Chicano Families
Gender Roles and the Latina/o Family

Traditional Latina/o Families
• Mexican family is founded on supremacy of the father and the corresponding total self sacrifice of the mother (Diaz, 1955)
• Women must devote herself to the satisfaction of everyone else’s needs and complete denial of her own. They are expected to be fragile, rational, farsighted, docile, submissive, dependent, and timid (Senour, 1977)
• Latinas hold values, which emphasize family and group achievement over individual achievement. Value extended family as well as nuclear family, less rigid, present focused time orientation.
• Latinas internalize the expectations to nurture, care for, and maintain the family unity and connections. The Latina may deny or ignore her needs in order to keep the family intact, even in the face of abuse, lack of happiness, or unsuccessful marriage.

Gender Roles
• Social expectations which vary across cultures and subcultures of what men and women are suppose to do (Vasquez, 1981)
• Socially constructed and reinforced by stereotypes and society
  • Research on masculinity, femininity, acculturation, education, etc.

Traditional Gender Roles
• Separate husband-wife roles
  • Separate friendships
• Parenthood
  • Family harmony
• Self sacrifice
  • A good marriage is good fortune
• Intergenerational bond
  • Divorce is not an option
• Machismo
  • Marianismo
• Hembrismo

Machismo
*Machismo* - can be defined as “a strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity stressing attributes such as physical courage, virility, domination and aggressiveness”

Machismo: Negative Connotation
• Exaggerated masculinity
  • Physically Strong
• Sexually virile
  • Multiple sexual relationships
• Engender more sons
  • Command respect of his children
• Male chauvinism
  • Patriarchical authority
• Dominate his wife (through physical force/violence if necessary)
• Emotionally unavailable (not always true)
• The better man is the one who can drink the most
Machismo: Current Literature

- Torres, Solberg, and Carlstrom, (2002) debunk the myth of machismo and encourage this attribute to be placed within a perspective that integrates historical backdrop, acculturation status, socioeconomic status, and family functioning.
- A new portion of the literature focuses on the specific roles as fathers and the shaping that they do to provide unique strength in their protective nature with families.
- Mexican American men integrate some form of masculinity into their roles as fathers based on acculturation level, degree of perceptions regarding an alliance with the Mexican male ideology, education, and social class (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004; Zamarripa, Wampold, & Gregory, 2003).
- The negative side of Mexican American men who incorporate a style of masculine identity associated with Mexican culture is that they are likely to experience levels of stress and depression (Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000) and develop rigid gender roles that underscore patriarchy and dominance (Casas, Wagenheim, Banchero, & Mendoza-Romo, 1994).

Machismo: Positive Connotation

- Being a “Caballero”
  - Pleasing his woman
  - Interested in the welfare of his loved ones
  - Provider and protector
- A man is to be devoted to the women in his own biological family, and his own mother above others
- Emotionally available

Machismo - Not the Same for Latino Men

- Machismo was found to be characterized as a multidimensional construct; traditional definitions of machismo as authoritarian, emotionally restrictive, and controlling represented only about 10% of the Mexican American and PR males that were surveyed. Most of the sample identified with more emotionally responsive, collaborative, and flexible masculinity styles (Torres et al., 2002).

Consequences of Machismo

- Seen as pathological by Euro centered views that negatively stereotype Latino men.
- Excessive adherence to the negative machismo mystique may place Latino men at risk for physical and mental health stress (Torres et al., 2002).
- Psychological distress is prevalent among Latino cultures (Torres et al., 2002).

Good Woman: “La Virgen Maria”

- Marianismo – the cult of Maria, Virgin Mary, or the Madonna.
  - Its roots can be traced to Catholicism
  - Emphasizes chastity before marriage
  - Self-sacrificing, submissive, humble, religious, and modest.
  - Subordination to her husband
  - Sex is a wifely duty she must endure.
  - Fidelity is mandatory
  - Her love is not romantic rather biological
• Marriage is indissoluble

Maria Paradox: 10 Commandments
1. Don’t Forget a Woman’s place
   • Old world vs. new world
2. Don’t forsake tradition
   • Staying Latina and not Angla
3. Don’t be Single and Independent
   • Enforcing Marianismo vs. Forging a Lifestyle
4. Don’t put your own needs first
   • Selfishness vs. self-fullness
5. Don’t wish for more than being a housewife
6. Don’t forget that sex is making babies– not for pleasure
   • Old world marriage vs. real-life passion
7. Don’t be unhappy with your man, no matter what
   • Noble martyr vs. new marianista
8. Don’t ask for help
   • Supper woman vs. healthy human being
9. Don’t discuss problems outside the home
   • Struggle alone with us vs finding resources
10. Do not change
    • Go with the flow vs making waves

La Mujer Today
- Amongst today’s acculturated Latinas in the United States, marianismo is often akin to an “invisible yoke which bind capable, intelligent, ambitious Latinas to a no-win lifestyle, because marianismo insists that Latinas live in a world which no longer exists and which perpetuates a value system equating perfection with submission” (Gil & Vasquez, 1996)

Bad women: “La Malinche”
• Sexually seductive and attractive
• Sexual vs. Asexual
• Manipulative
• Cannot be trusted
• They use men for their own benefit and likewise be used
• Put her own needs first

Hembrismo
• The quality of strength, endurance, courage, perseverance, and bravery.
• Sometimes these qualities are referred to macho-type traits.
• “Superwomen”
• Those women who do it all and show determination to face and overcome every hardship.

Gender Expectations: “Un hombro/una mujer debe...”
• Creates faulty belief systems about men and women
• Perpetuate endless cycles of mutual reactivity and control
• Myths are perpetuated on weakness vs. strength, sexuality vs. purity, romantic love vs. parental love foundation
• Machismo goes hand in hand with marianismo where gender myths are favored
• Parental, intergenerational love over marital love

**Latina Power: Seven Strengths**

1. *Espíritu Creativo:* Latinas always have had to use their creativity in order to survive.
   • Being creative leads women to new ideas and to transforming them into action. *As women become more aware of their creative spirit ~ it will help guide them to the pursuits that fit with who they are.*

2. *The Aguantadora’s Passionate Determination:* This trait is derived from the personal experiences of generations of Latinas who have had to endure hardships.
   • An aguantadora’s attitude is crucial for enduring life’s obstacles and remaining passionately focused on their aspirations.

3. *The Comadre’s Networking Ability:* Latinas have learned how to be resourceful by making use of their close female contacts—their closely connected group of friends and neighbors.

4. *The Diplomata’s Discretion:* With so many divergent opinions being expressed in nearly every Latino family it is usually the women who find a way to create a common ground and bring people together.
   • Women are taught how to communicate diplomatically and effectively.

5. *The Atrevida’s Courage:* Women know that in order to survive sometimes they must be courageous and take risks: Being an atrevida is not only about taking risks, though; it’s also about having a goal and taking consistent, bold steps toward it.

6. *The Malabarista’s Balance:* The ability to balance responsibilities comes naturally to women because as Latinas they must juggle a variety of duties to their immediate families, their extended families, and their communities. As Latinas they are taught to balance their commitments to their parents, spouse, children, extended families, communities, and spiritual life.

7. *La Reina’s Confidence and Strength:* The Latino culture always has taught its girls to be competent and strong, to make family decisions, and to transmit their culture to their children.
   • Women can use their queenly confidence, wisdom, and sense of responsibility in a spiritual manner to enhance all other aspects of their lives, including their professional or business capabilities.
Reinforcing Gender: La Quinceanera

- Making culture, making gender, sexuality, and faith
- Ceremony focuses on the relationship between the parents, the daughter, the family, and God
- Family sponsors are defined as baptismal godparents
- Adulthood is a time when you start saying, “I give and not a time I think of myself”
- Working on a project for the needy, help the handicapped, etc
- Flowers to the virgin, dress, status in community
  - Girlhood to seniorita- ready for marriage
- Color of dress, pastel, some places in Mexico white, 14 girls who accompany, damas
- Headpiece, tiara and carries flowers, un ramo, prayer book, rosary
- Jewelry, ring, bracelet- esclava, earrings, ring, and medallion of Guadalupe
- Life-cycle marker for Latinidad

Reinforcing Gender: La Quinceanera

- Gender and culture making process
  - a process, “becoming recognized” “Becoming a woman and known as a Mexican”
  - Event gave student sense of pride and self worth as Mexican in the face of discrimination and assimilation
- History and Tradition
  - Tradition or custom which has historical origins and roots (first from Mexico, and then established in Latin America)
- Just a Tradition
  - Cultural meaning and affirmation
  - A living practice

Latinas and the U.S

- As a group, Latinas are projected to constitute just over one-fourth (25.7%) of the U.S. female population by the year 2050 (Jackson, 2013) and 30% by 2060 (Nielsen Project, 2013).
- For Latinas who are 20 years of age and older, the employment-population ratio is just over half (54.3%), whereas for males the corresponding ratio is 75.7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Further, Latinas were at the highest rate of being below the poverty level in comparison to other women of color and White women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Latinas and Employment

- As full-time working women in the U.S. are paid at 77% of what men earn, the pay gap is more than a women’s issue, it is a family issue (American Association of University Women, 2014).
- For Latinas, who have proportionally larger families than other women groups (US Census, 2011), they make 89% of their male counterparts’ median annual full-time year-round earnings; however, their earnings are the lowest in comparison to other women of color and White women (American Association of University Women, 2014).
• When compared to the same salary information for White males, Latinas have the largest of pay gaps among the women, being paid at only 53% of the earnings.

Latinas’ Realities
• Latinas share a collective identity (Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, & Smelser, 2004) and dimensions of common realities. Specifically, Latinas hold the belief that individuals are interconnected more broadly to the environment and to others physically, mentally, and energetically or spiritually (Ramírez, 1991). Grounded in community, Latinas come from a culture that emphasizes interconnection, loyalty to others (Castellanos & Gloria, in press), and a sense of collective responsibility to the group and family (Ramirez, 1991).

• In their processes, Latinas learn to navigate through the belief/cultural practices and engage these ethnic specific values differently with age, time in the US, changing perspectives about mujerismo. Yet, these values serve as a common denominator (hilo - thread) for their realities. Familismo, comunidad, extended family, personalismo, and spiritualidad are core values within the culture they collectively and uniquely navigate.

Chicana Feminism
• Division between Chicano cultural nationalism and Anglo American feminism
• Experiences with sexism during the social movement
• Chicanas did not feel as part of the struggle in the women’s movement
• Chicanas began to question their traditional gendered roles
• Struggle for equality
• Chicana movement developed during 1960s
  • Consciousness and conferences on la mujer
  • Not separate but simply more focused on la mujer - fundamentally different reality

Chicana Feminist VS Chicana Loyalist
• Loyalists viewed Chicana feminists as allies of middle class Women’s movement who advocated individualistic upward mobility rather than struggle against race/class domination.
• Feminist labeled as vendidas (“sell outs”)
• Loyalist associated the feminist with “melting” into white society and dividing the Chicano movement
• Seen as incompatible with the Chicano cultural nationalism
• Feminists argued that the struggle against male domination was central to the overall Chicana/o Movement for liberation.

La Mujer Spirita – Reading
• Spirita reminds women of color why they came to this world. As a way of life, Spirita celebrates a love of spirit and reclaims sacredness in all.
  • it helps women to reconnect with themselves and others.
• Spirita affirms life and generativity. It promotes the gestation of people who liberate themselves by liberating others.
• emphasizes service as a vehicle for spiritual development.
• Spirita is community based, nonelitist, and emancipatory (Comas-Diaz, 2006; Figueroa Deck, 1995).
  • Womanists redefine their spirituality as protest, resistance, and subversion. Spirita is a form of social witness and reform (Townes, 1995) in which women refuse to succumb to the pressure to revise or to repress experience, while embracing conflict rather than conformity and enduring anger and pain rather than submitting to repression (Tal, 1996).

La Mujer Poderosa – Reading
• As a plethora of research has emphasized the challenges and difficulties of balancing multiple identities, resilience models and frameworks

• Two key factors that influence the process are centrality (i.e., the extent to which an individual places importance on their racial self-concept) and public regard (i.e., one’s belief and evaluation of others of one’s racial and ethnic groups

• Latinas negotiate their identities and work toward being culturally grounded, they are protected by keeping culture at the center of their processes but are simultaneously conflicted as they begin to make other identities more salient during various stages of their lives.

• Latinas often use la familia (family) as their central resource (Keefe, 1980; Marín, 1993; Padilla, 1980). Simultaneously, the cultural values when shifted by acculturation or traditionality can create cultural incongruence or familial stress (Alamilla et al., 2010; Vasquez, 1994).

• More specifically, para conocer el presente o el futuro hay que conocer el pasado (to know the present or future means knowing the past). Knowing the past can assist in the process of claiming and living out different identities, as they often do not come without challenge or question of authenticity.

• The cultural and gender scripts for Latinas have been described through psychological, sociological, and women’s studies literatures, ranging from docile and subservient women who are venerated as saints (Castillo, Perez, Castillo, & Ghosheh, 2010) to guerreras chingonas (bad-ass warrioresses) who have fought against male subjugation and traditional conceptualizations of Latina scripts (Gaspar de Alba, 2005).

• Latinas have passed indigenous knowledge (consciously and subconsciously—orally and behaviorally) intergenerationally, having learned the connection of nature, soul, and spirit (Lara, 2008). Latinas understand the holistic role of interpersonal interactions and the centrality of energy, intention, mind-set, and beliefs.
• Imprinted in their ancestral blueprint and spiritual makeup, Latinas have survival skills that are generationally passed down, both consciously and unconsciously. Through daily encounters, the basic task of sharing time and coexisting (e.g., eating a meal, sitting, and sharing space) transmits ancestors’ costumbres, valores, y practicas culturales (customs, values, and cultural practices).

• Nuestras madres y abuelas (Our mothers and grandmothers) may take the initiative to share the details of how to sobrevivir (survive), but this knowledge is already energetically transmitted via the management of challenges and subsequent strength patron (blueprint)—a collective consciousness awaiting to be awakened.

 What about Latino Males?

• Abalos (2002) contended that some Latino males live the life of a disappointed male
  • Angry and wounded
  • Has an ego that is threatened by breakdown of male privilege inherent in patriarchy
  • Attempts to bring back the past to support and rest to violence
  • Lacks knowledge of how to change his life
  • May use bargaining or limited forms of independence to maintain his power
  • Attempts to prevent change by using fragments of the dying tradition
  • Results to manipulation rather than transformation

• Coley (2001) indicated ethnic minority fathers have been viewed as invisible men due to their unique life circumstances and the understanding of a developmental framework that has been based on a radically different normative standard.
  • As such, stereotypes specific to Mexican American males have been influenced primarily by assumptions and attitudes describing this group as sexist, manipulative, and subject to a negative interpretation of masculine attributes, such as machismo (Cervantes, 2006; Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002)
  • Diaz-Guerrero over fifty years ago (1955) described Mexican males as authoritarian, aloof, reserved, or restrictive in emotion, and prone to aggressiveness, characteristics described as core characteristics of both Mexican and Mexican American men
  • Cervantes, 2009

• Contrasting and distinct views of fatherhood in more recent years have described Mexican and Mexican American fatherhood in a more positive light reflecting characteristics such as being supportive, protective, engaged in parenting functions, and fully involved in the lifespan of families (Cervantes & Sweatt, 2004; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002).
  • Macho man syndrome" in which he described the need to feel protective and strong for his remaining family members and to demonstrate an attitude that he could “handle it all.”
What about Latino Males?
1. An acknowledgement of ancestral wisdom that is necessary for growth and healing
2. Development of vision that reflects one’s true self as it impacts the wellness of one’s family and community,
3. Families and communities develop an interdependence with one another
4. Belief in a circular learning process in which pride in one’s ethnic cultural background and respect for the belief systems of others is fundamental
5. Live life with a sense of spirit that promotes newness and well-being in one’s relationship with self and others.
   • (La cultura cura, Culture heals)

Families: Happiness and Parenthood
• Latina/os in traditional family settings seldom see happiness as the primary goal of marriage, although they are distressed by marital unhappiness. Satisfaction is seen as a result of good fortune and wise choices. It cannot be achieved by working toward marital improvement.
• The romanticism of courtship shifts to family formation and parenthood rather than partnerhood, in part because of Catholic values and opposition to birth control.
• Latino families tend to stay together longer than non-Latina/o families (Landale & Oropesa, 2007)
• Divorce is avoided and seen as a significant stressors that runs counter to cultural expectations.
• Single parenting has been associated to lower educational progress and psychological challenges for the children
  • Economic stressors for mother, lack of parenting support and depressive symptoms
  • Child acts out, substance abuse by child, less supervision, less parent-child communication

Latina/o Families: Parenthood
• More demands on the child, involves stricter behavioral standards and more environmental structure
  • Family boundaries tend to be loser
  • Informal supervision - chaperonas
• Falta de respeto practice – respect – serious transgression
• Bien educado /malcriado (bad manners)
• Collectivism
• Take children to adult social encounters and expect them to behave appropriately
• Domenench-Rodriguez
  • Boys can mature later; girls expected to mature early
  • As boys grow older, they assume more responsibilities - job
Families: Domestic Violence Rates

- Approximately 1 in 4 (23.4%) of Latinas report that they have been abused at some point in their lifetime (UNIDOS 2001-2007)
- Latinas are more likely to be younger, less educated, and more impoverished than white women (UNIDOS 2001-2007; West et al., 1998)
- Emotional abuse appears to be the most frequent, followed by physical abuse. Sexual abuse is also present and appears to have been increasing in severity over the last 2 years (UNIDOS 2001-2007)
- Among undocumented Latina women, the rate of battering is estimated to be as high as 34% (AYUDA, Inc.)
- Battered Latina women are likely to have experienced a longer duration of abuse, be married at a younger age, have larger families, and likely to stay in the relationships longer.
- Latinas face multiple barriers due to their race, national origin, and gender, that affects how they experience and respond to domestic violence (Rivera, 1994)
- More acculturated men assault their wives because they are trying to balance their own cultural demands and those of the host culture.
- Lack of acculturation has also been noted as a variable to possibly influence spousal abuse. The resistance to not want to accept gender role changes
- Differences by ethnicity in spousal abuse were found with Mexican men reporting higher spousal abuse (but the findings were not significant). Cuban men did not report any beatings.

Contributors

- Substance abuse
- Violence in the family of origin
- Conflict around attachment and autonomy
- Power imbalances
- Stricter gender roles

Culture of Honor

- Latina/o cultures embrace the idea of culture of honor in relation to female fidelity (Vandello & Cohen, 2003)
- Strict gender roles guide appropriate behavior for women; sexual impropriety is not acceptable.
- Cultures where men’s honor and reputation is tied to a woman’s sexual fidelity tend to be more accepting of actions that seek to restore men’s honor through violent responses (Vandello & Cohen, 2003)
- Males are socially pressured to react violently to honor threats (Vandello & Cohen, 2003)
- Failure to do so can result in a loss of social status (Vandello & Cohen, 2003)
- Men may perceive that they have no other option but to react in a violent matter to restore their honor, while women are expected remain loyal and not commit an indiscretion (Vandello & Cohen, 2003)
Gay and Lesbian Domestic Violence
- Prevalence of domestic violence among lesbian and gay male couples is more difficult to assess (Hughes et al., 2002)
- Inequality in legal protection from domestic violence may explain why so many incidents of same-sex domestic violence go unreported to criminal justice authorities (Merrill & Wolfe, 2000)
- Greater risk for partner violence –
  - As low as 17 and as high as 57%
  - Mostly 30-40%, considerably higher than heterosexual partners

Divorce Rates
- 30% of Latino couples, 25 years of age or older, had divorced at least once (U.S. Census, 2004)
- Divorce rates for Latina/os are lower than their white or African American counterparts (UCSF, 2002)
- Although divorce rates are still comparatively uncommon and the majority of Mexican families remain intact, family breakup is on the rise, especially for Chicano families.
- Abandonment and single parent households are more prevalent among poor Mexicans, and even more so among poor Puerto Ricans. The number of Puerto Ricans single parent households is more than twice the number than among Cuban and Mexican families (42% vs. 19%).
- Cubans have fewer children, achieve middle class lifestyles, and have the highest marital stability (62%). More than other Latino groups, Cubans tend to cope with divorce by maintaining a binuclear family with high involvement from the father.

Coping Strategies
- La Familia
- Religious practices
- La comunidad
- Spirituality
- Extended network
- Concept of fatalismo
- Interdependence
- Secure legal assistance
- Ensure safety
- Restore sense of control
- Validate her feelings
- Help to heal the effects of the trauma

Latina/o Families and Gender
- Most Latina/o couples are in cultural transition relative to gender ideology
  - But powerful gender scripts still exist
  - Must take into account context and historical transformations of these scripts
  - Although centered in cultural socialization, they are influenced by the intersection of other identities
Country of origin, SES, education, urban vs rural, wife employment
  • The close proximity and interdependence of family may limited their exploration of separate identities as husband and wife.
Marital unit embedded in collective network
  Community life reinforces gender socialization

**Latina/o Families and Therapy**
• Despite problems, they typically seek help when there is a problem with a child.
  • Engaging the wife to be assertive without creating a supportive context for such changes creates therapeutic dilemmas.
    • be aware of cultural communication styles (direct approaches to avoid conflict and preserve harmony) – are not problematic.
  • Newly found assertiveness can cause the husband to feel blame and become more entrenched in his position, dyadic terms to include the husband is the key.
  • Deconstructing internalized gender discourses
  • Discovering and using positive construction of masculinity and femininity
  • Searching for existing positive role models in strength based genograms and movie and social characters.

**Counseling Mexican-American Women**

*Feminist Therapy:*
• Recognition of women’s oppression based on gender, race, and class
• Relevance of socio-cultural context
• Focus on women’s empowerment (inner resources)
• Diverse therapeutic modalities
• Demystification of power in the therapeutic relationship
• The therapist and the other women as role models
• The therapist’s on-going self examination and reflection of her own values
• Encouragement of growing experiences in addition to therapy

*Feminist Psychology Theory (Espin, 1997)*
• All women experiences must be heard, understood, and valued
• Attention to the contextual influences is essential
• The psychology of women must be pluralistic
• Egalitarian relationships must be at the base of the development of the theory (power)

**Counseling Mexican-American Women**
• Traditional vs. Contemporary
  • Typically polarized
  • Move across both dimensions
• Consider psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical entre fronteras
• ABC Dimensions
  • A = age, generation, phenotype
  • B = accult status, citizenship, family relations, spirituality
  • C = personal/familiar historical eras/events
• Cultural heritage
• Nuclear and extended family
• Gender socialization
• Career Path
• Power and privilege
• Recognize historical and sociopolitical intuitional barriers

Counseling Mexican-American Men
• Review relevant background and contextual history to understand particular life circumstances
• Self-disclosure to emphasize similarities in human experiences
• Understand machismo and its challenges
• Recognize presence of religious and spiritual themes
• Acknowledge own biases and stereotypes toward Mexican-American males
• Need to understand the interrelated dynamics of migration history, acculturation stress, and the merging of a Mexican-American/Chicano, mainstream identity.
• Role of therapist as: advisor, advocate, facilitator of indigenous support systems, facilitator of indigenous healing systems, consultant, change agent, counselor, and psychotherapist.