

Mi familia essay sample

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The movie “ Mi Familia” portrays a Mexican/American family dealing with daily struggles of living in a society where their ethnicity is not of the majority. It features themes that penetrate to the heart of the immigrant experience in America as well as class and culture differences. It shows us that family ties are eternally binding and can survive the roughest of winds. The characters in the movie can be somewhat stereotypical of most Mexican families, but the central theme of the movie and the characters represented is the binding force of the movie. The women play a very important role in the film since it is through them that one may see what is faced by Chicana’s in an Anglo-Saxon world. The Chicano’s must face several challenges to survive and continue to break through racial barriers. The Chicana’s in the film range from the stereotypical mother, nun, and caretaker to an independent, fierce, and stubborn woman. They have the personalities that make them dynamic characters in the movie.

The first woman seen in the film is Maria, who is swept off her feet by Jose, a landscaping man. She decides to marry Jose and they have two daughters. This is a stereotype that once women are married they are expected to have the husband’s children and often times are not true. What makes Maria’s character unique is her struggle. The INS carted her off during the infamous operation wetback, which deported anyone resembling Mexican descent to Mexico. At the time she is shipped she is an American, pregnant with a child. She is able to find her way to her aunt’s house and survive the ordeal of giving birth to her son without her husband or his support. Not only was she strong enough to endure being shipped off like cattle for no reason than the color of her skin, she has the determination to return to her home. With the

wages she made working she heads off home with her son. On the way she is faced with the dilemma of losing her son because of her impatience to wait out the waves of the river she must cross.

She is swept away by the current and frantically looks for her child. Being the mother and caretaker that she was bred to be, she throws herself into the river to find her son. With God's grace she is able to recover him and make it the rest of the way home by herself, with no one to guide her or encourage her. Her fierce stride for home and love for her family carries her out of Mexico back to where she "belonged" with her family. Mexican upbringing makes that a fact of life, to belong to her family and give her everything to her family, just as a Mexican woman should. Yet, she is different than the typical Mexican portrayal of women because of her pride and stubbornness to get what she wants. She raises the rest of her children (following, of course, the typical family constituting of six children) and is able to provide so that one may go off to college.

The expected role of Maria who is the matriarch of the family is to be a loving and caring mother to her children. She fulfills this role in the traditional Chicano family, but she also triumphs over adversity when she is illegally deported. Maria has to overcome many obstacles during the movie and I believe she is one of the greatest characters in the movie. She is a role model for almost any Chicana woman and she breaks through a stereotype as a subservient traditional woman. Her role in the movie is essential since she provides the backbone to the family and strikes at the core of the standard Chicana woman.

One of Maria's daughters also provides a dynamic view of the Chicana. Antonia, or Toni, becomes what is expected of the traditional Chicana woman, which is being a devout nun. She is what men idealize for the woman, an innocent, virginal, and untouched woman. She makes her family so proud that she would follow the dream of giving her entire life up to the Lord and reserving nothing for herself. Yet, when she returns to the family to declare that she has left the convent and worse yet, married to an ex-priest, which was enough to almost kill the family. Toni shattered the expectations of the woman being forever pure, with her refusal to remain the Mary/virgin-like, and innocent woman. She astounds her family with her enthusiasm and strife to help those in need and giving no heed to what everyone else might say about her leaving the convent.

Her personality and character makes the movie a unique film in the sense that they are not going along with the standard Mexican/Chicano family roles. Toni is able to break out of the role given to her and follow what she deems best for herself and those around her. Not only was she able to break the role of the virginal woman, but also that of marrying someone of different ethnicity. That in itself is an action that is condemned by the wider Spanish community. Toni provides a unique and different approach to a woman and the roles expected of them. She is able to continue on, despite the fact that she let down her family by giving up the pure woman role and choosing a man as her husband out of her own race. Toni is breaking the traditional role of the Chicana especially because she decided to change her ways on becoming a nun. Women who become religiously devout in the Chicano community are considered to be pure and almost like the Virgin

Mary. I believe she is an accurate depiction of the Chicana's struggle over breaking the traditional role of the daughter. She is also a great role model for the Chicana's of today, she is not afraid to go and marry outside her race and she struggles with her discrimination from her family.

These women in the movie are but a few to elaborate on, each woman plays a distinctive role and breaks out of the mold in which almost all Chicana's are expected to fulfill. They are able to take what life has offered them and use it to their benefit. The movie is a modern version of life today and what life is really like for Chicana women. Through their determination, personality, and stubborn characteristics these women obtain what is credited toward them and offer a glimpse into the reality of life for Chicana's. Judging from their hard experiences in life Chicana's display a passion for life and a strict adherence to the traditional Chicano lifestyle, Chicana's and every woman around the world should learn and take an example from the extraordinary women presented in this film.

In society today we really don't realize what troubles and hardships it takes to provide for the American dream. I believe this movie strikes at the heart of what discrimination really affects in our country today, we cannot allow our heritage to become extinct and we cannot forget who we were and where we came from. Likewise, we cannot fail to recognize who we are today and where we are now. We need to acknowledge the fact that we live in a country which has changed greatly since 1848. Furthermore, we should realize that we do have our own culture and identity because we belong to neither country. We should take pride in who we are Mexican-Americans, or

Chicanos and also refer to ourselves as Mexicans or Mexican-Americans not to convey a national identity but an ethnic one. Being Mexican has nothing to do with where you live or what you speak, being Mexican is being proud of whom you are.