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Toxic Masculinity: An Outcome of Colonialism and its Effects on the Latinx/Chicanx LGBTQ+ Community

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Community

Biography

Monica is a first-generation student majoring in Sociology and minoring in Chicana and Chicano Studies. Being a first-generation Queer Chicana, much of her research interests intertwine with her identity. Her research interests include Chicanx and Latinx involvement in the Prison Industrial Complex, femininities and masculinities of Chicanxs and Latinxs, the Chicano Movement, masculinity and internalized homophobia, transphobia and sexuality, gender studies, Chicanx and Latinx representation in media, and Colonialism. Monica hopes to pursue a PhD in Ethnic Studies in order to apply the theoretical framework into her career as a potential social justice activist for disadvantaged communities of color. Currently as an intern for the County of Santa Clara, Monica's passion for social justice has increased as she is working on a project to help low-income Latinx individuals from East San José and their families heal from trauma to avoid falling victim to the Prison Industrial Complex by promoting higher education and indigenous healing practices.

Toxic Masculinity: An Outcome of Colonialism and its Effects on the Latinx/Chicanx LGBTQ+ Community

Abstract

This research examines masculinity in the Latinx community within the U.S. Much of the theory behind masculinity involves discussing toxic masculinity and machismo. To do this, I look at film, poetry, and literature to discuss how toxic masculinity affects Queer Latinxs. Although this research focuses on fictional characters and the analysis of fictional works, these characters' stories do not fall far from current LGBTQ+ Latinxs who may be experiencing the same issues. I examine *La Mission*, *Mosquita y Mari*, *Gun Hill Road*, "I am Joaquin," "La Loca de la Raza Cosmica," *Rain God*, and *What Night Brings*. These pieces work well with one another to show how gay Latino men, Latina lesbian women, and transgender Latina women are affected by toxic masculinity, internalized homophobia and transphobia. With this research I hope to show how the way we construct masculinity as a society, should be reconfigured to something more positive; I also hope to eliminate homophobia and transphobia, as well as violence and hate crimes towards the LGBTQ+ community.

Introduction

By analyzing film, poetry, novels, and religion popular to the Latinx and Chicax community I hope to show how masculinity affects the LGBTQIA+ community. In order to do this, I also examine how the colonization of Mesoamerica and the cultural stripping of the indigenous groups of Latin America caused a toxic means of masculinity. During colonialism, toxic masculinity became a survival mechanism that resulted in being considered as part of the culture for several generations.

The colonization of Latin America resulted in a complete shift of culture; the Spaniards believed the indigenous groups to be savages and made them convert to Christianity and follow the traditions of this religion (Mirande 1997). In the present day, many Latinxs are or have been members of some form of Christianity. Christianity considers same sex relationships as sinful and states that women should be submissive towards their husbands which explains why many of the characters I analyze are subject to negative encounters from family members who tell them their actions are against the church. Much of the Latinx culture revolves around religion that stemmed from colonization: therefore, Latinxs are following a culture that is not truly theirs and have involuntarily abandoned their ancestors' language and culture. I am also analyzing media to examine the traits of toxic masculinity that has been accepted as social constructs.

Masculinity and Marginalized Groups

Masculinity is an ideology that is everywhere around us, especially in the United States, a society that primarily operates through patriarchal norms and expectations. According to Gary Barker (2005):

There is an immense pressure for young men, both Black and Latino to conform to certain standards of toughness and financial prowess – often by any means necessary. By attempting to meet these standards, poor minority men often get themselves in trouble – through violence that ultimately leads to a run-in with the law.

Institutionalized racism makes it difficult for people of color to attain opportunities or succeed in a society that was not built for them.

Barker (2005) states that, “both Black and Latino men experience the same high rates of incarceration, marginalization in the workplace, and struggle to ‘prove’ themselves in an economy where they simply cannot be breadwinners.” In a study conducted by Ramaswamy (2010), she found that the men she interviewed pointed to male figures as a source of learning manhood. She also states that these men who were raised by single mothers learned about manhood by being self-sufficient and learning how to cook and clean without the need of a woman; however, the men she interviews, “strive to fulfill the ‘provider role,’ a feature of patriarchal masculinity” (2010: 417).

Racial Identity

In each culture, it is largely assumed that there are different expectations for a man’s masculinity. However, if they come to the U.S., it is expected for them to assimilate into dominant norms, “giving up their ethnic and cultural values in favor of the Anglo-Saxon” (Harris et al., 1994: 705). According to Harris et al (1994), “American society is based upon White masculine gender role paradigms, African-American, [and Latinx] males must learn those paradigms as well as the roles and rules expected of them within their own culture” (709).

Gloria Anzaldúa developed her concept of *Nepantla* from W.E.B DuBois’s concept of double consciousness, which states that African Americans try to maintain their African American identity or culture while embracing the dominant white American culture as well due to societal expectations. Balancing two identities is a constant struggle for many ethnic groups that do not belong to the dominant white group. Many Latinxs in the United States consider their culture to be a hybrid since it requires them to be both Latinx and American. This is the case for many biracial ethnic groups, who are in the state of *Nepantla* according to Gloria Anzaldúa. Not only does this apply to Mexican Americans, but it also applies to any racial group coming to the U.S. who are stuck in between a borderland by trying to please their American counterparts while doing the same for members of their ethnic background.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Positive Masculinity

According to Donaldson (1993), Hegemony was adapted by Antonio Gramsci; this term was first developed by Karl Marx, it is when ideas become so dominant, so pervasive, it is accepted as common sense and there is no other way. Donaldson states that Gramsci's adaptation of "Hegemonic Masculinity" signifies that women exist as sexual objects for men while men are not considered objects for other men" (1993: 644). Despite the fact that males benefit from male privilege, there are certain disadvantages: "Hegemonic masculinity not only excludes certain groups of men from accessing aspects of male privilege (...) it is an impossible ideal that many men are socialized to strive to attain but cannot" (Connell 1995). Arciniega (2008) determined two factors that identify the basis for machismo which include traditional machismo consisting of hypermasculine ideas and *caballerismo* which consists of the positive things a man should do such as connecting to family, showing emotion, and social responsibility. According to Estrada and Arciniega (2015), *caballerismo* is a form of positive masculinity. Positive masculinity can be used for social responsibility; Estrada (2015) uses the example of a man who has prostate cancer and the counselor helping the man, uses the man's responsibility to the family to convince him to get treatment. In other words, positive masculinity can relate to keeping in good health for their family's best interest.

"Machismo"

Being "macho" can be interpreted in different ways depending on who is defining it. Originally, being macho was something associated with Latinx men until it became Americanized. It can now be used to describe famous male athletes or sex symbols as something positive and is associated with "strength, virility, masculinity, and sex appeal" (Mirande 1997). However, according to Mirande's findings, when machismo is associated with the Latinx culture, it is seen as something negative such as "male dominance, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and spousal abuse." When a white male is called a "macho," it is something positive and fondly looked upon; however, when a Latinx male is associated with being "macho" he is seen as an ultimate male dominator and unfavorable amongst women due to negative portrayal of "manly" people of color in society. If we compare the Pre-Columbian era to Spanish colonialism and

the modern day, we can conclude that this form of masculinity is associated with a colonized mindset.

Many scholars argue that machismo was a reaction from the indigenous groups in response to being emasculated by the Spanish conquistadors. However, Mirande argues that, in fact, machismo was not a response to Spanish conquest but rather it was a form of assimilation since the Spanish men were highly masculine; this is why the current day ideology of “macho” is a colonized mindset, since both the Mexican macho and Spanish conquistador share almost identical characteristics. Another interesting point to note is that in the Spanish language, when a man pursues a woman’s attention it is referred to as *conquistando* – conquering – which shows how colonialism still plays a key role in Latinx masculinity and culture.

Fragile Masculinity

Masculinity is fragile because it only exists as a construct and not as a biological trait as we are socialized to believe. Masculinity is a reaction against passivity and powerlessness, and with it comes a repression of a vast range of human desires and possibilities: those that are associated with femininity (Kaufman 1987:588). Some associate masculinity with power and maleness with machismo; however, they are two different things – one is an idea and the other is biological. Maleness and masculinity are fondly looked upon but many men struggle with the “certainty of the sexuality, needs, fears, and weaknesses [thus creating] a psychology of violence” (Kaufman 1987: 588).

In certain occasions when men feel emasculated, they may resort to violence as a way to prove masculinity, which according to Kaufman, only shows powerlessness for resulting to an extremely negative measure to solve a problem thus enforcing the fragility of masculine ideology (591). Much of this “fragile masculinity” violence includes displaying violence within a “group of men, rape in prisons, and attacks on gay men [or women and] or racial minorities” (Kaufman 1987). Many men use their gender as a form of ideology to prove themselves as men by performing an act of terror on a vulnerable group (Kaufman 1987).

Racially Unequal Access to Male Privilege

It is often assumed that men benefit from being males; however, that is not always the case. Men of color are disadvantaged and do not benefit from male privilege like their white counterparts. According to Edward Orozco Flores and Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2017), men of color have marginalized masculinities because they experience societal disadvantages such as poverty, unemployment, and institutional racism. An example of marginalized masculinity are Chicano gang members - Chicanxs have been oppressed for much of history. In the present-day, they are denied opportunities to meet the stereotypical notion of the male breadwinner and are thus relying upon alternative measures to prove their dominant role and masculinity such as physical force or aggressive behavior towards women (Orozco Flores and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2017).

According to Majors and Bilson (1992), “hypermasculine gang behavior, dress, and language serve as a way to” replace and satisfy the absence or lack of employment and educational opportunities. Hurtado and Sinha (2016) use the idea of intersectionality to explain that Latinxs in the United States are more likely to experience social injustice simply because of their class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality all at once. With Hurtado and Sinha’s point, it makes it clear that despite being a man, there are different privileges if one is of color, lower class, and of the LGBTQI+ community. One can be a man and have privilege within one’s racial group, but within the dominant society, a man only fully benefits from male privilege if he is a wealthy white cisgender male.

Toxic Masculinity

Masculinity is toxic because it may encourage males to participate in negative activities such as aggressiveness, heavy drinking, risk taking and virility. However, some scholars argue that masculinity or machismo is a “culturally valued and desirable ideal of courage, honor, virility, physical strength, and as representing a protector, provider, and authority figure” (Abreu et al. 2000, Christensen 1975, Lazur & Majors 1995; Mirande, 1997). Saez et al. (2009) states that previous research on men who are persistent in maintaining a toxic traditional masculine ideology, have a higher rate of physically or psychologically abusing women as well as maintaining attitudes that encourage the sexual harassment of women.

According to Hurtado and Sinha, within Mexican masculinity, women are perceived as weak and easy subjects for “domination and abuse” (2016: 56).

Additionally, abuse is also something that is prone to happen to weak heterosexual and homosexual men because they are perceived as being more feminine than traditionally masculine men. Those who identify with hegemonic machismo, may resort to “physical domination and abuse” toward the ones who do not fit into the norm of Mexican masculinity. Since masculinity is rather prominent in many cultures, it has even allowed for language to become a male centered discourse. Gloria Anzaldúa critiques how the Spanish language is male dominated and denies females the opportunity to embrace their femininity (2012:76). For example, among multiple women, one would state “*nosotras*” which emphasizes that they are women. However, if all these women were together and a man came along, they would have to change the phrase to “*nosotros*” in order not to hurt the man’s masculinity while denying the women’s femininity.

Homophobia

Masculinity is associated with males adopting dominant behaviors while women are expected to be submissive towards the male and family. Part of being masculine requires rejecting everything associated with femininity, being emotionless and aggressive, and having a clear heterosexual identity while being homophobic (Saez et. al, 2009). Associating homophobia with masculinity is a sign of internalized homophobia for the men who fear that being gay is not manly thus oppress gay males in order to be manly enough; Kaufman argues that many men who commit acts of violence towards other men are repressing their own feelings of attraction towards men and result to homophobia as a way to cope and overcome anxiety (1987: 594). Furthermore, Kaufman suggests that “men’s violence against other men is one of the chief means through which patriarchal society simultaneously expresses and discharges the attraction of men to other men” (1987: 594).

Alfredo Mirande notes that when it comes to homosexuality in the Latinx community, one is not defined as gay but rather by the power they have through a sexual act (1997). Following Mirande’s definition, a

Mexican man can engage in gay sex and maintain his masculine identity as long as he is the dominant figure; this means that the submissive male loses his masculine identity and it is replaced with a feminine perception and subject to discriminatory homophobic comments by peers or their dominant, closeted sexual partner.

Religion and Queerness

In many religions, being Queer is seen as something sinful. When it comes to attraction toward the same sex, many consider it sinful because it goes against God's plan to have man and woman procreate. Same sex couples cannot procreate together and must result to alternative methods to have children which is seen as sinful primarily in Christianity since they are having sexual intercourse for pleasure.

When it comes to members of the Trans community, religions like Christianity see them as sinful because a person is changing their biological sex into a gender which goes against what God ascribed to them:

Encourage 'Christian' families with monogamous units and Spanish 'sexual ideals'... Such colonial domination rests upon a logic of heteropatriarchy that envisions a gender binary system where men dominate women; thus, communities that have gender and sexual systems not matching this cis-heteropatriarchal system are targeted for transformation so as to enable settler colonial domination (Hidalgo 2016:175).

Many fail to acknowledge that much of the religion in the Chicax or Latinx community comes from a colonized mindset and that our ancestors had a different lifestyle prior to Christianity. Additionally, some men are not accepting of the LGBTQI+ community due to toxic masculinity which may cause them to fear that by interacting with a Queer individual might make them seem less manly. Anzaldúa states that being Queer is the heterosexual's fear because being Queer is constructed as something different, thus being "lesser, sub-human, in-human, non-human" (2012:40). Furthermore, Anzaldúa states that by being Queer, is the ultimate act of rebellion a woman of color "can make against her

native culture” because “she is going against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality” (2012:41). Anzaldúa states that she was raised Catholic and socialized to be heterosexual but she made the choice to be Queer despite the fact that for some, they are born Queer. By choosing to be Queer, she says that it allows her to go back and forth “from the white, the Catholic, the Mexican, and the indigenous” which makes room for *loqueria* (crazies) allowing her to discover the oppression of her ancestors (2012:41).

In the film, *La Mission*, Che and Jesse represent the constant battle an LGBTQIA+ member of the Chicax or Latinx community faces when having an unaccepting parent. Coming out is hard enough, but it becomes even more challenging when parents or peers are unwilling to accept it or make homophobic comments. Jesse not only deals with the negative comments his father makes, but the comments from his schoolmates as well:

SMOKE: We next. But we don't play with no faggots.

NACHO: Aww I think you hurt her feelings.

His Chicax schoolmates also give him trouble because they cannot understand that it is normal for a Chicax man to be attracted to other men; especially, these young men who represent a hyper-masculine identity (i.e. tattoos, grillz, baggy clothing, and drug usage). The hyper-masculine identity these men practice, is toxic with its display of aggression, homophobia, and often times, objectification of women. If we compare Nacho and Smoke to Che, Jesse's father, we can assume Che may have acted like these young men during his teen years due to the way he acts now as an older man. Che is very masculine; he boxes, constantly looks and talks about women, has tattoos, works on cars, and has a problem with feminist women by stating that chivalry did not work for him on a recent date:

CHE: I tried to be a gentleman and hold the door open for her. She said I was oppressing her as a woman.

It is established that Che has spent some time in prison when Jesse insinuates that Che may have engaged in homosexual acts while in prison such as prison rape or pleasurable acts; this results in hurting Che's masculine ego and starts beating Jesse. Because Che has an extreme homophobic attitude towards his son, he beats him, embarrasses him in front of the whole neighborhood, and threatens Jesse's boyfriend. Che gives up his relationship with his son because of his machista ideology that men cannot be gay, especially if they are dating a white man. Additionally, Che is quite nationalistic. He represents his Chicana culture rather proudly by teaching the boys from the neighborhood about their indigenous roots and including Aztec paintings on his lowriders. The fact that his son is gay, is problematic enough for him, but the fact that he is dating a white man becomes the ultimate betrayal to Che, someone whose ideology is about reclaiming Aztlan and indigenous roots as well as being free from a colonized mindset. In comparison, Jesse has agency, he is his own person, and does what he pleases. Despite his father's wishes, he continues to see his boyfriend, Jordan and even leaves home when Che threatens Jordan:

Queer self-identification enables [Jesse] to attack the tacit normativity of gender and sexual duality that causes trauma in Queer persons and their families (and the nation, by extension), which as a consequence may undermine the politics of recognition within Chicana/o familial structures and their love for family members (Kynclova 2017:153).

Similar to Che, Jesse is very proud of his culture as well. The film makes this point clear with the choice of outfit he is constantly seen wearing. He constantly wears Chicana-related clothing such as the Aztec calendar, or a shirt saying "Xicano" (using X instead of Ch is referring back to the Nahuatl language that was excluded from Mesoamerica's language when it was colonized); he even wears one of these shirts while in a gay club, symbolizing that one can be Chicana and part of the Queer community. Although some Chicanas hold the belief that there is only one way to be Chicanas but in reality, there is not just one way; there are many identities that make up a Chicanas person – one being part of the Queer

community. Due to colonialism, much of the ideology on what was “normal” for indigenous culture was seen as sinful or savage-like by the colonizers and made it punishable. This permanently changed the ideas on indigenous practices, altering them into a colonized mindset. For those who did not conform, they were treated as outsiders or killed (Armaline, Fall 2018 lecture).

The film *Mosquita y Mari* helps viewers see how much of the Latinx community is stuck in a cis-heteronormative way of thinking. For example, the characters, Yolanda (Mosquita) and Mari have feelings for each other. While Yolanda begins to do poorly in school, Mari performs better, leading Yolanda’s parents to assume she is in a relationship with a boy who is causing her academic decline. It is interesting to note that when it comes to academic downfall, most parents assume that it is due to their child beginning to date the opposite gender and it hardly ever comes to mind that it can be someone of the same gender. This is because we are socialized to think in a heteronormative ideal when it comes to relationships.

In one scene, Yolanda is seen wearing her father’s sombrero and dancing. When her mother sees this, she is infuriated and tells Yolanda to put the sombrero “back in the closet.” This scene represents her ‘coming out’ as Queer to her mother because the mother later goes on to rant that Yolanda should not be thinking about relationships with other people; rather she should focus on her academics and everything else will disgrace the family. In this exchange, it is almost as if the mother is telling Yolanda to go back into the closet and continue hiding her sexuality and gender queerness.

A sombrero is usually associated as masculine. By having Yolanda wear it, sparked some discomfort in her mom because it is not associated with cisgender behavior. As Jackie Cuevas suggests, in the eyes of Yolanda’s mother, she is seen as a “malflora” which means:

‘Bad flora’ or ‘bad flower,’ it is a slang term for ‘lesbian,’ synonymous with tortillera or jota, and may be considered more offensive than ‘lesbiana.’ The term is a variation of ‘manflora,’ which can be used to describe a masculine woman or an effeminate man, evoking the association of women’s masculinity with both

supposedly failed masculinity and supposedly inadequate femininity” (2018:68).

Perhaps Yolanda’s mother disliked her wearing a sombrero because according to Cuevas:

It is not lesbianism, same-sex desire, or even sexuality in general but instead genderqueerness that poses greater challenges to the coherence of the Chicax community... genderqueerness, because of its unreadability, ultimately poses a bigger threat to a Chicax imaginary than same-sex desire (2018:78).

This is the case because gender queerness does not allow for other individuals to know if a person is a man or woman - a socialized factor that is engrained since the day one is born with gendered-coded toys and clothing. Not knowing someone’s gender causes fear in some because it is out of the norm.

On the other hand, Mari represents a masculine figure. She is rebellious, smokes marijuana, skips school, and is constantly job hunting. At first, it seems that Mari is like any other adolescent; however, things change when she sees that her mother is late on the rent payment. After this, she puts on her deceased father’s necklace and begins doing all sorts of jobs to help her mother with the rent, as well as helping to feed her little sister. Mari goes to the extreme to help provide for her family throughout the film and even prostitutes herself. After she sells herself, she takes off her father’s necklace and tells her mother “she is tired,” symbolizing that is she tired of having to fill her father’s shoes and act as the sole provider for the family when she is only a young girl. Since Mari is a woman, she has to result to degrading job opportunities that have been created for women by men who wish to exploit the female body.

Although Mari is Queer, the only way she can acquire money is through engaging in a heterosexual act which goes against her sexuality. This means that she is being degraded twice, as a woman, and for being Queer. Many Queer women have to subject themselves to the toxicity of sex work in order to help provide for themselves or loved ones (Barrera Fall 2016). Sex work is something that was created by the means of toxic

masculinity; most of the people who hire sex workers are men who are seeking sexual pleasure or encounters. This method allows for women who cannot make ends meet to provide services for men as a way of surviving.

Though women or men can experience negativity from presenting gendered traits that do not correspond with their assigned sex, there are transgender people that also experience this same response. Trans women are subject to violence, hate crimes, and murder simply for being assigned the wrong sex. In the film, *Gun Hill Road*, Enrique is completely unaccepting of his trans daughter, Vanessa and he resorts to calling her homophobic slurs. Enrique is also unaccepting of the LGBT community because during his time in prison, he was raped by another male inmate. He sees the LGBT community as a threat due to his trauma and lashes out at Vanessa. Vanessa knows that her family will not accept her, so she decides to live a double life: with her family, she is Michael – with friends who accept her, she is Vanessa.

The constant in-between Vanessa experiences represents the struggle of being in the borderlands; as Anzaldúa says, Vanessa is in the in-between and cannot please both sides. Eventually, Vanessa begins to date a cisgender man who at first wanted to treat her well and take her on dates. However, once he finds out that Vanessa is trans, he automatically sexualizes her, changes their dates into asking Vanessa for sexual favors, and asks if she has received bottom surgery. Chris, Vanessa's boyfriend, carries himself as the ultimate masculine male, wears baggy clothes, baseball caps, and smooth talks her to perform sexual favors for him. He treats her as a sex slave; when Vanessa confronts Chris about never going on dates and only having sex, he says that dating is "wack." Despite this, they eventually go to have lunch where he acts like he does not know her and is embarrassed to walk with her or hold her hand.

This scene shows viewers his internalized homophobia and transphobia. Chris is embarrassed about being attracted to a trans woman because of the negative stigma society has placed on dating trans women or men. Some people believe the misconception that people transition because they are attracted to their biological sex and for it to be okay to like the same sex, they must change their gender identity; however, this is

completely wrong. People transition for many reasons and the fact that one likes a person who shares their biological sex, has nothing to do with it. In the film, Vanessa not only has to deal with the negative behavior of her macho boyfriend, but from her father as well. Because Enrique wants to make Vanessa more of a man, he introduces her to a prostitute who sexually assaults Vanessa. Enrique cannot accept Vanessa; thus, he resorts to the extreme to keep Vanessa from being a trans woman. He violently cuts her hair, and states he is doing it “for [Michael’s] own good because he loves him.”

Earlier in the film while Enrique is in prison, he is raped. This becomes clear when he finds his rapists on the street and beats and kicks him multiple times in the groin while calling him a homophobic slur. This scene holds particular significance, since it explains why Enrique is so unaccepting of the LGBTQ community – in reality, he is frightened and has developed a phobia. Vanessa, a trans Latina, helps viewers realize that not only are trans women subjected to transphobia, and violence, but they are also victims of homophobia due to toxic masculinity or machismo. Additionally, Michael/Vanessa is what we would refer to as Latinx, since they present themselves as both genders. According to Jackie Cuevas (2018), “the ‘x’ in ‘Chicanx,’ ‘Latinx,’ and other terms attempts to move beyond the binary and offers a trans, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and gender variant intervention that opens up the possibilities of ascribing any gender, or none at all to the term” (20).

Poetry

There are many males outside of television who may feel like Enrique from *Gun Hill Road* and decide to practice toxic masculinity. In the poem, *I Am Joaquin* by Corky Gonzales, it positively portrays males while excluding the rest of the Chicane community. Although Gonzales has the right idea to compare the Chicane identity to Mexican heroes, he fails to include women, the LGBTQ community, the Chicanes who are gender non-conforming, and Afro-Chicanes by labeling Chicanes as “Chicano” thus referencing it to the masculine word. Additionally, many of the heroes Gonzales mentions are men; women are only mentioned when they seem weak or submissive:

I killed those men who dared / To steal mine, / who raped and
killed my love / My Wife” or “Faithful women / Who die with me /
Or live.

Traditionally, men are seen as protectors of women and must resort to the extreme when a woman is dishonored particularly if that woman is of importance to a man. Killing a man that dared to steal or rape another man’s “woman” would restore his honor in society; however, this is actually a colonized mindset. In Pre-Colombian societies women were highly respected, it was a matriarchy (Laduke 1999:52).

Only the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Aztec goddess Tonantzin are mentioned while the rest of the poem focuses strictly on men. By doing this, the poem also shows that the only women worth mentioning are mythical figures who not all Chicanxs believe in, again highlighting another flaw of Gonzales’s work. Gonzales’s analysis of the Chicano community is exclusive to Catholic males and submissive women which leads us to conclude that the identity he has claimed as Chicanxs is false and non-inclusive. “I Am Joaquin,” is completely male centric; while it does manage to show the different identities that a Chicano has, it also excludes the LGBT community, gender non-conforming Chicanxs, Afro-Chicanxs.

Gonzales mentions that Chicanxs carry indigenous and European roots, thus signifying that Chicanxs are all not exclusively “Mexican” and that it takes different components to define a Chicano:

The chattering machine guns / are death to all of me: / Yaqui / T
arahumara / Chamala / Zapotec / Mestizo / Español.

However, he fails to include that much of the Chicano community is indigenous, European, and African, since many slaves were brought to Mesoamerica to work the lands which many indigenous people were killed and needed a replacement. Despite that, although, Gonzales’s analysis of the Chicano identity is largely male centered, he does a well in describing the heinous conditions the indigenous groups faced in Mesoamerica under Spanish rule:

Part of the blood that is mine / has labored endlessly four hundred / years under the heel of lustful / Europeans... / I have survived the toils and slavery of the fields.

The concept Gonzales discusses here is related to Tara Yosso's 2005 article, *Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth*, specifically in terms of navigational and resistant capital. The ideas in Yosso's work relate Gonzales's poem because the indigenous groups had to navigate their way through the Spaniards to stay alive while others resisted and eventually gained their independence from Spanish rule after 400-500 years:

Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind...
Resistant capital refers those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Yosso, 2005: 80).

The community cultural wealth Yosso mentions helps us to understand that much of the Chicax culture that is often dismissed from dominant culture. The Chicax culture is a hybrid that consists of Latinx and American customs. Yosso explains what "culture" is and what is important for Chicaxs in the same way Gonzales does. However, the only difference between them is that Yosso is inclusive of all members of the Chicax community while Gonzales is exclusive to non-Afro-Latinx males. It is important to be inclusive to all identities that make up a Chicax or Latinx persons because excluding one can be problematic. Many individuals who do not see themselves represented especially Afro-Latinxs – begin to internalize Eurocentric ideas and to discredit their African ancestry or internalize negative stigmas such as colorism. This concept is similar to the LGBT community, gender non-conforming individuals, and women because "I Am Joaquin" excludes all these groups thus making it seem as though they are not real Chicaxs but a submissive or weak version of a Chicano.

Although Gonzales's intentions were positive, he failed to include much of the entirety of the Chicax community. Additionally, we should acknowledge that this was written in the 1960s, when equality for Chicaxs was non-existent. At that time, he was trying to capture a nationalistic spirit and show that Chicaxs are worthwhile. However, he did it while excluding important groups that have a history of being treated poorly within the Chicax community. Although he does mention the indigenous people of Mesoamerica positively, as well as all the abuse they endured, he does not include the African slaves, which makes his analysis of the Chicax incomplete. The fact that Gonzales excludes the LGBT community gives room for others not to consider an LGBT individual as "the ideal" Chicax. The lack of inclusivity from Gonzales's part, "takes away nationality and symbolizes a loss of identity... [Chicaxs and Latinxs] are significantly oppressed" (Garcia-Preto 1996: 155). This poem should be revisited or rewritten with more inclusive language; that way, it can help Chicaxs struggling with identity issues since there are groups who have been denied the opportunity to feel proud to be a Chicax woman, a member of the LGBT community, an Afro-Chicax, or a gender non-conforming individual.

Due in part to the fact that "I Am Joaquin" is rather male centered, there has been a female response titled, "La Loca de La Raza Cosmica" by La Chrisx in the hope of being more inclusive of the Latinx and Chicax community. La Chrisx does an excellent job in including all members of the Chicax and Latinx community – even the ones that are often overlooked such as:

Soy el welfare / Soy Juvenile Hall / Soy the A.A / Soy being under
psychiatric care / Soy dope-pusher

In many situations, there are Chicaxs or Latinxs that deny someone because of their identity such as the way they act, dress, or their sexuality. Such is the case with many Chicaxs who fall into the criminal justice system and spend time in prison -- they are looked at negatively by family members and sometimes considered a waste of space. Although, Chicaxs and Latinxs all live different lives and identify in distinctive ways, a Chicax, is still a Chicax:

For as different as we all may seem, / When intricacies are compared, / We are all one, / and the same.

Although La Chrisx does not mention anything related to members of the LGBTQ community, she does include women and individuals who have been overlooked by the Chicana community – something that Gonzales fails to do. Both “I Am Joaquin” and “La Loca” are poems that discuss The Chicano Movement but do so in distinct ways. Gonzales makes it seem as though men are the only ones responsible for the Chicano movement while making women seem weak and submissive. In comparison, La Chrisx makes women seem powerful:

Soy Radical / soy la Revolucionaria / soy la Chicana en los picket lines / soy la Chicana en los conferencias / Soy la Chicana en los teatros / soy la que hecha chingazos por su Raza / soy el grito: “Chicano Power!”

In these lines, La Chrisx shows readers how much of women’s voices were ignored during the Chicano Movement as well those of other minority backgrounds, such as the LGBTQ community. The fact that she excludes Queer Chicana/Latina members but then later apologizes at the end of the poem, conveys the lack of inclusivity in The Chicano Movement:

Con mucho cariño dedico esto a las Locas de la Raza Cosmica, / Y si no te puedes ver aqui hermana, solo te puedo decir / “Dispensa”

It is evident that the Chicano Movement was largely male dominated; this is most evident with the fact that it holds the male word of “Chicano” versus “Chicana,” which would show that it is for every Chicana member, not just males. If the Chicano Movement was as inclusive as everyone states it was, women and Queer voices should have been included when fighting for rights and acknowledgment. Instead, they were ignored by the more mainstream movement ran by men.

Some may say that the men were fighting for every Chicanx and Latinx but one gender is not intersectional; more genders and people of different backgrounds need to be included for a movement to be considered fair and inclusive. Given this information, it comes to show how toxic masculinity plays a huge role within the Chicanx and Latinx community which has not been eliminated from colonialism. Many machista ideologies are passed on from generations making toxic masculinity and colonized mindsets a generational issue that needs to be addressed.

Literary Analysis

Hyper-masculinity has been a problem for many decades in the U.S., especially in the Chicanx community. For example, American ideologies oftentimes influenced certain ideologies in other countries, such as Latin America and its issues with colorism or discrimination towards indigenous groups and the influence of the patriarchy. These negative influences can reshape cultures in other countries, thus making them more Americanized. This can destroy a country's original culture, which is which is what took place during Spanish colonization. In the novel, *The Rain God*, the protagonist, Miguel Grande is portrayed as the ultimate womanizer: he is macho, quite promiscuous and he uses these traits to manipulate the women in his life.

Miguel Grande represents the ultimate hyper-masculine male. His job title highlights this; he is a police officer, an occupation that is more common among men rather than women. Being a police officer gives him power not just in his community, but in his personal life as well. He has the authority to incarcerate anyone he desires, whether legally or illegally. Additionally, as a womanizer, he cheats on his wife with her best friend Lola and plays with both of their emotions. Miguel's sexuality is a way for him to retain his "manhood," as sexual intercourse is the only physical thing he can control. He can control the number of women he sleeps and the frequency he sleeps with them, but when it comes to having power over other things, it is somewhat difficult for him.

This applies to his relationship with his wife, Juanita. She is submissive and listens to whatever Miguel has to say, but her lack of sexual appeal displeases Miguel. During sexual encounters, Lola allows

for Miguel to believe he is physically hurting her – something some people may associate with being “manly” – oftentimes men associate violence during sexual encounters as an act of manliness. This allows for Miguel to become mentally and physically satisfied with his toxic definition of “manhood.” This love triangle is an example of the virgin-whore dichotomy as Juanita is the virgin, someone who is not fond of sex and is more reserved. In contrast, Lola loves to have sex with multiple partners and is rebellious. Some men find pleasure in this type of triangle because both women have something the other lacks. This leads to the man feeling that he has complete control over both women.

In many cultures, biological sex determines how much power a person will have throughout their lifetime. Similar to America, many Latinx and Chicanx communities have adapted a patriarchal ideology, usually resulting in violent tendencies. Before colonization, the indigenous people of Mesoamerica believed in peace. This later changed with the arrival of the Europeans (LaDuke 1999). Due to this, many people now believe that the Latinx culture revolves around machismo or violence. In addition, many believe that the man of the household holds power over the rest of the family – particularly the women. In the novel, Miguel Grande, heavily emphasizes this role with the control he has over the town as a police officer, as well as his wife. In many patriarchal societies – including Latin America – women are expected to be submissive for their husbands and attend to their every need.

In this novel, there are two characters named Miguel, one is the father and the other is the son: Miguel Grande translates to “Big Mike” while Miguel Chico, is “Little Mike”. This shows the power dynamic despite both of them being male. Miguel Grande has more power because he is an officer, Miguel Chico’s father, and a heterosexual male. In comparison, Miguel Chico has less power and prestige because despite being male, his “manhood” is not validated, since he is part of the LGBTQ+ community, which is not fondly looked upon, especially in this time era – one to two generations after the Mexican Revolution in a U.S. Border town.

Sexuality is a major drive for a male to be considered “a man,” as well as the number of women they are involved with sexually. Because Miguel Grande’s son, Miguel Chico and his brother Felix, are both gay, he

feels that he must make up for it. He believes he must be triple the man to prove to society what his son and brother lack within themselves as men. This is an example of internalized homophobia; it is a way to cope with their sexuality. Rather than accepting his family, Miguel feels ashamed because he must demonstrate himself worthy of being a “man” to make up for his son and brother’s shortcomings. According to the documentary, *Tough Guise 2*, men feel that in order to meet American patriarchal standards, they must present features that correlate with violence, hypersexuality, and homophobia. With such pressures placed on American men, it makes sense why Miguel Grande acts in such a way: he wants to fit in and it affects him and his culture as a Mexican American male. This relates to Anzaldúa’s *Nepantla*, stuck in between two worlds, wanting to embrace a personal culture while still trying to fit into American culture.

In Miguel Grande’s struggle to be “manly enough,” he has gained control over his mother into what seems like an oedipal complex. In the last chapter of the novel, he tells his mother to calm down and let the women bathe her and she responds by calling him by her husband’s name. This act may have been brushed off by some due to her condition; however, she is so sure of it and the rest of the family – including Miguel – do not question it. Miguel Grande’s father has not been part of the picture for many years, forcing him to be the man of the household. He has embodied the role of his father, allowing his mother to sexually feed off his character even if there has not been any physical contact between both Mama Chona and Miguel Grande.

It is hinted that Mama Chona and Miguel Grande share something special when one of the women says that they need to call Miguel Grande “the only member of the family who could make their mother obey” (Islas 1991:175). Normally, the power dynamic is flipped, as the parental figure has authority over their offspring; however, in many cultures, the husband or intimate partner of a woman has power over her. Miguel yells at Mama Chona “knowing from their experiences with her... that this made her calm and submissive” (Islas 1991:176). If there was nothing going on between Mama Chona and Miguel, he would have told her to calm down, but in a gentler voice. She is submissive, as though he were her husband. It is also evident that she believes this is the case. Due to these minor details, it shows that there is an oedipal complex between Mama Chona

and Miguel Grande. The reader is given a glimpse of Miguel Grande having for desire for his mother through the description of his first date with his wife Juanita:

Her manner, the complete lack of flirtation in her voice, her total indifference to the game of sex, surprised him and filled him with admiration. She was unreachable and incorruptible in the same ways as his mother... she would be the mother of his children” (Islas 1991:99-100).

The Angel family seems to have sexual interests with their parent or child; which is also the case with Felix, Miguel Grande’s brother, who has an interesting relationship with his son, Joel. Islas mentions how any disagreement with Joel causes Felix to become irritated with everyone – even his wife – not mention that they slept in the same bed until he turned ten and he constantly cradled him all throughout the night:

His protective feelings for the child perplexed and disoriented him because they seemed stronger than his desire for his wife (Islas 1991:122).

The above quote leads readers to believe that Felix has a Jocasta complex when it comes to his son. Chicax issues are heavily influenced through the use of gender, and sexuality from American patriarchy. The U.S is strictly focused on having its men be “man enough” by enforcing violent or hyper-sexually active behaviors at a very young age through the use of films, television, and video games. Although, the Angel family is somewhat middle class, the problem of the patriarchy still plays a role as the women in this novel are subjected to male power and are discriminated against based on their biological sex. When a character presents something outside of the norm, it is looked badly upon and thus results in violence; this is shown through Felix’s death towards the middle of the novel. For example, joining the military is looked upon as something very heroic and manly.

When Felix challenges a U.S. Army soldier’s “masculinity” by hitting on him, the soldier retaliates with violence by killing Felix. Felix

represents outside the norm of masculinity which would explain why the soldier let his anger get the best of him through an unconscious desire to stamp out what he considers abnormal. Felix's death is a result of toxic masculinity not being accepting of a Queer individual making a flirtatious gesture toward a cis-gendered, heterosexual male - thus his death was not only a product of machismo, but also a hate crime. This novel helps its readers acknowledge the power dynamic between men and women, as well as the power dynamic between heterosexual individuals and members of the LGBT community. It shows us that despite the differences, we should all look past them and maintain our familial relationships until the very end of our days, similar to Mama Chona looking past her children's non-normative behaviors.

In the book *What Night Brings* by Carla Trujillo, readers are given the opportunity to become aware of what it is like to discover that one is Queer during an era where the LGBTQ+ community was not accepted by society. Marci, the main character, is attracted to girls. However, since she is a girl, she dreams about becoming a boy so that it can be socially acceptable for her to like girls. The narrative takes place in the 1960s which is when the LGBTQ+ community was not as widely accepted. Marci constantly questions her faith because God will not turn her into a boy even though she prays every day for that to happen and attends catechism. It is interesting to note that she prays to God to be a boy, yet in many religions, being transgender is not accepted or is looked at as sinful, which shows us that she is still young in age because her thoughts are not fully developed. Marci begins to question her faith even more when she confesses to a priest that she likes girls. To her surprise, the priest tells her that it is acceptable to like girls, not knowing that the priest is having a same-sex affair with her uncle, Tommy.

When it comes to Catholicism, Marci feels trapped: this becomes evident when she visits her neighbor's bible study group. She states that "[she] didn't have to stay at the MacCormacks' house if [she] didn't want to. That made [her] feel free" (Trujillo 2003:52). In many religions, one is expected to stay throughout the entire service and it is frowned upon if one leaves prior to the ending or if they are not paying attention. Marci attends church and catechism and constantly gets in trouble for asking logical

questions about God's existence that seem unreasonable to highly religious people like Sister Elizabeth.

Not only does religion call out sins, but it also calls out the indigenous and associates them with Satanism. During colonization indigenous people who refused to convert to Christianity were killed or burned alive as their rituals were seen as savage and satanic-like. Due to this colonized mindset, many Latinxs, deny their indigenous roots and claim to only be of Spanish descent. This mindset is shown in Marci's mother who denies having indigenous blood (Trujillo 2003:33). Much of the ideas behind colonialism includes the concept of colorism. Colorism is favoring people with lighter skin rather than a person with darker skin.

Being brown or darker skin shows a closer connection to indigenous roots, something Christianity did not approve of during colonization; it can also be the case because European colonizers were of lighter skin and wanted to construct indigenous people as the "other." Marci states that during Catechism, Miss Beauchamp, "looked at [their] hands at the start of every class and sent [them] to the bathroom to wash them even if they were just a little browner than [their] real color" (Trujillo 2003:62). Although this novel takes place in the sixties, colorism is still a current issue in many Latinx communities who associate darker-skinned Latinxs or indigenous groups as lower class or as satanic. This can also explain as to why Latinxs who are Queer are not fondly looked upon and why white Queer individuals are more accepted since they are fairer skinned.

Marci's father, Eddie is the ultimate construction of a macho male; he is violent, drinks heavily, has an affair, does not let his wife work, leaves when his pride is hurt by women, and makes homophobic comments, especially towards his younger brother, Tommy. Eddie uses his brother's sexuality for any trivial issue to hurt Tommy both emotionally and physically:

"Well, well, well," Eddie sneered. "So my queer little brother thinks he can kick his big brother's ass, huh?" He folded his arms up like it would be nothing to beat him up. "Now I sure as hell know that no queer can kick nobody's ass. Just because you got a

few extra muscles don't mean shit. Because a queer with muscles – is still a queer” (Trujillo 2003:131).

It is true that homophobic comments hurt, but they can be especially debilitating if they come from a family member; particularly a person who is rather intact with their masculinity – particularly a person who displays the toxic forms of manhood. These types of comments are harmful because there is the negative stigma that gay or bisexual men are not manly enough simply due to their sexual preferences. This is why some men who display toxic masculinity or are homophobic, are actually gay themselves.

With the comments and abuse Marci endures from her father, it only makes her want to be a boy even more. She wants to be able to defend herself when her father is abusive towards her and her sister and she wants to be socially accepted. Eddie's behavior affects Marci's mental health – she is constantly scared and has negative thoughts about her father and she prays every night for God to either kill him or make him go away. The novel progresses from Marci being ten to twelve years; a child having murderous thoughts about her father signals that something is truly affecting her well-being. Her father's behavior is setting him up for hatred from his own children. When Marci's father first leaves, she becomes happier and displays a sense of well-being; this is evidenced in the garden she is growing. When her father leaves, her garden is beautiful and full of crops but when he comes back, she states that almost everything is gone from the garden, thus symbolizing her lack of hope and poor well-being. With Eddie's return, Marci knows that she will be abused again. Marci and her sister eventually run away to their grandmother's when Eddie hits their mother. While away from her parents, Marci meets a girl who is also attracted to girls. This symbolizes that in order for Marci to truly be herself, she needs to get away from the toxicity of her abusive father and her clueless mother who let the abuse happen.

Feminist (Inclusive) Masculinities

Despite there being a negative outlook at masculinity, there are some masculinities that are positive or inclusive. Scholars like Hurtado

and Sinha take a different approach when studying masculinity and decide to focus on the positive forms of masculinity rather than the toxic:

Four major dimensions [are] associated with feminist masculinities – these include emphases on being an ethical human being, having emotionally healthy relationships with others (both women and men), being involved in activism and social justice-oriented activities, and rejecting aspects of hegemonic masculinity. (Hurtado and Sinha 2008: 338).

In Hurtado and Sinha's 2016 study, they found that manhood does not necessarily have to be associated with gender but rather with performing the duties that make a person "a man," such as the responsibility of caring for family which can be a feminine or masculine act. They use the example of single mothers, or mothers who are the main breadwinner of the household and demystify the stereotype that men are the sole providers. Additionally, many men in Hurtado and Sinha's study mention that manhood must be redefined to include women that perform the social constructs often associated with manhood and for the gay men who are often oppressed and excluded from the dominant ideology of machismo.

Discussion

Although many people state that time has progressed along with customs and ideas, many people's beliefs have not. There are still Latinxs who experience homophobia and transphobia from their family members because of religion or societal expectations toward their gender identity. Many of the mentioned characters try to be what society expects of them but soon realize that it is not who they are and are only hurting themselves to please others. When the characters begin to accept themselves that is when they truly become happy and live their lives as they want to. It is also important to note that works like poetry can show toxic masculinity without even realizing it because of hegemonic colonized mindsets. Toxic masculinity is everywhere around us and many fail to recognize that it does affect individuals in a negative way, especially the Queer community who are constantly subject to homophobic or transphobic comments from family members or strangers. Although not all forms of masculinity are

toxic, the people who practice positive forms of masculinity should spend more of their time educating individuals who present toxic masculinity in hopes of diminishing the negative comments or actions that occur because of societal norms.

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