

# Masculinity Reconfigured: Shaking up Gender in Chicano/Latino Literature

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He mocked Yoyo's plagiarized words. "That's insubordinate. It is improper. It is disrespecting of her teachers—" . . . Finally, he shouted at Yoyo, "As your father, I forbid you to make that eh-speech!"—  
Carlos García yelling at his daughter, Yolanda, for a speech she wrote to deliver during Teacher's Day at her Catholic high school.

**M**achismo and masculinity are common leitmotifs in Chicano novels, for example in *Pocho* (1959), by José Antonio Villarreal, and in *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* (1991), by Julia Álvarez. Chicano literature often deals with gender themes like machismo, masculinity, and feminism within the scope of Latino and/or Latin American identities. Other novels like . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *and The Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971), by Tomás Rivera; and *Cuando era puerto riqueña/When I was Puerto Rican* (1994) by Esmeralda Santiago, continue the Chicano tradition that Villarreal's book established. The new genre formed by *Pocho* commences the Chicano Renaissance that opens the path for Chicano voices in literature. Similar to Rivera's text, the *García Girls* focuses on the evolution of the female characters as well as the lives of Chicanos in and outside the United States; as these characters become independent and gain autonomy, others, like the fathers in both novels, lose their masculinity. Recent studies done on the *García Girls* and *Pocho* concentrate on the coming-of-age model, feminism, sexuality and gender roles, for instance, as ideal topics of investigations; yet, they have not fully signaled how these matters and others modernize the families and turn their lives upside down when they immigrate to the United States. Two particular male figures, Juan Rubio in *Pocho* and Carlos García in the *García Girls*, become intertwined and filtered through the process of emasculation at the hands of their wives and children. Although the representation of Latinas and race/identity epitomize the novels, male chauvinism is at the crux of these literary advancements. Therefore, this study will show how the fathers, Juan and Carlos, transform from archetypical macho patriarchs to emasculated men in each of the novels as their families and environments resist traditional masculine norms by way of nationalism, transnationalism, feminism, and modernity.

In a general context, theories like nationalism, transnationalism, feminism, and modernity can be employed in *Pocho* and the *García Girls* to facilitate deciphering the paternal calamities. It is not a coincidence these notions can be derived from the texts.

Upon reading and memorizing the basic plot, the reader can establish an order of events that creates the following theoretic scheme: nationalism dominating in the native land, transnationalism taking over in the new environment—which then gives rise to feminism due to an exposure to modernity. Nationalism is the identity or way of being that pertains to a person's nationality and heritage; it has more influence when that individual lives in the homeland or has just relocated, bringing those customs with him or her to the new country. Furthermore, transnationalism includes the passing of one nationality to another when moving to a new place—including demographics and modernity—and clashes between such problems as gender role and identity. In *Postnationalism in Chicana/o Literature and Culture*, Ellie D. Hernández defines nationalism as a quality that an original, national individual has, especially one residing in an underdeveloped country (10). On the one hand, Carlos and his family move from the Dominican Republic in a time when the country depended on the export of coffee, fruits, and minerals as the chief sources of export. The economy was based on agriculture and the state maintained a feudal system within the society that created gaps between the aristocracy and the lower classes. Also, since the commercial industry was controlled mainly by men, their personalities reflected their professions. Consequently, women were held to their homemaking responsibilities, thus, creating biased and sexist gender roles. On the other hand, when *Pocho* takes place beginning with the end of the Mexican Revolution. Like the Dominican Republic, Mexico was left in turmoil after the revolution and a large segment of the population belonged to the lower class. On account of the political instability, the Mexican economy was still underdeveloped in comparison to the United States.

Meanwhile, Mexico was founded by men, consequently, leaving women to meddle with house chores and children. Because Carlos and Juan are raised in traditional ways of life, it is habitual for them to perform the role of leaders in their families. In addition to nationalism, Hernández specifies that transnationalism is “the transnational frame of analysis that encompasses not just a border zone but also an unmapped terrain and space for a new frontier that extends beyond the traditional geographies, whether geopolitical, cultural, social, or even physical” (2). The term “transnational” may be another word for Mexican American, Dominican American, or Chicano, for example. It is a term often associated with Aztlán, the Southwest region of the United States invoking the indigenous past of the Aztecs. In other words, transnationalism takes place when a national identity comes into contact with a new one. The exodus both families participated in is the ideal example of how transnationalism overtakes the national identity of the women and allows them to overcome the dogmas their cultures set for them. The geopolitical, cultural, social, and physical environments change from Mexico and the Dominican Republic to the United States. As a result, transnationalism benefits everyone but patriarch immigrants like Juan and Carlos by introducing them to a new place they are not able to fully embrace. In the meantime, modernity, as shown later in this essay, impacts the conventional paradigms impregnated in the Mexican and Dominican families. Also, these four theories play an important part in the emasculation of Carlos and Juan. The values and morals the fathers believe in come from their ancestral background influenced heavily by their Spanish heritage that illustrates the principle standards of women and men in medieval Spain. As the Spaniards arrived and conquered America, so would Carlos and

Juan attempt to complete the same mission, this time in a modern civilization. In spite of the success their ancestors had in defeating the Aztecs and Caribs, the fathers in *Pocho* and the *García Girls* would face a tougher challenge that consisted of more than rebuilding their honor.

In the beginning of the stories, Carlos and Juan are powerful men while they live in their homelands. Both fathers provide the basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter for their wives and children. Ironically, these are considered true male characteristics as opposed to the stereotypical machista that is irresponsible when it comes to the care of his family; he drinks, gambles, gets into fights, and has affairs with many women. Alfredo Mirandé's description of a true family man in *Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture*, is the following:

A man who has an honest job, who works hard to provide for his family, and who is responsible and puts the interests of the family above his own is considered a success and a good man and father. One who does not look after his family is not considered successful as a man, regardless of how much money he has or how important his job is. One of the worst or lowest things that a man can do, according to this ethic, is to be selfish and irresponsible or to succumb to such personal vices as drinking, drugs, gambling, or women, and, most of all, to not take care of his family. (145-46)

In the narratives, Juan and Carlos possess a limited number of these qualities. In Mexico, Juan drinks, goes to bars, leaves his family to battle in the Mexican Revolution, and does not have a stable job to provide his wife, Consuelo, and his children a secure home. On the other hand, Carlos is able to embrace the ethical man that Mirandé praises while in the Dominican Republic. On the island, Carlos has a government job that allows him to live in a manor

house with his entire family that also comprises his wife's. With his eminent place in the Dominican government, Carlos is the main source of income for his spouse and kids. Unfortunately, due to Carlos's political activities, the García family must flee the country and the merits he held in his home start to diminish with the innovative changes they encounter in the United States. In comparison, Juan is represented as a ruthless warrior during the Mexican Revolution; he is respected by his family, friends, and enemies. Nonetheless, certain occurrences—like the inevitable future that awaits him once leaving to the neighboring country—reduce the manipulative influence on his family. One physical circumstance that is instinctively useful for both fathers in the Mexican and Dominican Republic is what Ilán Stavans calls "The Latin Phallus." In his study, Stavans also deals with the traditional canons that men and women followed since the medieval era. Thus, Stavans asserts that men and women "simultaneously . . . reproduced the medieval hierarchy of the sexes that prevailed in Europe: man as lord and master, woman as servant and reproductive machine" (147). Since Carlos and Juan need to control their possessions, they used the same hierarchical ideal to subjugate their women and children. However, the fathers suffer from their own insecurity. Due to the pressure of being head of household and the value placed on the male sexual organ, the fathers feel anxiety and must find a way to intimidate and safeguard themselves from an uprising. In some ways, the behavior carried by Carlos and Juan are as explosive as a loose cannon, as if fighting against an incoming enemy. After all, they have many factors that oppose them in the United States and since both men come from a martial kind of background, it is not surprising they react fiercely.

One question stems from this male potency:

why do Hispanic men still need to use the phallus the same way the Spanish conquerors used theirs to colonize their rivals? The answer lies beneath the inferiority complex that is embodied in the courage of the macho: “The size and strength of the penis is the index of masculine value, as well as the passport to glorious erotic adventure. Inevitably, then, it is also a boundless source of anxiety. He is an emblem of the insecure Hispanic male. His machismo could not hide his confusion and lack of self-esteem” (Stavans 152). This quote facilitates understanding the anarchy in Juan’s behavior when his command plummets to the floor of his very own home. The more time Juan spends time out of Mexico, or his headquarters, the more his confidence decreases. It is ambivalent, though, how Juan can take women from other fathers, love them, disgrace them, and then leave them tainted as promiscuous things. In several scenes from *Pocho*, Juan disrespects Consuelo. When the couple argues, Juan attacks Consuelo with verbal rebuttals or physical abuse like he does in this confrontation:

“Enough!” He said. “I have had my fill of your whimpering and your back talk! You are thinking yourself an American woman—well, you are not one and you should now your place. You have shelter, and you have food and clothing for you and the children. Be content! What I do outside the house is not your concern.” (91)

On one occasion, Juan waits for Cirilo, one of his best friends, to leave for Mexico and return with Pilar—the soon-to-be lover of Juan—and makes love to Macedonia, Cirilo’s wife. These are particular ways that Juan deceives his wife. By keeping her oppressed, he keeps a higher level of self-esteem. Alternatively, Carlos does not quite expand his phallus into a realm of domination like Juan does, but it is still viewed as a governing object in the Dominican Republic.

In the beginning of their lives in the United States, Carlos expects for his wife and daughters to regard him with the same admiration as in the Dominican Republic. On the contrary, Carlos finds it nearly impossible to acculturate to his new life. Apparently, his role as father changes when he migrates to the United States because he, like Juan, does not permit his life to become transnational since these changes are included in this development.

After arriving in Santa Clara, California and New York City, respectively, Juan and Carlos must face a different culture with an intricate government, strict rules, and laws that are included their transnational settings. Complications arise as the men refuse to acknowledge the changes in social responsibilities. Some of the problems they experience cause a decline in their authority. Throughout the storylines, the relatives that Juan and Carlos live with take advantage of the circumstances and impact the outcome of their destinies. In effect, the children are particularly responsible for the demise of their fathers. It is essential to note that both of these stories are bildungsromans. In a typical coming-of-age-novel, the protagonist has a sexual awakening and develops a maturity level unique to his/her surroundings. In this case, they are usually young people fighting for their identities and defying religious beliefs instituted in their lives like decrees they must obey. In his book, *Rethinking Chicano/a and Latino/a Popular Culture*, Daniel Enrique Pérez makes the next suggestion:

The bildungsroman has a long and ubiquitous presence in the history of literature worldwide. As narratives that center on the maturation of a young protagonist and his/her relationship to the society in which she/he resides, novels of this genre often include experiences that shape gender and sexual development and, in turn, identity. (65)

Pérez's quote helps reveal how the adolescents' maturation plays a significant part in the emasculation of their fathers. At the end of each story, Juan and Carlos regress into an unorthodox position in society in which they cannot function because of the continuous challenges their children pose. Essentially, they both withdraw to their chauvinistic ways. In *Pocho*, Juan fails to leave his old-fashioned ways behind; he leaves his wife and children for Pilar, a fifteen year old girl who comes to live with her uncles, after Consuelo and his daughters no longer yield to his instructions. The females in Juan's family understand that they are no longer in Mexico and acclimate to Santa Clara more willingly. In contrast, the *García Girls*, along with their mother, eventually overcome their father's subjugation when they grow older and get accustomed to American concepts. As his wife Laura becomes the primary breadwinner, the only dignity Carlos has is his medical stipend given to him with the help of a close friend named Dr. Fanning, which does not pay him enough to provide transportation for the girls. In other words, a nationalist approach favors the fathers since their national ethics sore over the one's held for women, maintaining them a "conquered" entity. Conversely, from a transnationalist perspective, the women have more to gain from the new society they relocate to, than their husbands. The new country seems like a promising refuge for both families, but turns out to be the end of Carlos's and Juan's leadership in the family. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, feminist critic and activist, Gloria Anzaldúa, supports subjugated women and tells them to take a stand against cultural tyranny in the following way:

The culture expects women to show greater acceptance of, the commitment to, the value system than men. The culture and the

church insist that women are subservient to males. If a woman rebels she is a *mujer mala*. If a woman doesn't renounce herself in favor of the male, she is a good woman. For a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or the home as a mother. Today some of us have a fourth choice: entering the world by way of education and career and becoming self-autonomous persons. (39)

Anzaldúa criticizes traditional cultures (like the ones in Mexico and the Dominican Republic) that impose masculine norms to oppress women. At the time the families moved to the United States, there were more opportunities for women to gain freedom. They were able to mobilize more easily in contrary to the routine walks to the grocery store, had more time to get educated rather than dropping out of school and looking for a job to help pay their house rent. Plus, they had the option to go elsewhere than go to church to obey its religious orders. Because of the changes that Laura and Consuelo come across with the passing from one country to another, they intuited the mestiza (feminist) conscience that Anzaldúa praises and placed themselves first in their priorities.

With respect to the transcultural effect that shapes the lives of the women in Álvarez's novel, the *García Girls* are aided by the state of freedom and peace emergent in the 1960s. In her investigation, "Living in a Borderland: Cultural Expectations of Gender in Julia Álvarez' *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*," Karen Cox reminds readers about the implications the 1960s introduces to the girls in the following comment: "Like stereotypical American teenagers, they rebel against parental control, experiment with marijuana, explore their sexuality, and struggle with eating disorders; as grown women, they suffer mental collapses, and marry

and divorce with frequency” (145). During one scene from the *García Girls*, Carlos demands Sofia, one of his daughters, an answer for the letters that she had been hiding in her room. After moments of arguing, Sofia tells her dad that it is none of his business and that he should not go through her mail (28-30). Fifi, as her sisters and friends call Sofia, is the youngest of the four girls and immediately expresses her feelings of indignation towards her father. After the argument, the rest of the girls were shocked at the inability of their dad to discipline the youngest sibling. In fact, Fifi would become the emblematic role model Cox affirms—get married, drop out of college, smoke weed, and elope with her boyfriend. The illicit activities go against the Dominican morals the girls’ parents raised them with, yet, permit them to fend off their father’s command. In addition, Consuelo and her daughters observe and realize that women have rights in the United States and those privileges help them go to school, find a job, and improve their lives. Juan’s children, including Richard Rubio, disagree with the religious beliefs their parents revere. None of them show an interest in going to mass, confess their sins, nor believe in God. The only child that has a voice in the family is Richard and at one point in his youth refuses to visit the priest and confess his sin because of the flirtatious activities that happen between the nuns and the clerics. Hence, Santa Clara and New York offer the families a higher position in society. With the exception of Juan and Carlos, it can be said that Richard, the mothers, and the García Girls, show signs of individual progress in the United States. That is why Anzaldúa reiterates that the new space (the U.S.) across the border is a place where achievements—as when Laura learns to speak English and Richard leaves to the navy for example—can be celebrated. In this new geographical place, both Juan and Car-

los are unable to assume their obligatory roles as family patriarchs whereas their wives and children have taken over those positions. Because of the disconnection from Mexican and Dominican social standards that Juan and Carlos experience in the new society, they are considered to be failed men.

For the most part, *Pocho* takes place in the valley of Santa Clara, California, at the end of the Mexican Revolution until World War II. Although *Pocho* is a fictional narrative, it depicts the lives of immigrant families from Mexico, Japan, Portugal, and Italy as they came to the United States during a time of hostility and discrimination. The story begins with Juan Rubio, who claims the only person he will take orders from is the Mexican general, Pancho Villa. Yet, Juan and Villa have one word in common: macho. When defining the term “macho” in her study *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Ana Castillo maintains that “political scientists specifically interpret this characteristic of exaggerated virility as a defensive response to the racist and classist hierarchy under which most of modern civilization lives” (66). Perhaps one of the reasons Juan joins the revolution is to fight against the social injustice the upper class perpetrated on the lower class. If this were to be true, then why does he treat women unfairly? After killing a man in a bar fight over a cabaret prostitute named Dolores, Juan takes her to a hotel and uses her for his own gain. In the following conversation, Dolores questions why Juan does not ask her name. While in bed, he demands that she take off his boots. When Dolores realizes that Juan does not ask for her name, he yells at her as if not caring (4). During this scene, Juan appears not to care about Dolores because of her indecent profession. Upon inspecting Juan’s attitude, there seems to be a pattern of negligence. For example, the only person he is willing to listen

to is Villa, he does not mind killing a man and sleeping with his significant other, nor does it matter to know her name. What Juan does with this negative conduct is reproduce social hierarchies where authoritative men exert power over others. Castillo refers to this social pyramid and specifies that, “all men who feel displaced racially, culturally, and /or because of economic hardships will turn on those whom they feel they can order and humiliate, usually women, children, and animals—just as they have been ordered and humiliated by those few privileged who are in power” (67). Moreover, Juan is advised by one of his comrades to leave Mexico or risk being imprisoned. In spite of this reality, Juan chooses to stay and wait for Villa to appoint him in another battle against the federal troops. Once hearing the devastating news that General Villa has been ambushed and murdered, Juan decides to settle on the other side of the border fearing raids from the Mexican army. Still, things would not be easier for Juan because it is in Santa Clara where his children challenge and ultimately defeat his authority. Pérez highlights that “Richard’s parents attempt to rear their children with traditional Mexican values. However, the family resides in the Santa Clara Valley, not Mexico, and Richard finds that everything he learns from books, in school, and from other sources stands in opposition to the things he is taught at home” (67). Richard is a young teenage boy of about twelve to fifteen years of age. He spends much time reading books and being outside with his friends who influence him with distinct opinions and morals his parents grew up with. In the end, Juan and Consuelo cannot comprehend Richard or answer many of his questions. Richard frequently tests his father’s authority and challenges his mother’s faith in God. One night after coming home late, Richard’s father awaits him impatiently and calls his son’s atten-

tion in the following scene:

“It is late,” he said. “Where have you been?”

“Walking, Papá.”

“Walking? You know you are not allowed to be out after nine o’clock, do you not?”

“Yes, sir. But I must live my life,” answered Richard.

“Your life! Your life belongs to us, and will belong to us even after you marry, because we gave it to you. You can never forget your responsibility to the family.” (129-130)

Juan expects his son to obey him at all times because he brought him into the world. Nevertheless, Richard’s strikes back declaring that, “listening every day to the girls and their silly talk is as bad as listening to you and your México and to Mamá talk about God! I am sick—sick. Can you not understand?” (130). Surprisingly, Juan does not punish him as he does Consuelo and his daughters. Later in the conversation, Juan realizes that his son is talking back to him, and regards this as a sign of disrespect he learned from his friends. Richard though, tells his dad that there must be something more to life than just living to have a family and feeding it because it is God’s purpose. Likewise, Juan’s daughters quickly familiarize themselves to their environment and surroundings. When learning about their rights as women, the sisters also protest against their father’s dominion. Since Richard is the only male heir, he is able to get away with more because Juan gives him the privileges his sisters don’t have—like the right to speak at home, go out on dates, and marry. Richard though, is an exception in the process of his father’s emasculation. He is not the eldest but is the only hope Juan has for his last name to survive. For the reason that Richard is Juan’s successor, the father tolerates the son’s defiant behavior. In view of the fact that Richard obtains special treatment from Juan, his sisters see this as an opening and do not resist in adding injury to insult. Since they

are all not all fully grown adults, their nationalist perspective is based more American values than Mexican ones (they eventually spend most of their lives in the United States). Moreover, Richard's sisters, whose names are hardly mentioned in the novel, will integrate their freedom with feminist and modern ideologies.

A feminist discourse is prevalent in the *García Girls* which also shapes masculinity in unique ways. The *García Girls* begins in the Dominican Republic towards the late 1980s, shifts to New York, and then back to the island in the 1950s. The father of the girls, Carlos García, is portrayed as a breadwinner in the Dominican Republic. As emphasized, Carlos was a government official with a residence big enough for his in-laws to live in. He was a man worthy of directing his family just like his dictatorial opponent Rafael Trujillo, governed the island with sovereignty. Trujillo oversaw the Dominican Republic for nearly thirty years and created a model of machismo to follow. According to Stavans, "In a continent where tyranny remains an eternal ghost and democracy (the open society, *la sociedad abierta*) an elusive dream, the phallus is an unmerciful dictator, the totemic figure of our longing" (164). In other words, Carlos and Trujillo are driven by the machismo norms they use to impose their supremacy. Eventually, Carlos sets up a coup d'état on Trujillo that backfires, leaving him no choice but to flee. Thanks to a few contacts the Garcías have in New York, the family chooses to move there. When Carlos takes his family, along with his traditional beliefs to New York, his male dominance begins to weaken because he ceases to be the focal point in their lives. Carlos's bravery declines and he collapses into a vulnerable role; when the girls are grown, along with Laura, they take the place Carlos had as leader. The emasculation of Carlos is due to unconventional customs he tried to carry over

from the Dominican Republic, but his very own actions cause his relatives to turn on him. In one incident for instance, "daddy," as his four daughters, Yolanda (Yoyo), Sandi, Carla, and Sofia call him, gives preference to Sofia's youngest child for being the only male heir to carry on his last name. Cox affirms that Charles's "fair Nordic looks' promise to guard the family's European blood against 'a future bad choice by one of its women'" (145). In fact, Sofia's oldest daughter becomes saddened to see her grandfather ignore her presence when he gives Charles all of the attention. The birth of Charles even permits Carlos to slowly restore his rapport with Sofia after she ran away with another lover many years before. Carlos is so delighted by his grandson that he compliments him by saying, "You can be the president, you were born here . . . You can go to the moon, maybe even to Mars by the time you are my age" (27). Actions like this one committed by Carlos offended his daughters and had been happening from the time they lived on the island. When Yoyo was chosen by her English teacher, Sister Mary Joseph, to deliver the address at Teacher's Day for her Catholic school, she and her mother worked several hours to compose a speech. Afterwards, they walked into the master bedroom to show Carlos, and he became furious with the content of the speech and tears Yoyo's speech into many pieces. That same moment, both mother and daughter proclaim Carlos to be a madman (146). Yoyo even refers to him as a "chapita," the tyrannical pseudonym Trujillo generated from his dictatorship. Subsequently, this kind of authoritarianism from Carlos that Laura and the girls underwent triggered insubordination and female belligerence. Laura decides to go along with her daughters and gradually integrates American values into her life; this is how she takes the initiative and decides to learn English, take her daughters to

school, and speak on behalf of the family. Accordingly, the children take advantage of social trends in the liberal sixties, engage in a form of subversion that emasculates their father, and inspire their mother to gain the independence she did not have before.

Remarkably, nationalism, transnationalism, and feminism are not the only theories/topics that deteriorate the powerful fathers' rule. Modernity and the rise of capitalism are protocols implemented in the United States. Mirandé declares "It was, therefore, assumed that modernization and assimilation to American culture would lead to the eventual rejection of traditional values, including machismo and adherence to the traditional conceptions of gender roles" (145). Up to that time, modernity in Mexico and the Dominican Republic had a long way to go and the ongoing battle between socialism and capitalism interfered with its expansion. As a result, the fathers were not able to neo-colonialize the United States as their Spanish descendants overtook the Americas. Mirandé correspondingly alludes to the enlightenment that marked the decline of feudalism (which favored men as landlords and kept women in traditional roles) and the birth of capitalism: "Many forms of masculinity are implicated in the traditions of social theory that have emerged since the Enlightenment. One of the basic tenets of the Enlightenment that has shaped our conception of 'modernity' is the notion that only through reason could we guide and control our lives" (22). The modernization and urbanization that both families were exposed to made them susceptible to changes in their family hierarchy, which in turn reconfigured parental responsibilities. Increased contact with American notions enables the families to uncover modern scruples. In reality, the advances that took place in the United States during the past years—like the industrial

revolution, the women's rights movement, and capitalism—ended the neo-colonial conquest that Carlos and Juan subtly intended to execute, paved the way for women, and gave the young population a chance to obtain an education and a rite of passage to liberty from traditional patriarchal cultures.

Finally, unlike their wives and offspring, Juan and Carlos were not able to adapt to the transnational and urban communities that required exchanging of language, custom, and politics across and beyond national borders (Hernández 15). Both men relinquish their authority unto their female counterparts, changing roles and reconfiguring their masculinity. Although Álvarez's novel develops more feminist qualities than Villarreal's text, the main topics both share are about immigrant families and immigrant stories as they collide with the tides of growing urbanization in the United States. Juan Rubio from *Pocho* and Carlos García from the *García Girls*, are the stereotypical machos from Latin America during a time when women had very few rights and Mexico and the Dominican Republic were forming their identities as developing nations. Upon moving to the United States, the families enter a unique social sphere. The adolescents in each story grow as individuals and become free of the Mexican and Dominican traditional cultures. In "Deconstrucción del estereotipo hispánico," María Inés Lagos convenes that the characters "habitan un espacio cultural híbrido, en el que los valores de la cultura hispánica y la anglo-norteamericana se entrecruzan situadas entre dos tradiciones culturales, dos lenguas, dos códigos de conducta" (196). In summary, the fathers redefine gender roles and resign their autonomy because they become fossilized in their old customs rather than transnationalizing identities. In the end, roles are reversed as Richard, all of the girls, and the

two mothers adjust better to the United States and take over the positions Juan and Carlos held at the top of the social pyramid. The novels' point of departure begins with nationalism, in which through a chain of events, the characters' state of minds are impacted by transnationalism—weather positively or negatively—then feminism, and lastly modernity. The title of this investigation alludes that in the beginning of the stories, the social pyramid stood in the next order: father, spouse and children as properties. Toward the chronological end, the arrangement changed around in this form: mother and children as breadwinners, and father as a dependant relative. Even still, a more feasible way to partake in family matters is by having a balance between patriarchal and matriarchal viewpoints. Perhaps if Juan and Carlos conceded an equalized method of power where everyone appreciated each other's roles and input, their futures would have granted optimistic results.

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