

How Do Self and Family's Religious Centrality Affect Latinx Sexual Minority Youths' (SMY) Development?

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Background

- Religious affiliation is thought to be a protective factor for adolescents (e.g., religiosity is associated with higher self-esteem; Yonker, Schnabelrauch, & Dehaan, 2012).
- The association between religiosity and well-being may be attenuated or more complex for sexual minority youth (SMY) due to religious beliefs that non-heterosexuality is immoral or punishable (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2015).
- Research acknowledging the intersections between religion, sexuality, and ethnicity, particularly among Latinx SMY, is limited (e.g., Toomey, Huynh, Jones, Lee, & Revels-Macalinao, 2017).
 - Latinx SMYs' overlapping identities shape who they are and the affordances/barriers they may face; adding religion into the equation creates an additional layer of complexity and uniqueness.
 - Familial and religious systems tend to overlap, and religion likely influences familial relationship quality experienced by Latinx SMY (Etengoff & Daiute, 2014).
- Guided by positive youth development theories (Lerner, 2017) and an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989), this study examined the associations among youths' own religious centrality, the perceived religious centrality of their families, their sexual orientation (SO) and ethnic identity (EI) developmental processes, and their self-esteem.

Research Questions

- How does Latinx SMY's religious centrality affect their self-esteem, ethnic identity (EI), and sexual orientation identity (SOI)? Do these associations differ by participant's own religious affiliation status and by their parent's religious affiliation status?
- How does perceived family's religious centrality affect the Latinx SMY's self-esteem, EI, and SOI? Does this differ by participant's own religious affiliation status and by their parent's religious affiliation status?

Method

- Data from a larger study of 385 Latinx SMY experiences in the U.S. were analyzed for the current study. Participant's age ranged from 14 to 24 ($M = 20.26$, $SD = 2.62$). Most participants identified as male (73%); fewer identified as female (19%) or transgender (7%); 1% did not respond. In terms of sexual orientation, 84% identified as gay or lesbian, 7% as bisexual, and 9% identified as queer, questioning, asexual, pansexual, or heterosexual. The majority of Latinx SMY were of Mexican-descent (67%); 20% were Puerto Rican, 4% were Cuban, and 8% reported other countries of origin. The majority of participants took the survey in English (71%); 29% took the survey in Spanish. Perceived family of origin income level: 51% reported that their family of origin's income ranged from \$30–49K (ranged from "less than \$5K" [2.1%] to over \$100K [5.7%]).
- Religious Affiliation: 21% of respondents reported that they were affiliated with a religion while 34% of them reported that their parents were affiliated with a religion. The majority of religious youth reported affiliations (self and family) with Catholic, Christian, or Jewish traditions.

Variables & Survey Questions

The following are the variables we used in this study:

- Own religious centrality (ORC):** 1 item (Cotton et al., 2012): "Please rate the following item on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree: Religion is an important part of my life."
- Family religious centrality (FRC):** 1 item (Cotton et al., 2012): "Please rate the following item on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree: Religion is an important part of the lives of my parents/family."
- Sexual orientation (SO) resolution:** 3 items (Toomey et al., 2017): e.g., "I know what my sexual orientation means to me."
- SO affirmation:** 2 items (Toomey et al., 2017): e.g., "I feel positively about my sexual orientation."
- Ethnic identity (EI) resolution:** 3 items (EIS-B; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015): e.g., "I have a clear sense of my ethnicity means to me."
- EI affirmation:** 3 items (EIS-B; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015): e.g., "I dislike my ethnicity." (reverse coded)
- Self-esteem:** 10 items (Rosenberg, 1979): e.g., "I feel that I am a person of worth at least on a equal plane with others."

Results: Overall Sample

	Overall Sample	Neither Affiliated (61%)	Both Affiliated (23%)	Only Family Affiliated (15%)
ORC	2.53	2.42 ^a	3.56 ^b	1.60 ^c
FRC	2.83	2.22 ^a	3.94 ^b	3.83 ^b
SO Resolution	2.91	2.78 ^a	3.0 ^b	3.39 ^c
SO Affirmation	2.67	2.4 ^a	2.3 ^a	3.6 ^b
EI Resolution	2.79	2.74 ^a	3.02 ^b	2.67 ^a
EI Affirmation	2.43	2.13 ^a	2.77 ^b	3.33 ^c
Self-Esteem	2.56	2.46 ^a	2.74 ^b	2.72 ^b

Table 1. Means of key study variables across affiliation status measures. Means sharing a superscript are not significantly different from one another. Three participants (1%) reported that only they were religiously affiliated (and not their parents); these participants were removed from these analyses due to limited cell size.

	ORC	FRC	SO Resolution	SO Affirmation	EI Resolution	EI Affirmation	Self-Esteem
ORC							
FRC	0.51						
SO Resolution	-0.07	0.14					
SO Affirmation	-0.14	0.28	0.54				
EI Resolution	0.06	0.03	0.34	0.07			
EI Affirmation	0.04	0.29	0.25	0.61	0.02		
Self-Esteem	0.07	0.26	0.25	0.36	0.26	0.27	

Table 2. Correlations among variables for overall sample.

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Results: Own Religious Affiliation

	ORC	FRC	SO Resolution	SO Affirmation	EI Resolution	EI Affirmation	Self-Esteem
ORC	---	0.42	-0.19	-0.31	-0.04	-0.18	-0.10
FRC	0.29	---	0.11	0.25	-0.08	0.30	0.13
SO Resolution	0.21	0.19	---	0.51	0.29	0.28	0.26
SO Affirmation	0.01	0.24	0.52	---	-0.08	0.62	0.34
EI Resolution	0.10	0.06	0.33	0.22	---	-0.16	0.09
EI Affirmation	0.24	0.03	0.16	0.56	0.18	---	0.22
Self-Esteem	0.24	0.25	0.07	0.20	0.52	0.29	---

Table 3. Correlations above the diagonal are for SMY who reported a religious affiliation. Correlations below the diagonal are for SMY who reported no religious affiliation. Pink shading = $p < .001$; blue shading = $p < .01$; white shading = $p < .05$.

Results: Parents Religious Affiliation

	ORC	FRC	SO Resolution	SO Affirmation	EI Resolution	EI Affirmation	Self-Esteem
ORC	---	0.74	-0.08	-0.17	-0.08	0.05	-0.02
FRC	0.18	---	-0.10	-0.13	-0.06	-0.04	0.06
SO Resolution	-0.20	-0.02	---	0.25	0.35	-0.05	0.01
SO Affirmation	-0.35	0.18	0.55	---	-0.15	0.36	0.03
EI Resolution	0.19	0.06	0.30	0.08	---	-0.17	0.06
EI Affirmation	-0.10	0.06	0.19	0.53	0.03	---	0.04
Self-Esteem	0.06	0.12	0.24	0.33	0.34	0.17	---

Table 4. Correlations above the diagonal are for SMY who reported that their parents have a religious affiliation. Correlations below the diagonal are for SMY who reported no religious affiliation for their parents. Pink shading = $p < .001$; blue shading = $p < .01$; white shading = $p < .05$.

Conclusions and Implications

- Findings indicate that religious centrality is highest among Latinx SMY when they and their families are affiliated with a religion. Further, the conglomerate of affiliation status appears to be related to sexual orientation developmental processes, such that SO resolution and affirmation were highest among those whose family was affiliated with a religion but who were not religiously affiliated themselves.
- Overall, own religious centrality was only associated with lower levels of SO affirmation; this association appears to be moderated by religious affiliation, such that the association was stronger for those with a religious affiliation. In general, family religious centrality was positively associated with sexual orientation and ethnic identity processes (except EI resolution).
- Our findings illuminate important nuances in understanding the association between religious affiliation and self-esteem. Latinx SMY youth with religiously affiliated parents reported the highest levels of self-esteem, compared to those whose parents were not affiliated. Yet, own religious centrality was only positively related to self-esteem among SMY not affiliated with a religion (Table 3). Thus, results are inconsistent with prior literature among adolescents (Yonker et al., 2012). Additional research is needed to understand the intersection of family, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religiosity among Latinx SMY.

