The Formation of Mexican-American Understandings of Virginity

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Abstract
In Mexican-American society, where women and men still deal with the forces of machismo and marianism in combination with the cultural norms of the United States, women are often forced to contend with strict regulations on their sexuality and sexual practices. Though a virgin is traditionally defined as someone who has never had sex, “sex” itself could refer to a number of sexual practices, thus rendering the definition of virginity ambiguous. With the reduced importance of virginity in the United States, women also experience a loss of feminine capital, a power that they may have gained by remaining virgins until marriage. As individuals of Mexican heritage living in the United States struggle with the changing definitions of virginity, the effects of feminine capital, machismo and marianism, gender roles, and family dynamics are left in a state of flux. Through a series of five interviews with individuals of Mexican descent living in the United States, supplemented with anthropological, sociological, and literary research, this study aims to understand what phenomena influence Mexican-American understandings of virginity, as well as the importance of virginity in today’s society.

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THE FORMATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN UNDERSTANDINGS OF VIRGINITY

In Mexican-American society, where women and men still deal with the forces of machismo and marianismo in combination with the cultural norms of the United States, women are often forced to contend with strict regulations on their sexuality and sexual practices. Though a virgin is traditionally defined as someone who has never had sex, “sex” itself could refer to a number of sexual practices, thus rendering the definition of virginity ambiguous. With the reduced importance of virginity in the United States, women also experience a loss of feminine capital, a power that they may have gained by remaining virgins until marriage. As individuals of Mexican heritage living in the United States struggle with the changing definitions of virginity, the effects of feminine capital, machismo and marianismo, gender roles, and family dynamics are left in a state of flux. Through a series of five interviews with individuals of Mexican descent living in the United States, supplemented with anthropological, sociological, and literary research, this study aims to understand what phenomena influence Mexican-American understandings of virginity, as well as the importance of virginity in today’s society.
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THE FORMATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN UNDERSTANDINGS OF VIRGINITY

Every day, Elena went to church to leave offerings for the Virgen de Guadalupe. One day, when she was still a child, an altar server raped her. She never returned to that church, fearing that she would see the altar server again. She stopped thinking about the saints she had used to love. She stopped believing that they were powerful, if they were capable of allowing her to suffer such a violation. Without being able to tell her mother what happened, Elena would suffer the secret of her rape for the rest of her life.

However, that day would not be the last time that she experienced sexual violence. When Elena lived in México, her boyfriend put a gun to her head and demanded that she have sex with him. Without the option to refuse, she reluctantly obliged. Although she decided that she never wanted to see her boyfriend again, her parents forced her to marry him. A few years later, they moved to the United States, awaiting the birth of their first son. Across two decades of difficulties, moments of abuse, violence, and of happiness as well, Elena survived.

Why did Elena have to suffer her experiences in silence? Why did she not feel safe telling anyone about what happened in the church? The fact that a woman feels guilty and deeply embarrassed into silence in the wake of male violence is an issue of profound importance.

***

Advancing through the public education system of Southern Oregon, we students were always led through classes that told us that people our age were not ready for sex. Virginity, they taught us, was nothing to be ashamed of; in fact, it seemed that they believed it was something to strive for. Despite the teachers’ urges, however, many students in my
grade throughout middle and high school began to enter the world of sex. I came to recognize the look of concern on an adult’s face when they understood that one of my peers had lost her virginity, but in television and in the movies virginity was always something that one had to lose to become an adult. The messages young women receive from media often tell them that they are worth more as sexualized individuals, but in the dominant U.S. culture, women are often socialized to believe that they are worth more as virgins.

In 2009, the pregnancy rate for non-Hispanic white teen girls in the United States was 42.8 per 1,000, or 4.28%, while the pregnancy rate for Hispanic teen girls was 100.5 per 1,000, or 10.05%. While pregnancy rates in both groups have declined since the 1990s, the statistics still reflect an uneven trend between the two ethnicities (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy 2013). Why is it that Hispanic girls are twice as likely as white girls to experience teenage pregnancy? This disparity was clearly visible to me as I advanced through high school and watched classmates experience pregnancy, and it was difficult to see them make choices that would affect the rest of their lives, while being subjected to the judgment of their peers. Though there is a myriad of reasons that a Hispanic teen is more likely to become pregnant than a white teen, culture plays an important role in creating these statistics.

While many may agree that the messages about virginity and sexuality in American culture are confusing, there are other cultures within this nation that share similar conflicting messages. One of the most prominent cultures within the United States is the Mexican-American culture, which includes individuals who are recent immigrants, as well as those who have been established in the United States for generations. Shaped by its roots in both
Mexican and North-American cultures, this culture is rich with fascinating historical and religious figures, as well as complex perspectives.

To investigate this topic, I conducted a series of interviews with Mexican-American individuals and asked them about their experiences. Because I wanted to correctly represent this group, I asked the participants how they would describe themselves, since they, in turn, defined my study. While I am labeling this particular group as “Mexican-Americans,” I am in fact referring to all inhabitants of the United States with Mexican origins who identify with aspects of both Mexican and American culture. Some may refer to themselves as Mexicanos or Chicanos, but these terms limit the population I can discuss. I will therefore refer to the participants as they describe themselves during the interviews that I conducted.

Though there are many aspects of Mexican-American culture that this project will investigate (such as key feminine figures within Mexican culture and gender roles), the main focus will be to understand what a woman’s virginity means to them. The heavy influence of religion and folklore on their lives helps to illuminate the sexual standards that Mexican-American culture creates for women (especially young women) to follow. Paired with machismo and marianismo, the expectation for young women to remain virgins until marriage shapes how society understands women, and how women understand themselves. The cultural and literary role models for women are analyzed as they shed light on the historical expectations modern women face, and the systems that oppress them even today. Apart from examining the anthropological elements with regard to virginity, I investigate the overall narrative of the female experience as constructed by the larger community, as well as by families, which reflect the potency of cultural and literary role models in Mexican-American culture. The female experience for Mexican-Americans is changing, indicating a
shift in traditional values such as virginity, feminine capital, machismo, marianismo, and the importance of feminine figures, including La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona.
LITERATURE REVIEW

To help aid in the exploration of this topic, I draw from multiple anthropological and sociological scholars who work with the concepts of virginity, family dynamics, and gender roles. Starting with a broad understanding of the Mexican-American population within the United States, I use Erlinda V. Gonzales-Berry and Marcela Mendoza’s book, *Mexicanos in Oregon: Their Stories, Their Lives* (2010), to access highly informative descriptions of the culture at large, as well as offer an investigation of family dynamics. It explores the changes that many immigrant families experience, the role of generation gaps, and the effect that these have on familial relations and women’s roles. The breadth of these sources helps to create a more specific analysis of virginity in Mexican-American culture.

In addition to anthropological and sociological sources, I also draw from the rich traditions of Latina and Chicana literature, which provide a more personal understanding of the topics of virginity and womanhood. Authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Sandra Cisneros offer vibrant works of prose that illuminate the difficulties women face in being compared to the sexual standards set for them by cultural figures such as La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche. While La Virgen de Guadalupe is revered as the iconic patron saint of México and a symbol of maternal protection, La Malinche is in a very different position and represents one of the extreme standards against which Mexican women can be held.

La Malinche, who acted as the translator for Hernán Cortés when Spain conquered the New World, is often blamed in part for the downfall of the native empires of México. Besides being portrayed as a traitor, La Malinche is also viewed as the violated mother who gave birth to the first mestizo and started the Mexican race. She is often despised for having
been submissive to Cortés, despite the fact that many Chicanas argue that she was actually raped. Because La Malinche is often viewed as a sexually open and vulnerable woman, women in Mexican-American culture may be compared to her if they fail to live up to the passive, virginal standard set by La Virgen de Guadalupe. Octavio Paz’s (1997) concept of sexual vulnerability and the unique role women have in Mexican culture is detailed in his work *El laberinto de la soledad*, which provides a context for current Mexican-American views on gender roles and sexual independence.

To gain a firm understanding of how Mexicans view their cultural history and the role that sexuality has played throughout the ages, I have decided to start with essays on the conquest of the Americas by European forces. Octavio Paz (1997) explores the relationship Mexicans have with their history of being conquered by the Spaniards. He explains that they feel that their fathers (the Spaniards) raped their mothers (the natives). The popular but vulgar Spanish term “La Chingada,” (coming from the word *chingar*, which in México, means *to fuck*) is used in various circumstances, but Paz defines “La Chingada” as the raped mother (1997:96). She is one of the representations of motherhood, a mythical and maternal figure that has suffered violation throughout history. All Mexicans are “chingados,” he explains, because they are all sons and daughters of “La Chingada,” and even further back, they are all sons of Eve, which adds a more religious tone to the theme. Paz also explores the relationship Mexicans have to La Virgen de Guadalupe, who is seen as the divine virgin mother of México (1997:95). I look to use this source as a way of explaining the gender roles for women and the virgin/whore dichotomy that can be found in Mexican culture.

The impact of these feminine figures on the Mexican psyche is worthy of consideration, and plays into the analysis of the how Mexican-Americans understand
While the topic of interest is the social construction of virginity within Mexican-American culture, it is important first to understand how virginity has most often been defined in Western civilization. It is a fluid concept that changes, based on culture, time, religion, and gender, but virginity has always seemed to play a larger role in the lives of women. Though a virgin is traditionally defined as someone who has never had sex, “sex” itself could refer to a number of sexual practices, thus rendering the definition of virginity subjective. However, in general, virginity has served as a marker of the purity and worth of a woman. In fact, traditionally, in many cultures it has served as the main determinant of whether or not a woman is suitable for marriage:

The notions of virginity and chastity may be particularly apt for symbolizing such value, rather than, for example, external beauty, because virginity is a symbol of exclusiveness and inaccessibility, nonavailability to the masses, something, in short, that is elite. A virgin is an elite female among females, withheld, untouched, exclusive. (Ortner 1978:32)

This elite status attained by being a virgin has placed great pressure on women through countless generations to remain sexually inexperienced, though it may be against their own desires.

The prestigious nature of virginity plays an important role in any society that values female purity. In “Beyond the Bed Sheets, Beyond the Borders: Mexican Immigrant Women and Their Sex Lives,” Gloria González-López (2000) investigates the sex lives of Mexican immigrant women in the United States, and describes the concept of virginity as a source of capital femenino, or feminine capital. Women can use this type of capital, which they obtain
by maintaining sexual purity, and it can be a very powerful social and economic tool. Through this *capital femenino*, women may secure better socio-economic positions for themselves, which their families can benefit from as well, as the virginity of a woman upholds the reputation of her family. Premarital virginity, González-López explains:

is tied to socially constructed family and gender dynamics.

First, the imposition of virginity on a woman is interwoven with a sophisticated ethic of *respeto a la familia* (respect for the family) which links family honor with a daughter’s virginity. And second, the ideal of preserving virginity until marriage stems from a woman’s socially learned fear of men’s deeply rooted expectations to marry virgins. (2000:74)

With these expectations in mind, González-López determines that the “loss of premarital virginity puts women at risk” (2000:74). The virginal standard hinges not only on the expectations of a woman’s future husband, but also on the standards for displays of respect towards one’s family. By remaining a virgin, a woman can satisfy her husband’s expectations, her family’s demands for respect, and society’s standards.

Returning to the explanation that virginity is socially constructed, the outward displays of virginity and “their socially constructed symbolisms (e.g., pregnancy out of wedlock, the white dress, the orange blossom, the white coffin, etc.), transform what is intimate and private into a public, family, and social affair” (González-López 2000:75). By making these displays of a topic as personal as virginity public, women and their families are able to boost their social status. The fact that these displays of virginity are so public also
places women under the critical inspection of their society to ensure that they do not stray from the prescribed practices.

González-López’s analysis of Octavio Paz’s \textit{Laberinto de la soledad} provides a more in-depth illustration of how a Mexican woman’s virginity is understood. Delving into the dichotomy of the “passive/active (pasiva/activa), good/bad (buena/mala), or virgin/whore (la virgen/la puta),” she claims that “the woman with an intact hymen represents sexual purity, honor and decency,” and the one with a ruptured hymen represents “dishonor, profanation, and lack of virtue” (González-López 2000:76). If a woman cannot be a perfect virgin, then her only option is to be labeled as \textit{la puta}, or the whore. While these standards for women require them to play the role of the passive virgin, the definition of men in opposition to women further complicates their prescribed roles in society:

Since the ideal of manhood consists in never having to “crack/split” or \textit{rajarse}, Paz associates a woman’s inferiority with the penetrable nature of her sexualized body. Opening up to be penetrated means being weak, treacherous, and untrustworthy. Accordingly, for a Mexican woman, losing her virginity would imply \textit{rajarse}, (to be cracked or split), thus she would possess an everlasting wound. (González-López 2000:76)

Because Paz so strictly defines women in opposition to everything that manhood represents (women are seen as weak while men are strong, etc.), women are viewed as inherently weak and treacherous. However, this nature of the woman can be excused, so long as she maintains her virginity. In the case of women who are assaulted, “losing [their] virginity while being
raped meant being violently robbed of their *capital femenino*, and of the possibility to *casarse bien*; being raped also meant experiencing family shame” (González-López 2000:110). In this sense, women are the vessels of family honor, but are also vulnerable to having that honor stolen from them through rape. Unfortunately, it appears that there is no exception for women who lose their virginity against their will. Emphasis is placed on the male’s right to have sex with a woman, not on the woman’s right to consent or to conserve her virginity.

In “Beyond the Hymen: Women, Virginity, and Sex,” González-López (2005) again uses the term *capital femenino*, meaning *feminine capital*, in which the virginity of women takes on a social value. Premarital virginity is required of women to show respect to their families and to their prospective husbands. Because the virginity of women reflects so much on her respect for her family, her virginity, and therefore her sexuality, women actually become family possessions. The cult of virginity in Mexican culture plays a large role in Mexican morality, and plays into the virgin/whore dichotomy. However, the author finds that Mexican immigrant women actually rebel against these norms, though the women still adhere to their Catholic faith. Virginity, the author argues, becomes a collective performance, based on what Bourdieu calls an *economy of symbolic exchanges*, in which a woman can use her virginity as a form of social capital for her and her family (González-López 2005:43). With virginity a woman can maintain respect and gain a husband who respects her.

González-López also discusses the relation between pleasure and danger when Mexican Americans consider female sexuality. She categorizes three types of female heterosexual experiences: taking control of her sexuality and seeking out pleasure; becoming pregnant and/or failing to show the proper respect to her family and therefore experiencing
guilt or shame; or becoming the victim of rape and sexual violence (González-López 2005). The study suggests that the line between pleasure and danger is often blurred, but that the two are not mutually exclusive. In a society that values virginity so much, this emphasis adds another element that makes rape that much more difficult for a woman. When the women do not tell their current husbands about their histories of being raped, their husbands come to blame the women for not being virgins at their time of marriage, without really understanding the circumstances (González-López 2005). This is even more agonizing for these women, as it adds a sense of shame to their already-existing victimization. Some men do come to understand their wives’ situations and attempt to help them, but there is only so much they can do to counteract the pressures these women feel from their culture.

While virginity is a social construct that many societies throughout the world embrace, like any construct, it changes through time and context. In her article “Dialogue and the Negotiation of Meaning: Constructions of Virginity in Mexico,” Ana Amuchástegui (1999) investigates the varying constructions of virginity, and the understanding of those who lose it. Though the first sexual intercourse is regarded as a rite of passage from childhood into adulthood, because it signifies an individual’s ability to reproduce, the individual’s reaction to this experience varies by gender (Amuchástegui 1999:79). Up until the point of penetration by her sexual partner, a woman is considered a virgin. This description of the woman as innocent and pure is reflected in the description of the man as a contaminator. The male, then, “is thereby cast as the emissary of evil through his seduction and penetration of the woman’s body, which, in mirror image is a virgin or unpolluted space until damaged by the intrusion of the male” (Amuchástegui 1999:89). Casting the male as an unsavory polluter emphasizes the negative portrayal of men and the portrayal of feminine purity in
heterosexual practices in general. This negative light cast on sexual practice is in fact another social construct, and part of the larger discourse prevailing in contemporary Western culture on sexuality in general.

Continuing with the concept of losing virginity, Amuchástegui examines the social construction of virginity amongst Mexicans and their views towards sexual practices in her article “Virginity in Mexico: The Role of Competing Discourses of Sexuality in Personal Experience” (1998). It is important to consider that this study is focused on Mexican individuals, because while the target population of my investigation on virginity is the Mexican-American population within the United States, one must acknowledge the large influence Mexican culture plays in their lives. Through interviews Amuchástegui (1998) discovered that some of the participants (especially participants from more rural areas) viewed sex as physically harmful, and some women even expressed a sense of shame about having sex. Women fear that if they lose their virginity before marriage, their future husbands will not value or love them. Some even refuse to tell their husbands about their previous sexual experiences for fear of being rejected. While men are allowed to have sex with as many women as they want, women are limited in their engagement in sexual practices. According to the study of Amuchástegui (1998), it seems that the norm for the sexual initiation of men is for them to lose their virginities to sex workers, though it is not the case for all men. Rather than being about pleasure, the first sexual experience for men is about proving one’s masculinity. There seems to be less of a presence of religion in these views on virginity, but there do seem to exist ideals that originate in religion, such as the Virgen de Guadalupe. Many of the participants in the study are aware of the gender
inequalities and gendered expectations, but they were unable to provide solid explanations of the origins of these dynamics (Amuchástegui 1998).

The concept of inequality in the expectations for women to maintain virginity is a theme that is shared by many investigations. In their article “Mexican-American Adolescent Sexuality and Sexual Knowledge: An Exploratory Study,” Amano Padillo and Traci Beard (1991) investigate the sexual knowledge, attitudes, and sexual practices of low-income adolescent Mexican-Americans. The investigation reveals that the participants did not have a strong understanding of sexual intercourse and sexual practices, which could result in grave consequences such as disease and pregnancy. The study also worked with the theme of virginity and when it is appropriate to lose it. When the researchers asked the participants if they believe that women should be virgins when they marry, 80% of the participants (both the females and males) agreed that a woman should be a virgin when she marries, but only 37% said that a man should be a virgin when he marries (Padillo and Beard 1991). Even more interesting is the fact that the males in the group shared a stronger opinion that a woman should stay a virgin until marriage. We can conclude that attitudes towards virginity are deeply gendered among this population.

In their article “Sociocultural Beliefs Related to Sex among Mexican American Adolescents,” Eyre, Flores and Millstein (1998) investigate Mexican-American cultural values that influence sexual relationships. Cultural values such as familismo (the importance of family, children and traditional roles for women), simpatia (the existence of harmonious interpersonal relations), respeto (showing respect for tradition and authority), and personalismo (a sense of close personal affiliation with family, friends and neighbors) all emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships (1998). The authors suggest that
males are socialized through the values of machismo, which also support trustworthiness and responsibility. Females, on the other hand, are socialized through *marianismo*, which emphasizes spiritual strength, virginity, and obedience to males (Eyre et al. 1998). The authors explained that these cultural and gender-specific values play a large role in determining the sexual practices of Mexican American adolescents. The study investigated what sorts of traits Mexican American adolescents seek in their partners, and found that some of these traits included adhering to the values of *respeto*, *familismo* and *simpatía*. While this study investigates the preferences of the participants for traits in their romantic partners, it does not necessarily analyze the larger cultural and historical influences in Mexican American sexual practices and gender roles.

Continuing the discussion of machismo, Marit Melhuus (1996) describes the precarious nature of masculinity and the influence that women have on a man’s status. Machismo, explains Melhuus, is “derived from the generic term *macho*, meaning male, [and] is used synonymously with masculinity; it implies, above all, the ability to penetrate, and is associated with being active, closed, unyielding” (1996). Echoing the ideas of Octavio Paz, Melhuus refers to the impenetrable nature Mexican men are expected to possess. In explaining the functioning of machismo, and its dependency on masculinity, Melhuus explains the following:

1. *Machismo* underpins the continuous evaluation of men, and rests on the discrete categorization of women, 2. *Machismo* has men as its reference group: it is in the eyes of other men that a man’s manhood is confirmed, but it is through women that it is reflected and enacted. Thus men are socially and emotionally
vulnerable to other men, through the behavior and moral evaluation of women. The very articulation of *machismo* not only points to the precariousness of being a man but also underscores the ambiguity of being a woman, showing how women’s sexuality is an ambivalent source of virtue. (1996:241)

The ambiguity of machismo is readily apparent when one analyzes the method in which men understand their masculinity. Men are constantly compared to other men or defined by the virtue of their women, which means that men are never fully in control of their machismo. Instead, they are forced to constantly perform the act of being masculine, or *macho*. The fact that women can destroy a man’s social status and impair his machismo could perhaps explain the impulse that many have to control women and their sexuality, so that they may remain pure. This concept of “dominance is expressed through the discourse on machismo, through men’s overt control over women and contested control over other men. It is also expressed through the idea that women are the keepers of men’s honor while men are the guardians of women’s virtue” (1996:249). Men and women, therefore, are guardians of each other’s virtue and honor, striving to solidify their ambiguous statuses and control how others perceive them.

Melhuus also discusses the importance that La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche have in shaping how women are understood in Mexican culture. Citing the fact that both the stories of La Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe occurred within years of each other, Melhuus explains that both figures are “a product of the conquest” of México (1996:236). Though both figures may be described in completely different manners, Melhuus finds many similarities:
They are both Indian, although their Indianness takes on different connotations: one of divinity and grace; the other of humility and shame. They are both mediators between powerful men and subject people, playing the role of intermediary passing on vital information. Malinche delivers her people into the hands of the enemy; Guadalupe leads her people to victory. (1996:238)

What truly sets the two women apart is their behavior. “Malinche’s act is one of betrayal; Guadalupe’s one of suffering and sacrifice. Malinche is the traitor; Guadalupe the savior,” (1996:239). While Malinche supposedly betrayed the indigenous Mexicans by helping the Spanish, Guadalupe is the innocent mother who seeks to guide her people and embodies the ideal of the self-sacrificing mother. Though both women are mothers, they are treated in completely different manners.

To continue this analysis of the woman and mother in Mexican-American culture, I again turn to Chicana literature. In her book *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*, Ana Castillo (1995) explores themes related to the experience of being a Chicana woman, while debating the history of gender relations in the Hispanic and Muslim cultures. She explains that machismo can be a demonstration of both self-respect, and physical and sexual power. She also explains that the subjugation of women to masculine will has been in the Hispanic and Muslim cultures for centuries, and has been passed to Mexican and Mexican-American culture as well. With regard to the role of the woman today, Castillo (1995) explains that women have to choose between two polarized roles: that of the mother, represented by La Virgen de Guadalupe, or that of the whore/traitor represented by Eve (and
by extension, La Malinche, because of her role in the fall of the native empires). The theories of Castillo explain the broader expectations for women in the Mexican-American culture.

In the collection *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* edited by Ana Castillo (1997), various essays explore the effect La Virgen de Guadalupe has in the lives of her followers. Sandra Cisneros’s essay “Guadalupe the Sex Goddess” examines the double standards that Latina girls face with regards to sexual expectations. She explains that young women are expected to know nothing about sex and to remain virgins until marriage, mirroring the purity of La Virgen de Guadalupe. However, she notes that boys are never expected to model themselves after Jesus (Castillo 1997). In fact, she explains that Latino boys are especially sexually promiscuous and practice sex as they please while young girls are expected to remain chaste. Cisneros goes on to examine her own relationship with La Virgen de Guadalupe, which ranges from the resentment she felt as an adolescent because La Virgen created an unrealistic standard for girls, to a sense of appreciation and pride because La Virgen reminds Cisneros of all of her sexual power. It appears that many individuals, much like Sandra Cisneros, may have equally complicated feelings towards La Virgen de Guadalupe and the sexual standards that their culture holds for them, and this essay provides valuable insight on the intricacies of those relationships.

In her work “Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism,” Norma Alarcón (1989) explores the roles of La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche in Mexican culture. In Mexican culture La Virgen de Guadalupe and Malintzin (the native name of La Malinche) are a binary pair that tell the history of the creation of the people and the nation of México. While La Virgen de Guadalupe is the virginal mother of México and the representation of the native goddess Tonantzin, Malintzin is better known as *la lengua* (the
tongue) of Hernán Cortés; she was the interpreter who in part participated in the conquering of México, and was the raped mother who gave birth to the mestizo race (Alarcón 1989). Malintzin often assumes the role of the scapegoat for México, and carries the weight of centuries of blame. Because of this, individuals who break the social norms are called malinche or malinchista.

In the works of Octavio Paz, Malintzin has received the name La Chingada, which refers to her negative experiences at the hands of the Spaniards, as well as to the rape of the native Mexican women. While Guadalupe symbolizes sublime transcendence, and has the love of the country, Malintzin represents feminine subversion and the victimization of the people (Alarcón 1989). Alarcón explains that while Guadalupe is a maternal figure that operates in silence and sacrifices herself for others, the attributes of Malintzin are at the other end of the spectrum (1989). In opposition, Malintzin is a sexually independent woman who speaks for herself, and betrays her maternal role. If a woman does not line up with the attributes of Guadalupe, she is then assumed to line up with the attributes of Malintzin, the whore. To be a woman who speaks for herself and who is confident in herself is to be a woman who abandons her family and represents betrayal. Alarcón (1989) explores the works of various authors, including Carlos Fuentes, who describes Malintzin as the Mother Goddess/Muse/Whore as well as Eve, and explores multiple roles in the Mexican culture. Alarcón’s broad analysis of multiple literary works provides an in-depth perspective of how these two cultural figures shape the understandings Mexicans have of women.

In her book Borderlands: La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) describes the standards that have been set for women through the blending of cultures. Anzaldúa explores the different elements of Chicana identity, as well as the importance of gender roles. Women
are expected to be selfless and submissive to men, and if they fail to do so, they are “bad women.” If they are not wives and mothers, they are made to feel like failures. Anzaldúa (1987) draws on the understandings of binaries and the idea that women are closer to nature, and therefore a threat to themselves and society. At the same time, however, their culture breeds distrust in men. I believe the most interesting part is the description of the three mothers of Chicanas: La Virgen de Guadalupe, the protective virgin mother, La Chingada, or La Malinche, who is the raped mother of all Mexicans, and La Llorona, who, according to legend, drowned her own children in a fit of madness. Anzaldúa argues that these three mothers have been subverted. They have used “Guadalupe to make us docile and enduring, la Chingada to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and la Llorona to make us long-suffering people. This obscuring has encouraged the virgen/puta (whore) dichotomy” (1987:31).

The combination of the firsthand experiences of Mexican-American authors with theories on the construction of virginity illuminates the sorts of pressures that Mexican-American women are obligated to follow. However, while the literature explains the history of these expectations for women, it is difficult to determine whether or not these standards still hold power today. The aim of my research is to discover what standards are still held to be of value, and the extent to which they dominate women’s lives.
METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using qualitative methods, meaning that it was focused on the experiences of the population that I studied. Basing the data in the emotional truths that these individuals live, I worked within many of the qualitative research traditions. I conducted an ethnography by studying an intact cultural group in a natural setting, utilizing grounded theory to allow themes and concepts to emerge from the data, which were examined through the detailed descriptions of the people being studied (Creswell 1994). I have chosen a pseudonym for each participant to protect their identities and allow them more freedom of expression. I chose to use qualitative methods for my investigation because I wanted to experience the rich data about my participants’ lives, and have the ability to make them feel comfortable sharing their personal information. The use of qualitative methods allowed me to understand the feelings and experience of these individuals and more accurately convey the stories of their lives.

Working with a small sample of individuals of Mexican descent living in the United States, I conducted interviews to better understand the lived experiences of these people. Using open-ended questions, my interviews asked the individuals to explain their own definitions of sexuality within the context of Mexican-American culture, and to share their own understandings of historical figures who may also influence these definitions. After each interview, I reflected on new topics and ideas that had arisen in the previous interviews and adjusted the questions to pursue any promising new leads.

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, I set out to recruit my participants. I met the first three participants in the community, and asked them if they or their family members would be willing to work with me, emphasizing that participation was
completely voluntary. I asked my first three participants if their husbands would be interested in being interviewed as well, however, none were interested. My two male participants are students recruited from Pacific University who I had met in classes and at university events.

While I had previously met every one of my participants before the interview, I had heard very little about each individual’s background. I started each interview asking the participants about how they identify themselves (e.g. as “Mexican,” “Latino,” “Mexican-American,” etc.), and attempted to touch on their background a little in order to ease them into the interview process. By allowing the participants to choose where to hold the interviews, I was able to enhance their comfort and sense of privacy.

The first participant, Elena, is a woman who was born in México and has lived in the United States for a number of decades. We conducted the interview in a McDonald’s restaurant, where we were not granted much privacy, but were able to converse for nearly two hours. Elena had grown up in México, but was forced to accompany her husband to the United States. Having been a victim of sexual violence at a young age, and surviving a difficult marriage resulting in an attempt on her life, she has been unable to convey most of her struggles to the family she left behind in México. Despite the difficulties in her life, she displays an incredible passion for life and endless love for her family.

The second participant, Adriana, is a woman who was also born in México, who came to the United States at the age of 22. Though she has been here for a number of years, she has had little opportunity to learn English because she has spent the majority of her time as a stay-at-home mother. The interview took place in her home and was conducted in Spanish. A kind, warm woman, Adriana insisted on feeding me and offered to teach me to
cook Mexican food. She seems to be quite happy with her life, and absolutely adores her husband and children, who were a delight to meet.

The third participant, Rosario, is a woman who identified as Mexican, just like the first two participants. The interview was conducted in Spanish in a small public library, which did not allow for any privacy. In fact, there was a young man eavesdropping throughout the majority of the conversation, which prevented the participant from expressing herself comfortably. After the young man left I was able to return to some of the earlier questions with her so that she could speak more freely. Reflecting on our conversation, I came to realize that Rosario is incredibly determined to achieve her goals, and has the ability to express herself eloquently.

The fourth interview was conducted in a much larger library than the previous interview, which allowed for a more comfortable interview. The fourth participant, Daniel, is a young man who identified himself as Mexican-American. Having been born in México, he came to the United States at a young age and became a citizen when he was in high school. Because he had spent the majority of his life in the United States, he did not have a great sense of what the recent conditions of México have been in terms of gender relations. Daniel was the first to mention the man’s side of gender roles, which is important to note because this perspective could easily have been overlooked.

The fifth participant, José, is a young man who identified himself as Mexican-American as well as Latino, Hispanic, and American. The interview was conducted in his apartment, which allowed us more privacy than in the other interviews. Though he was born in the United States, his parents came from México. As he explained, his parents have adapted to the culture of the United States. According to him, immigrants from México
experience different levels of acculturation, and one must be careful when speaking of the
“Mexican-American culture” as a homogenous population.

After each interview, I transcribed the conversation and highlighted any important
concepts, allowing the themes to present themselves. Based on these themes I coded the
interviews and grouped relevant segments of conversation together. The analysis of my data
then relied on these codes, which were supported by literature pertaining to the field.
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Virginity and its Definitions

After considering all of the definitions of virginity offered by the participants, it is apparent that there is no universal definition, reflecting its status as a socially constructed concept. Dictionaries often offer a definition that is quite vague, such as the Real Academia Española, which claims that a virgin is a “persona que no ha tenido relaciones sexuales” (Real Academia Española). The Cambridge Dictionary in English also explains that a virgin is a person “who has never had sex,” which is an identical definition (Cambridge Online Dictionaries). The problem with this definition is that it is so vague that one may not know at what point a person is still a virgin if they have committed any sexual act. If a person has oral sex, is he/she still a virgin? If a person masturbates, is he/she still a virgin? If a person touches the genitals of another person, or if their own genitals are touched, is he/she still a virgin? Even further, this definition is quite ethnocentric, ignoring the different understandings that other cultures may have with regard to virginity. Without a clear or strong definition, women who participate in sexual activities find themselves in a liminal state, lacking an understanding of what they can call themselves, because the status of “virgin” is already so ill defined.

Many participants described virginity as traditionally as the dictionaries, saying that a virgin is a woman who “jamás ha estado con un hombre,” or who “has never been with a man” (November 15, 2013). But the same person claimed that while a virgin is a person “who has never been with a man,” according to what she had read, “si no te penetraste, pero cuando te agarran todo, ya no puedes decir que eres virgen,” or “if you weren’t penetrated, but they grabbed everything, you can’t say that you are a virgin” (November 15, 2013). Thus
there is recognition of the flexibility of the term, and it appears that any sexual act can remove an individual’s label as “virgin.”

A very important element in Rosario’s definition of “virgin” is that she explains the definition of virginity from the perspective of a woman: she says that a virgin is someone who “has never been with a man,” not a person who “has never been with another person.” In fact, the majority of the participants described virginity from the perspective of a woman. They only offered the definition from the perspective of a man when I requested that they do so. When they defined it from the perspective of a man, the loss of virginity was much more positive. For example, Daniel described the virginity of a man as “never sticking it,” or “never going all the way, never ‘home-running’” (November 19, 2013). While the definition of virginity for a woman in the interviews was rather neutral, the definition of virginity for a man was almost compared to a game in which a man has not participated, as if losing one’s virginity were a sport for men.

While the definition of virginity is not very clear, the standards for virginity are more obvious. In theory, each person should remain a virgin as long as possible, until he/she is married. However, it appears that it has always been normal for a man to lose his virginity at a much younger age than a woman. If a girl loses her virginity, it has to be with a boyfriend, explains Daniel, but if a boy loses his virginity, it does not have to be with a girlfriend (November 19, 2013). The consequence for a girl who loses her virginity before marriage and without being in a serious relationship is that she is no longer respected. In the past, explains Elena, nobody wanted or loved a girl who had lost her virginity, and nobody would respect her (November 19, 2013).
However, the consequences with regard to virginity are not the same for men. The loss of virginity for a man does not represent a threat to his social value as it does for a woman. Instead of a threat, the loss of a man’s virginity is a rite of passage. In fact, there are tales of fathers who bring their sons to brothels so that they may lose their virginity and gain sexual experience. A man who is still a virgin is considered to be less masculine. As Daniel explains, many times men feel pressure from their peers to have sex, because their peers are surprised to hear that a friend is still a virgin (November 19, 2013). While remaining a virgin is a good thing for girls, it is almost an embarrassment for boys. In this sense, virginity is a feminine attribute that men must strive to avoid.

Considering that virginity has been an important element in many societies, especially in Mexican and Mexican-American society, it is interesting to note that virginity is losing its importance. With the passing of time, virginity has been changed from being a requirement for a woman to a favorable option. It is no longer necessary for a woman to get married. In the past, a woman had to be a virgin to be able to have a good husband and to have his respect, but it is no longer that way (November 6, 2013). Adriana explained that while being a virgin until marriage would be ideal, she does not believe that it still happens. “I have lived in this country for many years,” she explains, “and I see this very differently” (November 13, 2013). The standards that Mexican-Americans face in the United States are very different, and it is very probable that they are a result of a change in culture and a change in time as they become embedded into contemporary U.S. culture.

Several of the participants expressed the view that they no longer consider virginity to be important. While some of the women explained that they still prefer that their daughters be virgins when they marry, they understand that it is not very common today. The two men
interviewed (who are not married), told me that they do not care much if their future wives are virgins, ascribing the standard of virginity to the past and the traditions of México (November 19, 2013). However, one did state that even if his future wife is not a virgin, he would prefer that she have a good reputation, meaning that she could not be known as sexually promiscuous, which still remains somewhat within the traditional standards of México. Rosario explained that the traditions of México are somewhat old, because “decían en México que los tiempos se quedan atrás,” or, “they used to say that in México the times are left behind” (November 15, 2013). Perhaps there is a conscious effort to leave behind the Mexican traditions that are considered antiquated.

However, Daniel explained that while his ideal woman does not have to be a virgin, she should have a good reputation. Thus a woman no longer has to be a virgin, but she still should not have sexual relations with many men; it is acceptable for her to sleep with her boyfriend, but she cannot go sleeping with whichever man she chooses. Instead of basing their ideals in virginity, men are now looking for women with good reputations. According to my participants, the times are changing, and that change comes the weakened influence of virginity. However, while virginity may be losing its importance in Mexican-American culture, it still influences the reputation of the contemporary woman.

\textit{Feminine Capital}

Despite being an embarrassment for men, virginity is (or, more appropriately, \textit{was}), integral to the social status of the woman. Virginity is a sign of the respect that the woman has for herself, for her family, and for her future husband (November 6, 2013). For Adriana, virginity is everything for a woman; she “should save it for the ideal man when she gets
married. You should be pure, it is what you give to your husband” (November 13, 2013). It is apparent that virginity has been converted into a product, a type of capital. In fact, this good exists as feminine capital. This feminine capital, explains Gloria González-López in her article “Beyond the Bed Sheets, Beyond the Borders: Mexican Immigrant Women and Their Sex Lives,” is what women can use to access a good status in society for herself and for her family (2000). Being a virgin is very important for some people, explains Elena, because virginity is what a woman gives to her future husband— her companion, the father of her children— and if she gives him her virginity, he gives her his respect (November 6, 2013).

This concept of virginity as a gift is a manifestation of feminine capital, but another manifestation is the concept of the value of the woman herself. If a woman has multiple sexual partners, she can begin to lose her social status or symbolic capital as a ‘good’ woman. As José explains, the more men a women sleeps with, the more she devalues herself, as if her value were decreasing in terms of finding a husband who would want to marry her (January 16, 2014). This man explains the reputation of a woman in terms of the stock market, which reflects well the role of the reputation of women in feminine capital. If a woman loses her virginity, she loses part of her ability to achieve or maintain her social status.

When a woman loses her virginity and her feminine capital, she starts on the dangerous path towards being una mujer fracasada, or, a failed woman. If she does not care for her reputation, she can find herself in a situation where no one respects her. Similar to la mala mujer, or bad woman, who is not viewed well by society because of her sexual practices, la mujer fracasada is “failed” because she no longer has a good reputation. Nobody will love or want her, and nobody will take her seriously (November 13, 2013). With
the loss of her virginity, a woman advances toward the loss of her feminine capital and her ability to access a higher status in society.

Considering that virginity and feminine capital are so intertwined, a reduction in the influence of one results in the reduction of the other. While virginity continues to lose its importance in contemporary times, feminine capital follows the same path. If virginity is no longer important, there is little on which to base feminine capital, and there is not as much left for a woman to lose when she sleeps with a man.

With this lack of capital depending on sexual status, a woman now has to find another manner in which she can achieve a higher social status. If the social status of a woman is not based on her sexual reputation, she must seek other types of capital that can attract a man, or gain her more social power. Many women are now seeking to become professionals, explains Elena, and this search for an education and a good job can create new forms of capital that can fill the void created by the loss of feminine capital (November 6, 2013). Today, women are not as limited by the restrictions created by their sexuality as they used to be; instead, perhaps now they are being evaluated more and more for their educations and their roles in society at large. While one form of capital is diminishing, another is growing, and women in Mexican-American society are gaining more power through a type of social capital gained through an education or a profession.

Machismo

The fact that men are in a different situation is reflected in every interview that I conducted. It is important to recognize the ease with which men lose their virginity compared with that of women. While women have to fear the consequences of losing their virginity, men can
lose their virginity at any time, and continue sleeping with other women without consequence to their reputations. This double standard is reflected in much of Western society, and it plays an important role in machismo. Elena describes it as the situation in which the man has all the power in the family and in society; he has the power to decide if something is good or bad, and has the power to decide what the women under his influence can do (November 6, 2013). Under the gaze of men, which in turn informs the larger societal narrative that includes women, Mexican-American women are judged and controlled. Although machismo is not the principal focus of this study, a great deal of relevant information emerged that, in turn, influenced the direction of this analysis.

While virginity and feminine capital help control the woman, the process is not complete without machismo. As many of the participants explained, machismo is based on more traditional practices, such as the separation of the roles and jobs of men and women, “because in México, the men work, and the mom dedicates herself to the children” (November 13, 2013). One participant explained that her machista husband does “not cook, because he is a man. He does not clean the house because he is a man, and he does not care for the children because he is a man” (November 13, 2013). However, machismo is not only about the division of chores within the household, but also about the broader gender roles, power and social control of women and men.

While women are half of every heterosexual pair, in traditional machismo, the positions of power for the men and women are unequal. Many of the participants expressed the sense that machismo is based in the power of the man over the woman. As ‘el jefe,’ or ‘the boss’ of the house, a man has the power to make the important decisions for the family. As Rosario explains, “there are husbands who are very jealous and want their wives not to
work, for them not to leave, for them not to study,” and they expect that women obey them (November 15, 2013).

According to Evelyn Stevens in her article “Machismo and Marianismo” the Latin American macho insists on “having his own way, forcing acceptance of his views, winning every argument in which he engages, considering every difference of opinion as a declaration of enmity” (1973:58). The man is the center of society and of the family, and the “mother and sister cater and defer to him, make excuses and pray for him, and intercede on his behalf with his father during the latter’s brief, infrequent but usually harsh exercise of authority” while the brother can treat his sisters with condescension (1973:62). The macho seeks control, and is prepared to hurt others before making himself vulnerable and being wounded. However, not all men are machos; each one falls in a different place on the spectrum of behaviors.

In fact, the definitions of machismo vary according to the individual, as well as the gender of that person. While women described machismo as an oppressive force, the men see the situation a bit more ambiguously. Echoing the definitions of Stevens (1973), José noted that machismo is “hyper-masculine, where you kind of are just the alpha-male type of deal. You’re supposed to be like this kind of dominant male that’s respected. It’s all about you, you control everything, and if something doesn’t go your way, you’re angry, and you’re all tough” (January 16, 2014). This view reaffirms the more negative definition of machismo, but José explained that he never saw violent or negative machismo firsthand, so he must depend on the stereotypes and secondhand experiences of machismo to define it.

While many of the participants described machismo as something stereotypically negative, Daniel expressed that he felt machismo could have a positive and a negative side.
“Machismo is like you provide and everything, but a lot of times I feel like machismo is portrayed as like this always-there-to-hurt someone figure” (November 19, 2013). Machismo could simply be protecting and caring your family, but it could also be something less positive. He recognized that in Mexican media, like on television, machismo is portrayed in a negative light, and in many families, it can be something very negative, but he never experienced negative machismo in his own family. In fact, José had shared the same sentiment as Daniel, and the both explained something very important: machismo is diminishing.

The theme of change that we see in the shift in understandings of virginity and in feminine capital occurs with machismo as well: machismo is losing its influence and is taking on a different meaning. When I asked each participant if they believed that machismo still exists today, all of them said yes. Machismo “still exists,” explains Rosario, “although it isn’t the same as it used to be. I believe machismo still exists, but women are more, we are learning more, we know more, and… it’s not the same” (November 15, 2013). Machismo is changing, and women are learning to adapt to a new situation and to new opportunities. If women have more liberty in their lives, they can begin to make more decisions for themselves, like the decision to pursue an education, or to look for work outside of the home, which are less traditional decisions.

Besides experiencing a reduction in the influence of machismo in Mexican-American culture, Mexican-American women are also experiencing a stronger sense of a change in machismo because it seems that there is perhaps a new tendency to marry men who are outside the Mexican and Mexican-American cultures. Adriana spoke of the hopes of her daughters who do not want to live under the control of machismo. Her daughters “say that
when I am big, I’m not going to marry a Mexican. I want to marry an American, because I want to work and I want to study. And my husband is going to help me care for the children, and we are going to clean the house” (November 13, 2013). Thus, girls go looking for husbands who practice the opposite of traditional machismo so that they may have control over their own lives.

This desire to distance oneself from machismo is reflected in women’s decisions as well as in men’s decisions. While women go in search of husbands who do not embody machismo, men are also looking for ways to separate themselves from the stigma of machismo. In fact, the same definitions that men use to define machismo reflect the desire to distance themselves from the stigma of the macho. By using definitions of machismo such as “hyper-masculine” and “violent,” they create a concept of extreme machismo that is more traditional. However, they live in a different context, and the old version of machismo no longer holds the currency it once did.

Thus, this more violent definition is not the type of machismo that we would normally see today. If contemporary men can say that machismo involves a violent and controlling man, and if they behave themselves rather differently, they can say that they are not, in fact, machistas, despite benefitting from a system that still maintains elements of machismo. If they can say that they are not machistas, men benefit from a more subtle form of machismo, because while the definition of machismo has changed, the system still maintains control over the women in Mexican-American culture.

The double standard of sexual practices is yet another element of machismo, where we see the man under immense pressure to demonstrate his masculinity. With the seduction of a woman, the macho demonstrates to his companions the magnitude of his power, because
“[amorous] conquests serve a double purpose. While each seduction gives a man the temporary sensation of having bested an elusive adversary, it also serves to reassure him that the supposed essence of his manhood—his sexual potency—is intact” (Stevens 1973:59). If a woman is in the position to affirm or negate the masculinity of a man, the conquest of the woman of another man is doubly impacting, thus “the question for the fearful macho is not whether his wife or mistress may leave him; he worries about giving other men any kind of opening wedge to doubt his claims to potency” (Stevens 1973:59). Returning to the ideas of Octavio Paz, we might say that a man needs to remain closed and invulnerable, which he cannot be if another man steals his woman.

The power that comes from the conquest of a woman makes women that much more desirable, which results in the necessity for a man to control the women in his family. “A girl who is known as ‘wild’ or ‘easy’ brings disgrace not only on herself, but—more important—on the whole family, in that she reveals the inability of her male relatives—their lack of virile strength and courage—to ‘protect’ her” (Stevens 1973:62). While a woman can disgrace her family, men do not respect the threat that sleeping with a woman represents for her family. If a man is able to sleep with a woman before marrying her, it is a victory for him, but a disaster for that woman and her family.

Although Mexican-Americans may have a tendency to distance themselves from machismo, it continues to linger. One of the manifestations of this lingering machismo is womanly shame. While men can have as many girlfriends as they please, women have to live within different norms. Women are expected to carry all of the responsibility for everything sexual that happens to them, though the fault may not be theirs. This is quite evident in the story Elena, who suffered under the control of her *machista* husband for decades. At the end
of their marriage, her husband attempted to strangle her, but her son saved her, and nearly a year later, the police had detained her husband. When they jailed her husband, and years before Elena had left him for the first time, she had to respond to the frustration of her children who did not understand the situation. She feared that her children would blame her for leaving her husband, as well as for his being incarcerated, though the two events were necessary. Thus, even though these things had to happen, Elena still feels guilty for all that has happened to her and to her family. The fact that there remains in place a system that continues to emphasize feminine shame indicates that machismo still exists.

*Marianismo*

Confronted with the influence and power of the man, women have an influence that balances what they lose with machismo: *marianismo*. While none of the women that I interviewed knew what *marianismo* is, many of them gave commentaries that support this theory proposed by Evelyn Stevens (1973). Stevens explains that *marianismo* functions alongside machismo as the other half of gender relations:

> Taking its cue from the worship of Mary, *marianismo* pictures its subjects as semi-divine, morally superior and spiritually stronger than men. A female cannot hope to attain full spiritual stature until her forbearance and abnegation have been tested by male-inflicted suffering. Men’s wickedness is therefore the necessary precondition of women’s superior status. (1973:61)

While women do suffer at the hands of men, one finds that women almost benefit from the situation: “women strive not to avoid suffering but to make known their suffering, for their
misfortunes are the stigmata of incipient sainthood which are further validated by the appropriate attitude of abnegation” (Stevens 1973:62). By suffering at the hands of their male relatives, women become an incarnation of the Virgin Mary.

Within the family, everyone views the mother as a saint, except, perhaps, her husband. “To her children, but especially to her male children, she is an object of reverence, a royal personage whose wishes must be gratified, and the ever-loving, always forgiving surrogate of the Virgin Mary” (Stevens 1973:60). Yes, the woman is revered and treated well by her children, but the husband is the one who does not always have to treat her well, so that the responsibility of caring for the mother falls into the hands of her children. “Typically a man may comment that he is going to try to make restitution to his mother for all the suffering his father had caused her. At the same time he is acting toward his wife in such a way that his children, in turn, will see her as a martyr” (Stevens 1973:60). Thus, while the sons treat their mothers well, the treatment of these very sons towards their own wives continues the cycle of marianismo and machismo.

A woman does not have to be perfect to be admired as a saint; she only needs to sacrifice herself and suffer for the wellbeing of the family. “A married woman can be lazy, bad tempered, improvident, but as long as she is not found to be sexually promiscuous she will be regarded as a good wife and mother” (Stevens 1973:63). The mother who sacrifices herself is converted into someone that the children must protect from the husband, because while the sons and the father have the masculine power in the family, many times the sons choose to protect their mothers, as in the case of Elena. When Elena’s husband attempted to kill her, it was her son who saved her.
If a woman is mistreated, like Elena, she suffers, but she also continues to be venerated within her family and within Mexican-American culture at large. “The more closely the husband conforms to stereotyped macho behavior the more rapidly his suffering wife advances toward her anticipated beatification” (Stevens 1973:62). The worse a man treats his wife, the better her position within the family. Now, Elena has custody of her children, and surely she is considered a very respectable woman. Yes, the woman has a great deal of power within the home, but the woman has something more, because “his efforts to sustain his reputation as a macho in the world outside of the home require that he relinquish his claims to respect and love within the home” (Stevens 1973:63). While the man has the authority in the home, the woman has the respect and love of her children. This sharing of power and influence between man and woman makes their cohabitation possible, giving the woman something with which to protect herself when she suffers. However, while marianismo may protect women ideologically, it does not protect women in everyday practice, especially from physical violence directed towards them.

_Feminine Figures_

When considering that La Virgen de Guadalupe has consistently been described as the patron saint of México, it is no surprise that every single participant in this study knew of her and was able to provide at least a basic explanation of her story. “She’s always been looked at as the mother figure of mother figures,” explained Daniel, and every other participant expressed that she represented maternal protection (November 19, 2013). This standard of motherly guidance is a prominent aspect of La Virgen de Guadalupe’s significance in Mexican and Mexican-American culture. As Adriana explained, “ella es madre, como nosotros tenemos
nuestros hijos, pues, pedimos que La Virgen nos cuide, nos acompañe. Es como modelo para nosotros como mujeres,” or “she is a mother, like we have our own children, so, we ask the Virgen to care for us, to accompany us. She is like a model for us women” (November 13, 2013). In fact, often the mother is viewed as a caring, nurturing woman in Mexican and Mexican-American cultures. Daniel explained that while his father often acted as a disciplinary figure, his mother would care for the wounds (either emotional or physical) (November 19, 2013). Women aspire to be as loving, caring, and self-sacrificing as La Virgen, even though it may be an impossible standard to meet.

Because of the widespread belief in the Immaculate Conception of her son Jesus Christ, La Virgen de Guadalupe, or the Virgin Mary, is the perfect woman. The Immaculate Conception is what allows La Virgen de Guadalupe to be revered on a level equal to or above that of other religious figures in México. “That’s why she can be up there next to Jesus,” explained José, “if she was not a virgin, she wouldn’t be viewed in the Mexican community and our culture the same as if she were not a virgin. It just makes her more holy, that whole idea of the wife- you want your wife to be pure… her stock is at its highest point because it hasn’t been devaluated at all” (January 16, 2014). Apart from being a self-sacrificing and protective mother, then, women are also expected to maintain their virginity as well so that they may meet the standard set by La Virgen de Guadalupe.

Thus ideal womanhood is characterized in two ways: the ideal woman is expected to be a mother, and the ideal woman is expected to be a virgin. The reverence that is held for La Virgen de Guadalupe implies that women who are any less than caring mothers, and women who are not virgins, are not worthy of the love shown for La Virgen de Guadalupe. While Stevens points out that women are still revered and viewed as inherently more holy than men
in the culture of *marianismo*, this standard may still eat away at the self-esteem of women who fail to meet those standards.

The two feminine figures that fail to meet these standards of womanhood are forever immortalized in the national history and legends of México, which are carried over into Mexican-American culture. La Llorona, the failed mother who drowned her own children is the subject of a ghost story often used to scare kids into behaving well. Because she drowned her own children, she is considered to have failed her role as a mother. “It’s like the utmost disrespectful, and the opposite end of the spectrum from the mother, or a woman in general,” because while La Llorona killed her children, a mother is normally expected to be willing to sacrifice her own life to protect them (January 16, 2014). La Llorona exists as prime example for women of what they should never do or become, and represents a type of failed woman.

What is most intriguing is that while La Llorona is a folk tale known by every participant in the study, La Malinche was only known to one. In fact, even the participant who knew of La Malinche did not have a very deep understanding of her historical significance or her role in México’s history. Why is it that so few knew of La Malinche? Why do they not recognize the woman who gave birth to the very first mestizo Mexican? Considered to be the Mexican Eve, La Malinche is seen as the woman who took the first step towards the doom of the indigenous peoples, much like Eve is blamed with taking the first step towards the banishment of humans from the Garden of Eden. For a woman who many consider to carry so much of the blame for México’s colonization, she is hardly known among Mexican-American individuals. While so many view her as a traitor for aiding the Spaniards in their conquering of the indigenous peoples of México, when I explained her situation to the participants, the majority of them felt sympathy for her instead of hatred.
I see this conundrum following two paths: First, it could be that La Malinche is not well-known within Mexican-American culture because they do not wish to recognize the woman who gave birth to the mestizo race, because to recognize her would be to recognize what many consider to be the source of identity conflict. Second, it could be that within the Mexican and Mexican-American cultures, there was a subconscious effort to ignore any woman like La Malinche who had an intelligent mind and spoke with authority. However, both of these explanations almost accuse Mexican and Mexican-American culture of choosing to completely ignore and silence the woman, though we know that marianismo helps to counter that. It could very well be that La Malinche is not well known within these cultures simply because she is only discussed at the highest levels of Mexican education, preventing her from becoming a household name. Unfortunately, such a simple solution cannot be the sole answer to this conundrum.

What is important to understand is that these three women, La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Llorona, and La Malinche, are different representations of female Mexican archetypes: The Virgin Mother, The Failed Mother, and The Traitor. While La Virgen de Guadalupe is often called upon as a guardian for her people and is celebrated in times of success, La Llorona is called upon to scare children, and La Malinche is called upon to remind Mexicans and Mexican-Americans of the subjugation and betrayal of their own people. These extremes of womanhood provide different standards against which women are held, but there are no figures that represent a middle ground for women. There is no figure that the average woman can identify with; there is no figure that is neither the perfect mother nor a traitor. Without any neutral figures or standards, women are then defined as either perfect mothers, as failed
mothers, or as selfish traitors to their own people. With such limiting standards, women are controlled by the definitions society gives them.

*Oppression and Violence*

“Society,” Elena explains, “doesn’t let us grow as women. They only see us as ‘the good wife’ or ‘the good mother’ and nothing else” (November 6, 2013). With an importance in society that is based in their qualities as mothers and wives, women are simplified as unimportant characters. “We have to be behind men, but now that is changing” (November 6, 2013). Although the tradition has been to maintain the woman beneath the control of masculine society, Mexican-Americans live in a period of transition. According to the participants, everything is moving toward a more egalitarian situation for women, even though there is a long way to go.

One important element in the story of Elena is how she came to the United States. When she married, she had to move to the United States with her husband, leaving her family behind. Elena considers this obligation yet another element of machismo. While her situation worsened, Elena felt that she did not have any other option besides staying with her husband, even though he became more abusive. She stayed with him because she felt isolated, and unloved. At the beginning she did not speak much English, and did not feel that she had the option to leave the situation.

What one can take from this first interview is that some women are controlled by society because society wants them to be virgins, and when they come to the United States, they are even more controlled because they do not speak English and do not have the power to leave their husbands. Thus, while the importance of virginity is diminishing for Mexican-
Americans in the United States, there are still other factors that control women because some do not have the social networks they need to survive without their husbands. Many times housewives stay in home with their children for years, without leaving the house much or learning English.

“I think that they’re viewed as- they would be sexual, or else why would they be trying to socially pressure women to not have sex? It wouldn’t be such a big deal if they were asexual, if they didn’t have the same drive that a man does”, (January 16, 2014). With these standards for virginity, combined with machismo and marianismo, that suggest submission to men, women are left with little liberty with which to live their lives. There is little space for the girl who has sexual relations on the spectrum between a whore and a virgin, and women are very conscious of this. For those who still want to marry and have families, having sex is a dangerous affair, and one wrong step could take everything a woman might have gained in terms of feminine, social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital. Thus, women are in a difficult position, where society decides their value based on their sexual status, but where men are encouraged to have sex with them. However, with the changing of the times, this situation is less common for women, but it still has an effect on how older generations view the world.

The great irony of the situation is that women are complicit in their own oppression. Feminine capital, the same capital that is given to women by their virginity, is so important that it functions as part of the control and oppression of women in Mexican and Mexican-American society. By using feminine capital to their advantage, women unconsciously reaffirm the standards of virginity and sexual activity for women, aiding the maintenance of the same cycle of violence in which they are trapped. Although these women are not to
blame, this cycle serves as a clear example of the subtle functioning of violence within many cultures. Returning to the concept of feminine capital, we see that virginity can give a woman a form of power. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the woman is already in a position with less power in a society, if a man can rob her power.

The academic Slavoj Žižek (2008) speaks of the different types of violence that function in our society. According to him, symbolic violence is “embodied in language and its forms,” working in our form of language and expression, and the meaning of what we say (Žižek 2008:1). Systemic violence is the type of violence “inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence” (Žižek 2008:9). In the world of machismo and marianismo, women are constantly contending with the threat of violence, with each woman knowing that a man could hurt her, but at the same time knowing that if this were to happen, that violence would work to affirm her status as a good woman, because she is self-sacrificing. Women suffer symbolic violence with the standards that tell them that they have to accept the abuses of men in order to be good representations of La Virgen Maria or La Virgen de Guadalupe, forcing them to be submissive to the system. A woman suffers systemic violence that makes her constantly feel like a man could hurt her at any moment for any reason, terrorizing her, once again, into submission.

In the work of Cheleen Mahar, Richard Harker, and Chris Wilkes (1990), they speak of the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu explains symbolic violence as “the symbolic conflicts of everyday life in the use of symbolic violence of the dominant over the dominated, i.e. education, relationships in the workplace, social organisations, even in the conceptions of good taste and beauty (Bourdieu 1977:115). The social space is a space of status groups
which are characterised by different lifestyles” (Harker et al. 1990:5). In the words of Bourdieu, symbolic violence affects “those who do not have the ‘means of speech,’ or do not know how to ‘take the floor’” and “can only see themselves in the words or the discourse of others— that is, those who are legitimate authorities and who can name and represent” (Harker et al. 1990:14). Bourdieu explains that symbolic violence is a very subtle form of oppression, because it is not an obvious type of violence. If women can only define and explain themselves within the discourse of the dominant powers of a machista society, they cannot achieve justice.

In the context dominated by machismo and marianismo, women are forced to accept the abuse of men, or run the risk of being marked as a ‘mala mujer’ or being viewed as ‘malinchista,’ (which refers to the supposed treachery La Malinche), because being marked in such a way would negate their roles as good, passive mothers. If women seek to live alone, without the influence of men in their lives, they can be called bad women because they are not following the traditional feminine roles of marrying and having children. If a woman does have a man in her life, she has to deal with the pressure from him to have sex, and the pressure from society to remain a virgin, without even mentioning her own desires that can influence her.

The same roles that women are expected to do cause them great harm if they go without regulation. A woman who should accept the emotional and physical abuse of men in her life is left feeling ashamed if she decides to change her situation, because she would be viewed as selfish. If a woman is happy living with a certain level of control from the men in her life, she may have fewer opportunities to pursue her own interests, like an education or a profession, which could help her to achieve a level of independence and her own forms of
capital. To go even further, a woman who decides to fulfill the more traditional role of staying at home to care for her children, her independence is impeded even more. If she does not already speak English, a woman who stays at home to care for her children is left with few opportunities to learn the language, as in the cases of Adriana and Rosario.

Despite the fact that many North Americans would see these situations for women in Mexican-American society as oppressive, it is important to recognize that these women are often times quite happy with their situations. While both machismo and marianismo emphasize feminine submission and purity, they do permit women a certain amount of power and influence in the home. Many of the female participants expressed how much they love their families and how important it is to them to be part of their children’s lives, and many times participating in the culture of machismo and marianismo allows them to do so. It is when a woman wants to be part of the larger society and exercise more control over her own life that she might find conflict. I make these arguments not to justify the influences of machismo and marianismo, but to remind the reader that Western society in general has equally horrific displays of violence towards women, and one should not impose Western standards of what is healthy or good for a woman.

**The Changing of Tradition**

Throughout the analysis of my interviews, it becomes apparent that the sources of oppression for the woman, like machismo, marianismo, the importance of virginity, and everything else that I have discussed up to this point, are diminishing for Mexican-Americans, especially women. While these influences still have an important effect, with the passing of time and the transformation of every generation of Mexicans in the United States to American culture,
it appears that the participants see these effects losing their power. Culture is always changing, and it would not be a surprise to see more traditional beliefs, like the value in virginity and *marianismo* and machismo, diminish.

However, there is a strong culture of sexism and machismo also in the United States, though we do not always call them by the same name. Today there is a great deal of violence towards women in the United States, and there is still a great deal of inequality between men and women. What is important to remember is that my participants perceived a reduction in machismo in Mexican-American culture, but it could be that they are only escaping the Mexican version of machismo, and all of the other sources of oppression for women, only to find these same problems, but with English names.

Many times the participants spoke of cultural phenomena like virginity and machismo as if they were of another time, of another world. Sometimes I asked myself if they were distancing themselves from Mexican culture on purpose in order to fit better here. If they could say that México and its traditions stayed in the past, the participants could present themselves as more progressive individuals that belonged more to the North American society.

With the passing of years, immigrants can adopt new customs from the United States, but not all adopt as many customs or beliefs as others. José explains, “I think we’re all a part of the Mexican-American culture, because it - a lot of it depends on your parents, how long you’ve been here. We’re so different - some of us can’t even speak Spanish… Everyone’s kind of on a different level of what they kept from México” (January 16, 2014). Thus the oppressive effects on women of machismo and virginity, etc., can vary between every
Mexican-American family, being affected by a great number of variables, especially the number of years that a family has been in the United States.

The question of generations is very important here, because many immigrant families adapt to American culture in different manners. Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza (2010) discuss the theme of acculturation in the cases of Mexican-Americans, explaining that while the children in a family can adapt to the dominant culture here, their parents do not necessarily adapt at the same speed. ‘Dissonant acculturation,’ then, occurs when the children adapt more rapidly than their parents, abandoning parts of the culture of their parents and perhaps distancing themselves from their parents at the same time (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 2010:11). One must remember that existence of generation gaps can help determine the treatment of women across generations.

Another aspect of generation gaps that is important to consider in my analysis is that my participants were from very different generations. All of the women that I interviewed were first-generation immigrants, which means that they came to the United States as adults. On the other hand, between the two men that I interviewed, we see that one was born in the United States, and one was born in México but came here when he was two years old. He "was raised here, with all the norms from here, but [he] was born in México” (November 19, 2013). The one who was born in the United States notes that while he grew up with all of the norms from the United States, he sees that his parents are becoming accustomed bit by bit to the culture of the United States over the decades. Considering that his parents have been here for so long, he feels like his parents are adapting slowly but surely, because that is what they must do in order to fit into American society (November 19, 2013). Thus the generations can
play a very important role in determining how Mexican-American individuals adapt to the culture of the United States, and how quickly.

While all of the aforementioned oppressive effects for women can lose their strength in today’s times, because the loss of tradition often accompanies immigration, there are still other elements of immigration that can reinforce these same effects. Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza suggest that an immigrant man can feel stripped of his authority and power when he comes to the new country, and his lack of social power can push him to seek other forms of control. Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza continue to explain that within an immigrant community, it could be that a man resorts to seek dominance in the family to the point of abusing his wife and/or children (2010:189). Because a woman born in another country such as México does not always speak good English, she might be afraid of seeking help in abusive situations, especially if she is undocumented, because she might feel that she could risk her own deportation. Thus women are exposed to another form of domination by men, but a form that is less obvious. Unfortunately, while a woman can experience certain liberation from the more oppressive traditions from México when she is incorporated into the Mexican-American community, she can still be controlled by her husband or a man in her family.
CONCLUSION

Though Mexican-American women are experiencing new levels of freedom because of the diminishing importance of virginity and feminine capital, and the wavering influence of machismo and mariánismo, paired with cultural standards set by figures like La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona, they still walk a long path to equality. While these factors may be diminishing, women will continue to be oppressed until those factors are lost to the effects of time and cultural change. Unfortunately, these factors may only cease to affect women when they are completely forgotten by society.

In this context, women do play a role in their own oppression, though they have the ability to make change and take charge of their situations. It is not to suggest that making these changes is easy, or that these women are not motivated, by any means, because the concept of blaming the victims of male violence will never accomplish anything. Instead, I have found that women have other forms of capital that they may use to contribute to society and find value in their lives. Women do have more to contribute to society than their sexual purity. Women like Elena, who have refused to be valued simply for their roles as wives and mothers, are finding new ways to make a difference with their lives, often through education, and they are making changes to the way their families and their culture at large understand women.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Considering that this study was conducted on a very small scale, it is impossible to propose that the sample of five individuals interviewed for this research could be representative of the entire population of Mexican-Americans across the United States. Each participant
demonstrated quite liberal tendencies in one way or another, either by emphasizing a woman’s right to education, or by emphasizing the inherent equality between the sexes, which I would consider to be non-traditional views. An accurate sample of individuals would require a greater number of participants overall, and a more politically and ideologically diverse sample of opinions. It would be advantageous to create a sample that also reflected the proportion of individuals within each generation of Mexican-Americans. All of the women interviewed were first-generation immigrants, and the two men were either born in the United States or came to the United States as children. To obtain a more accurate sample, I would need to find women who were born in the United States or came to the United States as children, and I would need to find men who were first-generation immigrants. To address other disparities in my sample, I would also need to find a more diverse sample of ages across the participants.

As this investigation was conducted under the assumption that my participants and I were discussing heterosexual relationships, I now plan on investigating how masculinity and femininity are understood within the Mexican-American LGBTQ community. It will be important to understand how these individuals work with the values of machismo and marianismo, and whether or not they still adhere to more traditional values. The objective of my research is to amplify the voices of the minorities within the greater minorities within the United States so that they can create justice for themselves.
APPENDICES

Appendix A. Institutional Review Board Approval Letter.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
FWA: 00007392 | IRB: 0004173

2043 College Way | UC Box A-133 | Forest Grove, OR 97116
P: 503-352-1478 | F: 503-352-1447 | E: irb@pacificu.edu | W: www.pacificu.edu/irb

Approved 08/02/2013
Continuing Review Due 08/02/2014
File Number 076-13
Project Title Family Dynamics and Gender Roles in Mexican-American Families
Investigators Catherine Prechtel
Faculty Advisors Aaron Greer, PhD; Nancy Christoph, PhD

☐ Eligible for Exemption ☐ Expedited Review ☐ Full Review ☐ Joint Review ☐ Not IRB Jurisdiction

This letter signifies that the above research project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Pacific University and has been approved for one (1) year based on the provided materials. While being mindful of participant confidentiality, keep this letter on file, along with all informed consent and release forms, for the duration of the project and for at least three (3) years after the project officially is closed.

If a research-related incident (i.e., adverse event, issue of noncompliance, unanticipated problem) occurs during the course of the study, or if you anticipate modifying the project in any way, please complete the necessary paperwork (available on the IRB website) and submit it to the IRB immediately. As a researcher, you are responsible for the well-being and safety of your participants.

Also, because this project required expedited or full review, it must receive continued approval from the IRB for each year that it is active. Your first continuing review must be completed by 08/02/2014 to ensure compliance. It is suggested that you submit your request at least one (1) month in advance. If your research is no longer active, please submit a project closure request instead. The paperwork for both requests is available on the IRB website.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We thank you again for your submission and wish you well in your research endeavors.

Sincerely,

Sandra Rogers, OTR/L, PhD
Chair, Pacific University IRB
Appendix B. Approved Institutional Review Board Proposal Informed Consent Form.

1. Study Title / Título del Estudio
Family Dynamics and Gender Roles in Mexican-American Families / Dinámica Familiar y Papeles de Género en Familias México-americanas.

2. Study Personnel / Personal del Estudio

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<tr>
<td>Catie Prechtel</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:aaron@pacificu.edu">aaron@pacificu.edu</a></td>
<td>503-352-3125</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Faculty Advisor/ Asesor</td>
<td>Pacific University</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:christon@pacificu.edu">christon@pacificu.edu</a></td>
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<td>Nancy Christoph, Ph. D</td>
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3. Study Invitation, Purpose, Location, and Dates / Invitación al Estudio, Propósito, Lugar, y Fechas
You are invited to participate in a research study about patterns of family dynamics and gender expectations in Mexican-American families. I want to further the anthropological understandings of these topics so that improvements can be made in the lives of Mexican-Americans at large. With the recent growth in the population of Mexican-Americans, it is crucial for social policy workers to understand the culture that these people bring with them and the ways they see the world. Non-profit groups, clinics, teachers, social workers, police and social scientists need to understand some of the broader patterns of Mexican-American culture, which include their understandings of gender and family roles.

Se le invita a usted a participar en un estudio de investigación sobre las pautas de la dinámica familiar y las expectativas de los géneros en familias méxico-americanas. Quiero avanzar los entendimientos antropológicos sobre estos temas para mejorar las vidas de méxico-americanos en general. Con el crecimiento reciente en la población méxico-americana, es crucial que trabajadores de la política social entiendan la cultura de estas personas y cómo estas personas entienden al mundo. Organizaciones sin fines de lucro, clínicas, maestros, trabajadores sociales, policía y científicos sociales necesitan entender algunos de las pautas más importantes de la cultura méxico-americana, que incluye su entendimiento de los papeles de los géneros y de la familia.

4. Participant Characteristics and Exclusionary Criteria / Características de los Participantes, y Criterios de Exclusión
You must be Mexican-Americans and aged 18-50 years of age. You are not required to speak English, and you may speak Spanish. Any subjects outside the age groups of 18-50 will not be included in the investigation. The subjects of the interviews will be 60% women and 40% men. I will gather data in a neutral location where you are comfortable. The interview will be in a public, safe location, such as the Forest Grove Library, a Starbucks, the Pacific University Center for Languages and International Collaboration, or the Pacific University Library. You may choose from the preceding locations to conduct the interview. I will keep the data stored in a password-protected computer and a locked cabinet in the office of my faculty advisor Professor Nancy Christoph to protect your confidentiality. I will always have the computer in my possession or in a locked home. You may be removed from the project if I feel that you are at risk by participating, if you request to be removed, or if you jeopardize the project.

Usted debe ser méxico-americano y entre 18 y 50 años de edad. No se requiere que usted hable inglés, y puede hablar español. Cualquier persona que no tenga entre 18 y 50 años será excluido de la investigación. Los sujetos de las entrevistas serán 60% mujeres y 40% hombres. Voy a recopilar datos en un lugar neutral donde usted esté cómodo/a. La entrevista se llevará a cabo en un lugar público y seguro, como la biblioteca pública de Forest Grove, un Starbucks, el Centro para Lenguaje y Colaboración Internacional de Pacific University, o la Biblioteca de Pacific University. Usted puede elegir de las ubicaciones anteriores para llevar la entrevista a cabo. Guardaré los datos en una computadora protegida por contraseña y en un archivador cerrado con llave. Usted puede retirarse del proyecto si yo siento que está en riesgo por participar, si lo solicita, o si su participación pone en riesgo el estudio.

5. Study Materials and Procedures / Materiales del Estudio y Procedimientos

I will recruit between 7 and 20 subjects, and will interview them in the location of their choosing. You may discontinue your participation at any time, and I can destroy your interview information if you so desire. You will not be forced to discuss any topic that you are not comfortable with. I will read the informed consent information to you, and I will explain the interview process to you and your rights as a participant. I will record the interview with a voice recorder and take notes. The interview can range anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours but you may leave whenever you choose. Interview information and information regarding your identity will be kept coded and in a password-protected computer and in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Professor Nancy Christoph.

Voy a reclutar entre 7 y 20 sujetos, y voy a entrevistarlos en la ubicación de su elección. Usted puede terminar con su participación en cualquier momento, y yo puedo destruir su información de las entrevistas si lo desea. Usted no será obligado/a a discutir ningún tema con el que no se sienta cómodo/a. Yo le leeré en voz alta la información del consentimiento informado a usted, y le explicaré el proceso de la entrevista y sus derechos como participante. Grabaré las entrevistas con una grabadora de voz y escribiré apuntes. La entrevista puede durar entre 30 minutos y 2 horas, pero usted puede salir en cualquier momento si lo elige. Información de las entrevistas y información relativa a su identidad será guardada codificada y en una computadora protegida por contraseña y en un archivador cerrado con llave en la oficina de Profesora Nancy Christoph.

6. Risks, Risk Reduction Steps, and Clinical Alternatives / Riesgos, Medidas de Reducción de Riesgos, y Alternativas Clínicas

a. Anticipated Risks and Strategies to Minimize or Avoid Risk / Riesgos Anticipados y Estrategias Para Minimizar o Evitar el Riesgo
The interview process may cause you to feel emotional stress from answering personally embarrassing questions, and you will be reminded that the interview is completely voluntary and that you do not need to talk about anything that distresses you. Discussion of family dynamics and gender roles may lead to some social and familial stress. I will make efforts to minimize this risk by reminding you that you do not need to discuss any distressing topic. There is the possibility that your legal status or the legal status of one of your friends or family members will be mentioned in the interview process, which could be a legal risk if the information is not kept confidential. If you reveal that an individual is in the United States without legal documents, every precaution will be taken to ensure that any such information will be kept absolutely confidential to minimize any legal risks. I will not use information regarding legal status in my study. Once the recording of the interview has been transferred to my computer I will erase the recording on the voice recorder and will make sure that the section pertaining to legal status is not saved on my computer or used in any part of the study. To keep your identity confidential I will use pseudonyms.

El proceso de entrevistar puede causarle a usted sentir el estrés emocional de responder a las preguntas personalmente embarazosas, y le recordaré que la entrevista es completamente voluntaria y que no necesita hablar de nada que le angustie. Discusión de la dinámica familiar y papeles de género puede resultar en una cierta tensión social o familiar. Haré esfuerzos para minimizar este riesgo al recordarle que no necesita discutir conmigo ningún tema que le angustie. Hay la posibilidad de que el estatus legal de usted o de unos de sus amigos o de miembros de su familia sea mencionado en el proceso de la entrevista, que puede ser un riesgo legal si la información no es mantenido confidencial. Si usted revela que un individuo está en los Estados Unidos sin documentos legales, todas las precauciones serán hechos para garantizar que toda la información sea mantenida confidencial para minimizar los riesgos legales. No usare información sobre el estado legal en mi estudio. Cuando he transferido el grabado de la entrevista a mi computadora, borraré el grabado en el grabador y aseguraré que esa sección sobre el estado legal no será almacenado en mi computadora y no será utilizado en ninguna parte del estudio. Para mantener la confidencialidad de su identidad, usaré seudónimos.

b. **Unknown Risks / Riesgos No Anticipados**

It is possible that participation in this study may expose you to currently unforeseeable risks.

Es posible que su participación en este estudio pueda exponer a usted a riesgos imprevisibles.

c. **Advantageous Clinical Alternatives / Alternativas Cínicas Ventajosas**

This study does not involve experimental clinical investigations.

Este estudio no implica investigaciones clínicas experimentales.

7. **Adverse Event Handling and Reporting Plan / Tratamiento de Eventos Adversos y Plan de Reportar**

In the event that you become sick, injured, distressed, or otherwise uncomfortable as a result of your involvement in the research study, you may stop your participation immediately. If such an event occurs, promptly notify the principal investigator or the Pacific University Institutional Review Board.

If the investigator becomes aware of an adverse event, the IRB office will be notified by the next normal business day for minor events (such as discontinuing the interview or having to leave...
because of emotional distress) and within 24 hours for major events (in the case of violence or threatening the safety of yourself or others).

If you experience or are directly affected by an adverse event, you will be given the opportunity to withdraw any data collected from you during the study up to the point of the publication of the study.

If you wish to seek counseling services, you may contact the Pacific Psychology Clinic in Hillsboro, which is located at 222 SE 8th Ave., Suite 212, Hillsboro, OR 97123. You can call the clinic at 503-352-7333.

En el evento de que usted se ponga enfermo/a, herido/a, afligido/a, o incómodo/a de otro modo como resultado de su participación en la investigación, usted puede terminar su participación inmediatamente. Si tal evento ocurriera, notifique a la investigadora principal o la Junta de Revisión Institucional de Pacific University sin demora.

Si la investigadora es notificada de un evento adverso, la Junta de Revisión Institucional será notificada para el siguiente día de trabajo para eventos menores (como discontinuar la entrevista o dejar porque de estés emocional) y dentro de 24 hora para eventos grandes (en el caso de la violencia o la amenaza a la seguridad de usted o de otros).

Si usted experimenta o es afectado/a directamente por un evento adverso, usted tendrá la oportunidad de retirar cualquier dato recogido de usted durante el estudio hasta el punto de la publicación del estudio.

Si usted desea conseguir servicios de terapia, puede ponerse en contacto con La Clínica Psiquiátrica de Pacific (Pacific Psychology Clinic) en Hillsboro, que está ubicado en 222 SE 8th Ave., Suite 202, Hillsboro, OR 97123. Usted puede llamar a la clínica al 503-352-7333.

8. Direct Benefits and/or Payment to Participants / Beneficios Directos y/o Pago a Participantes

a. Benefit(s) / Beneficio(s)
   - There is no direct benefit to you as a study participant.
   - No hay ningún beneficio directo para usted como participante en el estudio.

b. Payment(s) or Reward(s) / Pago(s) o Recompensa(s)
   - You will not be paid for your participation.
   - Usted no recibirá pago alguno para su participación.

9. Promise of Privacy / Promesa de Privacidad

Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and the identities of your family and friends. Any information related to your identity or the identities of people you mention will not be published. I will keep the confidentiality of all participants, and though I will have a master key of your names, I will take steps to minimize the possibility that someone other than my faculty advisors or myself can access this information. The information will be kept either in a locked filing cabinet or on a password-protected computer. The consent forms of the participants will be kept separately from the study data. Study data and consent forms will be kept on file with the faculty advisor for a minimum of three years after the completion of the study. Only my faculty advisors and myself will have
access to the data. In the case that I suspect child abuse or that you are a threat to yourself or others, I will end your confidentiality in order to notify the proper authorities.

Seudónimos serán usados para proteger su identidad y las identidades de su familia y de sus amigos. Cualquier información relativa a su identidad o las identidades de las personas que mencione usted no serán publicadas. Mantendré la confidencialidad para todos los participantes, y aunque yo tendrá una clave maestra de sus nombres, tomaré medidas para reducir la posibilidad que alguien que no sea yo o un/a asesor/a del profesorado tenga acceso a esta información. La información se quedará o en un archivador cerrado con llave o una computadora protegida por contraseña. Los documentos de consentimiento de los participantes serán mantenidos separadamente de los datos del estudio. La profesora del asesorado mantendrá los datos del estudio y los documentos de consentimiento por tres años a mínimo después de la finalización del estudio. Sólo yo y mis profesores asesores tendremos acceso a los datos. En el caso de que yo sospeche el maltrato infantil o que usted sea una amenaza para sí mismo o para otros, terminaré su confidencialidad para notificar a las autoridades apropiadas.

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<th>10. Medical Care and Compensation in the Event of Accidental Injury / Asistencia Médica y la Indemnización en Caso de Lesión Accidental</th>
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<th>11. Voluntary Nature of the Study / Carácter Voluntario del Estudio</th>
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<td>Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Pacific University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw after beginning the study you can choose to have your interview information and contact information destroyed. If significant new findings develop (or are discovered) during the course of this research that could impact your decision to continue participation, such findings will be shared with you and you will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study.</td>
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<th>12. Contacts and Questions / Contactos y Preguntas</th>
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<td>The investigator will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any time during the course of the study. If you are not satisfied with the answers you receive, please call the Pacific University Institutional Review Board at 503-352-1478 to discuss your questions or concerns further. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or if you experience a research-related injury of any kind, please contact the investigator and/or the IRB office. All concerns and questions will be kept in confidence.</td>
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La investigadora estará encantada de responder a cualquier pregunta que usted tenga durante el curso del estudio. Si usted no está satisfecho con las respuestas que recibe, por favor llame a la Junta de
Revisión Institucional de Pacific University al 503-352-1478 para discutir sus preguntas o preocupaciones. Si usted tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación, o si usted tiene una herida relacionada con la investigación, por favor póngase en contacto con la investigadora y/o la Junta de Revisión Institucional. Todas las preocupaciones y preguntas serán mantenidas confidenciales.
Appendix C. Excerpt From Interview 1.

Interview Transcript 1
From Participant #1 on November 6, 2013. (49:32)
Conducted by Catie Prechtel

So, I'm going to look at identity. How would you describe your- are you Mexicana? American? Or how do you describe yourself?

A hundred percent Mexican.

Mhmm. And then, let’s go to gender- What do you think is the difference between a woman and a man?

Hm, well, the difference is, eh, sex.

Mhmm.

I don’t know how to say that in English. Uh, yeah. The sex- sexo? Como, es-

Las partes fisicas?

El sexo is like- yeah, the physical, and I think we are much the same, but the sex, el sexo, uh, te indica que eres mujer o hombre.

So what do you think, um, are there emotional differences between men and women?

I think both- we have the same emotions. The men don’t show it, and uh, the women they’re really fragile and easy to break, you know, emotionally. And men don’t show his emotions, but I think both they have the same equally and emotionally. The same feelings-

But they express it-

They express it differently.

And then what do you think- are there differences socially for men and women?

I think so yes, for men it’s more easily to get a job and find any kind of place to hang out or go with friends, and women, we have to see our friends or we can’t do the same jobs as the mens, even if in this time, um, it’s changing, you know? Everyone any work of the man, but they don’t treat us like same.

Right.

Because we women.
So what do you think the ideal woman would be like?

Well, I think women have to have the same quality, like respect of men, you know? Because women is the same, is a human being, and they deserve the same respect of men.

Mhmm.

And stability, you know? It’s equally, you know? Even if we do more work than men sometimes.

Yeah. How do you think a good woman would behave?

Behave?

Como comportarse

I think the good woman is the one that respect the idea of the man. Uh, the good woman is the- [she] do all the emotional stability and respecting the men and understanding how the man is on the inside, you know? And give him the same quality important about emotionally. You know, if women respect that, the quality, emotionally, they have the man, I think the woman can be responsible for everything, and you know sometimes they don’t see that we can do anything in this world like the same as men, and we need to be respectful for that.

Right. Do you think- When you think about the ideal woman, is the ideal woman a mother? Or does she stay at home? Or does she go out and work? What do you think a good woman should do?

(8:27)

A good woman … I think a good woman could work outside or she could work in home. Be a good wife, a good mother, and a good woman to help the community and I think that’s all for me, you know, like, be a good woman is all that and have good sentimental feelings for the others and whatever they have in home.

How do you be a good mother, then? You said sentimental feelings…

Well, I think a good mother is … First of all, a good mother is the one who takes care of [her] children, [she] understands them and [she] give them the opportunity to speech. And understand [her] kids- what do they want, what do they need? And give love equally. I think it’s important that each kid that we have receive the same amount the love. And um… I think that’s a good mother.

Yeah. So, now we’ll change the topic a little bit. I’d like to ask you: what is virginity?
Uh, I think in this time, we don’t care about the virginity no more, because with the time, we lost that. Uh, but for some people or especially for men, like I say, not in this time it’s important, but for some people it’s really important because it’s the priority that you have a good man, and uh, and it’s something that you have and you want to give that to the person that is gonna be your husband, your partner, the father of your childrens, and I think it’s like, and they’re gonna give you the respect, you know. Like I said, you know, that was before, you know, right now the virginity is not important in this time, but I think it’s one of the tings that we lost already. And it’s one of the important thing that the womens they can keep and give it to the real husband that they’re gonna have, the man that you’re gonna have for the rest of your life.

Very true. Do you think there is a difference between virginity for men and virginity for women?

Yeah, I think it’s totally different. Women, we don’t have the opportunity to have relationships like a man, because men lose their virginity faster than women. Or mens, they can be partner by partner, and they don’t care about their virginity, but womens, they have this virginity in touch. They keep it like that the longest [she] can keep it. Keep it and find their real love, you know?

So you’re saying that virginity can be a sort of gift?

Yes. I think- for my knowledge, and for me, I think that’s really important, because you’re showing to you, you’re showing to the person that’s going to live with you for the rest of your life, that you have respect for your body. You have respect for you [temple???] and you have respect for that person that is gonna be with you.

That’s good. When do you think it is acceptable for a man to lose his virginity, and when do you think it is acceptable for a woman to lose her virginity?

I think for men, it doesn’t matter, because men- they’re supposed to be the same way [as] women, but it’s not the same. Men lose their virginity like maybe at 13 years? And uh, maybe women they can wait longer like maybe 15? Some girls they like 16, 17 and they virgins. They’re still… And men, I think it’s easier because they’re men, you know? and women we keep more like respect in selves.

So keeping your virginity is like respecting yourself.

Yeah.

So do you think a woman should be a virgin when she marries?

I think so, yes. I think that when you find the right person that is gonna be in your life, and you keep your virginity and you give it to them like it’s your temple. They you know that they’re gonna be for the rest of your life with you.
Appendix D. References.


