

Female Masculinity in the Queer Latinx Community

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The purpose of this research is to investigate female masculinity in the queer Latinx community. Female masculinity is the way masculinity, a quality or attribute regarded as a characteristic of men, is embodied by those who identify as women. This study examines the complexities of gender among Latinx individuals, particularly with the growing visibility of LGBTQ+ people, which can be seen in how some queer Latinx women express their gender in ways that mirror *machismo*. Gender roles within relationships, labor, and outward presentation will be closely examined. Additionally, this study will unveil how culture, race, and ethnicity affect Latinx women's relationship with their sexuality and how it is expressed in their daily life.

Additionally, I will analyze how these queer women navigate female masculinity against the gendered expectations of their Latinx communities. In connection with the culture of *machismo* in many Latinx communities, Latinx women are expected to present effeminate and support the men within their lives; this includes familial and romantic relationships. This enforcement of stereotypically feminine behavior for women in Latinx communities is placed upon them at a young age. The consequence of this is that the idea of female masculinity counters what it means to be a "good woman" within these cultures. Those who stray from this expected behavior are often scrutinized, especially into adulthood. Analysis of these gendered and cultural expectations will further the investigation of how race and ethnicity affect the way sexuality is viewed by queer Latinx women.

To gather this data, I have been conducting semi-structured interviews with self-identified queer, Latinx women between the ages of 18-40 residing in the DMV (DC, Maryland, Virginia) for a minimum of two years. In combination with voluntary participants recruited via social media, I chose interviewees through snowball sampling which is recruiting subjects through my pre-existing friendships and their acquaintances.

This project addresses the following questions: How do queer Latinx women define masculinity and femininity? In what settings are women more open to expressing their sexuality? Do queer Latinx women in the community believe that the lines between masculinity and femininity blur? How does culture, race, and ethnicity impact my participants' romantic relationships? Specifically, do cultural/racial/ethnic norms influence if/how queer Latinx women enact gendered relationship roles? Does one take on the more "male" role? Did they grow up in a matriarchal household or patriarchal, and how does this impact their relationships? Do queer Latinx women perform masculinity differently from non-Latinx white and black queer women?

While this research is still ongoing, there are some prominent findings from this summer's work. What I have found to be an important question is, "Think back on a particular relationship, or your relationships in general ... did one of you take on the more "male" role? Why do you think this is?" This role embodies masculinity and contrasts femininity, which is a quality or attribute regarded as a characteristic of women. The majority of my participants said one partner in the relationship did take on the more masculine role; however, the reasons as to why they thought this varied. There are three key reasons my participants provided in regard to the question of a "male" role in the relationship. First, and most common, outward presentation. Many participants noted that the woman who dressed most masculine by society's standards took on the masculine role — solely based on outward presentation. Second, this role was linked to how the women interacted in an intimate bedroom setting. Even with both individuals in the couple being feminine presenting, sexual interactions caused one member to identify with masculinity. Finally, participants noted that the "male" role is equated with doing traditionally masculine things in a relationship such as holding doors, paying for food on dates, buying flowers etc. Participants' reasons clearly varied, however, it is evident that for many women in the queer Latinx community, a "male" role is taken on in some way.

By continuing this research, I hope to learn more about the dynamics of how masculinity functions within this community (queer Latinx women) and how it differs from other communities. Unfortunately, research on Latinx women within the queer community has not been prioritized by many scholars. I trust my participant's stories will unpack the important truths regarding this research.

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