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Family Ideal and Real

The Change of the Image of the Family

in Selected Works of Mexican American Authors

Diplomová práce

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P R O H L A Š U J I ,

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Introduction

The fact that in the twenty-first century Latinos became the largest ethnic minority in the United States is inevitably mentioned in any recent publication on Latino population in the U.S.¹ People of Mexican origin form the largest percentage of the Latino group, 58%, according to the 2000 U.S. census.² Mexican Americans have a long history of settling in the United States, nevertheless, their disadvantaged position in the American society is evident. They are usually located among the working-class, have low income, and also low educational attainment. Some social scientists, whose works will be mentioned in this thesis, believe that it is the Mexican American culture that prevents this population from success; others attribute it to discrimination and negative stereotypes of Mexicans that are perpetuated in the American society.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Mexican American civil rights movement, known as the Chicano Movement, decided to end the discrimination and other social problems by supporting Mexican American nationalism. One of the ways to increase their national pride was to point at the Mexican American family as a source of strength and a symbol of unity of all Mexicans in the United States. The Chicano Movement asked artists to create works of art that would represent the Chicano family as an inspiration, and several literary works were written at that time in support of the Mexican American family. On one hand, this depiction of Mexican Americans was a positive thing, as it formed a counterpart to the negative Anglo-American view of the Mexican American family, and it certainly helped the Mexican-American minority at that time. On the other hand, the movement completely disregarded women and homosexuals and their rights. Therefore, after the turbulent years of the Chicano Movement, several artists addressed these problematic issues in their works. The purpose of this thesis is to show that the depiction of the family in Mexican-American literature changed after 1970s, and that this change was directly linked to the family ideology of the Chicano Movement.

To be able to talk about the representations of the family in the Mexican-American literature I will first describe the Mexican-American minority and its position in the U.S. society. I will address this minority from the historical and sociological

¹ For example Alma M. Garcia's *The Mexican Americans* and *Encyclopedia of Latino Popular Culture* (See Bibliography).

² Marotta, Silvia A., and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 17.

perspective by using historical studies as well as facts provided by the demographic and socio-economic statistics. Then, I will discuss the Mexican-American family, its general characteristics, and its importance for the Mexican minority. Afterwards, I will show how the Mexican-American family is portrayed in literature, and how this image has changed in time.

I will discuss two novels that were written before and during the era of the Chicano Movement, and then two novels that were written in its aftermath. Mexican-American literature prior to and during *El Movimiento* pictured the patriarchal family with strictly defined gender roles as a warm harbor, where the family members support each other. In my thesis this image is represented by Jovita González' novel *Dew on the Thorn* and Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*. After the Chicano Movement the image of the Mexican-American family in literature changed dramatically. Writers such as Sandra Cisneros and Arturo Islas disagreed with the family image presented during the Chicano Movement. In their works from the early 1980s, *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros) and *The Rain God* (Islas), these authors attacked the traditional Mexican-American family, and blamed it for perpetuating unequal gender roles and normative heterosexuality, and thus perpetuating the social injustice.

I have decided to discuss these particular works for several reasons. Family plays an important role in all the stories, all the books are comparable in form, and they clearly represent the period when they were written. I also considered it crucial to discuss works by both male and female authors to be able to see how do they differ in their depiction of the family. Therefore, literary works by both male and female writers represent the two different views of the family.

I have chosen *Dew on the Thorn* by Jovita González because it is one of a few Mexican-American novels from the first half of the twentieth century. At that time the body of Mexican-American literature consisted mostly of short stories published in magazines. Despite the fact that *Dew on the Thorn* is longer than most of these works, it represents similar views as other Mexican-American literary works from that period, written by authors such as Nina Otero or Fermina Guerra. These writers also turned to the rich Spanish past of Mexican Americans and nostalgically depicted the life of the Spanish settlers in North America.

Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya is a novel that is typical of the Chicano Movement. ...*y no se lo tragó la tierra* (...*And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*) by Tomás

Rivera offers similar representations of the Chicano family as well as of the Mexican-American minority. Nevertheless, I have chosen Anaya's novel, because it is the most widely read novel from the era of the Chicano Movement. Moreover, Rivera's text was written in Spanish, while Anaya, as well as other writers that will be discussed in this thesis, wrote in English.

There are many literary works that represent the post-Chicano Movement attitude towards the Mexican American family. I have decided to use *The Rain God* by Arturo Islas and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros because in these works the family is central to the plot, and through them we can look at the Mexican-American family from both male and female perspective. Even though a more recent novel by Cisneros, *Caramelo*, would also offer an in-depth analysis of the Mexican-American family, I have decided to discuss *The House on Mango Street*. *Caramelo* focuses on one family only, while *The House on Mango Street* follows the lives of many families and thus describes the issue from different perspectives.³

The problematic of the family can be associated with feminism and Sandra Cisneros is even often classified as a Chicana feminist author. Nevertheless, this thesis will not discuss feminism, because Chicana feminist theory was already analyzed at this department by Marie Loudínová in her thesis *Being a Chicana* and by Tereza Kynčlová in her thesis *Mestiza Consciousness and Literary Techniques in Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera – The New Mestiza*.⁴ The linguistic aspect of the Mexican-American literature, i.e. the frequent code switching, was also already addressed in these two theses, and therefore I will not analyze the language used in the selected literary works.

My thesis will focus on the Mexican-American family and its image in literature. Using the combination of the mimetic and the expressive approach to literature I want to describe how the reality of the Mexican-American minority as well as the experiences of the authors are seen and interpreted in the selected literary works. Thus, this thesis will examine the connection between Mexican-American history, sociology, and literature in relation to family.

I have already introduced my primary sources, but I will also use several secondary sources. In the field of history I will rely mostly on *The Oxford History of the*

³ The Mexican-American female experience is described also in *Peel My Love like an Onion* and *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, novels by the Chicana writer Ana Castillo (See Bibliography).

⁴ See Bibliography.

American West edited by Clyde Milner and Rudolfo Acuña's *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. The background for the sociological part of the thesis will be obtained from the official data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Ronald L. Taylor's *Minority families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*, Alma Garcia's *The Mexican Americans*, and Norma Williams's *The Mexican-American Family*.⁵ Apart from these major works I will also consult encyclopedias of Latino culture as well as several academic journals related to Mexican-American studies.

Terminology

When talking about Mexican Americans it is very important to define the terms, because this is the first problem that scholars can encounter in the area of Mexican American studies. Different groups used different terms in different historical periods, and these terms have different connotations, which can be very confusing. The most important distinction has to be made between "Hispanic" and "Latino", and "Mexican American" and "Chicano". The former two terms refer to the population with roots in Latin America, in any country from Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego. "Hispanic" refers to the group of people who share the Spanish language, but this term is also viewed as a more problematic one out of these two words, because it suggests only the Spanish ancestry of these people, and does not take into account their indigenous heritage.⁶ Regardless of this reasoning, this term is frequently used by politicians. "Latino" is not a perfect solution either, because it can refer to the U.S. population of Latin American heritage, but also to the population in Latin America without any relations to the United States.

The term "Mexican American" refers strictly to a person of Mexican heritage in the United States. It became popular after World War II, when the Mexican origin population wanted to stress the fact that they can be Mexicans as well as Americans, and wanted to be fully integrated into American society. The term "Chicano" became popular in the late 1960s, in the era of the Civil Rights movements. People who used the word wanted to put

⁵ See Bibliography.

⁶ The term *Hispanic* was coined in 1970 by the U.S. Census Bureau to provide data on people of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and other Spanish speaking groups in the United States. See section 1.3.3 "Mexican Americans in the United States: Demographical Facts."

emphasis on what differed them from the majority society. Nowadays, “Chicano” is viewed as a too political and even radical term, and therefore the term “Mexican American” is used more frequently in the media when referring to the Mexican origin population in the United States.⁷

In my thesis “Mexican Americans” refers to the Mexican origin population in the United States, and the term “Latinos” to all the Latin American immigrants in the U.S. The term “Chicano/a” will be used predominantly in relation to the people and events associated with the Chicano movement.

The following are other key terms that I will use in my thesis, and their definitions:

Acculturation is a “cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture.”⁸

Americanization means to become American in character, and to absorb or assimilate into the American culture.⁹

Discrimination is a treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit.¹⁰

Ethnicity means a shared cultural heritage, such as religion, language, and customs.

⁷ Laura E. Gomez writes more on the problematic terminology in her article from 1992 “The Birth of the “Hispanic” Generation: Attitudes of Mexican American Political Elites toward the Hispanic Label.” (*Latin American Perspectives* 19,4: 45—58) After interviewing several Mexican American politicians, Gomez found out that even though these people did not agree with the word “Hispanic”, they used it because it secured them larger support, not just from Mexican Americans, but from other Latinos as well. It is very probable that Anglo American politicians use the word “Hispanic” for the same reason.

⁸ “Acculturation.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 10 Mar. 2007. <<http://www.britannica.com/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=acculturation&query=acculturation>>

⁹ “Americanization.” *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. 10 Feb. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Americanization>>.

¹⁰ “Discrimination.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. 25 Jan. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/discrimination>>

Familism is “a social pattern in which the family assumes a position of ascendance over individual interests.”¹¹

Gender is a sexual identity, especially in relation to society or culture.¹²

Minority is a “culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group living within a larger society. As the term is used by politicians and social scientists, a minority is necessarily subordinate to the dominant group within a society.”¹³

Oppression means the feeling of being heavily burdened, mentally or physically, by troubles, adverse conditions, anxiety, etc.¹⁴

Patriarchy is a social system in which the father is the head of the family, and men have authority over women and children.¹⁵

Race is a socially constructed category that focuses on the biological traits that people share.

Stereotype is a simplified and therefore distorted image of a group.¹⁶

¹¹ “Familism.” *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. 17 Mar. 2007. <<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/familism>>

¹² “Gender.” *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. 05 Feb. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/gender>>

¹³ “Minority.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 25 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9052878>>.

¹⁴ “Oppression.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. 25 Jan. 2007. Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/oppression>>

¹⁵ “Patriarchy.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. 04 Feb. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/patriarchy>>

¹⁶ “Stereotype.” *The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005. 25 Jan. 2007. Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Stereotype>>

1. Mexican Americans: Between Two Cultures

The objective of this chapter is to introduce the Mexican American minority, its history and its socio-economic status in the United States. The section “A Brief History” covers the time period from the conquest of Mexico until the end of the Chicano Movement in the 1970s. In the following subchapters, “Anglo-American Stereotypes of Mexicans” and “Mexican Americans in Numbers,” I will describe the various forms of discrimination and the main problems that this minority had to deal with.

1.1 A Brief History

Even though Mexican origin population is often considered an immigrant group, they have lived for many centuries in the area that is now the United States. This section maps the history of Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest and also the history of their interactions with the Anglos. I want to show how the history of Mexico blends with the history of the American West, and how historical events shaped the contemporary Mexican Americans. Some of these events had a great impact on the disadvantaged position of the Mexican origin population, and they also play an important role in some of the literary works, which will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

1.1.1 The Conquest

The history of Mexicans dates back to the Olmeca, Maya, Aztecs, Zapoteca, Tolteca, Puebla, and the other pre-Columbian cultures. These agricultural societies became more complex in the period between 300 and 900 AD. They developed skills and crafts, they knew astrology, mathematics, architecture, and they also kept historical records. The arrival of the Spanish at the end of the fifteenth century put an end to this so-called Golden Age of Mesoamerica. The Europeans brought new weapons, new religion, and new diseases, and these helped them conquer many of the ancient cultures. This process culminated in 1521, when the Spanish *conquistador* Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztecs, who were the most powerful civilization in Mesoamerica at that time. During the first years after the conquest there were hardly any Spanish women in

the Americas, and therefore the mixing of the two races, European and Indian, began, and a new race was created: the mestizo.

1.1.2 Expeditions to the North

The Spanish gave Mexico the name New Spain because of its resemblance with their mother country. Although they developed mostly the area of Central Mexico, some of the explorers went further north in their quest for “God, gold, and glory.” Because they did not find the wealth they expected, the expeditions returned back to Mexico City. Instead, missionaries came, as conversion of the indigenous people to Christianity was one of the objectives of the conquest. Because the missionaries “could not imagine that a people could become Christians unless they lived like Europeans,”¹⁷ they educated them not only in the Catholic religion, but also in the European ways of dressing, eating, and farming. The Spanish colonists and missionaries introduced the indigenous population to their way of life, which was concentrated around the family and the Catholic Church. In New Mexico the missionaries were successful in converting the sedentary Pueblo Indians. However, to establish similar missions in Texas was more complicated, because the Spanish Crown did not have sufficient funds to maintain the missions in the territory of the nomadic Apaches.

1.1.3 The Colonization of Texas

The French presence in Louisiana became a threat to Spanish empire in Northern Mexico. Therefore, several troops were sent to Texas, some of them led by Don José Escandón and Don Blas María de la Garza Falcón, and the land was sold to colonists willing to settle there.¹⁸ After the Seven Year’s War, in 1763, the Spanish Crown acquired the part of Louisiana west of the Mississippi river, and this vast territory formed a buffer zone between the Spanish and the English territories in the New World. At the same time, Spaniards founded similar settlements in California, because they feared Russian presence in the west. Despite these colonizing activities, the far north of the

¹⁷ Weber, David J. “The Spanish-Mexican Rim.” *The Oxford History of the American West*. Ed. Clyde A. Miller II et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994. 54.

¹⁸ Jovita González mentions these historical figures in her novel *Dew on the Thorn*. See section 4.1.1 “Tejano History.”

Spanish Empire in the New World remained a frontier without many institutions and hierarchies that were common in the center of New Spain.¹⁹

1.1.4 The Anglo Presence in Texas

The beginning of the nineteenth century was a period of dramatic changes. The Mexican civil war started in 1810, and lasted until 1821 when the Independence was finally proclaimed. As the Spanish institutions, missions, and soldiers left the area, the frontier was open to American businessmen, who used the sudden vacancy to trade with the indigenous population. American settlers encouraged by the Manifest Destiny soon followed these traders.²⁰ Mexico allowed these settlements on several conditions, such as conversion to Catholicism, abidance by Mexican laws, and no slavery.

However, the Americans refused to submit to these conditions, and Mexico seemed unable to “consolidate its control over Texas” because of the increasing number of Anglos as well as the vastness of the territory.²¹ U.S. authorities made several attempts to buy Texas from Mexico at that time, and Anglo settlers, led by Stephen Austin wanted to proclaim Texas a separate republic. A short war that followed in 1835-1836 was hopeless for the Mexican army, because the better-equipped Anglos outnumbered them, but Mexicans, led by the general Santa Anna still enjoyed a small victory in a former mission called the Alamo.²² The Anglos won the war after the battle of San Jacinto, and their leader, general Samuel Houston became president of the Republic of Texas.

1.1.5 The Mexican-American War and its Consequences

In the 1840s the U.S. decided to annex Texas. According to them the border was the Rio Grande, but Mexico insisted that it was further north, at the Nueces River. Unable to negotiate, the United States declared war on Mexico in 1846. The war, according to Rodolfo Acuña, was “violent and brutal” because the Americans led by the

¹⁹ Weber, David J. “The Spanish-Mexican Rim.” *The Oxford History of the American West*. Ed. Clyde A. Miller II et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994. 68.

²⁰ “Manifest Destiny” was a phrase first used by a Democrat John O’Sullivan in 1839. According to Manifest Destiny it was God’s will and destiny of the U.S.A. to expand westward, and thus justified this expansionism. Later the expression was used especially in relation to the annexation of Texas.

²¹ Acuña, Rodolfo F. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. New York: Harper Collins. 1988. 7.

²² The Alamo later became a symbol of the bravery of Texas settlers as well as of Mexican cruelty. The battle cry “Remember the Alamo” was used as a justification for further attacks against Mexicans.

general Zachary Taylor killed innocent civilians. In 1847 the U.S. troops got as far as Mexico City, and thus forced Mexican authorities to give up. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American war, was ratified in 1848, and Mexico lost almost half of its territory. According to the treaty, U.S. had to abide by the land grants given to Mexicans by Spain and by the Mexican government. The Mexican citizens, who decided to stay in what was now the territory of the United States of America, were given the rights of the U.S. citizens.

Unfortunately, Mexicans in the new territories were discriminated by American settlers.²³ Even before the war there were people who were against incorporating the northern part of Mexico because of their racial prejudices. John C. Calhoun, a Southern politician, wrote a letter of protest to President James Polk saying, among other things, that “the greatest misfortunes of Spanish America are to be traced to that fatal error of placing these colored races on an equality with the white race.”²⁴ Such opinion was not isolated. “Mexicans were described as lazy, ignorant, bigoted, superstitious, cheating, thieving, gambling, cruel, sinister, cowardly half-breeds,”²⁵ historian David J. Weber says in his essay on Anglo-American attitudes towards Mexicans. The most common stereotype of a Mexican was a dirty sleeping drunkard.²⁶ These views of Mexicans make it clear that their rights as American citizens, as well as their rights to their property were not likely to be honored. The majority of Mexicans in Texas, New Mexico, and other territories were deprived of their land, which is one of the reasons for the disadvantaged position of the Mexican origin population. Anglo attitudes towards the Mexican inhabitants of the new territories resulted in segregation: Anglo-Americans refused to send their children to school with Mexicans and therefore both groups had their own schools.

Many Mexican Americans attempted to end the discrimination, school segregation, and the denial of the right to vote. They wanted to prove that Mexican

²³ A very detailed account of how Anglos treated Mexicans in Texas is given by Arnolde De León in *They Called Them Greasers*, and Rodolfo F. Acuña in *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. (See Bibliography)

²⁴ “John C. Calhoun on Incorporating Mexico, 1848.” *Major Problems in the History of the American West*. Ed. Clyde E. Millner. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company. 1997. 219.

²⁵ Weber, David J. „Anglo-American Stereotypes of Mexicans.“ *Major Problems in the History of the American West*. Ed. Clyde E. Millner. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company. 1997. 251.

²⁶ Interestingly, these negative stereotypes applied exclusively to Mexican men; Anglos referred to Mexican women as “Spanish *señoritas*.” According to Weber’s abovementioned essay, the reason probably is that “their hormones overcame their ethnocentrism”, because there were hardly any Anglo women in the West at that time.

Americans were proud citizens of the United States. In 1929 the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was formed in Corpus Christi, Texas. This organization was in favor of Americanization. LULAC encouraged Mexican Americans to embrace the cultural values of the United States, and they coined the very term “Mexican American”, because until then people of Mexican origin were simply called Mexicans. English was the official language at LULAC, and undocumented immigrants and non-citizens were not accepted as members.

War World II brought a change that could be attributed to LULAC’s activism: while African American soldiers were still segregated, Mexican Americans were integrated with white units. This seemed to be the beginning of the American Dream for Mexican Americans, but when these soldiers, who were willing to lie their lives for America, returned home, they found out that the *de facto* segregation persevered in the USA. It went to such measures that Anglo Americans protested against Mexican American soldiers being buried in “white” cemeteries. Yet, the period after World War II also offered a great change to the war veterans, who benefited from the so-called G.I. Bill. This was a financial aid that helped World War II veterans to access university education, and Mexican Americans, who have fought in the war in large numbers, finally had a chance for upward mobility.

Despite these attempts for desegregation, the white Americans resisted. It was not easy to change the prejudices that were deeply rooted in the American nation. Nevertheless, John F. Kennedy began to realize the growing importance of Mexican Americans, and in the presidential campaign in 1960 they were for the first time addressed as a politically important group. John F. Kennedy’s wife, Jacqueline, even spoke Spanish in a television advertisement in support of her husband in the 1960 election. The spot was filmed in a living room, and Mrs. Kennedy said that her husband’s victory in the election would be good for the future “of our children”. This was an important gesture for the Mexican Americans. Not only did she speak Spanish (an effort that was never before seen in domestic politics), but for Mexican Americans she also represented the “ideal woman:” she was beautiful, sat at home, supported her husband, and wanted the best for the children. It was an excellent strategy, and it worked: 85% of

Latino voters in the U.S. voted for John F. Kennedy, and in Texas he even gained 91% of the Latino vote.²⁷

1.1.6 The United Farm Workers

In the early 1960s the Mexican American migrant farm workers began to organize to protest against the conditions they had to work in. Life of these workers in the Southwest was extremely difficult. They earned low wages for their hard work and exposure to poisonous pesticides, and the majority considered them ignorant, dirty, and lazy.²⁸ Therefore, they formed the United Farm Workers (UFW), an organization that strived to achieve better working conditions and higher wages for the workers in the grape fields in California. The leader of UFW, César Chávez, introduced their demands to the growers, who refused to cooperate. Chávez did not give up, and used non-violent activities to raise awareness about the problem. He organized strikes, and he also launched the national boycott of California grapes. Senator Bobby Kennedy became involved in these actions and this ensured the boycott a great publicity that helped the UFW gain support throughout the United States. In 1970 the grape growers finally signed contracts with the UFW.

1.1.7 The Chicano Movement

The activities of the United Farm Workers inspired Mexican American students and intellectuals in the late 1960s, because the way these Mexican American workers resisted the white grape growers brought up the idea of internal colonialism. This notion was based on the history of colonization in Africa, India, or Latin America, where white rules were imposed on non-whites. Internal colonialism means that one group continues to “maintain dominance” over another group after conquering it.²⁹ According to Irene I Blea’s theory of internal colonialism “the dominant and subordinate populations give the appearance of being intermingled, but distinctive differences in quality of life are highly

²⁷ “Viva Kennedy – Viva Johnson Clubs.” *The Handbook of Texas Online*. 2001. The University of Texas at Austin. 28.1.2007. <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/VV/wcv1.html>

²⁸ The hard life of Mexican farm workers is depicted in the novels *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Helena Maria Viramontes and *Macho!* By Victor Villaseñor (See Bibliography).

²⁹ Blea, Irene I. *Researching Chicano Communities: Social-Historical, Physic, Psychological, and Spiritual Space*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. 1995. 25.

apparent.”³⁰ Mexicans in the United States began to realize that they were internally colonized in a similar way, and that they formed a third world within the borders of the U.S.A. Ramon A. Gutierrez, a Chicano historian, maintains that Mexican Americans were “socially, culturally, and economically subordinated and territorially segregated by white Anglo-Saxon America.”³¹ The struggle of the UFW for better working conditions became an inspiration also for the educated Mexican Americans in their struggle for self-determination in the American society.

Chicano nationalism was expressed by rejecting the white culture and by turning to the indigenous, especially Aztec, roots.³² Chicano muralists, such as Mario Castillo, Antonio Pazos Jiménez and David Tineos, expressed their ethnic consciousness on the walls in several American cities, especially in Los Angeles, San Antonio, El Paso, and Chicago.³³ In their murals they linked together Aztec mythology and contemporary Chicano activities. The Aztecs fought against the Spanish conquerors, and Chicanos wanted to fight against the Anglo-Americans in a similar way. They believed that the white Americans have suppressed their history, culture, and traditions. Mexican American historians such as Rodolfo Acuña began to “decolonize” Mexican American history. They described the events from the Mexican point of view, and used words like “invasion”, “atrocities”, “aggression”, and “brutality” when talking about Anglo presence in Texas before 1848.³⁴ Activists like Reies Lopez Tijerina in New Mexico began to recover the land rights that Mexican Americans were deprived of by Anglo-Americans after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

The Chicano Movement was by no means a uniform movement. There were farm workers asking for fair conditions, and students asking for courses on Mexican American history. Different activities took place in different parts of the country. There were also various ways of activism, including art, literature, and politics. What was common,

³⁰ Blea, Irene I. *Researching Chicano Communities: Social-Historical, Physic, Psychological, and Spiritual Space*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. 1995. 25. These “distinctive differences” will be introduced in section 1.3 “Mexican Americans in Numbers.”

³¹ Gutierrez, Ramon A. “Community, Patriarchy and Individualism: The Politics of Chicano History and the Dream of Equality.” *American Quarterly*. Vol. 45. No. 1. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1993. 46.

³² Even the very name “Chicano”, that these activists chose to describe themselves, symbolized the return to the Aztecs. The term Chicano comes from *Mexicano*, which derives from *Mexica*, a word from Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. *Mexica* was the name that the Aztecs gave themselves. In this manner, Chicano signifies descent from the Aztecs.

³³ Arreola, Daniel D. “Mexican American Exterior Murals.” *Geographical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 4. (Oct., 1984), pp. 411-412. 19 Feb. 2007. <<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0016-7428%28198410%2974%3A4%3C409%3AMAEM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-7>>

³⁴ Acuña, Rodolfo F. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. New York: Harper Collins. 1988. 5 - 15.

though, to all the branches were the mottos “Qué viva la Raza!” (Long live the race/people) and “Brown is Beautiful”. Racial unity was so important for the Chicano Movement, that even the class differences were overlooked.

The Chicano Movement was crucial for the self-determination of Mexican Americans. Without their efforts, there probably would not be Mexican American Studies departments at the universities; there would not be Mexican American congressmen, and some valuable literary works would have never been published, let alone written. Despite the three decades that have passed, the legacy of the movement is still alive. Its spirit was present during the rallies organized to oppose the anti-immigration program of President Bush in the spring of 2006. The protesters carried banners saying “We Are Indigenous, The Only Owners of this Continent”³⁵ and “Si Se Puede”³⁶, the motto of Cesar Chávez. Clearly, the Chicano Movement was one of the forces behind the masses that marched the streets of Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and other big American cities during the “Day without Immigrants” event on May 1st, 2006.

Despite its great influence and success, there were issues that the Chicano Movement did not address. The movement was strongly associated with the concept of machismo, and therefore the official leaders did not address women’s rights and homosexuality within the Mexican American community. I will focus on these issues in chapter 2, “Mexican-American Family.”

1.2 Anglo-American Stereotypes of Mexicans

In the sub-chapter “A Brief History” I mentioned that among the stereotypical characteristics of Mexicans were laziness, dirtiness, ignorance, and thieving, and that the most common stereotype of a Mexican was a dirty sleeping drunkard.³⁷ Despite the many years that have passed since the Mexican-American War, these stereotypes are still deeply rooted in the contemporary American society. It is most visible in advertising,

³⁵ *Libertad Latina*. 2006. 17 Feb 2007.

<http://la.indymedia.org/uploads/2006/03/click_picture_for_full_resolution_15336.jpg>

³⁶ *Alliance of South Asians Taking Action - ASATA*. 2006. 17 Feb. 2007.

<http://www.asata.org/files/ASATA_May1rally_1_web.jpg>

³⁷ Interestingly, these negative stereotypes applied exclusively to Mexican men; Anglos referred to Mexican women as “Spanish *señoritas*.” According to Weber’s abovementioned essay, the reason probably is that “their hormones overcame their ethnocentrism”, because there were hardly any Anglo women in the West at that time.

where Mexicans are very often presented as lazy and smelly bandits.³⁸ Historians Arnoldo De León in his book *They Called Them Greasers* as well as David Montejano in *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* discuss how these cultural stereotypes and the attitudes of Anglos towards Mexicans originated.³⁹ According to De León the roots of this ethnocentrism were in the racism and the traditional Anglo resentment of Catholicism,⁴⁰ and according to Montejano another factor was the notion of dirtiness associated with Mexicans.⁴¹

The obvious question is, how is it possible that these stereotypes are so persistent and are still being used in the media? The American stereotypes of Irish or Chinese immigrants have disappeared over time, but stereotypes of Mexicans are still strong. The reason probably is that there is a difference between the types of immigration of these groups. Chinese or Irish immigration was massive, but eventually diminished. In contrast, Mexican immigration has been massive and continuous, and therefore Mexicans do not seem to become assimilated as quickly as the previous groups of immigrants.

The stereotypes of Mexicans can be seen also in the American film industry. Mexicans in the films are usually associated with bright colors of clothes, their houses are equipped with colorful furniture and decorated with images of the Virgin of Guadalupe and other saints, and their diet consists of *tortillas*, beans, and tequila.⁴² As far as the Mexican characters in American movies are concerned, Charles Ramirez Berg described in his book *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance* the six most common stereotypes: *el bandido*, the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, and the dark lady. “*El bandido*” is common in the traditional Hollywood western films. The bandit is usually a dirty vicious man who speaks English with a heavy Spanish accent. “The harlot”, who is often lusty and treacherous, is the female counterpart of the bandit. “The male buffoon” and “the female clown” are comical simple-minded characters, who are sexually promiscuous and often make mistakes in English. “The Latin lover” and “the dark lady” are attractive and mysterious. While in the

³⁸ Wallechinsky, David and Irving Wallace. “History of Advertising: Mexican Stereotypes in Advertising.” *Trivia-Library.com*. 12 Feb. 2007. <<http://www.trivia-library.com/a/history-of-advertising-mexican-stereotypes-in-advertising.htm>>

³⁹ “Greasers” is a pejorative term for a person of Mexican origin that was frequently used in the Southwest in the 19th century.

⁴⁰ De León, Arnoldo. *They Called Them Greasers*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1983.

⁴¹ Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1987. 220-1.

⁴² A very clear example of Mexican cultural stereotypes are *Fools Rush In* (1997), starring Salma Hayek, and *Ugly Betty* (2006) with America Ferrera and Salma Hayek.

case of the previous stereotypes their Spanish accent alludes to their ignorance, here it is presented as exotic.⁴³ The interesting fact is that although Ramirez Berg conducted his research on films from the silent era up to the 1980s, similar stereotypes continue to be present in contemporary films.

The American media, be it in advertisements or films, perpetuate these stereotypical images of Mexicans, and these cultural stereotypes might have been one of the reasons for the disadvantaged position of Mexican Americans. The statistics that will be mentioned in the section on demography will illustrate how in several aspects Mexican Americans lag behind other ethnic groups in the United States, especially the non-Hispanic white population. Their socio-economic status is low, and so is their educational attainment. This phenomenon can be partly explained by the ongoing immigration from Mexico, which slows down the assimilation process. But Mexican Americans have experienced “second-class citizenship” since the annexation of the northern part of Mexico in 1848.⁴⁴ Latinos in general are also described as a disadvantaged job-seeking group, which means that in the labor market they are disadvantaged as job applicants in comparison to other ethnic groups, regardless of their skills. Therefore, the *de facto* segregation of Mexican Americans may be as well based on cultural stereotypes of laziness, dirtiness, and ignorance frequently presented by the media. A recent study in a scholarly journal *The Counseling Psychologist* examining the influence of stereotypes on the Mexican Americans has shown that Mexican origin population in the United States is indeed generally perceived in derogatory terms.⁴⁵

1.3 Mexican Americans in Numbers

The previous sections have summed up the main events that map the history of Mexicans in the United States, as well as the stereotypes that are associated with Mexican Americans. It was already mentioned that the Mexican-American War was the beginning

⁴³ Berg, Charles Ramirez. *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance.* Austin: University of Texas Press. 2002. 66-77.

⁴⁴ Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. “Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited.” *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 70.

⁴⁵ Flores Niemann, Yolanda. “Stereotypes about Chicanas and Chicanos.” *The Counseling Psychologist*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 55-90. 2001. 15 Feb. 2007. <<http://tcp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/1/55>>

of discrimination of the Mexican origin population, and this had a great impact on the disadvantaged position of Mexican Americans, which was perpetuated by the stereotypes introduced in the previous section. The disadvantaged position of Mexican Americans in the United States is demonstrated in the following demographical facts, which are also clearly reflected in most of the literary works that will be discussed in this thesis.

This thesis wants to show the impact of the Chicano Movement on the representations of family in the Mexican-American literature, and I should therefore use statistics from the era of the movement. Because it is rather impossible to obtain accurate statistics on the Mexican minority from those decades, I have decided to use statistics from the 2000 census. Firstly, even though there has been a slow and steady improvement in some areas, the socio-economic position of Mexican Americans has not changed significantly over the past decades. Therefore, the 2000 census reflects not only the contemporary trends, but it also corresponds to the data from the previous decades. Secondly, for reasons that will be discussed in this section, the 2000 census offers the most precise data on the Mexican origin population in the United States.

Finding demographical data focused specifically on Mexican Americans is quite problematic. Many researchers unite all the citizens and permanent residents of Latin American origin under the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino”. This is partially justifiable, because these people have a common language and generally share the Catholic religion. Also, as Maxine Baca Zinn and Angela Y. H. Pok point out, “these terms are useful for charting broad demographic changes in society.”⁴⁶ Yet, despite the fact that they have a similar cultural background, Latinos are a very varied group, and these general statistics are not useful for people who conduct research in a particular group. In this section I will discuss the Latino group in general when the data on the Mexican-American group are not available, but where possible I will focus specifically on Mexican Americans.

Official data on Latinos in the United States are available through the U.S. Census Bureau since 1970, but there are still several problems with the data collection on this specific group, and those will be addressed in the section “Race and the U.S. Census Bureau”. In the following sections I shall describe the status of Latinos in comparison to the total U.S. population, and then I will demonstrate how the Mexican-American group

⁴⁶ Baca Zinn, Maxine, and Angela H. Y. Pok. „Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families.“ *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*. Ed. Ronald L. Taylor. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 2002. 80.

differs from the total Latino population in the U.S. by using the census data as well as sociological studies on the subject.

1.3.1 Race and the U.S. Census Bureau

Demographic data on Mexican Americans are a very tricky subject. Although the United States has taken a census every ten years since 1790, the data on people of Mexican origin in the U.S. are not consistent. One of the problems is the vagueness of the terms “ethnicity” and “race” that causes confusion when filling in the census forms. The U.S. Census Bureau understands “race” biologically, while Mexican Americans and other Latinos tend to understand it in ethnic and cultural terms. Mexican Americans are both a racial and an ethnic group, because they generally share both biological traits such as brown skin color, dark eyes and hair; and cultural heritage such as the knowledge of Spanish language, Catholic religion, and also the family structure.

The U.S. Census Bureau changed the questions on race, one of the crucial sections of the form, almost every decade, and therefore different categories were considered “race” in different decades. From 1790 until 1890 the Census Bureau used the term “color” instead of “race”, and the form offered options based on the idea of hypodescent, such as mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon. In 1900 the census form began to use a section called “color or race”, and until 1940 it offered eight racial options. In 1950, this section was named “race”, and there were only six different categories. Ten years later the number of options began to grow again: In 1960 there were ten, in 1970 eight again, in 1980 and 1990 fourteen, and in 2000 twelve racial categories. In all these years there has always been a blank field marked “Other”, where people could fill in their race, if it was not among the options offered by the Census Bureau.

Although the section on race changed so frequently, and various categories have been added to the form, Latino, Hispanic, or Mexican were never among them. Since the beginnings of the official census in 1790 the people of Latin American origin in the United States were considered racially white. In 1970 the growing Latino presence in the United States alarmed the Census Bureau, and a new section was inserted in the census form, because the statisticians and demographers needed to differentiate between Latinos and the rest of the white population. Therefore they added a question concerning the

“Hispanic origin”⁴⁷. Based on this question the white population in the United States is divided into Hispanic white and non-Hispanic white, and similarly the black population divides into Hispanic black and non-Hispanic black.

Inserting the question on Hispanic origin lead to a discovery of an interesting phenomenon. People, who identified themselves as “Hispanic,” very often marked the option “Other” when filling in the race question of the census form. For example, in the 1990 census 40% of Latinos (approximately ten million), and almost half of Mexican Americans, 47.4%, marked “Other” in the census form.⁴⁸ According to sociologist Clara Rodriguez, the problem is that Latinos view the question of race differently than the Census Bureau. For Latinos race is “a question of culture, national origin, and socialization rather than simply biological or genetic ancestry or color.”⁴⁹ The concepts of the U.S. Census Bureau are shaped by the theory of hypodescent, and therefore “racial categories have been few [...] and mutually exclusive, with skin color as a prominent element.”⁵⁰ In Latin America, on the other hand, there are many categories, influenced not only by color, but also by social status, and these categories often overlap.⁵¹ Latinos do not consider themselves white as the Census Bureau expects them to do. Apart from the difference in the perception of race, described by Dr. Rodriguez, there are other reasons for that. Latinos mark the option “Other” either because their skin color is not really white or because they are not treated as white in society. Apart from that, the majority of Mexicans are historically of a mixed heritage, and therefore marking just one of the categories offered would not completely describe their racial origin. They would need to fill in more options, for example “White” and “American Indian”, and that was not possible. The Census Bureau seems to have realized that, because finally in 2000 the census form allowed people for the first time in history to choose more than one race. Nevertheless, because of the inconsistency in the data collection, the data on Latinos and Mexican Americans may not be accurate.

⁴⁷ This question asked for “self-identification of the person's origin or descent. Respondents were asked to select their origin from a “flash card” listing of ethnic origins. Persons of Hispanic origin, in particular, were those who indicated that their origin was Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or some other Hispanic origin. It should be noted that Hispanics can be of any race.” (“Hispanic Population of the United States: Current Population Survey, Definition, and Background.” *Census Bureau Home Page*. 2000. 7 Feb. 2007. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic/hispdef.html>)

⁴⁸Rodriguez, Clara. *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States*. New York: NYU Press. 2000. 12.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 9.

⁵¹ Ibid. 9.

1.3.2 Latinos in the United States: Demographical Facts

According to the data from the 1990 and 2000 census, the Latino population doubled in size that decade. The Latin American minority increased by 58% between 1990 and 2000, while the total U.S. population has only increased by 13%.⁵² This growth reflects both the constant immigration and the high fertility of the Latino populations. The geographical distribution of Latinos in the United States is not regular. The majority of them live in the states that border with Mexico: Texas and California; and also in New York and Florida.⁵³ In Texas and California most Latinos are people of Mexican heritage, the largest portion of Latinos in Florida are Cuban immigrants, and Puerto Ricans predominate in New York.⁵⁴ Proximity to the home country as well as history are the main factors in the geographical distribution of Latinos in the United States. Despite the stereotypical image of migrant farm workers that is associated with Latinos, 91% of Latinos live in urban areas.⁵⁵

Several regular patterns can be observed in the data that are available on the Latino population in the United States. Latinos are a much younger population; their median age is 26 years. This is nearly ten years less than the median age of the total U.S. population, which is 35. Furthermore, 80% of Latinos are 24 years old or younger, and this has a great impact on the status of Latinos in the United States, because they are disadvantaged in terms of income and political representation.⁵⁶ These numbers show that a large percentage of Latinos is school age, and a smaller percentage is actually working. Also, there are high numbers of dependent children among Latinos, therefore the parents have to support their offspring and cannot use their financial resources on investments or purchase of a home.⁵⁷ Another aspect of this age distribution is that a high number of Latinos are below voting age, and therefore they cannot effectively participate in the decision making of the United States.

The socio-economic status of Latinos is generally lower than that of the U.S. population in general. While almost one half of the total U.S. population earns \$50,000

⁵² See Appendix, Table 1.

⁵³ See Appendix, Table 2.

⁵⁴ Marotta, Silvia A., and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 19.

⁵⁵ See Appendix, Table 3.

⁵⁶ See Appendix, Table 5.

⁵⁷ Sandra Cisneros addresses this problem in the first vignette in her book *The House on Mango Street* (See Bibliography).

per year or more, for Latinos the average income is not even one third of that. Moreover, 10% of Latinos earns less than \$10,000 compared to only 6% of the total U.S. population.⁵⁸ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a family of four, which earns less than \$20,000, lives below the poverty line. In 2000 this applied to 27% of Latinos, but only to 19% of the total U.S. population. Also, Latino families tend to be larger than those of the total U.S. population; the average family size is 3.5 and 2.5, respectively.⁵⁹

As far as employment is concerned, Latinos and the total U.S. population are comparable in terms of work experience: 59% of the total U.S. population and 56% of the Latino population have had some work experience.⁶⁰ The reason why the number for Latinos is smaller may be explained by the above-mentioned fact that Latinos are a younger population. While the latest census shows that the majority (60%) of the total U.S. population works in the white-collar jobs, such as managerial, sales, administrative and technical jobs, a similar percentage of Latinos (61%) work in services, agriculture, and industry, i.e. the blue-collar jobs, hence the smaller income.⁶¹ Also, Latinos tend to have higher unemployment rates when compared with the rates for the total U.S. population: 5.3% and 3.7%, respectively.

The fact that Latinos generally hold blue-collar jobs is related to their educational attainment, which tends to be lower than that of the total U.S. population.⁶² In 2000, only 53% of Latinos had a high school diploma (82% of the total U.S. population). Latinos are also more likely to drop out of high school than any other racial/ethnic group.⁶³ This has an influence on their position in the labor market in the U.S. and hence on their socio-economic status. As far as university education is concerned, in 2000 only 9% of Latinos held a bachelor's degree (25% of the total U.S. population).⁶⁴ Overall, since the 1970s up to 2005 Latino enrollment in college has been constantly lower than that of white or black U.S. population.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ See Appendix, Table 6.

⁵⁹ Marotta, Silvia A., and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 23.

⁶⁰ See Appendix, Table 7.

⁶¹ Marotta, Silvia A., and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 26.

⁶² The reasons for that will be addressed in the following section with a focus on the Mexican-American population in the United States.

⁶³ See Table 8.

⁶⁴ Marotta, Silvia A., and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 26.

⁶⁵ See Appendix, Table 9.

1.3.3 Mexican Americans in the United States: Demographical Facts

Mexican Americans form over half of the Latino population in the United States: 59.3%,⁶⁶ and 7.4% of the total U.S. population.⁶⁷ It is the largest foreign-born population in the United States, being 28% of all foreign-born Americans. The number of Mexican Americans in the U.S. grew by 55.8% between 1994 and 2004.⁶⁸ The reason for this number is obviously the proximity of Mexico and the United States, and the continuous influx of new immigrants from Mexico.⁶⁹ The median age of Mexican Americans is 24 years⁷⁰, which means that Mexican Americans are the youngest of all Latino groups (the median age of the total Latino population is 26).⁷¹ The average household size of Mexican Americans is 4.1 persons, which is the largest one among Latinos in the United States (the average household size for the total U.S. population is 2.5 persons).⁷² This may be explained by the constant immigration from Mexico, because new immigrants to the U.S. often move in with their family members who have arrived to the USA before them. It can also be explained by high fertility rate, which is higher among Mexican-American women than in other ethnic groups. Their high fertility rate may be connected to the Mexican-American Catholicism, and also to their low socio-economic status, which may prevent them from using contraceptives.⁷³

Mexican American immigration is a unique phenomenon in the United States. While other minorities came in a few waves and then underwent a successful acculturation and social mobility, there is an ongoing influx of immigrants from

⁶⁶ Ramirez, Roberto R. *We the People: Hispanic in the United States*. Census 2000 Special Report December Issued. U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C. 2004. 7 Feb. 2007 <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-18.pdf>>

⁶⁷ Marotta, Silvia A. and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 13-14.

⁶⁸ Chacon, Yamilette. "Population Patterns and Educational Attainment of Mexican-Americans 1994-2004." *Sociation Today*. Vol. 3. No. 2. 2005. 7 Feb. 2007 <<http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v32/chacon.htm>>

⁶⁹ The difference between gross domestic product of Mexico and of the USA is higher than the difference between any other two neighboring countries in the world, and that certainly attracts immigration.

⁷⁰ See Appendix, Table 10.

⁷¹ The implications of a low median age were explained in the previous section, "Latinos in the United States: Sociological facts."

⁷² Valdivieso, Rafael. "Demographic Trends of the Mexican-American Population: Implications for Schools." *ERICdigest.org*. 1990. 7 Feb. 2007 <<http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9217/trends.htm>>

⁷³ Baca Zinn, Maxine, and Angela H. Y. Pok. „Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families.“ *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*. Ed. Ronald L. Taylor. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 2002.

Mexico.⁷⁴ Mexican Americans therefore experience a low upward mobility rate and a low degree of acculturation.⁷⁵ Mexican Americans also rank number one in several unfavorable statistics. They show the highest dropout rate and the lowest educational attainment out of all the Latino groups. Even though the educational attainment of Latinos has grown over the last three decades, the educational achievements of the white and black U.S. population have equally improved.⁷⁶ Therefore, Latinos, and Mexican Americans especially, still stay behind the black minority and white majority. As mentioned before, according to the 2000 census, 80% of the total U.S. population had a high school diploma and 24% also had a university degree, and for Latinos it was 52% and 10%, respectively. For Mexican Americans it was even lower, 46% and 8%, respectively.⁷⁷

There are 10.8 million Mexican-American workers in the U.S., and only 8.2% of these people have a white-collar job, compared to 32% of non-Hispanic White. At the same time, 30.6% of Mexican Americans work as laborers, while 17.4% of white people have a similar blue-collar job.⁷⁸ The annual income of Mexican Americans is lower than the income of any other ethnic group; they earn 35% to 140% less than non-Hispanic whites.⁷⁹ As was stated above, there is a connection between occupation and education. Mexican Americans generally have less years of schooling than other ethnic groups⁸⁰, and very often they receive a lower-quality education; some scholars, such as Dr. Arturo Gonzalez from the Public Policy Institute of California and Professor Gary Orfield from Harvard University, speak even about educational discrimination, which later results in employment discrimination.⁸¹

To summarize the previous section, the number of Latinos in the United States has increased, but their socio-economic status has remained unchanged. They are generally younger, less educated, hold jobs that require fewer skills, gain lower wages, and have

⁷⁴ The extremely complicated process of illegal immigration from Mexico is described in Victor Villaseñor's novel *Macho!* (See Bibliography).

⁷⁵ Penalosa, Fernando and Edward C. McDonagh. "Social Mobility in a Mexican-American Community." *Social Forces*. Vol. 44, No. 4. (June 1966). 499.

⁷⁶ See Appendix, Table 9.

⁷⁷ See Appendix, Table 11.

⁷⁸ Gonzalez, Arturo. *Mexican Americans and the U.S. Economy: Quest for Buenos Días*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 2002. 107.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 117.

⁸⁰ See Appendix, Table 12.

⁸¹ Gonzalez, Arturo. *Mexican Americans and the U.S. Economy: Quest for Buenos Días*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 2002. 122.

Orfield, Gary. "The College Access Crisis and the Role of Affirmative Action: Texas and the Nation." Texas Union, The University of Texas at Austin, TX. 9 Nov. 2006.

larger families than the total U.S. population. Moreover, Mexican Americans tend to be younger, less educated, have jobs that require fewer skills, gain lower wages, and have larger families than the total Latino population. Three of the four literary works discussed in this thesis follow the lives of working-class Mexican American families with three or more children, which clearly reflects the reality of the Mexican minority in the United States.

2. Mexican-American Family

In this chapter I intend to describe the specificities of the Mexican-American family. I want to discuss what are its particular characteristics, how it differs from the typical American family and Mexican family, and also how it has changed over time. This thesis has already addressed several negative stereotypes related to Mexican Americans. According to a recent study the few positive images of the Mexican origin population in the United States are predominantly related to the centrality of the family for this ethnic community.⁸² Contrary to this statement, other scholars believe that it is the family that very often creates the negative stereotypes about the people of Mexican descent.⁸³ As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Mexican-American family is viewed as either warm and nurturing or cold and authoritative, and these two contrasting views are apparent not only in sociological studies, but also in Mexican-American literature

The family plays an important role in the society. It teaches children the norms of behavior in a particular society, and it provides material as well as emotional support to its members. Moreover, the family fulfills the human need for emotional attachment. Minority families in the United States also have a function of perpetuating their unique culture, language, and traditions in a society based on the melting pot theory. This is especially true for the Mexican origin family in the United States.

In the statistics mentioned in previously we have seen that Mexican Americans are a young population with the median age of 24; their average household size is larger than among other ethnic groups, 4.1 persons per household, and Mexican-American women have the highest fertility rate.⁸⁴ Mexican Americans have lower levels of education than other Latino groups in the United States and than the non-Hispanic population, and they are generally concentrated among the working class. This is reflected also in the research on Mexican-American families, because most of it has focused on working class families, while research on middle and upper class Mexican-American families is rather limited. However, for the purpose of this thesis the research on working-class families will be sufficient.

⁸² Flores Niemann, Yolanda. "Stereotypes about Chicanas and Chicanos." *The Counseling Psychologist*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 55-90. 2001. 15 Feb. 2007. <<http://tcp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/1/55>>

⁸³ Mirandé, Alfredo. "The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 39. 1997. 748.

⁸⁴ Baca Zinn, Maxine, and Angela H. Y. Pok. „Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families." *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*. Ed. Ronald L. Taylor. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 2002. 81.

2.1 Family Structure

It is complicated to generalize when talking about the structure of the Mexican-American families, because they tend to vary in terms of their socio-economic status as well as the degree of assimilation to the American culture. Nevertheless, we can allow ourselves certain generalizations based on the historical factors as well as statistics mentioned in the previous chapter. The traits that characterize the Mexican-American family are based on the culture of Mexico. The Spanish *conquistadors* brought with them their patriarchal way of life, where the man is authoritative figure, while the woman is submissive.⁸⁵ This family pattern, together with the Spanish familism, was integrated into the Mexican culture, and it is also part of the culture of Mexican origin population in the United States.

In 1977, Alfredo Mirandé, a Mexican-American studies sociologist, described the typical characteristics of a Mexican-American family. Those were, according to him, "(1) male dominance; (2) rigid sex-age grading so that the elder order the younger and the men order the women; (3) clearly established patterns to help and mutual aid among family members; and (4) a strong familistic orientation whereby individual needs are subordinated to collective needs."⁸⁶ In a study published in 1993 sociologists Denise A. Segura and Jennifer L. Pierce observed similar features concerning the Mexican-American family. Apart from familism, involvement of extended family in the daily life of the nuclear family,⁸⁷ and strictly defined gender roles, they mentioned also the working class status and high fertility.⁸⁸ The Mexican-American family is described in a similar way in Alma Garcia's study of Mexican Americans from 2002.⁸⁹ As Alfredo Mirandé claims, these characteristics cannot be ascribed to all Mexican-American

⁸⁵ See section 1.1.2 "Expeditions to the North".

⁸⁶ Mirandé, Alfredo. "The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 39. 1997. 751.

⁸⁷ Nuclear family consists only of parents and children. Other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins belong to extended family.

⁸⁸ Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. "Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited." *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 70.

⁸⁹ Garcia, Alma M. *The Mexican Americans*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 2002. 101-3.

families, but they would be more likely to depict the Mexican-American family than the Anglo family.⁹⁰

2.1.1 Familism

Familism is one of the major features of the Mexican origin population; some sociologists even call it the “defining feature.”⁹¹ Mexican Americans consider their family (nuclear as well as extended) to be the dominant group in their lives. Sociologists Segura and Price point out that people of Mexican heritage “often realize their interests, skills, and desires in the community and *la familia* instead of the larger public domain.”⁹² This is one of the main differences between the Anglo-American culture and the Mexican-American culture. While the first group puts emphasis on individualism, Mexican Americans are collectivists. The family therefore expects the loyalty of its members, who often feel obliged to bring sacrifices for the benefit of the family.

Often, Mexican Americans may “drop everything” in response to a call for help, articulated or implied, by relatives [...]. This is most often interpreted by Anglos as the Mexican American’s desire to avoid work and responsibility, when in reality they are reacting as very responsible people in relation to their own values.⁹³

The extremely high dropout rate of Mexican-American high school students may be explained in part by this aspect of familism. It is possible that some of these students do not finish their education in order to join the labor force and to be able to financially help their families.⁹⁴ Social scientist of Anglo origin often considered this familistic orientation rather than discrimination and historical reasons to be the reason of the low socio-economic status of Mexican Americans.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 751.

⁹¹ Baca Zinn, Maxine, and Angela H. Y. Pok. „Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families.“ *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*. Ed. Ronald L. Taylor. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 2002. 93.

⁹² Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. “Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited.” *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 81.

⁹³ Gibson, Guadalupe. *The Mexican American Family*. San Antonio, Texas: Our Lady of the Lake University. 1985. 3.

⁹⁴ Arturo Islas mentions a similar case in his novel *The Rain God*. See section 5.1 “Arturo Islas: *The Rain God*.”

⁹⁵ This issue will be addressed in greater detail in section 3.3 “Chicano Family and Social Science.”

Familism is especially important for Mexican immigrants. Most of them come to the United States, because some of the fact that their relatives are already there. These social networks established through the family help new immigrants throughout the immigration process.⁹⁶ Living with their family helps the newly arrived relatives to settle and adjust to their new environment. “Familism creates a strong support network that assists the immigrant family in time of need. Families lend each other money, provide child care, assist with the elderly and sick, and join together to celebrate important dates,” Alma Garcia adds.⁹⁷ Through these family networks they also manage to retain the typical culture of Mexico in their new country. On the other hand, some social scientists have observed, that as following generations of Mexican Americans improve their socio-economic status, the familistic orientation becomes “an obstacle to advancement rather than help.”⁹⁸

Amado Padilla, professor of Ethnic Studies at Stanford University, observed that Mexican Americans are much more likely to solve their problems inside the family rather than with the help of their friends, therapists, or institutions, which is what Anglo-Americans usually do. He quotes one of his informants, who said:

[Mexicans] are a proud people. They're the type of people that would rather stay together in a little circle within their own family and try to work out their problems themselves than go outside – even to discuss it with, say, [a] friend. We would really have to be very close in order for a person to tell me what was happening, as far as their child is concerned, or their husband, or themselves. Because they keep that to themselves.⁹⁹

When asked about where they seek emotional support, the most common answers of the Mexican Americans interviewed for the study were: “You can't trust anybody else. Everything is better if kept within the family,” and “You have confidence in your relatives and you know they'll give truthful advice.”¹⁰⁰ The fact that Mexican Americans tend to rely on their relatives, while Anglo Americans consult a therapist, can be

⁹⁶ Sandra Cisneros's novel *Caramelo* describes how one of the characters leaves Mexico and moves to the United States with the help of his uncle, who had already immigrated before. Cisneros, Sandra. *Caramelo*. 207 (See Bibliography).

⁹⁷ Garcia, Alma M. *The Mexican Americans*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 2002. 102.

⁹⁸ Gibson, Guadalupe. *The Mexican American Family*. San Antonio, Texas: Our Lady of the Lake University. 1985. 7.

⁹⁹ Padilla, Amado M. “The Mexican American Extended Family as an Emotional Support System.” Paper read at the Annual Convention of the Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research. Mexico City, Mexico. 9 March 1979.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

explained not only by tradition, but also by the economic aspect: the majority of Mexican Americans are situated in the working-class, and seeing a therapist would not be affordable for them. Another study, conducted among young children has found another dissimilitude between Mexican origin population and Anglo Americans. To the question “Who do you love?” the Anglo children often named friends and other non-family members, while the Mexican children named only the members of their family.¹⁰¹ Family thus played a larger role in the lives of young Mexican Americans than in the lives of their Anglo peers.

2.1.2 Extended Family

The importance that Mexican Americans give to blood ties was described in the previous section. Therefore, also the extended family, i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, plays a large role in their lives. In fact, when Mexican Americans speak of their family, they usually do not mean just the nuclear family. Sociologists Segura and Price note that because of the closeness of these extended families, Mexican-American children have multiple mothering figures, since apart from their mothers, grandmothers and maternal aunts often take care of them.¹⁰² It is not surprising that a research comparing European-American, African-American, and Mexican-American families, found out that the Mexican-American extended family is usually the largest and most active.¹⁰³ Another study points out that it is not uncommon among Mexican Americans that three or four generations live in the same household.¹⁰⁴

Alma Garcia points out that “[s]trong family loyalties extend beyond the immediate nuclear family and include other relatives and kinship networks.”¹⁰⁵ One of these networks is *compadrazgo*, or “ritual parenthood.”¹⁰⁶ *Compadrazgo* is actually a system of godparents, who are required for baptism and confirmation in the Roman

¹⁰¹ Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 752.

¹⁰² Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. “Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited.” *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 75.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 74.

¹⁰⁴ Staples, Robert. “The Mexican-American Family: Its Modification Over Time and Space.” *Phylon*. Vol. 32. No. 2. Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University. 1971. 181.

¹⁰⁵ Garcia, Alma M. *Mexican Americans*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 2002. 68.

¹⁰⁶ Padilla, Amado M. “The Mexican American Extended Family as an Emotional Support System.” Paper read at the Annual Convention of the Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research. Mexico City, Mexico. 9 March 1979.

Catholic Church. Through baptism the godparents enter into a relationship not only with the child, but also with the child's parents, and they become *compadres* and *comadres* (co-parents). This bond is similar to blood ties, and this relationship is extended to the religious, social, and economic realm. The godparents are supposed to provide "discipline and emotional and financial support when needed."¹⁰⁷ In the case of the death of the child's parents the godparents are expected to take care of the child. However, Segura and Price argue in their study of the Mexican-American family that nowadays the role of *compadrazgo* is to represent the family unity, and the economic functions of the relationship are declining.¹⁰⁸ According to Norma Williams' research the importance of the extended family for Mexican Americans is slowly decreasing as well, especially among the professional class in the urban centers.¹⁰⁹ It can be said that with their increasing socio-economic status, Mexican Americans tend to turn from the traditional collectivism to American individualism. Nevertheless, in some of the literary works that will be discussed here the extended family plays still a very important part. The positive aspects of familism and active extended family are portrayed in Rudolfo Anaya's novel, *Arturo Islas* focused on its negative aspects.

2.1.3 Children

Mexican-American families are child-centered, and little children are considered and treated as a gift from God.¹¹⁰ The size of Mexican-American households reflects the value they tend to place on children. We have already seen that the average Latino household contains 3.63. For Mexican Americans this number is even higher, 4.1 people.¹¹¹

Even though both parents tend to be very affectionate towards their offsprings, the children are soon taught to respect and obey their parents. Based on the gender roles

¹⁰⁷ Griswold del Castillo, Richard. *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. 1984. 42.

¹⁰⁸ Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. "Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited." *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 74.

¹⁰⁹ Williams, Norma. *The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change*. New York: General Hall. 1990. 65-70.

¹¹⁰ Staples, Robert. "The Mexican-American Family: Its Modification Over Time and Space." *Phylon*. Vol. 32. No. 2. Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University. 1971. 188.

¹¹¹ Valdivieso, Rafael. "Demographic Trends of the Mexican-American Population: Implications for Schools." *ERICdigest.org*. 1990. 7 Feb. 2007 <<http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9217/trends.htm>>

discussed in the previous section, mothers are responsible for the household and for child-rearing tasks, while the father is often outside the home, and children are taught not to expect much contact with him, which adds to the authority of the father.¹¹² The mother then becomes a “mediator” between the father and the children. The father is seen as a “distant authority”, while the mother-child relationship is very close, and she is the central figure in the home.¹¹³ Nevertheless, some social scientists claim that this relationship between father and children is typical rather of Mexican families. According to Segura and Pierce, Mexican-American fathers are very active in caring for children, and they even precede Anglo-American fathers.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, when the children enter adolescence, Mexican-American father tends to “avoid demonstrations of affection and demands that the child show him respect.”¹¹⁵

2.1.4 Gender Roles

Male dominance is probably the most common stereotype associated with the traditional Mexican-American family. The ideas of male dominance and female submissiveness result in clearly defined gender roles in the family. Children are introduced into the roles they should have as adults at an early age. Boys are expected to be aggressive and never to run from fights, while girls learn to dress neatly and to help their mother take care of the father and brothers.¹¹⁶ This can be seen very clearly in the literary works of Arturo Islas and Sandra Cisneros, which will be discussed in this thesis.

The typical Mexican-American family is patriarchal, and the father is the authoritative figure in the family. The concept of *machismo*, which is defined as exaggerated displays of masculinity, involving behavior demonstrating physical power, male superiority, and sexual promiscuity, is frequently associated with the Mexican-

¹¹² Station, Ross D. “A Comparison of Mexican and Mexican-American Families.” *The Family Coordinator*. Vol 21. No. 3. Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations. 1972. 328.

¹¹³ Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 752.

¹¹⁴ Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. “Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited.” *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 75.

¹¹⁵ Staples, Robert. “The Mexican-American Family: Its Modification Over Time and Space.” *Phylon*. Vol. 32. No. 2. Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University. 1971. 188.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 326.

American family, is closely connected to the patriarchal system.¹¹⁷ The term comes from the Spanish word *macho*, which means male. According to sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn, this concept is “associated with the belief that the Mexican male is the sole, unquestionable authority within the household.”¹¹⁸ Contemporary social scientists now begin to re-evaluate the stereotypical views of *machismo* and consider it to be a “survival strategy” for the men of Mexican origin.¹¹⁹ Guadalupe Gibson’s study of the Mexican-American family comments on this topic:

Most important for Mexican American males is to have self-respect. Unfortunately, Mexican American men live in an oppressive and discriminatory society, which does not always give them opportunity to affirm themselves positively through their jobs and lifestyles. They are constantly subjugated to indignities, to insults, and, at times, are almost dehumanised. In their importance it seems that the only avenue open to them to be assertive is through the subjugation of their wives and children. [...] Their wives, sensitive to their needs, accommodate this situation, and often manage to keep the family functioning.¹²⁰

The last sentence in this quotation addresses another concept associated with the Mexican American family: *hembrismo*. While *machismo* defines the behavior of the Mexican man, *hembrismo* (from the Spanish word for female: *hembra*) describes the position of the Mexican woman, as it calls for exaggerated femininity and submissiveness.¹²¹ A complement to *hembrismo* is *Marianismo*, which is a concept connected to the traditional Catholicism of the Mexican community. It refers to the veneration of Virgin Mary as a role model, who sets the standards all women should abide by. In Mexican culture this is especially associated with the image of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. Guadalupe has always been portrayed as a static figure, her eyes looking down and her hands united in a prayer. Mexican-American women are traditionally

¹¹⁷ “Machismo.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 25 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9370850>>

¹¹⁸ Baca Zinn, Maxine, and Angela H. Y. Pok. „Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families.” *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*. Ed. Ronald L. Taylor. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 2002. 103,

¹¹⁹ Garcia, Alma M. *Mexican Americans*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 2002. 104.

¹²⁰ Gibson, Guadalupe. *The Mexican American Family*. San Antonio, Texas: Our Lady of the Lake University. 1985. 9.

¹²¹ Station, Ross D. “A Comparison of Mexican and Mexican-American Families.” *The Family Coordinator*. Vol 21. No. 3. Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations. 1972. 326.

expected to be like her: very pious, submissive, and devoted to their families.¹²²

Guadalupe Gibson noted that women often accept this role free-willingly:

Some women enjoy playing the role of martyr. They build their self-concept on this premise, gaining self-respect from the sympathy and/or praise they attract from friends and relatives. This becomes their way of coping with what otherwise would be an intolerable situation.¹²³

These concepts are closely related to sexuality. Traditionally, men were allowed sexual promiscuity, while women were expected to be chaste. Guarding a young girl's honor was an extremely important task, because it was associated with the family honor. Even though it may seem that *machismo*, *hembrismo*, and *Marianismo* only exist in working class Mexican origin families, Alma Garcia claims that several studies have shown that these concepts can be found among Mexican-American families in all social classes.¹²⁴ The father is the ultimate authority, requires respects from his wife and children, and represents the family on the outside. The mother does chores in the household and plays an extremely important role in the life of their children. Alfredo Mirandé even observes that "while the woman does not have the formal prestige of the man, she has great informal influence in the home."¹²⁵ This theory is supported by some of the literary works that will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.2 Comparison: Mexican-American and Anglo-American Family

Some of the differences between the Mexican-American and Anglo-American family have already been addressed in this chapter. Mexican-American families tend to have more children than Anglo-American families, they have a very active extended family, and their family ties are often considered stronger than in the Anglo-American family, because when problems arise, they tend to solve them inside the family and do

¹²² After the Chicano Movement, when Chicanas began to protest against the role of women in Mexican-American culture, the image of Guadalupe was one of the first to be re-defined, and by using visual art Chicanas presented her as an active woman. See Loudinová, Marie. *Being a Chicana: Chicanas: A Cultural Introduction. History. Major Issues. Literary Production. Visual Art.* (See Bibliography).

¹²³ Gibson, Guadalupe. *The Mexican American Family*. San Antonio, Texas: Our Lady of the Lake University. 1985. 9-10.

¹²⁴ Garcia, Alma M. *Mexican Americans*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 2002. 103-4.

¹²⁵ Mirandé, Alfredo. "The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 752-3.

not seek help from outside authorities.¹²⁶ The difference in the extended-family structure between Anglo American and Mexican Americans is based on the fact that Anglos are more mobile, while Mexican-Americans tend to stay close to their family. Also the *compadrazgo* system is not known in the Anglo-American family, but as it was mentioned above, even among the Mexican Americans the fictive kinship is decreasing in importance.

The biggest difference between these two families is often seen in their approach to gender roles. Because of the concept of *machismo*, Mexican-American family is often considered to be “rigid and authoritarian,” while the Anglo-American family is viewed as egalitarian and individualistic.¹²⁷ Alfredo Mirandé claims that several social scientists accept this theory and blame *machismo* for having bad influence on Mexican-American children: “This rigid male-dominated family structure [...] fails to engender achievement, independence, self-reliance, or self-worth – values which are highly esteemed in American society.”¹²⁸

However, the comparison between the Mexican-American and Anglo-American family cannot be accurate, because what is usually being compared is a Mexican-American working-class family and an Anglo-American middle-class family. If two working-class or two middle-class families were compared, the difference between them probably would not be so striking. According to Segura and Pierce “male domination/female subordination transcends any one cultural group.”¹²⁹ Moreover, Alfredo Mirandé claims that “[Mexican-American] middle-class urban families appear to be more equalitarian and to have discarded the more traditional features of the family.”¹³⁰

Recently, sociologists have taken a different approach to comparing these two different families. Originally, Mexican-American family tended to be compared to the Anglo-American family from the ethnocentric perspective of the Anglo-American social scientists, and therefore it was viewed as a deviance from the norm. Nowadays, sociology views these differences as “shaped by the adaptations of family members to the social

¹²⁶ See section 2.1 “Family Structure.”

¹²⁷ Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 748.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 749.

¹²⁹ Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. “Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited.” *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 80.

¹³⁰ Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 754.

situations and contexts in which they are socially located.”¹³¹ Thus, Anglo-American family structure is no longer considered to be the norm, from which the Mexican-American family structure is deviant. Rather, both families are perceived to be autonomous and developed from two different cultures.

¹³¹ Baca Zinn, Maxine, and Angela H. Y. Pok. „Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families.“ *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*. Ed. Ronald L. Taylor. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 2002. 87.

3. Chicano Movement: Ideology of *La Familia*

The first chapter has introduced the historical reasons for the discrimination and it has demonstrated that the Mexican origin minority lags behind the majority population in many aspects. The Chicano Movement and the role that it played in self-determination of the people of Mexican origin in the United States were also introduced in the first chapter. The second chapter then described the characteristics of the Mexican-American family, which are viewed as both positive and negative. In this chapter I want to discuss the importance of the concept of family in the ideology of the Chicano Movement. In my opinion, this ideology played a crucial role in the change of the image of the Mexican-American family in literature, and in my thesis I want to demonstrate how the Chicano Movement influenced Mexican-American writers and the image of the Mexican-American family.

It was already said that this movement was very heterogeneous. The unifying idea of this movement was to protest against the injustice that started with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848 and that has resulted in the unequal position of Mexican Americans in the American society. The activists of the Chicano Movement strived to support Chicano nationalism by focusing on the long and rich history that Mexicans had, and also on the unique Chicano culture in which the Chicano family was considered to be one of the most important values. This section will show how the Chicano family was presented in two central documents of the Chicano Movement.

3.1 *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*

In March 1969 Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzáles, one of the early leaders of the Chicano Movement, organized the first National Chicano Conference in Denver, Colorado.¹³² At this conference the participants, mostly college students, introduced their program, which became to be known as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*.¹³³ *El Plan* was a manifesto that introduced seven goals for Chicano activism, and also named six ways to achieve these

¹³² Lopez, Fred A. III. “Review: Reflections on the Chicano Movement.” *Latin American Perspectives*. Vol. 19. No. 4. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. 1992. 82.

¹³³ Aztlán is the mythical homeland of the Aztecs, and according to their legends it is situated somewhere in the Southwest of the United States. (León, Luis D. *La Llorona’s Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S. Mexican Borderlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2004. 53.)

goals. It was “a blueprint not only for resistance to internal colonialism, but also for a politicised approach to cultural and artistic production.”¹³⁴

The family was one of the Chicano values mentioned in the manifesto. *El Plan* described the importance of family in affirmation of the unique Chicano identity, and asked Chicano writers and other artists to create works of art that would praise the family and other cultural values:

Our culture unites and educates the family of La Raza towards liberation with one heart and one mind. We must insure that our writers, poets, musicians, and artists produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture. Our cultural values of life, family, and home will serve as a powerful weapon to defeat the gringo dollar value system and encourage the process of love and brotherhood.¹³⁵

This excerpt reflects the importance of family, and also unites all Chicanos into “the family of La Raza.” Nevertheless, the family that the manifesto proposes is strictly patriarchal: “Brotherhood unites us, and love for our brothers makes us a people whose time has come [...]” Women were not independent members of *la familia*, they were expected to be passive supporters. Even at the conference in Denver, Chicanas were reminded, that their role in the Chicano movement as well as in the Chicano family was to be subordinated to men.¹³⁶

3.2 *I am Joaquín*

Similar view of the Chicano family was offered in another “manifesto” of the Chicano Movement. Rodolfo Gonzáles presented it in his unrhymed poem *I am Joaquín*, which became to be known as *the* Chicano epic poem.¹³⁷ In this bilingual poem published in 1967 Gonzáles summarized the history of Mexican Americans, and expressed their right to live in the United States. Carlos Muñoz, professor of Ethnic Studies at the

¹³⁴ Allatson, Paul and Laura G Gutierrez . *Key Terms in Latino/a Cultural and Literary Studies*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing. 2006. 190.

¹³⁵ Course material for *Mexican-American Literature*, UT Austin, Fall 2006. Gonzalez, John.

¹³⁶ Jacobs, Elizabeth C. *Mexican American Literature: The Politics of Identity*. New York: Routledge. 2006. 125.

¹³⁷ Kanellos, Nicolás. “An Overview of Latino Poetry: The Iceberg below the Surface.” *American Book Review*. Vol. 24, Issue 1. Normal, Illinois: American Book Review. 2002.10.

University of California at Berkeley claims that *I am Joaquín* was more than a poem and that it was one of the crucial literary works of Chicano nationalism:

[I]t was an ambitious essay that attempted to dramatize key events and personalities from important moments of Mexican and Mexican-American history, beginning with the indigenous ancestors prior to the Spanish conquest. It ended with the adamant assertion that people of Mexican descent and their culture would continue to endure. *I am Joaquín* filled a vacuum, for most student activists had never read a book about Mexican American history – especially one that linked that history to Mexican history.¹³⁸

I am Joaquín was extremely powerful and influential, it was “passed from hand to hand in communities, read aloud in rallies,” and it was also adapted by El Teatro Campesino, which was a Chicano theatre troupe.¹³⁹ The narrator of the poem claimed to be all the important figures in Mexican history, indigenous, European or Mestizo, as well as a nameless peasants and warriors. This way Gonzáles tried to depict the complicated Chicano identity and the conflicting concepts that constituted it.

Nevertheless, the difference between the image of men and women in the poem was striking and it mirrored the ideology of the Chicano Movement. Gonzáles offered several icons of Mexican culture and history: Cuauhtemoc, Cortez, Netzahualcoyotl, Emillano Zapata, Porfirio Diaz, Francisco Madero, Benito Juarez, Diego Rivera. A typical Chicano according to Gonzáles is described in the following excerpt:

Here I stand
poor in money
arrogant with pride
bold with machismo
rich in courage
and
wealthy in spirit and faith¹⁴⁰

The difference between the Chicano Movement’s attitude towards men and women is obvious. While the author presents several concepts and icons that create the Mexican man’s identity, and praises *machismo* as one of the defining features of a Chicano man, the representations of women in the poem are rather limited. Gonzáles

¹³⁸ Muñoz, Carlos. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. London: Verso. 1989.

¹³⁹ Kanellos, Nicolás. “An Overview of Latino Poetry: The Iceberg below the Surface.” *American Book Review*. Vol. 24, Issue 1. Normal, Illinois: American Book Review. 2002.10.

¹⁴⁰ Course material for *Mexican-American Literature*, UT Austin, Fall 2006. Gonzalez, John.

named two of them, the Virgen de Guadalupe and the Aztec goddess Tonatzin. The other two women are nameless. One of them is a killed wife, whose husband wants to punish her murderers and the other one is pictured in the following stanzas:

I am in the eyes of woman,
sheltered beneath
her shawl of black,
deep and sorrowful eyes,

[...]

Her rosary she prays and fingers
endlessly
like the family
working down a row of beets
to turn around
and work
and work
There is no end.
Her eyes a mirror of all the warmth
and all the love for me,
and I am her
and she is me.
We face life together in sorrow,
anger, joy faith and wishful
thoughts.¹⁴¹

Thus, the only women in this poem are unreachable divine figures, a passive victim of oppression, and a hardworking, pious, and loving companion/wife/mother. These are the roles that the Chicano Movement ascribed to women in the Chicano family.

3.3 Chicano Family and Social Science

Until the era of the Chicano Movement social scientists have viewed the Mexican-American family as cold and authoritative. Alfredo Mirandé complains in his study from 1977 that “social science literature on the Mexican-American family reveals a consistently pathological and pejorative view.”¹⁴² He quotes several of these studies,

¹⁴¹ Course material for *Mexican-American Literature*, UT Austin, Fall 2006. Gonzalez, John.

¹⁴² Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of*

addressing especially the problem of familism and gender roles in the Mexican-American family, such as Norman D. Humphrey's article from 1944 and G. M. Gilbert's article from 1959, which describe the problem *machismo* and its negative impact on the life in the Mexican-American family.¹⁴³

During the Chicano Movement the number of studies on the topic has grown enormously, and these books and articles were written predominantly by Chicano social scientists. These authors reject the previous studies as generalizations and as "social science fiction," and contrary to the earlier studies described the Mexican-American family as a "warm and nurturing institution" that "provides support throughout a lifetime of the individual."¹⁴⁴ The influence of the ideology of the Chicano Movement on these studies is clearly visible.

Thus, there appear two contrasting views of the Mexican-American family: it was seen either as oppressive and rigid, or as warm and loving. The ethnocentric Anglo-American social scientists prior to the Chicano Movement usually adapted the first view, while Chicano scholars turned towards the other. Both of these approaches towards the Mexican-American family cannot be considered objective, as both of them used generalizations rather than research; moreover one view presented the family in negative terms, while the other one idealized it. Recent studies on Mexican-American family, such as Norma Williams' *The Mexican-American Family: Tradition and Change* from 1990 and Maxine Baca Zinn's and Angela H. Y. Pok's „Tradition and Transition in Mexican-Origin Families“ from 2002 try to avoid these mistakes and support their theses by research.¹⁴⁵

Marriage and the Family, 39, 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations, 1977. 748.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 748.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 750-1.

¹⁴⁵ See Bibliography.

4. The Family in Literature: The Traditional View

In the previous chapters I have discussed the stereotypes and the rather disadvantaged position of population of Mexican origin in the United States. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Chicano Movement strived to change the position of Mexican Americans in the American society. Contrary to the assimilation strategies of organizations such as LULAC, the Chicano Movement praised the unique Mexican culture and supported Chicano nationalism. Chicano leaders also realized the importance of family in the self-determination of Mexican Americans, because the Mexican-American family was very frequently criticized by Anglo-American social scientists. LULAC would probably try to solve the problem by proposing acculturation and set the individualistic Anglo-American family as an example, yet the Chicano Movement did the opposite. As we have read in the previous chapter, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* called “writers, poets, musicians, and artists [to] produce literature and art that is appealing to [Chicano] people and relates to our revolutionary culture,” and named Chicano cultural values: life, family, and home. Many authors heard the call at that time and produced literary works that depicted these cultural values. In their books they portrayed the traditional Mexican-American families of the Southwest, probably using their own memories as an inspiration. “Only a person who has never experienced the warmth of the Mexican-American family would tend to see it primarily from a negative perspective,” Alfredo Mirandé quotes one of the studies by Chicano social scientists, published in 1976.¹⁴⁶ This chapter presents how the authors, who “have experienced the warmth of the Mexican-American family”, created its positive image in literature. I will discuss two literary works where the family plays the important role. One of them is Jovita González’ *Dew on the Thorn* and the other is Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima*.

In these two literary works both authors wanted to show the richness of the Mexican-American culture. Jovita González described Tejano folklore, and Rudolfo Anaya wrote about the religious conflict between Catholicism and indigenous religion within a young Mexican-American boy. Those are the main themes in these books. Nevertheless, the family relationships are linked to both the folklore and religion themes

¹⁴⁶ Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 750.

and in both literary works the Mexican-American family is portrayed as very strong and united.

Jovita González' novel *Dew on the Thorn* is important for this thesis for two reasons. The first one is that it was written long before the Chicano Movement, probably between the two World Wars.¹⁴⁷ Therefore the image of the fictional family in her novel is not influenced by the Chicano Movement ideology. The other reason is that she is a woman writer. In the previous chapter we have seen that the role of women in the traditional patriarchal family is very complicated, because their life is ruled by the three concepts of *machismo*, *hembrismo*, and *Marianismo*. The difference between the role of women and men in the family must have been even greater in the early 20th. Nevertheless, González' still gives a positive image of the patriarchal Mexican-American family.

Rudolfo Anaya's work was written much later, in 1972, during the Chicano Movement, and the movement certainly had a great influence on this novel. According to Anaya, his literary work is "a quest to compose the Chicano literary worldview."¹⁴⁸ This is also what he is attempting to do in *Bless Me, Ultima*. The novel enhances the indigenous heritage of Mexican Americans, and indigenous spirituality plays a crucial role in the story, as the protagonist is searching for his identity. The relationship with his family and their support is extremely important in this quest. Again, this writer offers a very sympathetic view of the Mexican-American Family.

4.1 Jovita González: *Dew on the Thorn*

Mexican-American writers before and during the Chicano movement presented in their books the traditional view of the family that was later supported by the rhetoric of the Movement. Jovita González (1904 – 1983) was one of them. She came from the fifth-generation Mexican Americans and was born into a ranching family in Southern Texas. When she was very young they moved to San Antonio so that she and her siblings can receive English education. González received university education, which was not common for a woman of Mexican origin at that time, but she did not turn her back on the Mexican American community. She dedicated her academic career to conduct a research

¹⁴⁷ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. vii.

¹⁴⁸ Augenbraum, Harold et al. *U.S. Latino Literature: A Critical Guide for Students and Teachers*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2000. 40.

on the folklore of Tejanos (Mexican Americans from the South Texas area), their stories, sayings, legends, and customs. Her novel *The Dew on the Thorn*, which was not published until 1997 when the manuscript was found and edited, is the result of González's research.¹⁴⁹

For this thesis it is not the depiction of the customs of the Tejano society that is important, but the way the Mexican-American family is described in this book. Professor José E. Limón, who edited Jovita González's manuscript, observes that her sense of place, i.e. the South Texas area, played an important role in González's writing. According to him, the "sense of place also involved her close-knit family, one bearing a resemblance to the Olivares," the fictional family in this novel.¹⁵⁰ This attachment to her family as well as to Texas is very well depicted in González's autobiography.

Jovita González portrays in *Dew on the Thorn* the life in Southern Texas at the very beginning of the nineteenth century. The main plot of the novel is the love story of Carlos and Rosita, children of two well-established *ranchero* families. Carlos is accused of cattle thievery, and therefore Rosita's father, Don Francisco, does not give his permission for their wedding, because such union would bring dishonor to his family. Rosita is desperate, but never questions the decision of her father. In the end Carlos proves his innocence and the couple can finally get married. As it was mentioned above, this love story is just a tiny thread around which González weaves a large net of traditions, legends, songs, and stories to illustrate the richness of Tejano folklore. The story also very descriptively depicts the life style of the ranching society, in which the story is situated, and she also describes very vividly the historical change in life style caused by a new wave of Anglos coming to the area. Another important aspect is that this piece of literature is a very unique testimony because it is written from the female point of view. Therefore, the novel offers a perspective, which is otherwise often disregarded by male authors, and that is the role of women and gender relations in the *ranchero* family at the turn of the 20th century.

¹⁴⁹ The depiction of folklore in the novel is similar to *Grandma / Babička* by Božena Němcová.

¹⁵⁰ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. xvi.

4.1.1 Tejano History

This thesis is primarily about the Mexican-American family, but in Jovita González's literary work this is closely related to the history of South Texas, as she describes the roots of the ranchero family of the Olivares. History of Mexicans in Texas was addressed already in the sections on history and stereotypes of Mexican Americans. There are several books that provide information on life in this region in the given time period, yet Jovita González's novel offers a completely different and very unique view of the life of Texas Mexicans at the beginning of the 20th century, and thus helps envision the broad perspective. She describes life in south Texas from the female point of view, and focuses on one particular family, their daily life, and gender relations.

At the beginning of the novel, Jovita González gives a historical background to her story and explains, how the Olivares acquired their land in Texas. To add credibility to her story, she uses real historical figures, such as Don José Escandón,¹⁵¹ and presents him as a friend of Don Juan José, one of the ancestors of the Olivares: "Together they explored the region, together they braved the dangers of the frontier, and together they fought and subdued the Indian tribes."¹⁵² And not only that; where Alonzo attributes settling the newly discovered land to Escandón's merit¹⁵³, González claims it to be Don Juan José's success: "Why couldn't we," he [Don Juan José] told Escandón, "get these northern rancheros interested in the movement? Why not offer land to those who want to expand the frontier to the north?"¹⁵⁴ Similarly, González introduces another important historical figure from the colonization of Texas, when she writes: "He [Don Juan José] and his friend, Don Blas María de la Garza Falcón, founder of Camargo, drove their cattle across the river and established themselves at the Carnestolendas ranch."¹⁵⁵ By using real historical places as her setting, and by introducing real figures from the early history of the settling of the territory north of Rio Grande, Jovita González creates an image of reality. And apart from that, this way she shows that many of the Texas Mexicans really have been in the land for generations, that they were the first to ever settle the land, and that the land was granted to them by the Spanish Crown, long before the Anglos came.

¹⁵¹ See section 1.1 "A Brief History".

¹⁵² González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. 4.

¹⁵³ Alonzo, Armando. *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734 – 1900*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1998. 28-31.

¹⁵⁴ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*4.

Following the Olivares from Don Juan José to Don Francisco serves González in many ways. Firstly, she shows the importance of land for Texas Mexicans, which she presents in her initial description of Don Francisco: “He was proud of two things, that he was a gentleman and that the land he possessed had been in the family for generations past.”¹⁵⁶ The land was essential not only because of the obvious economic reasons, but also historically and spiritually. She explains this in the last chapter through the character of Doña Margarita, Don Francisco’s wife: “This land is ours. It was blessed by the fathers, who made it a Christian land. It was blessed by the blood of our ancestors who fought and suffered for it and conquered it, that we, their children, might have a home.”¹⁵⁷ Again, the importance of the family in relation to the land is presented here. Secondly, González illustrates the long history of Mexicans in Texas and thus proves wrong those who claimed that Texas was a wilderness that was only developed by Anglos.¹⁵⁸

The relationship between Anglos and Mexicans is another important theme in *Dew on the Thorn*. In the beginning Anglos are presented mostly as ruthless thieves and killers, however, there also some exceptions to this rule.¹⁵⁹ González describes how through intermarriage the relationship between Tejanos and Anglos improved, and how those who settled in the area at the beginning of the twentieth century accepted Tejano “customs, [...] language, and even [...] religion.”¹⁶⁰

However, at the times of Don Francisco, the relationship with Americans is getting worse, and as more Americans are coming to the area, Tejanos are suddenly considered dirty and inferior. The Anglos bring an inevitable change of lifestyle in the area. By describing these events from the point of view of the *rancheros*, not from the point of view of the Anglos González wanted to challenge the traditional view of Americans “colonizing” Texas. In *Dew on the Thorn* the readers can see that ranching in Texas was flourishing long before the Anglos came, and that culture flourished as well.

¹⁵⁶ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. 12.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 179.

¹⁵⁸ See section 1.1.5 “The Mexican-American War and its Consequences.”

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 9.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 167.

4.1.2 Tejano Family and its Values

The previous section described the history of the South Texas area and the roots of the Tejano culture. Jovita González points out that in the Tejano culture the role of the Mexican-American family was central, and she describes the traditional family structure. “Tejano families were usually nuclear and headed by an adult male,” Armando Alonzo says in his book *Tejano Legacy*, and he continues: “The importance of widespread male-headed families meant that interpersonal relations and other social matters were strongly affected by the thinking and behavior of fathers or patriarchs.”¹⁶¹ As Alonzo claims, this was “essential to maintain the continuity on the land,” as land was extremely important for the Tejano ranching society.¹⁶² The family in *Dew on the Thorn* is constructed according to this patriarchal model. Don Francisco is always presented as the biggest authority on the ranch and in his family, and the following exclamation of Doña Margarita illustrates this very well: “May God forgive me! Never until now have I kept a secret from your father. It is for her [Rosita’s] happiness.”¹⁶³ According to this statement, only her maternal feelings towards her suffering daughter may excuse Doña Margarita’s “disobedience” towards her husband.

Tejano values are also related to the importance of the family. One of the most important of these values is family honor.¹⁶⁴ Family honor is also the underlying theme in Jovita González’s novel. In the beginning it is presented as something that differentiates Tejano *rancheros* from the Anglos. As an example can serve the incident, when Americans kill Don Francisco’s uncle, Don Juan, because he does not want to give them his brother’s cattle. “Kill me if you will, [...] but my brother’s cattle are not mine to give away,”¹⁶⁵ says Don Juan bravely, and he chooses death rather than betraying his brother. However, this is just an introduction. The main “honor theme” appears with Carlos, son of Don Ramón, who is to be married to Don Francisco’s daughter, Rosita. When Carlos is accused of cattle thievery, the incident affects his entire family. “May God pity your parents whom you have so dishonored,” says Don Ramón, and he continues: “May curse

¹⁶¹ Alonzo, Armando. *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734 – 1900*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1998. 113.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* 113.

¹⁶³ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. 64.

¹⁶⁴ Alonzo, Armando. *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734 – 1900*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1998. 113.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 9.

be upon you and cursed be I who am the father of such a son.”¹⁶⁶ It is absolutely obvious how important honor was to Don Ramón, who was ready to forsake his own son for a matter of honor. And the same applies to Don Francisco: “He could not and would not tolerate the marriage of his daughter to one who had brought shame to his family and to his name. [...] A name is family honor, honor comes from the soul, and the soul belongs to God.”¹⁶⁷ And even though Doña Margarita pointed at the possibility of Rosita’s death as a consequence of Don Francisco’s decision, “he preferred to mourn for a dead daughter than for one living in disgrace.”¹⁶⁸ According to Don Francisco, happiness of the individual has to be sacrificed for the benefit of the family, which is a typical trait of familism that was discussed in chapter 2.

4.1.3 Gender Roles in Tejano society

It was said before that *Dew on the Thorn* is a great source for historians, because Jovita González knew the South Texas area from her personal experience. However, what makes the novel even more ahead of her time is the fact that it is written by a female writer and therefore from a female perspective. *Dew on the Thorn* thus offers a very unique insight into the Tejano society, and it depicts the life in South Texas differently than the historian Armando Alonzo in *Tejano Legacy*.

Despite the fact that Jovita González is a female writer, the family that she describes in *Dew on the Thorn* is still traditional and patriarchal with Don Francisco as the head of the family, who realizes the responsibilities that accompany his position:

The government of the ranch, as understood by Don Francisco, was a paternal hierarchy with himself as absolute ruler. [...] He was the protector in time of danger, the advisor and counselor, and not seldom the judge who tried the case and inflicted the punishment.¹⁶⁹

Carlos, who is the fiancé of Don Francisco’s daughter Rosita, is another important male character. He personifies the sexual implications of *machismo*, the concept, which “emphasizes free sexual expression for men.”¹⁷⁰ The attitude of the community towards

¹⁶⁶ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. 43.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 63.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 63.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 13.

¹⁷⁰ Station, Ross D. “A Comparison of Mexican and Mexican-American Families.” *The*

Carlos' behavior is expressed in the speech of his father: "The more love affairs he has, the more acceptable he will be. A man has to have his escapades. [...] He will settle down when he marries Rosita and will be a better husband for his experiences."¹⁷¹ It is unimaginable that such words would be uttered when commenting on a similar behavior of woman, and these sentences thus clearly illustrates the double standards for men and women in the Tejano community.

While the male characters conform to the concept of *machismo*, the women in the novel embody the concepts of *hembrismo* and *Marianismo* that were described in the previous chapter. Doña Margarita, the main female character in the novel, is depicted as a loving wife and mother of eight children, and one of her responsibilities is to keep her home peaceful. She consoles Don Francisco when he is angry ("Francisco, My Lamb, let me read to you for a while."¹⁷²) and she is involved in the religious education of the people on the ranch:

She had a maternal feeling for the poor whom she considered sent to her by Providence. Every evening, in the *patio*, while the warm weather lasted, and in the *sala*, during the winter, she gathered the women and children around her, instructed them in religion, told them stories, or played the harp. She always ended the gatherings with prayers [...].¹⁷³

The other female characters in the story are rather flat. The most important of them is Rosita, Doña Margarita's daughter. She is a passive character, whose only actions are her random outbursts of emotions, be it sadness or happiness, yet she does nothing to help herself or Carlos. She surrenders to the rules of the patriarchal family that Don Francisco expresses when he talks about Rosita's hurt feelings after her wedding is cancelled: "[L]ike the women of our race she will suffer, but she will do her father's wishes."¹⁷⁴

The patriarchal system is closely connected to the class structure in the Mexican origin population in Southern Texas. Although according to Alonzo there were not many indebted *peones*, i.e. unskilled common workers, in Nuevo Santander, on the ranch in Jovita González's novel there are many of them, and they form the lowest class in the Tejano social structure.¹⁷⁵ Don Francisco's patriarchy is very clearly portrayed in the

Family Coordinator. Vol 21. No. 3. Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations. 1972. 326.

¹⁷¹ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. 35.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 13.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* 13.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 44.

¹⁷⁵ Alonzo, Armando. *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734 – 1900*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1998. 199.

relationship with these workers: “They had been in the family for generations, obeyed the master’s orders blindly and had no will of their own. In this way the master [...] exercised complete control over the *peones*, economically, as well as socially.”¹⁷⁶

Unlike the contemporary Mexican-American female writers, Jovita accepts the patriarchal family that she portrays in *Dew on the Thorn*. The cultural heritage that was important also to Don Francisco, whose family “was encouraged and expected to keep intact the customs and traditions of the mother country,” was dear also to González.¹⁷⁷ She considers the patriarchal family to be one of the most important Mexican traditions. One of her early critics, Gloria Louise Velasquez, comments on this in her study of the author:

[González] devotes little attention to the description of female experience. In her prose fiction the female characters do not appear as protagonists and are assigned very little space within the narrative discourse. When women do appear, they are confined to traditional roles within the ethnic culture while male experience is foregrounded.¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, this is not necessarily completely true. Even in *Dew on the Thorn* González presents every now and then a woman, who has a certain power over men. This might be explained by her education. She grew up in a traditional family, yet she received an extraordinary education. In her autobiography she says:

We [González and her sister] rattled off in Spanish *La Influencia de la Mujer*, a poem which began with Judith, the Old Testament heroine, and ended with Doña Josefa Ortiz Domínguez, the mother of Mexico’s independence. We knew about Sor Juana, the Mexican nun, who in the seventeenth century addressed men as “foolish men who accuse women without a motive.”¹⁷⁹

According to José Limón, by naming strong Mexican women in this excerpt, González criticizes the “patriarchal order that continually subordinates women.”¹⁸⁰ She talks about Doña Ramona, “woman of great strength and character”¹⁸¹ who was the matriarch of her family and in charge of the ranch after her husband’s death. When she introduces Doña Margarita, the mother in the story, González says that Don Francisco was “the master of

¹⁷⁶ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. 14.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 12.

¹⁷⁸ Champion, Laurie. *American Women Writers, 1900-1945*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2000. 145.

¹⁷⁹ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. xi.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* xxii.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 10.

many but a slave of one - [...] his wife.”¹⁸² The position of his wife is thus supported by Alfredo Mirandé’s observation that the woman is the central figure in the home.¹⁸³ Even though Doña Margarita has an influence on her husband, she still respects him. The ultimate female power in the story is thus represented by Nana Chita, who used to take care of Don Francisco when he was a child. Nana Chita shows no respect for Don Francisco, when she says: “I am the only one who is not afraid of him and treats him as though he were not a God.”¹⁸⁴

Although these female characters might show certain traces of gender egalitarianism, they represent only a minority in Jovita González’ praise of Mexican folklore and traditions, among which is also the patriarchal Mexican-American family. She suggests that a strong woman can have certain power even in a patriarchal family and in her community, but she never questions the established gender roles. The writer herself has chosen the traditional role of a housewife and a high school teacher, even though she had opportunities to study in a Ph.D. program at renowned universities such as Berkeley and Stanford and thus she could have perhaps become the first Mexican-American women Ph.D, as José Limón speculates.¹⁸⁵

4.2 Rudolfo Anaya: *Bless Me, Ultima*

Jovita González’s main motive for writing *Dew on the Thorn* was an attempt to give a testimony about the life of Mexican-American *rancheros* in Southern Texas at the turn of the century as she remembered it from her childhood and family stories. She wanted to present the richness of their culture through the descriptions of Tejano customs, traditions, and folk tales, which form a large part of the novel. Rudolfo Anaya was also inspired by his childhood, yet because the focus of the story is the religious conflict and Antonio’s psychological and spiritual experiences, the most important portion of the story takes place in the protagonist’s mind. But even though the account of the family relations of *Nuevo Mexicanos* (people of Mexican origin living in New Mexico) and the descriptions of their family life form only the background information, they are still important. Just like in *Dew on the Thorn*, Antonio’s family is very

¹⁸² González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997.13.

¹⁸³ Mirandé, Alfredo. “The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39. 1977. Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1977. 752-3.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 83.

¹⁸⁵ González, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn*. Houston: Arte Publico Press. 1997. xxv.

traditional and patriarchal. And this corresponds to the rhetoric of the Chicano movement about the Mexican-American family.

Rudolfo Anaya was born in 1937 in a small village in New Mexico. He was raised in a Catholic family of seven children, and they all spoke Spanish at home. Later, the family moved to Albuquerque, where Anaya finished high school and got his B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of New Mexico.¹⁸⁶ After working as a teacher at the University of New Mexico for a few years, he decided to pursue his literary career. Anaya has written several novels, political essays as well as books for children. *Bless Me, Ultima*, his first novel, was written during the Chicano movement and published in 1972. The setting of the novel and some characters were inspired by Anaya's childhood, just like Jovita González's *Dew on the Thorn*. But his novel shows traits of a more recent view on Mexican Americans than that of Jovita González, because it stresses also the indigenous heritage of the people of Mexican origin, and not only their Spanish roots. The main focus of *Bless Me, Ultima* is the change in the religious views of Mexican Americans during the Chicano movement, and the role of the family in this process of change is very important.

In *Bless Me, Ultima* Anaya presents a *Bildungsroman*, a story of a spiritual coming of age of a young Mexican-American boy, Antonio Marez y Luna. In his traditional narrative Anaya uncovers the processes that have lead Antonio from being a very devoted Catholic boy into a spiritually open young man, capable of understanding both Catholicism as well as the pagan indigenous beliefs and the forces of nature.

4.2.1 Chicano Family

The Marez are a typical working-class Mexican-American family, and therefore they are economically in a very different situation from the Olivares family in *Dew on the Thorn*, who are rich rancheros and represent the Tejano "nobility." Despite these differences in the social position, both families are constructed according to a similar pattern: the father is a public figure and a provider; the woman is a caring domestic figure. Elizabeth C. Jacobs sums this up in her study of Anaya: "In his uncritical use of gender stereotypes, Anaya's text reinforces the politically sanctioned myth of the Chicano *familia*, the heterosexually configured structure within which a distinct gender

¹⁸⁶ Kevane, Bridget A. *Latino Literature in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2003. 33.

and economic hierarchy subordinated women.”¹⁸⁷ Anaya never questions this subordination.

There are five children in the Marez family: two older sons who served in the World War II, two daughters, and Antonio, the youngest. All the children feel closer to their mother than to their father. This is understandable, as the mother stays at home and takes care of the household and the children, while the father spends most of the day out, working in the construction of roads. The mother is thus portrayed as the stereotypical Madonna figure, who is “deeply devoted to furthering the maintenance of ideal family patterns.”¹⁸⁸ The father is the breadwinner in the Marez family, and therefore he demands obedience from his sons and daughters. Mrs. Marez was born in a family of farmers, while Mr. Marez comes from a family of *vaqueros*. This dichotomy between sedentary versus nomadic way of life is very obvious in the conversation of the parents. While the mother respects her husband, she often opposes him to defend her own father and brothers, who are often the target of her husband’s jokes.

The last member of the Marez household is Ultima, an old *curandera* or a healing woman, who is very respected in the area for her knowledge of healing and nature.¹⁸⁹ Although she is not related to the Marez by blood, there is a strong bond between them because she assisted at the birth of all the children and helped the family several times. “When I married you and went to the *llano* to live with you and raise your family, I could not have survived without [Ultima’s] help,” the mother appreciates the role of the healing woman in her life.¹⁹⁰ Because Ultima is very old and cannot live on her own, the Marez welcome her to their home as a new family member: “It was the custom to provide for the old and the sick. There was always room in the safety and warmth of *la familia* for one more person, be that person a stranger or a friend.”¹⁹¹ By directly pointing to the “safety and warmth” of the family, Anaya dutifully fulfils the role that *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* asked of Chicano writers.

¹⁸⁷ Jacobs, Elizabeth C. *Mexican American Literature: The Politics of Identity*. New York: Routledge. 2006. 47.

¹⁸⁸ Williams, Norma. *The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change*. New York: General Hall. 1990. 23.

¹⁸⁹ Marie Loudinová focuses on *curanderas* in section “Spirituality and Healing Skills” on pages 31-2 of her thesis *Being a Chicana: Chicanas: A Cultural Introduction. History. Major Issues. Literary Production. Visual Art*. (See Bibliography).

¹⁹⁰ Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*. New York: Warner Books, Inc. 1994. 3.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 4.

Even though the father is the head of the household, he respects what Ultima says, because he acknowledges her life experience. In this respect, the character of Ultima is similar to that of Nana Chita from *Dew on the Thorn*. We can generalize based on these two characters that the elderly are honored in the family regardless of their sex. This is supported by Alfredo Mirandé's observation that in the Mexican-American family sex-age grading is very common, so that the women have to respect men but the younger have to respect the elder.¹⁹² Thus age takes preference before sex, and an older woman may order a younger man.

Even though the Marez live as a nuclear family, the novel presents also their extended family, the father and brothers of Antonio's mother. The Lunas are a farming family living in another town, but the relationships between the two branches of the family are still very close, because they always turn to each other for help.

4.2.2 Catholic Religion

As it was written above, religion is the central theme of the novel. Anaya attempts to unite the typical Mexican Catholicism with the pre-Columbian beliefs that are apparently in opposition. In the beginning of the novel, the Catholic religion is the only worldview that the protagonist knows, because the Marez are a traditional New Mexican family. Therefore the Catholic Church plays a central role in their lives. Especially the mother is a very devoted Catholic, and she hopes that Antonio could become a priest. Since Antonio is the youngest son in the family, there is a very strong bond between him and his mother, and therefore, as the following passage illustrates, the Catholic religion is very important also for the young boy.¹⁹³

After supper we always prayed the rosary. [...] My mother had a beautiful statue of la Virgen de Guadalupe.¹⁹⁴ [...] She wore a

¹⁹² Mirandé, Alfredo. "The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 39. 1997. 751.

¹⁹³ This bond is similar to the relationship between young Miguel Chico and his mother in Arturo Islas's novel *The Rain God*.

¹⁹⁴ *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is a Mexican icon. It is believed that in December 1531, ten years after the Conquest, the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to a young indigenous man named Juan Diego near Mexico City on the hill of Tepeyac. The image depicts the brown-skinned Virgin Mary standing on a crescent moon and held by an angel. She is wearing a blue mantle with stars and a belt as a sign of pregnancy. Because Tepeyac was a place of indigenous worship, some people believe that Guadalupe is a figure of religious syncretism, uniting the indigenous as well as Catholic beliefs. Our Lady of Guadalupe is also a symbol of the Mexican national identity: in 1810 father Miguel Hidalgo united the indigenous people against Spaniards in the Mexican war of Independence under the banner with Guadalupe.

crown on her head because she was the queen of heaven. There was no one I loved more than the Virgin.¹⁹⁵

This passage shows not only the fact that Antonio is very religious, but also the importance of Mexican culture in the Marez family, which is represented by the statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is the patron saint of Mexico. These home altars are a very common feature of Mexican-American homes. It is the responsibility of the women to create and decorate them, and they believe that the saint to whom the altar is dedicated will protect the family.¹⁹⁶ Creating home altars is closely related to another female responsibility, which is the religious upbringing of her children. This was apparent already in Jovita González' *Dew on the Thorn*, and will be seen again in Arturo Islas' *The Rain God*. Norma Williams describes that in her sociological study *The Mexican American Family*.

[T]he women were primary carriers of the religious belief system, (...) it is the women who have been the most expressive in the area of religion, for they have done the most praying and churchgoing. And it is mainly the women who have been expected to instill the religious belief system in their children. [They] have played an active role in (...) socializing them into the cultural belief system of Mexican Americans, including the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church as they understood them.¹⁹⁷

According to Williams' study, Antonio's mother is the embodiment of the typical Mexican-American mother. She is the one who makes sure the family is ready to go to church on Sundays, and she organizes the "prayer sessions" in front of the statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe whenever there is a need to ask or thank God for something.

4.2.3 Education

While the statue of the Virgin representing the Catholic religion makes Antonio feel safe, entering the public school system makes him feel lost. The main reason is that the Mexican culture is totally absent from it. He does not understand English, the only

¹⁹⁵ Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*. 42.

¹⁹⁶ Marie Loudínová focuses mentions home altars in her thesis *Being a Chicana: Chicanas: A Cultural Introduction. History. Major Issues. Literary Production. Visual Art* on page 30 (see Bibliography).

¹⁹⁷ Williams, Norma. *The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change*. New York: General Hall. 1990. 22-23.

language that is spoken there, and he does not know what to do on his first day of school. He is alienated from the other children also by such a simple thing as a sack lunch: “My mother had packed a small jar of hot beans and some good green chile wrapped in tortillas. When the other children saw my lunch they laughed at me and pointed again. [...] They showed me their sandwiches, which were made of bread. Again, I didn’t feel well.”¹⁹⁸ A similar incident with food at an American school has been described by several Mexican Americans. Margaret E. Montoya recalls in her article “Máscaras, Trenzas, y Greñas: Un/masking the Self while Un/braiding Latina Stories and Legal Discourse:”

I remember being called on one afternoon in a second grade to describe what we had eaten for lunch. Rather than to admit to eating *caldito* (a soup) with *tortillas*, partly because I had no English words for those foods, I regaled the class with a story about what I assumed an American family would eat at lunch: pork chops, mashed potatoes, green salad, sliced bread, and apple pie. (...) Afraid of being mocked, I unsuccessfully masked the truth, and consequently revealed more about myself than I concealed.¹⁹⁹

Antonio is alienated from the other children because of his Mexican American culture, here represented by beans and green peppers. Even though he feels lonely and wants to return home where he feels safe, he stays. He does not want to bring shame to his family and knows that he has to act as like a man.²⁰⁰ Already at this young age Antonio is aware of the notion of family honor and of distinct gender roles.

4.2.4 Indigenous Religion

Despite Antonio’s strong Catholic upbringing an incident happens in El Puerto, where his uncles live, that puts a stop to Antonio’s unconditioned faith. Three *brujas* (or witches) placed a curse on his Uncle Lucas, and caused him a serious illness. Neither the priest, representing the Catholic Church, nor the doctor, here representing the educational system, were able to cure Uncle Lucas. After a few months of despair, the grandfather asked Ultima for help and she cured Antonio’s uncle. The fact that the priest with “the

¹⁹⁸ Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*. New York: Warner Books, Inc. 1994. 58.

¹⁹⁹ Montoya, Margaret E. “Máscaras, Trenzas, y Greñas: Un/masking the Self while Un/braiding Latina Stories and Legal Discourse”. *Critical Race Feminism: A Reader*. 2nd edition. A. Wing ed. New York: NYU Press. 2003. 70-77.

²⁰⁰ Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*. New York: Warner Books, Inc. 1994. 59.

power of God, the Virgin, and all the saints of the Holy Mother Church behind him” was unable to remove the curse, while Ultima finally cured him with the help of magic and herbs leaves Antonio in a great confusion.²⁰¹ The fact that his Uncle Lucas was saved by paganism complicates Antonio’s religious belief. Later, Antonio’s friend introduces him to an old indigenous belief in the golden carp, a pagan god. This experience “shook the roots of everything that Antonio ever believed in,” and he starts to ask more questions. He wonders whether there is more than one God, whether the God of the Church is the right one to believe in, and whose priest should he become.

While the cure of Uncle Lucas followed by the meeting with the golden carp create more questions and confusion, the time that Antonio spends with Ultima slowly helps him to gain knowledge and provides him with answers. *La curandera* shares with the boy her knowledge about the world around them, she teaches him to respect the trees and herbs that might be of use, and she tells him stories and legends about his ancestors. The time they spend together even strengthens the bond that they have shared since Antonio’s birth: “I felt more attached to Ultima than to my own mother. [...] From her I learnt the glory and the tragedy of the history of my people, and I came to understand how that history stirred in my blood.”²⁰²

This learning process is very important, because Antonio’s world is full of dualisms and rivalry that present a challenge for him. These dichotomies represent the contrast between the Western culture represented by Catholicism, and the indigenous culture represented by the golden carp. The Western thought divides the world into two concepts that are placed in binary opposition.²⁰³ Antonio believes that he always has to choose between these two concepts: being a Marez or a Luna, between the *llano* and village, between Catholicism and paganism. Spending time with Ultima makes him realize that the strength does not come from the rivalry, but from restoring the balance between the seemingly opposite concepts, that only together form the whole. This is presented by Ultima’s cure that heals both body and soul at the same time, and also by her explanation of the water cycle, where the water of the sea (Marez) and water of the moon (Luna) are one.

²⁰¹ Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*. New York: Warner Books, Inc. 1994. 85.

²⁰² *Ibid.* 123.

²⁰³ Meyer, John M. *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 2001. 38.

Anaya's novel differs from Jovita González' *Dew on the Thorn* in its favorable approach towards the indigenous populations and their beliefs. While González showed a positive picture of indigenous folklore, her protagonists are always white aristocratic people of Spanish descent. González's depiction of Mexican Americans is typical of the works of art written before the Chicano Movement. The writers carefully distinguished the Spanish settlers, who were the heroes of their literary work, from the indigenous people, who formed just the background and gave the book a sense of local color. Similar characterization can be found in the first Mexican-American novel, *Who Would Have Thought It?*, which was written by Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton (1832 – 1895) and published in 1872.²⁰⁴ Ruiz de Burton's protagonist is a young girl named Lola. She was found among the indigenous people in the Southwest and was brought to New England, where she falls in love with a young soldier from a wealthy family. The author considers it important to point out Lola's European origin (her pregnant mother was kidnapped by the Indians) and describes that after some time in New England her skin became "mysteriously" lighter and therefore she could marry the Anglo soldier.

Anaya's view is completely different. The only Spanish character in his novel is the ancestor of the Lunas who came to New Mexico as a missionary, but later married a local woman. He was therefore not the virtuous Spaniard that González portrays in her book. Anaya stresses the indigenous aspect of Mexican Americans under the influence of the Chicano Movement, and he shows that on the differences between the western and indigenous culture. The western worldview is based on a conflict between two concepts, while the indigenous one sees these concepts in unity. The shift in Antonio's belief system forms the central plot of this *Bildungsroman*, and it represents also the change of thinking among Mexican Americans during the Chicano Movement. At that time Mexican Americans began to acknowledge what distinguished them from the majority Anglo society: their indigenous past, and they also realized the importance of the family as a source of strength, comfort, and happiness.

The previous chapter shows a positive image of the Mexican-American family, because Jovita González's *Dew on the Thorn* and Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless me, Ultima* were written in support of Mexican Americans. The fact that these books were written in English, even though both González and Anaya were fluent in Spanish, alludes to the fact

²⁰⁴ Stavanoas, Ilan, ed. *Encyclopedia Latina: History, Culture, and Society in the United States*. Volume 4. Scholastic Library Publishing, inc. 2005.

that these authors wrote for the English-speaking readers, for Anglos as well as Mexicans who could speak English. In this they differ from another important author of the Chicano Movement, Tomás Rivera, whose highly political novel *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (...*And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*) was originally written in Spanish to appeal directly to those Mexican Americans, who did not speak English. While Rivera wanted to motivate especially the Spanish-speaking migrant workers by describing their disadvantaged position, González and Anaya wanted to show the English speaking readers a positive image of Mexican Americans. Jovita González grew up in Southern Texas and was aware of the stereotypes that Anglos associated with them. Therefore she created the “aristocratic” family of the Olivares and the rich culture of the Mexican-American border that contradicted the stereotypical images. In a similar way Anaya depicted a poor yet loving Mexican-American family and the rich Chicano spirituality. And even though the concept of *machismo* appears in both Anaya’s and González’ novel, the writers present it in a positive way.

5. The Family in Literature: The Postmodern View

According to the writer Tomás Rivera, Chicano literature is based on three images: *la casa* [the house], *el barrio* [the community], and *la lucha* [the struggle].²⁰⁵ This is true of González and Anaya, as well as Rivera himself. All of these writers wrote about things that were important for the self-determination of Mexicans in the United States. González focused on history and the problems between Anglos and Mexicans in the South Texas area. Anaya wrote about the complicated spirituality and the struggle between Catholicism and the pagan religion. Rivera described racism and segregation of Mexicans in the Southwest. The traditional Mexican-American family is present in all three literary works and it represents a safe and warm harbor for the protagonists. The outside world may be cruel and unkind, but the family protects its members from any danger and supports them.

Some Chicano scholars claim that the Mexican-American literature came of age in the 1980s and 1990s.²⁰⁶ This means that while in the 1960s and 1970s writers of Mexican origin were influenced by the Chicano Movement, as we could see in Anaya's novel, the authors writing in the following decades liberated themselves from the Movement's ideology. The literary works that will be discussed in this chapter, *The Rain God* by Arturo Islas and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, were written in the early 1980s, in the aftermath of the main events of the Chicano movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the depiction of the Mexican-American family differs from the literary works discussed in the previous chapter. In the three above-mentioned literary works by González, Anaya, and Rivera, the main focus is on the outside world, and the shelter that the Mexican-American family represents forms just the background to all the stories. In *The Rain God* and *The House on Mango Street* the family moves from the background to the center of the story, and the struggle moves from the outside world into the family itself. This nontraditional depiction of the family was a form of protest for these Mexican-American writers. Through their texts these authors wanted to demonstrate their disagreement with the family ideology of the Chicano Movement, because according to them the concept of *machismo* was very problematic and the

²⁰⁵ Jacobs, Elizabeth C. *Mexican American Literature: The Politics of Identity*. New York: Routledge. 2006.100.

²⁰⁶ Maciel, David. R et al. *Chicano Renaissance: Contemporary Cultural Trends*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press. 2000. 285.

Mexican-American family was far from being perfect. This is considered the postmodern view of the Mexican-American family.

5.1 Arturo Islas: *The Rain God*

Arturo Islas was born in 1938 in El Paso, Texas, on the border with Mexico. He was a third generation Mexican immigrant, whose grandparents left Mexico after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Islas got a scholarship for the prestigious Stanford University, where he received his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree. After finishing his education he continued to live in California, because he became a professor at Stanford University.²⁰⁷ At that time he began to write, and although the manuscript of his first novel *The Rain God* was rejected several times, it received both critical and popular acclaim after it was published in 1984. He had planned *The Rain God* to be the first novel in a trilogy inspired by his own experiences in a difficult position of a double outsider: Mexican-American and a homosexual. *The Rain God* is a highly autobiographical novel, and the author projects it onto the characters, which are based on the members on Islas's own family. He managed to write its sequence called *Migrant Souls*, but was unable to finish the last novel to complete the trilogy. Arturo Islas had suffered from several serious diseases throughout his lifetime. He had polio as a child, which left him with a limp; he had intestinal problems, which resulted in colostomy, and he was HIV positive. Most of these health problems are reflected in *The Rain God*. Arturo Islas was fifty-two years old when he died of pneumonia in 1991, while he was working on the sequence to *Migrant Souls*.²⁰⁸

The Rain God is written as a series of six stories that all talk about different members of three generations of the Angel family in a small Texan town on the Mexican border. He calls this town Del Sapo, which is a clear allusion to El Paso, Islas's hometown. Each of the six sections has enough potential to be published independently as a short story. Yet, when put together in a novel they describe with great complexity the problems of the Mexican-American family living in the borderlands. Mama Chona, the matriarch, wanted her family to form an ideal Mexican-American family, similar to those that González and Anaya described in their works. Yet, almost none of the members of

²⁰⁷ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003. 181.

²⁰⁸ Aldama, Frederick Luis. *Dancing with Ghosts: A Critical Biography of Arturo Islas*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2005. 1.

the family is able to live up to these expectations, and their lives are therefore full of remorse and frustration.

Islas tells the story through a third person omniscient narrator, who is seemingly detached from the story, although at times the narrator is hinting that he and Miguel Chico, the protagonist, are one person. The omniscient narrator allows the readers to focus on every single member of the Angel family, and to see into their minds. The characters speak for themselves and uncover their fears and desires. On the other hand, the association of the narrator with Miguel Chico brings the readers inside the story, almost in a way that a first person narrator would. Miguel Chico's position as the protagonist gives another perspective to the novel. He can tell the story of his family from the position of an insider, because he is a Mexican American, like the rest of the Angels. At the same time he is an outsider, because he left the family, unable to live among the hypocrites. Thus, the protagonist is both participating in and criticizing the Mexican-American culture.²⁰⁹

The main theme in Islas's novel is the deconstruction of the ideal of *la familia*, which was praised in the literary works discussed in the previous chapter. Miguel "Chico" Angel tries to separate himself from the family; he moves away from the desert, and starts to study in California, where he stays even after graduation. After recovering from a serious illness Miguel Chico begins to contemplate on his family "and especially its sinners."²¹⁰ To acknowledge that there were "sinners" in the family is a very big step away from the Chicano Movement's ideology. Among the "sins" of the family members are hypocrisy, adultery, racism, homosexuality, drug addiction, and suicide. Miguel Chico believes that he has survived his medical problems to tell the story of his family, because this process might liberate him from the influence that the family members had on him. The protagonist, who is seeing a therapist himself, thus becomes a self-appointed family "analyst."²¹¹ This represents the alienation of the Miguel Chico from his family. As was mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, Mexican Americans tend to solve their problems inside the family, because they believe that relatives have better insight into the problem. Yet, Miguel Chico cannot ask his family for help, because the Angels

²⁰⁹ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003. 287.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* 4.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 28.

deny the existence of any problems within the family. He therefore chooses to consult a therapist, which is what Anglo-Americans would do.²¹²

In each of the stories Miguel Chico concentrates on a different branch of the Angel family, and from his position of an insider and also an outsider he describes the deviations from the ideal of the Chicano family. The themes in each of the stories are similar: family relations and relationships between people, problematic gender roles, and different attitudes towards race, class, and religion. Each of the six sections in Islas's book develops the previous one, adds more pieces of information, and completes the picture of the "real" Angel family that the author is trying to create.

The Angel family is a typical Mexican-American family; there are very close ties between the nuclear family and the extended family. All the members participate in religious ceremonies, visit each other, and turn to each other in time of need. Their familistic orientation is obvious also in their approach to education. Although the high school teacher encouraged Miguel Chico's uncle to go to university,

[h]is family, though proud of him, expected him to find a job right away. His sisters were anxious to see him fulfilling his duty as family breadwinner, for their father had died when they first crossed the border and Mama Chona has suffered much to keep them all together.²¹³

Needless to say, Miguel Chico's uncle acted according to the expectations of his mother and sisters.

The Angels consider family to be the highest value, and almost all of them, especially Miguel Chico's grandmother Mama Chona, who is the matriarch of the Angel clan, insist on the image of the perfect family. She is responsible for perpetuating the hypocritical behavior of the Angel family: She "was never able to talk about the ugly sides of life or people, even though she was surrounded by them."²¹⁴ Mama Chona refuses to talk about the problems of her children and grandchildren, because the image of the ideal family cannot be distorted. She believed that "no harm [...] could ever come from within one's own home and family."²¹⁵ According to Mama Chona, the picture of the perfect family had to be kept in order to protect the family from the outside world and also the individual family members inside of the family.

²¹² See section 2.1.1 "Familism."

²¹³ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York: Perennial. 2003. 127.

²¹⁴ Ibid. 26.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 163.

Miguel Chico believes that this repressive attitude destroys the family. The characters in the novel are caught between their ideal of the Angel family, the safe and nurturing harbor that Mama Chona believes in, and the imperfections of their real family. The protagonist himself never talked about his own “sin” neither did he talk about the “sins” of the others. But after surviving the serious surgery he decides to unveil the truth about the Angel family to be able to reconstruct his life. In his deconstruction of *la familia* Islas describes the “sins” of each individual member of the Angel family, and considering their family name, it is quite ironic that he describes “sinners” within the “Angel” family. According to Chicano Professor Marta E. Sanchez *The Rain God* is Miguel Chico’s “exorcism of the repressed forces that have ensnared his family for three generations.”²¹⁶ In the following sections I am going to describe the main problems of the Angel family that differentiate it from the ideal Mexican-American family as depicted by González and Anaya.

5.1.1 Gender Roles

Strictly defined gender roles were described in the second chapter as one of the key features of the Mexican-American family. In González and Anaya these gender roles were presented as absolutely unproblematic, as if agreed upon by both men and women. Islas, on the other hand, describes how different norms of behavior for men and women negatively affect the relationships within the family. Women, who refuse their subordination and do not act according to the expectations of the family, are rejected. Women, who accept their role, suffer quietly. Mama Chona, although a woman herself, supports these different roles for men and women, and thus she perpetuates the subordination of women. According to Gloria Anzaldúa this is a typical phenomenon in Mexican-American families:

Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them. How many times have I heard mothers and mothers-in-law tell their sons to beat their wives for being *hociconas* (big mouths), for being *callejeras* (going to visit and gossip with neighbors), for expecting their husbands to help with the rearing of children and the housework, for wanting to be something other than housewives?²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Sanchez, Marta E. “Arturo Islas’s *The Rain God*: An Alternative Tradition.” *American Literature*. Vol. 62. No. 2. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 1990. 288.

²¹⁷ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books. 1999. 38.

The women in the Angel family are supposed to be obedient wives and loving mothers while men are expected to be *machos*. Miguel Grande, the father of the protagonist, represents a typical *macho* man. He is a police officer, and requires obedience and respect, and the whole family relies on him. Juanita, his wife, represents the ideal Mexican-American mother: she is focused on her family, loves her children despite their imperfections, and even though she suffers because of her husband's mistakes, she never complains. Miguel Grande wants his son to be raised to become a *macho*. According to him, girls and boys have to be brought up differently, so that they learn to act according to their gender. Sociologists Segura and Price mention in their study that Mexican-American boys must learn to be masculine, strong, and responsible.²¹⁸ When Miguel Chico and his nursemaid Maria play with dolls, Miguel Grande gets very angry. "I don't want my son brought up like a girl," he says, because according to him being a girl is degrading.²¹⁹

When he sees his young son dancing in a female dress, he accuses his wife of turning Miguel Chico into a *joto*, which means queer.²²⁰ Homophobia is a common feature in the Angel family. Miguel Grande fears that his son's playing with dolls and wearing of female dresses might result in homosexual orientation, because his bother Felix, who is a homosexual, also enjoyed wearing female clothes as a young boy.²²¹ He tries to bring up his son differently; he wants him to become a strong man and protect his family. This is apparent in the scene from the Day of the Dead, where the family goes to the cemetery. Miguel Chico is scared, and wants to run away, but his father tells him to be a man and protect his mother from the dead.²²² Later, Miguel Grande talks his son's friends into fighting with Miguel Chico, so that he learns how to defend himself, and he asks Miguel Chico's swimming teacher to be harder on the boy than on the other children.²²³ These attempts fail, and Miguel Grande is unable to understand his son anymore, because his unmanly behavior negates everything that the Angels believe in.

²¹⁸ Segura, Denise A. And Jennifer L. Pierce. "Chicano/a Family Structure and Gender Personality: Chodorow, Familism, and Psychoanalytic Sociology Revisited." *Signs*. Autumn 1993. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 78.

²¹⁹ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003.16.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* 16.

²²¹ *Ibid.* 87.

²²² *Ibid.* 10.

²²³ *Ibid.* 96.

Juanita, on the other hand, loves her son despite his inability to fulfill his father's expectations, and she protects him.

According to González and Anaya *machismo*, *hembrismo*, and *Marianismo* are cultural traditions, and it seems that in their novels these concepts help create functioning families. Islas does not share their opinion and he challenges these three concepts, as many of the problems in the Angel family arise exactly from *machismo*, *hembrismo*, and *Marianismo*. In his novel, women and gays are the victims of the cultural values associated with male dominance and subordination of women. Although some women in the novel act independently despite the criticism of the family, most of them suffer from the oppression and never protest. Miguel Chico's aunt Angie considers her husband's unjust behavior towards her "simply the rights of a husband and a father. Her duty was to suffer from his arbitrary nature so that she might enjoy greater glory in heaven."²²⁴ Homosexual men in the novel have to hide their sexual orientation from their family, which results in serious psychological problems. According to Islas the principle of male dominance is harmful to the Mexican-American family.

5.1.2. Adultery

An important aspect of Miguel Grande's *machismo* is his sexual promiscuity: "Miguel Grande was content with Juanita's lack of worldly wisdom and the ease with which he could sleep with other women," says the narrator when describing Miguel Grande's moral integrity.²²⁵ His attitude is similar to the behavior of Carlos from González's *Dew on the Thorn*, where sexual promiscuity was also considered a proof of manhood. Yet, in *The Rain God* the situation is more complicated, because Miguel Grande is married, and his behavior affects other members of his family. The main theme of the story "Compadres and Comadres" is a love triangle: Miguel Grande starts a love affair with Lola, Juanita's best friend. "Compadres and Comadres" begins with an ironic scene from a big celebration of Juanita and Miguel Grande's wedding anniversary: "On their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, which Juanita insisted on celebrating in the company of the entire family with the repetition of the wedding vows at the cathedral,

²²⁴ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003. 125.

²²⁵ *Ibid.* 61.

Miguel Grande was already in love with her best friend Lola.”²²⁶ All the relatives enjoy the celebration, creating a perfect illusion of a happy family.

Later, when they find out about the affair, none of them says anything about the affair to Miguel Grande, because they can “rely on him in times of trouble.”²²⁷ His affair is also kept out of family conversations, for the obvious reason of keeping intact the idealized image of the family. His love for Juanita and his passion for Lola later become an unbearable burden for Miguel Grande, and he asks his adult son for advice on how to deal with this complicated situation. The scene where Miguel Grande asks for help represents a great satisfaction for Miguel Chico: his “macho” father is suddenly weak and desperately begs for help, while Miguel Chico firmly insists: “You’ve got to make a decision, Dad.”²²⁸ Miguel Chico is finally stronger than his father and in this way he is able to take retribution after the years of humiliation.

In the end Miguel Grande decides to confess to his wife. Despite the pain that her husband’s adultery causes her, Juanita remains the dutiful wife that she has always been, and takes care of her husband. “She had long ago accepted Miguel’s weakness for other women [...]”²²⁹ She also continues to love her best friend Lola, and misses her terribly, after she moved to Los Angeles. When her husband decides to visit Lola, Juanita shows incredible patience and understanding:

I have to see her,” he said. She did not answer. In the morning she prepared breakfast for him, ironed two of his better dress shirts, and, repacking his valise, folded them neatly so that they would not be too wrinkled when he needed them.²³⁰

Juanita’s behavior is almost unbelievable considering the fact that her husband and her best friend betrayed her, and Miguel Chico acknowledges it at the end of the story, when he tells his mother: “You’re too good to be true.”²³¹ Even though Juanita dislikes the snobbery of the Angel family, she is actually the only Angel in the novel, who lives up to the name.

The problem of extramarital relations keeps reappearing in the novel. Even though these incidents differ from each other in several aspects, there is something they have in common: they are not discussed openly with the sinners. Mama Chona’s daughters Jesus

²²⁶ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003. 53.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* 54.

²²⁸ *Ibid.* 97.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* 98.

²³⁰ *Ibid.* 107.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 110.

Maria and Eduvigés, who are the “guardians” of the family pride, never confront those who endanger the image of the ideal family; they discuss these problems behind the sinner’s back. The family also set double standards for men and women. Only Juanita’s sister Nina and Sancho, who married Mama Chona’s daughter Eduvigés, criticize Miguel Grande’s adultery, but the Angels themselves never talk about it. When women commit the same sin, Jesus Maria and Eduvigés are ready to condemn them.

This is the case of Mama Chona’s sister Tia Cuca, who lives with Mr. Davis without being married to him, as her nieces believe. They consider it absolutely inappropriate, and therefore Eduvigés and Jesus Maria refused to visit their aunt. Yet, rather than openly confront her, the sisters make up excuses, and Miguel Grande, himself an adulterer, “spoke of her with contempt.”²³² Even though Tia Cuca has certain flaws that will be discussed later on in this chapter, her character is very firm as far as her relationship is concerned: “Tia Cuca did not seem to care what anyone thought about her “arrangement” with Mr. Davis.”²³³

Eduvigés and Jesus Maria have similar attitude towards their sister Mema, who has an illegitimate son, Ricardo. When the child was born, the family refused to accept him, and puts the boy up for adoption. Mema’s protests go in vain and therefore she leaves to Mexico with her boyfriend, which makes her a prostitute in the eyes of the Angels. When Ricardo is found several years later, and Mama Chona adopts him, Jesus Maria’s feelings are hurt (“[H]ow can you let that child live here when you know from what sin he comes?”), and she even regrets not having murdered the boy when he was a baby.²³⁴ This attitude can hardly be considered Christian, and it corresponds with Mema’s opinion about her sisters, as she calls them “pious hypocrites.”²³⁵

To summarize, *machismo* is the prominent characteristic of the Angel family, and it governs the gender roles and the behavior of the family members. The difference between the expectations associated with the concepts of *machismo* and *hembrismo* can be best compared using the problem of adultery in the Angel family. There are three adulterers in the Angel family: Miguel Grande, Tia Cuca, and Mema, but only the women are viewed as sinners. Miguel Grande is still respected by most of the family members, because he is a man, and a real *macho*, who supports the family.

²³² Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York, Perennial. 2003. 145.

²³³ Ibid. 145.

²³⁴ Ibid. 166-168.

²³⁵ Ibid. 165.

5.1.3 Homosexuality

Homosexuality is one of the key issues in the novel. When Miguel Chico begins to think about the “sinners” in his family, his uncle Felix is the first family member he names. Everybody in the family knows about Felix’s homosexuality, even though he got married and has four children. Felix is older than Miguel Grande, but because of his homosexuality he is treated with less respect than his younger brother. The behavior of the Angel family towards Felix shows that according to them it is socially more acceptable to be an adulterer than to be a homosexual. This attitude is obviously connected to *machismo*.

Felix’s affection for other men is first demonstrated in the affection he feels towards his son. JoEl and his parents sleep in the same bed, and although Islas never hints at the possibility that Felix could molest his son, there are still sexual implications:

As the three of them slept more frequently together, Felix lost his passion for Angie, and he would wake up during the night cradling JoEl on his side of the bed. His protective feelings for the child perplexed and disoriented him because they seemed stronger than his desire for his wife.²³⁶

Felix seeks the company of men. He uses the opportunity to perform physical examinations of newly hired workers in his company to make sexual advances, and often approaches young soldiers who are stationed at the military base in the area. Islas points out that these encounters were voluntarily, and that Felix never harassed any of the men, if they did not “express interest.”²³⁷

After Felix tries to seduce a soldier, the young man brutally kills him. Yet, even after Felix’s death the family tries to escape the confrontation with his homosexuality, because it is “more concerned with its pride than with justice.”²³⁸ Rather than to have the family name publicly associated with a homosexual in case of a trial, the Angels quietly agree that the soldier acted in self-defense and do not demand prosecution. Felix’s homosexuality and his murder are never talked about anymore, so that the image of the perfect family is not disturbed. They sacrificed Felix for the sake of the family honor, which is another example of familism among the Angels.

²³⁶ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003. 122.

²³⁷ Ibid. 116.

²³⁸ Ibid. 85.

Felix was probably not the only homosexual in the family. The narrator mentions certain aspects of Miguel Chico's life that hint at his homosexual orientation. In his childhood he enjoyed playing with dolls and wearing female clothes, he is not married, and when his cousins ask him why he never married, he uses his operation as an excuse. Miguel Chico does not dare to reveal his sexual orientation, because he has seen what happened to Felix. And even though he says that his "rebirth" after the surgery gives him an opportunity to openly talk about the sins of the other members of the family, he never speaks about his own.

5.1.4 Race and Class

While the Chicano Movement praised the indigenous origin of Mexican Americans and understood it as a unique heritage that had to be cherished, the Angel family refuses to acknowledge their partially indigenous origin. The importance of race and class is connected to the family pride and is referred to throughout the whole novel. The importance of race for Mama Chona and her sister, Tia Cuca, as well as their hypocrisy is striking:

Tia Cuca was lighter-skinned than her sister Chona. Nevertheless, like Mama Chona, she was unmistakably Mexican with enough Indian blood to give her those aristocratic cheekbones the two sisters liked the younger generation to believe were those of highborn Spanish ladies who just happened to find themselves in the provinces of Mexico.²³⁹

Miguel Chico dislikes this trait of his grandmother's character. He is unable to understand why she could not accept her "mexicanness" and why did she consider Indians "impure" when she was one of them. "What did she see when she looked in the mirror?," he asks himself, and then offers his description of Mama Chona's facial features, "Indian cheekbones" and "aquiline nose" among them.²⁴⁰ Yet, Miguel Chico's grandmother was blind to the mixed heritage of her family, because according to her the purity of the ethnicity was closely related to the purity of the family:

In subtle, persistent ways, family members were taught that only the Spanish side of their heritage was worth honoring and

²³⁹ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York: Perennial. 2003.141.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 27.

preserving; the Indian in them was pagan, servile, instinctive rather than intellectual, and was to be suppressed, its existence denied.²⁴¹

Jesus Maria, whose skin was lighter than her mother's, shared Mama Chona's racist views. She "had a light skin and anyone darker than she considered an Indian."²⁴² Jesus Maria and Mama Chona could not forgive Felix for marrying Angie, who has a darker complexion. Mama Chona, who herself has Indian features, disrespectfully called Angie's first-born baby Yerma "a little Indian."²⁴³ Years later, Mama Chona and her daughters are horrified to find out that the friends of Felix's second daughter Magdalena are "low class" Mexicans, that she is involved in a Mexican girls' club, and that she sings with a band. Despite her objections against Felix's wife, Jesus Maria herself disappointed her mother by marrying an uneducated man against her mother's wish. Later she repents: "Every day of their lives I teach my children not to be like their father, but to aspire to greater things and to that perfection that you and the Church have taught me."²⁴⁴ Her attitude is completely different from Felix's who supports his wife, and protects her from the rest of the family. He, unlike Jesus Maria, is aware of his own imperfections, and therefore he does not struggle to preserve the ideal of the Angel family. Marrying a dark-skinned girl was Felix's form of protest against his mother's racial prejudices; nevertheless, later he realizes that even his son JoEl is ashamed of his origin.

Mama Chona's hypocrisy is reflected also in her attitude towards the Mexican girls that her family hires to do housework. "Mama Chona had taught all her children that the Angels were better than the illiterate riff-raff from across the river."²⁴⁵ She refers to these Mexican girls as "Indians" or "wetbacks," even though she herself came from Mexico as a "wetback" many years ago.²⁴⁶

Many relatives cannot understand why Mama Chona detests Mexico and its people, and consider her a hypocrite. "The snobbery Mama Chona and Tia Cuca displayed in every way possible against the Indian and in favor of the Spanish was a constant puzzlement to most of her grandchildren."²⁴⁷ This mystery remains unexplained until the last chapter of the novel, when the readers as well as the protagonist, who is

²⁴¹ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003. 142.

²⁴² *Ibid.* 127-128.

²⁴³ *Ibid.* 128.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 167.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 15.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 142-143.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 142.

haunted by Mama Chona's idealized vision of the Angel family and herself, learn about her reasons:

[T]he first Miguel Angel, Mama Chona's only child born of the love she had felt for her husband, was killed [...] at the beginning of the revolution that changed their lives and forced the family north from Mexico. [...] Mama Chona never forgave Mexico for the death of her firstborn.²⁴⁸

After the revolution her son is proclaimed a "hero" and a "true patriot," but that only increases her suffering and her hatred towards her own country. Thus, towards the end of the novel the narrator uncovers the reason for Mama Chona's hypocrisy. She blames Mexico for killing her son during the Mexican Revolution in 1910, and therefore she cannot accept her Mexican origin, because that would mean accepting the murder of her first son. Nevertheless, her hypocrisy has negatively affected the relationships within her large family, while her only wish was to protect it.

The members of the Angel family live with an idealized picture of the family that they know they have to maintain, but at the same time cannot seem to do it, because their many secrets and sins keep haunting them. Felix was killed and his murderer was not punished, JoEl is a drug addict because the family cannot fulfill his need for love, Miguel Chico's cousin Tony committed suicide, unable to bear his mother's strict discipline. Those who cannot conform to family rules are turned into outsiders and they voluntarily leave, just like Mema moved to Mexico, and Miguel Chico moved to California. Islas's portrait of the Mexican-American family has the same ingredients as that of Anaya's and González's: *Machismo* and *hembrismo*. However, only Islas shows that not all Mexican-American men and women can agree with this dichotomy, and enforcing these concepts can gradually destroy the family.

²⁴⁸ Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*. New York. Perennial. 2003. 163.

5.2 Sandra Cisneros: The House on Mango Street

Sandra Cisneros is probably the most popular contemporary Mexican-American writer. She was born in Chicago in 1954 in a working-class family; her father was an upholsterer from Mexico and her mother was a Mexican-American factory worker.²⁴⁹ Cisneros soon realized that her race and class represented certain barriers to her advancement in the American society: “When I was 11 years old in Chicago, teachers thought that if you were poor and Mexican you didn’t have anything to say.”²⁵⁰ Gender became the third barrier: Being the only girl in her family, Cisneros quickly realized the role that women had in the Mexican-American family. Despite all these limitations she received her bachelor’s degree from Loyola University, and then she was admitted into the prestigious Iowa Writers’ Workshop.²⁵¹ Later she said about her education: “In retrospect, I am lucky my father believed daughters were meant for husbands. It meant it didn’t matter if I majored in something silly like English. After all, I’d find a nice profession eventually, right?”²⁵² Cisneros published volumes of poetry and prose, drawing on her experience of a double outsider: Mexican in the United States and a woman in the patriarchal Mexican community. Her books are widely read at high schools and universities in the United States, and she has also received several awards for her writing.

Sandra Cisneros managed to overcome the barriers imposed on her by her race, class, and gender, and is now a successful writer. *The House on Mango Street* was her first work of fiction. She started working on it when she studied in Iowa, because she felt that her origin alienated her from the privileged students in the creative writing program. Then she realized that it was her working-class origin and experiences as a woman in the patriarchal world of the Latino *barrio* in Chicago that made her unique, and decided to write about that.²⁵³

The book is different in several aspects from the literary works that I have discussed so far. Firstly, while the works of González, Anaya, and Islas are linear narratives, *The House on Mango Street* is a collection of vignettes written that the author herself calls

²⁴⁹ Amparano Garcia, Julie. “Cisneros, Sandra.” *Encyclopedia of Latino Popular Culture*. Vol. 1. Ed. Cordelia Chávez Candelaria. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2004. 167.

²⁵⁰ Day, Frances Ann. *Latina and Latino Voices in Literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2003. 145.

²⁵¹ Amparano Garcia, Julie. “Cisneros, Sandra.” *Encyclopedia of Latino Popular Culture*. Vol. 1. Ed. Cordelia Chávez Candelaria. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2004. 230.

²⁵² Day, Frances Ann. *Latina and Latino Voices in Literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2003. 147.

²⁵³ *Ibid.* 148.

“lazy poems.”²⁵⁴ Cisneros says that she wanted her narrative to be nonlinear so that the readers could open the book randomly and each of the stories would be understood. Secondly, the story in *The House on Mango Street* is set in the urban area of Chicago, while all of the previously discussed literary works depict the life in the rural area of the Southwest. And finally, while all the other literary works were focused only on one family and its members, *The House on Mango Street* describes the family relationships and gender roles in the whole neighborhood. Cisneros writes stories about girls and women who live on Mango Street, and who are trying to find their place in the male-dominated world of the Latino *barrio*.

Just like Arturo Islas’s *The Rain God*, *The House on Mango Street* elaborates on the image of “la familia” as an oppressive institution, and it is focused specifically on the role that women have in the Mexican-American family. Making a young Mexican-American girl the protagonist gave Cisneros the opportunity to describe the life in the community through the eyes of a child, and explain the events with the logic of a child. While the other three books that were discussed in this thesis were all written in the third person narrative mode, Cisneros decided to write in the first person, and thus the reader can easily identify with Esperanza Cordero, the protagonist.

Esperanza is a girl on the verge of womanhood, and therefore her growing up and the initiation into her gender role is a very important theme of *The House on Mango Street*. At the beginning of the book Esperanza is still a child. She feels lonely, her two brothers never play with her outside of their house because “[t]he boys and the girls live in separate worlds.”²⁵⁵ The first stories are focused on her family and on Esperanza’s attempts to find new friends on Mango Street, where her family has just moved in. She soon meets two girls from the neighborhood, Rachel and Lucy, who become her friends.

Their childhood games soon reveal that the girls are entering into adulthood, and Cisneros describes the danger that growing up brings. The protagonist realizes this for the first time in the story “The Family of Little Feet.”²⁵⁶ Esperanza and her friends play with used high-heeled shoes, and by wearing them, they literally step into the shoes of adult women. Cisneros describes how the shoes change the girls into sexual objects in the eyes of men: The joy about their new adventure soon changes into fright, when a drunken

²⁵⁴ McCracken, Ellen. “Sandra Cisneros.” *Latino and Latina Writers*. Vol. 1. Ed. Alan West-Durán. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons. 2004. 238.

²⁵⁵ Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 8.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 49.

man, attracted by the high-heeled shoes, offers Rachel a dollar for a kiss. The idea of dangerous sexuality keeps reappearing in the book. In the story “The First Job” an older co-worker uses Esperanza’s nervousness and sexually harasses her.²⁵⁷ “Red Clowns” as a story about rape is the ultimate example of the dangers of sexuality and violence against women.²⁵⁸ The story puts into a sharp contrast the childhood excitement about the carnival and the actual horrible experience. The depiction of the incident is very disturbing, because Esperanza is unable to express what happened. She does not describe the rape itself, but the fact that her romantic dreams about love and sex were destroyed by this single act of violence.

5.2.1 Marriage as an Escape from Poverty

Esperanza is surrounded by many female characters: her mother, her friends, and her neighbors. Seeing the girls and the women in her neighborhood, Esperanza begins to realize the unequal gender roles in her community. Most of the women who live in the neighborhood are trapped in the male dominated world. The patriarchal system discourages women to become independent and help themselves out of poverty, and for the majority of them, marriage is seen as the only way to improve their social status and to escape the power of their father. According to Cisneros, these wives and daughters are victims of the patriarchal oppression. Esperanza’s friend Sally is repeatedly beaten by her father, whose violence is driven by his desire to control his daughter. According to her father’s logic Sally deserves this treatment “just because [she is] a daughter”, which can be translated as “just because she is woman.”²⁵⁹ Sally’s father is afraid that Sally would “make the family ashamed.”²⁶⁰ Similar attitude towards family honor was already described in *Dew on the Thorn* where Don Francisco said that family honor was more important than the well being of his daughter. It is obvious that the familistic orientation of Mexican Americans has not changed much over the sixty years that separate these two stories. Sally, although she should be angry with her father, defends his behavior by saying: “He never hits me hard.”²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 53.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 99.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.92.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. 92

²⁶¹ Ibid. 92.

Cisneros shows on the character of Sally that women often learn to accept the patriarchal oppression, and willingly victimize themselves in their relationship with men. In "The Monkey Garden" Esperanza describes an incident that happened in an abandoned garden in the neighborhood.²⁶² Esperanza, Sally, and other children play an innocent game there, but one day Sally suddenly leaves the game and starts talking with the boys. While Esperanza is still a child, believing in the separate worlds for boys and girls, Sally accepts the rules of a new sexualized game that the boys invent. They take Sally's keys, and offer to return them for a kiss. Esperanza, who wants to protect Sally, feels as an outsider because the others laugh at her, and she realizes she has no power over this adult game. Sally is willingly getting involved and she does not challenge the rules of the game. When Esperanza runs to ask the mother of one of the boys to interfere, the mother's answer is only: "Those kids."²⁶³ In the previous vignettes about the high heels and Esperanza's new job the girls were victimized by the male behavior. In "The Monkey Garden" Sally willingly gets involved in the game and thus she willingly becomes a victim.

This process continues when Sally gets married before even finishing eighth grade. Nevertheless, the marriage has not changed her life. In the beginning, Sally was controlled by her father, now she is controlled by her husband. "Sally says she likes being married because now she can buy her own things when her husband gives her money," Esperanza says.²⁶⁴ Sally is not allowed to leave the house without her husband's permission. She does not have her own economic resources, and she does not have her own will. Cisneros depicts the painful isolation of the newly-wed: "She likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet, the linoleum roses on the floor, the ceiling smooth as wedding cake."²⁶⁵ Cisneros consciously compares the room that becomes Sally's prison to a wedding cake in this sentence. It reflects the fact that women often escape the prison of being a daughter by voluntarily getting into a prison of being a wife.

Sally is not the only girl who imagined that marriage would save her. Esperanza's neighbor Marin, a young woman from Puerto Rico, dreams about marrying her unemployed boyfriend. This story again shows how women perpetuate their own subjugation to men. Although Marin works and therefore she has the opportunity to be

²⁶² Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 94.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* 97.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 101.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 102.

independent, she remains passive: “[She] is waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall, someone to change her life.”²⁶⁶

Marin hopes that marriage would make her happy, but the married women in *The House on Mango Street* are not happy. They are kept “on a silver string,” isolated from the rest of the community like Sally and like Rafaela, who is locked up at home, “because her husband is afraid Rafaela will run away since she is too beautiful to look at.”²⁶⁷ Rafaela spends the time by looking out of the window, just like *Mamacita*, another woman who is imprisoned in the domestic space by marriage, and who is isolated from the neighborhood by her inability to speak English.

While the writers of the Chicano Movement considered *machismo* to be the vital force of the Mexican-American family, in *The House on Mango Street* male dominance makes a family dysfunctional and unhappy, and eventually destroys it. This is the example of Rosa Vargas, whose husband left her alone with their many children, without even an explanation, just like the husbands of Izaura and Minerva. These women cannot change their subordinated position, because men have controlled them since their childhood, and they are taught to accept the role that the community ascribes them.

5.2.2 Education and Art as an Escape from Male Oppression

Most of the women in *The House on Mango Street* let themselves be trapped in the traditional gender role. Yet, Cisneros introduces in her book also other female characters, who can represent role models for Esperanza. Mrs. Cordero, Esperanza's mother is one of them. In a vignette titled “A Smart Cookie” she stresses the importance of education, knowing that it is the only way out of subordination: “Esperanza, you go to school. Study hard.”²⁶⁸ She instructs her daughter to consider education as a chance to improve her life, while regretting her own missed opportunity: “I could have been somebody.”²⁶⁹ Mrs. Cordero admits to her daughter that she dropped out of school because she was ashamed of her clothes. And now, despite her talent for singing and arts, she is confined to the domestic space. Alicia, another woman in the neighborhood, also

²⁶⁶ Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 27.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 79-80.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 91.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 90.

believes that education is a way out of subordination. Despite her father's remarks about the role of women, she decides to study at university. Alicia does not passively wait for marriage to rescue her; she is rescuing herself from both poverty and dependence on men.²⁷⁰

Cisneros shows that art can also have a liberating power. Minerva, who is a victim of domestic violence, is unable to find the strength to leave her aggressive husband. Because she cannot express herself in real life, she writes poems on little pieces of paper; her poetry is something that her husband cannot control. Esperanza's aunt Lupe, just like Minerva, believes that art can help women escape the patriarchal oppression. "You just remember to keep writing, Esperanza. You must keep writing. It will keep you free [...],"²⁷¹ aunt Lupe says, when Esperanza reads her poetry to her. Seeing both groups of women, those who are trapped in marriage as well as those who can see a way out of the patriarchal trap, inspires Esperanza. She realizes that the only way to escape the traditional role of women that she refuses to fulfill is to leave her community.

5.2.3 A House of My Own

The whole book is closely associated with the idea of domesticity. It describes the role of women in the Mexican-American family, who are expected to be domestic figures. In the traditional Mexican American family home is the only place where a Mexican-American woman can be active. They should take care of the husband and their children and keep the house clean.²⁷² Esperanza observes the women in her neighborhood and realizes that the concept of male dominance is very harmful to the Mexican-American family, and she refuses these traditional gender roles. In the vignette titled "My Name" Esperanza talks about the name that she has inherited after her great-grandmother:

"It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of a horse – which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female – but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong."²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 37-38.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* 61.

²⁷² Marie Loudínová discusses the importance of the domestic space for Mexican-American women in her thesis *Being a Chicana: Chicanas: A Cultural Introduction. History. Major Issues. Literary Production. Visual Art* on pages 27-30 (see Bibliography).

²⁷³ Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 10.

Even as a child Esperanza realizes the injustice of the idea that strong women are considered bad. She accepts the name, but she refuses to inherit her great-grandmother's "place by the window," where she spent the rest of her life after she was forced to get married.²⁷⁴ Esperanza refuses the traditional name that represents the traditional role of women. She says she wants to re-baptize herself as "Zeze the X," a name that is original and not feminine.²⁷⁵ She does not want to be tamed or domesticated and to "lay her neck on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain."²⁷⁶ She starts a war against these norms in her family. She refuses to be tidy and to clean the house as is expected of a girl and she decides to act like a man.²⁷⁷

The house is the central image in the novel. It represents the domestic space where women are confined by social norms. Owning a house represents the American dream that all immigrants strive to achieve. For Esperanza a house is a place that would be her own. Since the first vignette the protagonist explains how important it is to her to live in a beautiful house. The Corderos dream about a typical American middle-class house: "Our house would be white with trees around it, a great big yard and grass growing without a fence."²⁷⁸ The house on Mango Street is different:

"It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb."²⁷⁹

Even though this house is far from the house they have pictured in their dreams, the fact that they were able to buy a home is a great achievement for Esperanza's working-class parents. But she still dreams about a house that she "could point to."²⁸⁰ Her desire to own a nice house leads the girl to Elenita, the local "witch woman," whom she asked to look into her future to tell her if she can see a house. According to Elizabeth Jacobs's analysis, the fact that Esperanza dreams about the mainstream house represents her desire to assimilate into the majority society.²⁸¹ Despite the fact that she is a child, Esperanza

²⁷⁴ Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 11.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 11.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 88.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 89.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 4.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 4.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 5.

²⁸¹ Jacobs, Elizabeth. *Mexican American Literature: The Politics of Identity*. NYC: Routledge. 2006. 111.

already knows about the social and cultural differences in the society. She does not appreciate the house on Mango Street, although it is *their* house, because it is in the socially segregated working-class neighborhood. Mango Street is a different neighborhood than those that Esperanza can see on television, and she does not like it because the fact that she lives there makes her different from the majority.

It seems that Esperanza wants to enter the majority society because she is ashamed of her working-class origin. In “Bums in the Attic” she even admits that: “I am ashamed – all of us staring out the window like the hungry. I am tired of looking at what we can’t have.”²⁸² She feels she does not belong in the rich area of the town, and at the same time she feels her place is not in Mango Street either. “I don’t belong. I don’t ever want to come from here,” she tells her friend Alicia.

Regardless of the shame she feels, *The House on Mango Street* reflects Esperanza’s deep affection for her community. “All brown all around, we are safe” she says in one of her observations about her neighborhood.²⁸³ And even though she dreams about leaving Mango Street and moving into her dream house, she says: “One day I’ll have my own house, but I won’t forget who I am or where I came from.”²⁸⁴ She even makes a promise to invite bums inside her house, because she knows “how it is to be without a house.”²⁸⁵ Although she wants to leave Mango Street, Esperanza knows she will never forget. “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,” an old lady tells her at the end of the book.²⁸⁶ Esperanza promises that she would come back for those she left behind. Cisneros claims: “I am very fierce about people coming from a community having an obligation to the community.”²⁸⁷ Esperanza is aware of this obligation, and her narrative can be considered to be her way back to her community, to the lonely women, to the victims of domestic violence, and to the poor immigrant families.

²⁸² Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries. 1991. 86.

²⁸³ *Ibid.* 28.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 87.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 87.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 105.

²⁸⁷ Day, Frances Ann. *Latina and Latino Voices in Literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2003. 147.

Conclusion

The Mexican minority in the United States is important not only because of its increasing size, but also because of the economical, social and demographical consequences for the United States. Therefore, there is a growing need for research in the area of Mexican-American culture and its impact on the economy, and also Spanish-English bilingualism in relation to education. The Mexican-American literary history is also one of the fields where additional research is especially necessary, because so far scholars have focused mostly on contemporary literary works, and Mexican-American literature of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century is rather neglected and many literary works probably remain undiscovered.

I have examined four literary works primarily from the mimetic and expressive perspective. Although this approach might be considered outdated, the purpose of taking it was to demonstrate the connection between a literary work of art and the time and social conditions in which it was created. Nevertheless, there was no intention to diminish the artistic value of the selected works.

In the course of this thesis I have focused on the importance of family for Mexican Americans, and especially how the family is pictured in the Mexican-American literature. I have found out that there are two conflicting views concerning the Mexican American family, and that these contrasting views, the traditional and the postmodern, are also reflected in the Mexican American literature.

In the first chapter of the thesis I have briefly reviewed the history of the Mexican minority in the United States, and I have also discussed this group from the demographical point of view. The statistics used in this chapter illustrated the disadvantaged position of Mexican Americans, and I have examined the possible connection between the low socio-economic status of the Mexican-American minority and the history of discrimination and negative stereotypes.

To be able to later address the image of the Mexican-American family in literature, the second chapter was dedicated to a detailed analysis of the Mexican-American family and its structure. It was demonstrated that the Mexican-American family is based on the concept of familism, and that there also exist very close ties between the nuclear and extended family. I found out that strictly defined gender roles are typical for the traditional Mexican-American families, and I explained the concepts of

machismo, *hembrismo*, and *Marianismo* that define the gender roles in these families. I have also addressed the fact that the Mexican-American culture and especially their familistic orientation were often blamed for preventing this population from upward mobility. At the end of the chapter I also provided a comparison between the Mexican-American and Anglo-American families to summarize the main differences between them.

The third chapter examined the importance of the Chicano Movement as a turning point between the traditional view of the family and the postmodern view. In my thesis I intended to demonstrate that the depiction of the family in Mexican-American literature changed because of the family ideology of the Chicano Movement. While in the first chapter I have discussed the importance of the movement in terms of political and social issues, in this chapter I have focused on the traditional family as a source of inspiration for the movement. I have analyzed the depiction of family and gender roles in the crucial works of the Chicano Movement activist Rudolfo “Corky” Gonzalez and I have come to a conclusion that the concepts of *machismo*, *hembrismo*, and *Marianismo* were considered to be the defining features of the traditional Chicano family. In this chapter I have also mentioned the change that the Chicano Movement caused in social science literature concerning the Mexican American family.

The change in the depiction of family in the Mexican-American literature is demonstrated in the last two chapters, where I have discussed literary works that were written before, during, and after the Chicano Movement. In the fourth chapter I have focused on literary works by Jovita González and Rudolfo Anaya. Both writers wanted to address complex issues related to the Mexican American minority, and the family is described only in relation to these issues. González wrote her novel *Dew on the Thorn* between 1920s and 1940s to defend the culture of Texas Mexicans against the negative stereotypical view that was common in the United States at that time. She focused especially on the history and culture of Tejanos, but she also related these themes with the family structure and gender roles. González’s perspective represents the traditional view of the family in the first half of the twentieth century, where the family is considered a source of strength, comfort, and happiness. Anaya’s novel *Bless Me, Ultima* is one of the crucial literary works of the Chicano Movement. Anaya focused mainly on the indigenous roots of the Mexican-American minority and their spirituality, because return to the indigenous roots was very important according to the movement. The family

in this novel is again depicted very positively, as a warm harbor that protects its members from the hostile world. This view is clearly influenced by the principles of the Chicano Movement, because it uncritically stresses the male-dominated family and describes the female subordination within the family without questioning it.

In the final chapter I have demonstrated the postmodern view of the Mexican-American family by using *The Rain God* by Arturo Islas and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros that were written in the 1980s, after the era Chicano Movement. While the previously discussed authors focused on Texas history, folklore, and religion, and the image of the ideal family formed the background of their stories, in the literary works of Islas and Cisneros the family appeared in the spotlight. Both writers wanted to point at the problems connected to the concept of male dominance, and blamed the Chicano Movement that by ignoring these issues it perpetuated the inequality. In their works the family is no longer viewed as an ideal and sacred institution, but rather a source of conflict and discomfort due to its oppressiveness and rigidity. Islas addressed the problem of *machismo* especially in relation to homosexuality; Cisneros criticized the subordinated position of women.

The purpose of this thesis was to introduce the Mexican-American family, to explain the change in its depiction in the Mexican-American literature, and to relate this change to the events of the Chicano Movement. This movement tried to improve the position of the Mexican origin population in the United States and it is not my intention to belittle the achievements of the Chicano activists. Nevertheless, the Chicano Movement wanted to address problems between the Mexican minority and Anglo majority, and disregarded the problems within the Mexican American community itself. These internal problems were strongly related to the family. *The Rain God* and *The House on Mango Street* focused on these problems and demonstrated in what way the Chicano Movement failed. According to Cisneros and Islas presenting the Mexican-American family as a source of strength, happiness, and comfort completely denied the existence of gender inequality, homophobia, racism, and intergenerational conflict.

To address these problems within the family was a very daring act, because the family has always been one of the strongest values for Mexican Americans. The fact that Islas and Cisneros acknowledged the existence of problems within the community itself proved that the minority was mature enough to find fault with itself and not only in the majority society. Discussing the imperfections in literature and admitting that the

traditional Mexican-American family is not ideal gives the population of Mexican origin an opportunity to address the very issues that might have caused the disadvantaged position of this minority. Recognizing these problems is a way to fight them and eventually the Mexican-Americans minority may benefit from this discussion.

Summary

Rodina ideální a reálná:

Změna obrazu rodiny ve vybraných dílech mexicko-amerických autorů

Afroameričané tvořili donedávna největší menšinu ve Spojených státech, nicméně počátkem 21. století je předstihli přistěhovalci z Latinské Ameriky, z nichž největší část tvoří lidé původem z Mexika. Velikost a rychlý růst této skupiny má v mnohém vliv na život ve Spojených státech, a je proto důležité věnovat jí náležitou pozornost. Cílem mé diplomové práce je představit mexicko-americkou menšinu a zejména její literaturu se zaměřením na rodinu, která hraje v životě Američanů mexického původu velmi významnou úlohu. Nejprve je tedy třeba tuto menšinu popsat z historického a demografického hlediska a zaměřit se na instituci rodiny. Posléze bude možné prozkoumat, jak je rodina zobrazena ve čtyřech dílech mexicko-americké literatury z různých období, v čem se od sebe její obraz v jednotlivých dílech liší a čím jsou tyto rozdíly způsobeny.

Mexická menšina je skupina velice různorodá. Zahrnuje jak přistěhovalce z Mexika, tak i obyvatelstvo území na sever od řeky Rio Grande: například nynější státy Texas, Nové Mexiko, Arizona, Kalifornie, Colorado a Utah, které před mexicko-americkou válkou náleželo Mexiku. Smlouvou z Guadalupe-Hidalgo v roce 1848 tato území připadla Spojeným státům, které se zavázaly, že Mexičané, z kterých se tímto aktem ze dne na den stali cizinci ve vlastní zemi, budou mít všechna práva občanů USA a jejich pozemky jim zůstanou zachovány. Američtí osadníci však trpěli rasovými předsudky vůči Mexičanům, a tak jejich práva byla tvrdě pošlapána. O své pozemky byli většinou násilně nebo podvodně připraveni a byli odsunuti do chudinských čtvrtí. Přestože tedy byli občany Spojených států, jejich postavení v americké společnosti nebylo rozhodně rovnoprávné, protože stále byli považováni za Mexičany.

Ve dvacátých letech minulého století proto vznikla Liga spojených latinskoamerických občanů (LULAC), která si vytyčila za cíl ukázat, že Mexičané v USA jsou skutečně americkými občany a že se od většinové společnosti neliší. Tato organizace podporovala přejímání americké kultury, na jejích schůzích se mluvilo výhradně anglicky a jako občerstvení byly podávány hamburgery místo klasických mexických tortil. LULAC také jako první začala používat termín „Mexican American“ neboli „mexický

Američan“. Ačkoliv tato organizace dosáhla drobných úspěchů, vyvrátit předsudky hluboce zakořeněné v americké společnosti se jí nepodařilo.

V šedesátých letech, v době velkých občanských nepokojů ve Spojených státech, se ozvala i skupina, která byla dlouho opomíjena: zemědělstí dělníci v Kalifornii. Jednalo se zejména o přistěhovalce z Mexika a potomky lidí, kteří po mexicko-americké válce přišli o vlastní pozemky. Práce na ovocných plantážích byla vzhledem k jedovatým postřikům, kterým byli dělníci denně vystavováni, velmi nebezpečná, ale také velmi špatně placená. Tito zemědělstí dělníci se tedy spojili v odborové hnutí a požadovali zlepšení pracovních podmínek a zvýšení platů. Stávkou kalifornských dělníků nakonec začaly podporovat další státy a celonárodní bojkot kalifornského hroznového vína nakonec přinutil majitele plantáží, aby podepsali s dělníky výhodnější smlouvy.

Hnutí mexických zemědělských dělníků inspirovalo středoškolské a univerzitní studenty a profesory mexického původu, kteří si uvědomili, že mexická menšina byla vlastně Spojenými státy utlačována a že události mexicko-americké války jsou často vykládány nepravdivě, ve prospěch Spojených států. Zatímco organizace LULAC podporovala amerikanizaci pod hlavičkou „mexický Američan,“ tito lidé hlásali návrat k indiánským kořenům, k bohaté mexické kultuře, a říkali si „Chicanos“, což je jméno, které přímo odkazuje k aztécké civilizaci. Chicanské hnutí bylo velice rozmanité. Zabývalo se sociálními problémy a nedostatečnou politickou reprezentací mexické menšiny v USA, bojovalo o navrácení pozemků na dříve mexickém území původním majitelům, kteří o ně byli nespravedlivě připraveni, a v neposlední řadě se snažilo probudit v mexické menšině pocit sounáležitosti a hrdosti. Národní uvědomění bylo velmi důležité pro zvýšení sebevědomí této skupiny, neboť Američané mexického původu byli vystaveni soustavné diskriminaci ze strany většinové společnosti, a i v médiích byli zobrazováni velmi nepříznivě. Typický Mexičan byl podle hollywoodských filmů líný opilec, který má problémy se zákonem, a takové stereotypní zobrazování podporovalo další diskriminaci.

A diskriminace může být i důvodem špatného postavení této menšiny ve společnosti, které se potvrzují i oficiální statistiky. Sčítání obyvatel se v USA provádí každých deset let, ale získat údaje o mexické menšině ve Spojených státech je stále problematické. Znění otázky týkající se rasy se totiž téměř pokaždé mění a až během posledních třiceti let se dotazník začal ptát na hispánský původ. Ve většině statistik jsou tedy Mexičané spojeni s přistěhovalci z ostatních zemí Latinské Ameriky pod názvem

Hispanci. Statistiky dokazují, že obyvatelstvo původem z latinskoamerických zemí je nejrychleji rostoucí skupinou ve Spojených státech: za posledních deset let se její velikost zdvojnásobila. Ukazují také, že lidé latinskoamerického původu v mnoha ohledech výrazně zaostávají za většinovou společností: vedou si hůře co se týče dosaženého vzdělání, zaměstnání a výše příjmů.

Mexicko-americká menšina je na tom v mnoha statistikách mnohem hůře, než ostatní přistěhovalci z Latinské Ameriky. Američané mexického původu dosahují nižšího vzdělání (velmi vysoké procento nedokončí ani střední školu), vykonávají zejména nekvalifikované práce a jejich příjmy jsou podprůměrné. Tato menšina má také nejvyšší porodnost a v jedné domácnosti žije průměrně více osob, než je tomu u jiných skupin. Tyto poslední údaje ukazují, jak důležitá je pro tuto menšinu rodina.

Mexicko-americká rodina je pro americké sociology fenoménem, neboť podle mnoha z nich je nízká životní úroveň mexické menšiny způsobena nikoliv diskriminací, ale právě tím, že rodina hraje v životě těchto lidí tak důležitou roli a zájem rodiny má přednost před zájmem jednotlivce. Tento jev se nazývá familismus a je velmi běžný pro Mexiko, kam nekritickou úctou k instituci rodiny přivezli španělští dobyvatelé. Právě vlivu familismu je připisováno, že mnoho studentů mexického původu nedokončí střední vzdělání a nastoupí do zaměstnání, aby mohli přispívat do rodinného rozpočtu. Familismus se projevuje také v případě jakýchkoliv problémů, neboť pro tuto menšinu je běžné konzultovat starosti s rodinnými příslušníky, jen velmi zřídka hledají pomoc mimo rodinu. Podle mnoha průzkumů tak rodina hraje v životě mexické menšiny v USA důležitější roli než je tomu u jiných skupin.

Vazby mezi elementární a rozšířenou rodinou jsou u mexicko-americké menšiny velmi pevné. V mnoha případech bydlí všichni v jedné domácnosti, nebo se často navštěvují a organizují společně oslavy rodinných událostí (jako jsou narozeniny, svatby či křtiny) a starším osobám je prokazována velká úcta. Důležitou roli hraje v mexicko-americké rodině také kmotrovství. Kmotra zde pojí vztah nejen s kmotřencem, ale i s jeho rodiči - stává se vlastně „spolurodičem“. V minulosti bylo povinností kmotra zabezpečit svého kmotřence v případě úmrtí jeho rodičů, ale v současné době má kmotrovství pouze význam duchovní a společenský.

Kromě familismu a úzkých vazeb mezi nukleární a rozšířenou rodinou je pro mexicko-americkou menšinu typický tradiční genderový model rodinných rolí, kdy muž je živitel rodiny a žena má na starosti péči o děti a domácnost. Tyto role se řídí třemi

koncepty: „machismem“, „hembrismem“ a „marianismem“. Tyto koncepty popisují nadřazené postavení muže, které je spojeno i se sexuální promiskuitou, a podřazené postavení ženy, která má být čistá a zbožná jako Panna Marie. Děti jsou již od útlého věku vychovávány tak, aby tyto role byly v dospělosti schopné plnit. Muž vyžaduje od své rodiny úctu a navenek ji reprezentuje, ale žena má i přesto doma často velký vliv, což je dáno tím, že tráví s dětmi více času než muž. V literárních dílech, která jsou v této práci popsána, se objevují všechny výše jmenované charakteristiky mexicko-americké rodiny.

Jak již bylo řečeno, americká sociologie odsuzovala mexický typ rodiny jako zaostalý. Podle nich se nehodil do amerického světa, ve kterém je jednou z hlavních hodnot individualismus. Když však chicanské hnutí v šedesátých a sedmdesátých letech hledalo, čím by pozvedlo sebevědomí mexicko-americké menšiny, obrátilo se právě k tradiční rodině jako ke zdroji inspirace. Dvě stěžejní díla tohoto hnutí, epická báseň *I am Joaquín (Já jsem Joaquín)* a manifest *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán (Duchovní plán Aztlánu)*, který vytyčil cíle chicánského hnutí, vyzdvihují patriarchální rodinu jako důležitou tradici, které je třeba se držet. Chicanské hnutí se tímto názorem řídilo. Muži byli považováni za bojovníky proti nespravedlnosti a od žen se očekávala plná, ale pouze pasivní, podpora. *Duchovní plán Aztlánu* také vyzval umělce, aby tvořili díla, která budou oslavovat chicanskou rodinu a kulturu. Kromě beletrie, která je hlavním tématem druhé poloviny této práce, se tématu rodiny věnují i mnohá díla chicanských sociologů, jejich práce tvoří protipól odmítavým studiím jejich amerických kolegů.

Má práce má za úkol popsat, jak byla rodina v mexicko-americké literatuře zobrazována před, během a po období chicánského hnutí. Věnuji se v ní čtyřem literárním dílům: *Dew on the Thorn (Rosa na trnu)* (napsáno pravděpodobně mezi lety 1920-1940, vydáno 1997) autorky Jovity Gonzálezové, *Bless Me, Ultima (Požehnej mi, Ultimo)* Rudolfa Anayi (1973) *The Rain God (Bůh deště)* Artura Islase a *The House on Mango Street (Dům v Mangové ulici)* současné nejúspěšnější mexicko-americké autorky Sandry Cisnerosové (obě díla byla vydána v roce 1984).²⁸⁸

Jovita Gonzálezová se narodila v mexické komunitě v jižním Texasu v roce 1905, a zažila na vlastní kůži ústrky ze strany amerických osadníků na dříve mexické půdě. Její rodina si uvědomovala důležitost vzdělání a Jovitě se přes její mexický původ podařilo získat univerzitní vzdělání. I poté se však vrátila ke své komunitě a svůj život věnovala

²⁸⁸ Ani jedno z těchto děl zatím nebylo přeloženo do češtiny, u názvů knih se jedná o můj překlad.

zaznamenávání folklóru mexické menšiny v jižním Texasu. Tak vznikla i její kniha *Dew on the Thorn*, která je silně autobiografická a velmi pečlivě popisuje život a zvyky texaské mexické komunity. Jovita Gonzálezová zde zobrazila bohatost života a kultury texaských Mexičanů a také popsala dlouhou historii mexických rodin v Texasu, které do této oblasti přišly již s prvními španělskými průzkumnými výpravami. Chtěla tak změnit obraz této menšiny ve společnosti, který, jak již víme, byl velmi nelichotivý a plný předsudků.

Děj knihy se točí kolem milostného příběhu dvou mladých lidí a také kolem změny tradičního života v komunitě, což je způsobeno neustálým přílivem amerických osadníků. Pro tuto diplomovou práci je však důležité zejména zobrazení tradiční mexicko-americké rodiny. Jovita Gonzálezová zcela nekriticky popisuje život v patriarchální komunitě, kde muž je absolutní autoritou. Stejným způsobem je organizována i rodina, kde žena zastává pouze podřízené postavení. Zatímco u mužů je sexuální promiskuita tolerována a dokonce chápána jako důkaz síly (zde se projevuje typický mexický machismus), podobné chování u ženy by zneuctilo rodinné jméno. Rodinnou čest jsou její členové ochotni hájit všemi prostředky, což je jedním z hlavních témat knihy. Gonzálezová ve své knize nijak neprotestuje proti podřízenému postavení žen v texasko-mexické rodině. I když dvě z ženských postav se v některých situacích postaví proti muži, jeho formální autoritu nikdy nezpochybňují. Ač sama žena, Gonzálezová věří, že tradiční patriarchální rodina je nejdůležitější hodnotou pro texaskou mexickou menšinu, jíž ve svém díle vytvořila nesmrtelný pomník.

Rudolfo Anaya se také nechal inspirovat svým dětstvím, které strávil v mexické komunitě, a sice v Novém Mexiku. Jeho román *Bless me, Ultima* byl napsán v době, kdy bylo chicanské hnutí velmi aktivní, a téměř by se dalo říci, že jej Anaya napsal na objednávku, která byla zmíněna v *Duchovním plánu Aztlánu*. Anaya ve své knize opravdu oslavuje mexicko-americkou kulturu a rodinu. Hlavním tématem románu je náboženství. Autor se ve své knize vrací od katolicismu k předkolumbovskému náboženství a popisuje, jak tento vnitřní náboženský konflikt působí na hlavního hrdinu, malého mexicko-amerického chlapce Antonia.

Rodina v této knize podobně jako u Gonzálezové tvoří spíše pozadí, ale přesto je velmi pečlivě vykreslena. Anaya popisuje tradiční patriarchální rodinu s mnoha dětmi: Matka má na starosti domácnost a výchovu dětí, otec rodinu živí a matka s dětmi mu prokazují úctu. Vztahy s prarodiči, strýci a jejich rodinami jsou pro tuto rodinu také velmi

důležité, neboť se k sobě vždy obrazení o pomoc. Antoniova rodina se dostane do několika nebezpečných konfliktů, ale rodina je vždy prezentována jako klidný přístav, který své členy ochrání a postará se o ně. Ve své knize Anaya přináší kritiku katolické víry a amerického systému školství, kde si malý Antonio připadá odcizený kvůli svému mexickému původu. Tento román tedy přesně odpovídá požadavkům radikálního chicánského hnutí, které hlásalo návrat k indiánským kořenům a oslavovalo tradiční patriarchální rodinu.

Literární díla, která vznikla před nebo během chicánského hnutí, byla tedy psána s úmyslem podpořit mexicko-americkou menšinu, vyzdvihnout její kulturu a bránit ji před předsudky ze strany většinové společnosti. O tom svědčí i fakt, že byla psána anglicky - a tedy pro anglicky mluvící obyvatelstvo Spojených států, ne pro španělsky mluvící menšinu. Podle mexicko-amerického spisovatele Tomáše Rivery je chicánská literatura založena na třech obrazech: domov, komunita a boj. V dílech Gonzálezové a Anayi se vyskytují všechny tři obrazy, přičemž domov je popsán jako zdroj síly a štěstí a boj probíhá vždy ve vztahu s vnějším světem. Knihy, Islase a Cisnerosové, které vznikly po období radikálního hnutí také obsahují tyto tři obrazy, ale objevuje se zde důležitá změna. Rodina již netvoří pouze pozadí příběhu, ale přímo v ní se odehrává hlavní děj a boj se z vnějšího světa přesouvá přímo domů, do rodiny. Islas a Cisnerosová tak chtěli vyjádřit svůj nesouhlas s ideologií chicánského hnutí. Podle nich mexicko-americká rodina zdaleka nebyla tak ideální, jak hnutí tvrdilo, a na vině byl podle nich zejména machismus.

Arturo Islas se narodil v Texasu, přímo na hranicích s Mexikem. Přestože pocházel z chudé přistěhovalecké rodiny, podařilo se mu dostat na prestižní Stanfordovu univerzitu v Kalifornii, kde vystudoval literaturu a posléze tam i vyučoval. Islas celý život bojoval nejen s chatrným zdravím, ale i se svou homosexuální orientací. Z těchto důvodů byl vlastně naprostým opakem toho, jak si nejen chicánské hnutí, ale i jeho vlastní rodina představovala muže. Ve své knize Islas popsal ze své vlastní zkušenosti, jak ideál rodiny, prosazovaný chicánským hnutím, způsobuje jen lži a přetvářku.

Rain God se skládá ze šesti příběhů, z nichž každý se zaměřuje na jinou část rozvětvené rodiny Angelů a na problémy, které vznikají neustálým usilováním o zachování obrazu ideální rodiny. O tom, co by tento obraz mohlo jakýmkoliv způsobem narušit, se v této rodině nikdy nemluví, a tento pokrytecký přístup pak ničí vztahy mezi příbuznými. Babička Mama Chona, která nad rodinou Angelů drží ochrannou ruku, učí

svá vnoučata, že v rodině jsou vždy v bezpečí a nikdy se jim tam nic zlého nestane. Opak je však pravdou. Prosazování machismu naruší vztah mezi otcem a synem. Manželova nevěra zničí pouto mezi nejlepšími přítelkyněmi. Vražda strýce je ututlána, aby nevyšla najevo jeho homosexuální orientace. Bratranec spáchá sebevraždu, protože nevydrží matčinu tvrdou výchovu. Tetino nemanželské dítě je dáno k adopci, aby nevznikl skandál. Islas v těchto příbězích ukazuje, že familismus a machismus nejsou nutné ingredience k vytvoření ideální rodiny, jak ji ve svých dílech představili Gonzálezová a Anaya, ale že rodinu mohou naopak zničit.

Sandra Cisnerosová pochází z chudé mexicko-americké rodiny a vyrůstala v hispánské čtvrti v Chicagu. Stejně jako výše zmínění autoři čerpala při psaní *The House on Mango Street* ze svých vlastních zkušeností z dětství. Zatímco Islas se zaměřil na jednu rodinu a popsal mnohé z jejích problémů, Cisnerosová zobrazuje jeden problém z mnoha úhlů: postavení žen v mexické komunitě. Autorka očima malé Esperanzy popisuje, jak jsou ženy a dívky v jejím okolí vystaveny útlaku patriarchální společnosti, jsou obětí domácího násilí a přesto se bezhlavě vrhají do manželství, v němž naivně vidí jedinou možnost, jak zlepšit své společenské postavení.

Esperanza vypráví smutné příběhy žen ze sousedství a stále zřetelněji si uvědomuje, že pro sebe chce jiný život. Díky některým kamarádkám a příbuzným zjišťuje, že psaní básní a vzdělání jí může pomoci uniknout jak podřadnému postavení, které ženy v mexické komunitě mají, tak z chudinské čtvrti, kterou Esperanza odmítá přijmout za svůj domov. Vysnila si pro sebe krásný bílý dům v hezké části města, kde bude jen ona sama svou paní a věří, že se jí podaří vymanit z chudoby i z mužského područí. Přesto však cítí povinnost k ostatním ženám a slibuje, že jim pomůže.

Zatímco první dvě knihy popisovaly mexicko-americkou rodinu jako klidný přístav, který poskytuje ochranu před nebezpečným světem, druhé dvě knihy tvrdí, že tato rodina idylická vůbec není, neboť ochranu poskytuje pouze členům, kteří souhlasí s genderovým rozdělením rolí. Vzhledem k historickým událostem, které se váží ke vzniku těchto knih, je zcela zřejmé, proč se první dvě díla od těch druhých liší. Gonzálezová a Anaya bránili svou kulturu před ústrky ze strany většinové společnosti, a proto ji vykreslili velmi kladně. Islas a Cisnerosová naopak mírnili nadšení způsobené chicánským radikálním hnutím a poukazovali na problémy přímo uvnitř mexické komunity. Oba autoři shodně tvrdí, že patriarchální společnost a machismus je přežitek, který ničí mexicko-americkou rodinu a tím i celou komunitu.

Účelem mé práce bylo porovnat zobrazení rodiny v dílech mexicko-americké literatury. Byly představeny knihy mužských i ženských autorů z různých období a ukázalo se, že ve starších dílech je rodina zobrazována pozitivně, zatímco v těch novějších je její obraz velmi nelichotivý. Jako hlavní důvod tohoto rozdílu můžeme vidět společenské a ekonomické problémy této menšiny, které byly v této práci popsány, a které mexicko-americkou komunitu v minulosti nutily hledat vinu u většinové společnosti a na svou vlastní kulturu pohlížet přes růžové brýle. Podle novějších děl je však tato menšina již příliš vyspělá na to, aby žila v sebeklamu, a autoři otevřeně poukazují na její nedostatky. Vyjadřují tak souhlas s těmi sociology, kteří viní mexicko-americký familismus a machismus ze špatného postavení této menšiny ve společnosti. Skutečnost samozřejmě není černobílá a diskriminace na tom má nepochybně také svůj podíl. Takováto sebereflexe je však prvním krokem k nápravě, a mohla by nakonec vést i ke zlepšení postavení této komunity v americké společnosti.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Population Growth from 1990 to 2000 (in millions)²⁸⁹

Description	1990	2000	Increase (%)
U.S.	249	261	13
Latino only	22.4	35.3	58

Table 2. States with the Largest Latino Population, 2000²⁹⁰

State	Latino Population
California	10,966,566
Texas	6,669,666
New York	2,867,583
Florida	2,682,715

Table 3. Urban and Rural Distribution of Latinos, 2000²⁹¹

	Total	Percentage
Urban	32,173,942	91
Rural	3,131,876	9

Table 4. Median Age of U.S. Population and Latino Population by Gender, 2000²⁹²

	U.S. Population	Latino Population
Women	36	27
Men	34	26
Total	35	26

²⁸⁹ Marotta, Silvia A., and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 16.

²⁹⁰ Ibid. 18

²⁹¹ Ibid. 19.

²⁹² Median age is the age at which half of the population is younger and half is older. Ibid. 20

Table 5. Distribution of the Latino Population by Age, 2000 ²⁹³

Age Group	(%)
0 to 17	35
18 to 24	44
25 to 64	15
65 and older	6

Table 6. Distribution by Income Category, 2000 ²⁹⁴

Income	Total U.S. Pop. (%)	Latino Pop. (%)
Less than \$10,000	6	10
\$10,000 - \$24,999	17	29
\$25,000 - \$49,999	28	33
\$50,000 or more	49	29

Table 7. Work Experience, 2000 ²⁹⁵

Work	Total U.S. Pop. (%)	Latino Pop. (%)
Work Experience	59	56
Full-time	71	68
Part-time	12	10
None	17	22

Table 8. Dropout Rates among Youth Ages 16 to 24, 2004 ²⁹⁶

Race / Hispanic Origin	Dropout Rates (%)
Non-Hispanic White	7
Non-Hispanic Black	12
Latinos	24

²⁹³ Marotta, Silvia A., and Jorge G. Garcia. "Latinos in the United States in 2000." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25. 2003. 21.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. 23.

²⁹⁵ Ibid. 24.

²⁹⁶ "Dropout Rates." *Child Trends DataBank*. 2004. 8 Feb. 2007.

<http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/pdf/1_PDF.pdf>

Table 9. College Enrollment: 1970s, 80s, 90s, 2000 - 05; Population 18 and 19 (%)²⁹⁷

Race	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-05
Total	35.0	39.4	44.1	46.5
White	36.4	41.4	46.1	56.6
Black	24.6	26.5	31.8	37.5
Latino	23.2	23.8	25.1	29.5

Table 10. Median Age of Latinos by Origin, 2000²⁹⁸

Latinos	Median age
Mexican	24.4
Puerto Rican	27.7
Cuban	40.3
Central American	29.0
South American	33.0
Dominican	29.6
Spaniard	35.8
Other Hispanic	24.8

Table 11. Educational Attainment (%), 2000²⁹⁹

25 years and older	High School Graduate or More	Bachelor's Degree or More
Total U.S. Population	80.4	24.4
Latinos	52.4	20.4
Mexican	45.8	7.5
Puerto Rican	63.3	12.5
Cuban	62.9	21.2
Central American	46.0	9.5
South American	76.1	25.2
Dominican	51.1	10.9
Spaniard	77.0	29.9
Other Hispanic	60.0	11.2

²⁹⁷ "School Enrollment." *U.S. Census Bureau Home Page*. 2007. 8 Feb 2007.

<<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/school/TableA-5b.xls>>

²⁹⁸ Ramirez, Roberto R. *We the People: Hispanic in the United States*. Census 2000 Special Report December Issued. U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C. 2004. 7.2.2007

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-18.pdf>

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

Table 12. Workers: Years of Schooling, 1999 ³⁰⁰

Race/Ethnicity	Male	Female
Mexican American	10.4	11.1
Other Hispanic	11.9	12.3
Black	12.7	13.0
Non-Hispanic White	13.6	13.6
Asian	14.3	14.1

³⁰⁰ Gonzalez, Arturo. *Mexican Americans and the U.S. Economy: Quest for Buenos Días*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 2002. 119.

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