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**Mexican-American College Women and Their Perceptions on Sexuality  
in the U.S.**

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**Mexican-American College Women and Their Perceptions on Sexuality  
in the U.S.**

**by**

**Angie Arreaga, BA.**

**Thesis**

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to my parents Miguel and Claudia, sisters Ana and Eliza, and to my sweetheart. Thank you for always supporting me.

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## **Abstract**

### **Mexican-American College Women and Their Perceptions on Sexuality in the U.S.**

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Discussion between Mexican migrant mothers and Mexican-American daughters in the United States and their changing perceptions of sexuality were studied. Literature review is presented to give the reader insight into the cultural, media, music and identity issues faced by Mexican-American women and how these aspects affect their perceptions of sexuality. Sixteen Mexican-American college women volunteered to complete a questionnaire about their experiences discussing sexuality with their mothers. Analysis of the responses through use of quotes from literature and examples of study participant responses were used to understand the experiences shared by these women. The results showed that the mothers were not explicitly discussing sexuality with their daughters, but that the daughters were getting their information from other sources such as friends, school, and media. The conclusions that were drawn from the literature review and questionnaire responses are that Mexican-American daughters are blending their

mother's ideas as well as their own in shaping their perceptions on sexuality. The literature review depicts this blending through works from Mexican-American women.

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## **Section I. Mexican-American Women, How Perceptions Of Sexuality Adapt Through Culture And Experience**

The intent of the study was to discover aspects in the everyday lives of Mexican-American college women that influenced their sexual awareness in addition to the role that the United States experience played in their knowledge of topics regarding sex. In investigating the personal stories of Mexican-American college women and their perceptions on sexuality in the United States, I reviewed responses collected from a questionnaire sent directly from a survey website to the volunteers that participated in the study. These responses include college women born in Mexico, but raised in the United States as well as United States born women raised in the United States. The study took place in the cities of San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas in the state of Texas.

A significant aspect of this project was the personal responses of the study participants that gave me further insight into the thoughts of college Mexican-American women with regard to their knowledge of sex and the source of their information. The data collected helped me understand the type of information that is needed among Mexican-American women regarding their sexual health and information.

Other sources of information include texts in history, literature, anthropology, and education studies regarding Mexican-American women and their ideas of sex, where they originated, and how those ideas on sex continue to be shaped by their presence in the U.S. The value I found in looking at various sources that mention Mexican-American women and their sexuality is that it gave me a bigger picture understanding of the impact a discussion on sex has on a college educated Mexican-American woman.

The following information includes a hypothesis that describes my thoughts on the results expected from this study. Next is a literature review that provides a view into gendered experiences and connected issues of identity to sexuality in Mexican-American daughters of Mexican women. The literature review gives background to experiences and explanations of how women and sexuality are described. The literature review contains media, music, and gender identity issues that all help shape my qualitative analysis of the study participant responses. Analysis of the respondents follows. Concluding the thesis is a final statement of findings and future research ideas that arose from this project. Questionnaire and responses can be found in the appendix. A list of resources ends this thesis paper.

## **Section II. Hypothesis**

My hypothesis is that Mexican-American college women have different perceptions of sexuality than their Mexican mothers. My questions in the survey concerned how the United States' culture, media, literature, and music have influenced Mexican-American daughter's perception on sexuality and if they are aware of the difference in their sexual perceptions when compared with their Mexican mothers. The expectation for this study is to demonstrate that Mexican mothers communicate issues of sexuality with their Mexican-American daughters. Reading previous studies that explain how Mexican mothers migration to the United States changes their conversations about sexuality with their daughters, I expect to learn about these conversations and the different perspectives. Is immigration affecting women's perception on sexuality? The goal of the survey research was to receive information and acquire the perspective of Mexican-American college women regarding their sexuality. How are Mexican mothers in the United States contributing to Mexican-American daughter's sexual knowledge? In what ways is the United States influencing the sexual awareness of Mexican-American women?

This study is needed in order to gain more insight into Mexican-American college women's perception of sexuality in the United States. By learning about their thoughts on their sexuality, we can address what is impacting them on this subject. The research will contribute knowledge to the field of Mexican and Latino studies.

### **Section III. Internal Movements, Identity, And Lived Experiences Of Mexican-American Women**

The issue of identity for Mexican and Mexican-American women presents us with the idea that they are still struggling to create a unique identity of their own. The following literature gives insight into the way these women are viewed in their society and what role they play within the family. The objectives of this chapter are to give examples of the portrayal of mothers role within the family and to connect how these women, in the past, have been described in literature, and how it continues to affect their identity today. This shaping of identity and mindset, in turn, affects their perception on sexuality. The structure of the chapter focuses on the analysis of three literary works written by Mexican-American women about the struggles Mexican-American women have faced as workers, as migrants, as mothers in Mexico and the United States.

The book titled No Mexican, No Women, No Dogs Allowed, by Cynthia E. Orozco in 2009, begins with the background and history of Texas. Euro-American Anglos began to arrive with the development of the railroad in South Texas, an area predominately with people of Spanish descent. The Mexico-Texano was a new term being created by Mexican-Americans in Texas who felt they had to define their loyalty to the state of Texas as well as their identity. The Mexican Revolution resulted in the migration of Mexicans into the United States. This led to the existence of a “Mexican problem” that formed an umbrella over anyone who was “Mexican,” even Mexican-American citizens.

It is interesting how some of the letters written to congressmen mention Mexicans loyalty to their home country and their lack of interest in assimilating to the United States

or to learn English. It seemed obvious to me that these Mexicans coming into the country were fleeing a war in their home country. They did not leave because of a personal choice, but were being forced to flee as refugees into the United States. Lacking food, a home, and suffering the violence of a revolution they made their way to Texas. Escaping the violence of war, the Mexican was not thinking about the Americans' concern with assimilation.

"Three Stories: Campesinas, Onions, and Granma's Apron", by Mary Helen Ponce, in the text titled Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family, edited by Vicki Ruiz and Chon Noriega in 2000, reprint of 1993, described the power and strength of women. The unity found between women in the family. Courage and bravery were traits characterizing the Granma, mother, and daughter within the Mexican American community. I was really interested in the identity issues faced by these Mexican-American women and the values that continued to be passed on from daughter to daughter in each generation. While reading, I felt proud to be connected to these women somehow through the simple story of mothers and grandmothers hardworking struggles to provide for their daughters. Sharing the same culture, I found myself admiring the sacrifices these women made in order to give their daughters a better life. The daughters, now women themselves, understand the struggles their mothers face and stand in awe of how they managed to accomplish everything. In Ruiz's and Noriega's edited work Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family in 2000, reprint of 1993, the woman recalls her single mother working sixteen hours and taking her and her siblings out on trips. The woman has no idea how her mother managed with everything when she herself

struggles even with the help of her husband to find time to provide those activities for her own children. The dedication women had for their children and family was not as bystanders, but as participants in the representation of their history. The importance of the woman/mother for the Mexican people is evident by the strong presence of the women resisting the notions of dependent women at home and the powerful portrayal of the women as mothers and daughters working to provide for their families.

During the Mexican Revolution in 1910, women were also present and they struggled not only with the war, but issues of sexuality in that they were raising daughters, giving birth to children, and dealing with strange men in their towns due to the war. In the story "Onions" in the text Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family, "There was nothing to eat," she tells me, a frown on her round face. The Carrancistas set fire to the wheat, the corn. They left only the onions, las cebollas.....I was pregnant again---and afraid....Each day I drank atole, never hating the taste. It was for my child that I ate.....Nunca se me enfermo...I think it was the onions" (Ponce, edited by Ruiz & Noriega, 2000, p.258). The strength that comes from the Mexican people during a time of war leads to something good. I really enjoyed the imagery portrayed in the story along with the survival story of the woman who was pregnant and gave birth to her daughter in the middle of the Mexican revolution.

"Granma's Apron" written by Mary Helen Ponce, edited by Ruiz & Noriega, 2000, reprint of 1993, states that, "This was your granma's, mother tells me, as she rubs her tear-stained cheek against a faded apron. She wore it when she picked cotton. Te acuerdas? The social worker tried to take you away from her. All summer long she

worked with you at her side. As she sewed, granma hummed church hymns....I touch the sturdy material...feel the double stitched seams that held our home together. Then slowly drive past cotton fields of childhood, granma's apron by my side" (Ponce, edited by Ruiz & Noriega, 2000, p. 264). She held the home together. The "sturdy material" relates to the sturdy strong character of the "granma" who worked and raised her grandson. The important people in his life included his mother and more importantly his grandmother. This quote looks at the grandmothers struggle as a migrant farm worker and how she becomes the matriarch of her family. We see the experience of this woman, and it is not forgotten as it is passed down to the next generation that no longer works in fields, but understands the value of the grandmothers sacrifice.

"Mexican Migrants in North Carolina: Maria Salas Shares Her Story" by Margarita Decierdo, in the text titled Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family, edited by Ruiz & Noriega, 2000, reprint of 1993, Salas states that "Does it matter to you if your daughters marry Mexicans? Like we have told them, they will be the ones to decide whom they will marry, but they will have to give it much thought, because marriage is not just for a little while but a lifetime. One can't say, 'I'm going to get married', and then get married. Like father used to say---it just happens. Is your husband very strict with your daughters? Yes, yes. Do they have to ask permission for everything? Yes, that is what he tells them. They don't give me trouble, but he tells them if they want to stay here with us they will have to do as he says. It's ok with me that they go out. Sometimes we go with them or I go with them. But alone, we don't give them that much liberty" (Decierdo, edited by Ruiz & Noriega, 2000, p. 269). This reminds me of my

parents immigrating to this country as I always share my frustrations with friends and explain that my parents are 'Mexican' and the explanation they use for their American parents doesn't work for mine. It was different then other books I have read in that they were Mexican, the Chicanas were her daughters who already were influenced by the United States and were not yet married or had any desire to get married at an early age. They were focused on educating themselves and having a better life than that of their parents who worked in the fields.

In the following text, we see the importance of female role models in the lives of Mexican-American women. It is important that these role models portray values that are significant to the community. "The Synapses of Struggle: Martha Cortera and Tejana Activism" by Mary Ann Villarreal, in the text titled Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family, edited by Vicki Ruiz and Chon Noriega in 2000, reprint of 1993, states "My Mexican role models: Dona Josefa de Ortiz Dominguez, because my grandmother spoke about her, Elena Vicarro, that I write about in my book, *Diosa y Hembra*. And my grandmother, from the Mexican side, she was so hardworking, and so brave, and so together. And of course my mother, because she was so brave and so hard working (Villarreal, edited by Ruiz & Noriega, 2000, p. 277). These women were role models and her mother, who widowed at 26, was a single mother from then on. I found these ties to previous women interesting in that you inherit certain traits from your family and the fact that these women continued to pass down their values and sense of work ethic to their daughters was impressive. It is unique in that these life experiences shape the mentality that is later passed down to the daughters of these women.



The value of women in the community goes unnoticed and is revealed when they are not present is visible in the following quote regarding a meeting. "You guys are really dumb. If you would bring your wives and girlfriends we would have three times the people here! They were womanizers. They thought it was really funny, but it was true. The fact is that it's that acquired stereotype and the lack of collective consciousness about what a reality is. But that's important to get us on the road. That attitude is important in getting us on the road to document some history" (Villarreal, edited by Ruiz & Noriega, 2000, p. 283). The power that these women had in finding their voice and not being scared to voice their opinions was impressive and caught my attention to what these women were capable of doing and influencing the public to cause change for the better.

The book titled Refusing The Favor: The Spanish Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880, by Deena J. Gonzalez. in 2001, dealt with the women in Santa Fe during the 1800's and the struggle they faced with the new incoming Euro-American immigrants ignorant of Spanish-Mexican customs. The women were left dependent and powerless to inflation and thus strategically had to change their previous ways of inheriting everything to their daughters, for their security, to their eldest sons in order to protect the family land from the conniving religious leaders and government officials. The women of all classes learned to survive with the new challenges presented to them. Most of the wealthy women had multiple children, were widows multiple times, and also tended to outlive their kids which led them to become leading matriarchs of their lands and estates. It is fascinating that the women followed their mother and grandmother's way of adding prayer to their wills and then gave everything away even if it had no monetary value but

to serve as a piece of remembrance. Women were stereotyped, in my opinion, and they were only visible through the point of view of the Euro-Americans in this reading. An example of this is that the Euro-Americans did not think women spoke to their husbands or sons. This was perhaps because during this time period, everything was dominated by men. It was understood that women were treated like a second-class citizen and by women testing the new system of power, they had access to the Euro-Americans new system that men of Spanish Mexican background did not have the ability to access.

"The widow Chaves was blessed, luckier than many women of the postwar generation. She was born into a prominent Santa Fe family, had inherited land and livestock, and had managed to preserve and improve her estate. Wealthy, but in poor health in 1871, unable to read or write English, the widow turned to a law clerk and asked him to draw up her will" (Gonzales, 2001, p. 79). Her son returned from a trip and it turned out the law clerk and a dishonest priest tried to get her money. There were differences in cultural ideas of privacy and secrecy between Latinos and Euro-Americans. Euro-Americans were as ignorant of Spanish-Mexican customs and laws as their predecessors. Again, the Euro-Americans were unaware of the woman's role in family. As a mother, she communicated everything to her son. The author Gonzalez's (2003) emphasis on the ignorance of the new colonizers is evident. Women of Spanish-Mexican descent were very close to their families and followed the cultural norms passed down to them from their mother and grandmother.

The aspect in the Spanish-Mexican culture of the relationship the mothers have in showing their sons and daughters their wills. The character Chaves' strategy of coping

with the problem of an unauthorized document was therefore family and community-based. This strategy saved her children's inheritance and also demonstrated the close ties the community had with each other. The clerk and priest ignorant of Spanish-Mexican values and practices, just like the many newcomers were unable to understand that these women were not alone and were not helpless and weak. The person who told the widows tale, Territorial Secretary William G. Ritch was also misinformed and suggested that some women were willing to accept Euro-American reforms. This promoted a new form of colonization in the postwar era, one that accepted women who lent themselves to "American" ideals and values. I would imagine that this would lessen the women's values, because they would no longer be true to themselves and their customs. This would be obvious in both the Spanish-Mexican and Euro-American communities thus degrading their power in both.

"Colonization is defined as a process involving the imposition and impact of Euro-American values, ideologies, economies, and political practices, as well as systematic importation of sexual and racial attitudes. During the postwar period, colonization was slightly different because the wealthy class was now considered, in a sense, potential citizens. Post war colonizers like Ritch manipulated the information about the women of Santa Fe, popularizing one type over another to contain the local population and secure the lands and properties of the colonized for themselves. The indirect consequence of colonization was the extensive writing of women ensuring they were not hidden from written history. The widow Chaves may have had the last laugh by testing the men, like the law clerk, and the new court system now controlled by Euro-

Americans. Knowing her son would examine the will, her strategy contained a safe mechanism" (Gonzales, 2001, p. 81).

The widow Chaves was motivated by her wealth, the main concern of those related to the upper class. She married well, was ill which motivated her to seek financial assistance. The problems of beggars, of unemployment, and of abandoned children became more severe after the war. Jean Baptiste (John Baptist) Lamy [European, a native of France] did not, however focus on the causes of the problems but instead focused on their solution.

"Lamy also began denouncing 'immoral' women and he refused to hear their confessions. The Euro-Americans added to his campaign supported by the example of W.W.H. Davis, an acting governor for a period, argued, indeed 'the vie of prostitution has become so prevalent that the whole moral framework of society is rotten and undermined'. Such comments ignored the economic hardship of most women. Many Catholics postponed their weddings until they could afford it, and lived together in the meantime" (Gonzales, 2001, p. 85). It is not that they were prostitutes, but that they could not afford to legalize their marriage so women did what they had to do in order to move forward with their marriages. "To such observers as Lamy and Davis, these women were immoral" (Gonzales, 2001, p. 86). Spanish-Mexican women began searching for methods to resolve their precarious positions as Catholics and as working women. Santa Fe had an appearance of growth and of thriving. Spanish-Mexican women lived under harsh conditions and remained in poverty, despite wage work. There was a huge contrast

between Spanish-Mexican women and prosperous immigrant men. This was a result of working women having no protection against spiraling costs.

"Thus departing from previous practices, where women tended to leave their estates to their daughters (and fathers left land to sons). Women tended to leave most of their holding to their daughters because they were their main priority over their sons" (Gonzales, 2001, p. 91). The mothers knew that their daughters would struggle in a world dominated by men, so they felt they were giving them some security by leaving them their estate to live in and attract a good husband that would provide for them.

The examples in these literary works serve to explain why Mexican mothers discuss or do not discuss issues of sexuality with their daughters. It is these experiences, struggles, and hardships are what shape the women and define them. They in turn pass their wisdom, knowledge, and experiences to their daughters. Today's Mexican-American daughters of Mexican women have perspectives on sexuality that are influenced by not only society and their own experiences, but also their families experiences. Mexican-American women's history influences their perceptions of the world today and is evident in these literary works. As we move forward, the review of literature for the following section refers to the manner in which women gained agency in society even though they live lives of tragedy. Through their struggles and pain, they gain a voice that helps other Mexican-American women who read these texts and in this way, shapes their perceptions on sexuality.

#### **Section IV. Tragedies: The Dilemma Of Sexuality In A Woman's Life**

The title of this section refers to the struggles of three women whose lives were filled with tragedy in connection to their sexuality. The objectives of this section are to relate the struggles women had with sexuality in their society and how Mexican-American women today relate to the tragedies of these women in their perceptions on sexuality. La Malinche is Hernan Cortes' mistress when Cortes' invaded Mexico. In Mexican culture, La Malinche is known as a traitor, a whore, but her influence on sexuality in Mexico cannot be refuted. Silent Tongue and Selena are the other two examples of women who will be discussed in this section. The objective of this section is to portray how women are aware of their sexuality and how it was used against them. From this however, they gain power and influence over those who oppress them, and eventually, and with the loss of their lives, Mexican-American women are expected to remain pure and virginal. If they do not remain pure, they are compared to women such as La Malinche.

The Decolonial Imaginary, written by Emma Perez, in 1999, "maintains that women can gain agency through la Malinche. 'I'll cut your tongue out' just as their mother's tongue had been cut out-so you will never forget who gave you birth" (Perez, 1999, p. 114). The woman's voice is removed and there is reference to the mother and what she has suffered and now is repeating itself. The way that she exclaims "who gave you birth" gives more agency to the mother who made the decision to give her life.

The Indian woman is silenced and cannot yell out when she is raped. This is representing the forced intrusion of the Irish man as well as the intrusion of the white men on the land. The Indian woman is a representation of the motherland that is being colonized. The women are treated like merchandise as they are traded for horses and the sisters are interchangeable; only being seen as Indian women that are all the same. The child that witnesses the origin of his sisters carries the guilt of his father for both raping the mother and for trading the girls off to other men. The son is white and cannot rid himself of the relation he has from the father. The ghost daughter freed herself by dying when giving birth to a child that she chose not to have. She had agency in her choice to die while giving birth. She would rather die than give birth to a child of a white man.

The way the ghost daughter is depicted as having a painted line drawn down her face and being both young and dead. This reflects the duality found in her blood of white and Indian as well as the desire and agency to be free in her death, but the ties and colonization of her body by her white husband. The ghost daughter died during childbirth and her child died. She chose to die and take her child with her. This gave her agency and prevented her child from suffering the same fate as her or her father. The child was doomed to suffer the guilt of the father or the rape suffered by her mother. Either way, her life would not be kind to her. The white father wants to save his son by bringing him another Indian woman without realizing that is what is killing him in the first place. The father orders the Indian woman to show his son affection and by doing so, he is still ordering and controlling her life. Women are all same to the father, they are objects that can be exchanged or replaced with no consideration of them being humans.

It is interesting that the stolen woman knows her boundaries and knows the strength of her dead ghost sister. When she tries to voice this to the Father, he silences her and says “your sister is dead” in this way he is silencing them both (Perez, 1999, p. 114). When the daughter is forced to sell her body she is denied power and is colonized by both the father and son who use her for their purposes. The spirit refuses to be silenced is so powerful in that only dead can the woman be free from her captivators. Only in this way can she have power and control. Only in death can the ghost daughter have vengeance on both her injustices, the mother’s injustices, and the sister’s injustices. The dynamic of the three women all suffering the same fate parallels the ghost sister having the ability to vengeance these injustices. The father brought all this calamity on the son and the spirit desires to have her vengeance, make the son suffer what she suffered and the father suffer even more because not only has he hurt her, but her mother, and sister as well.

The husband of the ghost Indian girl will not leave her body, will not give her freedom, and he does not let the vultures or dogs devour her body, he enslaves her body even after her death. Her spirit wants to fly but cannot because her body is tied down. The other sister yells out when she finds out that her sister has died. She gallops away on the horse spilling the coins onto the ground. She is merchandise that men colonize and trade with. Her yelling is her power and her voice is still bounded to the horse, but she can yell as loud as she can. The sister chooses to keep the horses and gold and in this way has some power. The sister says “my [ghost] sister is my mother’s weapon” (Perez, 1999, p. 114).



We continue with another example of a young woman who discovers her sexuality, but is tailed by the lust of her father which leads to her tragic death. The daughters become their mother's agency. "Their sexuality is born from reducing women (Mestizas) to objects for exchange" (Perez, 1999, p. 114). The author asks us the readers as spectators how do we view Indian women. She goes on to say that Silent Tongue represents motherland North American invaded and colonized. Delgadina was a young girl who had the misfortune of having a father who fell in love with her and her refusal to be with him led to her being locked up by her father and her death. "Entering sexuality is her burden" (Perez, 1999, p. 115). The Delgadina ballad allows the expression of women who are denied a voice in their lives. Delgadina is one of many women who are denied a voice, but she expresses power by singing and telling of her father and his interest in her sexually. The father saw Delgadina as sexual and womanly, while she may have never perceived it. "She was becoming a woman and her body was a tell tale sign as we can perceive from the songs emphasis on her wearing a 'silk gown that illuminates her body'. Delgadina is imprisoned and this demonstrated the power of her father the patriarch who dominated control over her. The father begins to notice her because of her beauty as a young woman and punishes her in order to keep her for himself. This ballad is passed down from grandmother to mother to daughter and in this way the transmission is matriarchal" (Perez, 1999, p. 184).

The text I read by Perez (1999) discussed an Indian woman named Silent Tongue, that is represented in both literature and film, Delgadina, a young Spanish-Mexican women in a ballad, Selena, the Tejana Singer, and Malinche, an Indian woman from

Mexico who became Cortez's mistress, all are women representing the various ways men have colonized women. The author reinterprets their struggles in a patriarchal society allowing their transformation into role models that depict the values and strengths of women even in oppressive situations. The power these females convey for future generations of women is incredible. The analysis of the representation of these women can only be done through a contextualized point of view. The impact their stories have on women of today is interesting because the author has reinterpreted their oppression into a personal choice to battle the men that control and limit their lives. They suffered the domination of men, race, and cultural impositions on their lives. The characteristics of confidence, strength, bravery, and courage continue to be embodied in these women even in their representation today. This is what keeps us learning and discussing them through their struggle they passed boundaries and paved the way for more females to express themselves giving them a voice to cry out in times of hardship. These women reclaim a space for themselves.

For example, Selena was a role model for young women that allowed them to step away from their parents restrictive norms and wear thick makeup, dress up, and still be considered part of the family. Selena was killed and through her death became an even more powerful symbol for women of all ages. Through her death she was able to become a bigger star and impact a larger number of people. She gained success, power, and freedom in her death. Even though her death was not her own choice, she became a victim of murder from an obsessed female fan. She also suffered the domination of her father, the patriarchal male in her life that pushed her into the music industry. She

suffered the role of a Mestiza, a woman with two cultures, Mexican parents and American by birth. The two cultures Selena embodies seemed similar to those of the Indian ghost daughter of Silent Tongue, who embodied both white and Indian, youth and death, colonization and freedom. The memory of Selena lives on in the lives of her fans similarly the ghost daughter of the Indian woman, Silent Tongue, continues to haunt her husband.

“Selena as a cultural icon, even more so now in her death, symbolizes a particular Chicana feminist agency that her audiences embraced” (Perez, 1999, p. 121). Selena provided an option for women as well as served as role model for young Chicanas who could relate to her in her struggle to live an American life while also maintaining a good relationship with her Mexican parents. The sexuality she was fighting for was the norm for white American women, but not acceptable for Latinas and seemed to perpetuate a negative hyper sexualized stereotype. With Selena being a success and having agency in her sexuality she becomes the empowered women breaking the stereotypes and proclaiming her identity as acceptable.

Perez (1999) explains her interest in Selena only because she served as a good explanation for the seduction fantasy. She also describes her as being in that third feminist space that permits her to be decolonized and have that freedom to battle with her father, the patriarchal figure. Selena fits the seduction fantasy in that she uses her sexuality to both seduce her audience and allow herself to be seduced by her love, Chris, the guitar player in her music group. This agency and control of being both the object and subject of desire allows women to see the sexual fantasy as an option to be comfortable

with their own sexuality. In this way permitting the use of makeup as previously mentioned before without the need to get permission from her father as if it were something negative. “Selena did it; but Selena made it acceptable to do so and not be labeled a whore, by affirming a cultural sexuality with historical roots. Other young Chicanas could do the same and not be alienated from their families” (Perez, 1999, p. 121). The author is aware of the stereotypes placed on Latinas as well as the cultural pressures to confine them to Mexican norms that oppress and place limitations on women. This was in itself a great feat for women of her time, because she not only broke gender barriers but racial barriers as well.

The women, Selena and the ghost daughter seduced their audience and husband and in this way had some agency over their sexuality in the face of male dominance both in the ranchera music industry and in the American west. The situations of their afterlives are different, but it is interesting to see how their memory and spirit continue to play a part in the woman’s freedom and their triumph over their male dominated worlds. The actions of the women in the past continue to have an effect on the women of today. The stories of these women serve as metaphors for struggles suffered by women. The interpretation we give of these women and their struggles is based on our cultural perceptions which are continuously changing over time. We can use these figures of victimized women and reinvent them to empower ourselves by depicting their strength and resilience against invasive male figures in their lives. These women succeeded within the limits of their culture during the time period these incidents occurred and were portrayed in song, oral storytelling, writing, and in some cases film. These women defy

society, stand outside the boundaries, and defend their reputation. Women today continue to fight against acts of violence played out by men onto women. They are resisting injustices and voicing out their suffering through film, literature, poetry, and legal measures to protect themselves against sexual violence.

Sandra Cisneros is a Mexican-American that made a decision in her life to blossom in a mostly white dominate culture separate from her Latino Barrio. Thus her characters reflect her ideas and she depicts Mexican women as continually controlled by men, but Chicanas as independent, free, and in control of their lives. It is from her experiences that Cisneros' (1991) work explores issues that are important to her: gender, language, love, oppression, and religion. Cisneros (1991) mentions in personal interviews that she didn't realize her "difference" until she took classes with predominantly white, wealthy classmates. Until this moment, she had always suppressed the Chicano side of her because she could not relate to anyone in her classes. But she realized she was able to draw on her personal experiences growing up in a working class neighborhood to create her own unique work different from everyone else around her.

The House on Mango Street, by Sandra Cisneros, in 1991, embraces her two cultures, that of her father, a Mexican, and her mother, a Mexican-American. Growing up like the main character, Esperanza, in a The House on Mango Street, she wanted to leave the barrio and become a writer. Cisneros (1991), like Esperanza, is tired of the typical Mexican stereotypes that bind you to the house and family after seeing her mother's lifetime of sacrifices and her friends' physical and sexual abuse at the hands of men. Her only desire is to escape and become an example to other Chicanas. The Mexican-

American characters in her work, like herself, continue trying to define their identity through the actions and steps they take in life.

Cisneros (1991) raises a number of sociological issues related to gender roles among Mexican-Americans. Her work allows audience members to explore how gender operates within the context of the familia and expectations of two cultural societies. Traditionally in Mexican-American culture women have been restricted to subordinate roles rooted in the patriarchal structure of the larger society and the conditions of ethnicity. Her work reflects how Mexican-American culture enlarges the difference between gender roles, further reflecting family and ethnic factors that are tied to the subordinate status of Mexican-Americans. Cisneros (1991) work acknowledges some of the barriers that Mexican-American women have to confront.

In The House on Mango Street, Cisneros (1991) discusses how “Mexicans, don’t like their women strong” because they prefer to have a submissive wife that they can control and dominate” (Cisneros, 1991, p. 78). This goes back to Mexico’s history that resulted in the rape of the indigenous mother, the Malinche, who gave birth to a Mestizo. In Mexico, a women can either be a Malinche or La Virgin de Guadalupe, which are two extreme roles that are not realistic, and do not allow for mistakes to be made. “My Name: I have inherited her name, but I don’t want to inherit her place by the window” (Cisneros, 1991, p. 78). The main character discusses how a previous relative in the family had her same name and how she does not want to live her life. Being Mexican has prevented some of the family women from living to their fullest potential, but the main character, just like the Cisneros (1991), is determined not to suffer the same fate.

In the book Caramelo, by Sandra Cisneros, in 2003, presents the lives of girls that are in their youth at a time when they are trying to finding their identity. “Betty Boop on one arm and La Virgen De Guadalupe on the other” (Cisneros, 2003, p. 278). Even the surrounding society holds the images of women as either seductive sexual beings or virgin saints.

In the book Woman Hollering Creek, by Sandra Cisneros, in 1992, states that “nothing is named after a women? Really. Unless she’s the virgin. I guess you’re only famous if you’re a virgin” (Cisneros, 1992, p. 55). Cisneros work is full of attitude, humor, and reality. Cisneros (1992) uses her personal experiences growing up to create a work that contains the real issues that face Mexican-Americans. Her work is for Latinas that will be able to relate and understand her ironic sincerity about the topics she concentrates on such as religion and gender.

There are references to the female character of the state of Texas, which are that Chicano women have characteristics that allow them to be very independent. Being loud and speaking up for what they think and do what they please, Mexican-Americans are the total opposite of Mexican women who do nothing without the permission of a man, older brothers, father, or husband. With children being born in America and having rights and protection against male domination, the Mexican ideas and traditions have started to change for Mexican-Americans in America. Texas is recognized for its free spirit, pride, and sense of independence, because it was the only state in the union that was once it’s own republic making the Texan women very free and independent thinkers as well. “I like Viva. She spits cuss words out like they’re watermelon seeds” (Cisneros, 2003, p.

328). Viva is a Mexican-American personifying the independent and liberal Texas girl that has no boundaries and doesn't follow the rules assigned to women. "No way! You've never been to Mexico? –Only to Nuevo Laredo. My Family's from here. Since before. Since before this was Texas. We're been here seven generations" (Cisneros, 2003, p. 328). Cisneros (2003) points out how the passage of time causes identity changes to occur and girls like Viva become truly Mexican-Americans that have never even traveled to Mexico, because their life is here in America.

Cisneros (2003) expresses the simple wish of a girl, "It's just that I want to be on my own someday" (Cisneros, 2003, p. 359) This desire for freedom is unacceptable for a girl of Mexican descent. Her father answers "But that's not for girls like you. Good girls don't leave their father's house until they marry, and not before" (Cisneros, 2003, p. 359). Her father's machismo is expressed along with the perception that women can only be virgins or Malinches. "I just thought maybe I would try stuff. I don't know. Just stuff like....like you see people doing in the movies. I want a life like..." (Cisneros, 2003, p. 359). We feel for the main character, who just wishes to find her self-identity, but her father is quick to assume, "Girls who are not Mexican?" (Cisneros, 2003, p. 359). She wishes to ignore her Mexican culture and change into something she is not, but the reality is that she is living in America, a world of opportunities for women that allows her to explore her greatest desires, but she is obligated to stay home and live the life of a Mexican girl. This internal conflict the main character suffers is an example of what Mexican-Americans feel when trying to deal with their self-identity, unable to pursue the American way of life, for fear of betraying their Mexican heritage. Trapped between the



Mexican past and the American future, they are unable to move, until they embrace their roots that gave birth to them and move forward always accepting the reality that they must share both values and traditions.

Mexicans come from a very integrated family unit that strengthens them by providing emotional support and security. There is a constant need to stay with your family of origin and friends cannot replace that. A Mexican states the importance of listening to your elders and respecting your parents advice, because they have lived longer than you and have gone through what you been through. The father expresses his thoughts more like a warning “If you leave your father’s house without a husband you are worse than a dog. You aren’t my daughter. You aren’t a Reyes. If you leave alone you leave like, and forgive me for saying this but it's true, como una prostitute. How will you live without your father and brothers to protect you? One must strive to be honorable” (Cisneros, 2003, p. 358). This harsh talk by the characters father demonstrates the dominant role the father has as the head of the family and how the girl’s Mexican values are being evaluated. “When I breathe, my heart hurts. Prostituta. Perra. Perdida. Papa.” (Cisneros, 2003, p. 359). Cisneros (2003) presents us with this information about the Mexicans view of young women who leaves the house without first being married. Mexican-Americans find themselves struggling with their identity that holds both American and Mexican values. Cisneros (2003) feels very strongly about women’s rights and dislikes the machismo that is so common in Mexican culture.

The Labyrinth of Solitude, by Octavio Paz, in 1985, states how the Malinche and her history has affected the Mexicans and left them confused. Paz (1985) mentions that

this is all part of them and they cannot ignore because if they do they are denying their own identity and the result is their solitude. They must confront this violent past that is their origin, they must live with the reality and not hide from their past. Mexicans are sons of the Malinche that only adds to the already confused history of Mexico. The Malinche represents the indigenous women raped by the conquest philosophically as well as physically, and from her were born all the Mexicans that are a mix of indigenous and Spaniard. The history described by Paz demonstrates the valor and dignity that the Mexican has in continuing to live, after such a violent past.

“My Malinalli, Malinche, my courtesan, you said and yanked my head back by the braid. Calling me that name between gulps of breath, to be called Malinchista is to say you have turned your back on your own culture” (Cisneros, 1992, p. 74). But she also became the mother of the first Mestizo race. Malinche had the ability to communicate with the various indigenous tribes which led to the destruction of the Aztec civilization. In my opinion, Mexican-American young women feel conflicted by Mexicans who consider them to be traitors of their native country and serve as translators because they know both English and Spanish.

Cisneros (1991) criticizes the gender roles assigned to women “And anyway, a woman’s place is sleeping so she can wake up early with the tortilla star, the one that appears early” (Cisneros, 1991, p. 31). She is tired of the way in which men manage to subjugate women. Mexican-American Women continue to struggle with traditional stereotypes. The “macho man” is the provider while the woman is a stay at home mom. Opportunities outside the house are not permissible, because that would mean the man is

not doing his job. "Alicia, who inherited her mama's rolling pin and sleepiness, is young and smart and studies for the first time at the university" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 31).

Mexican-American young women are trying to break away from these constricting views in order to better their situation. When they go and study in school, their Mexican culture considers them traitors of their Mexican values, because they view them as acquiring the American way of life and denying their own heritage. Mexican immigrants suffer with the notion of being called Malinchistas when the reality is that they leave behind their deceased parents buried in their native land and yet cannot return because they cannot leave their living children in the United States.

Cisneros (1991) use of southwestern references shows how the Mexican-American is highly influenced by the geographical location that is so close to Mexico, and at one point was a part of Mexico. The recent immigration continues to influence Mexican-Americans residing in Texas and the rest of the south.

In my perspective, Women in all cultures have been forced to think that their only options in life are to find a good husband and have lots of children. Cisneros (1991) emphasizes the extent of this teaching in the chapter "Hips", "One day you wake up and they are there. "They are good for holding a baby when you're cooking. What a culturally dominated society that demonstrates the restrictions placed on women because they are considered inferior because of their gender. Hips, 'you need them to dance' and then 'they bloom like roses'; I have science on my side. The bones just one day open. Just like that," (Cisneros, 1991, p. 88). In the past, Mexicans rarely discussed issues of development with their young girls because it was considered taboo to talk about those topics, today in

modern Mexico life continues to be similar because of the conservative aspect of the country and its religion young women lack knowledge about the development of their own bodies.

The color of one's skin has always been an issue, especially in Latin America, because of the conquest the Mestizo race has undergone a lot of racism that persists today all over the Americas. Cisneros (1991) points out the differences in color among her characters, "She is the color of a bar of naphtha laundry soap; she is like the little brown piece left at the end of the wash" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 52). She does this in a manner that brings the differences to the surface and in this form highlights the importance of being different and that like language is something Mexican-Americans as well as Mexicans have to deal with. The grandmother passes away and now "she is in a world we don't belong to anymore" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 54). Literally she is not in our world because she has died, but in another sense she was never in their world. She lived in Mexico all of her life while the character lived with her family in the U.S another completely different world.

The combination of cultures by Mexican-Americans is portrayed through their desire to hold on to some of the values and traditions passed on by their native Mexican parents. "Elenita, witch woman, wipes the table with a rag because Ernie who is feeding the baby spilled Kool-Aid" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 63). But somehow the result is neither a Mexican nor American way of life, but an incredibly complex combination that is particularly different for each. Religion in Cisneros' work consists of the conflicting Pagan and Catholic values that are common both in Mexican and Mexican-American

families. "If you got a headache, rub a cold egg across your face," is an example of a indigenous Pagan healing method that has been transformed and incorporated with Catholic prayers (Cisneros, 1991, p. 64).

Pocho, written by Jose Antonio Villarreal, in 1970, states that "because they were daughters, they could not interfere; because they were women, they wept for themselves and their destiny-their subservience to men" (Villarreal, 1970, p. 92). The boy in the story for the first time becomes aware of the difference in male and female roles in his family structure. We can see he has grown up in American with its uniquely independent and liberating culture and yet still believes his mother was out of line when speaking up for herself and her thoughts during a discussion in the kitchen with her husband. He understood the need his father had to hit her and replace his place in the family as the dominant male figure. This Mexican way of life that his father teaches him, conflicts greatly with his own American values. In this chapter it is easy to see how this cultural problem becomes internalized not only by the women who sit crying around him because of their situation in this family structure, but also by him when he has to stop and reflect on the situation and how his sisters also cry not only for their mother, but for themselves and their future under the dominance of men.

The main character in Woman Hollering Creek, by Cisneros (1992) is a Chicana or Mexican-American who feels outraged when watching the Mexican telenovelas that portray Mexican Women as either the kind or submissive damsel in distress that needs to be rescued by the man of her dreams or as evil and traitorous. This mentality is that the Mexican men have to oppress the women, but they do not have the right to use their

countries violent past to continue to subjugate the woman. Mexico's past history is made up of a traitorous Malinche that is the mother that gave birth to the Mexicans as well as ended their lives by leading the Conquistador Cortes to their Aztec leader Montezuma that was defeated and led to the destruction of a civilization. The virgin of Guadalupe is the mother that appeared to the indigenous Juan Diego, she is the holy virgin mother of the Mexicans who arrived to protect them against the Spaniards. These two depictions of women in Mexico's history are what serve as the role models for Mexican women. The two extremes leave no room for mistakes, which leaves the Mexican women in an impossible position of either complete submission to men or complete separation and freedom from men in her society.

“In my dreams I'm slapping the heroine to her senses, because I want them to be women, who make things happen, not women who things happen to” (Cisneros, 1992, p. 161). The differences between the Mexican woman and the Mexican-American woman can be seen in this outburst from the character that defies the ideas traditional Mexican culture imposes on women and demands that there be change. That independent streak in her personality that wants to take control of her own life and make things happen is what makes her stand out as a Chicana that has been born in the United States and thus has been raised with a different lifestyle that promotes independence which also turns this character into a traitor of her own Mexican heritage. She no longer fits to conform around the Mexican ideals of a submissive woman.

Cisneros describes “real women. The ones I've loved all my life. If you don't like it largate, honey. Those women. The ones I've known everywhere except on TV, books

and magazines. Las girlfriends. Las comadres. Our mamas and tias. Passionate and powerful, tender and volatile, brave . And, above all, fierce.,” (Cisneros, 1992, p. 161). This concept that women are brave, strong, and passionate as if this is something denied to them, explains how the Mexican has suffered with the betrayal of the Malincha and thus distrusts all women. Women in Mexico are also the most important figure in the family network; they hold everything and everyone together. They are the piece that fits everything and is necessary for life. The mother in Mexican culture is revered and respected, no one messes with the mother of a Mexican: it is the worst thing you could possibly do.

The title of Woman Hollering Creek, by Cisneros (1992) refers to the myth of La Llorona, the poor Mexican woman who drowned her children and died of sadness. Cisneros (1992) makes her own version of this story with Ceofilas as the main character that is under the control of her oppressive culture and abusive husband. Ceofilas is able to escape her life by crossing the border ending the story with a "ribbon of laughter, like water" instead of the wail of La Llorona (Cisneros, 1992). Cisneros (1992) lives her life alone in San Antonio, not a mother and not a wife. She likes her independence and portrays this message through her work that it is possible to be a Mexican-American and live life to the fullest without being chained down to those Mexican cultural values that were put in place by the church or oppressive machismo of years past.

Daniela Romo sings, “Ya no. Es verdad que te adoro, pero mas me adoro yo,” which translates to: I love you honey, but I love me more, (Cisneros, 1992, p. 163). Cisneros' (1992) idea of an independent women can easily be seen portrayed throughout

her work. Here she discusses an important issue that women are in a Mexican cultural struggle to deal with and this results in women being battered or abused by their husbands. In this case she announces that it is one thing to love another, but a different thing to love oneself and she seems to give voice to all those women that because of a cultural structural idea must suffer the consequences of an unjust idea held tightly by the Mexicans, because of their long history of violence.

In "The Three Sisters" chapter by Cisneros (1991), the older women approves of "Esperanza...a good, good name" because the translation of her name is hope (Cisneros, 1991, p. 104). Cisneros (1991) may have purposely given her this name in order to further emphasize the characters hope for the future and the author's hopes as well to "raise hell" and make a point about young Mexican-American girls growing up in the U.S. The women tell the main character Esperanza, "when you leave you must remember always to come back" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 105). "The Three Sisters" refer to her origins and that she cannot deny who she is. "For the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 52). They emphasize the pride behind being a Mexican and that this heritage passed on from her father is now a part of her. "For the ones that cannot leave as easily as you' she must leave this place only to later come back as an example for her community. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you'll come back too" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 107). Cisneros (1991) refers to this concept of returning to the place you are from repeatedly and again it is three older sisters that are foretelling her destiny and know the paths of life because of their own



experiences. There is already a foreshadowing of what is to be the future, both in the work and in the characters life. The number of sisters is three and can be an important detail that refers to Greek mythology and the three fates that control the lives of people by weaving and cutting if necessary.

Cisneros (1991) then discusses the point of view from Esperanza, the Mexican-American. "I am going to tell you a story about a girl who didn't want to belong" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 109). Here Esperanza tells about her self-conflict that can be tied to her cultural identity. She feels separated from her Mexican heritage because she has lived in America all her life and feels constricted by the expectations required of her as a Mexican-American. "Mango Street, sad red house, the house I belong but do not belong to" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 69). This is an internal conflict presented with examples of the main characters life, a house, a home, the object that identifies who you are, and where you come from. Cisneros (1991) places so much importance on this house because Esperanza does not like it, but she cannot help that it is now a part of her and makes up who she is and what she values and wants from life now. "They will not know that I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot get out" (Cisneros, 1991, p. 54). Cisneros' (1991) quote here at the end is by Esperanza a child that is still dreaming of leaving her barrio and becoming a writer. She refers back to the three sisters and how they will not know if she will return, but we can decipher from the text that they are fate and know what she will do. Esperanza realizes with this last quote that her experiences gathered from this sad house on Mango Street have inspired her actions for her future goals.

In the book Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends, edited by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, in 2003, contained chapter 11 "De Madres a hijas: Gendered Lessons on Virginity across Generations of Mexican Immigrant Women" by Gloria Gonzalez-Lopez. I was intrigued by the impact that migration has on immigrant women's sexuality. Gonzalez-Lopez (2003) went on to explain in this chapter a study she conducted on Mexican mothers who migrated from Mexico to the United States. Through in depth analysis of their conversations she pointed to a couple of ways Sexuality and preservation of virginity were viewed by these women especially from their home country and how they were impacted by the way sexuality and preservation of virginity is viewed in the United States. Gonzalez-Lopez (2003) presented how they began to change how they talk to their daughters not only continuing to follow the ways of their home country but adapting to changes found in this new country. Thus, migration has affected Mexican women and in turn I believe is affecting Mexican-American daughters. With various preconceived notions found in their home countries their Mexican-American daughters understand both where their mothers are coming from with their conversations about sexuality and preservation of virginity as was told to them by their mothers as well as their own culturally complex environments that are becoming more intertwined and changeable.

Gonzalez-Lopez (2003) explained that Mexicans enter the United States with certain sexual ideologies and practices that vary depending on region of origin, but are otherwise controlled by family beliefs and practices that are for the most part patriarchal societies. Migration leads to many more factors that are taken into account and change

the nature of the conversations about sexuality and preservation of virginity for these immigrant women. These migrant women now have to face problems of finding jobs, making decisions of settling or not into their new environment, adapting to the new way of life and socializing with other people that may share similar experiences of migration, as well the assimilation that most immigrants are forced to undergo when they are in America. These new problems and circumstances in their lives change how they deal with their personal lives as well as how they prepare their Mexican-American daughters.

Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives, by Gloria Gonzales-Lopez, in 2005, contained a study that mentioned Mexican women viewing the preservation of virginity until marriage as a guarantee during their married life to be respected and have a healthy marriage as well as serving as protection from the recrimination of a macho husband. Gonzalez-Lopez (2005) goes on to explain that virginity in the Mexican family is strongly interwoven and that the family honor is lost along with the daughter's virginity if done so before marriage. This picture is completely different for a Mexican-American whose family ties are no longer the same as those found for the family still living in the home country. Gonzalez-Lopez explains in her book how virginity is described by her Mexican participants to be tied to family traditions that are a major part of social conventions of decency and morality" (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005, p. 40).

Through the extensive analysis on the literature presented, ideas of sexual identity among Mexican-American women have been presented. Societies influence on women's

perception of sexuality, along with the role woman play not only in their family household, but in a larger context, serve as guidance for other women in the community.

## **Section V. Media's Effects On Perceptions Of Sexuality**

In Latinos, Inc: The Marketing and Making of a People, written by Arelene Davila, in 2001, states that "the marketing and making of a people describes the virginal mom and other negotiations" (Davila, 2001, p. 130-144). She begins by explaining that there is a dual portrayal of Latina women as virgin or whore and goes on to say that this explains the dominance of the mother figure featured in most Hispanic advertisements. The dual stereotype of traditional *senorita* or very sexualized Latina has dominated stereotypes of Latina women in mainstream media. This duality used to describe women is not unique to Latinas in that the author Davila (2001) explains it is used in dominant constructions of gender roles as tied to norms of sexuality. Women are portrayed as dutiful citizens that serve as repositories of morality and tradition. Women are responsible of maintaining respectability in the realm of sexuality. This leads to the idealization of motherhood.

The duality of virgin/promiscuous females are represented differently in ads than in TV programming. This shows us how corporate clients view Hispanics and what ideas they have that affect their representation. In TV programming, the glamorous sexuality that is required by any female character is present along with the beauty that is foremost for a Latina, regardless if she is good or evil character. In advertisements, the Latina icon is mostly a mom, young and beautiful, but never glamorous. In advertisements, she is a caretaker and guardian of the family and the concerns she keeps in mind as she selects any product.

In beer ads, which cater mostly to men, the glamorous sexy Latina in a tight dress and high heels is just as common. The virginal but less sexualized representations of women presented in the ads are most of all products of their clients stereotypes about Latinas and the standards of female sexual and social propriety. Advertisements are produced with the assumption that they will address the particular needs of the U.S Hispanic market, and the needs of their clients. An example given by Davila (2001) is that the “Clients don’t understand Latino culture and cannot read the way women dress, or accept they are concerned about their appearance. They feel that it would sexualize women. They want women to be conservative and covered up” (Davila, 2001, p. 132).

The argument that Latina women “tend to overdress” or displays “use of color and have steady interest in color cosmetics” is commonly used to attract cosmetic companies to advertise to Hispanics, (Davila, 2001, p. 132). In the world of advertisement, the issue of better representation for women is reduced to one of appearance and looks or the amount of lip gloss or mode of dress that can be tolerated without disrupting the virginal innocence that is required of women on TV. The same concerns on the threatening sexuality that pervades both Anglo and Latino prototypes of Latina.

“Bikini-clad women are rarely seen in Hispanic advertisements but are common in United States-distributed Latin American shows like *Bienvenidos*, a Venezuelan show, which contrast to the reverent treatment given to family in ads for the U.S Hispanic market, pokes fun at marriage, family, and religion” (Davila, 2001, p. 179).

An example from Davila's (2001) text that I really found intriguing was the unemployed mother of seven who proudly said she watched television "all day and every day" (Davila, 2001, p. 188). Davila (2001) asked her participants from the focus group about how much TV in English they watched, the woman also identified a number of English language shows and it turned out that she was not really watching TV, but connecting with and getting updates from her seven children. As she put it, "I ask them what they are up to, and they never talk, but then I sit next to them when they are watching a show and all of a sudden things come up and there's a conversation" (Davila, 2001, p. 189).

In Davila's (2001) reading we find that the participants prefer Latinos to have a "positive image" (Davila, 2001, p. 195). An example given in the text Latinos Inc. is the participant saying when housewives are shown in American ads, you see women who are white and fit. You don't see her having a stomach or anything. But in Latin ads, they show the Latina woman with a ripped robe. They don't show her wearing Victoria Secret. Generally, it is beauty and clean-cut looks that dominate TV's Latin look" (Davila, 2001, p. 195). Davila (2001) mentions that she found the woman's perception and conviction interesting, in that Latinos were presented negatively when contrasted with the models who decorated the ads in the general market. When in relation to their ads, the Latin look, while in reality unrealistically lavish, in her eyes fell short of Anglos images, being always darker and more modest, reminding the viewer that she/he is still subordinate to the "American" consumer (Davila, 2001, p. 196).

A Puerto Rican participant in Davila's (2001) reading states "English TV takes you all around the world, but Spanish TV keeps you in Mexico" (Davila, 2001, p. 197). "Activist groups that work on behalf of Mexican-Americans have expressed dissatisfaction with the Spanish networks for providing limited representations of Mexican-Americans and for showing programming that does not reflect their U.S reality, as have other U.S -born Latinos" (Davila, 2001, p. 199).

Davila (2001) helped shape popularly held beliefs among and across Latino subgroups, beliefs concerning temperament, race, values, and traits that are supposedly shared among members of particular Latino sub nationalities. The example given by Davila (2001) is the popular radio station La Mega, that is described to have an overall tone that is irreverent---sexual imagery and innuendos are common. The discussion started when a Colombian woman denounced the sexual innuendo that pervades the dialogue between the DJ's and the call-in public, particularly after its programming change to increase its fare of merengue. The participants for Davila (2001) continue discussing with examples of the stereotype of the hot Dominican male and the more eroticized Caribbean culture. The women "don't like how they are always talking about sex, as if that was what we are all about" (Davila, 2011, p. 204). The other women continue with "yes, women are treated like an object. They are always saying " go take their butt" as if [the butt] is a glass or a cup" (Davila, 2001, p. 204).

The Dominican woman had previously explained, in relation to a similar insinuation of Dominicans unrepressed sexuality, that Dominican culture in not the way it is represented in the Latin media and such profanities would not be heard in the



Dominican Republic. The issue continued with the radio station serving as proof of Caribbean lustfulness versus South Americans more “restrained” sexuality, which one would encounter on another station. It is noteworthy that the women who distanced themselves from La Mega’s sexually filled content, were among the middle class college graduates in the group, who did not represent the views of all Latinas (Davila, 2001, p. 205).

Davila’s (2001) book Latinos, Inc. inspired me to look more closely at the various ways Latinos are portrayed in the media. The literal construction of a Latino/Hispanic ethnicity to fit the needs and perceptions of whites in the dominant media industries was very striking. This led me to having a desire to look more closely at stereotyping. Trying to recall stereotypes I have been exposed to in the media led me to an episode in South Park. The important question to ask is why was this particular episode funny and entertaining? The answer is the way in which it was poking fun at Latino stereotypes. In the episode I viewed, South Park depicted a Jennifer Lopez hand puppet that mimicked the real Jennifer Lopez and recorded a song titled "Taco Flavored Kisses" (South Park, 2003). As one might imagine, the stereotype of Latinos eating tacos is visible. When watching the episode again on YouTube, I found it interesting that the first thing Jennifer Lopez demands for her music video are the rhythms of the music, and more specifically, she demands it to be ‘spicy, spicier, and spicier!’

The other film that I was reminded of during class discussions is “Spanglish.” Some of the stereotypes I recall are that of the Latina caretakers for the white working professionals that have the natural motherly role. Not only is she naturally able to

understand the children, but she is portrayed as beautiful, so much that the husband can't help to be tempted, and to top it off she can dance. The Latina is stereotyped in films as motherly, devoted to family and husband while the opposite extreme portrays a sexy Latina that seduces with her "hotness" and overtly sexual nature.

In "Birth of a Nation' Hood, Color Blind Dreams and Racial Nightmares: Reconfiguring Racism in the Post Civil Rights Era", by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, in 1997, states that "color-blind ideology, the achievement of equality is measured by the formal removal of race categories across society" (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 103). By not acknowledging race, we are hiding the problem. People have not learned from their history and continue to ignore the underlying problems.

Latinos are blamed for the social problems found in the United States. With the recent debates in Arizona over immigrant legal status, illegal immigrants have been stereotyped as Mexicans. The media has propagated this image by depicting illegal's as Mexican when the reality is that illegal immigrants are from many parts of the world. I want to make clear that by stereotyping illegal's as only Mexican, you are denying Mexican-Americans the liberty to feel comfortable in public spaces, where others will automatically assume that they are illegal. This is a cause of major controversy because by stereotyping illegal's, you begin to categorize people by race and racial isolation begins to occur. Moving from the idea of Mexican's portrayal in media, we see the struggles women face in regard to stereotypes used to portray them.

In The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and Nation, by Leo Chavez, in 2008, states that women serve as the pillars and stitching that holds a family

together. The motherly stereotypes are based on some realities of Latin America including the devotion many Catholics have for the Virgin Mary who gave birth to baby Jesus. "The great hazard to the illegal immigrant is a large family," (Chavez, 2008, p. 86). Why would having a large family be negative? This would be a negative situation for whites who feel overwhelmed with the Latino population in the United States. It is true that refugees fleeing from countries ravaged with war, poverty, and dictatorships come to the United States with their entire families. It is also misleading because many immigrants come for job opportunities, usually leave their families behind to care for the more elderly and they send remittances home to feed and support their children. Stereotypes among illegal immigrants only say so much about a population and cannot encompass all the many factors associated with different people.

In "The Spectacle of the Other, Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices", by Stuart Hall, in 1997, "to be stereotyped means to be reduced to a few essentials, fixed in nature by a few simplified characteristics" (Hall, 1997, p. 249). This way of categorizing people in the media leads to limitations and confusion for those who do not fit set stereotypes. "Stereotypes reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity (Hall, 1997, p. 258). This presentation of an individual with an extreme stereotype does not allow for an in-between you are either good or bad. This results in a form of control that is not reasonable. People change overtime and the boundaries set by stereotypes are not realistic and lead to harmful effects.

In analyzing the portrayal of Latinas, going back to the reading titled The Decolonial Imaginary, the author Perez (1999) relates and compares the issues undergone by an Indian woman of the American west, with those of a Spanish American woman of the Southwest, a Mexican young girl described in a ballad “Delgadina”, and the Tejana singer Selena. She provides insight into the background of these women who are all suffering the colonization of men who tie them down and do not let them be free in both the literal and metaphorical sense. This historical reference to women and the stereotyping that ensued from these moments leads to modern day stereotypes of women as good women dominated by men and female victims of sexual violence blamed and stereotyped as hypersexual.

This impact is still seen today with young women liberating themselves from stereotypes that force them to look or act a certain way. The domination of men over women, I feel, is a way of imposing control and by stereotyping women, they expect to influence how women behave. By forcing stereotypes onto media men seek to control women. The characteristics of confidence, strength, bravery, and courage embodied in their representation today.

Not only are women victims of men and their physical violence, but they survive it and continue to grow stronger. Men suppress women through stereotypes of weakness and ignorance. Much time has passed since the early stereotypes of women belonging in the kitchen. This idea, I should say, is still debated in that women have more access to professional work opportunities, but are still held responsible for their families. The desire of men to be the center of attention for women leads to their domination and leads

to feelings of guilt. Their sexuality is born from reducing women (Mestizas) to objects for exchange. In the text by Emma Perez the character Silent Tongue suffered the colonization of the white man which led her to give birth to two daughters who were half white and half Native American.

In the movie "Selena", Selena suffered the role of a Mestiza, a woman with two cultures that of her parents being Mexican and her American nationality. In the movie, there is a scene that resonates profoundly with the essence of what it means to "judge a book by its cover" (Selena, 1997). In this a scene, Selena and her friend go inside a mall and go to an expensive dress shop in order to buy a dress to attend the Grammys. At this moment in the movie, she was a very popular Tejana singer, but went unnoticed by the majority of America. The store sale clerk had a stereotype of Latinas and assumed she had no money to buy the expensive gowns. When Selena asked for a dress to try on her friend the sales clerk responded, "I don't think you can afford that" (Selena, 1997). Selena responded with "I'm trying on this dress" (Selena, 1997). Then some of the Latino workers recognize her in the fitting room and the store is bombarded by Selena fans. The sales clerk wonders what is going on and the fans explain "Its, Selena she is here for the Grammys" and with this Selena tells the sales clerk she didn't like the dress and walks out of the store" (Selena, 1997). This moment in the film depicts the reality of stereotypes and how they are not appropriate to use. The scene in the movie just reaffirms how white people in America view Latinos.

Latinos have historically been portrayed in media negatively. In fact, Latinos were Hollywood's first bad guys portrayed as the Indians, the pirates, and the Mexicans

in cinema. Often, the Mexican carries the stereotype of the 'greaser' who is violent, an immoral lowlife, or simply dark and dumb. These are the predominant stereotypes portrayed in the media and subconsciously affect the perception the world has of Latinos. With this in mind for Latinos, looking more closely at the Latinas, we can see that they too have been used in media to portray and represent violent, uncontrolling, and with loose morals. The early 1900's, when Mexicans were getting involved in cinema, they were portrayed as evil and blood thirsty. Stereotypes were so terrible that it led to Latin Americans boycotting films produced in the United States. With this reaction from a major consumer, the American industry began in the early 1920's to portray the Latino as the "Latin Lover" such as the naturally talented Spanish dancer who is naturally "spicy". With these stereotypes into place, the beginning of the romantic image of the Latino evolved and in order to be realistic for Americans, they had to be Europeanized to fit Hollywood's stereotypes of intelligent Spanish ancestry.

In the article titled, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in 1984, wrote that "the distinction between the act of mothering and the status attached to it is a very important one" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 340). People assume that what they consider important is what everybody else values and this is not the case. When we stereotype Latinas as motherly, we are creating problems for these women and judging them. Different cultures have varied definitions of what it means to be a good mother. I dislike the stereotype of women being motherly because it places the sole responsibility of their children's welfare on them, if the child misbehaves, it is automatically assumed to be the mother's fault. The way we perceive the

colonization of women needs to be based on historical contexts. The freedom of women has changed over time and many factors are involved in the supposed oppression of women, including religion, class, race, and form of dress, and cultural values. Women of different cultures place different value on family, children, education, work, money, etc. The stereotypes we make of women are depicted in media and only serve to continue the oppression of them, but not permitting their growth and expression. When we stereotype women as motherly, we are restraining them to a time and place for the rest of their life. Another problem with stereotyping women as motherly is that when they are left as single mothers, they have to fulfill all the roles of a parent which is difficult and leads to “The feminization of poverty” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 348).

Actress Rita Hayworth was of Spanish and Irish descent and played ethnic roles in films until she dyed her hair red and later blonde. Hayworth receded her hairline and underwent a process to broaden her forehead and in this way fit the part of Caucasian. Even her name was changed from Margarita Cancino to a more anglicized name. This need to change your name because it is too ethnic reminds me of a Dancesport article, that included a similar comment about Latinos dancing too ethnically. An article titled "Brown Face: Representations of Latin-ness in Danceport", by Juliet McMains, in 2001, stated that Latinos were “exceeding the expectations of their own identity” which reinforces the point that stereotypes limit and oppress (McMains, 2001, p. 66). The 1950’s arrived with actress Rita Moreno, a Puerto Rican that portrays the good girl with traditional values in films such as “West Side Story”. Films during this time period began to get involved with issues of race and she serves as a voice for Latinas. The stereotypes

in the film, for example, say that Latinos don't know English and don't have money. This portrayal of Latinos is what audiences are exposed to while allowing Latino talent to be seen, and also serve as a safety mechanism for the fears of non-Latinos. The 1990's brought about more films depicting the bonding between mother and daughter in films "Like Water For Chocolate".

The negative stereotypes persist in films like "One Million B.C" that depict the dark haired girl as bad while the blonde girl is the good girl and in this way, dark haired actresses were limited to ethnic or bad girl roles, many dyed their hair blonde in order to be hired in the film industry. Moving on to the 1980's the typical stereotypes of Mexicans and Cowboys changes to Latinos depicted negatively as drug dealers and killers especially connecting the negative to the darker colored skin.

In From Bananas to Buttocks: The Latina Body in Popular Film and Culture, by Anghard Valdiva, in 2007, state that Latinas are stereotyped into roles of maids and prostitutes. "United States Latinas, pose a double threat, sexual and racial" for this fear held by non-Latinos comes the need for stereotypes (Valdiva, 2007, p. 131). The stereotypes for Latinas that were visible in the 1900's continue to exist today and are visible for actresses like Jennifer Lopez and Penelope Cruz who "Both share thinning of their bodies and a straightening of their hair as they get closer to the United States mainstream" (Valdiva, 2007, p. 138). Both Jennifer Lopez and Penelope Cruz are under "the "hot Latina" stereotype that has always been constructed in relation to other taken-for-granted assumptions about normative behavior of non-Latina whites" (Chavez, 2008, p. 76). The "Stereotype of Latinas in the U.S popular culture-nearly white, but brown



enough to count as different” is very scary because Latinas are as diverse as can be with all the skin colors and body shapes it is difficult to imagine the number of Latinas excluded from the Latina stereotype created by whites (Valdiva, 2007, p. 138).

The other stereotype I found common across racial groups but very prominent in the Latinas is the purpose of women and by this I want to focus on giving birth to children and having the role of mother as women’s fulfillment in life. The common misconception in the United States is that “Latina fertility is out of control and thus poses a threat to the United States” (Chavez, 2008, p. 78). The stereotype that Latinas have too many children is harmful to Latinas. People believe the media and perceive all Latinas as motherly with multiple children and their only goal in life because it is their fulfillment in life. This does not help Latinas who are trying to educate and become professionals and have others roles besides that of a mother. Immigration issues have led to stereotyping Latinas as having children and associating this negativity; I feel that this is the excuse used by Americans to feel better about themselves for not dedicating more time to their own children. They feel guilty for not having multiple children, so they create a stereotype for Latinas. This reminded me of the way white’s stereotype black women as hypersexual to excuse for their need to rape them. Similarly, whites stereotype Latinas as having multiple children and being a problem for immigration issues in America in order to excuse their own social problems of not securing their borders appropriately.

The Latina is supposed to fit both stereotype extremes of motherly and hot seductress. The logical trajectory is for the hot Latina to become the hot mama to many children. Thus, the "hybrid image of the Latina materializes, melding the sexuality of the

former and the fertility/reproduction of the latter" (Chavez, 2008, p. 78). It's interesting to view the different Latina women stereotyped as "hot seductress," such as Jennifer Lopez, Salma Hayek, and Sofia Vergara. Their bodies have been the focus of attention especially in the case of Jennifer Lopez where her butt holds center stage. The more motherly roles Latinas are stereotyped into are seen in actresses during telenovelas where they are portrayed devoted to their multiple children and beloved husband.

## **Section VI. Love Songs, Heartbreak, and Sexuality**

The following section is about a singer, Lydia Mendoza, who sang about love and heartbreak. These song lyrics express sexuality from generation to generation within the same family. The analysis of her music is an expression of Mexican-American women's sexuality and gives us an idea of sexual issues presented to young women through music. Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography, was written by Chris Strachwitz & James Nicolopoulos, in 1993. When first introduced to Lydia Mendoza, daughter, sister, and singer I found myself wondering who this important woman in history could be and what her role in Tejano music was as well as what gender issues she confronted during her life. I wanted to explore a female Mexican-American that dealt with expressions of love, sexuality, and human struggle. I was not disappointed to find that she was in fact an inspiring Tex-Mex woman who not only opened the doors to other female Tejana singers, but lived and loved throughout her musical career. The history and impact of this Mexican-American singer can be heard and viewed through her lyrics, music, and life experiences retold through her family autobiography. In reading of her famous song lyrics and her family autobiography, I was amazed on the difference of my perception from start to finish on this project regarding her music and struggle to speak out for women. During the reading I discovered to my surprise that many other people contributed to her lyrics, such as her mother, grandmother, brother in law, and other composers this was something I was not aware of and was delightfully surprised to be able to include information from other women in her family.

My interpretation begins with the reading of Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography, in 1993, compiled and introduced by Chris Strachwitz & James Nicolopoulos. With the resources available to me as well as the time constraints I have interpreted a few songs sung by Lydia Mendoza. I found myself reading about Lydia Mendoza's life and getting bits and pieces of her life that seem to have an impact on the songs she sang for a living. I found it interesting that she grew up in poverty and found myself using these social factors in my interpretation of her songs. The reading mentioned that during her times of need, "prostitutes would offer her and her siblings food to eat" (Strachwitz & Nicolopoulos, 1993, p. 68). I found this information eye opening due to her famous songs "Mal Hombre" and "Mujer Paseada" to include issues related to mistreatment of women, poverty, and misogyny, as well as including as main subjects prostitutes and woman of the lowly life.

Reading The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-class Music, by Manuel Pena, in 1985, I found more information regarding music history as well as information on how Texas society of the time was changing due to events such as the World War II. That influenced what musicians expressed in their music. I found this information very helpful in understanding Lydia Mendoza's music and why she sang her songs. The reading also mentioned that Lydia Mendoza's style of singing would be considered Mexican, folk, and traditional.

"Mal Hombre": "Lydia acknowledged that people said she must have sung that song 'Mal Hombre' because of some personal disappointment in love. But how was she to be in love? When she learned the song she was not even nine or ten years old. Just a

little girl at the time and her biggest ambition was to learn songs” (Strachwitz & Nicolopoulos, 1993, p. 104). Like others, I also thought when hearing the song that she had gone through some trouble with a love in her life. Yet reading Mendoza’s history, it is clear that she was too young to sing of heartbreak. Mendoza does a good job of contributing a female voice to an industry of music that limited women’s emotional struggles.

When starting my research on Lydia Mendoza I was hoping to analyze two or three songs of hers that discussed love and sexuality, but found myself discovering that her famous songs, such as “Mal Hombre”, that she is highly renowned by and are songs that are traditional to her family and have been passed down by her grandmother to her mother and from her mother to her. This explains also why she was singing about love and heartbreak at the age of nine or ten that of course she herself was too young to have experienced personally. But this leads us to another question that is whether this exposure to topics of love at such a young age affected her or in what way did others perceive her singing due to her having such a young age did her age affect how others perceived her music.

Pena (1985) discusses how musicians express their feelings and try to find solutions in their music to their everyday problems or chaotic lives. The time period that Lydia Mendoza’s grandmother, mother, and herself were exposed to was of the Mexican Revolution of the 1910’s and World War II. These events are very traumatic and important in our history that are also time periods in which the Texas-Mexican Conjunto

emerged. Lydia Mendoza, although not a Conjunto artist, was a very important singer during the 1930's and 1940's.

In The Roots of Texas Music, by Lawrence Clayton and Joe W. Specht, in 2003, stated that "Lydia Mendoza gave Hispanic women a voice in a traditional predominantly male dominated society; she sang songs such as 'Mal Hombre' that spoke out against the mistreatment of women by men" (Clayton & Specht, 2003, p. 10). The authors Lawrence Clayton & Joe W. Specht describe Lydia Mendoza as unafraid to speak out about women's mistreatment by men through her songs. It is interesting to read her family autobiography by Chris Strachwitz & James Nicolopoulos that explain she was too young to have understood the meaning of the song other than that her grandmother and mother had passed it down generation to generation. I find that yes, she was empowered by the song and thus she became a strong woman that did speak out against injustices toward women by men unafraid because of the women in her family that reinforced those ideas on her "when she was a little girl of only nine or ten" (Strachwitz & Nicolopoulos, 1993, p. 104). This is the age when she sang the song "Mal Hombre" that she is recognized for in her singing career.

My interpretation is that the grandmother was the root of these powerful ideas that Lydia Mendoza was able to expose to the world. It is amazing to comprehend that her grandmother was unafraid to sing and speak out to her family about the mistreatment of women and to be able to then teach her daughter. This message was passed along to her daughter Lydia Mendoza who became famous for singing and expressing these family ideas to the public. Lydia Mendoza was like cinnamon spreading her ideas past her

family to the world. We can all now taste her music and the power behind the message in her songs. From the roots grows the tree strong that releases its bark of cinnamon.

Women before her were already singing about women's love and heartbreak, but only within their households and family gatherings. Lydia Mendoza was able to break barriers by expressing these thoughts about love, heartbreak, and revenge in a public sphere that included both men and women. It is interesting to find that Lydia Mendoza's songs are works of derived from her mother and grandmother. "The songs didn't come from gum wrappers" (Strachwitz & Nicolopoulos, 1993, p. 103). "'Pero Ay Que Triste', 'Al Pie De Tu Reja', 'Los Besos De Mi Negra', 'Deliciosa', 'No Puedo Dejar De Quererte'. All those were my mother's songs. She would sing them when I was a small child and later when the group was traveling. Lydia believed those songs would be from the time when her grandmother was also singing them" (Strachwitz & Nicolopoulos, 1993, p. 103). It was interesting to me that her mother had this much of an influence on her songs when I originally thought that they were expressing her own life. The passing of music from one generation of woman to the next is clearly visible as Lydia Mendoza explains how her songs were those of her mother and grandmother.

Clayton & Specht (2003) go on to say in their work that "Lydia Mendoza was one the first to transform ranchera style music from a romantic ballad to a more inclusive of important social issues such as poverty and misogyny" (Clayton & Specht, 2003, p. 10). I found while reading her family autobiography written by Strachwitz & Nicolopoulos (1993), that Lydia Mendoza was not the original song composer for "Mal Hombre", that is was actually a song passed down from her grandmother to her mother and then given to

her as part of a family Mexican traditional of music being passed from person to person through oral and audio. I found in Manual Pena's (1985) reading that music history is difficult to trace back in the past due to people not keeping records of music on paper tending to pass it on in oral or audio form. With music "there are always musical innovations that lead to shifts in language usage, folklore, and dress, educational and occupational mobility, (Pena, 1985, p. 4).

What I find most interesting about this is that the song "Mal Hombre" does speak out to social issues of poverty and misogyny, but not only for the 1930's and 1940's the time period in which Lydia Mendoza sang her music, but also to the beginning of the Mexican Revolution the time period of her mother. Not only that, but also more importantly the Porfirio Diaz Mexico time period of her grandmother who sang the song Mal Hombre within her household to her children and family during family gatherings where singing and dancing was common to take place. The women of Lydia Mendoza's family was already ahead of its time singing against social issues, not yet famous because of societal constraints placed on women of the time, yet very revealing about the issues women have always faced under a male dominated society. The song and its past reveal much about the Mexican community and its strides over time.

Music and song are passed from one generation to the next as can be seen with Lydia Mendoza's Great Grandmother who was Italian and played guitar, since it was customary for young girls of good family to learn a little music. Grandmother Teofila Reyna was Italian and Spanish. During her years growing up the region of northern Mexico was pretty wild. "Bandidos and Indian raids were present, yet she lived in an old



colonial part of Mexico, the cultural ambiente was very rich" (Strachwitz & Nicolopolos, 1993, p. 3). The grandmother was an educated woman in the Mexico of Porfirio Diaz which was very rare especially outside of the capital. Trained as a teacher and continued teaching high school after her marriage, Grandmother Teofila had musical training as well.

I find this interesting especially with the information I have read in Manuel Pena's (1985) work, The Texas-Mexican Conjunto, where he describes how the issues musicians face everyday affect their music and expression of music style. The relevance the song "Mal Hombre" had for women and men of all ages leads me to think of how it continues to speak of societies issues that we still face today, poverty and misogyny are long to be finished. The songs strength perhaps lies in the female Hispanic singer Lydia Mendoza who not only in this time period is dealing with ethnic barriers in the American southwest between Hispanics and Anglos, but also class differences, and cultural assimilation. Her music borders on two countries Mexico and the United States the problems the people of the region faced were both of uncertainty due to their socioeconomic status and inequality due to their race and ethnic background. The depression, World War II, and opportunities of upward mobility that arise due to all this changes had to affect Lydia Mendoza and her decision to continue singing about love, relationships, and heartbreak. I feel that all the problems her society was facing at the time led her to decide to add another social issue to the public's view and she decided to sing about poverty and misogyny.

Lydia Mendoza continued to sing in the traditional manner yet faced the social issues around her and sang songs passed from her grandmother to her of the reality faced everyday by women. She grew tired of the injustices and decided to face reality.

Lydia does not overlook hardships faced by the women around her and instead speaks to the struggles of women in her family and finds strength in her music that allows her to express her family's migratory experience from Mexico to Texas. The role music played in her life is clear as she utters the pain suffered by women due to the constraints of a male dominated society. The Texas-Mexican music tradition consists of romantic ballads that make up Lydia Mendoza's love songs. Love songs are not always happy and in the case of Lydia Mendoza her music expresses a sense of pain and loss. The love songs that Lydia Mendoza sings are expressions not only of her life, but more importantly to point out that of her family her mother and grandmother. They express the issues faced in their daily lives including pleasure, hurt, death, and desire. The passing along of music is an old tradition from the beginning of time, yet we see a change and evolution that occurs leading to changes in the songs, yet in Lydia Mendoza's case she keeps her mother and grandmothers songs intact still singing the music from her heart.

Lydia Mendoza described herself as "songstress of the poor" (Strachwitz & Nicolopoulos, 1993, p. 313). Lydia Mendoza catered to all she had talent to reach the common denominator and sell all over the world. Music is always made to target a specific audience or segment of society in the case of Lydia Mendoza's music it provided a much needed voice to the Tejano working class segment of society.

“Mi guerita Coca-Cola” is a song that Lydia Mendoza sang, written by Daniel Garces, that objectifies the woman by describing her body in the shape of a Coca-Cola bottle. The song also goes on to describe the swaying movement of the hips of a female when she walks. This particular song reminded me of a story my grandmother told my mother who then told me. The story is about a village girl nicknamed Coca-Cola, due to her promiscuity that was known among the community. This girl married, but was returned to her family after her honeymoon. When the family saw that she was returned they were shocked to find that her husband no longer wanted her. When they protested “why?” The man inquired if they knew why their daughter had the nickname Coca-Cola they responded that they did not know she even had such a nickname. The husband explained that everyone was aware of her active sexuality and that this nickname was representative of an open bottle of Coca-Cola. He didn’t want an open bottle of Coca-Cola and left soon after. This story is similar to the song due to the continued objectification of women into objects that are devalued if not sealed and in shape.

Throughout the life of Lydia Mendoza, further questions are needed to fully analyze the impact her music and life had on her audience. Throughout her lifetime, it is clear that her exposure to men and relationships increased and Mendoza expresses her emotions regarding these topics in her music. This is especially evident when she incorporates her mother and grandmother in her music, but later, her brother and other male song writers, such as Daniel Garces. Mendoza has truly lived a life that inspired her audiences and future generations of singers.

Lydia Mendoza's lyrics express perceptions of sexuality from a Mexican-American point of view. The references to sexuality through her music were done in ways that still fit the norms of her time. By not explicitly discussing sex, but singing about honor, gave the advantage of how perceptions of sexuality have changed over time. These changes can be seen in Mexican-American women today, which is revealed in the study participant questionnaire.

## **Section VII. Research Project**

This paper addresses the experiences and attitudes of both mothers and daughters through the point of view of the daughters. In this study I am concerned with understanding the actions of the immigrant mothers and the reaction of the second-generation daughters. The study participants are the second generation daughters of Mexican immigrant women in the United States. The study participants face numerous constraints from their traditional Mexican mothers that emphasize control over their lives and limit the amount of knowledge their daughters have about sexuality by not discussing the issue of sex and virginity with them in a mother daughter conversation.

As stated in Section II., my hypothesis is that Mexican-American college women have different perceptions of sexuality than their Mexican mothers. My questions in the survey concerned how the United States has influenced Mexican-American daughter's perception of sexuality and if they are aware of the difference in their sexual perceptions when compared with their Mexican mothers. The goal of the survey research was to receive information from Mexican-American college women and their sexuality.

The information on this paper is based on answers to a questionnaire that I distributed to 20 Mexican-American college educated women in Texas. Of these 20 women, only 16 responses were applicable to this project. Using the "snowball" sampling technique, I started by sending out information about my study interests to Mexican-American college educated acquaintances whom I knew. Then, I asked them to refer me to others who might be willing to volunteer for my study. In other words, the selection of

participants were not random, but rather through a network of Mexican-American contacts who the first group of acquaintances were familiar with. To capture the diversity within the Mexican-American community, I searched and found study participants that were college educated.

My questions were open-ended and covered four different areas: virginity, social conventions, religion, and women's experiences with their mother's discussion of sexuality or lack of discussion. The questionnaire itself did not vary and the same questions were given to all study participants. The study responses from the daughters varied. Some study participants focused on the impact religion played in their perceptions of sexuality yet admitted being exposed to information through the media, while others explained in great length that their mothers did not discuss sexuality with them. These women wished there was more said to them growing up before they dealt with sexuality with friends and in school. Some chose to focus on specific moments in their life that they felt were important while others gave a more general idea of the way sexuality was presented to them.

A survey questionnaire was provided with 16 questions, of which any could be answered. The questionnaire asked study participants about their discussions with their mother's about their sexuality or preservation of virginity until marriage. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 40 who were enrolled or completed a college level education. Recruitment was completed through FaceBook, a social networking website, and email which requested female volunteers with Latina and college educated backgrounds. The survey was operated by myself through Survey Monkey, a online survey tool. Questions

were asked regarding migration and the effects it had on women's discussions on sexuality and maintaining virginity until marriage. I analyzed the responses based on criteria of the importance of religion, mother's fears or concerns, maintaining virginity, American societies influence, and differences between male and female siblings discussion with mothers. The analysis of data looked at the United States factors presented by these Mexican-American women in influencing their perception about sexuality. The data was collected over a period of two to three months. The names and identification of individuals were not collected or used in order to maintain anonymity.

Answers to the survey were collected from each volunteer participant who were able to skip, omit, or end questionnaire at any point. Privacy and confidentiality of participants was possible due to no use of names, instead pseudonyms were used for each participant. Confidentiality of data remains secure on a password-protected laptop that is placed in a locked cabinet in a locked office.

The data was analyzed to see if there is a common perception on sexuality. The data responses from the participants are kept for use in future studies but will remain anonymous with the use of tracking numbers and pseudonyms. All data regarding this project will be held for two years after 05/04/2012. It will remain protected by being locked in a cabinet on a password protected laptop with no traceable information from volunteers via pseudonyms and tracking numbers.

## **Section VIII. Analysis Of Study Participants**

The study I conducted focused on Mexican-American daughter's perception of sex and virginity based on discussions with their Mexican mothers who immigrated to the United States. The questionnaire that was given to them raised this topic to find if their experiences with sexuality and preservation of virginity are different from their mothers because they were raised in the United States or is it the same because of their Mexican mothers influence over them. The study focused on gender, generational difference, and immigration.

In the following section, the analysis of the study participant responses looked at themes regarding virginity, social conventions, religion, and women's experiences with discussion regarding sexuality. The analysis was conducted with the use of study participant quotes that illustrated the themes that emerged amongst the respondents as well as my own recommendations and personal views collected from the literature, media, music and my own experience. I present the questions along with responses that include my investigation of themes that continued to appear throughout the study. The analysis of the questions was limited to questions 1-5 and 8-14 due to their significance and repetition of certain themes throughout the thesis and questionnaire responses.

I was very intrigued by these statements from the Mexican participants. The comments the Mexican-Americans participants made from my study relating to men included comments such as these, "*in my immediate family it has been explained the same. My parents expect us to uphold our values. However, it has always been stressed to*



*me that the girl is the one that loses more in that situation. I guess you could say there is more of a fear aspect placed on the female”* (Study Participant, 2012). I found that the Mexican-American women were aware how men had more options and freedom regarding sexuality than women. Another example from a Mexican-American participant went on to say that her experience was different from her brothers. *“Compared to my brother I think two different things were expected. I was not expected to even talk to boys and my brother could have his female friends but as far as having the sex talks I’m not sure how in depth or if they even talked to him about that with him”* (Study Participant, 2012). This attitude of difference between the male and female children of Mexican mothers that migrated to the U.S was very striking to me. In that they continued to show signs of that Mexican influence over concerns of sexuality in their children giving different amounts of freedom to their boys over their girls. *“Hell Noooooooooooooooooooo!!! I have a brother who is one year younger than I. Mexican boys are like princes in their families. I have even asked my mother why it is okay for my brother to have sex and not me. She always says, 'Well you know how men are.' It isn't their fault if they have sex before marriage; it is simply in their nature. That is ridiculous”* (Study Participant, 2012). It was interesting to see that the discussion of male sexuality didn't seem to change with migration from Mexico to the United States, only that of woman sexuality.

I found that there was a difference in the experiences of the mothers and daughters. The social factors in the new country did affect how sexuality was perceived by the daughters and how their mothers began to change their discussion based on the

new environment. Other concerns took priority when sexuality was even discussed. i.e. pregnancy, health risks, mental well being. If these Mexican mothers had not immigrated to the United States, the daughters reflect that discussion about sexuality would be completely non-existent.

One of the participants of the study stated that *“I can safely assume, if I had been raised in Mexico, I wouldn’t even be talking about this with you. Had I been raised in Mexico, I probably wouldn’t have gone to school and I probably would have been raised in the ‘rancho.’ Had this happened, it wouldn’t be an issue of discussion. I would have followed in the footsteps of the women that came LONG before me. I would have been a GOOD Mexican woman. I think my mother was forced to talk about sex (although she didn’t talk about it that much) because in America you are exposed to it a lot more, or perhaps it is much more sensationalized, I don’t know. I have cousins in Mexico, they don’t think or act anything like me. And I have other cousins who were raised in Mexico, and came here as teenagers and it is a little much for them to handle. I think that is because they weren’t equipped to deal with all this SEX TALK. Here you have to talk about these sort of things with your daughters, because one day or another, they will be confronted by sex – and they must know. In Mexico, they will be confronted by sex, but it will come after marriage – not before. But who knows, maybe things have changed there to?”* (Study Participant #10). This Mexican-American participant made a very interesting point at the end of her response stating perhaps Mexico is changing. I would dare to add perhaps the discussion of sexuality is changing in Mexico due to the increase in migration from and to the United States. The influence of migration on a country adds to the

commercialization of products as well as the transfer of ideas, ideologies, and ways of thinking and living life.

### **Virginity**

From my results in this study, I derived the idea that virginity for Mexican-American women is about the emotional and personal aspect. The girls mentioned preserving their dignity and protecting themselves emotionally. I found this importance on the emotions tied to sexuality to be very refreshing because for the Mexican-American daughters it is no longer just a physical situation that they must protect and preserve but an emotional process that needs to be educated about and given options. The Mexican-American participants gave great emphasis on not only protecting themselves as individuals, but also emotionally and physically in regards to health and problems that may arise due to sexual activity before marriage or before being emotionally prepared to deal with the consequences of being sexuality active or unable to preserve virginity until marriage.

Gonzalez-Lopez (2005) explains in her work how virginity is used by Mexican women to “maximize their life conditions and opportunities by developing virginity into a social exchange value” (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005, p. 38). In my study with Mexican-American women I was able to confirm ideas presented in Sotelo’s (2003) edits with the chapter written Gonzalez-Lopez (2003) who conducted the study on migrant Mexican women, the thoughts included this idea that American men do not care whether a woman is virgin or not, thus changing the need for virginity to serve as a social exchange value and also influencing the discussion about sex with their daughters the Mexican-

Americans. Migrating to the United States leads to a different perception of virginity for Mexican-American daughters who no longer need to have the same worries and fears that were presented to their Mexican mothers who lived different experiences.

### **Social Conventions**

In the study I conducted I found that a lot of the respondents discuss the social conventions they confront and how they are different than those of their Mexican mothers. An example is that *“this past weekend I was at my parent’s home and my boyfriend and I took a nap in the same room/bedroom. My mother came marching upstairs and told me not to do that because of what people may think!”* (Study Participant #10). The social conventions of the Mexican mother are clearly seen in this example with her giving so much importance on what could be thought, when the Mexican-American daughter has a different perspective due to growing up in the United States. *“However, I don’t think I should NOT have sex because that is what she wants or what she thinks is right. I feel American children oppose their parents a lot more than other children, and I think this ‘rubs off on you’ in some kind of way. I can safely assume, if I had been raised in Mexico, I wouldn’t even be talking about this with you”* (Study Participant #10). The explanation of the participant really emphasized how there is different social conventions in the U.S and migration does lead to changes in the children of migrants who are surround and growing up in a different society.

The transformation that Mexican immigrant women undergo when migrating to the United States has a profound effect on their Mexican-American daughters who are raised in a country different than their mother’s home. My study participants expressed

their thoughts on their mother's homeland experiences with examples such as "*I think that because she's from a different generation, raised in Mexico, sex wasn't everywhere like it is today. So my grandmother never talked to them about it*" (Study Participant #9). In my analysis, this acknowledgement from the participants that their Mexican mothers experience was real and their understanding that times have changed and life is different for them led me to view how the Mexican-American daughters are trying to handle and process both their mother's teachings and their own experiences. The study participants were aware of their mother's worries that were due to the new environment of the United States.

### **Religion**

The Mexican-American study participants are aware of preconceived notions about religion being a major factor in preserving virginity until marriage. They refuted this preconceived notion and gave examples to explain how religion was not their Mexican mother's priority in emphasizing their preservation of virginity before marriage. "*I don't think that religion played any part in her not talking to me about sex. It was more a personal choice of hers not to*" (Study Participant #9). The Mexican-American study participants emphasized that their mothers "*Religion did not play a big part in our discussions about sex because my mother was more concerned about our wellbeing however it was brought up sometimes as a reminder that we were part of a religion that viewed sex before marriage as offensive and frowned upon*" (Study Participant #14). The reasons the Mexican-American study participants presented were very common reasons present in the United States that of preventing teen pregnancies and avoiding health risks

of contagious herpes and aids. While some mentioned their mothers presenting religion as simply another factor in the many that were mentioned.

Question 1: Describe a time when your mother discussed sex with you? It can be anything. Basically I want to know if she was comfortable discussing sex with you and if so, what was it that she emphasized was important for you to hear.

Mexican mothers are not discussing sex with their Mexican-American daughters. If they mention sex at all, it is only after they believe their daughters were already sexually active. *“When later I had my own two daughters. She thought my second daughter might already be sexually active at the age of about 12 or 13. It was important that she not be”* (Study Participant #8). Something that caught my attention from this study participant’s response is the age of the young girl. This means that Mexican mothers need to discuss sexuality at a very young age. Mexican-American girls are being exposed to sexuality at a very young age in the United States through media, advertisements, friends, and school.

*“My mother never really discussed sex with me prior to me being married. When I was in 6th grade I was sent to a sexual education course in which they talked about bodies changing, menstruation and sex. She spoke to me afterwards about getting my period soon, but that was it. Now that I am married, my mom makes comments about “being intimate” but nothing too specific”* (Study Participant #6). This study participant explains how sex education in school was her introduction to sex and how her mother used this moment to explain that she would menstruate, *“but that was it”* (Study Participant #6). This was the end of the conversation between mother and daughter

regarding sexuality. The study participant goes on to explain that “*now that she is married,*” and her mother “*comments*” on her intimacy but “*nothing too specific*” (Study Participant #6).

The following is a comment that displays this idea of jokingly insinuating the importance of protection if sexually active. “*I had a boyfriend for over a year and she made an insinuation about wearing condoms. Made it a joke. Something like, 'if you're going to the party, make sure you wear a party hat'*” (Study Participant #5). This comment was only made by the mother after the daughter had a boyfriend, which I find needs to be changed. Mothers should be discussing sex to their daughters before they have boyfriends. It should not be insinuated, it should be talked about explicitly to have open communication and understanding of the risks and consequences of being sexually active. The importance of mothers talking with their daughters about sex is due to the issues of believing the sex talk is unnecessary if they are not sexually active when the reality is that young women need to be aware of their sexuality and informed before becoming sexually active.

“*Never!!! When I got married she asked me if I was taking birth control. So it was implied that I was sexually active*” (Study Participant #3). Only after the mother presumes her married daughter is sexually active does she ask questions regarding her sexual health and precautions regarding the use of birth control. Why are mothers not asking their daughters questions about sex before marriage? Questions and answers need to be discussed even if there is no sexual activity.

*"It was very difficult for her to discuss it and to discuss it in explicit terms. The most memorable thing I can remember her saying is that one of the worst thing I could do is not be a virgin when I get married. Whenever I've had a boyfriend, there have always been cautions about not being 'bad' but sex was not talked about explicitly"* (Study Participant #2). The emphasis by Mexican mothers on the importance of remaining a virgin until marriage continues to be seen in the discussions among Mexican mothers and their Mexican-American daughters. This idea that being sexually active before marriage is "bad" is the only explanation given to the daughter regarding the need for her to remain a virgin. Accompanying this is the memorable speech given by her mother that the worst thing possible is to not be a virgin when getting married. No explanation or discussion, simply a statement that was given, like an order. There are no questions, buts, or discussion, just a fact in this study participants mothers mind.

*"My mother is a doctor, so she explained the science part of reproduction when I was about 8 (the sperm and eggs). I did go up to her occasionally as a teenager to ask certain questions, like is oral sex okay. Then when I was getting ready to get married she also said she was open to answering any questions I might have, but I never asked"* (Study Participant #4). The participant whose mother was a doctor describes a different experience with her mother in that she received a scientific explanation of the way her female body functions in the process of reproduction. The study participant response leads us to infer that she felt comfortable approaching her mother regarding questions of sexuality as she went through adolescence, womanhood, and later when she married. The mother, like a previous study respondent's mother, also assumes that questions regarding



sexuality may arise due to marriage and the start of sexual activity or the increase in sexual activity in their daughter's lives. Only then is it okay to bring such topics into appropriate consideration. It is also striking that when marriage arrives in their daughter's lives, the mother finds more reason to approach their daughters on a discussion of sexuality and are more open to answer questions or concerns they may have regarding their wedding night with their husband.

Question 2: How did virginity come into play in discussion about sexuality? Was there any importance with women maintaining virginity or no and why do you think she thought this/ What did you think were your mother's reasons to say what she did?

It is interesting that with questions regarding virginity, religion became a way for the study participants to explain how they understood their mother's ideas on sexuality and upholding their virginity until marriage. The study participants identified themselves as Christian or having Mexican mothers strongly influenced by the Catholic church. The following participant brings up an interesting point when she describes how her mother was disappointed when discovering her daughter was sexually active. The mother only displayed her disagreement when she gave her daughter pink pajamas instead of the more traditional white pajamas for her marriage years later. *"My mom implied that she thought I should have remained a virgin after she figured out that I was sexually active at the age of 18. She was very disappointed and got me pink pajamas rather than white when I got married 6 years later with the same male"* (Study Participant #15). We can also infer that the mother was not discussing sexuality with her daughter; otherwise, she may have been more informed about her daughter's decisions to become sexually active. It seems to have

been a disappointing surprise to find that the study participant was already sexually active and thus, nothing more could be said to the matter of virginity. The mother implying that she should have remained a virgin also suggests that the active sexuality her daughter portrayed did not help the mother discuss sexuality more openly with her daughter.

On the contrary, she continued to stay quiet and only display her disagreement to her daughter's sexual choices through her actions regarding her wedding present. Even with the awareness of sexual activity occurring, the mother refused to discuss with her daughter and continued to imply and assume the daughter understood her dislike of what she did.

Again the idea of remaining a virgin was always implied by the mother or in this case, the church. "*Virginity was mostly referred to as 'waiting for sex after marriage' and that was mostly emphasized at church. There was always an understatement that I will wait because of my religious convictions*" (Study Participant #6). This study participant does not mention her mother discussing virginity, but only hearing about the importance of waiting to have sex until after marriage at church where they emphasized abstinence and remaining a virgin. The study participant goes on to explain that the understatement was always present and that her decision to wait to have sex would be due to her religious convictions. The underlying message given to her at church was that if she was truly convicted to her religion, she would abstain from sexual activity before marriage. Even within the church providing their input, there is a lack of education for women who are just told not to have sex outside of marriage but not told why.

*"There's a saying about maintaining your body as a temple for your husband. My mother would basically criticize girls nowadays who start sleeping with many men before marriage"* (Study Participant #5). The religious influence in the study participant's awareness of the importance of maintaining virginity is shown here with her use of biblical scripture that explains *"your body is a temple for your husband"* (Study Participant #5). The bible says that our body is a temple, 1 Corinthians 6:19, and a woman's body can be likened to the Old Testament tabernacle which is another word for temple. The mother of this study participant is criticizing other girls about their sexual activity outside of marriage in front of her daughter. This is fascinating because the mother does not tell her daughter how bad it would be if she slept around with any man, but goes about explaining her disagreement with this behavior through the girls that surround her daughter. The mother is teaching her daughter about her expectations for her preservation of virginity even though it is not direct, but through a secondary conversation about random women that sleep around.

*"It was known that one should be virgin till marriage. my mother never said it, it was just expected in the way she would not want me to have boyfriends. Virginity and sex was never discussed"* (Study Participant #3). Again, we are presented with this continuing idea that *"it was known that one should be virgin till marriage,"* (Study Participant #3). There are no conversations about maintaining virginity because it was just the normal situation of life. The mother *"never said it"*, but the fact that boyfriends were not allowed answered any questions the daughter may have about sexual activity and reaffirmed any doubts the daughter may have about her mother's stance on sexuality

(Study Participant #3). The absence of a discussion between the mother and daughter leads to a lack of information. Although the daughter may have picked up on the hints and clues her mother was dropping regarding sexual activity or preserving her virginity, the issue of sex and virginity were never discussed, leaving gaps in the daughter's awareness to the consequences of sex and the reasons why it is important to remain virgin. *"Yes virginity is important for marriage. I think she feels it's important because that's the way she was raised to believe, she married young, and the Catholic church had lots of influence on her when she was younger"* (Study Participant #2). This study participant acknowledges that she is aware of her mother's beliefs on sexuality due to her history with the Catholic church and that emphasis on keeping her virginity for marriage.

We also get some insight into the daughter's awareness that her mother was "young" when she married (Study Participant #2). It seems that the daughter uses this information to explain her mother's belief of remaining a virgin until marriage due to her young age when marriage occurred. Subconsciously, the daughter is making a statement to further explain that her mother believes in virginity until marriage due to her own experience marrying young and still being able to remain virgin until marriage. *"I come from a Christian family, so virginity and complete sexual purity were expected and desired. The reasons for this were that we want to honor God with our body and use it as an expression of love within marriage"* (Study Participant #4). This study participant also begins her comment by stating that virginity her was "expected" (Study Participant #3). This makes me question how much of a conversation is really being held between the mother and daughter or if the daughter is getting her information from the church. The

participant here says that it was expected of her, but she does not mention dive deeper as to what foundation was created for this expectation. Did the church create this foundation for her perspective, or did a discussion with her mother cause this idea within her? This study participant does recognize that reasons were given to her to explain why she should remain with complete sexual purity. The use of the word “desired” to make clear that she should remain virgin made me question whether desired meant that it was the best outcome for her family and herself that she remain sexually pure or was her virginity meant to be used as a powerful tool she could utilize to be more desirable and tempting for men. Like the previous study participant, there is mention of how the female body and the maintaining of sexual purity serves to honor God and in this way it is important to remain virgin. She also mentions that virginity would function for her as an expression of love within marriage. This comment reminds me of the idea that remaining sexually pure until marriage means you are offering your husband proof of your love to him and in this way he cannot disrespect you during marriage.

Question 3: How did religion weigh for your mother when talking about sex with you? Did your religion affect how your mom talked about sex or what did religion contribute to the sex conversation? Or was something else important when warning you about sex and loss of virginity?

*"My mother did not discuss sex until after the fact. While she was deeply religious, it was more of a thing of shame if one should become pregnant out of wedlock, which did not happen"* (Study Participant #15). This study participant mentions something very important that religion was important to her mother in influencing her

thoughts on sexuality. What is more important here was the shame associated with a possible pregnancy out of wedlock. While reading Gonzalez-Lopez' (2005) work, we find these ideas associated with Mexican mothers and their duty to protect and educate their daughters about sexuality and the need to remain virgin until marriage. Thus, it is intriguing to find that even though the Mexican mother is raising her daughter in the United States where sexuality is prominently displayed on billboards, advertisements, and television the mother still has concerns about the shame an out of wedlock pregnancy would bring to her family. I would think that this shame for the mother is a motivator for her to educate her daughter regarding her sexuality, yet the mother did not discuss sex until after the fact, when her daughter was already sexually active. This leads me to question why the mother did not discuss sexuality sooner with her daughter. Did she not want to bring up the issue to prevent ideas in her daughters mind from forming or did she simply not think it was necessary, perhaps assuming her daughter knew of her expectations in remaining virgin before marriage. Fear and shame seem to outweigh the importance of religion when discussing sexuality with the daughter as well as the concern for pregnancy out of marriage.

*"Yes, it was all linked to religious arguments- aka- sex before marriage is a sin, etc"* (Study Participant #6). This study participant reaffirms the mothers influence by the church and her religion in arguing that the daughter not be sexually active before marriage. This idea of "sex before marriage is a sin" from the participant is depicted in the bible. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3, Bible). Religion for this study participant did play a

role in what information she was given by her mother and her church. "*She would mention a lot about how important is to present to God in a true white wedding dress for marriage and how sex before marriage is a sin*" (Study Participant #5). This study participant also is aware of the importance of religion in her mother's discussion of sexuality, especially the preservation of her virginity and with this idea, the study participant ties together religion and the white wedding dress used to signify sexual purity in the bride. "Virginity a private and public experience, preservation and loss expressed through socially constructed symbols, [for example], pregnancy out of wedlock, the white dress, and the embroidered wedding night bed sheet" (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005, p. 230) This idea of how important it is to be able to be able to present oneself unto God in a white wedding dress also ties to previous mothers concerns of the shame associated with out of wedlock pregnancy in that it is more visible to those outside of the family. The white wedding dress the bride will wear is also visible to outsiders, not only to God.

"*It was expected*" (Study Participant #3). This study participant continues to describe her ideas of remaining virgin as expectations which gave me an idea that the mother simply assumes her daughter knows she wants her to remain virgin, but has not discussed anything regarding preservation of virginity. "*Religion was definitely important and weighed into conversations but there were also warnings about not getting pregnant before marriage and essentially 'ruining' your life*" (Study Participant #2). One result from sex is pregnancy. The study participant explains how religion was an important factor in her mother's warnings toward sexual activity, and weighed in higher than

religion when it came to reasons why the daughter should abstain from sexual activity before marriage. The participant describes how “*ruining*” your life is the threatening warning given out to those considering sexual activity (Study Participant #2). The term used to describe other factors that weighed into the concerns of the mother besides religion are “*warnings*” (Study Participant #2). The study participant is saying that her mother gave her an indirect demand to not get pregnant and this served as a more important reason not to have sex.

*"Honoring God was the foremost concern, but we were warned also about unwanted pregnancy, emotional pain, possibility of disease, etc"* (Study Participant #4). The main idea for this participant was to honor God and maintain virginity. The study participants main ideas for not having sex is to avoid unwanted pregnancy, emotional pain associated to being sexually active, as well as the health risks of getting infected with diseases.

Question 4: Was sexual health safety of concern or ever mentioned like protection or health risks? Did your mom focus a lot on the risks of having premarital sex or not staying a virgin? How were health issues mentioned when talking about sexual activity?

*"Yes. She liked to mention how AIDS is rampant nowadays"* (Study Participant #5). This study participant’s mother informs her daughter about the health risks associated with premarital sex, but always through other secondary individuals. The study participant point outs in her comment that her mother talks about AIDS and how “*nowadays*” it is so prevalent to warn her daughter of the dangers in becoming sexually active before marriage. Sex was rarely discussed explicitly among these study



participant's mothers and health issues were not brought up due to the lack of conversation.

Question 5: What concerns or general ideas did your mother try to express to you about sex?

*"Health issues were not discussed as they related to sexual activity. She never talked to me about the importance of seeing a gynecologist or anything along those lines"* (Study Participant #2). This study participant is aware of the significance of taking care of our female health and everything that is involved with that including a visit to the Gynecologist. The study participant is college educated while we are uncertain of the mother's level of education. We can perceive the daughters understanding of the need to be aware of health issues related to ones sexuality. There is more to sex than just loss of virginity. Health and disease are also important aspects to discuss regarding sexual activity.

*"The biggest thing that concerned mom was having to be a mother too young. I knew that a baby would always be a blessing, but she did warn me and show me examples of how hard it was to be a teenage mom, a single mom, and how much the child would suffer"* (Study Participant #4, 2012). The health aspect that was mentioned by the study participants more than once was the issue of pregnancy. The mothers discussed the shame of having a child outside of marriage and was discussed regarding ones values rather than a health risks.

Question 8: How do you feel American society has affected sex and virginity for you?

*"I think some Americans and some Mexicans, who I have met, think having sex is like drinking water. I think sex has lost some of its special value and it is not so important to be monogamous. I prefer to maintain a sexual relationship with one person"* (Study Participant #15). The study participant describes Americans viewing sex, *"like drinking water,"* normal and of no special value (Study Participant #15). In this section, we see how American culture has affected this study participants viewpoint regarding sex. It is unique that she describes as an everyday normal activity when in the past, sex was more of a taboo subject. Drinking water is a necessity of life, and living in America, with her response, it seems that she is saying that sex is a necessity of life in America as well.

Question 9: What did you want to hear regarding the sex talk?

This question on the survey was very important in that I could get a firsthand look into the Mexican-American daughter's opinion on what they wanted to hear regarding sexuality growing up. *"I would have liked to have heard something but my mother was very Victorian and did not like to discuss private matters"* (Study Participant #15). The study participants describe their need for information with any information given would have been useful to them since they agree their mothers gave them little to no information. *"What it [sex] was basically had to learn elsewhere"* (Study Participant #5). This left the daughters to find information elsewhere or piece together the piece of assumed information left by their Mexican mothers. One of the study participants goes on to include the basic questions of what is sex? When is it ok to have sex? The participant even asked about the explanation of sex within marriage. *"What it is - when is appropriate - risks associated with multiple sex partners - risks (physical, emotional,*

*spiritual) associated with premarital sex - sex within marriage - hormones"* (Study Participant #6). This leads me to say that the mothers tried their best to safeguard their daughters yet information was needed to be more aware of one's sexuality. Perhaps based on some of the study participant's knowledge of their mothers experience with sexuality back in her home country, they understand that she too needed to learn more about sexuality in order to better inform her daughter.

Another study participant goes on to explain the bond that could have resulted between her and her mother if she had taken time to approach her daughter about the subject. *"Anything would have been good because it goes beyond that, the most meaningful idea is that it would have created a closer bond and trust between my mother and me. Till this day we don't discuss sex openly. I would feel very uncomfortable to bring up sex as a conversation or even for her to ask me something. I am 27 and I would feel very embarrassed if she were to ask me about my sex life. I would probably just laugh it off and not answer sincerely"* (Study Participant #3). The sex conversation, or the preservation of virginity, can be turned into a good relationship tool to create more open communication between mother and daughter and it seems this is what the study participants want for other mothers and daughters. *"How to stay safe and healthy and also to promote healthy relationships that may or may not include sex at appropriate maturity levels"* (Study Participant #2). I find that they are aware of how more information would help them and how their experiences contribute to conversations of sexuality among women. *"I think what mom said was enough. I think I unwillingly learned too much about sex from TV, movies, school, magazines, etc. I think that being*

*able to come up with questions is good, because then the mystery isn't robbed from me"* (Study Participant #4). This particular participant seems overwhelmed with the amount of information regarding sex she encountered and the mother did not say much. The experience of growing up in the United States served plenty in informing her about sexuality and her level of education gives insight into the resources she had available to access more information regarding sexuality if she needed.

Question 10: How did your mother approach you with the topic? And why?

*"Like I said, it was never talked about"* (Study Participant #6). The study participants are aware of the information they needed and did not receive before finding out about sex elsewhere. *"My mom explained everything to me with medical terminology and it was after the sex talk in school"* (Study Participant #4). Even the study participant, who was given a medical explanation, by her mother who was a physician, received this information after hearing the sex talk in school. *"She only approached me about the topic when she discovered I was sexually active after I went to college. My sister told me about the facts of life after I graduated from high school. I was a very late bloomer. I am lucky no one took advantage of me and got me pregnant"* (Study Participant #15). The daughters already had ideas regarding sexuality before their mothers approached them with information or cautionary warnings of watching their behavior. *"She never did"* (Study Participant #3). While some study participants had little information, some had no information from their mothers at all. Why is it that some mothers spoke to their daughters while others did not? I find that it is in regard to mothers being forced to discuss the topic of sex. By force, I mean that these mothers were confronted with the

issues the daughters brought to their attention. This includes first boyfriends, pregnancy, and leaving home to go to college.

*"I think she first approached me in high school about it and it was mostly a cautionary experience. Don't do it was the message I received, over and over"* (Study Participant #2). The study participants had to themselves approach the mother and even when doing so they were cautioned against getting pregnant and were never explained how that happens or why that is important. *"Once I had a boyfriend over one year in college. I would have wanted that talk in high school instead or even middle school"* (Study Participant #5). The age at which these study participants were approached or given some ideas about sexuality from their mothers was high school or college after the fact that they had already been exposed to many other sources of information. They mention it would have been helpful if they had heard about sex first hand from their mothers ahead of time. The study participant makes a good point when she says she would have preferred hearing about sex and virginity in middle school. Sex information is prevalent in media, literature, advertisements, and radio. Younger girls are exposed to this information and are discussing it with friends.

Question 11: Do you think that sex and virginity have been explained to you the same as male relatives? Or do you think there are differences?

*"There are differences. Women are more pressured to abstain than men"* (Study Participant #5). The study participants acknowledge they feel additional pressure being women to abstain from having sex before marriage unlike men. The study participant's male counterparts are treated with a more hands off approach regarding their sexuality

and preservation of virginity. "*The same expectations were set for my sister, brother and I, we were all expected to remain pure until marriage, and all got pretty much the same explanations*" (Study Participant #4). The other participant felt that her and her siblings were all given the same expectations which gives rise to other important questions. Say for example if they were all expected to remain pure, are they aware of the consequences if they disobey and become sexually active?

Question 12: How do you think your mother's worries about sex and virginity have changed because she is in the United States and you have been raised here like a Mexican-American? Do you think she would have talked to you differently if you were in Mexico?

The study participant's responses give us insight into their experiences with their Mexican mothers and the influence of the United States on their perceptions of sexuality. The daughters notice a heightened fear in the way their mothers talk about the fast paced society in which they live in. This also translates to the quick growth of their children into adolescents and how sex seems to be the norm in the United States. "*She becomes more nervous here and blames everything on American society. How fast teenagers develop, how sex is more available and how it's become the norm*" (Study Participant #5). This study participant acknowledges that her mother's form of communication was to not discuss the problem of sex when she describes "*she probably did but it was just always expected that if we don't talk about it then you should not do it. No she probably would not have addressed the subject if we were to live in Mexico*" (Study Participant #3). This

is ironic in that the mother feels that by ignoring the problem, it will disappear and not exist.

The participants notice a difference in their mother's behavior in the United States and this is made clear with the example from the participant that her mother did not push her to marry in order to stay virgin until marriage like other relatives continued to do. The daughter also mentions that culture in Mexico propagates early marriage to ensure virginity until marriage. *"If she were in Mexico she probably would have encouraged me to get married. She actually has not pushed that on me at all unlike other relatives. I think that sex only in marriage for her are linked and so in a culture where that is more important would make her tell me to get married more. I still think she would have cautioned me against having sex and behaving 'badly'"* (Study Participant #2). A quote from the book Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States, edited by David G. Gutierrez, in 1996, states "my mom pushed the fact that she wanted me to have a profession—seeing that I wasn't thinking of getting married" (Gutierrez, 1996, p 134). This quote relates to what the study participant stated in that the study participants mother did not push her to get married. The daughter mentions that relatives pressured her into getting married soon because of the culture in Mexico. However, with the mother living in the United States, she understood the importance of a profession rather than the Mexican mindset of pushing her daughter to get married. The daughter makes the connection that the culture in the United States does not emphasize marriage as being important due to her mother's lack of pressure.

The other study participant shares her mother's increased openness and willingness to listen more due to the distance that college created between them. *"When I went to college my mom worried about me facing greater amount of temptation because I'd be alone and surrounded by all kinds of people. If I had been in Mexico I would've lived at home and had more support. I think she prayed a lot for me, and she was also willing to listen a lot more because she knew it was crucial"* (Study Participant #4). No longer at home, her mother had to face her fears of the temptation that the study participant would encounter and thus prepared herself to be available if her daughter needed her advice on matters of sexuality.

Question 13: Who are you learning your perspective on sexuality from? When did you become exposed to sexuality and begin forming your own opinion on the subject?

The study participants share the sources of their information on sexuality, which include most common of all friends and then television and media, the bible, boyfriends, and college. They do mention that their first exposures to sexuality began earlier than college in their late teen years and as early as the age of fifteen. As noted earlier, a study participant really wished she heard about sexuality as early as middle school. Friends and media play a major role in exposing women about sexuality and it is interesting to hear that college also affects the way the women are advised by their mothers who are no longer as close since the women move to the college campus to attend school. The study participant that explains her perspective resulting from her religion and reading of the bible also mentions exposure to sexuality at a young age through media which I found



speaks to what we as Americans are exposed to in our everyday lives in the United States.

Question 14: Did the United States have an impact on your mother's view on sexuality? Do you have a different perspective from your mother? Why did you develop an alternate view than that of your mother?

*"I do have a different view than her. I think education plays a part on it as well. I feel I make more educated choices. It is a combination. Her voice was always within me as I formed my own view"* (Study Participant #5). Vicki L. Ruiz (1996) states that the experiences of Mexican American women coming of age between 1920 and 1950 "reveal the blending of the old and the new, fashioning new expectations, making choices, and learning to live with those choices" (Ruiz, 1996, p. 141). The Mexican-American women in 1920-1950 were in a similar situation as Mexican-American women today in 2012. Their mothers were Mexican and traditional, yet they are adopting new cultural forms due to their experiences growing up in the United States. This dated information supports the study participants view, but I find that it gives you an idea how the first generation Mexican-American (the generation born in the united states from immigrant parents) college educated woman has adopted a new point of view. She maintains her Mexican-American identity and cultural ties to her mother by continuing to value the mother's lessons regarding preservation of virginity and ideas regarding sexuality that have helped form her own perspective on sexuality, even though they may no longer apply to her life in the United States.

It is important to note that my study participants are college educated women and that acknowledge education playing a role in helping them be informed and have a better understanding of their views on sexuality. The study participants are aware that their mother's view sex as taboo and due to all of the visible signs of sexuality in advertising, media, and society, their fears become exaggerated in the United States. The participants all had different perspectives on sexuality than their mothers and were due to their experiences in the United States. Their upbringing was not the same as those experienced by their mothers growing up. The study participants attended college and this led them to experience the "college culture" that were unfamiliar experiences not understood by the mothers. Each participant had to adjust and learn from these experiences as part of their upbringing.

### **Discussion**

Mexican-American women perceive sexuality and virginity different than their Mexican mothers. American society has impacted how they view sexuality and my study continues to support the previous study of Mexican daughters in that religion is not the main focus when discussing sexuality. Mothers need to discuss sex in order to prevent misinterpretations that may occur. This is in part due to the large volume of information that girls are receiving that is not always accurate from television shows and friends that may know about sexuality or be sexuality active.

The discussion about sex should not have to be set back until after marriage, but at a young age in order for women to have more information that is helpful in their sexual experiences. Conversations about sex need to occur with more frequency between

mothers and daughters in order to prepare young women to be knowledgeable about their sexuality before having a partner in their life. Simply having information about their sexuality will help women when having conversations with other young women. The more information women have about sex and related health concerns leads to a more responsible and conscious individual that can then make informed decisions about their sexuality or decision to be abstinent.

The discussion about sex is made through insinuations or not explicitly discussed. Over and over again, the study participants responded that the sex topic was implied, not explicitly said, jokingly mentioned, or ideas of abstinence were given more importance with no explanation but that simply sex should not happen, end of conversation.

The results of my project display a lack of discussion between Mexican mothers and Mexican-American daughters regarding the topic of sex. It is important that young Mexican-American women ask questions and receive responses from their mothers regarding sex in order to be better prepared when they do finally become sexually active. Mothers who are their first role models should involve themselves in these conversations to understand what their daughters know already and go from there in explaining about values, health risks, abstinence, use of condoms and birth control, and any other sexuality related issues including menstruation and pregnancy.

Without question, all the study participants suggested education as the key to having more Mexican-American women informed about their sexuality and preservation of their virginity. The more information and resources that are available to women, the more likely they will be able to make well informed decisions about their choice to be

sexually active or to abstain from sexual activity. With this, the women are also gaining awareness of the risks involved in being sexually active before marriage.

## **Section IX. Where Will Perceptions On Sexuality Take Us Now**

Dealing with more than one culture, Mexican-American women face conflicting perceptions regarding their sexuality. Mexican-American women are caught between two worlds in that in one world, their Mexican mothers are teaching them about values, and how to be good women in regards to their sexuality. The other world brings influences of the United States that are different than those of the mother. Mexican-American daughters express feelings of having to adapt to their parents ideals and mentality, yet living in the United States, they feel as if they cannot live to their expectations. Most of the Mexican mothers from this study are not having conversations with their Mexican-American daughters because they fear that by discussing sexuality, this will lead their daughters to sexual activity in the same way they feel that by not discussing sex, will prevent sex from happening.

The United States is changing the perspective of Mexican-American daughters on issues related to sexuality by creating awareness on issues that their mothers will not discuss. The daughters are receiving their information about sexuality from other sources early in life before their mother even hints about sexuality. The mother is not the first educator of sexuality due to no conversations on sexuality between mothers and daughters. Mexican-American daughters are blending their mother's ideas and values with their decision to make their own interpretations on their perceptions of sexuality.

### **Future Research**

More exploration on Mexican-American born women of different ages, college or high school education, as well as different economic backgrounds is needed. Increase in the number of participants and focus on women in college or higher education as well as high school can further research. Future research should include inquiries on their mother's level of education and hometown information, specifically the regions of Mexico where they are from to see how this changes the information that is exchanged by migrant mothers and Mexican-American daughters. Future research that includes Mexican-American daughters that are multiracial can provide further analysis if the Mexican influence continues or not.

#### **Limitations of the study**

Mexican-American women used in this study were specifically from Texas and a wider range of responses can be recorded from all areas in the United States. The sample size of 20 participants, of which 16 responded, can be increased to 50 participants to give more insight on how perceptions of sexuality are changing. The background information recorded in this study was limited to women were born in the United States by mothers who migrated from Mexico. Background information regarding their mothers hometowns in Mexico, education level, and time spent in the United States can bring further in depth analysis regarding perceptions of sexuality by Mexican-American women.

My study did not consider Mexican-American father's discussions with their daughters and this perspective should be further investigated. This study only included Mexican-American daughters raised by Mexican mothers which cannot be used to generalize all Latino groups.

## **Appendix**

### **Questionnaire**

Question 1: Describe a time when your mother discussed sex with you? It can be anything. Basically I want to know if she was comfortable discussing sex with you and if so, what was it that she emphasized was important for you to hear.

Question 2: How did virginity come into play in discussion about sexuality? Was there any importance with women maintaining virginity or no and why do you think she thought this/ What did you think were your mother's reasons to say what she did?

Question 3: How did religion weigh for your mother when talking about sex with you? Did your religion affect how your mom talked about sex or what did religion contribute to the sex conversation? Or was something else important when warning you about sex and loss of virginity?

Question 4: Was sexual health safety of concern or ever mentioned like protection or health risks? Did your mom focus a lot on the risks of having premarital sex or not staying a virgin? How were health issues mentioned when talking about sexual activity?

Question 5: What concerns or general ideas did your mother try to express to you about sex?

Question 6: How do you feel your mothers experience with sex talks and virginity differ or are similar to your experience with sex and virginity?

Question 7: Could you relate to what your mother talked about? How is your experience with topics of sex and virginity different?

Question 8: How do you feel American society has affected sex and virginity for you?

Question 9: What did you want to hear regarding the sex talk?

Question 10: How did your mother approach you with the topic? And why?

Question 11: Do you think that sex and virginity have been explained to you the same as male relatives? Or do you think there are differences?

Question 12: How do you think your mother's worries about sex and virginity have changed because she is in the United States and you have been raised here like a Mexican-American? Do you think she would have talked to you differently if you were in Mexico?

Question 13: Who are you learning your perspective on sexuality from? When did you become exposed to sexuality and begin forming your own opinion on the subject?

Question 14: Did the United States have an impact on your mother's view on sexuality? Do you have a different perspective from your mother? Why did you develop an alternate view than that of your mother?

Question 15: Where in your opinion are the Mexican-American women being exposed to sexuality? i.e. school, television, friends, etc. Where have you received your information on sexuality? Do you think this has an effect on Mexican-American women pregnancy and disease rates in the United States?

Question 16: What do you think we should do in order to have more Mexican-American women informed about sexuality?



## **Raw Data**

### **Participant 1**

Question 1: I was about 12 years old. I asked her about sex and she was more curious as to why I was asking these questions but she still answered me. She emphasized about waiting until marriage, if a man loves you he will wait.

Question 2: It was very important for my mom that I stayed a virgin until marriage. She based it mainly on her Christianity.

Question 3: Religion was the main factor that affected my mom's views on sexuality and virginity

Question 4: Health was not discussed as much

Question 5: No response.

Question 6: No response.

Question 7: Yes I can relate to what my mother talked about. She was right in many ways when it came to religion. I grew up with Christian beliefs so in my eyes premarital sex is not good in God's eyes and brings a feeling of guilt every now and then.

Question 8: American society had a big role in my life when making decisions about sex and virginity. Is sort of like the saying "everyone's doing it" it's everywhere, songs movies pictures, everyone wants it.

Question 9: No response.

Question 10: I approached my mother. I heard friends talking about sex and so I had to ask my mom to see what sex was all about.

Question 11: No response.

Question 12: No response.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

## **Participant 2**

Question 1: It was very difficult for her to discuss it and to discuss it in explicit terms. The most memorable thing I can remember her saying is that one of the worst things I could do is not be a virgin when I get married. Whenever I've had a boyfriend, there have always been cautions about not being "bad" but sex was not talked about explicitly.

Question 2: Yes virginity is important for marriage. I think she feels it's important because that's the way she was raised to believe, she married young, and the Catholic church had lots of influence on her when she was younger.

Question 3: Religion was definitely important and weighed into conversations but there were also warnings about not getting pregnant before marriage and essentially "ruining" your life.

Question 4: Health issues were not discussed as they related to sexual activity. She never talked to me about the importance of seeing a gynecologist or anything along those lines.

Question 5: Don't do it. At least this was the message when I was younger. Now that I am older, it's not really brought up.

Question 6: Very different. We grew up in completely different cultures and see differently about the issue. I can see her mother telling her not to do it either and that be the only thing they talked about.

Question 7: It's difficult for me to relate to what my mother talked about. I never sought to get married young so did not believe that sex could only exist in marriage.

Question 8: Very much so. I have learned everything about sex and sexual health from attending American schools where you learned about health topics since elementary school. I have learned about sex from other sources: friends and experience mostly.

Question 9: How to stay safe and healthy and also to promote healthy relationships that may or may not include sex at appropriate maturity levels.

Question 10: I think she first approached me in high school about it and it was mostly a cautionary experience. Don't do it was the message I received, over and over.

Question 11: I have no idea actually. I think my mother was more cautious with me being her first child and daughter than my younger brother. Her attitude toward him has been more hands off about a lot of his decisions so I can imagine that sex and virginity were also hands off with him but I am not sure.

Question 12: if she were in Mexico she probably would have encouraged me to get married. She actually has not pushed that on me at all unlike other relatives. I think that sex only in marriage for her are linked and so in a culture where that is more important would make her tell me to get married more. I still think she would have cautioned me against having sex and behaving "badly"

Question 13: I think initially I learned from friends and have formed my own perspective from experience. I was first exposed to sexuality at 19 and my opinions have formed since then.

Question 14: Probably this had an influence in her thinking that I would be exposed to all these dangers and temptations. I think her fears are exaggerated and I feel like I have taken a fairly mature approach to relationships and sexuality.

Question 15: I think school in the form of health courses and friends is where most women are getting their info. I think this absolutely has influence on pregnancy and disease. If many girls are getting the same message I did from my mother, which was "don't do it" and sometimes getting inadequate information about preventative measures due conservative agendas around health education, then I think there's a huge knowledge gap about sexuality, health, and pregnancy.

Question 16: Schools need to offer sexual health information. Also I think resources like Planned Parenthood, which unfortunately also has been receiving a backlash, need to reach out to these under-served communities. I'm not sure how many mothers would change their perspectives on sexuality and be able to talk candidly with their daughters, but that is also necessary, but probably difficult.

### **Participant 3**

Question 1: Never!!! When I got married she asked me if I was taking birth control. so it was implied that I was sexually active.

Question 2: It was known that one should be virgin till marriage. my mother never said it, it was just expected in the way she would not want me to have boyfriends. virginity and sex was never discussed.

Question 3: It was expected.

Question 4: Never.

Question 5: None. when I started my menstrual cycle she said I could not use tampons because I was a "senorita"

Question 6: My mom probably did not get that sex talk either. I am not too comfortable discussing sex and I think it is because that is how I was raised that we do not discuss "that" and maybe my mom was raised the same.

Question 7: No response.

Question 8: American society allows me to understand it is natural and "it is ok". It is ok to like it and not feel guilty! Also understand all sex infections that can occur so it has made me aware of the importance of annual women checkups.

Question 9: Anything would have been good because it goes beyond that, the most meaningful idea is that it would have created a closer bond and trust between my mother and me. Till this day, we don't discuss sex openly. I would feel very uncomfortable to bring up sex as a conversation or even for her to ask me something. I am 27 and I would feel very embarrassed if she were to ask me about my sex life. I would probably just laugh it off and not answer sincerely

Question 10: She never did.

Question 11: Do not know.

Question 12: She probably did but it was just always expected that if we do not talk about it then you should not do it. no she probably would not have addressed the subject if we were to live in MX.

Question 13: I have learned the most from friends and television. I began to form my own opinions in late teen years.

Question 14: She is conservative so her views probably clash with United States liberal perspective. I do have a diff perspective than my mother. I believe sex is natural and should not be a taboo as long as protection is always first thought out. for unwanted pregnancies.

Question 15: School, friends, and family even. sex is never addressed usually in Mexican-American households, therefore, unwanted pregnancies are so common especially at young ages. I am 27 and am the only one in my entire family and extended family who has not had a child. that is very weird in my family. It is expected I have children right away. especially if you are married. if families would openly discuss sex to prevent disease and unwanted pregnancies, young women would be more aware and take precautions when having sex, but since they have sex against family rules they just are ignorant to consequences when they become sexually active.

Question 16: Educate the parents first. Educate mothers "how" to discuss sex and understand that it is "ok" to discuss sex with their daughters. Have them understand how their advise to their daughters can be so powerful!! Mothers would be sending the message to their daughters that they care about them, understand their curiousness, want to help them, and you can confide in me as your mom but also as a women. That message

would be so powerful to young women. I would have loved for my mom to talk me when I was a teen. it is not the same if my mom talks to me as if a counselor or gynecologist. does. If parents would discuss sex with their children, they would become more aware of consequences and mother to daughter bond would grow stronger simultaneously, creating a sense in daughters of not wanting to disappoint their mothers and family.

#### **Participant 4**

Question 1: My mother is a doctor, so she explained the science part of reproduction when I was about eight (the sperm and eggs). I did go up to her occasionally as a teenager to ask certain questions, like is oral sex okay. Then when I was getting ready to get married she also said she was open to answering any questions I might have, but I never asked.

Question 2: I come from a Christian family, so virginity and complete sexual purity were expected and desired. The reasons for this were that we want to honor God with our body and use it as an expression of love within marriage.

Question 3: Honoring God was the foremost concern, but we were warned also about unwanted pregnancy, emotional pain, possibility of disease, etc.

Question 4: The biggest thing that concerned mom was having to be a mother too young. I knew that a baby would always be a blessing, but she did warn me and show me examples of how hard it was to be a teenage mom, a single mom, and how much the child would suffer.

Question 5: Mom tried to say that sex was meant to bring the greatest intimacy between husband and wife and how sex outside of marriage does the exact opposite, it brings control issues, fear, and disappointment.

Question 6: I agree with my mother completely, except that she is shy to speak about it whereas I'm pretty open to talking about it if it's for a necessary cause. What I mean is I don't mean to tell the entire world my experience, but if it would benefit someone I wouldn't be embarrassed. I think mom is more private.

Question 7: As I said before, I agreed with mom, I'm very grateful for what she taught me, and hope to teach my daughter half as well.

Question 8: I grew up mostly in Mexico, but I did spend one year of elementary school in the US, and another year in high school. I think it is a shame that people are pressured into being sexual so much. I'm sad at the lack of decency and the moral decay in the country, and concerned that parents don't take the responsibility of protecting their children and teen properly. In high school I knew girls whose own mothers put them in birth control, and I wondered what kind of mother would do that! Why not teach their daughters their true value?

Question 9: I think what mom said was enough. I think I unwillingly learned too much about sex from TV, movies, school, magazines, etc. I think that being able to come up with questions is good, because then the mystery isn't robbed from me.

Question 10: My mom explain everything to me with medical terminology and it was after the sex talk in school.



Question 11: The same expectations were set for my sister, brother and I, we were all expected to remain pure until marriage, and all got pretty much the same explanations.

Question 12: When went to college my mom worried about me facing greater amount of temptation because I'd be alone and surrounded by all kinds of people. If I had been in Mexico I would've lived at home and had more support. I think she prayed a lot for me, and she was also willing to listen a lot more because she knew it was crucial.

Question 13: I learn my perspective from the Bible, and I don't think that will ever change. The second part of the question is a little vague...I think I was exposed through media from a young age, and I had my opinion set when I was 15 and decided not to date because I did not want to give into temptation, and a relationship as such young age would've been unwise.

Question 14: I think the US makes my mom sad in the sexuality respect. I do not have a different perspective from hers regarding sexuality, just regarding male-female friendships. My mom wanted me to be home at dark which was an unrealistic expectation, so she had to learn to understand it. Mom also didn't want male visitors in my dorm room, but I had many good guy friends that came over to watch movies or have dinner. This difference in views came from college culture which mom did not experience.

Question 15: I think Mexican-American women are being exposed to sexuality the same as everyone else: from television, friends, school, magazines, movies, and family examples. I received information from all of this sources. I am sure that all the pressure put on women to be sexual has an effect on them. I for example, learned what

masturbation was in my senior year in college from the Vagina Monologues, and wanted to experiment. So of course women will want to try out all kinds of things, and as a result may become pregnant or ill, yes.

Question 16: I think we should have more people preaching the love of Christ to all young women, so that they will know who they are and not put up with lies about sex and their bodies.

### **Participant 5**

Question 1: I had a boyfriend for over a year and she make an insinuation about wearing condoms. Made it a joke. Something like, "if you're going to the party, make sure you wear a party hat."

Question 2: There's a saying about maintaining your body as a temple for your husband. My mother would basically criticize girls nowadays who start sleeping with many men before marriage.

Question 3: She would mention a lot about how important is to present to God in a true white wedding dress for marriage and how sex before marriage is a sin.

Question 4: Yes. She liked to mention how AIDS is rampant nowadays.

Question 5: Basically to have protection, be careful who we choose, and maintain abstinence as long as possible with every relationship.

Question 6: She didn't have a talk whereas she sort of dropped hints here and there but never truly had a full conversation.

Question 7: Ideas are different now. To stay a virgin was the norm. To marry young was the norm as well. It is not anymore.

Question 8: American culture makes you think when you are young that sticking to virginity as long as possible is prude and old fashioned.

Question 9: What it was basically. Had to learn elsewhere.

Question 10: Once I had a boyfriend over one year in college. I would've wanted that talk in high school instead or even middle school.

Question 11: There are differences. Women are more pressured to abstain than men.

Question 12: She becomes more nervous here and blames everything on American society. How fast teenagers develop, how sex is more available and how it is becoming the norm.

Question 13: I learnt in college from friends and boyfriends, and my own experiences.

Question 14: I do have a different view than her. I think education plays a part on it as well. I feel I make more educated choices. It's a combination. Her voice was always within me as I formed my own view.

Question 15: Mexican-American women are exposed in school now more than ever due to the increasing pregnancy and disease rates. And this stems from television, radio, and society (such as clothing) that makes sex more acceptable at younger and younger ages.

Question 16: Education at a young age. Because nowadays kids learn from each other since mothers won't speak about it until they think they are having sex already. Therefore they get misinformation. They need the truth from a good source with a

combination of morals and why abstinence is a good option with combination of religion and Mexican-American values. Maybe even teaching the mothers first and then the girls, on the same day but different classes, that way they have an assignment when going home, both mothers and daughters talk about it with each other. The class being the icebreaker.

### **Participant 6**

Question 1: My mother never really discussed sex with me prior to me being married. When I was in 6th grade I was sent to a sexual education course in which they talked about bodies changing, menstruation and sex. She spoke to me afterwards about getting my period soon, but that was it. Now that I am married, my mom makes comments about "being intimate" but nothing to specific.

Question 2: Virginty was mostly referred to as "waiting for sex after marriage" and that was mostly emphasized at church. There was always a understatement that I will wait because of my religious convictions.

Question 3: Yes, it was all linked to religious arguments- aka- sex before marriage is a sin, etc.

Question 4: We really never talked about the risks of premarital sex. All the information I learned was from other sources.

Question 5: None.

Question 6: Honestly, I know I was very sheltered growing up. When I went to college, I was a virgin and did not know much about my sexuality. Through friends and my own research, I learned about the risks involving premarital sex, etc. Also, my

Christian convictions helped me in making the decision to wait to have sex until after marriage. So I did. Since my mom really never talked to me about sex, I am not sure how our experiences differ.

Question 7: No response.

Question 8: I feel that in Mexican culture- "Sex" is a taboo word, no one really wants to talk about it. In fact, if a girl was remotely interested in talking about it (even with girlfriends) it was seen as wrong and look down upon. When I was recently married (been married for 5 years now), I struggled with guilt associated with sex- even though I was married. I realized the guilt surfaced from years of not being able to express myself by talking about my questions, fears and even desires. Now, I am much more open talking about the subject. In fact, I've tried to talk to my younger sisters about it since I know my mom won't bring up the subject to them. In essence, American society, or my experiences in a culture who is much more open about the "sex talk" has allowed me to experience freedom.

Question 9: - What it is - when is appropriate - risks associated with multiple sex partners - risks (physical, emotional, spiritual) associated with premarital sex - sex within marriage - hormones

Question 10: Like I said, it was never talked about.

Question 11: No response.

Question 12: No response.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 7**

Response: Honestly my mother never had the talk with me. It was kind of just implied that sex was only ok for people who were married. I never even really got the whole becoming a woman talk. I think she just wasn't comfortable talking to me about it. Sort of like that kind of stuff was taboo. I remember asking once as a little girls about sanitary pads and she just responded you're not old enough to know. But she seemed upset that I was asking about it. I would have liked being informed about it all though. I was a teen mom and at times I wonder if my mother would have talked to me about it, would things have been different. I don't know if any of this really helps.

### **Participant 8**

Question 1: Well my mom has talked to about sex many many times. It started in high school. She would always tell me about the importance of being married before having sex. She wouldn't talk much about using protection because she didn't want me having sex period. Now, when she talks to me about sex she encourages protected sex more than just not having sex. I guess she just assumes that I'm going to be having sex and that she can't do anything about it so she encourages protection until the time is appropriate for me to have children. She was very comfortable in talking about this with me. She never hesitated to bring it up if she felt it was needed to be talked about.

Question 2: Like I said in the first response she always encouraged me to stay a virgin until I got married. She is very traditional and her big reason in it was not only for

religious reason but that she wanted to feel proud in knowing her daughter wasn't sleeping around. She always said she wanted to see me walk down the aisle in a white dress. Another big reason was she said she only has had sex with me dad and that was after they got married.

Question 3: She did talk about religion as a part of why I shouldn't have sex but I know that her biggest concern was getting pregnant at a young age.

Question 4: She did mention it but it was all in passing. She never made a big deal about health risks and she hardly ever mentioned it. She knows there are a lot of diseases that one can catch when having sex but that was never really brought up in our conversations about sex.

Question 5: Her main concern was definitely pregnancy.

Question 6: My mom is very traditional. She comes from a family where they were strict on her and a time in history where having sex before marriage was frowned upon. I think that sex is being more socially acceptable.

Question 7: I understood her reasons in saying the things that she said but I definitely thought that our times in growing up are very different. I don't think I can say that I can relate but I can say that I understood her reasoning.

Question 8: Like I've said I think that it is becoming more socially acceptable. I think it's affected me in my way of thinking. I think that when I was younger I used to think that having sex wasn't a big deal because everyone did it. I didn't think it was cool to do, per say but I didn't think it was much an issue.

Question 9: I wanted to have options, like the ones I have now. Growing up it was always, don't have sex, period. Now, I have options. It's either don't have sex OR if you are, protect yourself. I do think that the way my mom handled it made an impact on my decisions when I was younger. I didn't have sex when I was younger and it wasn't because I didn't want to but I was simply scared of my mom. The way that she reinforced it made me not want to have sex. I was too scared to have sex and get pregnant.

Question 10: She normally brought it up when I would tell her about one of my friends having sex or when we found out that one of my friends was pregnant. I think she did that to reinforce her reasoning like "see that's what happens when you have sex" type thing.

Question 11: I'm the youngest one of my siblings but I have 2 older brothers and most of cousins are males. I know that my parents didn't want my brothers to get a girl pregnant at a young age but I don't think they the expectations of them were limited like me. I think that they have always let them have the option of having sex but again, protected sex. I think that it's just expected of males that they are going to have sex at any time they want because they are males so instead of discouraging them to (maybe in fear of rebellion) they just encouraged protection.

Question 12: It's sad to say but I think the expectations in Mexico are lower. I know my mother always wanted me to get far in my education but I feel that since the opportunities in Mexico are more limited, education wise, then the expectations are lower. I do think that if we were in Mexico maybe she would have been much more



lenient and more carefree about my sex life. I just think that she emphasized it so much in fear of me getting pregnant and not finishing school.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 9**

Question 1: My mother never had that talk with me. I know that she wasn't comfortable talking to me about it because whenever commercials on the radio or television would come on talking about male enhancement pills or anything having to do with sex, she would start a conversation with me about something else.

Question 2: Like I stated in the previous question my mother never talked to me or my siblings about sex. I do however know her well enough to know if she would have had the conversation with me, she would have stated to me that virginity is important and it's something that you can never get back. I think that because she's from a different generation, raised in Mexico, sex wasn't everywhere like it is today. So my grandmother never talked to them about it. I think that my mom believes in remaining a virgin until marriage because that is what she was raised to believe.

Question 3: I don't think that religion played any part in her not talking to me about sex. It was more a personal choice of hers not to. I know she was uncomfortable with the whole "sex" thing and that's why she never did.

Question 4: No response.

Question 5: Sex was never mentioned in a conversation between me and mother.

Question 6: No response.

Question 7: Do I feel that if she would have talked to me about sex, I would feel differently about it today? When I was 16/17 I did feel that virginity was “important” and would have agreed with her, but now that I’m older and live on my own I feel that it's more of a personal choice and that in no way it's bad thing not to be a virgin.

Question 8: Sex is everywhere. But do I believe that just because I see it everywhere I need to change my opinion about sex and your virginity? No I still feel the same, I think it’s a personal choice and it’s your business if you’re a virgin or not.

Question 9: Why one should wait until marriage, protection, possible consequences.

Question 10: She did not.

Question 11: If my mother would have had the conversation with my brother it would have been more like “Be careful. Use protection and think about your doing” As opposed to her telling my sister and I “Sex is something that you do when you're married”

Question 12: I think that her worries about sex here in the United States are much greater because of today’s generations. If we were to be in Mexico it would be a different story because where I’m from, The only contact between a guy and a girl that’s “allowed” is a 30minute conversation outside your house with your mom or dad checking on you every 5 minutes.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 10**

Question 1: I don't actually ever really remember my mother talking about sex with me. I don't think I even got told what a period was. Pretty much from her, I was told NOT to have sex before marriage – that was the only real guidance I got as a youngster.

Question 2: Definitely maintaining your virginity prior to marriage was/is important to my mother. It signifies your purity, worth, and that you're a "lady." I think my mother has this view because she was influenced by her parents and her religious beliefs. My mother lived with her aunt, who was a nun, for quite a few years. My mother at one point wanted to be a nun. Also, my mother's parents were from a very small rural town in Mexico. She grew up in/near the "pueblo," but she was raised with "rancho" ideals – I think.

Question 3: I remember my mother MAKING me get confirmed when I was 16. I asked her why she wanted me to get confirmed. She responded with: "One day you will get married, and you need to be confirmed in the Church." She told me it was her responsibility as a parent to raise me with the ideals of the Church. However, my mother never explicitly talked to me about sex. I think my mother's focus was my virginity and preserving it.

Question 4: I think the only health risk mentioned by mother was pregnancy. But I was never told about STDs, HIV, or other risks associated with sex. I was never told anything about condoms – nothing! I was simply told NOT to have sex.

Question 5: I don't know if my mother ever really expressed anything explicitly about sex. I think my mother was focused on things such as: preservation of my virginity, motherhood, what it means to be a good woman/mother/wife....I think my mother wanted to teach me how to be a "good woman." A woman who does as she is told and follows the ways of tradition.

Question 6: Well they clearly differ a lot! I am not a virgin and I am not married, I guess that would mean strike one against me in my mother's eyes. I think sex is something that if done with responsibility, can be fun and even recreational! This is completely the opposite of my mother! I believe she thinks sex is something you do after marriage and it is some sort of duty that comes along with wife-hood.

Question 7: I don't relate with my mother's ideals in the least bit. I think I have more American views, but I wouldn't know – I wasn't raised by "Americans." I think my mother expects me to be "a lady." And based on her definition of a "lady," I would say I am the furthest thing from that. I don't believe I have to follow the commands of a little black book or tradition. I do things because I want to, not out of expectation. Personally, I feel my mother does things out of expectation, not out of desire. Maybe my mother did want to have sex before she got married, who knows, but she probably didn't do it because that wasn't what would have been EXPECTED from her.

Question 8: I think it has certainly opened my eyes to different ideas. To be American, to me, means to be fortunate to come across a world's worth of cultures in your own backyard. I have friends from a lot of different backgrounds and nationalities. I have been influenced by all of them. And I can't say my mother didn't influence me to an extent. I didn't have sex until I was out of her home, because I didn't think that was right. She definitely taught me to have self-worth and comport myself like a lady. However, I don't think I should NOT have sex because that is what she wants or what she thinks is right. I feel American children oppose their parents a lot more than other children, and I think this "rubs off on you" in some kind of way. I can safely assume, if I had been raised in Mexico, I wouldn't even be talking about this with you.

Question 9: I think if she wanted me to NOT have sex, then she should have gone about it in a completely different way. For one, sex is very emotional. I think with all these diseases going around, parents forget to talk about what sex can do to a person emotionally speaking. Yes, sex can lead to horrible STDs and perhaps a child out of wedlock, but it is SOOO much more! I wish she would have talked to me about what sex makes you feel like in terms of pleasure, displeasure, and emotions/feelings. Sex can make or break you. It isn't something to be taken lightly, and I wish I would have been talked to about this.

Question 10: I have a serious boyfriend at the moment. I know my mother knows I have sex with him. I am pretty sure everyone assumes it, although they may not want to admit it. This past weekend I was at my parent's home and my boyfriend and I took a nap in the same room/bedroom. My mother came marching upstairs and told me not to do that

because of what people may think! LOL. I think my mother approaches sex as a bad thing. I think my mother thinks “que soy una perdida.” I think she sees sex as something bad, that shouldn’t be done before marriage PERIOD. She has never come out – straight up – and talked to me about sex. I think she has emphasized the importance of preservation of virginity, marriage, and motherhood – to me that means, I shouldn’t think about sex, want to have sex, or even have sex.

Question 11: Hell Nooooooooooooooooooooo!!! I have a brother who is 1 year younger than I. Mexican boys are like princes in their families. I have even asked my mother why it is okay for my brother to have sex and not me. She always says, “Well you know how men are.” It isn’t their fault if they have sex before marriage; it is simply in their nature. That is ridiculous.

Question 12: Had I been raised in Mexico, I probably wouldn’t have gone to school and I probably would have been raised in the “rancho.” Had this happened, it wouldn’t be an issue of discussion. I would have followed in the footsteps of the women that came LONG before me. I would have been a GOOD Mexican woman. I think my mother was forced to talk about sex (although she didn’t talk about it that much) because in America you are exposed to it a lot more, or perhaps it is much more sensationalized, I don’t know. I have cousins in Mexico, they don’t think or act anything like me. And I have other cousins who were raised in Mexico, and came here as teenagers and it is a little much for them to handle. I think that is because they weren’t equipped to deal with all this SEX TALK. Here you have to talk about these sort of things with your daughters, because one day or another, they will be confronted by sex – and they must know. In

Mexico, they will be confronted by sex, but it will come after marriage – not before. But who knows, maybe things have changed there to?

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 11**

Question 1: To be honest I really can't remember. LOL We have had talks about sex but it was never necessarily said. She would just talk about boys and how some boys want more than just being friends and that you have to wait for the right one. She was in no way uncomfortable. I was only because she was my mother and it just felt weird. As more talks came as I grew up, they were just normal talks because I knew she cared about me.

Question 2: Being a virgin was a huge thing. She wanted to make sure that I knew I held something precious and that the man I gave it to was my husband. It should be shared between two people in marriage and not just freely to just anyone. She was raised this way and she was raised religiously too.

Question 3: Religion played a huge role in what she talked to me about. She was raised Catholic but then the family converted into Christianity but the influence was still there. She followed the Bible just the way it was and raised us the same way. Just like God said it should be between a husband and wife is how she explained it to me.

Question 4: I don't really remember us talking about STDS and such. Maybe once when she first spoke to me about it. I think she told me to scare me though. After that, I already knew about it since I was being taught in school so we never really talked about it only because she knew I wouldn't do anything like that and knew I was scared of it.

Question 5: That it should only be between a wife and husband and not like the wild uneducated unwed people these days.

Question 6: My mother's talk about sex influenced me tremendously because I looked up to her. A lot of the things I go through now, she already has gone through it so she helps me a lot through all my problems. I wear a promise ring in order to remember that true love waits.

Question 7: No response.

Question 8: I could relate to what my mother talked about.

Question 9: I feel like they all take it lightly and as a fun thing to do. Sex is supposed to be fun but between a husband and wife, just like God created it to be. It's nothing to be ashamed up but only between a couple.

Question 10: I really didn't want to hear anything of it but hearing it made me know that she cared.

Question 11: I honestly don't remember, I know the first time she did was when I was little and I knew she did it because I was turning into a young lady.

Question 12: No I think there are differences because I think girls are able to contain themselves a little more whereas I think men really can't. There are exceptions



but they are the ones that really initiate it so I think they are taught that they need to respect the woman if she doesn't want to.

Question 13: I think she would stick to what she told me because she knew she raised me correctly. She would maybe emphasize a little more about not having it until marriage because of how the U.S sees sex as nothing.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 12**

Question 1: The first time my mother discussed sex with me was when I was 12 years old. I remember her being very comfortable talking about it, I was more timid about it. She emphasized on how a girl needs to be careful around boys and not let them brainwash you. Most importantly that it was between married people only because they are truly in love and want to have kids.

Question 2: Virginity was and is very important. At the age of 12 she emphasized to me that it is crucial to stay a virgin until marriage because it is the way she was brought it. In my mother's teenage years in Mexico a girl who wasn't a virgin was seen as unworthy. As time passes I think her thinking is less traditional and more realistic to these times, definitely much more acculturated to the American opinions. Virginity is still valued and something everyone should strive for, especially girls, but it does not devalue you as a person so much if you do not stay a virgin until marriage.

Question 3: During my younger years religion was not a big part when pertaining to sex it was more a culture thing. However, now it is an extremely large part of my family and our core beliefs. My parent's became very involved in church during my high school years and so did I. Now, our beliefs and our good standing in the eyes of God is of the utmost importance in every aspect of our life, sex included.

Question 4: Health risks in my family are addressed once it is known that a person is sexually active. Otherwise, abstinence and spiritual purity is of main importance. My mom encourages an ideal world and strong standing in faith however, she is a very practical woman and also supports safe sex if you decide to partake in premarital sex. The decision is always ours; and my parents will support whatever we decide.

Question 5: No response.

Question 6: My mother's experience was different from mine in the way that I have a much more open relationship with my mother than she did with my grandmother. My grandmother was very traditional and even though she loved her kids dearly and would never turn her back on them; premarital sex is something that would break her heart. My mother and I both have the same view on sex and virginity, more due to religion than culture, but in a very practical way. My mother taught us to wait until marriage but she has been open to any questions we might have. I will teach my kids to wait until marriage and what the Bible teaches us. However, if my child decides that they will have sex, safe sex is the most important thing in the long run.

Question 7: No response.

Question 8: American society has affected my view on sex and virginity by making my views more practical. It has added the grey area on what used to be black and white. Yes, in a perfect world everyone should wait and find their true love but in reality if it happens it's ok, it's not the end of the world; and you don't have to marry just because you had sex.

Question 9: No response.

Question 10: My mother first talked to me about sex when I got my first menstrual cycle. She explained the whole biological aspect of it, it's purpose, and where babies come from. She did not talk about it again until I had my first serious boyfriend. That talk was much more concentrated on the moral aspect, the value of a woman, and how to be smart and not get sucked in by boys; plus she made me promise I would tell her if and when I did have sex because I would need to get on birth control.

Question 11: In my immediate family it has been explained the same. My parents expect us to uphold our values. However, it has always been stressed to me that the girl is the one that loses more in that situation. I guess you could say there is more of a fear aspect placed on the female.

Question 12: My mother is much more realistic having lived here. If I were in Mexico it would be a black and white topic. I have family members who married at a very young age because virginity was lost. It's definitely much more traditional.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 13**

Question 1: My mother never really discussed sex with me other than telling me to wait till marriage a few times. As I got older it was just an understood thing that I need to wait till marriage and we would not discuss this topic.

Question 2: Staying a virgin is very important to my mother. My mother always emphasized on a white wedding gown. A white dress is a symbol of virginity to her. One of my mother's dreams is to see me get married in a white dress; even though she did not push me or discuss with me the importance of staying a virgin it was something that was understood because to be able to get married in a white dress meant that you had to be a virgin. I think that maintaining a women's virginity till marriage is a cultural and religious thing.

Question 3: In our discussions about sex or virginity with my mother, religion did not weigh in much, Other than getting married in a white gown in a church by a priest.

Question 4: We never had a conversation about sex so we were never able to discuss the importance of sexual health

Question 5: A few times she told me her experience, like she waited till marriage and the stories that her mom would tell her about sex. Like my mother thought that to get pregnant a simple kiss on the lips would get the job done. Also that it hurt a lot her first time and that's about as far as our discussions would go but that was not until I was like a junior in high school.

Question 6: I think that my mother experience and my own differ greatly. Except that I was naive like she was most of my years about sex compared to my peers but over all I was more aware then she was growing up.

Question 7: I could relate to some things she talked about but for the most part I did not. Sexuality is more open here, peers talk more freely about sex among each other.

Question 8: I think that American society has impacted my decisions.

Question 9: Growing up I would like to have heard both speeches about sex, the be safe if your sexuality active and the abstinence is best.

Question 10: No response.

Question 11: Compared to my brother I think two different things where expected. I was not expected to even talk to boys and my brother could have his female friends but as far as having the sex talks I'm not sure how in depth or if they even talked to him about that with him.

Question 12: I don't think my mom's worries about sex and virginity have changed since she has been to the US. I'm not really sure if she would have spoken to me differently if I was in Mexico, but sometimes I believe I would have been given more freedom because they trust the morals out there more.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

#### **Participant 14**

Question 1: I was around 12 when we discussed sex and the importance of being safe as well as respecting our bodies. My mother was very comfortable talking about sex because as she clearly stated it was something that needed to be discussed in order for us to understand, that whenever we had questions or concerns about it we would be able to come to her without feeling embarrassed.

Question 2: Virginity was quite important because it was related to my physical health and mental well being as well as being connected to religion and family morals. It was important for my mother that we stay virgins as long as possible however she did understand that it was something she would not be able to stop us from eventually choosing to do on our own if it were to be that way.

Question 3: Religion did not play a big part in our discussions about sex because my mother was more concerned about our wellbeing however it was brought up sometimes as a reminder that we were part of a religion that viewed sex before marriage as offensive and frowned upon.

Question 4: Yes health safety and the risk of a sexually transmitted disease was a general concern for my mother as well as unplanned pregnancy, she made it a point that if we were ever to be sexually active that we must use protection no matter what in order to be safe.

Question 5: The main concerns my mother had about sex was mostly about unplanned pregnancies as well as transmitted diseases. She made it frightening and harsh so that we saw it through her eyes.

Question 6: No response.

Question 7: No response.

Question 8: American society has made sex a topic that is no longer taboo many talk about it without shame there are even shows that talk about it openly in order to help young adults understand the importance of practicing safe sex. This is good to me because it means that people are not clueless about something that is so important; this has made me feel more comfortable with the topic as well.

Question 9: No response.

Question 10: My mother was very open about talking about it. She talked about sex in a way that was carefree in order to make us feel comfortable about it too.

Question 11: No response.

Question 12: No I think that it would have been the same, she did not care if it was viewed differently here in America or in Mexico she would have explained everything she did because it was how she saw it in her life and her daughters. She was not concerned if others saw it differently, it had no effect on her opinions about sex.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 15**

Question 1: When I had had two daughters. She thought my second daughter might already be sexually active at the age of about 12 or 13. It was important that she not be.

Question 2: My mom implied that she thought I should have remained a virgin after she figured out that I was sexually active at the age of 18. She was very disappointed and got me pink pajamas rather than white when I got married 6 years later with the same male.

Question 3: My mother did not discuss sex until after the fact. While she was deeply religious, it was more of a thing of shame if one should become pregnant out of wedlock, which did not happen.

Question 4: She thought sex was taboo for discussion and mainly discussed the shame of out of wedlock pregnancy. I believe that was her main concern.

Question 5: She thought being demonstrative, hugging or holding hands, was a no-no. Sex was only for after marriage.

Question 6: My mother was a virgin before she got married, as I was told implicitly. When my parents discovered I was sexually active at the age of 18, they were very disappointed. I succumbed to pressure from my boyfriend who became my husband. I always felt guilty about it.

Question 7: I have talked frankly with my children about sex.

Question 8: I think some Americans and some Mexicans, who I have met, think having sex is like drinking water. I think sex has lost some of its special value and it is not so important to be monogamous. I prefer to maintain a sexual relationship with one person.

Question 9: I would have liked to have heard something but my mother was very Victorian and did not like to discuss private matters.



Question 10: She only approached me about the topic when she discovered I was sexually active after I went to college. My sister told me about the facts of life after I graduated from high school. I was a very late bloomer. I am lucky no one took advantage of me and got me pregnant.

Question 11: No response.

Question 12: No response.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

### **Participant 16**

Question 1: Mom did not talk to me about it, just said I better not get pregnant when they found out I was on birth control. They told me to stop taking it, maybe their way of thinking I wouldn't had sex.

Question 2: Mom took me to doctor to make sure I was still a virgin when she thought I was having sex but other than that it was never talked about.

Question 3: No response.

Question 4: Did not talk about it.

Question 5: Pregnancy.

Question 6: She never shared any experiences.

Question 7: We did not talk about sex.

Question 8: I feel Americans have made turned sex from taboo to a commodity. It is expected.

Question 9: No response.

Question 10: She only yelled to me about it when she thought I was having sex.

Question 11: No response.

Question 12: No response.

Question 13: No response.

Question 14: No response.

Question 15: No response.

Question 16: No response.

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