

Changes or accommodations? Family Relations of Five Mexican Immigrant Families

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The purpose of the study is to investigate if it is true that gender roles in Mexican families change while they are immersed in a more heterogeneous and less patriarchal society.

This paper consists of a review of the literature from various authors who shed light on topics related to the theories of immigrant adaptation, gender roles in the subjects' home culture and changing gender relations' findings; as well as the analysis of the data gathered through an interview applied to five Mexican immigrant families, active observation and phone conversations with the subjects.

The context in which some low middle-class Mexican families migrate is the following: The husband, head of the household, because of economic hardship in Mexico and having the social connections, relatives or friends where to arrive, decides to migrate to the United States. He works in seasonal jobs and the rest of the family stays in their hometown in Mexico. In the meantime, the mother is responsible for the household and continues to work at home, doing the house chores, baking cakes to sell, sewing clothing, assembling shoes, making candies or selling snacks outside of her house. In some cases, she takes the husband's role and in some others he is still the decision-maker (by phone or mail). After some time of coming back and forth, the family talks, discusses and ponders the possibilities of migrating. The husband proposes to the family a job and place to live there. Then, the wife considers working there and they decide to migrate.

It is our understanding that "there" (United States) and "here" (Mexico) are located in the same social field. Having said that, our hypothesis claims that Mexican immigrants do not change their gender roles as a result of migration, but they are constantly accommodating them according to the circumstances they face and the decisions they have to make within the social field.

DATA COLLECTION

After we gathered some data and gained some knowledge about changing gender relations and immigration, we designed an interview with 59 questions and chose five illustrative cases that would help us to get more reliable results. Therefore, we applied our interview to five married Mexican immigrants. The interviewees were located on different areas in the United States. However, to narrow the diversity found among Mexican immigrant families, we looked for 5 interviewees that come from the same area of residence in Mexico and share the same religion. One of the requisite features to choose the interviewees was for them to be married. We were also involved in some active observation with our subjects before migrating and after migrating as well as phone conversations.

We gathered some rich information from the interviews which made us conclude that our hypothesis is reliable and these five Mexican immigrant families did not usually change their gender roles, values and priorities to an Americanized style, but they only accommodate them depending on the circumstances they face within the same social field, Mexico and the United States. We did not find a specific pattern that determines the changes in gender relations that Mexican immigrant families experience or will experience when coming to the United States. Changes do not seem to obey time, but to the specific circumstances that each family faces

We found one issue that is opened for a more detailed research; it is how immigrant women, who have reached some degree of independence, are perceived when they go back to their hometown.

A review of the literature

The first part of this literature review examines the different theories of immigrant adaptation according to several researchers. The aim is to summarize the research that has been done regarding the process of immigrant

adaptation, to connect changing gender relations with the premise of immigration, as well as to find out if there are some studies that do or do not support our hypothesis. Since the focus of this study is on changing gender relations a second part of the literature review sheds light on how gender roles are in the immigrants' home culture, in this case Mexico, and the family structure by which people from Jalisco Mexico are ruled. The analysis of the literature also includes a description of the cultural values that are deemed as important by the Mexican society. This will provide us with some background about the immigrants' culture, so that we can observe later on whether these values changed in the new culture or not. Another section of the literature contains a review of what several authors have found concerning the roles that Mexican families take when coming to the United States and how they rear their children. A last part of this analysis, presents the findings of several works regarding changing gender relations of Mexican immigrant families.

To begin with, we will concentrate on the different theories of immigrant adaptation: assimilation and acculturation. These perspectives study the social relationship between immigrants and members of the mainstream and their cultural interactions.

Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach in their theoretical overview scrutinized the theories of immigrant adaptation. According to them:

The assimilationist perspective defines the situation of immigrants as involving a clash between conflicting cultural values and norms. The native majority represents the "core" while immigrants are the peripheral groups. Assimilation occurs by the diffusion of values and norms from core to periphery. By osmosis, [...], these new cultural forms are gradually absorbed by immigrants bringing them closer to the majority. The process, sometimes called acculturation, is generally seen as irreversible though it may take different lengths of time for different groups. (21)

Milton Gordon offers a different perspective regarding the theories of immigrant adaptation. For him, assimilation is a process that occurs in different stages and acculturation is the first step towards it. "Next in line comes structural assimilation, or extensive participation of immigrants in primary groups of the core society. This is followed, in a loose sequence, by amalgamation, or intermarriage, between immigrants and natives and by identificational assimilation, or the development of a

common national identity based on the symbols of the core group. Attitudinal assimilation reflects the absence of prejudice toward immigrants while behavioral assimilation represents the absence of discrimination" (qtd. in Portes and Bach 21).

According to Gordon, there is not necessarily a linear relationship between the different types of assimilation and the stage of acculturation. They can take place in different order. However, he acknowledges that the extensive primary-level interaction between immigrants and members of the group is central to assimilation (Portes and Bach 21).

Gordon also scrutinizes three alternative results of the assimilation process: 1) *Anglo conformity*, 2) *the melting pot*, and 3) *cultural pluralism*. *Anglo conformity* is defined as "the complete surrender of immigrants' symbols and values and their absorption by the core culture". This process concludes in identificational assimilation. *The melting pot* theory believes that "assimilation results in a blend of the values, norms, life styles, and institutions of the different groups, both core and peripheral". It gets to be a mixture of both cultures' values, languages and traditions. The incorporation of American food as well as some American expressions into the immigrants' native culture and language, and the implementation of symbols and festivities brought by different immigrant groups into the mainstream culture are examples of the melting pot theory (Portes and Bach 22).

Harriette Pipe McAdoo makes a critique pertaining to this melting pot approach. She assesses that "[the melting pot] would make our ethnicity no longer so important" (11). Moreover, it does not melt all the ethnicities by erasing all the ethnic differences, and it does not take elements from each group and fuse a more natural entity. She states that terminology such as: a stew or stir fry would be more appropriate because "ethnic groups come in contact with each other, they blend a little, and they make an identity that is even better than all the ingredients were alone. Each group becomes richer and more resourceful, and yet each maintains the integrity of the original ethnic group" (12).

The third possible result, *cultural pluralism*, refers to "a situation in which immigrants are able to retain their own culture, modified by the core culture but still preserved in its distinct character" (22). Gordon states that although cultural pluralism is the preferred option by most immigrants, it has never really existed in the United

States. In his point of view, the acculturation process has led to outcomes best portrayed in the Anglo conformity approach: values, norms, and symbols, among others, taught to immigrants and completely absorbed by their children are those of the core culture (Portes and Bach 22).

McAdoo has also done some research regarding the theories of immigrant adaptation. McAdoo considers it very important to differentiate clearly the terms: *acculturation* and *assimilation*. In spite of the fact that they are different, "both represent the processes that take place when ethnic and non-ethnic groups, carrying different backgrounds and cultures, meet" (10). Kumabe claims "acculturation takes place when the various cultural threads of the ethnic and central cultures become intermeshed. Assimilation, on the other hand, is a gradual process, occurring over the time, in which one set of cultural traits is relinquished and a new set is acquired through participation in the mainstream culture" (McAdoo 11).

Rumbaut and others have also studied the theories of immigrant adaptation. They distinguish two large modes of ethnic incorporation into American social life.

One epitomized by assimilation, the master process that purports to explain how it came to be that descendants of tens of millions of European immigrants from heterogeneous national and cultural origins were absorbed into the mainstream of white society, their identities eventually becoming largely symbolic and fading into a "twilight of ethnicity" [...]; and another largely resistant to such absorption into the majority regardless of level of acculturation or socioeconomic attainment, characterized by persistently high social distances in intergroup relations and discrimination [...].(4)

David G. Gutiérrez acknowledges that one of the most important models of American immigration history was the "assimilationist" or "melting pot". The critique was:

Although traditional scholars acknowledged the many difficulties that immigrants faced in their efforts to adjust and reestablish themselves in a new and often hostile society, many researchers assumed that given enough time, immigrants (and their U.S.-born children) would gradually become assimilated into American life style in a progressive, linear and largely unambiguous fashion. Researchers also assumed that by slowly shedding their former traditional cultural norms and practices and adopting modern ones in the United States, it was only a matter of time before immigrants and their children would

met into the mainstream of social, and political life in this country" (xvii- xviii).

The reassessment of the different theories of international migration has been an on-going process and in the early 1970s, scholars focused their research on the Mexican immigration to the United States. Gutiérrez claims that researchers sought to replace the assimilationist perspective with analytical models that could meet the immigrants' complexity and variability, and that stressed the agency of immigrants themselves. Gutiérrez states that assimilationist theorists and revisionist scholars interpreted U.S. immigration history from different perspectives. Assimilationist theorists "portrayed immigrants as passive subjects waiting to adapt, adjust, and reorient themselves as "Americans,"[while] revisionist scholars insisted that immigrants had much more varied motivations for their actions and exerted much more control over the pace-and direction-of their "adaptations" (Gutiérrez xviii). Therefore, theorists believed that some immigrants would try to follow anything they would interpret as assimilationist prescriptions for their inclusion into American society, some examples: learning

English, becoming citizens, voting or joining the U.S. armed forces. For the scholars, it was only one of the many open possibilities that immigrants and their children have, to shape their future (Gutiérrez xviii).

This second part of the literature review contains a description of the Mexican family structure and the gender roles in Mexican society. This will give us a clearer understanding of how Mexican families are composed and from this, see if those gender roles experience a change when being emerged into a more heterogeneous society.

Some parts of Mexico are considered patriarchy oriented. Therefore, it is worthwhile to dedicate some efforts to describe what patriarchy is and some of the characteristics of patriarchal societies.

Gerda Lerner defines patriarchy as "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived to such power. It does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence and resources" (qtd. in Blakemore and Iverson 148).

Some historical data explains the origin of gender roles in colonized societies. It avows that indigenous societies changed with the introduction of the European culture during the colonization era. It is believed that before European colonialism, "indigenous people performed varying roles to maintain the efficient functioning of their society. Each role, regardless of who performed it, was considered equally important because it contributed to the fundamental goal of community survival. Arguably, prior to colonialism, women often performed wider and more varied roles than were typical for nineteenth-century European women" (Robertson 3). Therefore, since duties from men and women complemented, there was a mutual dependence and a balance of gender roles.

In this case, the Spaniards conquered Mexico and Antoinette Sedillo López claims the first marriages between the Spaniards and the Indian women were patriarchal. This colonization brought a change in gender roles to the Mexican society. Moreover, she points out that Spanish men were not only dominant because of their status of conqueror, but also because of the role institutionalized by the traditions of the Catholic Church. According to López:

Women were socialized to the "Marianismo" concept which idealized a submissive role for women. This concept involved the veneration of the Virgin Mary. The beliefs and values associated with Marianismo identified women as virgins, mothers and martyrs. Women were supposed to be submissive, altruistic and self-denying. This veneration of the Virgin Mary led to the downgrading of women who did not fulfill the ideal. Only two types of women, therefore, were recognized: the self-sacrificing mother who had an identity only as a mother and a wife, and the whore who was a direct anti-thesis of the Virgin. (124)

This ideology of women as an image of the Virgin Mary is a deeply rooted value in Mexican society and according to Consuelo Nieto "this "Marianismo" contributes to the difficulty that Mexican American women in the United States have in fulfilling themselves as independent people. Any break from traditional values (for example, on issues such as birth control) is seen as an abandonment of the Catholic church and the family (qtd. in López 124).

Michèle Le Doeuff points out an aspect that is truly applicable to gender roles in the Mexican society. She claims "male-centred society uses the 'bliss of motherhood' to attract women into family life, the same society deprives women of reproductive rights in order to press

them into matrimony, so that they work as their husband's employees for free" (Blakemore and Iverson 111).

According to Gutmann, family roles are clearly stated in Mexican families: "overwhelmingly, the people I interviewed stated there were pronounced differences in parenting obligations: to oversimplify, man should first and foremost provide for a family economically and women before all else should care for the home (meaning children, husband, and house, often in this order of importance)" (74). He claims that even though there was variety in the interviews' responses, there was a consensus response when it came to define the duties of the ideal man and woman. The responses were: "for men: "to work," "bring in money," "earn money," "support the family economically," "fulfill marital duties economically," For women: "take care of the children," "see to one's husband," "care for the children and husband," "keep the house clean." (74).

An interviewee, in Mexican Voices/ American Dreams, makes a comparison on the way gender roles are in Mexico and in the United States. He claims that in the United States "Elena worked too, we worked as a pair. It's different here. The husband and wife are like a partnership. There [in Mexico] the man is the boss and that's it. There isn't any communication with the wife. I have never been jealous, so we have never had any problems in that regard. We both have confidence in each other" (236).

A third part of this literature focuses on some of the values pertaining to the Mexican culture. "Family" is a very significant value within the Mexican society. Even though, there is an indefinite number of family models in the United States as in Mexico, for example, and they all follow the same pattern: a father, a mother, and children, the question can come to be as to what family model immigrants have to accommodate to.

McAdoo in her review of literature thinks, "familism, or the strong identification, loyalty, attachment, and solidarity of individuals with their families, is considered one of the most important culturally specific values of Hispanic families" (157).

Intrinsic cultural values such as family can result in a constraint when migrating. Rosemary Cooney, cited in López, states "the internalized values in the Hispanic culture which hold women responsible for "household work" and the care of the children are a strong barrier to their satisfactory participation in the United States work force". She proposes "a decline in the United States of the

Hispanics' emphasis on family ties may be causing the rise of participation of Hispanic women in the labor force" (128). On the other hand, López highlights the fact that "although Latin women face considerable social difficulties in entering the labor force, [...], economic necessity has forced a significant percentage of Latin women to obtain employments" (128).

The following piece presents what several authors have found concerning the roles that Mexican families have taken when going to the United States and how they rear their children. López acknowledges that "Hispanic families frequently develop a split [sic] between instrumental (practical) and affective (emotional) roles: one member, usually the male, deals with instrumental activities that entail a connection with the current environment. The other, usually the female, centers on present or past-oriented affective activities that entail a sustained connection with the previous environment" (128). She contends that this distribution of roles can cause severe family problems, if followed rigidly, because the male will tend to develop autonomous adaptive traits and establish a new satisfactory network for himself whereas the woman maintains a relative isolation. This segregation could be the result of the small number of women's integration to the work force due to chauvinist ideologies. Nevertheless, the conflicts of immigrant families do not only occur between husband and wife, but with their children too. Children of immigrant parents, raised in the United States, interact more with the new society through the means of communication, school, friends, etc., and typically clash with their parents' values.

Staton supports López' theory of Hispanic families experiencing a split in instrumental and affective roles. He determined that the mother, in Mexican American families, becomes the affectional focus for the children and that fathers, even though they play with kids, attend to their necessities, and show affection, they "maintain authority and demand respect" (qtd. in McAdool29). His belief is that children in Mexican American tradition are taught submission and obedience to the authority of the father. The mother is especially close to the daughters since she is to shape and transmit their adult female role. Sons are also close to their mother since she is the affective model of the family. It is interpreted from this split of instrumental and affective roles that women are the transmitters of the family ideology, and the preservers of morals and traditions, in spite of the fact that they do not work.

Revisiting the topic of children of immigrant parents, we will refer to the studies of child rearing done by Harriette Pipes McAdoo. According to her, there is not a definite conclusion or fixed pattern that describes how Mexican Americans rear their children. Some researchers conclude that Mexican American parents are primarily permissive whereas some others advocate that they follow traditional values and authoritarian practices. Still others define Mexican American parenting as "nurturing and affectionate within a patriarchal, authoritarian family structure, with traditional respect for males and the elderly" (123). Martinez claims "diversity is also found among Mexican American families, as are changes in family values attributed to socioeconomic status (SES), area of residence, demographic variables, number of generations removed from Spain or Mexico, and level of acculturation" (qtd. in McAdoo 123).

Miguel Tinker Salas referring to Latino immigrants affirms "exposure to mainstream United States society and contact with other Latinos has led to the recasting of old identities and the formulation of new images" (qtd. in López 58). Those changes that the Mexican immigrant families face are to some extent visible. An interviewee declares that "the culture is changing, in direct proportion to the number of people who leave and how long they stay on the other side [term use to refer to the United States of America]. Each immigrant who goes north brings a bit of America back home" (Martínez 56). Another interviewee stated that it was easy to distinguish when a woman from town has lived in the United States because they come back dressed up differently (33). This change is perceived negatively since it represents women's independence and it portrays how women are not following the morals set up by the society.

Rubén Martínez presents the thoughts of a couple that has just come back to Mexico after several years of living in the States. Interestingly enough, the woman since they arrived to Mexico is thinking about what she is going to do to earn her own livelihood with or without her husband. The author asserts that "it is a measure of how much the devastated Mexican economy and taste of life in the less patriarchal north have influenced women's roles" (88).

Thinking about women within a social field, more than talking about changes we are suggesting accommodations.

Gutiérrez considers that a greater number of Mexican women work in the United States due to economic reasons. He reports "family obligations and economic necessity propelled Mexican women into the labor force." He says that one-quarter of Mexican and Mexican American female wage earners in the United States were young, unmarried daughters who had to cede their wage for the essential economic survival of their families. Gutiérrez also studied Mexican families with working children, and the results showed that the children's monetary contributions represented 35 percent of total household income (128).

Mexican women have been working all their life, it could go from doing her housework to sewing and knitting blouses, scarves and sweaters to sell, assembling shoes, doing somebody else's laundry or ironing, cooking food or selling beauty products. In spite of all these jobs and their partner's job, some Mexican families do not make enough money for survival.

Gutiérrez acknowledges that a clash between parents and their female children, working outside the house, is likely to happen because through work and making their own money, they become more independent. They have acquired the American way of living. He claims: "at times working for wages gave women a feeling of independence." Historian Douglas Monroy avers that working outside: "facilitated greater freedom of activity and more assertiveness in the family for Mexicanas" (qtd. in Gutiérrez 128). Gutiérrez complements this thought by mentioning "some young women went a step further and used their earnings to leave the family home. Facing family disapproval, even ostracism, they defied parent authority by sharing an apartment with female friends. (...) The work environment did give women an opportunity to develop friendship" (128). Gutiérrez believes that outside employment along with media influence the acculturation of Mexican women. Movie and romance magazines, both Mexican and American, provided a popular form of entertainment that enabled adolescents and older women as well to experience the middle-class and affluent life-styles displayed in these publications.

Margarita Melville concluded her contemporary study of Mexican women immigrants by saying: "aspirations for upward mobility emerged as the most distinguishing factor in the process of acculturation" (qtd. in Gutiérrez 131). She clarifies that not all middle-class Mexican immigrants repudiate their mestizo identity. However, Paul Taylor affirms "middle-class Mexicans desiring to dissociate themselves from their working-class neighbors had the most fervent aspirations for assimilation" (cited in Gutiérrez 130). Martínez recognizes as the beginning of social mobility a couple who "have been profoundly marked by their journeys north" because after earning "real American dollars and lived in a genuine American apartment" they have started to think as middle class (88). It is worthwhile to mention that even the worst conditions of an American apartment are better than the worst conditions of a Mexican apartment.

Following this same idea of social mobility and reaching a higher economical status a Mexican, an interviewee who has been in the States, declares, "I [...] like the conveniences in the United States. You can get things easier. Things like dishwashers here are too expensive. There, everyone has one. I really do not know why, but everyone, even the poorest people who are earning the minimum, can buy things they want" (qtd. in Davis 238). Gutiérrez claims, "despite economic and social stratification many Mexicanas believed that life in the United States offered hope and opportunity" (139). Working class people can reach a more comfortable economic status than the one they had in Mexico and this affect gender relations. The fact that women work too, makes men feel that they are not able to provide their family like "a real men". Gutmann acknowledges, "with women working outside the home it's not a question of them having their own money now, as important as this has been. What's also involved is that women have met all sorts of different people, which has changed them forever. And this has meant that men have changed, for it they don't, more and more are left behind by women" (239). By doing this, women reach more social mobility, they meet new people and become more independent, diminishing this way the importance of men and their "*machismo*". Some men compromise for a more egalitarian gender relationship some others do not.

Linda Stone and Nancy P. McKee acknowledge that Latino gender roles and family structure are constructions that change as a result of their immersion in the American culture. These two authors claim that the gender roles and the family's structure is deemed by Latinos as traditional, but they are helpful to model the way behaviors and relationships were a generation or more ago. However,

"numerous elements of this construction are [...] still influential and operational within many of Today's more traditional (and often rural) Hispanic families. But a large number of contemporary families, especially those who have lived for several generations in the United States or who have achieved middle-class status, have modified or abandoned many aspects of the earlier Latino gender roles and relationships" (131). The authors assert that instead of an immersion in the traditional patriarchal family structure, Latinos become increasingly assimilated to the Euro-American behavioral conventions such as the fostering of individualism and women's autonomy. This thought tends to prove that the more time immigrant families stay in the United States, the more likely they are to modify or abandon their prime gender roles.

In looking at gender in the United States, according to Stone and McKee, women have worked away from home. This fact, along with the increase of levels of education, has made the definition and articulation of gender roles more difficult. They declare that women's work is increasingly carried out outside the household therefore it generates cash income. Putting it this way, women are aware of their financial contribution for the support of the family, which makes them feel that they have more power. Thus, they have the right to express an opinion as well as to spend their income whichever way they like. The authors conclude by asserting that this increasing autonomy threatens the traditional patriarchal orientation of the Hispanic family. However, they highlight "both men and women are likely to cause family distress when they embrace Euro-American-style individualism, but individualism is seen as less acceptable and more disruptive when it is expressed by a woman" (190). Taking a look to the other side of the coin, Mexican women have always been doing inside the house jobs. Moreover, they have also generated cash income; nevertheless it has not been enough to support the family.

All the studies analyzed so far have given us good insights on what to consider when developing ours. In order to see if there is a correlation on what has been studied on the literature review and on what our hypothesis claims, we conducted an interview to five married immigrant Mexicans. We were also involved in some active observation with our subjects before migrating and after migrating as well as phone conversations.

The interview addresses aspects such as: time that immigrants have been in the United States, place of origin, socioeconomic status, family life in Mexico, religion and gender roles that they used to play when they were in

Mexico, as well as the same aspects, but now that they live in the United States.

To narrow the diversity found among Mexican immigrant families, we looked for 5 interviewees that come from the same area of residence in Mexico and that share the same religion.

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Description of the interviews

The interviewees were four female and one male, their ages go from 29 to 44 years old. They have lived in the United States from a period of 11 months to 14 years. Two of them reside in Texas whereas the other three live in California. The five of them are married. Four of them were married before coming to the United States and one got married once she was there. All of them have children now. The interviewees belong to the same geographical area in Mexico, the State of Jalisco. Two of them were born in Arandas and the other three in Guadalajara. Their economical status is low to middle-class. The interviewees also share the same religion (Roman Catholic) and their educational level goes from primary to technical school.

There were fifty-nine questions related to demographic data, family history in Mexico and in the United States. These questions sought to decipher: how this group of people gets adapted to the target culture, who seems to be affected by this change of society and if there is something that has or has not changed in their gender relations compared to the life style they had in Mexico.

Finally, the interviews were conducted in Spanish since none of the interviewees is a fluent English speaker.

Next, we will present a summary of the overall data gathered and of what we considered focuses more on the gender changes of Mexican immigrant families.

The first interviewee was a female and she was forty-four years old at the time of the interview. She states that the reason why she went to the United States is because her husband used to work in seasonal jobs in the United States while the rest of the family stayed in Arandas, Jalisco. Moreover, they had a precarious economy. They lived in a lent house, rooms did not have doors, there was not hot water in the shower, they could not afford to but meat or sodas for meals, and they could never manage to go on vacation unless it was to her parents' village (located at

a driving distance of twenty minutes). Her children were usually craving to buy a snack or sweet from the corner store, and they also had difficulty on buying their school materials on time. The money she made from knitting plus her husband's monthly check coming from the States was not enough. Therefore, she and her husband made the resolution of migrating once their United States residence arrived. It was in process for more than 10 years. She is the mother of five children (ages: 22,21,16,11 and 10 years old). They were two women, the oldest and the youngest, and three boys. They were all born in Arandas. One of them was attending middle-school, two more were in primary school, a fourth one worked there and the fifth, her eldest daughter, did not work, but stayed at home and helped her to take daily decisions on regards to her brothers and sister. Her obligations in Mexico were to take children to school, to attend teachers' meetings, to clean, cook and set up the meals. She also worked at home knitting to sell. Now, that the family migrated to the United States, she works outside the house, cleaning offices, and her oldest daughter is responsible for the housework as well as the cooking. Her two older sons also work there. The other two children go to school elementary school. She claims that her goals in life are "to give my children a good education, to be a good mother as well as a good wife and a good partner for my husband".

She acknowledges that the curfew for each one of her children is different; it depends on their age and whether it is her oldest son or daughter. Moreover, she mentions that curfew does not vary whether they are in the United States or in Mexico. Ten p.m. was the curfew for her daughter in Mexico and it remains the same in the States. As for the boy, it was eleven and it is still 11 p.m. now that they are on the States. In both settings, females are more restricted to go outside. From her own perspective, she does not notice any change in the family structure since she came to the United States. However, she notices that they got settled and a job easier than they would have in Mexico.

Regarding traditions, she claims that one of the traditions she tries her family to keep is: "to go to mass and pray the rosary." It is something that she has inculcated to her children since they were young and she would like them to preserve it.

She likes living there because all her family is together and her children are not hanging around, but they study and work. She concluded saying: "I would rather go back to Mexico, but I cannot complain because I am fine here. I'd

like to go back because there is no place like home and the people that one's love, I hope we can come back soon." This was her perception at the time of the interview. A year later she and her husband came to Mexico to get rid of her belongings because now they think they are better off in the States since their children's education and life opportunities are wider. Almost right after they got into their old house in Mexico, she said how she could have lived in that place. She followed her comment by saying that now they rent a very nice big house with showering hot water and doors. They have carpeting, a big yard and her husband got a new truck. They have not been able to make any savings, but they have an easy-going life. They do their grocery without worrying on what to buy because there will not be enough money to pay.

The second interviewee, a thirty-four years old female, has lived in the United States for 14 years and while she was in Mexico, she worked fulltime at a clothing store and she was not married. She came to the United States because the economic situation in her house was very bad. They did not make enough money to pay the bills and struggled for money in time of sicknesses. She decided to migrate in order to improve her family's economy and arrived with some uncles to the States. After she migrated, she got married, and now she does not work, but takes cares of the housework and children's education while her husband works. She acknowledges that her children, male and female, receive the same curfew. She believes that even when her children are grown ups, she and her husband will be equally strict with the males as with the females. In her situation, she says that her husband makes the big decisions and she makes the small ones. She feels like "she had more responsibilities in Mexico than here because everything [there] was different and harder". The reason of her previous comment is because she considers the United States life's system "totally different," meaning easier. She likes living in the United States because in Mexico people work from sunrise to sunset and they are still not able to have a decent life because the wages are very low. However, she acknowledges that it took them a lot of hard work and sacrifices to get adjusted to this society. She misses her family and all the traditions that she kept in Mexico. Conversely, she would not go back to Mexico because all her life is there and she does not have a future in Mexico. Moreover, she thinks that economy is deteriorated in Mexico. By being in the States, she is able to send money to her relatives in Mexico. Besides, she is totally accustomed to living here; she would like to go, but only to visit her family not to stay there. Finally, she says that Sundays here are to be dedicated to her children and

for the whole family to go to church. She considers that it is important for her children "to follow all the traditions from Mexico".

The third female interviewed has been in the United States for a period of twelve years. She is twenty-nine years old and she came to the United States because of economic hardship. She migrated with her sister and brother in law who were already here. She describes her life in Mexico as "more peaceful and without too much stress, with my family everything was okay, we had communication and everybody helped to organize anything that needed to be done". However, she says that economically her family situation was bad and she could not afford to buy what she wanted. She was in charge of the housework and children's education, and her husband would help her whenever he got some time. She acknowledges that her husband was the head of the household, but the decisions related to permission to go out and the rules of the house were set up by both of them. Her children studied and they helped with the housework. However, males had a more liberal curfew than women. Actually, males did not have a curfew at all. She and her husband were stricter with the female than with the males. The aspirations that the interviewee had for her children were to study, so they could have a better future, but they did not have the resources to do so. The family income was not sufficient, so with a lot of efforts were children were to finish primary and middle school, and then be encouraged to work. For herself, she wished "to have had a good education, so I could have gotten a better job and I would have been able to offer my children a better future." Her duties were "to get up early, do the housework and leave time for my husband and children." She used to celebrate the traditional October festival in Guadalajara as well as the day of Saint Isidro. Talking about her life here in the United States, she claims that the family's economy has improved. She describes the daily life here as faster. She and her husband have an outside work. She works in a clothing store as a clerk. However, her husband does not collaborate for the house duties. Her routine is the same as in Mexico; except for the fact that now she works. In terms of children's education, she is the one who usually attends the meetings, she takes them to school and she brings them back. She also states that her children follow the same customs and rules as if they were in Mexico. The schedule keeps on being freer for males than for the female and her husband is the head of the household here, too. The decisions related to shopping are made by both of them. The interviewee realizes one change since they have lived in the United States. She recognizes that her children want to become more independent and she thinks

that this has happened because "this country offers more entertainment places to go". The traditions that her family still keeps are "the days of lent which are the Holy Days because that is what my parents inculcated in me since I was a child". What she likes the least here is that "there is not enough time to be with her children because life here is very active and stressful." On the other hand, she likes that there are more opportunities for success here and that is why she would not want to go back to Mexico. Besides, she is used to living here. She claims to be happy because after all this time her life has improved and she has accomplished and can buy things that she would have never reached in Mexico.

The last female interviewed is thirty-one years old and has been in the United States for 11 months. She is the mother of two male children (4 and 6 years old. They were born in Mexico). She lived in Guadalajara all her life until going to the States. While in Mexico her husband worked as a mechanic, she was responsible for the household, and her children went to school. Her economy was not insufficient. They had money to go on vacation twice a year and to any needed expenses. However, they wanted to have a business of their own and the only way to attain this was by migrating to the States. One of her husband's previous bosses had applied for a working visa for him many years ago. The whole family was included in that application. After more than ten years, the visas arrived and they were ready to migrate. The interviewee says, "there was not such a head of the household, both of us could give our opinion and we both made the decisions [...] related to the house and family. It is very difficult [for wife and husband to have the same rights], but it is possible". Nevertheless, she acknowledges being the one who took care of children's education and household because her children's responsibility was to do well at school and her husband worked most of the time. Since she does not have any females, she says that both her children get the same permission according to their age and that even if she had girls, they would get the same permission. She aspires for her children to be good students and learn English, perfectionists, and good human beings. In addition, she would like to continue studying and to be able to educate her children well. Now they two children go to kindergarten and primary school. They seem to be grabbing the language quite easily. The festivities that they used to follow in Mexico were: Holy Week, Christmas, New Year's Eve, and birthdays. All of these were celebrated with the whole family. Now, talking about her life style here in the United States she claims that the communication with her family has changed. The whole family has less time together

during the weekdays, but they are trying to spend more time during the weekends. She expressed her dislike to the fact that her husband gets to spend much less time with their children here than in Mexico. Her roles have not changed at all, her husband works and she takes care of the household duties. The decisions are made on behalf of both. She says that life here is more boring because everything is more practical. That is to say, that there is more time to do many things, but everything is to be done quickly because time flies. One thing that has changed in her routine is that she is taking English classes here. She claims that they do not follow any special tradition here, but she would like her children to keep all the Mexican traditions because she is not American, and her culture and customs are deeply rooted. She declares that "here there is not culture like the Mexican one; here everything is very superficial, empty, totally different from our own."

The last interviewee is a thirty-five years old male. He and his family have been living in Texas for the last 11 months. He states that he and his family wanted for a long time to come to the United States and once they got legal documentation to come, they did so. Nowadays, they are looking for a better future. He defines his family in Mexico as "any other family. My wife took care of the house and I took care of the economic part". He says that he hardly ever helped her wife with the chores and that both of them are the head of the house. The responsibilities of their children were "to study, do homework, watch T.V. and play". The aspirations that he had for his children were to succeed in life and to become educated people. In his spare time, he watched T.V. and washed his car. He and his family used to go to all kinds of regional celebrations together. Pertaining to their life in the United States, he acknowledges, "right now, my family is passing through the adaptation process, my children go to school and fortunately, they are learning the language easier than I thought; my wife takes English classes, and I work all day long [as a mechanic], always trying to understand English more". He also mentions that his family life has not changed too much because they have always been a very united family. However, indeed the time spent with his children has changed. He sees them less than before. The reason of this is because he works more hours than in Mexico and his children stay at school for a longer period. During the weekends, they go to mass and after that, they go shopping. The celebrations in which the whole family still participates are: Christmas, Lent and now they also celebrate Thanksgiving. The traditions that he would like his children to preserve are: "to go to Church and [...] to respect other people no matter race or nationality." On the

one hand, he would rather stay in the United States because there are more luxuries than in Mexico. On the other hand, he would prefer to go back because he does not like the American custom of children leaving the house at the age of sixteen and because definitively, there is nothing better than Mexico.

Analysis of the interviews

From these interviews, we can see that the roles in terms of gender changed a bit in some aspects and in some others they did not change.

The first interviewee worked when she was in Mexico and she continues to work now that she is on the States. Concerning their children's roles, males are encouraged and allowed to work whereas the female (the eldest daughter) remains at home and is responsible for the chores of the house. This aspect, with the males working outside the house and women staying at home, did not change in spite of having been merged in a second culture that is considered to be less chauvinistic. It shows us that they have not met the melting pot or the Anglo conformity approach, coined by the assimilationist theorists, where all the values, traditions and beliefs from both cultures are mixed or where migrants completely merge into the target culture by ceding all of their own traditions and absorbing the ones from the core culture. It looks more like they are trying to keep their own values (going to church, praying the rosary) and follow the same patterns as if they were in Mexico. Something different is that now the interviewee works outside the house, she gets a check and her income is bigger. The eldest daughter was not very encouraged to study or work, but to stay home in culture one as in culture two.

Regarding, the second interview we can see that even though she has been in the United States for a long time and she is used to the American life style, she is still interested in preserving her morals and customs as if she was in Mexico. She was not married when in Mexico. Her family structure is the typical one: a wife, a husband and their children. Her husband is the financial support of the family and they both are the decision makers. She does not get an outside income since she is devoted to her house chores. The interviewee's ideology is open and fair in terms of gender. We can observe this, when she says that her children receive the same curfew and even when they are grown up, they will be strict with their children no matter the gender. Thus, the process of adaptation that she has experienced is assimilation and according to Gordon, it will be cultural pluralism. However, her children are

likely to be emerged into the American culture and surrender of their own Mexican values, experiencing as a result the Anglo conformity approach.

The third interviewee claims that her husband is the head of the family, but the decisions related to permission to go out and the rules of the house were set up by both of them. Her children study and collaborate with housework. She is in charge of the household, husband, children and their education. In Mexico and in the United States she has participated and participates in the decision-making process when it comes to permission and shopping. The change that we can see is that nowadays in addition to her duties at home, she works. In regards to culture, they consider it very important to maintain their Mexican values and traditions, and they would like their children to grow up with those customs even though they are not in Mexico. The results of this interview portray that the processes of adaptation are headed towards the assimilationist theory and have the characteristics of cultural pluralism.

The life of the fourth and fifth interviewees in terms of gender has not changed except for the fact that the wife is studying. Their roles are still the same and they claim that both of them are the head of the household. They seem to have a more egalitarian relationship because both of them take part of the decision-making process. However, the structure of their family is that of a patriarchal society. The family still relies on a great deal on the male's behalf. This couple has been in the United States for a shorter period and conversely to the other interviewees, they are still trying to get adapted. They like being here because they have the extrinsic motivation of building a better future for their children. They both claim to dislike American culture. Likewise, they both want their children to preserve Mexican values and traditions. All this seems to indicate that they are passing through the stage of acculturation.

The results of these interviews seem to point out that time is not a determined factor on the adaptation process that Mexican immigrant parents' experience. It seems like the extrinsic motivation they have to reach upward mobility and to improve their local resiliency helps them to get adapted to the American culture no matter how short or long they have been living on the United States. However, they do not reject their own values, traditions, customs, beliefs and ideologies. On the contrary, they want their children to preserve their identity as Mexicans. The two last interviewees are being acculturated to the new society, but they share the same desire as the three previous

interviewees, they want their children to maintain Mexican festivities, values and religion.

In terms of gender, the family structure of the interviewees, in general, does not seem to change a lot. The role of women is the same as what they had before migrating. They are the housekeepers and they take care of their children's education. Regarding men's role, we can say that it does not change either. Mostly, they keep on being the head of the household, and their main responsibility is to support the family economically and to take the decisions pertaining to the family. Regarding their children we are not positive what process of acculturation they will take. Although children are the members of the family who are more exposed to the new culture this will not guarantee that they will change their family values because their parents are the ones that determine that. For example, one of interviewees claimed that he did not agree with the American value of independence for the youth and he did not want that as an example for his children. On the other hand, another interviewee said that her children would have the same curfew regardless of gender. This is something that would have not happened in Mexico.

From the results of our interviews, we can say that the situation of Mexican women in the labor force in the United States as in Mexico varies depending on the circumstances each family faces within the same social field, in this case Mexico and the United States. Two of the interviewees work in the United States while they did not work when they were in Mexico. One of them does not work here, but she worked, getting a salary, in Mexico. A fourth one neither works here nor did she work there.

A tangible difference is that the amount of money these women made in Mexico was not enough to support their families whereas in the States it allows them to have a better resiliency. According to the interviewees, their economic status has improved since they came to the United States. As the interviewees said, it is easier to get things here, there are more commodities, and they can afford to buy things they could never have bought in Mexico. In summary, their economic situation is better than in Mexico. Husband and wife have more opportunities to work outside the house with a better wage which helps to increase the family's income.

As López claimed there is a split between instrumental and affective roles in Hispanic families. There is a clear social division of work and based on our interviews we can see that Mexican women whether they work outside the house or not, they are transmitters and preservers of the family's ideology. They try to entail a sustained connection with the previous environment by inculcating their children their religion and values. Moreover, they are also in charge of one instrumental activity which is their children's education. They attend to the school's meetings and take them to school.

López stated that men are more likely to adjust faster to the American life style because, generally, they are more in touch with the public environment. Based on the results, we can say that all of the interviewees, regardless of gender, are constantly getting accommodated to the circumstances they face depending where in the social field they are located.

The immersion of Mexican families in American culture promotes a diverse attitude on behalf of the children. The interviewees' children go to school where they meet American and some other nationalities' friends, which allows them to adapt to the new culture sooner. They are immersed into the American culture, but in all the cases, their parents want them to keep and follow the Mexican festivities and traditions. It seems like the children are acculturated sooner than the parents. In some situations, that will end up, as assimilation or total immersion into the American culture, and probably it will result as a clash of values and beliefs between parents and children since they do not want them to relegate their home-country values.

Conclusion

From the results, we would like to say that our hypothesis was affirmative. These Mexican immigrant families do not change their gender roles as a result of migration, but they are constantly accommodating them according to the circumstances they face and the decisions they have to make within the same social field, Mexico and the United States.

Our interviewees were continuously thinking, discussing, facing situations that required a decision and as a result, they were shaping their values and acquiring new ones according to the given circumstances. These families' gender relations were usually put into play by an array of

different reasons: decisions taken by the family, external situations being encountered or even personal convictions. The comments portrayed in this paper were the clear perceptions of the interviewees at the interview; nevertheless, these perceptions are obviously constantly being modified, even if the interviewees do not perceive it.

It is also clear that these Mexican women are the transmitters and preservers of the family's ideology. They are the keepers of the family's moral values and traditions.

Moreover, the mobility in this social field is reached by two evident aspects. One: the resiliency of the interviewees in their place of origin. As we could notice throughout this paper, the economy of most of these families was precarious. Even if they worked hard in Mexico, the money they made was not enough to support their families or if it was there were still some things that could only be attained by migrating. And two, there are better working conditions in the United States. None of our interviewees mentioned having a problem to get a job once they arrived to the States. Moreover, the money they were making was enough for their needs.

We also realized that it is not that Mexican women work until they migrate, they are actually doing inside the house jobs all the time. The difference is that they accede to other work markets and with a different incentive: salaries under their names.

Finally, we would like to say that the family structure does not change from one day to the other, it is a process. Once these families had overcome any adverse conditions, even if they are in an unknown surrounding, their family structure will begin to get a different shape. This allows us to see that these Mexican immigrant families are only getting accommodated to the circumstances.

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