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**VOCES DE LAS BUENAS MUJERES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY
OF MARIANISMO AMONG MEXICAN AMERICAN AND MEXICAN WOMEN**

A Thesis

by

LORI ANNE RUIZ

**Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Texas-Pan American
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS


May 1998

Major Subject: Speech Communication

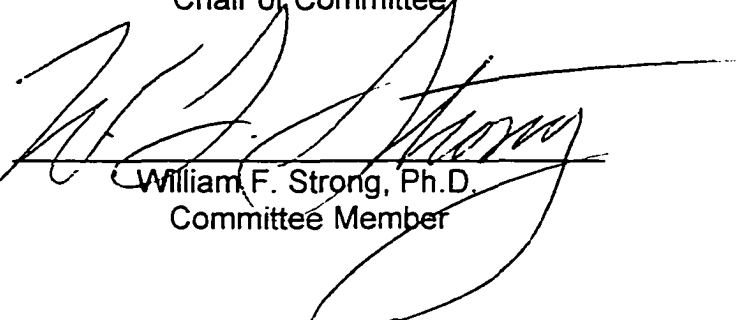
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ABSTRACT

Ruiz, Lori A., *Voces De Las Buenas Mujeres: A Ethnographic Study of Marianismo among Mexican American and Mexican Women.* Master of Arts (MA) in Speech Communication, May, 1998, 86 pp., 15 titles.

Research has focused on gender roles of the Hispanic male and female in regards to the *machismo* social construct. The current study examines the other side of *machismo*, via Gil and Vasquez's (1996) Ten Commandments of *Marianismo*, and explores the validity of this social construct through interviews with Mexican American and Mexican women. Twenty Mexican American and Mexican women were selected through a nonrandom purposive sample to participate in the interviews. The taped interviews were analyzed verbatim. Eight categories emerged which are directly related to *marianismo*. The women's responses are used to convey their attitudes, roles, and relationships and to identify any similarities between the Mexican American and Mexican women concerning the *marianismo* construct.

DEDICATION

*Some people come into our lives and quietly go; others stay for a while and leave
footprints on our hearts and we are never the same.*

Anonymous

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Maria Salinas, for her life long sacrifice as a Hispanic woman. Her life is truly an example to learn from. She is what we call, *una buena mujer*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe great “thanks” to my thesis director, Dr. Dora E. Saavedra. You have been the tower of strength in pulling the pieces together and an unfailing source of encouragement to me. To Dr. Bill Strong, who insisted I pursue the research I began last year (in Puebla, Mexico 1997). To Dr. Ana Maria Rodriguez, Dr. Jack Stanley, and Dr. Salma Ghanem for letting me “hug” her own thesis. Thanks are also extended to those that didn’t even realize they did so much for me, Barbara Mayo, Marcia An, Kevin Nix (thanks for letting me use your laptop), Mary Ortega, Flor Salinas, Elizabeth Ortega and Tim Kikos. Undoubtedly, there are many other “unsung heroes” (my family): Richard, Laura, Erica, Jessica Ruiz and Andres Nisimblat.

And most importantly, I’m thankful to the Lord for being there every step of the way and making the verse Phil 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” a reality.

Finally, I offer thanks to all the voices of the women, who remain nameless (I promised them confidentiality) in contributing their stories and lives to my research. Oh, and to all of you that kept me on task by asking, “How’s the thesis going”? Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Lori Anne Ruiz

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The gender roles of the Hispanic male and female have been explored by various researchers in terms of two social constructs, *machismo* and *marianismo* (Rodriguez, 1994; Brusco, 1995; Gil & Vasquez, 1996). According to De Jesus (1997), "*machismo* is a concept that projects a picture of the ideal Latino." A *macho* male is portrayed as one who is manly, aggressive, and who protects the family. The term, *marianismo*, is viewed by some researchers as the female counterpart to *machismo* (De Jesus, 1997; Gil & Vasquez, 1996). The *marianismo* construct presents an idealized concept of Latina womanhood.

The purpose of the current ethnographic study is to examine *marianismo* via Gil & Vasquez's (1996) Ten Commandments of *Marianismo*, and to explore the current validity of this social construct through interviews with Mexican American and Mexican women. Rodriguez (1994) has argued that times are changing rapidly and Hispanic women are now torn between and influenced by two cultures; in fact, they "are in transition between the two" (p. 81). Many factors contribute to the influence of these women to either welcome new world thinking or to adapt to past tradition. Rodriguez (1994) found that some of the factors that empower these women are "income, urbanization, experience, and education . . ." (p. 81). Since this study is looking at two groups, the Mexican American and Mexican women, it is important to recognize that many of these women struggle to maintain an identity among family and, most importantly, among themselves.

Before turning to the review of literature, the term *marianismo* must be defined in a comprehensive manner. In addition, the social construct of *machismo* will also be defined since the argument has been advanced that these two social constructs are flip sides “of the same coin” (De Jesus, 1997; Gil & Vasquez, 1996).

Definitions of *Marianismo* and *Machismo*

Evelyn Stevens (1994; 1973) is one of the earliest writers to examine the concept of *marianismo* in her essay entitled “*Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo.*” She asserts that:

Marianismo is just as prevalent as *machismo* but it is less understood by Latin Americans themselves and almost unknown to foreigners. It is the cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semidivine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men (p. 4).

Mirande and Enriquez (1979), also explain that these *marianista* women are in charge of:

. . . essential familial functions: reproduction, transmission of cultural values and beliefs to the next generation, and provision of needed warmth, support and affection for family members who must survive in a hostile environment (p.79).

Given these descriptions of the Latina’s roles, it is, therefore, important to examine the roots of *marianismo* and the characteristics of a *marianista*.

What are the moral roots of *marianismo*? Stevens (1994) points out that the Catholic culture, which dominates Latin America, is a patriarchal system. Within this male-dominated culture, the Virgin Mary serves a prominent role

which exemplifies what characteristics the ideal Latina should possess. In other words, the Virgin Mary is not only a religious figure, but she also serves as a role model for feminine behavior and attitudes.

Therefore, the idealized woman in Latin culture contains contradictory mandates. As Gil & Vasquez (1996) explain:

what an ambitious role it is, taking as its model of perfection the Virgin Mary herself. *Marianismo* is about sacred duty, self-sacrifice, and chastity. About dispensing care and pleasure, not receiving them. About living in the shadows, literally and figuratively, of your men—father, boyfriend, husband, son—your kids, and your family. Aside from bearing children, the *marianista* has much in common with *una monja de convento*, a cloistered nun—but the order she enters is marriage, and her groom is not Christ but an all too human male who instantly becomes the single object of her devotion for a lifetime (p. 7).

There are several defining characteristics for the ideal woman. According to Stevens (1994) these include:

- 1.) self-denial;
- 2.) unlimited patience with the men in their lives;
- 3.) submissiveness to the males of the family (e.g., fathers, brothers, husbands and sons);
- 4.) the belief that men are to be forgiven for their behaviors because they are just “little boys”;
- 5.) that women should be chaste before marriage and not enjoy sex even in marriage.

There are also benefits prescribed by *marianista* culture as well as positive behaviors and attitudes. These include:

- 1.) Women should be protected by the men in their lives.
- 2.) Husbands should provide the economic support for their families.
- 3.) Women face fewer pressures to work outside the home.
- 4.) *Marianista* women should convey compassion to others.
- 5.) *Marianista* women are loyal to their husbands and families.
- 6.) *Marianista* women are perceived to be generous.
- 7.) Women are to be accorded respect (Stevens, 1994; Strong, 1994, Gil & Vasquez, 1996; Castellanos, 1976).

Therefore, to be a *marianista* is to achieve a level of perfection. The *marianista* cares for everyone's needs except her own. It is her duty to submit to a man's desires in all aspects of her life (Strong, McQuillien & Hughey, 1994).

Stevens (1994) also asserts that the transmission of *marianismo* is not necessarily a result of a male-inspired conspiracy to subjugate women. On the contrary, she astutely notes that young males learn their roles and attitudes from the female caregivers in their lives, i.e., their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and so on. Therefore, women themselves assist in the perpetuation of *marianismo* as a reciprocal role which complements *machismo*.

What then is *machismo* and how does it relate to *marianismo*?

There are both negative and positive characteristics attributed to *machismo*. *Machismo* has been defined by Victor de la Cencela, a Puerto Rican psychologist, as a socially learned, reinforced set of behaviors which men are expected to follow in Latin society (Gil & Vasquez, 1996).

Machismo, both inside and outside the Hispanic community has become the synonym for "oppressive male supremacy" and abuse (Gil and Vasquez,

1996; Brusco, 1995). Octavio Paz (1961) wrote that the macho Mexican “is the hermetic being, closed up in himself, capable of guarding both himself and whatever has been confided to him. Manliness is judged according to one's invulnerability to enemy arms or impacts of the outside world” (p.31). Rodriguez found that a *macho* is “a male who refuses to do “womanly” things such as dishwashing, cooking, diaper-changing, or minding the children” (p. 70-71). U.S. social scientists inevitably have concluded that machismo produces maladaptive, pathological responses (Rodriguez, 1994). It is expected that the Latino may “provide for, care for, and defend his family. When these needs are truncated and reinforce feelings of inadequacy, this overcompensation may take the form of excessive fighting, drinking, or bragging about conquests” and thus may render the family or relationships dysfunctional (Casavantes, 1976, cited in Rodriguez, 1994, p. 71). To compensate for their feelings of inadequacy, therefore, men may react in a *macho* manner. According to the *macho*, women have obligations, while men have choices (Gil & Vasquez, 1996). It means that a man's place is in the world, and a woman's place is in the home. While *machismo* may sound rigid, it can have a lighter more positive side: the *caballero*. The *caballero* is the true protector in every sense of the word. He opens the door for his wife and always wants the best possible for his family. Although much research has been done on *machismo*, only recently has the opposite side of the coin--*marianismo*-- received any attention (Gil & Vasquez, 1996).

Review of the Literature on Marianismo as a Gender Role

A small number of studies have focused on the concept of *marianismo*, its cultural roots, and its cognitive and psychological manifestations (Gil & Vasquez,

1996). As mentioned previously, Evelyn Stevens, in an essay first published in 1973, sets forth much of the foundation for the study of *marianismo*. In her essay, she contributes to the definition of the term. She also traces the history of its origin in both practice and belief. She describes *marianismo* as a “cult” based on the belief that the Virgin Mary is a role model to be emulated by Latina women. Dr. Odette Alacron, a psychiatrist at the Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College states that Latin American female immigrants view the Virgin Mary as a “self-sacrificing, passive, chaste feminine ideal” (Murphy & Simon, 1998, p.1). Since Mary plays such an important role in the Latin tradition, it is very difficult for Latina women immigrants to confront and adapt their cultural roots with the realities of the American culture. Murphy & Simon (1998) found that “they want to be liberated but are trapped in their old culture” (p.1). In addition, Dr. Alacron, (Lorch, 1996) believes “that Spanish-Roman Catholic traditions” contribute to “a sense of fatalism” which exacerbates problems for the *marianista*.

The Ten Commandments of *Marianismo*

One of the most comprehensive projects on *marianismo* is Gil & Vasquez’s, The Maria Paradox (1996). It is a study of Latinas struggling to reconcile “Old World” traditions in particular *marianismo* attitudes and their ensuing behaviors, with what they term “New World” roles. These authors, who are psychotherapists based in New York City, have worked primarily with Latina clients. In their research, they have identified what they term as the Ten Commandments or characteristics of *marianismo*. These Ten Commandments, which are explained below, are highly condensed versions of the Gil and Vasquez (1996) text narratives . The “Commandments” describe the conflicts

faced by Latinas in U.S. culture.

Commandment One: Do not forget a woman's place

Latin women deny themselves, at times, the opportunity to explore their own abilities because of pressures from their families. If a Latin woman expresses her feelings or emotions she may be considered, "*una mala mujer*" or a bad woman (p.3). If, for example, a woman complains about her role to her husband or parents, she may be seen as disrespectful. The Latina carries the additional burdens of uncertainty about who she is as a woman and guilt if she strays from traditional expectations. When Latinas in North America find themselves in conflict concerning their own role expectations and those of their families and native culture's, they may experience a loss of self-esteem.

Commandment Two: Do not forsake traditions

Patterns in families are established throughout various generations. These patterns often times become tradition or "the way things are" (Gil & Vasquez, 1996, p.23), may involve self-sacrificing, and assertive behavior, all of which are considered part of the traditional female role. The woman is to serve her husband and her family. She is also expected to be obedient to her father until she goes to her husband's home. Again, tradition dictates the Latin woman's role is to put her family above her needs. This commandment is also echoed in Brusco (1995). A mother that gives everything to her children such as food, money, or clothing is considered a good mother. If the mother gave herself food, money and clothing first, she would risk disapproval of her family and peers.

Commandment Three: Do not be single, self-supporting, or independent-minded

Marianismo dictates that a woman be passive and dependent in her relationships. Decisions, for example, are to be made by her husband or boyfriend. In addition, she is to display obedience and respect to her parents, grandparents and other elders or authority figures. Finally, the woman's relationship to her mother is of great importance since in most cases, it is the mother who gives *consejos* (advice) and guidance regarding relationships. The mother also transmits messages about a woman's worth through the process of socialization. Because most Hispanic families express a strong preference for male children, women also grow up believing that men are more important than women. This preference often leads women to believe they are inferior. Therefore, a woman needs a man in her life to care for her, make decisions, and make her a *buena mujer* (good woman).

Commandment Four: Do not put your own needs first

Gil and Vasquez believe that the perfectionism of the *marianista* manifests itself in everyday interactions as selflessness. This selflessness is also manifest in the *marianista's* relationship with her man (p. 79). Thus, the definition of a good woman is dependent on how well she serves others. This is a deeply ingrained value which has been passed down generation after generation. The quality of selflessness, in essence, refers "to not being there for yourself" (p. 81). It is, therefore, a *marianista* expectation that women be capable of bearing all suffering, and they should do so gladly in order to earn the approval of family, friends and husbands (Strong, et al., 1994). This is termed, *familismo*, which refers to a tight-knit union of individuals in a nuclear extended family.

Since family is a very important part of Latin society, the *marianista* must choose between New World ideas as an independent woman or to continue on the grounds of Old World traditions. Ironically, according to Rodriguez (1994), the woman is considered the stronghold of the culture. Another author, Estella Herrera (1996) asks these questions in her article entitled "*Marianismo*."

What's a woman to do? Give herself totally to her family or reserve some of her resources for herself? Doesn't she have the right to rest after long working hours, a right to pay attention to her appearance, to her personal interests? A right to spend time and money on herself? To say no, thank you very much, to relatives who want to visit or worse, to stay over uninvited?

(p.43)

Questions such as these make it difficult for the Latin woman to put her own needs first.

Commandment Five: Do not wish for more in life than being a housewife

Latinas experience inner conflicts because of work-related issues--the struggle between family and job. According to Gil and Vasquez (1996), "the more successful they become in the North American world of work, the less successful they feel as Latin women" (p. 100). There is much guilt associated with not keeping a perfect home for her family. Leaving her family to other caregivers is especially difficult. Latin women may experience an identity crisis as they try to reconcile their home lives with their professional lives (Gil & Vasquez, p. 100). Latin husbands contribute to the problem:

We must never forget that the Latino man has been raised to

believe it's his birthright to have a woman waiting for him at the end of the day--with a bright smile and a hot meal. When that deeply ingrained pattern is disturbed or altered, he may feel his world has collapsed (104).

While they must serve or wait on a man at home, Latin women feel they must not "compete against men, certainly not in the business world" (p. 107). The only competition a Latin woman is accustomed to facing is in terms of competing with other women for the affections of a man.

Commandment Six: Do not forget that sex is for making babies--not for pleasure

Latin males are known for their *macho* ways, and they are also known for their infidelities (p. 127). One of the hardest cultural conflicts a Latina must deal with is the traditional sexual attitudes and behaviors that a good woman should possess. According to Gil & Vasquez, "we often detect a sadness and guilt in our clients feel after a sexual initiation" (p. 128). In most Latin households, and especially in traditional ones, sex is a taboo subject (p. 130). By not being able to discuss sex, women often receive the message that "nice" women do not care for this topic. The *marianista* believes that women of virtue do not enjoy sex. Instead, they must be sexually pure even in marriage. A good woman endures sex, she does not initiate it. A woman who enjoys sex is, according to the *marianista*, a prostitute.

Commandment Seven: Do not be unhappy with your man, no matter what he does to you

Gil and Vasquez (1996) discuss the fact that many *marianistas* endure an

abusive relationship because they have been taught to tolerate abusive relationships for the sake of their children or the family “honor.” They also seek to protect “their man’s pride” at the expense of sacrificing their own value as a women. In addition, keeping up the appearance of a happy family is important to the *marianista*.

According to Gil and Vasquez (1996), “economic constraints, role expectations, and a desire to maintain the traditional values of *marianesimo* and *machismo* augment the level of stress in families, and contribute to potential violence” (p. 158).

Commandment Eight: Do not ask for help

This commandment promotes the well-known superwoman syndrome. Gil and Vasquez (1996) identify six specific *marianista* beliefs that can affect a Latina woman’s self-esteem as a working wife and mother: a good *marianista* provides for her family, does not argue, tolerates her husband’s relatives, keeps an impeccable home, obeys traditions, and takes care of her children. Striving for feminine perfection hinders *marianistas* at home and work. If they fall short of perfection, they often feel guilty. More often than not, they become exhausted, fall behind in all areas, and then feel guilty about family and career obligations.

Commandment Nine: Do not discuss personal problems outside the home

Since a *marianista* is supposed to “endure all suffering” (p. 211), outside help is unheard of, or the person seeking help is perceived as “crazy, weak, and vulnerable” (p. 211). Latin families believe in privacy, and they encourage silence within a personal setting--such as the family.

Commandment Ten: Do not change

The tenth and final commandment is "Do not change." Change is a difficult process which takes time. However, Gil & Vasquez (1996) believe *marianistas* are encouraged to avoid making waves. Maintaining the status quo in their relationships is seen as preferable to changing and perhaps losing their culture. However, "the women living in the United States, including Latinas, have more role choices available to them than women in Latin America" (p. 262). These choices will serve as catalysts for changes in women's roles. Transformation, however subtle, is inevitable. The old *marianismo* will give way to a new, healthier, *marianismo*.

Of the few existing publications on *marianismo*, most acknowledge the importance of looking at both the positive as well as the negative aspects of the gender constructs of *marianismo* and *machismo*. The Stevens (1994; 1973) essay provides a historical overview of the religious origins of the concept. Stevens (1994) concludes that *marianismo* is a cult-like phenomenon. Gil and Vasquez (1996), on the other hand, provide a view of *marianismo* from a psychotherapeutic standpoint. The focus of their work has have been to remedy or ameliorate the negative effects of *marianismo*.

No studies, however, have been done with Latina women who are not seeking therapy for relationship problems. This researcher also found no studies which focused on messages women receive from significant others regarding their roles. Is *marianismo* truly an "invisible yoke which binds intelligent Latinas to a no-win lifestyle?" (Gil & Vasquez, 1996, p. 7), or is *marianismo* a gender role which has been exaggerated as a dysfunctional dimension of the Latina's experience? Little has been written from a Mexican or Mexican American woman's own experience as it relates to *marianista* beliefs.

Statement of Problem

Based on a review of the literature, the purpose of this study is to listen to and acknowledge women's voices as they talk about their attitudes, roles and relationships with families and significant others in order to explore the validity of the social construct of *marianismo*. The study is designed to be primarily descriptive with the results reported in a manner that remains true to the essence of the subjects' experience and response. The research questions were as follows:

Research Questions

1. Do subjects' perceptions of women's roles differ from their mothers' perceptions of women's roles?
2. What goals do these women have at the personal level and at the career level?
3. What goals did the women mention that their parents had for them?
4. How do these women characterize their relationship with their mothers?
5. Did these women's grandmothers or *abuelas* play a major role in their development?
6. What roles do women say their fathers played in their development?
7. How do women describe their relationship with their father as opposed to their relationship with their mother?
8. How do these women handle demands from family members?
9. Do women experience guilt in relation to their parents?
10. What messages have these women received regarding sex?
11. How are family problems handled? What if any support is sought?

12. Have the women received messages which convey the idea that men are more valuable than women?
13. How will women describe their reactions to possible infidelity? What would their mother's advice be?
14. What are these women's attitudes about sacrificing for their families?
15. Are these women's perceptions of their roles affected by their knowledge of the Virgin Mary?
16. Do the women identify any *dichos* or sayings that have had an impact on them or on how they view life?

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Interviews, which allow for richer data to be collected from the participants, were conducted with Mexican American and Mexican women. Brief descriptions of the key elements of this ethnographic study.

Participants

The sample for this study included Mexican women born and raised in Mexico and Mexican American women of South Texas. The following criteria were used to define this sample: a) the subject spoke English; and b) the subject was of Mexican or Mexican American descent. The participants were selected by means of a nonrandom purposive sample in which the researcher seeks out people who are able and willing to help reach the goal of the study (Frey et al., 1992), specifically, a snowball sample (or network sample). This type of sample grows from the first women interviewed. When they refer the researcher to others who may fit a profile for the study. The sample, therefore, begins to "snowball" (Frey et al., 1992). Subjects who met the criteria were recruited until 20 interviews had been obtained. A key informant helped the researcher locate Mexican participants.

Procedures

An interview guide was used to gather information about the women's feelings, attitudes, and beliefs regarding those areas that were directly related to the topic of *marianismo*. The interviews took about 35-60 minutes. All interviews were recorded, if the subject allowed the researcher to do so. All the interviews were confidential, and each subject signed a consent form (Appendix A) affirming their voluntary participation in this study. The questions on the interview guide (Appendix B) were designed to address the research questions in greater depth. The interview schedule consisted of thirteen primary questions related to the subject's feelings about herself and the roles she plays as a woman.

Due to the nature of the research, the settings for the interviews were at several locations such as the respondent's home, place of work, restaurants, and one was held at a coffee shop. Each interview was done in a quiet atmosphere. When approaching the subject to be interviewed, the researcher introduced herself as a graduate student who wished to ask Hispanic women questions about women's roles, the family, and relationships. A translator was used to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions and to translate the data into English.

The last part of the interview was the demographic section (Appendix C), which asked for the following information: level of education, age, number of children, religious background, degree or major, profession, marital status, relationships, and their parents' educational background. Thank you notes were sent to each participant after each interview session.

Data Treatment

The recorded interview data for each question were transcribed verbatim and placed on interview guide forms. These responses were analyzed to

determine if any generalizations could be made regarding the nature of the responses. The researcher noted responses which shared common themes and those which were unique. This approach to qualitative data is based on Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory method (1967; cited in Frey et al., 1991).

Recurring themes or issues are identified through this method. Data therefore serve to generate theory as opposed to testing theory (Frey et al., 1991, p. 246).

Reliability

This writer served as the "sole interviewer" in order to maximize reliability (Frey et al., 1991).

Validity

Verbatim transcriptions were employed to minimize bias and eliminate researcher distortion via paraphrasing. Since this is an exploratory, descriptive ethnography, no triangulation of research methods was employed.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The results are discussed in three separate sections. The first section describes the general characteristics of the participants. The second and third sections contain representative responses from the Mexican American participants and those of the Mexican participants, respectively. The interviewer answers the research questions through analysis of the recorded dialogues.

Participant demographics

The sample consisted of interviews with 10 Mexican women and 10 Mexican American women. The women ranged in age from 22 to 58 and represented various educational levels. Several of the women had children and held professional positions at different work sites. When asked about religious background 13 women were practicing Catholics, while the other women were of other religious backgrounds. Of the 20 women that were interviewed, eight women were single, 10 women were married and two women were divorced. Sixteen women explained they were involved in a relationship with either a husband, boyfriend or significant other. Of the sixteen, thirteen women were involved with a Hispanic man. Four of the women were not involved in a relationship. Most of the women acknowledged that their parents were between the ages of 47 to 85 years of age. The women's parents' educational background ranged from a third grade education, all the way to a Master's degree and higher professional occupations.

Mexican American Women

The following are stories the women shared about their lives in response to the questions asked by the researcher.

RQ 1: Do subjects' perceptions of women's roles differ from their mothers' perceptions of women's roles?

The women's responses indicate a significant difference between their perception of their role as a woman compared to their mother's. Several of these women referred to themselves as independent; hence, that is the term used to identify them.

One woman stated that, "I see the role of a woman as more equal." Yet, data reveal that two major themes arose. First, the subjects' perception of self was seen as more independent than the past:

I think I am more independent than my mother was. Back then, my parents, being Mexican, the woman has to be inferior to the man. I see myself as very independent. I have my own thoughts, my own ways. Even my husband says, "You need to listen to what I have to say - -stop being so independent."

Another woman, states:

I do see myself as a mother, still struggling, trying to balance that mom, career, and home thing. It is difficult. It's as difficult as people make it out to be. So it's hard and ever-changing. The family, they go through one phase and outgrow one phase and then into another. It's constant. [change] . . .

Secondly, their mother's roles were different. Women's voices reflect a difference in a mother's role.

A 22 year old woman described her mother's role as:

. . . take care of the child and the house. My mother did not work outside the home. She [her grandmother] took care of her husband, the cooking, and cleaning. My mother took on all these roles, but my mother worked. So it was all of those roles plus the role as an employee as well.

Several women responded in the same manner stating that their mother's role involved staying home, raising children, cooking and cleaning. A 24 year old woman commented that she perceived her mother as having:

A heavier burden . . . the woman was in charge of everything, the family, their home, and if they had an outside job, they were in charge of that, too.

RQ 2: What goals do these women have at the personal level and at the career level?

This question made the women think about themselves. *Marianismo* teaches that the woman should put "her own needs last." Listen to the voices of these women as they express their own desires.

A 23 year old graduate student stated:

I want to eventually be married and have children. I strive to have a successful marriage as my parents have had for the last thirty years. I want to have a strong marriage, I'm sure everybody does, that open communication with my spouse and children like my parents had with me.

A young divorced mother of one child said:

I want to eventually get married again. Have more children. I want to be a good mom. I want to be there for my kids.

Still another woman replied, "I want to be married, have two kids, and be there for them."

One woman explained that, in addition to achieving a good education, she had a goal of becoming "physically, spiritually, and mentally well-rounded."

One educated mother of one child responded:

You just want to be the best mother, wife, and daughter. And you need to take care of yourself because ultimately, everything will suffer if you don't take care of yourself.

These same women stated that they also had career goals set for themselves. In fact, all the women interviewed had a definite goal in mind.

Several women suggested that finishing their education is important. One woman explained, "I would like to finish my Master's and try for the Olympic trials." Another woman said, "I want to teach for three years and get my Master's." Still another replied, "I just want to advance as far as I can."

Others expressed their ambitions; one wants to be a consultant; another, an educational psychologist. Others are searching for different kinds of helping careers. All of these women wanted to make the most of their lives.

RQ 3: What goals did the women mention that their parents had for them?

Education was a common goal set by the parents of many women in survey. This is quite an interesting answer because that is not such a *marianista* thing to do. These parents seem to want their daughter's to better themselves and their lives and become more independent.

One student said:

My [Parents] [said] to better myself . . . They would always tell my sister and I [sic] watch who you marry. Make sure he is educated. They would always tell me you need to marry someone who has a career. Parents just want the best for their kids.

Another woman expressed her parents goals as:

Not necessarily [a] goal but they had expectations. And it was for our own good . . . They expected us to accomplish as much as we could, yet, at the same time, they were not going to think less of us or love us any less because we didn't achieve those goals. Dad always raised us, well, to think well. He raised us to believe that if you found something you really like, the money wasn't going to matter.

RQ 4: How do these women characterize their relationship with their mothers?

Nine Mexican American women expressed a "best friend" relationship with their mothers. The closeness they share displays the major role their mothers play in these women's lives. Only one woman will not be considered for this question because she was a foster child. Some of the women's stories indicated "deep roots" that are embedded into their lives through the relationship with their mother. One woman responded:

Overall, close, one of a best friend. No matter what was going on in life she was willing to help me and make time for me.

Another woman described her relationship with her mother as:

. . . extremely close. She is the backbone of the family. If it weren't for her, I think we would all fall apart. She's great! Very supportive and understanding always willing to listen and help out.

A 31 year old woman explained that her mother was her:

. . . best friend, offered encouragement and very positive. If I sat on her lap, she would be overjoyed.

Still another woman compared her life now as a new mother to that of her mother:

Hm . . . we are close. We are close and we've become a lot closer now that I have my own child because, all of a sudden, you understand all they are saying, all they have been through. All the fears, all the confusion, all the questions, you know, and who better to turn to than your mom because she's been through it um . . . Whereas before it was more of a power play, 'I want to do this' and you know, you reach a point where you have to mature and you're not out to break her. And all of a sudden, life has more meaning and you start to identify with your parents. We have become a lot closer now. More of a friendship.

While most of the women's mothers were still alive, one 23 year old woman reflected to the time she had shared with her mother. As the tears came to her eyes, she told of her relationship with her mother:

The relationship I had with my mother was a very close relationship. An inseparable bond. I'm the smallest and I was

always around her. When she passed away . . . even now I still feel that there is something missing in life.

RQ 5: Did these women's grandmothers or *abuelas* play a major role in their development?

These women shared that their grandmother's did play an important role in their lives in many ways. For one woman her grandmother offered, "comfort and support."

Other grandmothers offered these women spiritual guidance.

One 46 year old woman reports:

She [her grandmother] would say: all things are possible through the Lord, she was a Christian woman. Always put God first in your life and if it's all meant to be . . . the Lord, if you have faith in Him, the Lord will work it out for you. That's the way I live my life.

A 25 year old teacher explains, "I remember her [grandmother] teaching my prayers in Spanish. Still, one woman described her grandmother as, ". . . a strong woman. I think I got my strength from her." Yet, another woman replied, "She [grandmother] was traditional but open-minded."

Another woman summarized the thoughts of many of the women by explaining that her grandmother was a:

. . . great influence taught me how to cook, sew, [use] plaster of Paris, knit and crochet. She was a woman that suffered through a lot. The old woman has suffered . . . [She] told me to study, she told me to make something out of your life, get ahead. Life for you will get better.

RQ 6: What roles do women say their fathers played in their development as a woman?

Women revealed that their fathers demonstrated strong feelings toward the well-being of their daughters. Of the 10 Mexican American women interviewed, only one participant did not clearly answer the question. Only one woman stated that, "I don't no know . . . I really think it's been my mom." Although it was not a strong answer, she felt her father did not push as hard as her mother did.

The other women's voices projected a significant belief in their father's interest in their development as a woman. One woman commented:

He never discouraged me . . . He always wanted me to pursue my dreams. He always taught me to be independent, and to make up my own mind about things and to weigh options. I don't think in my father's mind wouldn't really matter if I was [sic] male or female. He just wanted me to do what made me happy.

Another woman, when asked how her father played a role in the woman she's become, responded:

If it hadn't been for my dad enforcing that education . . so much, I wouldn't be pursuing it as much as I want to. My dad always instilled that education is the most important thing. This comes from a man that was not educated and had to work very hard.

As a group, the women's messages about their fathers was "get a degree," an education. Education was the theme most often stated by the women.

RQ 7: How do women describe their relationship with their father as opposed to their relationship with mother?

It is always good to hear the other side of the story. In order to do this, women were asked to discuss what they saw as different or the same in their relationship with their parents. Overall, women suggested that their relationship with their father was different than the relationship with their mother. Only one woman stated that her relationship was, "equally, the same or even closer relationship than my mother or just as good or better." The relationship differences were as follows: Women referred to their father as a figure of "respect" and not being as easy to talk to compared to their mother. An independent and educated 25 year old woman stated:

My father was very strict, traditional and hard to talk to. He was to be respected." He always referred to her as, "daddy's little girl." She went on to say that, "He's jealous with his daughters, no one is good enough."

Some of the women's stories indicated the difference between their relationship with their mother and father. A 29 year old student replied:

He's a good friend, but I can't tell him everything. He would rather not hear about it.

While another woman briefly suggested that:

Dad's more about respect, but I can let my hair down with mom. Dad tells you how it is, but we also need some empathy.

Still, another woman described her relationship with her father as definitely a different relationship. Her father:

. . .was never around. My dad was always traveling or on vacation. My dad was never around. We definitely had a

different relationship.

And one woman summarized the other women's responses of the difference between their relationship with their mother and father by stating that:

Our dad always made the major decisions that affected us.

Mom pushed for us, rooted for us, trying to get us to have our way. Basically, I love my dad as much as I love my mom, but the relationship is different.

RQ 8: How do these women handle demands from family members?

Of the 10 women that were interviewed, nine women answered the question. While some women stated that demands from family were high, others believed otherwise. The women that expressed high demands from the family replied, "You have to stop because it's family. Part of the responsibility as a family member is to help other family members."

Another woman responded strongly, "I believe in family first . . . I'd give my life for my mom."

Another woman described her mother as "independent." She is independent because she rarely asked for help from the rest of the family.

On the other hand, some women explained that, "Not really, I don't think there is a time when we were asked to do something we didn't want to do." One 26 year old woman answered, "Not really, my mom is always there for us. She hardly asks us, and, of course, if she asks, we are willing."

Two themes arose from this question. First, half of the women suggested that family demands were evident. Second, the other half suggested that demands from family were not as apparent. Overall, these women were supportive of the fact that if family asked them to do something, they would be willing.

RQ 9: Do women experience guilt feelings in relation to their parents?

Of these women, none of them seemed to feel guilty about their parents, in general. Four of the women frankly stated that their parents did not make them feel guilty. Take one woman's response, "They don't make me feel guilty, its just in me."

An administrative secretary stated that:

No, I actually don't. My foster mother loved me as a very special person. I had a beautiful childhood. You were taught respect, first of all, but I do not feel there was any guilt.

Another woman briefly paused and confidently said, "no, not really."

A mother of three said:

No, I didn't feel guilty. We were very family oriented. If we were going to go somewhere, we'd go as a family.

On the other side of the coin, some of the women felt direct guilt regarding either their mother or their father. For instance, a young woman replied:

Sometimes I do with my father because he is so strict. My dad is not as approachable as my mom.

Another woman shed a tear as she disclosed her difficult relationship with her mother:

Although we were close, she criticized me a lot. I became very depressed, sought help and she always says that because I am the way I am, that nobody would take me.

This same woman lost her mother to cancer a few years back. She goes on to say that she also felt guilt in the relationship with her father:

I feel guilty even now as a grown up because I don't spend as much time with him (dad). It's hard to feel close to him.

Yet, another woman displayed pangs of guilt towards her father when he stayed home while her mother was away. She recalls:

I feel guilty when my mom is out of town, and I don't check on my dad to see if he has eaten or he's okay.

RQ 10: What messages have these women received regarding sex?

This question received a unanimous answer from all 10 women. According to the women's verbal and nonverbal reactions to this question, it was quite obvious that this was not a topic for open discussion. But after a quick swallow, women responded in quite astonishing ways.

A 23 year old teacher responded:

It was really never discussed, to be honest with you. I'm sure if I wanted to discuss it, they would have, maybe not in a comfortable way but they would have done it. It was never even said, 'don't have sex.' Just kind of they assumed that I understood that I knew better or I knew what to do to protect myself. Silence. . [shakes her head].

A woman in her fifties described her experience as:

Well, that was taboo. You did not mention it, you know, after you got to a certain age. I really did not learn much until I got onto school and girls start talking some more than others. I actually learned about things in the health class. To them (parents), I guess it was their upbringing and so too personal that I be exposed to it. Their parents did not talk about it and so through natural process, I learned it through others or on my own.

Still another woman stated:

As you know, in the Hispanic culture sex is considered taboo. So, in my household, the issue of sex was not discussed, any issues. I learned about sex in school, by friends, or health classes.

Another woman describes her father's brief attempt to mention the issue:

We never talked about it. After I was older in my 20s, mom would kind of say that. One time my father came up to me. My father was very strict. I told him I had a boyfriend and that was unheard of (at the time). He told me, *No quiero saber que algo ha pasado entre ustedes* (I don't want to find out that something has happened between the two of you). That's as far as the sex thing was talked about. I was hurt, angry about the way my dad handled it.

A woman whose mother was a Registered Nurse stated the following:

They didn't. It was never discussed directly or indirectly. It wasn't mentioned, nothing . . .brought up . . .No! You just knew it was a 'no, no,' you shouldn't be doing it. But that was about it. They never sat down with us and said, "OK, this is something you may becoming to or be reaching a certain stage that you may be tempted or curious . . .Nothing.

A businesswoman replied:

They didn't discuss it. It's just their culture, the way they were raised. It's not until today's generation, my generation, that tells our children. We're a lot more open. Back then even in the TV shows you didn't see sex. In movies you saw very little sex and

about the only thing my mom said was . . .the only thing you can do is hold a guy's hand. They weren't even supposed to put their arm around you. I just think it's because they were raised in a very strict atmosphere and you know. You just . . . You were either a very respectful young lady or you were a lady of the night.

The same woman shares the difference between her days of growing up versus the way her children are today:

Today's time, we're very open. You have to be. The kids see it at the movies, and if you don't tell your kids they're going to learn it somewhere.

Their descriptions on this topic included phrases such as, "It was never really discussed," "really didn't," "was not discussed," and "never discussed directly or indirectly." Basically, the same answer was repeated throughout the ten interviews.

RQ 11: How are family problems handled? What if any support is sought?

Research indicates that many Hispanic families share a feeling of *familismo*, as the most important factor of family life. They consider the family as, "sacred and private." The women as a whole agreed that problems stay within the family and any outside help would most likely be sought from a priest. Overall, the women expressed that any problems would be handled by the family. When asked this question, one woman responded:

No, when we have a problem at home, we deal with it at home. Family problems are very sacred . . .if there is a family problem, we look at it as there is nothing anyone can do for us. We need

to solve it ourselves. It's a problem within the family. So, we would never go to a counselor; it's private and stays within the family.

Another woman described her family as having, "bad communication." She goes on to say that, " My parents were raised thinking that seeing a psychiatrist, you were crazy. They would not seek outside help."

While another woman expressed that:

We handle it and share it openly with the rest of the family. We ask for opinions and advice. It's never anything major. I think the girls, my sisters and mom and I, would seek outside help. I think my dad would be quick to disagree about something like that.

A woman in her forties suggested:

It depends on the problem. If it was a problem when we were children, my parents would discuss it among themselves. And if it was a problem about teenagers, it was discussed among ourselves. Now, when my grandmother was still living, my mom would discuss it for advice with her mother. Other than that, it was just family. None of our problems were to the point where you'd need a psychiatric help. It was just your typical boy-girl problems. My mother and dad were married up to the point of her death. So, we didn't go through a divorce.

The same woman also discusses her mother's generation when and how they handled problems, she explains:

In my mother's generation, I don't think so besides our medical doctor, there was no reason. But in my generation, if I felt that

one of my children needed help, I would get the help. I would just have to make sure that the one who was giving me the help was really going to help. I just think back then [my mother] [I] don't know if they would go with someone else. You look back, there weren't that many psychiatrist back then. The Valley has grown a lot in the last 15-20 years, but back then I don't know if any psychiatrist that were here. Maybe one or two.

RQ 12: Have the women received messages which convey the idea that men are more valuable than women?

The women I interviewed shared a surprisingly different answer than expected. They explained that their parents never demanded more from them because of the fact that they are women.

A school teacher explains that:

My parents have never had the opinion that you have to cook, clean, etc. Periodically, she'll [mother] say, I had to cook, clean and take care of you. I have to . . .she's never said outwardly that I have to. I don't think there is a pressure put on me because I am woman.

A 25 year old graduate student, answered:

My parents are traditional. In a sense, they do not believe that a woman has to stay home and cook for the husband, clean the house, or wash dishes. They simply want me to maximize my potential and do the best I possible can and whether it's in athletics, education, or whatever it is I set my goals to be or to attain. They treat me as an individual, as a person, and not as

the sex [female].

One independent working mother says:

Growing up, no. I just feel [if] I can do it, he can do it, too. I understand if he works a lot of overtime, or he's been out to work a lot and I have a long weekend off, of course, I will take time out to cook. I cook for myself and the baby. And, of course, if he's there, he can eat, but I'm not going out of my way to cook for him after I've had a long hard day, because it is expected. I'd rather order a pizza and bring it home for dinner.

In a similar question, asking women if their parents ever portrayed men as more important than women. These women replied that some of their parents did while others agreed that their parents did not treat men as more important than women.

For instance, one 25 year old woman said her parents did not portray men as more important but "as a stronger vessel." She goes on to say that, "Women are emotional, more insecure, and throw a fit. Most men are in constant control of their emotions and actions."

While another woman explained:

Definitely, well [they] are supposedly . . . they're smarter than females and more hardworking than females.

A woman in her thirties said, "Yes, and the reason I say this is because I grew up with my brother. I saw he had more privileges."

Still another woman tells that she feels her, "dad does a little, he does it in a joking way."

On the other hand, other women opposed the issue by stating that their parents did not give the impression that men are more important.

A 25 year old woman reported that:

No, my parents believe that you can do anything that you want that you set your mind to regardless of gender. So, my parents definitely did not stress that. They stressed always you are a woman, you can definitely do as well as your brother. Your brother can do as well as you.

Another woman explained:

My dad would always say somewhere along the lines that the woman is always in control of the girls and housework and also found time to work sometimes. He knew very well that if something happened to my mom what would happen to the girls. He didn't know our routine. He knew the fact that we are girls. With one day that my mom was maybe sick or out to a conference or something, my dad was going crazy to do this and do that. Too difficult and stressful. I remember him always saying the woman is in control. Somehow [she] had more power. He said it very casual. It wasn't an emotional discussion we were having. We all knew it. Mom held the family together.

RQ 13: How will women describe their reactions to possible infidelity?

What advice would their mother's advice be?

This question raised eyebrows and some definite explanations of how these women felt about this issue. Also, they were asked to share what they thought their mother's advice would be in this situation.

The answers to first question will be given first, and then use the same

women's responses to answer the second question. The first question drew a definite conclusion that these women thought infidelity was wrong. One woman explained that:

It's not a good thing, unacceptable. I know in my relationship it would not be acceptable. I know people make mistakes but not in my relationship. When hearing people's stories, I see how it has destroyed not just the two, but a lot of people.

Then she went on to say that her mother would probably give her this advice:

She would probably encourage my spouse and I [sic] to seek outside help. She would advise me to keep the lines of communication open. She would encourage me to do whatever to salvage it [the marriage]. My parents have strong beliefs on marriage in general, and the sacredness of marriage and [they would] encourage me not to run away from it, but to face it head on and get to the root of the problem.

An independent woman in her fifties said, "In my case I would not take it -goodbye and good luck!" She goes on to explain that her mother would say, "Get an education and find someone you wouldn't have to hold on to in that situation."

Another woman announced that , "It is wrong." Her mother's advice she replied was that:

. . .she's just there to stand behind us with any decisions we make and whether she thinks it's right or wrong she leaves it up to us."

While another woman said, "It would be over."

One woman said her mother would say, "Don't put up with it."

An educated woman in her thirties said:

I don't approve of it. If it happened to me there would be a separation. I don't know if it would lead to divorce, but I would have to separate from the problem.

She went on to say: My mom would say, "You have to think about the children. They need a father on a daily basis, you don't want to deprive them of that." She finished with, "Today it is a privilege to have a father living under your roof."

A 24 year old student and mother replied:

It would tear a female apart. I don't know if I would ever want to be with him again. It breaks that contract when you married. Also, it depends if I am already educated. It would be easier to leave if I was educated.

She went on to say that her mother would probably tell her to, "Work it out, give him chance."

A 25 year old woman with a Master's degree in Education explains:

I can actually say I wouldn't put up with it. I'd probably leave him. As far as now, that's what I think I would do because I do have a child and it's not only me. I would take the child into consideration and knowing the relationship with his father that would be so difficult for him. Yet, at the same time I'd have to battle with, well, I'm going to be unhappy in this marriage for the rest of my life, not trusting, living in doubt for the sake of my child.

She believes that if she were in this situation her mother would be curious to find out, “what’s going on in my marriage, at work, outside stress or something else” that may have caused these infidelities.

Overall, these women all displayed that they did not condone infidelity for several reasons.

RQ 14: What are these women’s attitudes about sacrificing for their families?

These women had some interesting comments about sacrificing for their family. According to these women, the cost of love is high and most of the time, it is at their own expense.

A young woman in her twenties explained:

Sacrifice. Time? Sure, but it is usually because they sought my help or they like my opinion on something. Yes, I would say that I have done that. But I know that if the tables were turned, those people would do the same for me.

Another woman in her fifties stated, “I think that they come up in every situation, and you do it out of love.” While, another replied, “Sacrifice for family, not a big deal.” Still another woman suggests that:

. . . there is no time for me. The only time I get is when I get my nails done. I ask, Alex [her husband] please don’t take that away from me. I need that time. Not teaching kids, not changing diapers, not having to love on my husband because that’s a demand on a woman, too.

A 24 year old said, “I’ve sacrificed putting my education on hold.” Many women had different reasons for sacrificing. One woman shared:

Oh, you do it without thinking . . . you don't even think about it. You don't see it as a sacrifice. Regardless of what you're sacrificing, whether it be your time, money or energy, you just do it.

RQ 15: Are these women's perceptions of their roles affected by knowledge of the Virgin Mary?

Surprisingly, these women did not consider the Virgin Mary as a role model. She was more like a religious symbol. Many replied that the Virgin Mary was more related to prayers than an actual role model. Here are some comments the women shared: "No, I just remember prayers, and the Virgin Mary more as a symbol. Not a role model."

Still another woman explained a similar statement:

No, not really, my mother would emphasize going to church and not sinning, but I don't ever remember her using the Virgin Mary.
[as a role model]

Yet, one other woman reemphasized the Virgin Mary as:

. . . a religious symbol, something we were made aware of as far as CCD, at home, and religious events.

RQ 16: Do the women identify any *dichos* or sayings that have had an impact on them or on how they view life?

This question was not answered by many of the women simply because the women had difficulty remembering a *dicho*, or saying off the top of their head. Only three women could remember some *dichos*, or sayings that they still use today. Two of the three *dichos* were the same, while

the other focused on something else.

The *dicho* that two of the woman used was:

Dime me con quien andas y te dire quien eres (Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are).

While the other *dicho* that was mentioned was:

A los tres dias el muerto y el arrimado apestan (Don't overstay your welcome).

This question proved that many women have heard *dichos* time and time again , more and more women are not living their life from them.

Mexican Women

The next section will discuss the results of the Mexican women's interviews. Some differences are evident through the voices of these women.

RQ 1: Do subjects' perceptions of women's roles differ from their mothers' perceptions of women's roles?

These women reflected on their roles as opposed to the roles of their mothers. It is quite interesting to note that many of the younger women in their twenties express a sense of independence, while the women in their forties seem to focus on a more traditional way of living.

A woman in her mid-twenties explained the difference between her mother's life and the way she [the daughter] is today:

I first see myself [as] way more independent than she [mother] was, and still is. I notice when I go home, she still lives in Mexico, I notice that, even though my dad is a very nice person . . . but sometimes he is a little 'pushy and bossy.' I don't like that.

I have addressed this already to my mom. We tell her, 'If you didn't really want to go, why didn't you just say so.' She says, 'It's all right. 'I don't mind.' I just got married [six months ago], and I don't allow this to happen with my husband. I don't have to follow whatever he says. Most women in Mexico believe that whatever the men says they have to do – I am not like that. I also learned to drive and my mother did not.

A 48 year old woman born in Monterrey stated:

I perceive my role as a woman today as – first is my family, my obligation to my family comes first. I feel that we, as mothers, need to understand that when we take up an obligation, if raising a family - we have to be there and cater to our kids and raise them with good morals, values, and sacrifice your own interests while they are young.

The same woman reflects back to her mother and explains:

I sort of took after her beliefs. The modern way of thinking is that women have to get an education, which is good. But they want to go off working and not think about kids, so my mother taught my sisters and I [sic] to tend to our families first. We could do our thing after they are gone.

A 29 year old graduate student acknowledges:

I feel very lucky because I didn't grow up in that society that she grew up in because there were very little choices. Even though she's a professor, she didn't teach very long because it was expected that when she was married, she would have to stop working entirely and she dedicated her life to us. I just don't

think that's a choice I can make, you know, I don't know. I feel pretty lucky.

The same woman goes on to say:

I was given an opportunity. There are a lot of expectations at home. Like all my friends my age are married and have children. I have very little in common with them anymore. I feel like I can do things that mom couldn't. I feel a lot more independent. I like to know that I don't know what might happen in a year.

Still, a working mother replied:

I'm a working mother, and even though I work I like to do things to fulfill my life like studying or taking care of my family or taking classes. Even though it's hard if I don't do it, I don't feel good about myself.

The same woman reports that her mother would not understand. "Even though she had to work all her life if she could have stayed home, she would have."

One woman said that her mother was a "very independent woman." She says:

She doesn't depend on anyone. She makes decisions. Actually she's the strongest member of my family. She's the one that makes all the decisions. She's more aggressive. She has more determination than myself.

A retired accountant strongly expressed:

You can be a good mother, of course a good wife, but you cannot be a good professional and a good mother and a good

wife because you have to sacrifice something.

The same woman explained that her mother spent her life, “. . .raising her kids. Having a good home and she was happy with that.”

A young college graduate shares her ambition:

I see myself as a woman who tries to excel and I try to do better so that we [women] get treated better and so that we're better appreciated in this society.

The same woman expresses the different role her mother chose to live:

She was, my mother was submissive. She would do what her friends wanted her to do. She followed her mother's example as a mother and she does what my father tells her to do. She had a very different role from what mine is now. But maybe she . . . she's happy that I'm doing whatever she didn't do. She wants me to do whatever she always wanted to do. She wanted to study architecture. She never had the opportunity. And now she can't because she has to be home with my brother and, . . . we're six [in the family]. Yes, and since my mother couldn't do what she wanted to do and couldn't do . . . things, I'm trying to do now because she likes them. I'm trying to advance a little.

RQ 2: What goals do these women have at the personal level and at the career level?

One woman says:

Right now I am trying to succeed. I just started teaching, and I am trying to be very successful as a teacher. I want to go back to school and get a Master's degree. I also want to apply to

teach at the college level.

A mother of three explains that, "I feel like women should be involved in extracurricular hobbies and work if it doesn't interfere with the family."

The same woman says she would:

[I][would] love to own my own business. I feel like I'm a good sales lady. I could open up something and succeed because I believe I am a good working person.

A young woman in her late twenties suggested that:

I think it's kind of hard to distinguish between [personal and career] both for me. [Personal level] I 'd like to be married and that's kind of hard . . . I want everything. [Career level] I'm not sure if I want to do something that I feel comfortable with and to contribute to society. I used to do marketing, but I didn't feel like . . .I earned a lot but I wasn't doing anything meaningful for me. I don't know. I want the career, I want the family. I want everything. It's going to be hard.

While still another woman in her mid thirties expressed, "My goal is to marry. I don't want to grow old and be by myself." She goes on to say that she would like to enhance her, ". . . business, I would like to be more successful, to do more, to grow more."

A women in her twenties elaborated on her personal and career goals:

I, in the first place [want] a career. I want a Master's. And if I can a Ph.D.. And like any other woman, to have a nice family. Not a large family, but a family . . . I want to get married and have kids, but also want to be a woman with a profession, to be able to go to work. I don't want to marry someone who will restrict me

and not let me work. Because all my life I have studied so that someone . . . to do what I want. I want to keep improving and advancing all of my life. If I can study all my life I will study all my life.

A newlywed explained that:

My first goal is to form a strong marriage. I've only been married three months. And for now I feel it is important to form a good family. That is my goal.

The same woman is a student at a university and explains:

Later, I would like to be good in marketing. To find a good job. My husband loves that I am in school and wants me to pursue a Master's.

RQ 3: What goals do women mention that their parents had for them?

Many of the women suggested that their parents had goals for them that involved education and marriage. Here are some of the things women had to say about their parents.

A young teacher answered:

The first was to graduate from college. They also wanted me to marry a good man and have a good life with their conservative standards and morals. And not to fall below these.

A more traditional woman in her forties explained:

My mother pushed education through high school. I started working after high school, got married, and lived in Mexico. I wish I had gotten a college education. I went back to college after my children were older. My mother was the one who

“pushed” me into marriage. She had an instinct that he [husband] would make a good husband, and she was right. She always told me I needed to be a good housewife, tend to my husband and children and that was my first obligation.

A woman from Villahermosa, Tabasco in Mexico explained:

My dad -- which was confusing - - when I was in college . . . because for some strange reason, he had the idea that I should become an international relations [persons], and [I] actually majored in political science because of him. It took me four years to figure it out. He was very disappointed when I decided not to continue my Master's in that. But that's what I wanted to do.

A working mother of two said, “I don't think so, just work for a while and get married.” Still another woman stated, “she [mother] would like us to be better than her to go to school and learn more [than she ever had an opportunity to]. She wanted for me to be better than her, get an education.

Many other women explained that their parents not only wanted them to get an education but that they also marry well.

RQ 4: How do these women characterize their relationship with their mothers?

One woman explained, “We have a good relationship. She is very, very agreeable. She is very easy to get along with.”

A housewife born in Monterrey announced:

My relation with my mom is very close. I adore her and I love her. She is a very good role model as a housewife. She is

responsible and hardworking. I look up to her and respect her for that.

A graduate student in her twenties states:

She's [mother] more like my friend than my mom; it's very close. I live at home and um . . . , of the three I'm the closest to her for some reason.

A young woman in her twenties said:

We have a good relationship. It is a relationship that . . . we never talk about personal things. But overall, it is a pretty relationship.

On the other hand, two of the women expressed a different relationship with their mothers.

One woman in her late thirties explained:

. . .we depend on each other but it is more of a business relationship. I'll put it that way. Well, I was raised by my grandmother, and when I was six or seven she [real mother] demanded I move with her. I didn't want to because I was used to my grandmother, but we're close but not the loving, kissing, type and all that stuff.

While another woman in her forties recalls:

That is something that is hard, she had to work all the time, so I never saw her. I didn't have the best relationship with her. More with the maid than mother. But she could have had a better relationship. She would go out with friends instead of coming home.

Still another woman shared that her relationship with her mother was quite distant.

RQ 5: Did these women's grandmothers or *abuelas* play a major role in their development?

Many of the women acknowledged that there was little contact with their grandmother's because of distance or because of early deaths. For instance, one woman replied, "Not, really, she tried [but she was] very far away." While another woman said, "I never had any contact." Still other women never had an opportunity to have a relationship with their grandmothers.

A young woman said:

Yes, I have learned things from her. But I'm not close to her. I see her every year, but we don't live in the same city.

[Sometimes] . . .she would come to visit for a month. She did teach me things, about cooking, and all . . .but she wasn't a great influence.

A woman in her twenties stated:

In my mind, it seems like she's always been there. But I don't know. I'm sure she has. I'm like the opposite of her. She's extremely religious.

RQ 6: What roles do women say their fathers played in their development as a woman?

Many of the women expressed that their fathers did play a role in their development while others said they did not.

A Spanish teacher in her twenties stated:

. . . he played a big role by the way he brought us up with good straight morals. Don't drink, dress properly, etc. He would tell us 'women don't drink because they look cheap.' He showed us reading was important. Watch the news and don't stay in one place. He pushes us to not be mediocre.

Another woman replied:

We [brother & sisters] have all the same opportunities and all college graduates and he's has always treated us equally. And I never realized it until I go back . . . you know . . .that's usually not the case in most men. My dad's learned to respect us.

On the other hand, some women explained that their fathers did not play a role in their development.

A successful business woman responded:

No, I don't think so. I think I was more influenced by my mother. He [father] was the working man, provider, but on decisions the way that I am from her.

A woman in her forties stated:

He [father] likes to think that women have a 100% obligation to men and a macho man. He never helps my mother. He never did anything to help with his part of the housework duties or chores. I'm not at all for that. I believe men should help more. Growing up it was just my mother.

A woman in her forties stated:

Well, my father was kind of . . . He was an introvert. He did a lot of work that took him out of the house. He was an engineer.

He had his own company. . . So he was always away from home. And he would always say, "Whatever your mother says." He would never interfere.

A graduate student explains:

It is different because I talk more to my mother than my father. Like I talk to my father more about school things that have to do, but to my mother, I talk to her about my friends; they're more personal things.

RQ 7: How do women describe their relationship with their fathers as opposed to their relationship with their mothers?

Some woman shared their relationships with their fathers.

One woman explained:

I spend most of my time with my father. He would take me on business trips, to movies, to restaurants. He's very independent and [always] taking challenges and risks. My mother thinks through things more.

One woman answered the question by stating, "I am closer to my father because he barely worked." This woman shared with the researcher that her father had a weird schedule because he was a model for a very successful company in Mexico that is the reason why she was able to spend a lot of time with him. She goes on to say, "He lived with my grandmother and I saw him all the time and [he] was more affectionate."

While another woman shared:

Very different - - He is the type of personality that keeps to himself. He is an introvert. He does not participate in anybody's

business, hobbies or desires. I feel like I communicate more with my mother.

A 29 year old graduate student commented:

My dad is very typical. He provides, works a lot, does really well in business, but he's not physically there. He's not. Plus, he's a lot older than my mom. He's like 12 years [older]. So, there is a very big difference. My dad must be about 45 years older than me, so, when I was a little girl, I remember I was afraid of him because he has a very low voice that inspires respect. So I used to be scared of him [as] a little girl. I've never been really close to him. He's always been more detached.

RQ 8: How do these women handle demands from family members?

These women shared stories about family demands. Some suggested that their families asked more than others.

A school teacher in her twenties commented:

He [father] sends me to go places and never asks and I don't like that. That's one of the things I never liked about my dad. There will be something going on in his family, but he would make us go even if I didn't want to. We always had to go where he went.

A housewife in her forties replied:

Oh, yes, lots of times. Sometimes I would go out of my way to solve her [mother] problems because of her lack of English. She always needs a translator. But I happily do it because I know she needs help.

The same woman goes to say that she couldn't "remember him [father] ever asking me for anything, ever."

Another woman said:

No, not really, she [mother] doesn't really have to ask. She [mother] rarely ask for anything. We just kind of do it.

Still another woman replied, "yes, sometimes when she visits I have to do things for my father."

A mother of one stated that:

Yes, all the time . . .um . . .I can name you a hundred examples. She really wants attention all the time, and I guess that she . . . she would like. I guess part of the reason I have not gotten married is because I have to pay attention to her, and I need or I feel responsible to give them my time to do whatever they want first and then to myself. So, and it's okay . . . you know . . .I don't complain, but, yes, she demands time and for me. I would like to do something else.

Ironically, a woman in her late forties shared:

No, not really, my mother was the kind of person that when we were young she will not force us to do anything in our home. She always says that our duty was to go to college, learn and get good grades. That was it.

The same woman said her father rarely got involved.

Another young woman in her twenties shares:

No, not much. And when I feel like she's [mother] taking my time. . . And when I feel that she is, I tell her.

The same woman reflected and remembered that it was her father that often asks for favors:

I do experience this right now . . . but it's not always like this. . .it's once in a while. But with dad, I do see it more.

RQ 9: Do women experience guilt feelings in relation to their parents?

Most the women felt a sense of guilt regarding their parents in one way or another. They believed their parents needed help in financial or other supportive means.

A woman whose parents are in their 80s shared:

The only thing I feel guilty is not being there more than I am. I don't live as close as I wish we did. And I sometimes feel guilty because I can't help them the way they need to be helped.

A small business owner suggested:

Guilty [sic] that I would like to give them [parents] more enjoyment in life, to take them places, to provide for them, that will make me happy.

The same woman explained that she plans several trips a year in which she invites her parents to join her. Her guilty feelings reveal, "I feel guilty because I can't provide more for them."

Still, a newly married woman stated:

Sometimes I miss them [parents] because I am not with them. I always help them out. Each month I get my paycheck, I wire them some money.

A college student expressed deep appreciation for her parents:

Yes, because they do everything for me. All of their lives their

lives have revolved around my sister and myself. When I do something bad, like lie, I feel bad because of all they do for me.

Another college student said:

Sometimes I feel guilty with what they spend . . . on school . . . the university . . . with all the sacrifices they have to make. Yes, you feel guilty about not taking advantage of it or earning it; when you don't, you feel guilty.

In contrast, other women felt guilty specifically with their mothers. A woman in her twenties explained:

I feel it with my mom. I guess because she does so much. I wish I could somehow do more for her but it's funny because I do more for more for my dad. I feel guilty with her [mother] because I don't do enough for her.

Still, another woman replied:

I feel guilty about my mother because I am not real close to her, and I always wanted to know why, but I feel because she worked.

The same woman displayed difficulty as she said, " I know it was more important [for her] to go out then, than to be with me. So, I can't feel the same as other people [towards their mother].

RQ 10: What messages have these women received regarding sex?

Many shared a similar story about their parents who never told them anything about the area of sex.

A newly married woman explained:

They should have been more open about it. Since they never

mentioned it, then it never occurred to me. I was never really curious. I made a fool of myself a lot and went through many embarrassing moments because I didn't know anything. They could have done a better job.

A woman in her thirties said:

Actually, we never talked about it. I'm very private. I had never . . . even when I was a teenager . . . to discuss sex [sic]. I never discussed anything like that. I would not mention I had a boyfriend or whatever . . . you know. I'm very reserved with that. When I was a teenager [considers teenager a 10 year old], I remember one time she [mother] got so upset with me. I fell in love with this little boy, and she noticed it. She got very upset one time I was going to sit next to the little boy, and I was sitting next [to] him. I was 10 and she saw me. She spanked me so much and I was very hurt. I was in love with that little boy. She [mother] didn't understand that was my first love. I spent a couple of days in my room crying for that little boy. From that time, I never talked to her about boyfriends or sex.

While still other women stated, "Neither talked about sex," "They never did," "I learned everything from school," Another woman said, "They never told me anything -- nothing."

Still others shared the same story. One woman talked about what happened when her mother's friends came over and the issue of sex was discussed:

When a friend of my mother would go to visit her maybe to ask her a thing that would have to do with sex or kids or whatever,

they [mother and friends] would say: Go away. This is adult talk so you don't have to be here.

Then there was the woman who's life changed dramatically when she found out that her brother's girlfriend was pregnant. The woman explained:

What happens is that in my family it's very different. There was this incident, my older brother . . .in my home something happened that helped us all, especially my sisters . . .My older brother had a girlfriend and she was pregnant. When my brother was 17 years old and she [girlfriend] was 15 and this is a topic that is not discussed in my home. We do not talk about sex in my home. Lately, I've talked about it because it was understood that this was something you didn't talk about, so nobody needed to know about and we knew that if we took it upon ourselves to have a sexual relationship, it was just a risk . . .because we learned the hard way.

Common themes of "taking care of yourself" were mentioned by the women in place of the actual word "sex."

RQ 11: How are family problems handled? What if any support is sought?

These women resolved any kind of family problem within their own families. Not one woman suggested that their own families would seek help outside their own homes. The women seemed to lean more to privacy as their main reason for staying within their own family.

A woman described her family as handling a problem, "between themselves." She goes on to say, "I guess we are very private. Actually, we have never had anything major [happen]."

A young woman explained:

If they [family] had a problem they would try to figure it out themselves. They [parents] were more narrow minded. They would not tell others. They would not consider a therapist or psychologist but maybe the church.

Another woman suggests that her family:

. . . never sought any extra outside help. We try to resolve [it] within the family.

She, on the other hand, in her own family said, "I would consider talking to a pastor. That would be an excellent kind of help."

Still, another woman stated:

We rarely ever go out of the family. We rarely, if ever, not even with the priests. As my grandmother says, "*La ropa sucia se hace en casa.*" [Dirty laundry is done at home].

One woman suggested that things are different in the United States compared to Mexico:

No, never. The customs . . . here in the U.S. ,maybe it's more common, more open . . .In Mexico, it's in the family. My family would never say 'let's go talk to a counselor.'

A educated woman in her twenties expressed:

. . .Between us, in the family, we would solve it . . .it's all we have, our family and that we had to discuss and solve problems in our family, as a family. We try to discuss and solve problems ourselves. It's always just us. We have a very good relationship and there's very good communication in our family.

Most of the women were traditional in the sense that they all said their families would solve any problems within their own homes.

RQ 12: Have the women received messages which convey the idea that men are more valuable than women?

Of the 10 women interviewed, about half of the women believe they have received messages conveying the notion that men are more valuable than women. These women's answers range from saying that they had to learn how to cook to demands for them to iron and wash clothes so that they would be prepared for homemaking responsibilities.

An independent woman in her twenties laughs as she explains that neither her mother nor father have ever conveyed any messages about men being more valuable. In fact, she states, "Actually, I learned how to cook when I lived alone. It was pretty traumatic and stressful. I bought a lot of things that are ready to eat."

A woman born and raised in Mexico City said:

The only thing that my mother taught me before I got married was to cook rice. That was it. She would never say I had to this and that because I had to please my husband.

A young woman confesses that:

The only thing I can remember before my I got married was that my mother said that I should always look nice for my husband.

One woman explains how her parents encouraged her, not necessarily demanded of her:

. . . to prepare yourself to have a good family . . .to know all you have to know as a woman, your home, your kids, your husband. I cannot remember there being any pressure about demands because I am a woman.

Still, other women shared different examples of how their parents demanded more from them for being a woman.

A successful businesswoman explains her mother's obsession for her to help her husband:

She [mother] would demand me to iron, to have everything neat for him, because he deserved it. Even [how] to hang [clothes], sometimes I washed and hanged [sic] the clothes. She would say, why are you hanging things like that? . . . You're supposed to take care of his garments because they belong to him.

Another woman reflected to when she was younger:

I grew up with three brothers, and I was the only girl. I hung around the kitchen and always had to do dishes. My father would tell me I had to do them because I am the girl in the house. I always hated it. The same thing with cooking, even though I learned from him how to cook. Also, my brothers could go anywhere without permission and I never could. My dad would always drop me off and pick me up, and my brothers would just take off on their own.

Another woman also explained that her mother did convey messages when she was younger, " I would help with the housework because I felt it was my duty."

In a question similar to the one above, women were asked to share any times their parents portrayed men as more important. While some of these women acknowledged that their parents did, other's did not.

A housewife stated :

My mother has always had the old fashioned idea that men

should be catered to. And that is our respect as women. My brothers never participated in household chores, and we as girls had to help her [mother].

Another woman shares how her father expressed his idea that men are more important:

He told me to always give your husband a certain place – always respect him and never try to go against what he says. If he says something and you don't agree, try not to push your ways on him. Never try to make him feel less or try to humiliate him. He [father] always says men's ideas are more important than women's.

On the other hand, some of the women's responses are that their parents did not portray men as more important than women.

An older woman explains that her parents did not express that women were less than men but that they [men] had more freedom:

Those things they never say. But when I was growing up, it's just the way you see that men have more freedom than women. But at my time, we just didn't ask. It was just like that . . . We just knew that [they] would have more freedom. They will go to parties, and, of course, get to go home later, go with his friends . . .and we couldn't do that . . . we had to be home at certain times, but I guess we just never complained. It was just that way.

A young woman shared a tragic but touching story about her brother:

My brother well, he had a lot of personal problems. In 1985 there was a bad earthquake in Mexico City. A cousin and an

uncle died in that earthquake. When he [brother] learned that they had died, he had a juvenile stroke. It took him a long time to finish college because after the stroke, it took a long time to rehabilitate. The one man, my brother, after that [it was difficult] to get back on track. The message we had in my house was that you women are the strongest. You have to help your brother.

Another woman shared what she remembers of her parents when they were together as a couple. This young woman lost her father a few years back:

They [parents] believe that both are equal, 50-50. My mom says the strongest supports of a home are the parents, so the woman is as important as a man. My mom is probably the stronger of my parents because I see not that my dad isn't here my mom has kept the family strong and together still. They always emphasized both.

RQ 13: How will these women describe their reaction to possible infidelity? What would their mother's advice be?

There are several views on this particular subject. Some women believed that if an infidelity happened within their relationship [husband or boyfriend], then there would be no relationship. Others believed that people make mistakes and they would forgive their partner's infidelities.

A woman in her twenties explained:

I don't think I would. There are certain things I am willing to negotiate, but that is one thing I will not. It's funny when I look back and look at my uncle while my mom's sister says, 'Oh well,

it happens. It doesn't mean anything.' Excuse me! I think we are held to the same ethical standards. If it's wrong for a woman why shouldn't it be for a man?

The same woman said her mother's advice would be to understand and forgive and forget. "That's not something you forgive and forget."

A businesswoman in her forties shared:

I couldn't take it. I could never trust that person. I would want to try again but probably not be able to handle it.

She went on to say that her mother, "would not expect me to put up with it [infidelities]." Still another woman proclaimed:

I don't agree with it . If my husband would have an affair, I would not stay married. I think what causes infidelity is the lack of communication in the couple. If I ever reached that point, I would try to talk about it. I just think it's wrong.

Her mother's advice echoed her own opinion about infidelity:

She [mother] would tell me to seek a divorce. She wouldn't support him. She would tell me if he didn't respect me enough to be faithful then maybe I should not be with him.

A young woman with a strong view on infidelity expressed:

I don't even want to think that anyone is going to be unfaithful to me. I wouldn't stay with him. That is something that I don't support. I see it as very bad because you loose respect for each other, not only for each other but for your children, your family. When you get married, you promise to be faithful to one another for life, so you have to be faithful and being unfaithful you lose respect for your family, but it's also like breaking a chain, it's

something closed, sealed; by being unfaithful you break the seal and your left with the break, the hole. It's something that I could accept. That my husband be unfaithful, I think it's very bad.

This same woman explains that her mother would probably handle the situation differently:

. . .my mom is more understanding of men. She doesn't accept "machos" because my dad was not like this, but she realizes that men think differently and act differently, not like women. She says . . .men have nothing to loose, but women are women, they stand to loose a lot, they are the ones who end up pregnant and you will have a child. So, my mom sees infidelity as something that men can do because nothing happens to them, but she probably wouldn't tell me to leave him, that he had just made a mistake, but I don't believe that. I don't accept it, definitely not.

On the other hand, a housewife with strong Mexican values offers:

If it happened to me with my husband, I feel I would probably forgive him. If I knew his promises to be faithful were true . . . I don't think I should deny my children the presence of their father just because of one mistake. We are not perfect and everybody makes a mistake. If he would promise to be faithful, I would forgive him.

Her mother would tell her to "forgive him because she forgave my father. He was unfaithful to her."

RQ 14: What are these women's attitudes about sacrificing for their families?

Again, questions eight and 14 address similar topics but it is interesting to note the women's answers to this question.

A women in her forties explains that she does not see helping her family or others as a sacrifice, instead she explains:

I don't see it as a sacrifice. I really like to help them. I worked after high school to help them, and now that I'm married whenever my mother needs help, I am there to help.

A divorced woman seeking a relationship says:

Yes, I feel like I have by not getting married again because I don't know if it's OK for me to get married because I see my responsibility to them [parents]. I don't take time for myself or go places I would like to go. I don't want them to think wrong of me.

While some of the women feel they are "being taken advantage of."

Other women explained that there was no sacrifice involved or that their mothers did put them in a bind at times for asking for their time.

RQ 15: Are these women's perceptions of their roles affected by their knowledge of the Virgin Mary?

Most of these women stated that the Virgin Mary was seen more as a religious symbol than as a role model. One woman expressed that she did have some identification with the Virgin Mary as a role model.

A young woman recalls her mother:

. . .taught us to pray and take us to Mass. She didn't discuss her as a role model but she did tell us about her.

Similar responses such as:

She [mother] looked to God. She [mother] didn't mention her at all as a role model.

Another woman boldly said:

My mother never, never, never, discussed anything religious with us. She will discuss everything else but religion is not something you can convince people about. It's something very personal.

One woman says she remembers the Virgin Mary more through the prayer, "Hail Mary."

Still, another woman explained that the Virgin Mary did have an impact on her:

I think the Virgin Mary has always been like a role model in my family. My mom would tell us that we should be good women like the Virgin Mary and I heard about probably at school. My mother is a Catholic but she's not a stickler, she does tell us stories, bible stories and stuff but not to extremes . . .In school, I was in a private school, run by nuns, they always talked about the Virgin, she was my idol, she's like a role model. At one point I even considered being a nun. It had a great impact in me it was something positive.

RQ 16: Do these women identify any *dichos* or sayings that have had an impact on them or on how they view life?

In the Mexican culture, a lot of people, especially a lot of the older generations, tend to speak in *dichos* or sayings in order to get their point across. These women were asked to remember which *dichos* or sayings they could

remember that impacted them in some way. Many of the women were unsuccessful in trying to come up with one. Instead, the women who did come up with a *dicho*, all had one which dealt with relationships. Here are the *dichos* or sayings these women came up with during one of the interviews. A woman used this *dicho* earlier and again in this part of the interview: “*La ropa sucia se lava en casa.*” This translates to, Dirty laundry is washed at home. In other words, if there is a problem within the home that is where it should remain.

Another familiar *dicho* used in the Mexican American women’s results was expressed by a Mexican woman: “*Dime mi con quien andas y te dire quien eres.*” This translates to, tell me who you are and I will tell you who you are. This is commonly used to describe friendships among people.

Still another woman expressed an interesting *dicho* about the education she received from family, listen closely:

. . . education is at home, everything you are as a person you learn at home only. At school they can teach you many things from books, but the way you are, your person is your family, wherever you go. That’s what I learned at home. Regardless of how good a school you attend they will never give you the education you get at home.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

When asked how to conclude a qualitative study, Harry Wolcott (1990) explains,

You don't. Give serious thought to dropping this idea that your final chapter must lead to a conclusion or that the account must build toward a dramatic climax (55).

In other words, qualitative research is quite different than other kinds of studies. The discussion section in a qualitative study merely helps organize the researcher's findings.

There are significant findings that reveal differences in these women. In response to the research questions, a number of important pieces of information have emerged. This section will begin with the discussion of the Mexican American women and the second part will discuss the Mexican women. Both the Mexican American and Mexican women's discussion will focus on eight areas. First, the roles these women play will be summarized. Second, the relationships these women have (in relation to themselves their parents) and others will be explored. Third, some of the demands and expectations family has on these women will be reviewed. Fourth, the issue of sex will be covered and how it was handled. Fifth, how family problems are dealt with will be discussed. Sixth, the women's attitudes towards men and infidelity will be examined. Seventh, the impact of the Virgin Mary will be discussed as a role model. Eighth, the *dichos*

or sayings, which affected these women's lives will be explored. And finally, future research recommendations, implications and personal reflection will be presented.

Roles

In general, the roles of these Mexican American women differed from their mother's perceptions of women's roles. "Independence" was the key term women used to describe themselves as opposed to the roles of their mothers whom they described as "self-sacrificing." However, despite their independent streak, there is a longing from these women for a family life while still having the opportunity for a career of their own. Many aspire to marry or to have a long term stable relationship.

Parents showed a great interest in their daughter's education. Many of the parents encouraged their daughters to make a better life for themselves by getting an education.

Relationships

Overall, these women described a close, "best friend" relationship with their mothers. Many of these women expressed a close tie to their grandmothers, describing them as supportive, comforting and spiritual.

Surprisingly, fathers played a significant role in the development of their daughters. These women revealed that their fathers encouraged them to get an education and make something of themselves.

When comparing these women's relationship with their fathers as opposed to their relationship with their mothers, overall, these women suggested that their relationship with their mother was a close relationship. The women felt

free to express thoughts and feelings to their mothers. On the other hand, their relationship with their father was characterized as one of respect and authority.

Family demands and expectations

Family demands and expectations from these women were evident from their answers to the questions. They were not angered or frustrated by the demands, but, in fact, welcomed the family demands if they were needed. Several of these women did not display feelings of guilt towards their parents. Only a few indicated that some guilt did exist. According to these women, love and sacrifice go hand in hand in the family. If it needs to be done, just do it.

Sex

These women were sent few messages about the area of sex. In fact, there were no direct messages sent to these women from their parents. Parents either avoided discussing the topic with these women or dealt with the topic indirectly. Most of the women confirmed that sex was definitely a taboo topic among the parents and children in the culture. Some expressed that health class in high school briefly explained the concept.

Outside Help

As mentioned before, *familismo*, is a tie between family members in Hispanic families. Therefore, to honor this tie it is considered best to stay within the family circle. These women shared that their family problems were handled within their own family. Surprisingly, only a few mentioned asking a priest for advice. Also, some of the women stated that in their families believe that only *locos*, crazy people, saw counselors or therapists for help.

Attitudes about men

The women expressed that their parents did not convey any messages that men are more valuable than women. In fact, they reported not being treated differently. Instead, they were encouraged to pursue an education and career. Most of these women were independent and believed that in this day in age there has to be a balance between men and women.

The issue of infidelity drew some different answers among these women and the advice their mothers may give them on the same situation. While some of the women strongly agreed that infidelity was wrong. Others, believed that their children needed a father figure in the house, that reason being the only one that might keep them together.

On the other hand, these same women believed that their mothers had different types of advice to give. Mother's advice ranged from giving him a chance to standing behind their daughters decisions. Mothers of course, only want the best for their children.

Virgin Mary

It is quite interesting to note that *marianismo* includes attitudes and behaviors that may be passed generation through generation in Latin families. According to Stevens (1973, 1994), the roots of *marianismo* can be found in what she described as a cult to the Virgin Mary. The women in this study stated that the Virgin Mary did not serve as a role model to them. She was merely a symbol. Few could relate to the Virgin Mary except as the subject of the prayer, "The Hail Mary."

Dichos

Dichos are sayings that embrace the heart of the Hispanic culture. Through these *dichos* many people in the Hispanic culture share their stories of life. When asked this question, most of the women could not remember one and the ones that did remember a *dicho* had very similar ones. The *dichos* or sayings expressed one thing, the importance of relationships to these women. One of the *dichos* suggested, *Di me con quien andas y te dire quien eres*, in other words, tell me who your friends are and I will tell who you are.

Mexican Women

The following paragraphs will discuss the views that Mexican women hold in regards to the eight areas addressed earlier in the introduction.

Roles

Not surprisingly, these Mexican women expressed that their view of women's roles from the way their mother's saw their roles as womanhood was different. Many women described their roles in terms of "independence", and "being given an opportunity." They described their mothers' roles as that of a homemaker and submissive wife. However, despite these women seeing themselves as independent, their desires range from being married to receiving a Master's, and one woman acknowledged a longing for a Ph.D. in the future. Parents encouraged and even pushed their daughters to receive an education. Also, nearly all the women voiced that their parents' expectations was for their daughters to "marry well."

Relationships

Many of these women described their mothers as close and easy to get along with. Surprisingly, some of the women also mentioned that their relationship with their mother was not a close one. One woman even went as far as to compare her relationship with her mother to a business relationship. Several of these women did not express a close connection towards their grandmother. They described their relationships as distant.

While some of the fathers of these women showed interest in these women's development by offering them an education and respect as a self sufficient woman, other fathers played the role of the man expecting special treatment from the women around him. One woman described her father as an introvert. Often, many of these women fathers traveled because of their jobs. Therefore, some of these women hesitated at this question because it was not something they had really thought about before.

When comparing these women's relationship with their fathers as compared to their relationship with their mothers, women, overall, felt closer to their mothers. Although some of these women did express that their fathers included them in their lives when possible. Others explained their fathers worked while their mother stayed home. Many of the women suggested that their fathers are viewed as persons who were owed respect regardless of the closeness of their relationship.

Family Demands and Expectations

Many of these women shared that their fathers expected them to do more while their mothers expected help in other ways such as with translations and financial support.

The Mexican women expressed guilt feelings in numerous ways. Some indicated specifically that guilt was felt with the amount of money their parents invested in their education. Others felt guilt because of the sacrifices their parents made for them.

Some women felt specific guilt toward their mothers for not being close enough. Still, other women felt guilt in regards to not “doing enough” for their mothers.

Sex

These women expressed a unanimous story of not being specifically told about the issue of sex. Instead, these women received certain indirect messages that they believed had the “no sex before marriage” connotation to it. One woman described her awareness of the issue through a relationship where her brother’s girlfriend was pregnant. The only comment the woman said her parents expressed was, “Let this be an example for the rest of you.” Although it was an indirect way of saying it, the woman explained that everyone knew it was wrong.

Outside Help

Privacy was among the main factors that led these women to remain within the home if a problem arose. All of these women believed that problems should remain in the home. Surprisingly, even priests were not consulted with if a family had a problem. Again the issue of *familismo* is evident.

Attitudes About Men

The women had a split view on what they believed were messages that were sent by their parents about men being more valuable. Some answered that their parents did send messages, while others explained that they did not. It does seem, however, some of these Mexican women were directed since childhood to be in the kitchen and take care of her husband.

Infidelity among these women struck a surprisingly answer that the majority of these women would not accept it. One Mexican woman with a strong traditional background explained that if it happened only once, she would forgive him. Not one of these women explained that they would get out of the marriage mentioned children. The one woman that did consider staying in the marriage was a housewife and mother of three.

On the other hand, these same women believed that their mothers had various types of advice to give. While some would support their daughter's decision to move on, a majority of their mothers would encourage their daughters to stay and try and make the marriage work.

Virgin Mary

Again the cult that Stevens (1973, 1994) speaks about and the roots of marianismo are not evident through these interviews. Women say they view the Virgin Mary as a symbol more than a role model. Only one woman expressed that she identified with the Virgin Mary as a role model. This woman acknowledged a strong traditional connection towards the Catholic church because of her Catholic background and education.

Dichos

Dichos or sayings are typically dear to an Hispanic's heart because *dichos* are used very often. The Hispanic culture uses these *dichos* to teach others about life in a nutshell. Ironically, when asked this question, many of these women could not come up with any *dichos*. Out of the 10 women interviewed, only three women could remember a *dicho* off the top of their heads.

Limitations of Study

Before closing, some limitations of the current research should be acknowledged. First, the age of the respondents is clearly an issue. Ideally, interviews with a greater number of older and middle-aged women would be useful to this research in order to provide a broader perspective for the research. Another issue is the way the interview guide was written. The interview guide had too many secondary probing questions on certain topics and fewer in others. The questions that had more probes were difficult to address during the actual interviews and also afterwards when the researcher transcribed the results. The interview guide needed to be better designed. Third, the researcher lacked fluency in the Spanish language. This made it difficult, at times, to grasp the true meaning of the women's responses. A translator was needed to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions and to translate the data into English.

Directions for Future Study

There may be several directions for future study. First, future research should include a larger subject pool. Factors such as age and socioeconomic status may play a role in the judgment of the *marianismo* construct for different women. The present sample does not allow for the examination of these factors because of the limited number of subjects used. Second, future research should

study *marianismo* in other ethnic groups. Past research has suggested that *marianismo* is a predominately Latin belief, much like *machismo*. However, *machismo* is now a universally recognized concept. Third, future research should involve the development of a questionnaire in order to easily reach a larger sample of subjects.

Personal Reflections

Participants for this research expressed great interest in the concept of *marianismo*. Since *marianismo* hits so close to home for many of the women, they were willing to help with this research in hopes to learn more about themselves and their culture. Of course, as in most cases, the women were sometimes nervous about the nature of the tape recordings.

Overall, the women were helpful and patient with the interview process. They shared the happy and sometimes sad parts of what it is like to be a Hispanic woman. I believe Olivia Espin (1992) best explains this when she says, "Latin women experience a unique combination of power and powerlessness which is characteristic of the culture." Hopefully, the research will help Hispanic women understand not only our culture better, but most importantly, themselves.

Conclusion

Gil & Vasquez's Ten Commandments are a compilation of clinical case studies condensed to a reader friendly format. These studies have described the lives of many Hispanic women who sought therapeutic help. From their clinical experience, the authors gave birth to the 10 Commandments or 10 components of a "self-sacrificing" *marianista*. Therefore, this study relied heavily on Gil & Vasquez's Ten Commandments as a foundation of *marianismo*. The current research sought to test the validity of these commandments. It is quite

interesting to look back at both groups of women and notice that although some responses were slightly different, many responses were also quite similar. The question left here is, are these really “Commandments” or are they more like suggestions or observations from the past.

As the current research shows, many of the younger generation of women are seeking independence, while the older generations are staying close to their roots. As an educated Mexican American woman, I must agree with William's (1990) when she states,

Mexican-American women have played an active role in the home. They have cared for the children and carried out a variety of tasks, not just in the household but at times also in the fields. Under these circumstances, they could hardly have been the passive and weak beings that social scientists' stereotypes have made them to be (86).

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Investigation: An Ethnographic Study

Investigator (s): Lori Anne Ruiz

Date: _____

A RESEARCH STUDY ON MARIANISMO AMONG
MEXICAN AMERICAN AND MEXICAN WOMEN

This is to certify that I, _____, hereby agree to participate as a volunteer in this scientific investigation (experiment, program, study) as an authorized part of the education and research program of the UTPA under the supervision of Dr. Dora E. Saavedra.

*The investigation and my part in the investigation have been defined and fully explained to me by _____, and I understand his/her explanation.

*I have been given an opportunity to ask whatever questions I may have had all such questions and inquiries have been answered to my satisfaction.

*I understand that I am free to deny my answers to specific items or questions in interviews or questionnaires.

*I understand that any data or answers to questions will remain confidential with regard to my identity.

*I FURTHER UNDERSTAND THAT I AM FREE TO WITHDRAW MY CONSENT AND TERMINATE MY PARTICIPATION AT ANY TIME.

Date

Date of birth

Subject's Signature

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Date

Investigator's Signature

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS. PLEASE CONTACT LORI RUIZ, THE INVESTIGATOR OF THIS RESEARCH AT (956) 386-0363 OR THE DIRECTOR OF THIS STUDY, DR. DORA E. SAAVEDRA AT (956) 381-3585 IN THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PAN AMERICAN, EDINBURG, TEXAS.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hi, my name is Lori Ruiz. I am a graduate student at the University of Texas-Pan American. I would like to conduct interviews with women about their attitudes on women's roles. I have about 13 questions which cover different aspects about women's roles, the family, and relationships. If you agree to be interviewed, I would like to tape record the interview and I may take a few notes as we go along. Let me assure you that no names will be associated with the interviews. Everything you say is confidential. If you feel uncomfortable about a question please let me know. The interview may take about 20 minutes. Please feel free to ask me to clarify any questions if you do not understand. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. How do you perceive your role as a woman today? How do you think your mother perceived this role? What about your father, do you feel he played a role in the woman you have become today?
2. What goals do you have in life at the personal level? At the career level? Did your parents have any goals for you?
3. Please describe to me the relationship you have between you and your mother. Does your mother ever compare things that you do to when she was growing up? Has your grandmother or "abuela" played a major role in your development? Does the relationship with your father differ or about the same? Please explain how your father has impacted your life with his stories about growing up.
4. Has there ever been a time when your mother has asked you to do something for her or someone in your family, even though you do not have time or would rather be doing something for yourself? How about your father? How did you handle it?
5. In your relationship with your mother or father do you ever feel guilty in one way or another. How?
6. What messages were sent from your mother and father about the area of sex? How did they handle this?

7. When your family has a problem how is it typically handled? What support is sought from friends, family, or the community (i.e. church, counselor)? Would you ever consider outside help?
8. Does your mother or father ever demand more from you because you are a woman. For instance, by saying, "you need to take care of your man." Or " you need to learn how to cook or else you will not be a good housewife."
9. Do your mom and dad portray men as more important than women?
10. What do you think about infidelity in a marriage? How would you handle it? What advice would your mother give you?
11. Do you ever feel you sacrifice for your family, mother, father or any other family member or significant other? How did you feel about it?
12. Do you ever remember your mother discussing the Virgin Mary to you at any point in your life? What did she point out about her role? Did this impact your life in anyway?
13. Are there any *dichos* your mother uses about women or men? How about any general ones that you can think of off the top of your head that you live by or that are dear to your heart? What about your father, did he ever use any?

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS

Level of Education: _____ high school
_____ college
_____ higher education (Ph.D., M.D., J.D. or
Masters)
_____ other

Age: _____ under 20
_____ 21-30
_____ 31-40
_____ 41-50
_____ over 50

Number of children: _____

What is your religious background? _____

Degree or major: _____

Profession: _____

Marital status: _____ Single
_____ Engaged
_____ Married
_____ Divorced
_____ Never been married
_____ Other

Do you have a significant other? _____ Is he Hispanic? _____

How old are your parents? Mom _____ Dad _____

What is their educational background?

Mom _____ Dad _____

Any Comments or Suggestions:

VITA

LORI ANNE RUIZ

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II. EDUCATION BACKGROUND

Master of Arts, Speech Communication, University of Texas Pan American. Edinburg, Texas. May 1998.

Bachelor of Arts, Communication, University of Texas Pan American. Edinburg, Texas. Emphasis in Human Resource Communication Management, Dec. 1995.

III. RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Texas Pan American, Department of Communication. (September 1996-December 1997). Taught Fundamentals of Speech Communication (basic speech class including public speaking, small group communication, interviewing skills, and interpersonal communication).