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*The Effect of Cultural and
Traditional Customs on Mexican
and Mexican-American Women's
Development of Identity in the Bay
Area*

Biography

Victoria García is a first-generation graduate student, tutor, and future interpreter. She has worked as an AVID tutor for students from grades 9-12 at Del Mar High School for the last four academic years while completing her undergraduate degree in Spanish with a minor in business at San José State University. In Spring of 2020, García was accepted into the McNair Scholars Program at SJSU and conducted her own research on the effect of cultural and traditional norms on Mexican and Mexican American women's development of identity throughout Summer 2021. She focuses her research in topics concerning women's rights, machismo/sexism, and decolonization culture. She graduated with her bachelor's degree in Spanish in the Spring 2022 term and is currently enrolled in the master's program for Spanish at San José State for the upcoming school year. Her primary career goal is to become an interpreter and work within education, business, or the court while combatting social issues found within these fields and the surrounding community.

The Effect of Cultural and Traditional Customs on Mexican and Mexican-American Women's Development of Identity in the Bay Area

Abstract

An individual's culture, regardless of their geographical origin, is a vital component of the initial perspective they formulate of their environment. Customs and beliefs are knowingly and unknowingly passed down to descendants, allowing for such behaviors and points of view to live on after their practitioners are long gone. This is a particularly prominent trend in Mexican heritage when taking its conservative reputation into consideration especially its customs regarding gender roles. In terms of gender roles, *machismo* is a vital component that dictates much of the expectations placed on both the men and women of the culture. When immigration is added into the mix, however, the possibility of there being space for change becomes possible when exposed to a new culture and a new country. With this possibility for change, conflict can arise when the change goes against the norm.

Migration to the United States from Mexico for the purposes of seeking out greater opportunities is a goal that many immigrant families in the Bay Area share and is a circumstance during which the norms from the home country are first exposed to change. The pursuit of higher education is often portrayed to these families as the gateway to a financially stable life, resulting in a pool of first-generation students who will have to navigate this new country's education system on their own for the first time. For some, it becomes a drastic change from the education they would have received back in their home country if they had attended school there. For others who arrive at an early age or those who are born here to immigrant parents, it is all they know. Regardless of where they originate from, they are the first in their families to navigate through the U.S. education system with their only guidance typically being the emotional and financial support they receive from their parents.

While the obstacles associated with being a first-generation student are a popular topic in academia today, one must consider the fact that coming to a new country does not change the migrant's belief system, pointing toward the likelihood of those traditional, and *machista*, customs being brought over as well. This is not to say that is a completely bad scenario, however, it is important to consider the effects that result when *machismo* continues to be exercised in a conservative manner. It is, then, relevant to acknowledge that Mexican and Mexican-American women are taking on the challenges of being first-generation students while also dealing with cultural expectations being placed on them at home. This leads to the question of how such a mixture of obstacles influences these women's identities and behavior.

This study consists of asking what customs Mexican and Mexican-American women have encountered in their own families, how intensely they were practiced, how such customs have influenced the individual's behavior, and whether they had more of a positive or negative effect on the individual's development of identity. In order to answer these questions, it is important to describe some background information and previous research on the subject, information on the methods used to both conduct the study and collect data, and finally, present a discussion and analysis of the findings.

Literature Review

This research revolves around the responses to *machismo* on behalf of Mexican and Mexican-American women who aim to pursue higher education while facing the challenges of being first-generation students. It will also cover the behavioral changes they may or may not undergo as a result of the cultural practices linked to *machismo*. The research will highlight cultural beliefs exercised in the Mexican or Mexican-American household, and how such beliefs or customs affect the women living under them. The purpose of this study is to expose the double standard of treatment toward Mexican and Mexican-American descendants with their

own opinions as well as create a safe environment for women to empower their voices and speak their minds without fearing the possibility of being silenced. Before discussing the conducted research and findings of this study, however, it is important to also examine previous research made regarding the topic of *machismo* in order to both provide background information on the topic itself as well as discuss its relevance in these women's lives. Therefore, this section will first define *machismo* and the cultural roots it holds within Mexican and Mexican-American heritage, then determine the evolution of *machismo* as well as acculturation in the borderlands. Following this, the role that *machismo* has played for Mexican and Mexican-American women in their educational and professional lives will be determined. Lastly, the values and limits of the previously conducted research will be assessed in order to discuss how they relate to and aid the topic of disparity between patriarchal responses to daughters in contrast with their sons.

Before continuing, one must acknowledge that *machismo* is often associated with the Latinx community as a negative stereotype. It is also necessary to point out the sexist behaviors that are exhibited, which creates the purpose for a conversation to be held. While all women are subjected to patriarchy, not all women face it in the same way (Mowad, 2007). *Machismo* is a commonly known male characteristic found among the Latinx community that carries two different meanings. The word *macho* can be directly translated into the word "man," which claims that they are respectful, loyal, and all-around honorable; the typical description of a gentleman, or *caballero* (Estrada and Jimenez 2017). On the other hand, *machismo* or *machista* (a man who practices *machismo*) is associated with a violent but moreover sexist connotation (Mowad). Although the two definitions stand on completely opposite ends, the *caballero* versus the sexist, they both refer to *machismo* as a traditional Latino assemblage of principles on what it takes to be a man (Estrada and Jimenez). Aside from the sexist connotation that *machismo* carries, women's roles have also been defined by *machistas* as a result of the cultural identity that they carry. Under *machismo*, Mexican and Mexican-American women are expected to be submissive and entirely reliant upon their husbands, fathers, or other

patriarchal figures, leaving no room for independence (Mowad). This perspective within *machismo* is historically rooted in the colonization of the Indigenous population by the Spaniards; it is a reference to European dominance and the power that has been passed down for generations as a man's supposed right to power over his wife (Mowad). Therefore, commonly today, *machismo* can be most directly associated with a negative connotation of sexism and dominance.

Despite *machismo's* role in traditional Latinx culture, recent research has shown that it is being rejected by newer generations in both Mexico and the United States. According to Josue Ramirez, author of *Against Machismo: Young Adult Voices in Mexico City*, *machismo* is beginning to gain popularity as more of a stereotype than an actual issue within their communities, and words such as *macho* and *machismo* are being observed in reference to cultural practices within their families that they do not accept (Ramirez 2008). This attitude continues within the United States, as the patriarchal figures (fathers) of Mexican and Mexican-American families are now subjected to a new culture in which their own is no longer completely fitting. Claudia Roesch, author of *Macho Men and Modern Women: Mexican Immigration and Changing Family Values in the 20th Century United States*, concludes that the United States attempts to assimilate immigrants to the American culture rather than accept the cultures of their origin countries. Assimilation is not at all a new tactic placed upon people of Mexican origin, as it also roots all the way back to the Spanish conquest. This attempt to assimilate immigrants pushes away their culture in hopes of making them embrace the American one, leaving little room for the patriarch of a family to assert his *machista* practices if they hope to become a part of the American culture (Roesch 2015). Despite acculturation having a limiting effect on *machismo*, it is not completely removed. It can, however, be looked upon as either a limiting factor of these women's pursuit of independence or serve as the exact opposite.

As the population of Mexican and Mexican American/Chicanx families continues to grow in the United States, daughters of these families have developed a mindset that pursues independence from a man due to their experiences with *machismo*, which usually comes from the patriarch

of their family. In “‘Get and Education in Case He Leaves You:’ Consejos for Mexican American Women Phds,” Michelle M. Espino provides a collection of *consejos* (tips) that promote the pursuit of higher education in order to survive as well as resist the cultural restraints of both *machismo* and society as a whole. Throughout the study, it is evident that even the attainment of a Ph.D. will not save a Mexican American woman from sexism, as professional fields continue to be dominated by a male population. Another example would be Marta Mensa and Jean M. Grow’s study in which they explore and collect different accounts from women in the creative departments for Mexican advertising. Mensa and Grow’s findings show that these women often face misogyny in addition to other barriers within the professional environment despite holding the same positions as their male counterparts. Not only in the workplace but throughout significant historical events, Mexican and Mexican-American women have continued to be excluded from the spotlight and have had to mobilize resistance not only against marginalization as a racial group but as women (Gonzalez 2019). The sexism that is continuously seen throughout these women’s lives is largely due to a dichotomy upheld by *machismo* that is only applied to women of the culture, not the men. This dichotomy is known as that of *La Virgen*, the Virgin Mary as a perfect role model for women, versus *La Malinche*, a traitor to her own people (Blake, Mignolo, Silverblatt, & Saldivar-Hull 2008). This dichotomy allows no gray space for Mexican and Mexican-American women; if they are not one, they are the other. It is a sexist ideal that only applies to women, whereas their male counterparts are allowed to take whatever actions or behaviors they please.

This previous research is valuable in that it exposes the violent and sexist behaviors that come from *machismo* and present themselves among Mexican and Mexican-American families while also showing how it has progressively become rejected by newer generations. Additionally, it brings to light the idea that education has become a key component of liberation for the women in these groups and that it is a tool to use against the traditional *machista* norms that confine them. Previous research is limited, however, in that it does not discuss the role of education in a Mexican or Mexican-American household. This research will cover Mexican and

Mexican-American women's responses to *machismo*, the influence it has on their behaviors, and whether the exposure to *machista* customs have had a positive or negative effect on the development of their identity. Not only will this research expose the sexist double standard of treatment towards Mexican and Mexican-American children, but it also aims to provide a sense of empowerment to Mexican and Mexican American women who search for the courage to speak their minds freely without the fear of being silenced.

Methods

To carry out this study on the effect of cultural and traditional beliefs on Mexican and Mexican-American women in the Bay Area, it was deemed most effective by the supervising faculty member and the primary investigator to collect data through one-on-one virtual interviews. These interviews would allow for participants to express their responses as uniquely or detailed as they wished. This study pertains to Mexican and Mexican-American women who are either descendant of immigrants or are immigrants themselves. Therefore, every participant featured in this study will have stated and confirmed their identification with the mentioned groups. No questions regarding immigration status or documentation were included. There was no specific selection process for potential participants as any individual who identified as a Mexican or Mexican-American woman automatically fit the criteria for the study, additionally meaning that participation was completely voluntary. The necessary data for this study consists of personal accounts, experiences, and observations that participants have made or collected up until the time of their interview. These accounts are the most useful type of data for this study because it allows for each participant's input to remain individualized and genuine. Data was collected over a period of two months during which twenty-two participants completed the recruitment process and underwent a virtual interview.

Firstly, the recruitment process consisted of sharing an electronic flyer containing the study's information and a link to an initial Google form. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the flyer was shared using virtual tools

such as email, Canvas, and other platforms by professors of San Jose State University to their classes, by the Chicana/Latina Student Success Center at SJSU through their weekly newsletter, by the SJSU McNair Scholars Program, the College of the Humanities and the Arts at SJSU, and through both the supervising faculty member and primary investigator's personal social media platforms including Instagram and Facebook.

The collection of data began with the initial Google form linked on the study flyer. Here, participants entered their contact information. It is important to highlight that they would remain anonymous to create a safe sharing space, so this information remained accessible only to the primary investigator and supervising faculty member, Dr. Ruby Ramirez. After receiving their responses on the form, potential participants were contacted by the primary investigator through the provided email addresses with a notice of consent and the link to a second Google form where participants privately logged their schedule availability. The consent notice served as a guide with more information on the study as well as the participants' rights, including the process of consent which stated that the individual's participation in a virtual interview equated to the act of giving consent to being recorded. Once a participant filled out the second form, the primary investigator contacted them again through their preferred contact method (phone, text message, or email) to schedule a date and time for the virtual interview that would take place over Zoom. Interviews were conducted online to maintain social distancing and ensure the health and safety of both the participants and the primary investigator. Once a date and time were agreed to by both parties, the next and final procedure was the interview itself.

The interview is where participants' accounts are received. Each virtual interview was a one-on-one session during which participants were asked twenty-three questions regarding their upbringings, the customs and practices their family exercised in their home, specifically, those pertaining to gender roles, and how these teachings are reflected in their everyday lives. Interviews had a set time slot of forty-five minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes; this amount of time was determined and agreed to by the primary investigator and supervising faculty member to provide enough

time for participants to answer all questions and elaborate on their responses. Using the recording feature provided by Zoom, each account was saved and stored in a private hard drive accessible only to the primary investigator and supervising faculty member. The purpose of keeping this recording was to ensure the authenticity of the accounts during the data analysis portion of the study. Additionally, hand-written notes were taken during each interview in order to highlight key points or quotes given by participants. These notes have been safely stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the primary investigator. Upon completion of the participant's interview, their active role in the study came to a close.

To analyze the data, it was the primary investigator's responsibility to collectively survey each given account. In other words, the primary investigator identified the similarities and differences between each account and determined how common or uncommon certain customs were, as well as the different behavioral outcomes that arose as a result of these exercised beliefs. A limitation of this method is that the findings cannot be completely generalized. In all, however, this is also a valuable aspect of the study as it creates a collection of diverse perspectives. While the study aims to highlight the most prominent customs and their effects on these women's identities, it is of utmost importance to remember that personal information which can at times be difficult to discuss was shared. Therefore, it is arguable that the participants were placed in an emotionally vulnerable position. To counter this vulnerability and possible accompanying issues such as emotional distress, participants were notified at the beginning of each interview that they were free to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. Beforehand, the consent notice stated that participants' identities would remain anonymous, and they were able to opt-out of the study at any point in time because their participation was completely voluntary. The questions used in each interview are included below and are available in both English and Spanish.

Interview Questions / Preguntas de la entrevista

1. Which part of México did your family migrate from? / ¿De qué parte de México emigró su familia?
2. How long has your family lived in the United States? / ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha vivido su familia en los Estados Unidos?
3. What is your profession, or what major are you studying? / ¿Cuál es su profesión, o cual carrera está usted estudiando?
4. Was there a lot of support in your household in terms of doing well in school and/or pursuing a higher education? / ¿Obtuvo mucho apoyo de su familia para tener éxito en la escuela y/o obtener una educación universitaria?
5. What are some of the cultural/traditional beliefs maintained in your family especially pertaining to gender roles or norms? / ¿Cuáles son algunas tradiciones culturales o creencias que están implementadas en su familia con relación a los roles de género?
6. Do you feel that *machismo* was a large influence on those cultural or traditional beliefs regarding gender norms? / ¿Siente usted que el machismo tiene un papel influyente en las creencias culturales o costumbres tradicionales, especialmente aquellas relacionadas a las normas de género?
7. Do you have siblings who are also being raised/were raised under the same expectations as you were? / ¿Tiene hermanos/as que están siendo criados o han sido criados con las mismas expectativas que usted enfrentó?
 - a. If you have male siblings, were the expectations different and why? / Si tiene hermanos varones, ¿había una diferencia en expectativas y por que?
8. Would you have to provide information or evidence of your whereabouts and/or who you were with to your parents? (Notes from

teachers, etc.) / ¿Requerían sus padres que les trajera información o evidencia de dónde estaba usted y/o con quién estaba? (Ej. Notas de maestros, etc.)

9. Who helped you with the college application process, including writing essays, proofreading applications, paying for applications, etc.? / ¿Quién le ayudó con el proceso de solicitud a la universidad? Incluya detalles sobre quién le ayudó con los ensayos, la revisión de aplicaciones, pagar por la aplicaciones, etc.
10. Would your parents go with you to college orientation days? / ¿Fueron sus padres con usted a los eventos de orientación universitarios?
11. Did you ever talk to your parents about leaving home for college? If so, how would those conversations carry out? Describe the feelings you had after having that conversation. / ¿Usted habló con sus padres sobre dejar la casa familiar para vivir cerca de la universidad? ¿Cuál fue la reacción de sus padres? Describa sus sentimientos después de esa conversación.
12. Did you leave home for college, and if so, how did your parents react to your decision? / ¿Se fue de su casa para estudiar? Si decidió irse, ¿cómo reaccionaron sus padres ante la noticia?
13. When you are in class, are you confident in answering questions or do you stay quiet despite knowing the answers? If you stay quiet, how do you feel when someone else answers the same as you would have, is correct, and is praised by the teacher? / ¿Usted se siente segura para hablar en clase, o prefiere quedarse callada? Si se queda callada, ¿cómo se siente cuando alguien más contesta con la misma respuesta que usted hubiera ofrecido y recibe la aprobación de el/la profesor/a?

14. Do you feel that your reaction to similar academic situations are influenced by the cultural or gender roles you were taught in your household? / ¿Cree que su reacción a situaciones académicas similares son el resultado de las normas de género que se le enseñaron en su hogar?
15. Are opinions and perspectives that differ from those of your culture welcomed by your family? If not, how do they react? / ¿Se aceptan opiniones o perspectivas diferentes a las de su cultura y/o su familia? Si no, ¿cómo reaccionan sus padres hacia estas opiniones o perspectivas nuevas?
16. In regards to the previous question, do you feel that there is a two-sided definition of *un hijo/a educado*? Those two sides being a child who pursues higher education versus that of being a disciplined child. / Con respecto a la pregunta anterior, ¿siente usted que hay una doble definición al la frase “un hijo educado?” Esta doble definición se refiere a la de un hijo que recibe o desea recibir una educación universitaria versus a un hijo “disciplinado.”
17. In the workplace, do you feel comfortable expressing your own opinions or giving suggestions for the improvement of your organization or company? Why? / ¿Se siente cómoda en compartir sus opiniones o sugerencias en el ambiente laboral para mejorar o contribuir a su organización o empresa? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
18. Does your comfortability with speaking up in the workplace vary between men and women in charge? Why? / ¿Cambia tu nivel de comodidad para hablar y proponer ideas en tu trabajo a base del género de la persona encargada o su jefe? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
19. When outside of the classroom and workplace, do you speak up during conversations with friends? Do you include your own opinions although they may differ from theirs, and does the gender

of those friends motivate your decision to share? Why or why not?
/ En su vida social, es vocal durante las salidas con amigos? Por ejemplo, ¿incluye usted sus propias opiniones durante discusiones aunque sean diferentes de los demás? ¿Qué influencia tiene el género de sus amigos sobre su decisión en compartir o no compartir sus opiniones y por qué?

20. If a mistake is made on an order of yours, do you correct the mistake or do you simply accept the product? Why? This could apply to coffee/food orders, etc. / Si se comete un error en su orden, ¿corrige el error o lo acepta sin corregirlo? ¿Por qué? Esto se puede aplicar a órdenes de café, comida, etc.
21. Do you feel that your behaviors in these specific situations are a result of the cultural norms you grew up with? Explain. / ¿Siente usted que su comportamiento ante estas situaciones específicas son el resultado de las normas culturales con las que se crió? Explique su respuesta.
22. Taking into consideration the behaviors that you display within your personal, academic, and professional lives, do you feel that those cultural beliefs and customs have had an overall positive or negative effect on the development of your identity? / Tomando en consideración los comportamientos que usted mantiene en su vida personal, académica, y profesional, cree que las creencias y costumbres culturales han tenido un efecto más positivo o negativo en el desarrollo de su identidad?
23. Is there anything else you would like to share with regards to culture, gender, inequalities in the household, etc.? / ¿Hay algo más que quisiera compartir con relación a las desigualdades culturales de género en su hogar?

Results

The following section is a collection of the compiled data gathered from the virtual interviews. It is split off into four sections: (1) participant demographics, (2) relationships between the presence of *machismo* and at-home practices, (3) the relationship between the presence of support for education and the journey to higher education, and (4) overall effects as a result of the customs practiced at home. This section will contain only unbiased and raw data; the analysis will follow in the following section.

Demographics

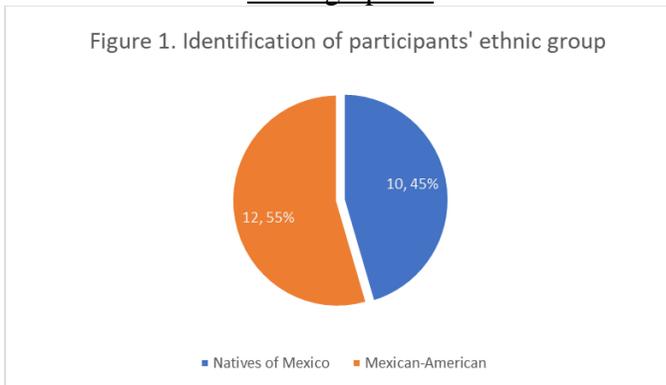


Figure 1 consists of a pie chart showing what percentage of participants identify as Mexican and what percentage identify as Mexican-American. Information was derived from participants' statements determining whether they migrated, or if their family had migrated before their birth.

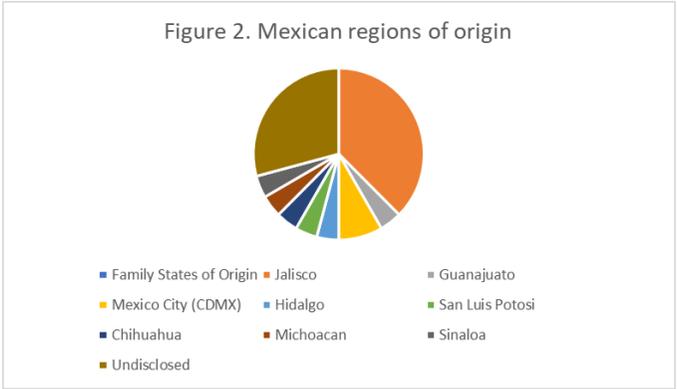


Figure 2 displays a pie chart containing all of the Mexican regions mentioned by participants. Either they themselves came from these regions, or are descendants of individuals who migrated from these regions.

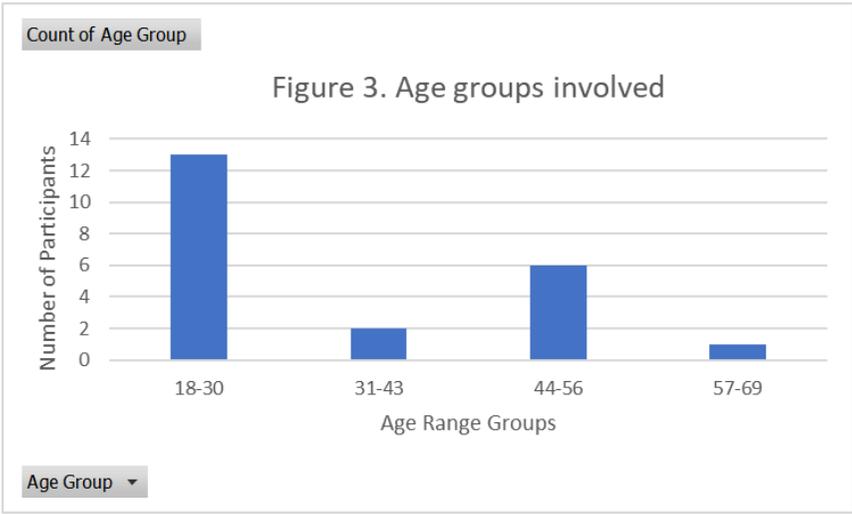


Figure 3 shows the age-range groups of all participants who took part in the study. The use of age ranges was implemented in order to further ensure anonymity and avoid the possible release of identifying information.

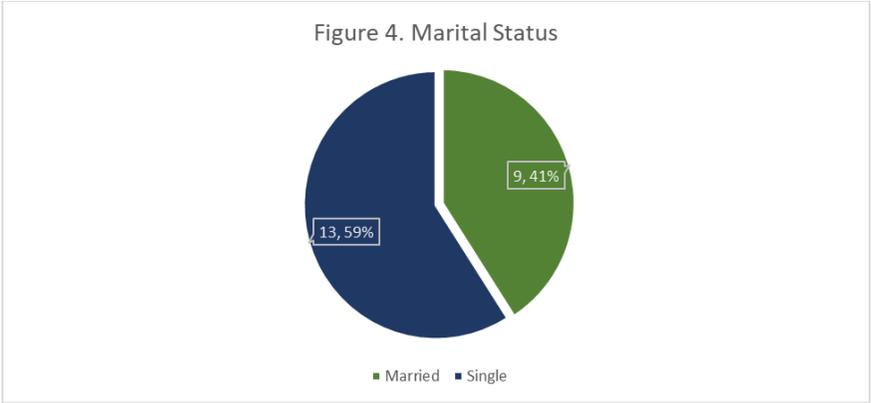


Figure 4 identifies the marital status of all participants. This information was acquired through participants' clear statements of said status.

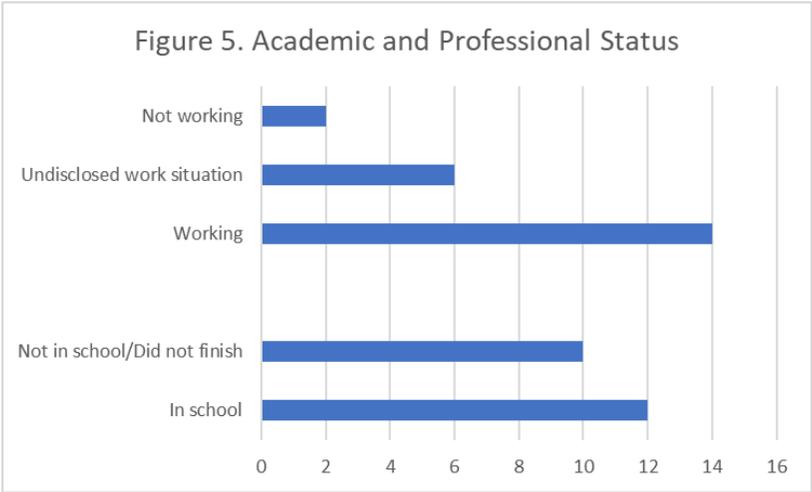


Figure 5 identifies participants' working and academic status. This information was acquired through participants' clear statements of said status.

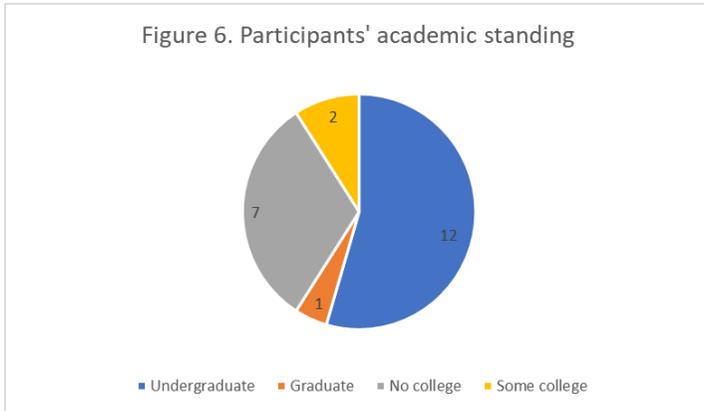


Figure 6 displays participants' academic standing to show their progress in academia. This information was acquired through participants' clear statements of said status.

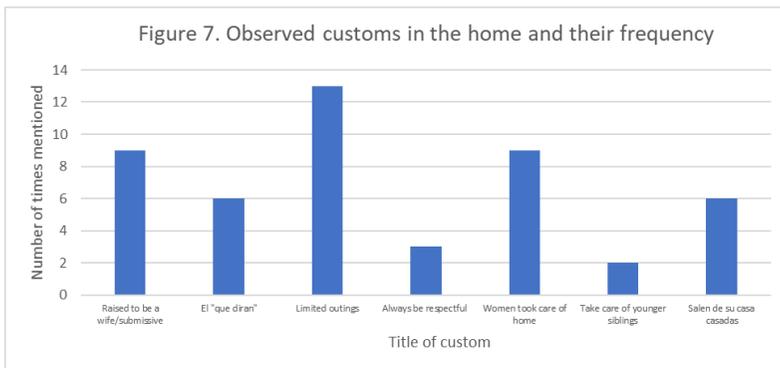


Figure 7 identifies all customs that were mentioned by participants, and how often they were mentioned throughout the study.

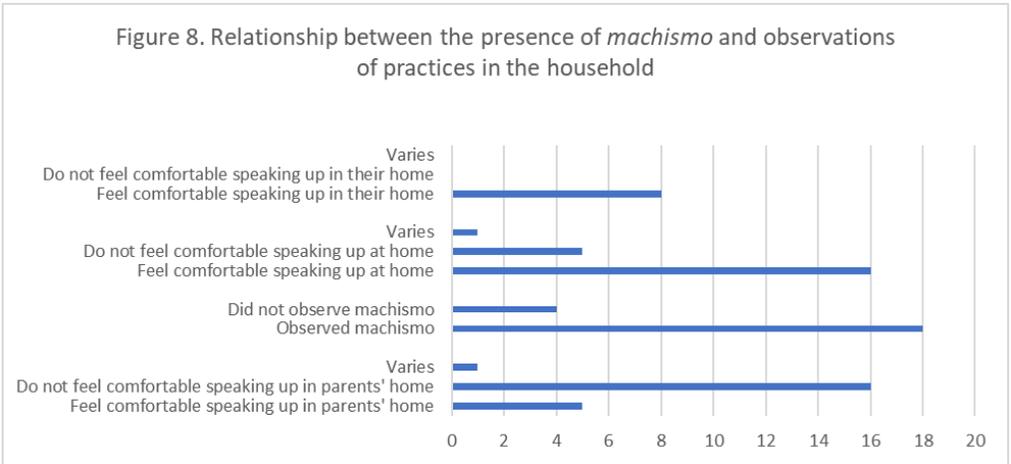


Figure 8 aligns at-home practices and customs with the presence, or lack thereof, of *machismo*.

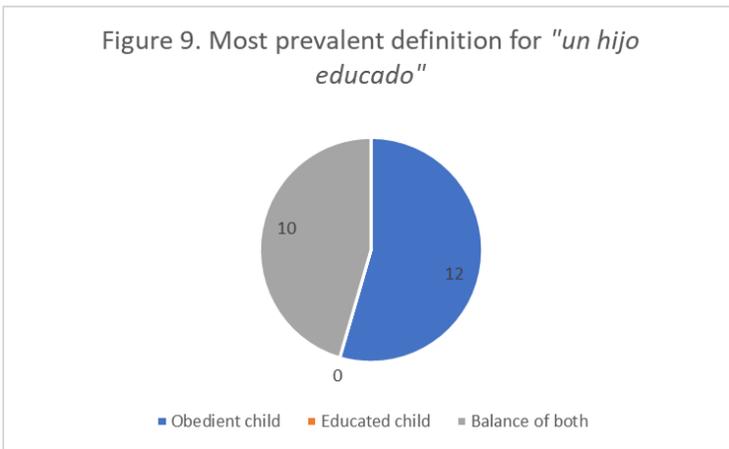
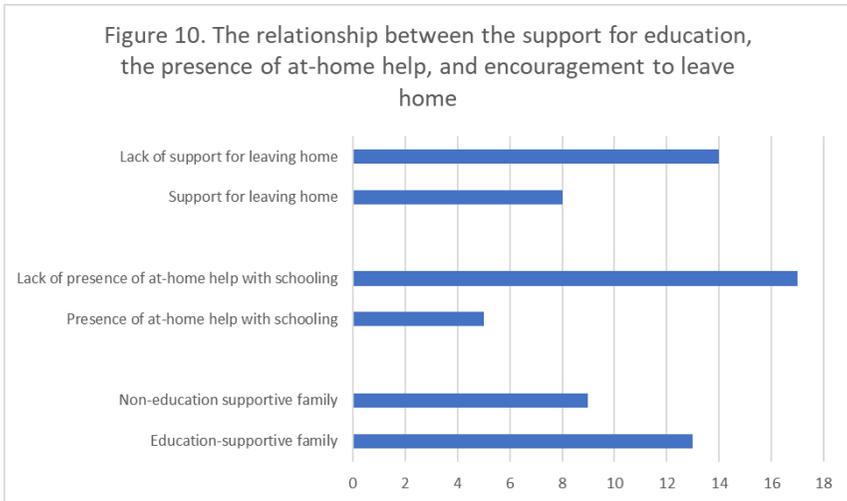


Figure 9 pinpoints which definition of "*un hijo educado*" is more or less common in participants' families. Definitions will be further explained in the Data Analysis section.



Data Table 1. Comfortability with speaking to people within their personal, academic, and professional lives, and participants' determination of cultural beliefs' overall effect on their development of identity.

Comfortability speaking up with...?

Participant Number	Friends	Family	Professors	Supervisors	Overall Effect
1	No	No	No	No	Moreso negative
2	Yes	No	No	No	Neutral
3	Yes	No	Varies	Yes, if female	Neutral
4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Positive
5	Varies	Varies	Varies	No	Neutral
6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Positive
7	Varies	Yes, if female	Varies	Varies	Positive
8	Yes	Varies	Yes	Yes	Moreso positive
9	Yes, if female	Yes	No	Varies	Positive
10	Yes	Varies	Yes	Yes	Moreso positive

11	Yes	Varies	No	Varies	Moreso positive
12	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Moreso positive
13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Neutral
14	Yes	No, then yes	No	No	Moreso positive
15	Varies	No	Yes, if female	Varies	Neutral
16	Yes	No then yes	No, then yes	No, then yes	Moreso positive
17	Varies	Varies	No, then yes	Varies	Neutral
18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Positive
19	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Neutral
20	Yes, if female	No	No	N/A	Moreso positive
21	Yes	Varies	Yes, if female	Yes, if female	Moreso positive
22	Varies	No	No	Varies	Neutral

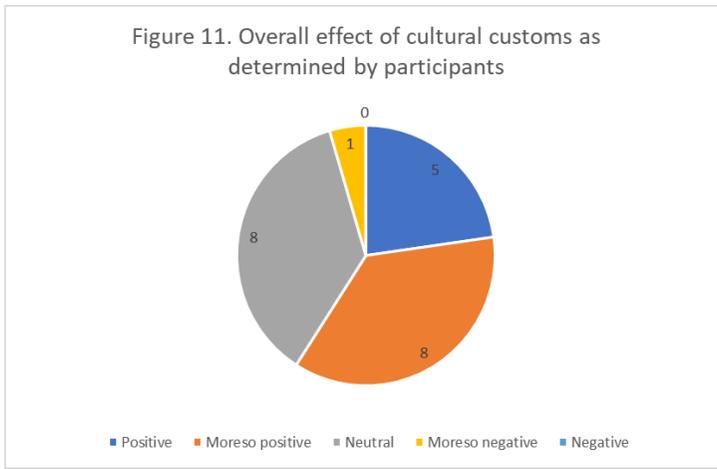


Figure 11 takes the last column of Data Table 1 to specifically show the most common responses for the overall effect that the aforementioned cultural customs and beliefs had over participants.

Discussion/Analysis

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of cultural and traditional norms on Mexican and Mexican-American women’s development of identity, mainly, whether it had an overall positive or negative effect according to their own experiences. Identifying each participant’s answer to this question, however, required that they discuss some of their family background and cultural practices in regards to gender, the support they received throughout their academic careers, as well as past and current behaviors they display within their personal, academic, and professional lives. This section will briefly convey the demographics of the study in order to clearly identify each individual’s context or background, and then thoroughly explain the relationships between each of the components regarding at-home practices, *machismo*, education, and behavior.

All demographic information is displayed in Figures 1-6, as shown above. Of the twenty-two participants who took part in a virtual interview, twelve identified as Mexican-American while the remaining ten identified

as Mexican. Their ages ranged from 18 to 69, with twelve currently enrolled at a college or university, while the other ten either did not attend college or did not finish their education. Although not noted in the data, 100% of participants reported having siblings. Sixteen participants disclosed their work situation, fourteen of which are currently employed while the other two are not; the remaining six did not disclose their work situation. Additionally, the majority of participants, thirteen to be exact, reported their marital status as single while the other nine are married. This information will serve useful later for a discussion on the ways in which these married women are implementing the customs they grew up with in their own households. Overall, this information serves as the context for this study and shows where these women are coming from, who they are, and the stages of life they currently find themselves in. The following information will highlight the relationships between *machismo* and at-home customs.

During the set of questions regarding family and upbringings, participants mentioned a number of different customs that were often brought up more than once. While Figure 7 is dedicated to identifying other customs that were practiced in the home, those with closer ties to *machismo* will be discussed first. These customs with closer ties to *machismo*, as observed by the participants within their own families, include: being treated differently in comparison to their male relatives; whether or not men helped with household chores; whether these women had to provide any sort of proof of their whereabouts if they were allowed to go out to begin with. The reasons these customs are considered to have further ties with *machismo* due to their similar trends with those accounts who claim to have observed *machismo* in their household. These customs consist more of exerting control over the women of the family while displaying leniency towards their male counterparts, with the intent to teach them to maintain the family's honor.

This relationship between *machismo* and practices such as a difference in treatment, the requirement of proof, and the duties of the home show a correlation, as those who reported observing *machismo* in their home were more likely to also mention that the men in their household did not help with chores and that the difference in treatment between the men

and women of the family was particularly obvious. Most importantly, this data shows that the vast majority of these women stated that they did not feel comfortable speaking up in their parents' home. Oftentimes, this was due to them attempting to avoid an argument or "maintain the peace."

Interestingly, this was also described by one participant as a situation in which they were "expected to be the bigger person" by staying quiet regardless of what was being said around or to them. This was where the definitions of "*un hijo educado*" became relevant as well. In Mexican culture, it is common to hear a parent say that their child is very well-educated. There are, however, two different ways to go about interpreting this: they are describing the child as a student who does well in school, gets good grades, etc., while the other definition depicts a disciplined and obedient child. Participants were then asked which of the two definitions they felt were more prevalent in their home, and the more popular one came out to be the definition of an obedient child. This falls in line with the idea of maintaining control over children and the custom of always being respectful.

Moving forward is the relationship between the customs discussed and their effect on these women's academic journeys. While more than half of the participants reported being encouraged to pursue an education, there were still limits to the help they could receive from their family. Because the majority of participants who are in school are first-generation students, their parents could not provide much guidance through the American education system because they were unfamiliar with it or did not receive an education back home themselves. Figure 10 supports this because it shows that only five participants stated they did have help with school and college applications at home. The previously mentioned customs regarding control, limited outings, and the idea of only being able to leave the parents' home after marriage become relevant again because the lack of support for leaving the home is only an extension of those customs; in this case, they extend into the pursuit of education.

After discussing the at-home practices and the balance between their families and education, each interview ultimately led to a conversation about current behaviors within participants' personal, academic, and

professional lives. These conversations were narrowed down again to each participant's comfortability with the people they encounter within each environment. When it came to social environments, such as with friends, only a very small number of participants stated that they felt uncomfortable with speaking up among them. While many of the other participants responded with confidence, some of them consisted only of having said confidence with female friends, or that their comfortability depended on the group they were interacting with. With family, there were more responses stating that they still did not feel comfortable speaking up among family. What was interesting about this data set, however, was that two had changed their behaviors over time. Before, they felt they could not speak up, but now they feel more comfortable doing so after seeing their parents ease up on their children's discipline as they grew older. When observing those women who now have families of their own, for example, the result changed entirely. One hundred percent of the participants who are married stated that they feel comfortable speaking up in their own home to their spouses and children. This shows that although they did not have a voice in their home growing up, they acquired one within the families they formed. Though change is present, however, it is limited. When it comes to speaking to professors and supervisors, there is more confidence as participants indicated that they either felt more comfortable speaking, or that their confidence varied in those situations.

After the participants had reflected over the entirety of their interview, they were asked about the overall effect they felt those cultural influences had on them. Thirteen participants indicated that they felt these practices had a more so positive or positive effect on them, while eight stated that they felt there was a balance of both a positive or negative effects (in this case, classified as neutral), and only one person indicated that they felt those customs had a more so negative effect on the development of her identity. She stated that this was due to her now being very quiet and having a hard time speaking up for herself in all settings. Aside from these observations, every other response indicated that the effect on them had some sort of positive impact. In the end, this shows not only that, despite the limitations placed by the gender-g geared cultural norms, most women

felt that it was a vital part of their development that aided in the journey to get them where they are today, while others may feel that it is a heavier work in progress to step out of their comfort zone as a result of similar experiences. Both responses are deemed acceptable, and should serve as a signal that there is still change that needs to be done in order for these women to feel empowered by all aspects of their culture, not just a select few.

Conclusion

As a result of the gathered data, all the initial questions were answered. In regards to the cultural beliefs or practices that this group of Mexican and Mexican-American women encountered in their homes, those most observed included: being raised to become someone's wife or be submissive, "*el que diran*;" limited outings; a difference in treatment when compared to their male counterparts; to always be respectful; that women are the ones to take care of the home or the younger children, and the idea that the only respected way for a woman to leave her parents' home was upon marriage. As noted in the data analysis section, most if not all of these customs were intertwined with each other. Above all, however, they are linked to *machismo* and the internalized idea of maintaining control over women of the family in order to uphold an honorable reputation. Most of these customs, as described by participants, are practiced as they have always been and continue to play a significant role in their families, while some have also incorporated change as they grew older. With respect to the question of how these customs affected these individuals, a large percentage of the responses dictated that such customs led to the realization of the presence of sexism and unfairness. Despite this, the majority of participants also indicated that up until now and regardless of where they are in their lives, these customs had a more positive impact on their development of identity.

The most impacting responses that were collected from this study were the presence of, or potential for, behavioral change. As previously stated, some of the women who felt they did not have a voice in their home now feel that they can speak up. It is also evident that those women who

already have families of their own also feel that they have a voice despite not having one when they were younger. All of these points are of most significance because it is easy for any individual to simply continue with the same behaviors and practices they have always known, but these women's change, or potential for change, opens the door to a more inclusive and fair set of practices. This is not to say that the traditional ones should be forgotten. On the contrary: these women are unknowingly teaching others that those old customs can be learned in order to become better. In all, this would allow for not only a more inclusive household but a more inclusive community and culture as well.

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