

# American latinos: cubans, mexicans and puerto ricans



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Three of the most dominant Latinos present in the American society today are the Mexican (66.9%), Puerto Ricans (8.6%) and Cubans (3.7%) (Ramirez & Cruz, 2003, 20). Aside from the fact that all three groups speak Spanish, all share common cultural backgrounds that differ from the US mainstream society. For one, the Latinos are very family oriented and keep extended families at home (Driscoll et al, 2001, 255; Andersen & Collins). In most Latino families, grandparents live with one of their married children or married children live with their parents. Sometimes relatives also live with the nuclear family.

Grandmothers played a significant role in the lives of Latino families, they help in raising their grandchildren and act as advisers. Latino parents also want their children to live with them until they get married. Such culture conflicts with the US mainstream society where independence and self-reliance is largely emphasized (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 263-265). Keeping an extended family in the home is not popular in US culture; in fact, children are expected to leave their homes when they reach eighteen. Children who still live with their parents at that age are looked upon as dependent.

Unlike Latino grandparents, older women in mainstream society exercised less power over their married children and more often than not suffer from depression due to an empty nest syndrome. Moreover, the prevalent individualistic culture of mainstream society in the US do not allow for too much dependence with other people even with their own family. The Americans worked hard in their entire life to support their old age. Unlike the

old Latinos that were taken cared of in the home when they are sick, aged Americans are usually cared for in foster homes or hospices.

Americans viewed too much dependence on others as a sign of laziness and irresponsibility (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 265). Latinos hold double standard for men and women. The honor of Latino family rest on the sexual behavior of their women. Women must keep their virginity at all cost until marriage and be differential to men in their sexuality. Although Hipics in the twentieth century may not hold the same strict sexual values, the tradition of maintaining virginity until marriage continues to be a cultural imperative.

However, married women are supposed to accept a double standard for sexual behavior by which their husbands may have sexual affairs with other women. This double standard supports the Latino stereotype of machismo. Many males celebrated their adolescence by visiting prostitutes and their father, uncles or older brothers pays for sexual initiation. Adolescent females on the other hand hold debuts that emphasize their virginity (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 264-266).

Unlike in US mainstream society, there is an equal standard on male and female sexual behavior, males and females are expected to give up their virginity at a young age around 15 or 16. Their peers ridiculed them if they are still virgins at 18. This difference in sexual behavior had caused tensions especially among American adolescents and female Latinas who were taught to keep their virginity at all cost. At present however, due to American cultural influence, younger Latinas now find themselves challenging traditional sexual mores (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 256).

In Latin society, female concept of goodness is connected by their being a martyr or submissive to their husbands and to their family. Male superiority had its roots also in machismo. Adult males, however, gave a higher respect and reverence for their mothers. Moreover, in Latino families, women are traditionally regarded as homemakers, as much as possible they stay in the home to care for the family while the men provide for them. American cultural influence however changed the Latino culture especially as the Latinos become exposed to the independent and liberated behaviors of the Americans (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 265-266).

II. Mexicans and Mexican Americans Due to American conquest of Mexico and the granting of US citizenship in 1848 through the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans became a part American society. In the years 1880's and 1940's, many of them migrated to America as laborers. Due to the proximity of America to Mexico, many entered the country as illegal immigrants (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 249). Like most Latino cultures, Mexican families are patriarchal in nature. Patriarchal families are important instruments of community life and nuclear family units are linked together through an elaborate system of kinship and god parenting.

Women are regarded as subordinates to men and are expected to take care of the family while the men work to provide for them. Machismo is also a part of their culture, with men celebrating manhood through the conquest of many women and acting as superior. Mexican families also recognize extended family network, particularly the system of compadrazo or godparenting. In Mexican society, godparents are an important factor that links family and community. Compadrazos are expected to act as guardians,

provide financial assistance in times of need and to substitute in case of death.

Because of their devotion to catholic faith and machismo, Chicanos do not approve of homosexuality (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 254; Driscoll et al, 2001, 256) In spite of the influence of American culture, racism, segregation and proximity to Mexico help the Chicanos (Mexican-American) to maintain some traditional family practices although the imposition of American law and custom ignored and ultimately undermined some aspects of the extended family. Wives are now exercising power over their husbands as they entered the workforce.

Unfortunately, even though both work, most men do not help in household chores so that chicanas are prone to stress. . New generation Chicanos, on the other hand, demands independence like their US counterparts and most likely engaged in intercourse at a lower age (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 230; Spence, 2003). Since many of the Mexicans entered illegally in the US, many of them were not able to move freely in American mainstream society causing so much stress on their part. Like the rest of the Latinos, Chicanos are at risk for developing asthma, diabetes, and AIDS (Center for Disease Control, 2008).

Illegal immigrants however, refuse to see a doctor when they got sick as they are afraid to be deported (Figueroa & Griffin, 2006, 2). II. Puerto Ricans  
Puerto Ricans are the poorest group of all the Latinos and generally are the most dark-skinned. Puerto Ricans first entered the country in 1898 when the United States take possession of Puerto Rico during the Spanish- American

War (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 229). The family is patriarchal in nature, with men acting as providers and protectors and women as homemakers.

Men do not take part actively in domestic chores and caring for their children although they are expected to be affectionate to them. Machismo is also a part of thier culture, subordinating women to men and men perceived as having a higher sexual drive. Men enjoy more freedom in public than women do and it is expected that they have many female conquest. Male dominance is met with a woman's submissiveness and in the belief that a woman's virtue is further enhanced by being patient and forbearing toward their men although generally women mistrust their men.

Puerto Rican women however, in spite of the demands of being patient and forbearing, do not see themselves as resigned females but as dynamic homemakers. Although conscious of their subordinate status to their husbands, wives are also aware of their power and the demands they can make. They can choose to live with the man or leave him when he turns out to be abusive. Furthermore, Puerto Rican women regarded motherhood as a woman's greatest satisfaction in life based on their concept of marianismo. Virgin Mary is seen as a woman's role model (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 255-260).

Ideal family relations are based on two interrelated themes, family unity and family interdependence. Family unity refers to the desirability of close and intimate kin ties, with members getting along well and keeping in frequent contact despite dispersal and getting together during holidays or celebrations. Family unity is viewed as contributing to the strengthening of family interdependence. They believe that the greater the unity in the <https://assignbuster.com/american-latynos-cubans-mexicans-and-puerto-ricans/>

family, the greater the emphasis family members will place on interdependence and familial obligation.

Despite the adaptation to American life, Puerto Rican families are still defined by reciprocity among family members, especially those in the immediate family kinship group. Individuals in Puerto Rican families will expect and ask for assistance from certain people in their social networks without any derogatory implications of self-esteem. The older women expect to be taken care of during old age by their adult children (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 255-260). Although emotional and physical closeness among women is encouraged by the culture, over acknowledgment of lesbianism is even more restricted than in mainstream American society.

In fact, rejection of homosexuals appears to be the dominant attitude in the Puerto Rican community forcing homosexuals to lead a double life although the American concept of equality and individual rights threatens this belief (Andersen & Collins, 1995, 260). Concerning their health, Puerto Ricans have higher risk for AIDS since they least likely get married. They also have the highest rate of developing diabetes among the Latinos (Center for Disease Control, 2008). In recent times, the culture of male dominance is being challenged in Puerto Rican families especially that women also now work.

Daughters however are expected to care for the home while their brothers work. New generation Puerto Ricans also engages in sex at an earlier age as compared to their island counterparts. Children also demands more independence from parental control (Shaefer, 2006, 239; Andersen & Collins, 1995, 255). IV. Cubans The Cubans first entered America as political refugees during the Cuban revolution in 1959. They are the most successful

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of all the Latinos since most of them are professionals and the US government assisted them (Schaefer, 2006, 247; Andersen & Collins, 1995, 229).

The Cuban family is also patriarchal in nature and the concept of machismo is very much entrenched in their nature perhaps largely because they had been the last Latin nation to be liberated from Spanish control and their lives had been dominated by military struggles. The ingrained machismo concept had caused much regression and assimilation conflict in Cuban males in America. Cubans in America are permitted to have sexual relations with American women as long as they do not forget to marry a Cuban girl.

Men do not do household chores because it decreases their machismo. Women are regarded as subordinates although women are now asserting more authority in the Cuban American home as they entered the workforce. However, women still respect male superiority and ask for their approval when joining clubs or engaging in social activities. The importance of extended families also diminished; god parenting-role is lessened. Cuban Americans do not accept homosexuality and were repulsed by the fact that some men chose to discard their male power to act as women.

However, unlike the Americans who regarded both persons of the same sex who engages in intercourse as homosexuals, the Cubans only regarded homosexual the person who assumes the position of a woman in intercourse (Schaefer, 2006, 250; Andersen & Collins, 1995, 229). Many Cubans however publicly proclaimed that they would like to return to Cuba someday when Castro's government is overturned and so they desired not to be all too adaptive to American culture (Schaefer, 2006, 250). V. Conclusion

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The Latino culture of family dependence through extended families, male superiority, women chastity and homosexual repugnance is being challenged in the American mainstream society. As they live in America, Latino family structure suffer changes in gender roles wherein women now asserts some form of authority, independence and sexual freedom. Parents and extended families also exert lesser power over the new generation. With regard to health issues, the Mexican illegal immigrants are at a disadvantage in accessing health care while the Puerto Ricans are at a higher risk for contracting AIDS and diabetes.

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