EXAMINING GENERAL STRAIN THEORY:

RACIAL STRAIN AND COPING METHODS

OF LATINX AMERICANS

by

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Existing literature primarily focuses on the experiences of Black and African Americans and strain. As a result, few studies have examined how other minorities, such as Latinx populations, experience strain in regards to criminality. Agnew's General Strain Theory may provide a theoretical explanation in how Latinx populations choose to cope with racial strain. This mixed-methods study seeks to expand our understanding of responses to racial strain by highlighting the experiences of Latinx Americans. By examining survey data from a Latino Second Generation Study and focus groups of Latinx college students, this study investigates if experiences with racial strain increase the likelihood that individuals will approve of legal or illegal protest. Results find that the experience of discrimination is a significant correlate in regards to accepted forms of protest. There is a discussion on the implications of what these findings mean in regards to GST and coping mechanisms.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory (GST) proposes that criminality is likely when one experiences strain: a disliked event or condition that conflicts between a person's goals and the means to achieve those goals. When experiencing the negative emotions brought upon by strain, an individual may choose to respond through a variety of coping behaviors that promote either socially sanctioned or antisocial behavior. Those that promote antisocial behavior can often end in crime.

The concept of strain can be traced to Merton's theory of strain as a means to understand juvenile delinquency. Under this context, delinquent behavior is a result of a strain imposed by cultural and societal structures (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). For example, a young student's failure to meet the academic standards set by their family can be a source of strain that results in their decision to embrace antisocial behavior and delinquency. With GST, Agnew brings Merton's theory from the macro and into the micro level by taking into account individual differences, specifically in how an individual chooses to cope and react to structural strain.

Contemporary studies in GST look to see how specific forms of strain affect unique populations. One particular unique strain that can affect specific populations is racial strain because it is an impact felt by a minority group, exercised by the majority. Often citing the experiences of African American and Black minorities, literature over the experiences of Latinx populations in this context is lacking. The need to study the Latinx population in regards to GST is becoming increasingly relevant.

Although they are not the largest racial minority, Latinx populations have grown by more than 50% from 2000 to 2010. It is from this growth that Myers and Levy (2018) project seeing non-Hispanic Whites becoming a racial minority in America. Despite currently being a minority group, Latinx minorities are overrepresented in multiple areas of the criminal justice system, from policing to incarceration. Researchers have found evidence for the differential treatment of these minority groups. Studies found that Latinx neighborhoods are more likely to have a heavy police presence when compared to Whites (Mitchell & Caudy, 2015). Others found that unlike Whites, Latinx offenders were more likely to receive harsher sentences, such as jail time, and less likely to experience leniency in sentencing, like probation. (Doerner & Demuth, 2010; Freiburger & Hilinski, 2010; Kutateladze, Andiloro, Johnson, & Spohn, 2014; Schlesinger, 2005; Wang, Xia, et al., 2013).

One reason behind these differences in treatment may be racial discrimination, which is when an individual is singled out and mistreated due to their race and/or ethnicity (Coster & Thompson, 2017). Hate crimes are defined as criminal offenses that are motivated, in any capacity, by bias towards another's race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and/or gender identity. Based on data from the Uniform Crime Report, hate crimes fueled by anti-Hispanic and Latino sentiments have increased in the past few years (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2017). These findings reflect the nation's growing concern over racism and discrimination against minorities. Since Latinx populations are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016) and with the rise in racialized crime against them, it is important to expand the current literature on racial strain for Latinx minorities. From the theoretical proposition set by GST, this study seeks to determine whether a

Latinx American's experience with racial discrimination, as a strain, is related to their approval of legal and illegal protests as coping mechanisms.

Relevant components of this study consist of: the development of strain and an overview of GST; racial minorities, strain, and the intersection of gender; understanding racial strain and coping mechanisms through the lens of GST; the measurement of racial strain and identifying forms of protest as methods for coping; and an examination of Latinx American's unique experiences with strain. Data from a Latino Second Generation Study examines the political experiences and attitudes of Latinx Americans. To explore the research questions, responses towards experiences with discrimination are included, along with the respondent's approval of legal and illegal protests. Accepted forms of protest are important because stress literature cites them as the responses to mistreatment. From this dataset a series of questions will be adapted for the use of focus groups consisting of Latinx, college-aged students from a public university community. The data from these focus groups are intended to highlight the current experiences of Latinx populations with discrimination; thereby allowing this study to not only examine the likelihood of those in this minority group to accept non-deviant or deviant coping responses but also to offer potential explanations for these findings and contextualize the Latinx experience.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strain theory

Robert Merton introduced the theoretical model of strain in 1938 (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). Building upon Durkheim's research on anomie theory, strain theory examines deviancy through a socioeconomic structure. Merton's theory of strain suggests that components of society, such as legal opportunity, can act as barriers that prevent a person from achieving goals accepted by our society (Merton, 1938). The effect of these barriers can cause strain on an individual and increase the likelihood of them turning towards deviant behavior (Featherstone & Deflam, 2003). Merton (1967) notes that those in a lower socioeconomic strata have fewer legal opportunities to pursue culturally valued goals and are therefore more likely to innovate by obtaining these goals through a culturally rejected, or criminal way.

Merton's work brings about two theoretical arguments in regards to criminal behavior (Murphy & Robinson, 2008). The first bases criminal behavior as a product of capitalism from pressure between the value of success and the importance of pursuing that success through a legitimate means. The second is a structural argument that proposes that criminality is a function of differences of legitimate opportunity within society. These theoretical propositions by Merton set the stage for criminologists in furthering the development of theories regarding the function of socioeconomic structures and criminal behavior (Murphy & Robinson, 2008).

Agnew's General Strain Theory

Mentioned earlier, GST extends strain theory into the micro level by highlighting how individual experiences with the removal or presence of certain stimuli can influence the function

of a person's goals and means to achieve them (Brezina, 1996). This can lead to delinquent or criminal behavior, depending on how one chooses to cope with these maladaptive feelings. Agnew (1992) groups the deviant responses of juveniles into three categories: escape-avoidance, compensation, and retaliation. Escape-avoidance behaviors reduce negative affect by reducing the juveniles' time spent around that strained social relation. This is apparent in juvenile behavior such as running away from home or truancy from school. Compensation adaptations involve juveniles replacing or making up for the lack of a valued stimuli. Acts of shoplifting as a means to obtain a desired item or illicit drug use done to ward off feelings of depression highlight this adaptation. Retaliatory adaptations, such as physical aggression or vandalism, minimize the feelings of victimization by empowering the juvenile through their own aggression. While the sources of strain vary greatly between juveniles and adults, these responses to strain can also be seen in how adults choose to cope (Brezina, 1996).

Agnew (1992) holds that strain can fall into three categories: the failure to achieve valued resources or goals; the removal of a positively valued stimuli; and the presence of an averse or noxious stimuli. He proposes that when one experiences these variations of strain, negative affect is generated, and this creates a pressure for 'corrective action'. Negative affect includes the feelings associated with a poor self-concept such as anger, sadness, guilt, and nervousness. Corrective action is how one chooses to cope or react to these feelings.

Responses to combat the negative affect experienced from strain can be grouped into either legitimate or illegitimate coping mechanisms (Broidy & Santoro, 2018). Agnew (1997) notes that a legitimate coping mechanism is a legal or socially-sanctioned response, while an illegitimate coping mechanism is one that is criminal or otherwise antisocial. For example, a

legitimate coping mechanism against a strain, such as academic stress, can include talking about ones feelings or forming a study group with classmates. An illegitimate coping response to this same strain can include choosing to not study and accept the failure or to cheat on the exam. The important part to consider is that illegitimate coping does not have to be inherently criminogenic, such as choosing to give up on studying and accepting a bad grade, but it could. Overall, GST suggests that when a person is faced with strain, they experience negative affect, and then they could choose to respond through a legitimate coping mechanism that promotes socially-sanctioned actions or an illegitimate coping mechanism, which promotes antisocial or criminogenic behavior. Through the lens of GST, there are legitimate empirical questions about whether the experiences and responses to strain can vary between racial minorities.

Racial minorities and strain

Scholarship on Latinx populations highlight the importance of identifying ethnic-specific strains (Perez & Gover, 2008). Perez and Gover (2008) found that strains related to cultural assimilation had different impacts in Hispanic populations. They found support that Hispanic youths were likely to engage in violent delinquency when they were more accultured and had greater levels of intergenerational conflict. Intergenerational conflict between Hispanic youth and their parents stemmed from differences in their comprehension of English. These findings echo the importance of taking into consideration strains unique to minority populations.

Although, General Strain Theory is applicable to all racial and ethnic identities, Blacks and African Americans are often the sampled population. Studies involving racial discrimination closely follow African American minorities because the historical evidence of the racial discrimination that they experience can be traced through centuries of inequality (Broidy &

Santoro, 2018; Coster & Thompson, 2017). Together, Black men and women are more likely to experience racial strain (Jang, 2007). Highlighting the intersection of gender and race in racial strain literature, Black men and women differ in their emotional responses to strain. Black women are more likely to experience self-directed emotions of depression and anxiety whereas Black men are more inclined to experience other directed emotions such as anger. Although Black women are more likely to report 'female strains' related to physical health, interpersonal relationships, and gender roles, they are also more likely to report predominately 'male strains' involving financial success and security (Jang, 2007). This reflects the growing number of Black women becoming heads of their households as well as holding more responsibility in their overall income.

The intersection between gender and race

Briefly mentioned in strain and race, differences in coping between racial groups can be compounded by differences between genders. In regards to gender, Broidy and Agnew (1997) propose that differences stem from a difference in the goals. They believed that men's goals generally revolve around material success, extrinsic achievements, and distributive justice. With these sets of goals, men are likely to experience strain related to finances and work (Jang, 2007). Meaning, work related strains could influence interpersonal conflicts arising from competitiveness. Their classification of these 'masculine strains' are thought to promote confrontational, other-directed deviance, and crime. In support of this, scholarship on Hispanic youth found that males were more likely to commit property offending, than females (Jennings, Piquero, Gover, Perez, 2009).

Women's goals are often expected to include interpersonal relations, the meaning/purposes of life, and procedural justice (Broidy & Agnew, 1997). These sets of goals make women more likely to experience interpersonal or relational strain. Strains most prevalent to women include gender discrimination and conflict between gender roles at work/home. These types of strain for women promote self-directed or self-destructive forms of deviance, such as depression, eating disorders, or drug abuse. They also promoted escape-avoidance mechanisms that were non-deviant such as selective ignoring or choosing to block out the negative stimuli. While less likely to cope in an other-directed, aggressive way like men, women were found to experience higher levels of anger than men. (Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Jennings, Piquero, Gover, Perez, 2009) How is this consistent with the general strain literature if men were more likely to be deviant? Broidy and Agnew (1997) suggest that accompanying feelings of fear, anxiety, guilt, and shame mitigate the feelings of anger that women experience. Jennings, Piquero, Gover, and Perez (2009) found Hispanic female youths' use of physical coping, such as being involved in music, served as means to mitigate the relationship between their depression and their engagement of interpersonal aggression. The mitigation in women's anger through their self-directed feelings and use of legitimate coping are in stark contrast to how men's anger is accompanied by moral outrage, or other-directed feelings. This is all consistent with women reporting higher levels of depression and guilt regardless of having higher or similar levels of anger when compared to men.

Women and men are socialized to internalize and externalize their anger, respectively (Jang, 2007). Stress literature does not show women having a significant advantage over men with being less likely to respond to strain with deviance. However, when gender role

socialization, gender stereotypes, and gender identities are taken into consideration, this difference becomes clearer. Existing literature finds that women are more likely to be involved in religion. These religiosity effects may explain how they are more likely to use legitimate coping mechanisms (Jang, 2007). Although women are higher in emotional support, coping mechanisms that are self-focused and non-confrontational may be used as a way to avoid jeopardizing these interpersonal relationships that they value. When women are low in self-esteem, security, and confidence, this becomes more apparent (Broidy & Agnew, 1997). With these differences between the genders taken into consideration, we can extend our understanding of General Strain Theory by considering these variations in regards to one's own race.

Racial strain and coping mechanisms through GST

Agnew (2013) proposes that discrimination is a uniquely criminogenic strain that can lead to crime for the following reasons. First, he finds that discrimination is high in magnitude due to its pervasiveness and repetitive nature in society. Next, Agnew states that discrimination is an experience uniformly seen as unjust. Third, he finds that discrimination compromises the ties between those experiencing said strain and social institutions, thereby reducing the effects of social control. Lastly, those who are discriminated against themselves receive an enhancement within their in-group ties and are more likely to foster a shared sense of anger or frustration. This collective sense of dissatisfaction creates a pressure for criminal or illegitimate coping. These conclusions of criminal coping are supported in findings that suggest that discrimination as a strain leads to feelings of other-directed blame (Hoskin, 2013).

Coping mechanisms are the reactions made after experiencing strain. When focusing on racial strain, the response to protest can vary and be categorized as a legitimate or illegitimate

coping mechanism (Broidy & Santoro, 2018). Studies assessing Black involvement in legal protest and illegal protest reflect a legitimate and illegitimate coping response to racial strain, respectively. Although Agnew (2001) states that discrimination as a strain is more conducive to crime, Broidy and Santoro (2018) found that racial discrimination can influence both coping styles, as Blacks involved in both legal and illegal protest reported experiencing this strain. Frustration as a result of experiencing discrimination is a greater indicator of one choosing to protest violently, or cope illegitimately. Blacks that engage in one method of collective protest were likely to engage in other forms. Meaning blacks that choose to cope illegitimately through illegal protest were also likely to cope legitimately though legal demonstrations and vice-versa.

Measurement of racial strain and typologies of protest

Racial strain is generally measured through experiences of racial discrimination. Historically, discrimination towards Blacks is found to be measured between their interactions with others such as police, storeowners, employers, school, or city services (Broidy & Santoro, 2014, 2018; Hoskin, 2013; Jang 2007). Survey data of this nature asks respondents about the severity, frequency, and context of the discrimination that they have experienced due to their race.

Stress literature finds that experiences of mistreatment inspire protest (Broidy & Santoro, 2018) Existing GST scholarship on strain with Black and African American populations cite protest as responses to racial strain (Broidy & Santoro, 2014, 2018). This is showcased in Brody and Santoro's (2018) work, where discrimination and racial frustration experienced by Blacks were found to correlate with non-violent civil rights protests and rioting. Protesting is commonly grouped as action that is either passive or direct. However in regards to General Strain Theory,

protest as a coping response to strain can be grouped as either a legitimate coping mechanism or as an illegitimate coping mechanism (Broidy & Santoro, 2014, 2018; Coster & Thompson, 2017). Forms of legal protest as a legitimate coping mechanism can be seen through non-violence, picketing, marches, boycotts, or sit-ins. Forms of illegal protest as an illegitimate coping mechanism include those who approve of violence or have participated in rioting. Following the interpretation of existing literature, the present study examines the acceptance of positive protest as the legitimate coping response and the acceptance of illegal protest as the illegitimate coping response to racial strain.

Latinx Americans and strain

Scholarship on the Latinx experience in the criminal justice system highlights the potential for the presence of a bias towards Latinx populations (Hoskin, 2013). When looking at the relationship between Latinx and the criminal justice system, Latinx individuals are more likely to be referred by formal means compared to Whites. Studies in racial disparities in the frequency of traffic stops showcases a greater likelihood for Latinx persons to be stopped compared to Whites (Roh & Robinson, 2009). And when accounting for gender, Latino men are more likely to receive mandatory minimum punishments (Hoskin, 2013)

In regards to delinquency, Latinx youth face strains unique to themselves. The juvenile justice system's shift from rehabilitative to punitive justice increased the likelihood that a juvenile would be charged with a crime. This likelihood is magnified when that juvenile is of a Latinx origin (Stevens & Morash, 2015). Latinx adolescents are also less likely to use positive appraisal and problem solving skills as a means to cope with violent situations when compared to Black youths (Hoskin, 2013). While they may choose to cope with these unique strains

differently than Whites, Latinx youth are less likely to cope or respond through delinquent acts. This is in stark contrast to the response of White youth to strain, as they are more likely to cope in a way that promotes more serious acts of delinquency.

Coster and Thompson (2017) emphasize that racial strain is unique to non-Whites because there is evidence of disadvantage in the system. Similar to the self-directed emotions felt by Blacks, research on Latinx American's experiences with discrimination and prejudice showcases greater likelihoods of psychological distress, depression, and thoughts of suicide (Hoskin, 2013). Consistent with the emotional implications of discrimination, victims of racial profiling experience similar reactions in the form of fear, frustration, depression, and anger (Birzer & Smith-Mahdi, 2006).

This study seeks to expand GST research in regards to coping mechanisms. Examining the experiences of Latinx populations under the context of racial strain adds to existing literature over the influence of racial discrimination and coping. Through the examination of a secondary dataset and focus group interview data with measures for racial discrimination and accepted forms of protest, it will be possible to see if experiences with racial discrimination make it more likely for Latinx populations to accept legal and illegal forms of protest. The current study will explore the experiences of Latinx Americans with racial strain and their approval of legal and illegal protests.

CHAPTER 3

CURRENT STUDY

The present study is a mixed methods approach focusing on racial discrimination as a source of strain and coping mechanisms for Latinx minorities. Legitimate coping mechanisms for this study are measured through Latinx approval of legal protests. Illegitimate coping mechanisms are measured by the approval of illegal protests. Responses on acceptable means of protest are being tested because existing literature cites these forms of protesting as responses from similarly oppressed minority groups (Broidy & Santoro, 2018).

Scholarship on racial discrimination suggests that African Americans are likely to engage in both legal and illegal protests after experiencing racial strain (Broidy & Santoro, 2018). Like Blacks, Latinx populations are found to experience high levels of psychological distress in the face of racial discrimination (Hoskin, 2013). Despite these commonalities, scholarship on GST and discrimination focuses heavily on the experiences of Blacks and African Americans. Due to these similarities and the lack of literature, this study seeks to examine the relationship between Latinx American's experiences with racial strain and their attitudes towards different forms of protest.

Hypotheses

Previous research on strain and coping methods shows racial discrimination as a source of strain that is unique to minorities. While existing literature often focuses on the African American/Black experience with racial strain and coping, this current study seeks to expand our understanding of GST for Latinx populations. The first half of this study takes a quantitative

approach through the examination of an existing dataset while the latter adds a qualitative perspective through focus group interviews of Latinx college students.

This study tests two hypotheses:

H1: Experiences with racial strain increases the likelihood that female Latinx individuals will approve of legal protests. Latinx women who report experiencing racial discrimination will be more likely to accept legal protest as an effective means for political change. This hypothesis suggests that unlike Latinx men, Latinx women are more likely to embrace this as a legitimate coping mechanism as a response to the maladaptive feelings brought upon by their experiences with racial discrimination. This hypothesis is supported through scholarship that highlights the coping mechanisms of women to be less confrontational and whose anger is more likely to be mitigated by self-directed emotions (Agnew 1997; Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Jang, 2007).

H2: Experiences with racial strain will increase the likelihood that male Latinx individuals will approve of illegal protests. Latinx men who report experiencing racial discrimination will be more likely to accept illegal protest as an effective means for political change. This hypothesis suggests that unlike Latinx women, Latinx men are more likely to embrace this as an illegitimate coping mechanism as a response to the maladaptive feelings brought upon by their experiences with racial discrimination. This is supported by existing literature that finds men being more inclined to experience other-directed anger in regards to strain (Hoskin, 2013; Jang, 2007). For this population, the cultural acceptance of mashismo could influence why a Latinx man would be more inclined to accept illegal protest. Prevalent in Latinx communities, machismo culture promotes and normalizes male aggressiveness as a positive trait (Ingoldsby, 1991). Tying back with the acceptance of illegal protest, it may be more

'manly' to aggressively show disdain with the physical damage of property in a protest as opposed to an organized, peaceful march.

In order to test these two hypotheses, this study will begin by taking a quantitative approach. This will be done in order to examine the relationship between Latinx American's experiences with racial discrimination and their acceptance of different forms of protest. A qualitative analyses of focus group interview data will be done in order to further understand the findings of our quantitative research. The nature of the focus group interviews gives an opportunity for our respondents to give more in depth answers when compared to the responses from the survey data.

Quantitative Methods

Sample

The first portion of this research uses data from a study involving second generation Latinx American born adults and their political attitudes. The sample size of this survey data includes 1,050 respondents between the ages of 16 to 35. Sixty-one percent identified as female and 39% identified as male. The majority have an education beyond the completion of high school and make less than the average U.S. income of $60,000. Most participants identified as unmarried. In regards to their Latinx identification, this includes Spanish and Hispanic descent. The dataset includes those who identified as Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, South American, Caribbean, and other. These categories are collapsed in the final dataset and only identifies participants as Latinx.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Sample Statistics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (n=1031)		
16-20	280	27.16 %
21-25	426	41.32 %
26-30	275	26.67 %
31-35	50	4.85 %
Gender (n=1028)		
Female	633	61.58 %
Male	395	38.42 %
Education (n=1031)		
Below High School	69	6.69 %
High School and Above	962	93.31 %
Yearly Income (n=1031)		
Less than $60,000	873	67.12 %
$60,000 or above	158	32.88 %
Work Status (n=301)		
Unemployed	135	43.97 %
Employed	172	56.03 %
Marital Status (n=997)		
Not married	626	62.79 %
Married	371	37.21 %

Table 3.2. Survey Responses

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rate of Experiences with Discrimination (n=1031)		
Yes, I have experienced racism.	654	63.43 %
Prevalence of Discrimination (n=1031)		
None	18	1.84 %
A little bit	127	13.01 %
Moderate amount	395	40.47 %
A lot	262	26.84 %
Great Deal	174	17.83 %
Perception of Prejudice – Sentiments (n=886)		
Disagree strongly	53	5.98 %
Disagree somewhat	68	7.67 %
Neither agree nor disagree	262	29.57 %
Agee somewhat	308	34.76 %
Agree strongly	195	22.01 %
Participation Rate in 2006 Immigration Rallies (n=1031)		
Did participate	643	62.37 %
Rate of Acceptance in Breaking the Law as Political Statements (n=906)		
Never acceptable	556	61.37 %
Under exceptional circumstances	280	30.91 %
Sometimes legitimate	70	7.73 %
Approval of Legal Protests (n=1031)		
Approve	468	45.39 %
Approval of Illegal Protests (n=1031)		
Approve	64	6.21 %

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Dependent Variables

Acceptance of Forms of Protest

For our first hypothesis, the acceptance of legal protest is the dependent variable that will be measured by asking participants if they believe legal protest is effective in pushing for political change. Acts of legal protest include activities such as rallies and marches. For our second hypothesis, the acceptance of illegal protest is the dependent variable that will be measured by asking participants if they believe illegal protest is effective in pushing for political change. Acts of illegal protest include activities such as riots and the destruction of public property. Responses for both of these activities are coded with a 0 for no and a 1 for yes. Table 4.2 highlights the frequency and percentage of the participants' responses.

Independent Variables

Experiences with Discrimination

The independent variable is a measure of the participants' experiences with racial discrimination. For this measure, the survey question asks participants if they have ever been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity. Aside from asking participants if they experienced or did not experience discrimination due to their racial/ethnic background the survey included responses based on where they may have experienced discrimination such as at work, in a store, in a government building, at school, in a club/restaurant, or in the presence of police. This questions is coded into a bivariate response where no experience of discrimination is coded as a 0 and where any experience with discrimination, regardless of the context, is coded as a 1 for yes. Table 4.2 highlights the frequency and percentage of the participants' responses.

Control Variables

Variables controlled for this study include demographic information, responses in regards to the prevalence of discrimination, perceptions of prejudice, accepted actions in political statements, and participation in rallies. Demographic information for this study contains responses for age, gender, education, yearly income, work status, and marital status. Age is categorized into four age brackets ranging from 16 to 35 years old. The survey measures gender dichotomously as male or female. Education is measured as a 0 for below a high school education and 1 for high school/continued education. Yearly income is measured with a 0 for below the national, yearly standard of living, $60,000, and 1 for at/above $60,000. Work status is measured with a 0 for unemployed and a 1 for employed. Marital status is measured dichotomously with a 0 for not married and a 1 for married. Please refer to Table 3.2 for frequency and percentage data.

The prevalence of discrimination is measured by asking respondents how much discrimination is there in the United States against Latinx based on a five point, likert scale from low to high in prevalence. Perceptions of what is prejudice comes from the survey question asking participants if they believe that anti-immigrant sentiments are actually anti-Latinx sentiments. This is measured on a five point likert scale from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing. The accepted actions in political statements variable asks participants if it is ever acceptable to break the law in order to make a political statement through illegal protesting activities such as damaging property or putting the lives of others at risk. It is measured on a three point, likert scale from least to most acceptance. Participation in rallies refers to whether or not survey responders participated in a series of rallies in the spring of 2006 against the proposal

in making undocumented citizens and those who aided them into felons. It is measured

dichotomously as either a 0 for did not participate or a 1 marking their participation in these

rallies. Please refer to Table 4.1 for the frequency and percentages of participant responses to

these questions.

Table 3.3. Correlation Matrix

	Approve Legal Protest	Approve Illegal Protest	Paricipate in 2006 Rallies	Approve of Breaking the Law for a Politicial Statement	Experiences with Discrimination	Prevalence of Discrimination	Perception of Prejudice	Age	Education	Gender	Income	Marital Status
Approve Legal Protest	1											
Approve Illegal Protest	0.0674	1										
Paricipate in 2006 Rallies	-0.1178	-0.1238	1									
Approve of Breaking the Law for a Politicial Statement	0.04	0.3188	-0.1069	1								
Experiences with Discrimination	0.0449	0.0938	-0.209	0.0199	1							
Prevalence of Discrimination	0.0397	0.0078	-0.1099	-0.0016	0.2527	1						
Perception of Prejudice	0.0963	0.0197	-0.1084	0.0614	0.0833	0.1923	1					
Age	-0.0927	-0.0425	0.0876	-0.0894	-0.0465	0.004	-0.0245	1				
Education	0.0684	-0.0559	-0.0237	-0.0645	-0.037	-0.0661	0.0086	0.0203	1			
Gender	-0.0353	0.1079	-0.0069	0.1009	-0.0059	-0.1028	0.0346	0.0387	-0.0892	1		
Income	0.0272	-0.0125	0.0579	0.0461	-0.0084	-0.0464	0.0268	0.1554	0.0718	0.0351	1	
Marital Status	-0.1491	-0.014	0.003	-0.1055	0.0256	0.0255	-0.0119	0.3459	-0.0306	-0.1532	0.0291	1

The correlation matrix on Table 3.3 shows the strength and direction between each of our

listed variables. Positive values indicate the relationship between two variables are positive and

have a direct relationship. Negative values indicate the relationships is negative and indirect. The

strengths in these relationships are interpreted by their proximity to -1, 0, and 1. On a sliding

scale, values closer to 1 or -1 represent stronger relationships and values closer to 0 can be

interpreted as lesser in strength. It is important to note that the approval of illegal protest and the approval of breaking the law for a political statement have the highest value (+0.3188) among the relationships of our variables. These two variables can be interpreted as having a weak direct relationship.

The quantitative data for this study are essential in our understanding of racial strain and coping mechanisms. The data give us the opportunity to examine potential relationships between these chosen variables. The following qualitative data will allow our respondents to go into further detail than the answer choices provided by the survey data. This insight will provide aid in our understanding of our quantitative data.

Qualitative Methods

Sample

After receiving approval to conduct this study by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), Latinx student organizations at the university were contacted by their organization's official email and social media pages. The principal investigator was invited by organizations wanting to participate and an introduction of the study was given at two, Latinx student organization meetings. A total of 13 Latinx adults from a public, college community participated in this study. Six of the participants identified as male and seven identified as female. This sample is not randomly generated and is therefore one of convenience.

Interview Format

Overall, two focus group interviews were conducted, with the first comprising six participants and the second with seven participants. After reaching out to their student organization, these participants chose to stay after their meeting for an additional 45 to 60

minutes to discuss their opinions of racial discrimination and forms of protest as means for political change. Ten discussion prompts were given to these participants to discuss.

Interview Prompts

The focus group interview data supplement the dataset by allowing participants to elaborate on their responses in regards to racial frustration and accepted methods for political change. Prompts over racial frustration asks participants questions such as whether they believe racial discrimination towards Latinx have increased in the past 3 years. Prompts over the acceptance in methods for political change asks participants for their opinions if actions such as protesting should only be done if they are legal to do so. This open interview format allows participants to elaborate and explain the reasoning behind their. The complete list of discussion prompts for these interviews are available under the Appendix section.

Analysis

Simple descriptive statistics are reported for the control variables, such as the demographic data. Survey responses for demographics, perceived discrimination, perceptions of prejudice, accepted action in political statements, and the participation in the 2006 rallies are analyzed as control variables. Model 1 will rely on a logistic regression test to examine the relationship between the dependent variable for the acceptance of legal protest and the independent variable for the experiences of racial discrimination. This test is necessary because the dependent variable for the acceptance of legal protest is a dichotomous variable, coded as either accepting or not accepting. This bivariate dependent variable violates the assumption of linearity needed in other tests such as in ordinary least squares (OLS) and the logistic regression test will allow us to estimate the regression coefficients for these variables. This regression

coefficient will show us whether or not a relationship exists between the acceptance of legal protest and experiences of racial discrimination. Model 2 will also use a logistic regression test to examine the relationship between the dependent variable of the acceptance of illegal protest and the independent variable for the experiences of racial discrimination. This will be done for the similar reasons because the dependent variable for the acceptance of illegal protest is coded dichotomously as accepting and non-accepting.

The odds ratio is determined by the regression coefficients. For model 1, this would be the likelihood that a Latinx respondent will accept legal protest given their response to our independent and control variables. In regards to our hypotheses, an odds ratio equal to 0 is interpreted as the tested variable having no effect on the odds, a value greater than 1 is interpreted as the tested variable is likely to produce an acceptance for legal protest, and a value less than 1 means that the tested variable is unlikely to produce an acceptance of legal protest.

For model 2, the regression coefficients associated with the acceptance of illegal protest, will be used to determine the odds ratio. With this, we will be able to not only identify a relationship between our dependent and independent variable, but we will be able to determine the odds for the dependent variable, the acceptance of illegal protest, to occur given the presence of the independent variable, experiences with racial discrimination. Similarly, an odds ratio equal to 0 is interpreted as the tested variable having no effect on the odds, a value greater than 1 is interpreted as the tested variable is likely to produce an acceptance for illegal protest, and a value less than 1 means that the tested variable is unlikely to produce an acceptance of illegal protest.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the focus group interview responses will be used in support of the quantitative data. Survey questions in regards to racial frustration and the

acceptance of protest present a finite number of responses. The focus group interview prompts allow participants to elaborate on their responses by discussing certain instances of racial frustration or certain conditions that may influence their acceptance in forms of protest. The qualitative data fill in the gaps that responses to the survey data do not address or take into consideration.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Quantitative Analyses

This chapter presents the logistic regression of model 1 for the acceptance of legal protest and model 2 for the acceptance of illegal protest. The total number of survey respondents in the regression is 789. Table 4.1 shows the results of the logistic regression for model 1 in regards to the approval of legal protest. Table 4.2 displays the logistic regression results for model 2 in regards to the approval of illegal protest. The odds ratio for models 1 and 2 highlight the odds that the acceptance for a certain form of protest may occur, given the occurrence or acceptance of the tested variable.

Table 4.1. Logistic Regression of Model 1 - Predicting the Approval of Legal Protest

Variable	Legal Protest (n=789; pseudo R2=0.0390)	
	OR	β(SE)
Age	0.91	0.08
Gender	0.78	0.12
Education	1.66	0.53
Yearly Income	1.24	0.24
Marital Status	0.54	0.08***
Experienced Discrimination	1.08	0.17
Prevalence of Discrimination	1.02	0.08
Perceived Prejudice	1.16	0.08*
Acceptance in Law Breaking	1.04	0.12
Participation in Rallies	0.64	0.10

Note. OR = odds ratio.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 4.2. Logistic Regression of Model 2 – Predicting the Approval of Illegal Protest

Variable	Illegal Protest (n=789; pseudo R2=0.2161)	
	OR	β(SE)
Age	0.90	0.17
Gender	1.88	0.58*
Education	0.73	0.38
Yearly Income	0.81	0.33
Marital Status	1.43	0.48
Experienced Discrimination	2.42	0.94*
Prevalence of Discrimination	0.89	0.51
Perceived Prejudice	0.98	0.14
Acceptance in Law Breaking	5.12	1.14***
Participation in Rallies	0.48	0.14*

Note. OR = odds ratio.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Acceptance of Legal Protest

Our first hypothesis looks to see if experiences of racial strain increase the likelihood that female Latinx individuals will approve of legal protests. The logistic regression helps us test H1 by examining the relationship between our binary variable of legal protest acceptance, our independent variable of experienced discrimination, and our control variables. The odds ratios showcase the odds one will approve of legal protest, given the presence of the tested variables. The findings of Table 4.1 suggest that there is insufficient evidence to support a significant relationship between Latinx women's experiences of racial discrimination and approval of legal protest because the probability values for gender ($p=0.119$) and experienced discrimination ($p=0.629$) are both greater than an alpha level of .05. This is a particularly interesting finding because similar studies assessing experiences with discrimination and forms of protest for Blacks and African Americans found that the occurrence of discrimination actually increased the likelihood of both legal and illegal protest (Broidy & Santoro, 2018). While this may be the case,

the results of Table 4.1 suggests that there are other variables that may serve as correlates in the acceptance of legal protest.

Table 4.1 show marital status (p=0.000) and perceived prejudice (p=0.028) as having p-values less than .05. Due to this, we can interpret these two variables as statistically significant correlates to the acceptance of legal protest. While the p-value of marital status says that this variable is a significant correlate, the odds ratio (OR=0.54), tells us that being married is unlikely to produce an acceptance of legal protest. The odds ratio of perceived prejudice tells us that those who perceive anti-immigrant sentiments to be anti-Latinx sentiments are 1.16 times more likely to accept legal protest.

Acceptance of Illegal Protest

Our second hypothesis looks to see if experiences of racial strain increase the likelihood that male Latinx individuals will approve of illegal protests. The logistic regression helps us test H2 by examining the relationship between our binary variable of illegal protest acceptance, our independent variable of experienced discrimination, and our control variables. The odds ratios highlight how one will approve of illegal protest given the presence of our tested variables. The findings of Table 4.2 suggest that that there is sufficient evidence to support a significant relationship between Latinx men's experiences with racial discrimination and the approval of illegal protest. This is because the probability values for gender (p=0.04) and experienced discrimination (0.02) are both less than an alpha level of .05. The odds ratio for gender tells us that men are 1.88 times more likely to accept illegal protest. Those who experience discrimination are 2.42 times more likely to accept protests that are illegal, as well. The data suggests that these men chose to cope with the maladaptive feelings associated with racial strain

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by adopting an illegitimate coping mechanism being illegal protest. This is consistent with current literature as men are more likely to experience other-directed feelings and adopt illegitimate coping mechanisms associated with anger and violence (Broidy & Santoro, 2018)

Table 4.2 also shows the acceptance in law breaking for political statements (p=0.000) and one's participation in the 2006 rallies (p=0.019) as significant correlates to the acceptance of illegal protest. Similar to gender and experienced discrimination, this is because the p-values in the acceptance of breaking the law for a political message and the participation against the anti-immigrant rallies are less than an alpha level of .05. While both are significant, only the odds ratio for the acceptance in law breaking for a political message shows a greater odds in the acceptance of illegal protest at 5.12 times more likely. Table 3.3 supplements these findings as the correlation between these two variables (+0.3188) is interpreted as a direct relationship, albeit weak. Through GST, the findings suggest that these participants cope with strain associated with making legal change through illegitimate coping means. As such, participants would also choose an illegitimate coping style by adopting illegal forms of protesting. While different, these illegitimate coping styles of breaking the law for a political statement and illegal protesting share similar characteristics by promoting anti-social behaviors (Agnew, 1997).

Qualitative Analyses

As mentioned in the methods section, the 13 participants in the focus group interviews responded to prompts based on racial frustration and the acceptance in measures for political change.

Measures of Racial Frustration

All participants stated that in the past 2 years, racial discrimination towards Latinx populations have increased. Both men and women agreed that increased attention on immigration and citizenship status contribute to these growing anti-Latinx sentiments. Participants discussed how they have seen discrimination against them grow on a nationwide scale. Everyone agreed that racists and white supremacists have become emboldened by negative media portrayal of Latinx, specifically, Mexican immigrants. Participants discussed how this is evident by the presence of hate groups on college campuses.

Twelve of the 13 participants discussed how these microaggressions, or indirect acts of discrimination, are growing and becoming more apparent in their lives. Participants discussed how their own citizenship status' have been brought into question despite being American citizens.

A female participant discussed how people who do not know her on a personal level feel entitled to ask about her citizenship status without provocation:

> After mock trial practice, a girl that I've seen a few times from the group came up to me and asked if I was a U.S. (United States) citizen. I was taken back because I didn't know this person at all and the question was so out of the blue. Out of everyone there, she chose to come up to me and ask that question.

A male participant discussed how he and his co-workers of similar ethnic backgrounds are not considered when it comes to upward movement in their professions:

> My dad and I work at the same place. Lately there have been openings for positions above what we have. He and his friends haven't even been considered for those higher positions and instead these white guys have been getting invited for interviews. At this company, they're interviewing White people for these positions above us that don't have the knowledge or experience in the business to

back it up. Even though I'm more qualified than them, they are still getting picked over us.

These interview responses are of particular importance as it supports ideas presented in the quantitative data such as how anti-immigration can be perceived as an anti-Latinx sentiment. As a perceived prejudice, immigration may serve as a source of racial strain that Latinx populations must cope with.

Acceptance in the Measures for Political Change

Both male and female participants stressed the importance of education in regards to political change. While all participants agreed that riots and property damage are not the most effective ways to get a political point across, male participants were first to express how sometimes illegal protest may be the only option. Examples participants gave include the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests that continued despite being suppressed by the Chinese government and the Black Lives Matter's Movement led protests that continued despite the issuing of a curfew to stop citizens from being out on the street. Through the lens of GST, these responses are supported by existing literature that finds men more likely to cope illegitimately because the emotional responses they experience from strain tend to promote confrontational, other-directed deviance (Broidy & Santoro, 2018; Jang, 2007). This supports the findings from the survey data that Latinx men are about 1.88 times more likely to accept illegal protest than women.

Five of the seven female participants expressed agreement in illegal protest being acceptable under certain conditions. The female participants were the first to define these acceptable conditions as illegal protests where no one could be physically harmed and that the destruction of property must not be thoughtless or rampant. The acceptability of property damage

brought up how the destruction of property is justified so long as it is in line with the political message, such as defacing a Confederate statue, because it may be seen as a symbol of hate in the eyes of non-Whites. This is consistent with GST literature on the coping styles of women, where these exceptions to illegal protest or illegitimate coping may serve as a means to mitigate confrontation and protects interpersonal relationships (Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Jang, 2007). These responses provide support for our findings in model 1, where marital status is a significant correlate for legal protest. For opposite-sex marriages, the presence of a woman being more inclined to impose conditions for illegal protest may influence and dampen a man's likelihood in embracing illegal protest as an illegitimate coping response.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The results for model 1 show that experiences with racial discrimination are not statistically significant correlates in the acceptance of legal and illegal protest. While this may be the case, marital status and perceived prejudice are variables that are found to be statistically significant correlates in the approval of legal protest. Although they are both significant correlates, only the odds ratio for perceived prejudice found that those who perceive anti-immigration to be an anti-Latinx sentiment are 1.16 times more likely to accept legal protest.

Model 2 found sufficient support for H2, that Latinx men are more likely to support illegal protest when experiencing racial discrimination. Men are 1.88 times more likely to accept illegal protest and experiencing discrimination makes one 2.42 times more likely as well. The acceptance of breaking the law for a political statement and the participation in the 2006 marches against anti-immigration policies, are significant correlates for the acceptance of illegal protest. Much like perceived prejudice, only the odds ratio for the acceptance of breaking the law for a political statement found that those who accept this are 5.12 times more likely to accept illegal protest.

The focus group interviews supports our quantitative findings. All participants discussed how the growing anti-Latinx discrimination is linked to a heightened focus on immigration and citizenship. This ties with our model 1 findings of the significance in the perceptions of prejudice with anti-immigration sentiments being seen as anti-Latinx. Latinx men in the group interviews were the ones to accept illegal protest as an option without bringing up conditions; unlike Latinx women who emphasized its support, given circumstances where physical violence could not play

a role and where the destruction of property only allowed the defacement of symbols associated with anti-minority sentiments. These answers reinforce the findings of model 2, where men are found to be more likely to accept illegal protest.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations

In regards to the dataset, the sample size is a limitation. After accounting for missing responses, the sample of our logistic regression dropped from 1,000+ respondents to 789. A similar study would benefit from a much larger sample size in order to be more representative of the population. While the survey asked participants about their specific racial/ethnic identification under the umbrella category of Latinx, the dataset did not provide these specific identifiers, and collapsed the data for this identifier as only Latinx. As such, this study was unable to examine differences in regards to specific Latinx racial/ethnic identities.

Although the dataset is a sample collected randomly, the sampling of the focus group interview participants is a limitation. The sampling for those respondents is one of convenience as Latinx groups at the university were specifically contacted in order to reach the intended population of interest. Since participants were of the same student organization, there may have been pressure for students to respond in a way that they believed to be acceptable while in the company of their peers. Future researchers should consider these limitations when exploring this topic of racial strain and coping.

Future Research

Future research should continue to examine GST and coping mechanisms of Latinx minorities, especially in regards to forms of protest. GST helps us measure individual level

responses to racial strain and we can see how an individual may be more accepting to legal and/or illegal protest as a coping response. The findings of these individual responses may have greater implications as a group response, as approval and participation in protest may grow into a social movement. It may be worthwhile to continue observing how minority individuals cope with racial strain and their attitudes towards protest as means to conceptualize the grander scope of a group response in social movements.

To improve from our limitations, future studies should examine the specific ethnic/racial classifications under the umbrella category of Latinx as there may be distinct cultural differences that influence how these unique populations cope with racial strain. Continued scholarship on GST and coping mechanisms of Latinx minorities should take into account the current and cultural sources of racialized strain; such as how our samples noted current rhetoric around immigration as sources of racial strain rather than only accounting experiences with discrimination. For example, Scholarship on Latinx strain align with the experiences of DREAMers (Hoskin, 2013). DREAMers are undocumented students who are waiting for the passage of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a bill that allows undocumented high-school and GED graduates to attain U.S. citizenship through a 3-step process (A Guide to the Immigration Accountability Executive Action, 2018). Mendez-Pounds, Williams, Gonzalez, & Whiting (2018) conclude that the theme of collective survival serves as a source of action for undocumented students to become active in political engagement. Undocumented students' participation in civil disobedience and advocacy (Galindo, 2012) reflect the experiences of African Americans in response to racial strain in general strain literature. When examining sources of racial strain, studies need to take into account how topics like

immigration and citizenship can influence experiences of racial strain, otherwise you risk failing in attempting to contextualize the Latinx experience.

This study serves as an entry point in understanding how Latinx Americans cope with racial strain. The results of this study contribute to GST literature by highlighting how gender, experiences of discrimination, perceived prejudice, and the acceptance in actions of political statements, can be statistically significant correlates in how Latinx Americans choose to cope with racial strain. Sampling methods limit the scope of these findings and future research should continue examining these unique populations. Subsequent research should study Latinx populations by their specific ethnic/racial identities and how minorities can view other topics as issues specific to their backgrounds. Experiences with racial discrimination only correlated with how Latinx men are more prone to accept illegal protest as a coping mechanism, but other variables in this study were found to be statistically significant in doing so too.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Measures of Racial Frustration

1. Do you feel that it is more difficult for Latinx populations to get ahead in life when compared to Whites?

2. In the past 2 years, do you think racial discrimination towards Latinx populations have increased or decreased?

3. Have you or someone that you know ever experienced discrimination due to your race?

4. Do you think other minorities experience similar cases of discrimination as Latinx populations, when compared to Whites?

5. How worried are you about getting in trouble with the authorities if you take a stand on a controversial issue?

Acceptance in the Measures for Political Change

1. What kind of activity do you think is effective in pushing for political change? (Ex. Voting, abstaining from voting, participating in legal protests such as rallies, participating in illegal protests, damaging property, lobbying politicians, etc.).

2. What are your thoughts on one of the current social movements: Black Lives Matter? What things do you agree or disagree with this movement?

3. Have you or someone that you know ever participate in a rally or a protest?

4. Should protesting only be done if they are legal?

5. Are riots and/or property damage justified and/or acceptable in protests?

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Karl Santos is from Allen, Texas and graduated with a BA in Criminology from The University of Texas at Dallas in 2017. He will graduate from UT Dallas with a Master of Science in Criminology in May 2019. He plans to apply his skills towards future research in the non-profit sector.

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