from initial rejection to acceptance. Even the few parental figures that expressed immediate acceptance discussed learning more about LGBTQ identity and community and developing a sense of admiration and respect for their child. Also consistent with IPART, it is important to note here that acceptance was not a linear process. That is, many of these parental figures struggled to balance different sources of support and stressors that were introduced at different stages of their acceptance journey. For example, although for many of the maternal figures in this study their role as Latinas was a source of internal support in moving toward acceptance, they also had to struggle with mixed feelings about having family members who rejected their child.
Family stress theory’s emphasizes the role of parental resources. Parental figures in this study had access to multiple resources at different levels (i.e., personal, familial, and social). These resources allowed parental figures to develop a closer and a more open relationship with their child and gain further knowledge about other LGBTQ people and the LGBTQ community. Consistent with family stress theory’s description of adaptation, many participants were able to recover from the initial negative reaction and develop new and positive definitions of what it means to have an LGBTQ child.

Summary of Similarities and Differences Between the Current Study and the General Literature

The findings in the current study present a number of similarities and differences to the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. Overall, the themes and subthemes about the initial reactions and adjustment to one’s child sexual and gender identity, the influence of religion and spirituality, awareness of oppression and exposure to LGBTQ people, and the relational benefits of parental acceptance are consistent with the findings in the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. On the other hand, the themes and subthemes of machismo as a source of stress for parental figures of LGBTQ children, marianimso, or the central role of mothers, the active role of fathers, the importance of family values and beliefs versus community resources, and immigration as an act of sacrifice and coping with cultural dissonance made a unique and significant contribution to the literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. Noticeably, the theme of awareness of oppression and exposure to LGBTQ people as leading to parental acceptance, the role of mothers and fathers, and the role of family in the process
of acceptance were both different and similar to the general literature. In sum, the key differences among these overlapping themes were that participants in this study directly linked their experiences to a collective rather than an individual process, including often providing rich details about specific Latina/o cultural values.

**Importance of Writing Intervention on the Affect of Parental Figures**

The writing intervention had a significant impact in these parental figures’ feelings toward their LGBTQ child. Feelings of anxiety/sadness decreased and happiness increased for Cuban-American and Puerto Rican participants as a result of writing a letter about their process of accepting their LGBTQ child. While feelings of anger decreased only for Cuban-Americans, Puerto Rican participants’ feelings of anger did not increase from the lowest possible score (i.e., 1.00) from the pretest to the posttest. In other words, engaging in these narratives did not make any of the Puerto Rican participants angrier toward their child.

Some participants reported mixed feelings as a result of recalling a wide range of emotions throughout their process of acceptance. Also, a few participants experienced satisfaction and relief through after writing a letter about their acceptance process. This wide range of feelings is not surprising considering the type of letter that they were asked to write. That is, although all of these parental figures described themselves as currently accepting of their child’s sexual and/or gender identity, they were asked to reflect on their entire process of acceptance, from when they first learned about their child’s LGBTQ identity to present. Therefore, these participants were put in the position to recall both negative and positive experiences and actions that asked for a wide range of feelings and emotions. Overall, however, both the pretest and posttest scores on the PFI and the
open-ended question about parental figures’ feelings of the writing exercise show that most of the participants found this intervention to be effective in moving toward forming a more positive and holistic view of their LGBTQ child and the LGBTQ community.

Considering the quantitative and qualitative data that have been presented about the effectiveness of the writing intervention, it is important to note the difference between clinical/practical significance and statistical significance in a study. Although paired t tests were not statistically significant for the Puerto Rican sample, considering that the sample consisted of only 11 participants, it is possible that having a larger sample would have produced statistically significant results. From a clinical/practical perspective, the fact that different feelings were activated for participants (as observed in the qualitative data), using a writing intervention in a clinical setting seems to be effective for parental figures of LGBTQ youth. Further research should use larger samples of accepting Latina/o parental figures to more accurately establish the statistical significance of expressive writing as an intervention on the affective responses of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals.

The writing intervention activated both reflection and emotion in participants. The participants in this study were able to recall complex emotional experiences about their process of coping and adapting to their child’s non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender identity. These parental figures reported that they were able to reflect on their actions and behaviors toward their child and gain new insights about themselves and their relationship with their child, were able to reflect on specific cultural factors (e.g., role of gender norms, family, immigration) that facilitated their acceptance narratives, and constructed new meanings about their role as primary attachment figures of a sexual or
gender expansive child. Also, similar to the findings of other studies where EW has been used as an intervention, positive emotions developed as a result of expressing in writing one’s feelings about a difficult life experience (e.g., Smyth & Pennebaker, 2012).

According to the Theory of Positive Emotions (Fredrickson, 2000, 2001, 2004), activating positive emotions may reverse past negative emotions and promote psychological well-being. Positive outcomes of this writing intervention may serve as a catalyst to well-being among these parental figures and stronger parent-child relationships.

These findings make a significant contribution to the EW literature. While EW has been used in multiple settings (e.g., medical, higher education) and with different populations (e.g., Latinas/os/Hispanics, LGBTQ, students, cancer patients), to date, EW has not been used as an intervention with parents of LGBT individuals. In addition, the usefulness of this intervention makes a contribution to the general literature about the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals, which, to date, has largely been atheoretical and has mostly explored the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals without measuring the effectiveness of interventions that might be fruitful in helping these parental figures better understand their feelings toward their LGBTQ child (Rosenkrantz et al., under review).

Implications for Practice

When working with Latina/o parents who recently learned about their child’s LGBT identity, and who might very well present with mixed feelings about their relationship with their child, clinicians should be aware of a multitude of factors. Specifically, clinicians need to be aware of the intersectionality of LGBTQ issues and
Latina/o cultural values in order to provide culturally sensitive services to these clients. First, it is important to normalize any negative or mixed feelings as a result of having a child that identifies as a sexual or gender minority. Clinicians should share that many parents of LGBTQ individuals have reported similar reactions, including Latina/o parents. Clinicians might share that such feelings are not an indication of not loving one’s child or being a bad parent but the result of living in a society that constantly bombards all of us with negative messages about LGBTQ people. Also, this study shows that Latina/o parents are also coming out and identifying themselves as parents of LGBTQ individuals and successfully working through complex feelings related to having an LGBT child.

In addition, as parents work through different feelings of rejection and acceptance, it is important not to overly-focus on negative feelings and outcomes that might come from learning that one’s child identifies as LGBTQ. Consistent with main principles of counseling psychology and the main tenets of IPART and family stress theory, it is important to focus on strengths and positive coping in the context of the person’s cultural context (Packard, 2009). Clinicians working with parents of LGBTQ individuals, including those who identify as Latina/o, should focus on two main questions: (a) what cultural values have helped these clients work through conflict and hardships in the past? and (b) what cultural-specific tools and resources will allow parental figures to adapt, reframe, and cope with the knowledge of having an LGBTQ child and achieve well-being and a cohesive parent-child relationship?

Second, it is important for clinicians not to talk about parental acceptance and rejection as dichotomous events. As described by the parental figures in this study, and
others (e.g., Baptist & Allen, 2008; Goodrich, 2009; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010; Grafsky, 2014; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2006; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Saltzburg, 2004), acceptance is a complex process. Clinicians should provide psychoeducation and inform parents that they will feel closer to their child at different times during their process of acceptance and at different stages of their child’s development. For example, perhaps once a parent has worked through negative feelings toward a child’s atypical gender expression, similar negative feelings might resurface as the child decides to bring a same-sex partner home for the first time. Therefore, as it has been suggested in the general parental acceptance literature, it is important for parents to continue to foster a strong emotional connection with their child (e.g., Philips & Ancis, 2008).

Third, with consideration to the theoretical framework of family stress theory, it is important for clinicians to help parents cope and create positive narratives about what it means to have an LGBTQ child. For example, religion/spirituality tends to be a strong source of support for some parental figures and allows them to create positive meanings about their child’s non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity (Goodrich, 2009; Phillips & Ancis, 2008). Therefore, clinicians should assess for the role that religion and spirituality might play in the acceptance narratives of Latina/o parental figures and, when appropriate, initiate conversations about how religion and/or spirituality is helping the client move toward acceptance. Along the same vein, it is important for clinicians not to assume that having a strong religious or spiritual identity is necessarily synonymous with rejection.
In addition, it might be helpful for clinicians to provide information about the positive aspects of being an LGBTQ person (Riggle & Rostosky, 2012) in order to help these parents realize that their child’s sexual or gender identity will not prevent them from having a fulfilled and successful life and achieving well-being (Goodrich & Gillbride, 2010). Furthermore, consistent with the findings in this study, expressive writing may have a positive effect on parental figures as they navigate their process of acceptance. Clinicians might provide information to parental figures about the benefits of expressing one’s feelings in writing. Keeping a diary or notebook can be beneficial for parental figures of LGBTQ children in several ways: (a) express how they feel without the restriction of being perceived a certain way by their child and/or family members; (b) allow parental figures to organize, label, and understand feelings toward their child; and (c) help parental figures identity and reevaluate throughout their process of acceptance the different resources that have facilitated positive ways of coping. A clinician might even encourage parental figures to write a certain number of entries each week and use it as a therapeutic intervention during session.

**Acknowledging and incorporating Latina/o cultural values.** It is crucial for clinicians to have a good understanding of specific and unique Latina/o cultural values that might play an important role in working with Latina/o parents of LGBTQ children. First, in order to build a strong therapeutic alliance and show that one understands the cultural factors that might influence these parental figures’ narratives of acceptance, clinicians should acknowledge how difficult it must be to reconcile feelings toward one’s child and different cultural messages. This acknowledgement can invite a conversation from parents about specific Latina/o values that are most salient for them at that
particular moment and as they navigate their process of acceptance. It is unrealistic to assume that all of the different cultural values explored in this study will apply to all Latina/o clients at once.

Specifically when working with mothers or maternal figures, it would be useful for clinicians to be aware of the crucial role that female figures play within Latina/o culture in relation to sacrificing for one’s child, caring for one’s husband, and being the caretaker for the family unit. For example, for a mother who might not understand and perhaps blame their child for “choosing” to be a lesbian after all she has done for her daughter, it might be appropriate for a clinician to explore further what it means to be a sacrificing mother for that client and how accepting or rejecting her daughter is congruent, or not, with such a value. In addition, when working with fathers and other male parental figures it is important to understand the different dimensions of Latino gender norms. For example, it is not productive and rather stereotyping to assume that all Latino fathers will endorse traditional values of *machismo* and reject their child. The findings in this study clearly show that Latino fathers are actively rejecting the stereotype of the hyper-masculine, homophobic male and working toward accepting their child’s sexual or gender identity by choosing to, instead, endorse other Latino values consistent with emphasis on loyalty, emotional closeness, and family cohesion.

Another important cultural Latina/o cultural value for clinicians to be aware of and explore with Latina/o parents of LGBTQ children is the role of family and group harmony. Parental figures in this study provided extensive narratives about the influence of family as they navigated their process of acceptance. Balancing family dynamics (e.g.,
family members various levels of acceptance and rejection) and keeping the family unity was a crucial component in these parental figures’ acceptance narratives.

Taking this cultural value into consideration, it is important for clinicians not to see parental acceptance as an individual process. Instead, it would be culturally congruent to inquire about how one’s family perceived their child’s sexual and/or gender identity and how the family views have served as a resource and/or stressor. This might require engaging in family counseling or discussing different coping skills that will not only help the individual parental figure move toward acceptance but also provide resources and skills for the entire family unit. As suggested by Lin and Hudley (2009) in a study with Asian American mothers of gay men and lesbians, being a parental figure of a child who is a sexual minority could be an isolating experience. Therefore, family connectedness could be a great source of support for Latina/o parents as they process the different feelings associated with being a parent of an LGBTQ child.

In the same vein of exploring parental figures’ sources of social support, clinicians should be aware of the fact that most of the participants in this study did not seek out LGBTQ community resources. Therefore, clinicians should be cautious about assuming that these parental figures know how to access these community resources or if they even find community resources helpful as they navigate their process of acceptance. While the general literature highly suggests connecting parents of LGBTQ children with organizations such as PFLAG (e.g., Baptist & Allen, 2008; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010; Saltzburg, 2004, 2009; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011), clinicians should be cautious when making this recommendation to Latina/o parental figures. Clinicians should first do their research and find out if there are community resources within the communities where
these parental figures find themselves before making such suggestions. For example, if working in a Latina/o community with parental figures who do not speak English, it would be more useful to identify resources in the primary language of these parental figures before making a general suggestion to seek out community resources. Perhaps, it would be more beneficial for clinicians to simply ask what type of social supports (if any) would help them process, cope, and adapt to having an LGBTQ child. It might be the case that Latina/o-specific resources do not exist within these communities and it would be up to the clinician to create a safe space and resources (e.g., Latina/o-specific support groups) for these parental figures to connect with each other.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

**Strengths.** This study has several strengths that merit a discussion. First, to date, this study has the largest sample \(N = 30\) of Latina/o parental figures of LGBTQ children. Perhaps the greatest significance of having a sample of Latinas/os is that the findings in this study have been explicated and contextualized from the lens of specific Latina/o cultural values to better understand how the process of acceptance of these parental figures is both different and similar to the predominant narratives of White parents found in the general literature.

Second, this is the first study to use an evidence-based writing intervention with a sample of ethnic and racial diverse (i.e., Latinas/os) parental figures of LGBT children. Although the literature on the experiences of parental figures of LGBTQ individuals dates back to the late 1980s, I was able to find only one study (i.e., Huebner et al., 2013) that has used an intervention with parental figures of sexual or gender minority individuals.
Third, this study has the largest sample of Latino fathers ($n = 9$) found in the parental acceptance literature. Although maternal figures outnumbered paternal figures, the sample of nine fathers in this study allowed for an in-depth understanding of the process of acceptance for Latino fathers.

Fourth, another notable strength of this study is that most participants were recruited from a community sample. As noted by Rosenkrantz and colleagues (under review), most parental acceptance studies have recruited participants from affirming parent groups (e.g., PFLAG). Although I also advertised my study in community organizations such as PFLAG, most of the participants in this study volunteered directly from Cuban-American and Puerto Rican communities (including the island of Puerto Rico). The approach of recruiting parental figures from within their own communities was a strength because it allowed participants to participate in the language (i.e., Spanish or English) with which they were more comfortable, and it helped build strong relationships with different members of these communities.

As described earlier, 23 of the 30 participants elected to complete the study in Spanish and, thus, it is plausible to assume that this study might not have been possible without the cultural consideration of allowing them to participate in their native language. Also, I believe that personal disclosures, extensive conversations about social locations as a gay Cuban man with accepting parents, and being bilingual allowed me to build a strong rapport with participants who then felt comfortable sharing their experiences with me and recommending other potential participants.

**Limitations.** This study has several limitations. Homogeneity and transferability is a concern. Although, to date, this is the largest sample of Latina/o participants in the
parental acceptance literature, this study included only a sample of two Latina/o subgroups (i.e., Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans). Therefore, conclusions should not be drawn about other Latina/o subgroups. For example, considering that all of the Cuban-American participants were documented and Cubans overall enjoy the privilege of an easier path toward permanent resident status, the immigration theme might have looked very different for parental figures from Central America who are undocumented.

Also, most of the Cuban-American sample identified as first generation and most of the Puerto Rican sample resided in the island of Puerto Rico. Therefore, it is inappropriate to generalize the findings in this study to all Cuban-American immigrants or Puerto Ricans residing in the mainland United States.

Another limitation is the geographic location where most of the participants lived. Eighteen of the 19 Cuban-American participants resided in Miami, Florida and eight of 11 Puerto Rican participants resided in Puerto Rico at the time of this study. The contextual factors of the location where these participants lived at the time of the study surely influenced their acceptance narratives. For example, perhaps different patterns would have emerged if this study had a larger sample of mainland United States Puerto Rican participants (e.g., different levels of familial support).

The lack thereof universality of the theories used in this study (i.e., IPART and family stress theory) is another limitation. Although these theories provided a thorough conceptualization of the findings in the context of parent-child and family relationship, they lacked the acknowledgement of systemic-level context of heteronormativity as these two theories did not accurately recognize the influence of systemic oppression toward
LGBTQ identities as a factor that influenced the participant’s journey toward accepting their LGBTQ child.

**Future research.** First, future research should explore the experiences of other Latina/o subgroups (e.g., South Americans, Central Americans), as other cultural values might also be important to their acceptance narratives. Along the same vein, future research should also explore within-group differences, (if any), among different generations of Cuban-American immigrants and island vs. mainland United States Puerto Ricans.

Second, considering that participants engaged in rich discussions with the researcher during the screening interviews, future qualitative methods should consider conducting structured or semi-structured interviews with Latina/o parental figures. This is especially important because some the information shared during the interviews was not also included in the written narratives. For example, the cultural value of *respeto* was discussed among participants during the screening but not in the narratives. Therefore, Latina/o parental figures might be more willing to discuss certain cultural values through in-person interviews. A future study that uses a structure interview might lead to rich details about how other cultural values (e.g., *respeto, personalismo, simpatía*) lead to parental acceptance of one’s LGBTQ child.

Third, consistent with IPART sociocultural sub-theory’s assumption that parents who have rigid belief systems are more likely to reject their child, future research should examine how family members who are supportive and affirming can help create cognitive flexibility for parental figures of LGBTQ children.
Fourth, future research should consider using a socio-ecological theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model) to accurately capture how macrosystems (e.g., heteronormativity) influence acceptance and rejection of one’s LGBTQ child. A family-system-based theory coupled with a socio-ecological theory would lead to a rich and thorough understanding of parental acceptance and rejection among Latina/o parental figures of LGBTQ individuals. Using Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions as a theoretical framework, future research should further explore other interventions (besides expressive writing) that will allow Latina/o parents access a wide range of positive emotions (other than happiness) that could facilitate the celebration (not simply acceptance) of one’s LGBTQ child.

Fifth, although this study provided strong evidence of different Latina/o values and beliefs (e.g., gender role, religion, familismo) that played a crucial role in the acceptance process of these parental figures, it is unknown which of these values lead to more acceptance or rejection for Latina/o parental figures. For example, does endorsing higher levels of certain Latina/o values but lower levels of others lead to more acceptance? Psychometrically valid measures of gender norms (machismo, marianismo), familismo, and other Latina/o values currently exist. Therefore, future survey research might test which Latina/o values are more predictive of acceptance and/or rejection among Latinas/os parental figures.

Sixth, considering that I was unable to locate a theory that explicates the process of acceptance toward one’s LGBTQ child in the Latina/o literature or the LGBTQ literature to explicate my findings, it would be a significant contribution to create a theory that integrates these intersectional pieces in order to more accurately describe the
experiences of Latina/o parental figures of LGBTQ children. However, there are challenges to consider in attempting to create such theory. For example, considering that research with Latina/o parental figures is scant, one must first understand these experiences before attempting to create a theory that accurately captures their experiences. More empirical research must be conducted. In addition, considering the lack of research about LGBTQ identity in Latina/o family research (Pastrana, 2015), more family-focused research is needed to understand the role that different Latina/o cultural values and beliefs play in the acceptance process of parental figures.

Finally, it would have been helpful to assess for parental acceptance before and after the writing intervention by using one of the parental acceptance scales found in the general parental acceptance literature. Although based on my knowledge about the expressive writing literature, I can extrapolate that the writing intervention used in this study could potentially lead to higher levels of parental acceptance, this conclusion cannot be established. Future research that uses expressive writing as an intervention should measure parental acceptance before and after the intervention. Similarly, future research should include a follow-up survey to test the longer term impact of the writing intervention on parental acceptance.
Appendices

Appendix A: Demographic Questions (English and Spanish Versions)

1- What is the highest level of education you have completed?

___ Attended High School
___ High School or GED
___ Some college or technical school (or currently enrolled)
___ College degree (BA, BS, or equivalent)
___ Some post-bac or graduate program (or currently enrolled)
___ Advanced college degree (M.A., M.S., PhD, JD, MD, or equivalent)

2- What is your current relationship status?

___ Married
___ Married but separated
___ Engaged
___ Single
___ Divorced
___ Cohabiting with significant other
___ Other (Please specify: ____________)

3- Describe your religious identity? Provide as many details as you would like.

4- How often do you attend religious services?

___ Never
___ Less than once a year
___ About once or twice a year
___ Several times a year
___ About once a month
___ 2-3 times a month
___ Nearly every week
___ Every week

5- What is your generational status?

___ First generation (I and one or more of your parents were born outside the U.S. but immigrated to the U.S.)
___ Second generation (you were born in the U.S., but one parent was born outside the U.S.)
___ Third generation (both you and your parents were born in the U.S.)
___ Fourth generation (you, your parents and grandparents were born in the U.S.)
___ Other, please specify: __________________
Preguntas Demográficas

1- ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación que ha completado?

___ Asistí a la escuela secundaria
___ Escuela secundaria o equivalente
___ Algunos años en educación superior (Universitario) o escuela técnica (o actualmente matriculado)
___ Educación superior (BA, BS, o equivalente)
___ Programa de postgrado (o actualmente matriculado)
___ Titulo universitario avanzado (M.A., M.S., PhD, JD, MD, o equivalente)

2- ¿Cuál es su estado civil actual?

___ Casada/o
___ Casada/o pero separada/o
___ Comprometida/o
___ Soltera/o
___ Divorciada/o
___ Conviviendo con pareja
___ Otro (especifique: ______________)

3- Describa cuál es su identidad religiosa. Proporcione todos los detalles que usted quisiera.

4- ¿Con qué frecuencia usted asiste a ceremonias religiosas?

___ Nunca
___ Menos de una vez al año
___ Alrededor de una vez o dos veces al año
___ Varias veces al año
___ Aproximadamente una vez al mes
___ 2-3 veces al mes
___ Casi todas las semanas
___ Cada semana

5- ¿Cuál es su condición de generación?

___ Primera generación (usted y uno o más de sus padres nacieron fuera de los Estados Unidos, pero emigraron a los Estados Unidos)
___ Segunda generación (usted nació en los Estados Unidos, pero uno de sus padres o los dos nacieron fuera de los Estados Unidos).
___ Tercera generación (usted y sus padres nacieron en los Estados Unidos)
___ Cuarta generación (usted, sus padres, y sus abuelos nacieron en los Estados Unidos).
___ Otra generación, por favor especifique: ____________________
**Appendix B: Parental Feelings Inventory (PFI) (English and Spanish Version)**

Using the scale below as a guide, rate the degree to which you are experiencing each of these emotions toward your LGBTQQ child right now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Extremely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Frightened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hopeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Miserable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Contented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pleased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Irritated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The Parental Feelings Inventory (PFI) was adapted from Bradley, E. G., Hurwitz, S. D., Harvey, E. A., Hodgson, S., & Perugini, E. M. (2013). Factor analytic structure and validity of the parental feelings inventory: A brief report. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22*, 801-806. Scoring will be done by generating mean scores in three categories: (a) Angry, (b) Happy, and (c) Anxious/Sad.
Parental Feelings Inventory (PFI)

Utilizando la escala de abajo como guía, califique el grado en el que usted está experimentando cada una de estas emociones hacia su hija/o LGBTQQ en este momento.

1- De ningún modo
2- Bajo
3- Ligeramente
4- Neutral
5- Moderadamente
6- Muy
7- Extremadamente

_____ 1- Asustado
_____ 2- Aterrorizado
_____ 3- Sin Esperanza
_____ 4- Miserable
_____ 5- Nervioso
_____ 6- Triste
_____ 7- Atemorizado
_____ 8- Infeliz
_____ 9- Preocupado
_____ 10- Calmado
_____ 11- Alegre
_____ 12- Contento
_____ 13- Emocionado
_____ 14- Feliz
_____ 15- Amoroso
_____ 16- Paciente
_____ 17- Pacífico
_____ 18- Complacido
_____ 19- Relajado
_____ 20- Satisfecho
_____ 21- Enojado
_____ 22- Enfadado
_____ 23- Frustrado
_____ 24- Malhumorado
_____ 25- Impaciente
_____ 26- Irritado

Appendix C: Expressive Writing Intervention (Spanish Version)

Intervención de Escritura Expresiva

Las instrucciones para la intervención de escritura expresiva dirán:

Por favor escriba una carta a otro padre Cubano- o Puertorriqueño- Estadounidense como usted, describiendo su proceso hacia la aceptación de su hija/o/joven adulto LGBTQ. **En su carta, por favor incluya los aspectos de sus creencias y valores culturales como un padre Cubano- o Puertorriqueño- Estadounidense que lo han ayudado en este proceso.** Siéntase libre de proporcionar ejemplos específicos que puedan ayudar a otro padre entender su proceso. **Por favor, proporcione tantos detalles como le sea posible. Es posible que usted piense en una persona específica que usted sepa, o imagine una persona como usted.** Puede tomarse todo el tiempo que desee para escribir esta carta. **Usted no tiene que terminar su carta en una sola sesión.**
Appendix D: Open-Ended Question (Spanish Version)

Pregunta Abierta

Las instrucciones para las preguntas que le siguen a la intervención de escritura expresiva dirá:

Por favor comparta con nosotros algunos de los sentimientos que usted experimentó al escribir su historia. **Al usted escribir sobre su proceso de aceptar a su hija/o LGBTQ, ¿que emociones usted sintió? ¿Como usted se siente en este momento?**
Appendix E: Advertisement (English and Spanish Versions)

Requesting Your Participation
Intervention for Accepting Cuban- and Puerto Rican-American Primary Parental Figures of LGBTQ People

I am Roberto Abreu and I am seeking volunteers to participate in my research study about parental acceptance of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQQ) child. I am looking for volunteers from the Cuban-American and Puerto Rican-American communities who would be willing to share their story as the primary parent or parental figure of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning (LGBTQQ) person. If you are at least 18 years old, consider yourself to be of Cuban- or Puerto Rican-American descent, and are interested in hearing more about this study, please contact me.

Name: Roberto Luis Abreu
Email: r.abre001@uky.edu
Phone number: 786-925-8140

You will receive an LGBTQ educational book at the end of the study as a token of gratitude for your time. This incentive will provide you the opportunity to learn more about the LGBTQ identity of their child.

Roberto L. Abreu is a Counseling Psychology Doctoral Candidate at the University of Kentucky under the guidance of Sharon Rostosky, Ph.D. Professor of Counseling Psychology and Ellen Riggle, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science and Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of Kentucky. More information about the researchers and their research can be found at www.PrismResearch.org
Solicitando Su Participación
Intervención Para Padres y Figuras Paternales Primarias Cubanas- y Puertorriqueñas-Estadounidenses con Hij/a/o LGBTQ

Soy Roberto Abreu y estoy solicitando voluntarios para participar en mi estudio sobre la aceptación de los padres con hija/o Lesbiana, Gay, Bisexual, Transgenero, “Queer” (LGBTQ) o que están cuestionando su sexualidad o género (Q). Estoy buscando voluntarios de las comunidades Cubanas- y Puertorriqueñas-Estadounidense que estarían dispuestos a compartir su historia como padres Cubanos- y Puertorriqueños-Estadounidense de hija/o o Lesbiana, Gay, Bisexual, Transgenero, “Queer” (LGBTQ) o que están cuestionando su sexualidad o género (Q). Si usted es mayor de 18 años de edad, se considera ser de ascendencia Cubana- o Puertorriqueñas-Estoaunidense, y está interesado en saber más acerca de este estudio, por favor póngase en contacto conmigo.

Nombre: Roberto Luis Abreu
Correo electrónico: r.abre001@uky.edu
Número de teléfono: 786-925-8140

Usted recibirá un libro educacional sobre las personas LGBTQ al final del estudio como una muestra de agradecimiento por su tiempo. Este incentivo le proporcionará la oportunidad de aprender más sobre la identidad LGBTQ de su hij/a/o.

Roberto L. Abreu es un candidato al doctorado de Psicología de Terapia en la Universidad de Kentucky, Departamento de Psicología de Educación, Escuelas, y Terapia. Roberto está bajo la guía de sus asesoras Sharon Rostosky, Ph.D. del Departamento de Psicología de Educación, Escuelas, y Terapia y Ellen Riggle, Ph.D. de los departamentos de Estudios de Ciencias Políticas y Estudios del Género y las Mujeres. Más información acerca de los investigadores y su investigación se puede encontrar en www.PrismResearch.org
Appendix F: Prescreening Questions (English and Spanish Versions)

1- What is your age? ___________

2- In which STATE do you currently reside? _____________________________

3- Do you identify as the parent of or act as the primary parental figure of an LGBTQQ child/young adult?

   ____ Yes
   ____ No

   Please share with me what you relationship with this child/young adult is. For example, mother, father, step-parent, guardian, aunt, uncle, or other relative:

   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

4- To the best of your knowledge, how does this child/young adult identify their sexual and/or gender identity?

   ____ Lesbian
   ____ Gay
   ____ Bisexual
   ____ Queer
   ____ Transgender
   ____ Questioning
   ____ Heterosexual
   ____ Other (please explain: ____________________________________________)

5- How old was this child/young adult when they disclosed their sexual and/or gender identity to you?

   ____________________________________________________________________

6- Do you identify as Cuban-American or Puerto Rican-American?

   ____ Yes
   ____ No

   If yes, please specify Cuban-American OR Puerto Rican-American?
   ____________________________________________________________________

   If no, please specify which other Latin American country: _________________

7- Please share with me what words or phrases you use to describe your ethnicity or race.
Preguntas de Selección

1- ¿Cuál es su edad? __________

2- ¿En qué estado usted reside actualmente? ________________________________

3- ¿Se identifica como un padre o figura paternal primaria (FPPs) de una hija o hijo/joven adulto LGBTQ?

   ___ Si
   ___ No

   Por favor comparta conmigo cuál es su relación con el joven adulto. Por ejemplo, madre, padre, madrastra, padrastro, tía, tío, u otro pariente:

   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________

4- ¿Qué usted sepa, cómo su hija/o/joven adulto identifica su identidad sexual y/o género?

   ___ Lesbian
   ___ Gay
   ___ Bisexual
   ___ Queer
   ___ Transgénero
   ___ Cuestionando su sexualidad
   ___ Heterosexual
   ___ Otro (por favor explique: ________________________________ )

5- ¿Qué edad tenía su hija/o/joven adulto cuando le comunicó a usted su identidad sexual y/o género?

   ________________________________________________________

6- ¿Usted se identifica como Cubano- o Puertorriqueño-Estadounidense?

   ___ Si
   ___ No

   Si su respuesta es Sí, por favor especifique si es Cubano-Estadounidense O Puertorriqueño-Estadounidense? ______________

   Si su respuesta es No, por favor especifique que país en América Latina: ______

7- Por favor comparta conmigo que palabras o frases usted usa para describir su etnicidad o raza.
References


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doi:q10.1023/B:SERS.0000018886.58945.06


doi:10.1007/s10826-014-9999-z


doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0131802
Vitae

Roberto L. Abreu

EDUCATION

2013 – 2015  Education Specialist in Counseling Psychology
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
Degree awarded: August, 2015

2010 – 2013  Masters of Science in Counselor Education, Clinical Mental Health Track
Florida International University, Miami, FL (CACREP Accredited)
Degree awarded: August, 2013

2006 – 2010  Bachelor of Science in Science Education, Biology Track
Florida International University, Miami, FL (NCATE Accredited)
Degree awarded: August, 2010

PUBLICATIONS

REFEREED ARTICLES


Hashtags and hip-hop: Exploring the online performances of hip-hop identified youth using Instagram. 
*Feminist Media Studies, 17*, 135-152. doi:10.1080/14680777.2016.1197293

LGBTQ youth bullying experiences in schools: The role of school counselors within a system of oppression. 

Mandatory reporting of child maltreatment for counselors: An innovative training program. 
*Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling, 2*, 112-124. doi:10.1080/23727810.2016.1228770

Training mental health professionals in child sexual abuse: Curricular guidelines. 

Using mixed personal growth groups to reduce biases with same-sex couples. 
*Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 10*, 200-215. doi:10.1080/15401383.2014.962721

#Dismantling islamophobia: A technology-based experiential activity to increase awareness and empathy toward Muslims. 
In M. Pope, M. Gonzalez, E. Cameron, & J. S. Pangelinan (Eds.), *Experiential activities for teaching social justice and advocacy competence in counseling*. New York, NY: Routledge


ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRIES


MANUSCRIPTS SUBMITTED AND IN PREPARATION


**OTHER PUBLICATIONS (NEWSLETTERS, POSITION STATEMENTS, AND BLOGS)**


joint statement on the Orlando mass shooting [Web blog post]. Retrieved from https://nlpa.memberclicks.net/ [This statement includes a Spanish version].


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**PEER-REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS**


presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA), Washington, D.C.


the Florida International University, College of Education Research Conference, Miami, FL.

**PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL AND OUTREACH EXPERIENCE**


**Abreu, R. L.** (2017, May). *Creating a safe and welcoming environment for LGBT clients.* Workshop presented at the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center, Lexington, KY.


**Abreu, R. L.** (2016, March). La importancia de la aceptación de las/los hijas/os LGBTQ en la comunidad Latina [The importance of acceptance of one’s LGBTQ son/daughter in the Latina/o community]. Workshop presented in Spanish for CRECER, Lexington, KY.

**Abreu, R. L.** (2016, March). *Juntos podemos [Together we can]: At the intersection of*
race, ethnicity, and LGBTQI+ identity. Coordinator and Host, Online Webinar presented for APA Division 45 Student Committee and the National Latino Psychological Association (NLPA).

Abreu, R. L. (2016, February). *UK depression screen day*. Screener, University of Kentucky Counseling Center, Lexington, KY.


### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### CERTIFICATIONS

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### SUPERVISED CLINICAL AND SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

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<td>Federal Medical Center – Lexington, Federal Bureau of Prisons (Lexington, KY)</td>
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<td>Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women (KCIW), Kentucky Department of Correction (Pewee Valley, KY)</td>
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<td>04/2014 – 09/2014</td>
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<td>04/2013 – 08/2013</td>
<td>Pediatric Psychology Associates (Coral Gables, FL)</td>
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07/2012 – 06/2013  Sunshine Social Services, Inc. (Wilton Manors, FL)
05/2011 – 08/2011  Pediatric Psychology Associates (Aventura, FL)

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<td>Division 44 Student Research Travel Award- Intersectionality Area ($400)</td>
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<td>Presidential (Group) Citation for Leadership of Orgullo (LGBTQ+ Special Interest Group)</td>
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<td>08/2014 – 05/2017</td>
<td>Lyman T. Johnson (LTJ) Fellowship ($35,000 plus benefits)</td>
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<td>Bethe Korfhage, PhD Fellowship in Educational and Counseling Psychology ($2000)</td>
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<td>04/2012</td>
<td>Mark Blum Memorial Scholarship ($2,500)</td>
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<td>Robert R. Bellamy Scholarship ($4,000)</td>
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<td>05/2011</td>
<td>Teacher of the Year ($1,000)</td>
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PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

**Editorial Review**

03/2017 – Present  *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling (2017-2020)*
01/2016 – Present  *The Journal for Counselor Preparation and Supervision*
09/2015 – Present  Editorial Board Member: *Journal of School Counseling*
Special Issues and Ad Hoc Review

04/2017 – Present  *Journal of Latina/o Psychology; LGBT Latinx Special Issue: Somos Latinx: Fostering Pathways of Resilience and Authenticity Among Sexual and Gender Diverse Latinx Community.*

01/2015 – Present  Ad Hoc Reviewer

**Special Program Review**

05/2017 – Present  English to Spanish Co-Translator for the *APA Practice Guidelines for LGB Clients: Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients*

05/2017 – 06/2017  Respect Workshop: Preventing Health Risks and Promoting Healthy Outcomes for LGBTQ Youth

**American Psychological Association (APA) Divisions**

09/2016 – Present  Awards and Recognition Committee, Student Representative

08/2016 – Present  Children, Youth, and Families (CYF), Committee Member
American Psychological Association (APA), Division 44

06/2015 – 05/2017  Student Committee Liaison
American Psychological Association (APA), Division 45

**National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA)**

2/2017 – Present  2018 Biannual Conference, Vice-Chair

11/2014 – Present  *Orgullo Co-Chair*

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**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

05/2017 – 08/2017  Fayette County Schools Countywide LGBTQ Training

08/2015 – Present  Bluegrass Black Pride PCSO Liaison
06/2014 – Present  Board of Directors Member, Pride Community Services Organization (PCSO)

02/2014 – 06/2016  Entre Nosotros (Latina/o LGBTQ Discussion Group) Founder & Leader

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2015 – Present  Kentucky Psychological Association (KPA)

2013 – Present  American Psychological Association (APA)

2013 – Present  National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA)

2013 – Present  American Counseling Association (ACA)

REFERENCES

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