Georgia State University
Digital Archive @ GSU

Sociology Theses | Department of Sociology

7-17-2008

Atlanta's Quinceañeras

Daniela Ruz Hernandez
druz@gsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/sociology_theses

Recommended Citation
Ruz Hernandez, Daniela, "Atlanta's Quinceañeras" (2008). *Sociology Theses.* Paper 21.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Sociology at Digital Archive @ GSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Archive @ GSU. For more information, please contact digitalarchive@gsu.edu.

ATLANTA'S QUINCEAÑERAS

by

DANIELA RUZ HERNANDEZ

Under the Direction of Elisabeth Burgess

ABSTRACT

Young women in Mexico and parts of Central America celebrate their fifteenth birthdays by following a complex rite of initiation, called Quinceañeras, a special ritual developed as a mixed heritage of the native people and their contact with European conquerors. The emerging Latino population in Atlanta celebrates this rite, facing the reality of being a minority racial group, although they maintain the same essence and goal than the celebration than in their country. This research explores this growing population group in Atlanta, in a special and significant cultural occasion, using an ethnographic approach methodology through participant observation and personal journals of the Quinceañeras as way to describe the meaning, implications and issues of this celebration for these girls and their families under a Social Constructionist Model of Ethnicity and Life Course Sociology theoretical framework.

INDEX WORDS: Family, Latino, Immigration, Atlanta, Identity, Ethnic Rites, Rites of Passage, Teenagers

ATLANTA'S QUINCEAÑERAS

by

DANIELA RUZ HERNANDEZ

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2008

Copyright by
Daniela Jeanette Ruz Hernandez
2008

ATLANTA'S QUINCEAÑERAS

by

DANIELA RUZ HERNANDEZ

Committee Chair: **Elisabeth Burgess**

Committee: **Denise Donnelly**

Gabriel Kuperminc

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2008

DEDICATION

Para Sergio

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank many people who helped me make this thesis possible:

My thesis chair, Dr. Elisabeth Burguess, for all her patience and guidance. Dr. Denise Donnelly and Dr. Gabriel Kuperminc for accepting being part of my committee and for all their enthusiasm and comments. Dr. Dawn Baunach and Dr. Christopher White for their support and suggestions.

My dear classmates Cory Albertson, Mikel Walters, Barbara Combs, Laura Overstreet, Baozhen Luo and Alexis Bender for their incredible support, guidance and constant help with my ESL.

The community of the Cathedral of Christ the King of Atlanta, and all the families who opened the doors of their homes to me.

My parents Dr. Omar Ruz and Dr. Jeanette Hernández, and my godfather Dr. Carlos Álvarez-Tostado for all their help, inspiration, support and love, all of which were necessary to finish this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION		**iv**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		**v**
LIST OF FIGURES		**ix**
CHAPTER		
1	**INTRODUCTION**	**1**
2	**LITERATURE REVIEW**	**4**
	Hispanic Family and Community	**6**
	Mixed Culture	**8**
	Initiation Rites	**9**
	Quinceañeras	**10**
	Theoretical Framework	**14**
	The Social Constructionist Model of Ethnicity	**15**
	Life Course Sociology	**16**
3	**RESEARCH METHODS**	**18**
	Research Questions	**19**
	Sample Selection	**20**
	Data Collection	**21**
	Risks and Data Protection	**23**
	Design Strengths and Limitations	**25**

Data Analysis **26**

Personal Disclaimer **30**

4 LA FAMILIA- THE FAMILY **33**

Defining a Family **34**

Las Familias (Families Structures) **35**

Choosing Padrinos **37**

Just Amigos **43**

Family Business **45**

5 LOS PADRES- PARENTS **48**

Great Expectations **49**

¿Novio? ¡No! **51**

Quince Años **55**

6 LAS QUINCEAÑERAS **59**

Identity **59**

The Journals **63**

7 CONCLUSIONS **67**

Identity **70**

REFERENCES **74**

APPENDIX A **79**

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Core Variables **28**

Figure 2: Family Cohesion Variable Links **29**

Figure 3: Ethnic Identity Variable Links **30**

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Young women in Mexico and parts of Central America celebrate their fifteenth birthdays by following an ancient tradition, called Quinceañeras, a special ritual developed as a mixed heritage of the native people and their contact with European conquerors. The Quinceañeras (adjective for quince años or Fifteen years) is the center of a complex rite of initiation. On that day, the fifteen-year old girl's family shows to the community that they have raised a beautiful, spiritual, and charming daughter who has now officially become a woman.

The Quinceañera tradition includes a beautiful gown, a court of friends, godparents, and a big party with hundreds of guests. Before the party, everybody goes to church where the Christian rite allows the Quinceañera to demonstrate her thankfulness to God and the Virgin of Guadalupe (if the family is Catholic) for her life, her youth, and all her gifts, and where she promises to continue in the way of the faith. The next time that she stands at the altar will be on her wedding day.

Following this tradition, which originated with the Aztecs and changed with European contact, these families celebrate their mixed heritage. Their ritual, part native and part Spanish, part pagan and part Christian, represents a mixture of traditions passed down from generation to generation.

Traditions travel with immigrants who are eager to keep them alive, and the United States is no exception to this rule. For example, some American stores such as David’s Bridal, sell Quinceañeras gowns. The emerging Latino population in Atlanta celebrates this rite, with some differences from their ways of celebrating it in their native countries, although with the same

essence and goal. In contrast to Mexican girls, Atlanta's Quinceañeras live in an American culture in which this rite is not well understood. Latino girls may have difficulty sharing this special tradition with their American peers. Adolescence can be a very difficult time for young girls and any mark of difference can be awkward or stigmatizing. Because American classmates may be ignorant about the traditions of others, Latino girls may have a difficult time reconciling treasured cultural and family traditions with their new life and friends.

This research uses an ethnographic methodology to describe and explore how Quinceañeras are celebrated in Georgia, and more specifically the meaning of this ethnic celebration for these bicultural girls, and their parents, as well as the realities of the multicultural family that this special occasion reveals / brings to light. Studies on Quinceañeras in America are almost non-existent, and I aim to fill the gap. In this study, I describe specific characteristics and issues pertaining to a segment of the largest minority group in the United States

This research is important to Hispanic studies because it investigates the reality of being an adolescent between two cultures, and describes the family dynamics after immigration. These elements are especially interesting in Atlanta's population, because the Latino community is relatively new and is already a source of tensions in a quickly developing immigrant population.

The characteristics we see in the Latino population in Atlanta are unique, and studies of this population at this stage, such as this research, may help to prevent larger cultural problems in the future. It is estimated that on average, 100 legal immigrants and 60 undocumented aliens arrive in the state of Georgia every day (Asociación Latinoamericana 2005). In addition, the rapid growth of Spanish-language media evidences the growth of the population: Georgia has already one daily newspaper, 20 weekly papers, one radio station and one TV station in Spanish, and the circulation of these media has grown from 100,000 to 500,000 units in the last 10 years

(Asociación Latinoamericana 2005). Thus, research on the Latino population, especially Chicano (Mexican-American) and immigrants from Central America, seems vital for the future of Georgia.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main goal of this research is to explore the meaning of this important ethnic tradition, Quinceañeras, within multicultural Latino families. In order to understand the complexity of this research, it is important to review topics like integration of immigrant families, rites of transition to adulthood and the particularities of the Hispanic (Mexican and Central American) family groups and community will be present in the general framework.

Hispanics, Hispanos or Latinos: the new Atlantans

The United States Census Bureau defines Hispanics as persons who indicate their ethnic or national origin to be Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or of other Hispanic origin, like from Spain. This definition is made independently of racial classification. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 13.3% of the United States population (over 37 million) identified themselves as Hispanic or of a Hispanic origin. This number exceeds the number of non-Hispanic blacks, or African Americans, in the United States, making Hispanics the largest minority in the country (U.S Census Bureau 2001). The three major subgroups within the Hispanic population are Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans (U.S Census Bureau 1999).

The largest subgroup is Mexican-American: there were 25.9 million U.S. residents of Mexican origin in 2004. These residents constituted 9 percent of the nation's total population (U.S Census Bureau 2006). The 2000 Georgia Census showed

a 5.3% of Hispanic/Latino Population in 2001 (U.S Census Bureau 2001), which had increased to 6.8% by 2004.

The exact number of Hispanics living in Georgia is difficult to estimate. Census takers record problems counting this population, characterizing them as largely undocumented and mobile; as a result, many are not taken into account(Rees 2001). There are no figures on the number of Hispanics who are Mexicans in Georgia, but some studies suggest that their proportion may amount to about 80% or 90% of the Latino population in the state (Rees 2001, Dameron and Murphy, 1997).

The presence of the Hispanic population in Metropolitan Atlanta has a very recent history with an explosive growth: from 30,000 in 1982 to over 110,000 in 1992, an increase of 260 percent in 10 years; and a 110 percent growth occurred between 1992 and 1996 (Rees 2001). There are no specific numbers for the last 10 years but other data can help us to estimate the phenomenon: i, in 2005 there were 21 Spanish language newspapers and magazines (as compared to three in 1997). Gwinnett county, the school district with the highest number of Latino students in Metro Atlanta has had a 84% increase in Latino student enrollments from 1995 through 2000 compared to an overall increase in enrollments of only 12% (Jurkovic et al 2004).

The city has changed, too. Nowadays it is not rare to see bilingual signs and advertisement in stores and streets; Buford Highway –"La Burford" for Latinos- is full of shops and Hispanic food restaurants. In April 2006, approximately 60,000 people, most of them Latinos, marched against President Bush's proposed immigration reform (Atlanta Journal Constitution 2006). In other words, the Latino population in Atlanta not only has grown, it is now very visible and active in the community. However, in spite if this increase and

consolidation, the Latino population in Atlanta is still at an early stage of its development. In contrast to comparable communities in California, Texas or Chicago, where Latino culture is recognized and, in part, assimilated as part of the city's identity, Atlanta has yet to recognize or engage its Latino population. For example, original Mexican food is only available in some areas of the city, places where, in general, only Latinos go, like Plaza Fiesta, a segregated social setting.

Hispanic Family and Community

Studies on Latino families in the United States take as their point of departure the notion that these families and communities are very close-knit and that they have to face issues related to their status as poor minorities from foreign cultures. In the Latino immigrant family, the relationship between parents and children can take a dynamic which is quite different from that of a non-immigrant family. Children play an important role within the household, acting as translators or language brokers, caregivers for younger siblings, financial advisors, mediators with authorities and schools, as well as caretakers of the family's general welfare (Valenzuela 1999; Jurkovic, 2004). Parents need the help of their children to perform the normal functions of the household because in many cases, the children are citizens but the parents are not, or the children need to take on household responsibilities because they can speak English while their parents cannot. In the following example, Dalia, a Latina girl living with her family in Atlanta, was suspended from school because she had to help with financial concerns that the rest of her family could not understand:

Dalia, a 10th grader, is responsible for managing the finances for her family and her father's business. Recently, she needed to leave campus during the school day to pay an important bill—

the rent on the family's home. The Vice Principal would not give her permission. She decided to pay the bill anyway and was subsequently suspended from school for three days. (Jurkovic et al, 2004: 81)

This situation burdens the children with greater household responsibilities than other children of the same age. Responsibilities are gendered, with girls taking more specific roles, but age is the primary indicator of responsibilities, especially in the care of younger siblings and/or parents. Girls tend to take more responsibilities as a way to earn more independence, a benefit that is already granted for boys (Valenzuela 1999).

Gendered patterns are stereotypical in the Latino community, according to many US researchers, who often consider that Latino families have a clear and extreme type of patriarchy. However, although patriarchal ideologies and the division of labor endures, research indicates that these characteristics are not uniform throughout the Latin community, especially as more and more women are finding jobs outside of the home (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Other traditional patterns are maintained, like the participation of mothers in family-related tasks and a noticeably lower rate of divorce than in non-Latino families (Domenech Rodríguez et al 1996).

Family is not the only institution in which parents and children interact. The community is an important space for Hispanics, especially when the extended family and social networks are far away. Community is another space for children formation, love and social control, especially in the case of girls. For example, in one study families agreed to participate in a research only after someone from their own community introduced the researchers and persuaded the families that it was important (Domenech Rodríguez et al 2006).

Denner et al. (2001) investigated how that strength of the community can protect adolescents from the negative effects of poverty. Using economic predictors, they identified

eight communities with low or high birthrates for 15-to-17-year-old Latinas. The zip codes with low adolescent birthrates had a higher percentage of residents of Latino descent, stronger social networks, and more ties to their countries of origin. The findings support a model of community building that focuses on strengthening informal social networks and supporting protective cultural norms. In other words, small Hispanic communities take care of all their members, especially regarding issues like teen pregnancy (Denner et al 2001).

Communities with low teen birthrates have characteristics of *colonias* (close Latino communities or neighborhoods, not necessarily very poor communities), which have a Latino majority and close ties to their home country. Residents choose to live or work in these communities to be close to family, to take part and benefit from informal networks of support, and to share the monitoring of children. When community residents share cultural norms, this strengthens family messages about sexual behavior (Denner et al 2001). Closeness to community and family is the social environment of young Latinos, creating a social net which, although not blood related, is as close as an extended family.

Mixed culture

Young Latinos face mixed cultural messages: they are exposed to a dual culture life, where they are exposed to Latino and American values and customs (Jurkovic et al 2004). In *"My name is not Maria,"* Williams et al (2002) address the confusion affecting the adjustment process of a group of Latina teenagers who have recently immigrated to the U.S. and are now attending a mid-western high school. In this study, Latinas invoke ethnic identity to resist an American gender order. The Latinas, as immigrants, are easily distinguishable from the general students (most obvious when compared to white girls), other Chicanos (who understand and

adopt American dress easily), and even immigrant boys (who are more likely to wear American sports apparel) (Williams et al 2002). Latinas in this study challenge the American gender pattern. These girls invoke ethnicity to challenge American appearance norms with a focus on name-brand clothes and some hairstyles and accessories. For example, the authors described the attraction that boys have for brand named sport clothes and tennis shoes, things that are not attractive for girls. They also maintain a strong ethnic identity to maintain self pride and family loyalty.

Even when they can maintain some ethnic characteristics in their identity, children are likely to acculturate quicker to the new culture than their parents (Szapocznik and Kurtines 1993), generating different approaches to the family dynamic. While parents try to maintain a strong link with the family and their culture, children look for their independence and the chance to develop their American identity. For example, it is common that in many Hispanic families with young children, the parents will speak Spanish, while the younger siblings will speak English, both to other children and to their parents (Szapocznik and Kurtines 1993).

Differences in levels of acculturation can lead to intergenerational problems within the family. In contrast to newer immigrants, more acculturated Mexican-American junior high school students show less respect of parental control, worst behavior and greater family conflict, facts that can lead to higher rates of crime in this group (Samariego and González 1997, cited by Jurkovic et al 2004).

Initiation rites

Initiation rites, or “rites de passage” in Van Gennep’s terminology (1960), are festivities that accompany any change in a society, especially those that might involve place, status or age

(Turner 1995). Turner separates rites in three components or stages: separation, margin and re-aggregation. First, the subject is separated from his or her original identity. In the case of Quinceañeras, the young girl's external preparation symbolizes her change from child to woman. For example, she wears make up and high heels for first time, woman's attributes, indicating that she is leaving her adolescence behind and cannot return. The margin is in the stage where/when the ritual happens, in the process of change (Turner 1995). In the case of Quinceañeras, the girl's marginal state takes place in her presentation to her community with a new image, including the rituals of the mass and the rites in the reception. Her re-aggregation takes place when she is reunited with the community, now as a young woman.

Turner (1995) explains that in the margin stage the subject –in this case the Quinceañera- and the community or communitas interact. The communitas members share social meanings and join together to apply them. The Quinceañera not only is repeating a tradition, she is interpreting the social values that her community gave her and with this act, she is at the same time reinforcing and adding meaning to the group.

Quinceañeras

Quinceañeras literature in the United States is spare. There is some research about the topic in Mexican communities in California and Chicago, where the festivity is not only common – three or four every weekend in Chicago (Davalos 1996)- but is very consolidated, a well-known social event. This is different from younger Latino communities, where the tradition is newer to the general social setting and thus may be more difficult to prepare for.

The origin of Quinceañera is confusing. There is not a single, accepted way to celebrate the ritual, and the tradition has changed been subjected to to numerous changes over the years

(Davalos 1996). One of its sources, at least in terms of meaning and chronology, can be found in the Aztec civilization. In their puberty years, Aztec girls had to decide if they wanted to attend the *Calmacac or religious* school or the *Telpucucali* where they were prepared for marriage (Watters 1998). At that point, they were close to the first stage and had to decide their role in society. The prospect of childbearing was probably the main consideration that ushered in adulthood. After the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, many native traditions mixed with Catholicism, and the rite of passage celebrated the choice between becoming a married woman or a nun (Watters 1998). The current celebration owes much to the short empire of Maximiliano of Hamburg and his wife Charlotte (Davalos 1996), especially in elements like the gown, chambelanes – or special male guests- and the waltz, which correspond to the European tradition.

Quinceañera is not a sacrament for the Roman Catholic Church, and for this reason there is no set "way" to celebrate it. Innovation and local tradition can change the form of the ritual. But, there are some basic stages that are common to all versions of the celebration.

Even though a Catholic mass is at the center of the Quinceañera tradition, nowadays some protestant churches are celebrating this ritual too. The young girl is presented in the church with a core of 14 couples of friends, who must be younger or her same age. In some occasions the Quinceañera is walked to the altar for her "chambelán", a young male friend that is her official company. The selection of the chambelán is a difficult task, and many girls decide to ask to some cousin or close friend of the family as a way to avoid problems with parents[1].

Davalos (1996) describes that some Catholic priests in the Chicago area had problems with the similarities between the Quinceañera mass and weddings. In the Catholic tradition,

[1] I was born and raised in Mexico where I had the opportunity to experience and observed many Quince Años. Many of the references that I used here are result of first hand knowledge about the tradition.

marriage is not only a sacrament, but the symbol of the social and religious approval to have sexual lintercourse . The ambiguous meaning of the Quince Años made some priests feel that it was a ritual allowing the girl to engage in sexual relationships with the young men of the community, a kind of authorization for the girl to have sex. Priests were worried that the ritual would lead to an escalation in teen pregnancies.

These concerns led some churches in Chicago to make changes to the event, like requiring the girls, parents and godparents to take a short class about religious principles and some social issues as a mandatory step for the Quince Años, or limitating chambelan's role in the mass. In that sense, they encourage girls to be walked to the altar by her father or parents, as a way to link the ritual to a family celebration instead of the finding of a sexual partner. This change has also been implemented in Mexico, where many Quinceañeras have decided to allow their parents to walk them down the church aisle. This gesture represents the girl's gratefulness to her parents for her education and for financing the "fiesta" (Dávalos 1996).

One of the social implications of Quinceañeras involves the girl's authorization to wear make-up and high heels and to date boys for the first time. The Church dislikes how this aspect of the ritual makes girls the center of a fancy celebration that, shows them off to the available men in the community as if it were an auction (Dávalos 1996).

The rite in the mass can take many different forms. In general the Quinceañera says a special prayer to thank God for her life, family and gifts and to make a commitment to continue in the faith; at some moment, and with help from her court, she receives some objects endowed with a special meaning. In some cases, she will receive gold earrings, as symbols of God's voice in her ears; a gold medal bearing the image of the Virgin, to have her close to her heart; or a Bible; she might also give away to her friends a doll dressed like her (Watters 1998).

The ceremony always ends with the Quinceañera with her parents or godparents, offering her bouquet to the Virgin. If the girl has Mexican origins, they will offer it to the Virgin of Guadalupe, a dark-skinned version of Mary that appeared to a native man –Saint Juan Diego- in Mexico in 1531 and today is the main divinity symbol in Mexico, even more important than Jesus to some people. This offering of the bouquet is also done by brides in a special moment of the wedding mass, where they pray for their marriage.

Godparents or "padrinos" are a very important social institution in Mexico. The selection of a couple to be padrinos of a child is a way to make a very strong relationship of friendship official. The new link receives the name of "compadrazgo" –"comadre" for women and "compadre" for men- and it has the same value and social prestige as blood ties. Padrinos will be part of the family and will have special powers and duties with their "ahijado" –godchild. They will be the advisors of the child and they are expected to give big presents on birthdays and for Christmas. In an informal way it is expected that in the case of parent's deaths, padrinos will be responsible for the economic future of the ahijado. It must be noted that every sacrament has a couple of padrinos, so for every child parents can add eight new compadres and comadres to the family – a couple for baptism, first communion, confirmation, and Quince Años. Compadrazgo, after family, is the strongest social institution in Mexico and is a good example of the importance of extended social networks in daily life.

The celebration for Quince Años is big and expensive, and typically, most parents cannot afford to pay for all the expenses by themselves. The main couple of padrinos can pay for the gown, the cake or the ballroom. If extra help is still needed, other relatives or friends can help. They are named padrinos of something in particular, like "padrinos de pastel" if they pay for the cake, "padrinos de refrescos" if they pay for the beverages, or "padrinos de fotografía" if they

pay for the photographer, for example. They do not acquire the compadre status; they only help the family to have a nice celebration. This cooperation , which is destined to makethe girl happy is a good example of the importance of the community networks for Hispanic families and the importance of the protection of children. In other words, children are seen as a community obligation.

During the reception, the ritual is based on the waltz. The court must practice complex choreographies for weeks, where the center of attention are the Quinceañera and her chambelán. At some point, she has to dance with her father and padrino, after a rite in which her father changes her adolescent shoes to an elegant pair of high heels. The doll, a symbol of her "last toy" she will ever have, is thrown into the air to the girls present at the party, in the same way as brides are supposed to throw bouquets to their single friends. This gesture means that she will not need a doll anymore, because she is already an adult (Dávalos 1996).

As a celebration based on tradition rather than a particular aim or use, Quinceañera is nevertheless understood by Latina girls as a way to express their ethnicity. Dávalos (1996) found that Mexican girls in Chicago did not have a clear motivation for celebrating a Quince Años, and they did not share a single meaning for the celebration. They did not appreciate the ancient origin of the tradition, and they justified the celebration as "something that a Mexicana has to do."

Theoretical Framework

As my theoretical framework I selected the social constructionist model of ethnicity and life course sociology. These families are facing adjustment to a new society, while the celebration of the Quince Años is part of the links that they keep with their social and ethnic origins. The definition of their new racial/ cultural identity in this foreign social context is an

important feature of this special occasion for parents and daughters, and the social constructionist model of ethnicity offers tools to study it.

Life course sociology allows the exploration of process and time within the family, the implications of the transition from childhood to adulthood experienced by the children, intergenerational relations, and the issue of diversity in the family.

The Social Constructionist Model of Ethnicity

The social constructionist model of ethnicity contends that the two basic building blocks of ethnicity, identity and culture, are constructed through social interactions inside and outside the ethnic community (Nagel 1994). Ethnicity is the product of a dialectical process involving not only the actions of the ethnic group, but also the forces coming from the external mainstream society. Ethnicity is constantly undergoing reconstruction and reinvention instead of simply remaining a fixed meaning of culture (Nagel 1994). The social constructionist view of ethnicity focuses on the shifting, volitional, and situational nature of ethnicity.

In Latina Quinceañeras this dialectical process is in action. In a single event, families have to deal with decisions about ethnicity and tradition and to find ways to express them in a different cultural environment. In addition, ethnicity has a different meaning for parents and daughters, taking the social construction discussion inside the household.

"Racial formation" is defined by Omi and Winant (1994) as the sociohistorical course through which racial categories are produced, altered and discarded. This racial formation consists in two steps: First, a process of "projects" situated in a historical context, in which the physical appearance and social structures have a representation and organization. Second, racial formation is linked to hegemony, and the way society is ruled and organized. Racial formation process occurs through the association between representation and structure.

Latinos have to face a new racial formation in the United States, and for some of them the first one. Latin America is predominantly composed of people who are products of "mixed blood" between Europeans and natives, creating one race. It is common to make distinctions between skin tones –even as an indicator of class- but not as markers of racial categories. Coming to the United Sates they have to interact with other races and to fit in a category given by the social structures. The main characteristics of this racial category are based in a difference with the other groups which is essentially based on culture, which makes matters even more complex. Officially, the US census considers that Hispanics can be "of any race". Thus for many Latinos, this is the first time that they have a racial identity, which actually includes a variety of denominations from "Caucasian" to "black". The Quinceañera tradition is precisely an opportunity to define their racial identity. In other words, parents may want to continue with the tradition as way to define themselves as a Latino family, and girls may face the event as the occasion to distance themselves from their American social setting and to reinforce their identity as Latinas, generating different feelings.

Life Course Sociology

Life Course Sociology focuses in the important role of time, social context meaning and process on families and individuals' lives (Bensgton and Allen 1993).

Bengston and Allen (1993) explain that time has three basic dimensions in relationship with personal or family development: Ontogenetic time, generational time and events, and historical time and events. In the case of Quinceañera, these three time dimensions are at play. The ontogenetic development of the girls is going through a crucial phase, in the middle of the process between one stage and another, between childhood and adulthood; Generational

dynamics involve two different generations and opposite roles within the family: Parents and daughters; and the Quince Años party itself is part of the historical time that these families are facing.

Other elements listed by Bengston and Allen (1993) are the social structural location, the social construction of meaning, the cultural context, the interaction of age and cohort effects and the diversity within the family.

All these elements are present in the group that will be studied. These families offer a special diversity, not only in age, but also in culture; their situation as immigrants puts them on a fringe of the social structure, and the social construction of meaning is different between parents and daughters, generating different visions about events such as the meaning and the importance of the Quince Años celebration.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses an inductive approach, trying to understand a general situation in an intercultural family through a single and important event in the life course of the family. The ethnographic approach is also used through participant observation. For the analysis of the data Grounded Theory Methodology was used, according to the methods described by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

This research was designed to use qualitative data collection and analysis. Qualitative research begins with statements of directions of inquiry aiming at generating theory, rather than hypothesized statements to be tested.

Literature review shows Hispanics as a close-knit community, where social relationships are strong and children are a general concern. At the same time, these children –born or raised in the United States – have important responsibilities in the household, and that can make parents think that they "deserve" a reward. That reward, in a girl's case can be the Quinceañera party, a celebration which is a luxury for many families, to the point where it is sometimes impossible to afford. The foreign context, the differences with the dominant culture and the differences between parents and daughters can generate changes, conflicts and tensions in this celebration.

This research will look for the meaning of this important celebration for these girls and their families, in the context of the multicultural family and in a city with a recently arrived Latino population.

Research Questions

Research questions address two main themes: the meaning and character of the celebration and its causes and consequences in the family. These questions framed the data collection and analysis.

What is the meaning of the Quince Años for Latina teenagers living in Atlanta?

In the case of the main character of this celebration, the Quinceañera, I will explore the ethnic identity, the meaning of the traditions and their unique view of their intercultural families and the preservation of their origins.

Question 1: How do the Quince Años allow girls to express their ethnicity?

Question 2: How do the girl, her parents and other parties involved (I think) negotiate the planning and preparation of the Quinceañera celebration?

Question 3: How do they share this celebration with their American friends?

What is the meaning of the Quince Años for Latina families living in Atlanta?

Within the families, the research will explore the intergenerational family relations between Hispanic immigrant families, the expectations and meaning of the tradition, and even the economic weight of the celebration in the family budget.

Question 1: What is the meaning of the Quince Años for parents and family?

Question 2: How does the preparation for the Quince Años influence family relations?

Question 3: How does the family manage the cost of Quince Años celebration?

Sample Selection

The sample is composed of five case studies, in an attempt to focus on the depth and not the breadth of the phenomenon. Each case is a Latino immigrant family facing a girl's 15th birthday. The concept of family can be very flexible, and the celebration itself tends to reinforce these variations. In some cases, the family was defined as including parents, siblings, and the girl; in other cases one of the parents was not present and grandparents or other family members will be acting in parental roles. The unit of analysis, the family, was defined by the subjects and their concept of family, and not by the researcher.

Atlanta was selected because it has a very recent Hispanic community, and therefore the necessary social networks are less developed. In other words to be a Quinceañera is still to be an outsider for Atlanta's teens; it is something new in the context of the city, unknown to the mainstream population, and possibly problematic for these girls.

The sample frame was the list of girls in Quinceañeras classes that the Catholic Church teaches in Atlanta. These classes are mandatory for Quinceañeras and their parents. They have to attend for three weekends. A married couple, who also teaches catechism, leads the classes and they work separately with girls and parents.

I met all these families through the assistance of the church. I am an active participant in the Latino Ministry of a large Catholic church in Metro Atlanta. Working as a volunteer there, I met many people who knew or had worked with these families. When I talked with them about my research, they gave me contact information very easily because they know me personally. However, I always made clear that they did not need to take my solicitude (answer my request) as a personal favor.

Almost all the families accepted to participate immediately. Some of them knew me or members of my family through my work in the church. I had met some of them before the observations, but we had never had a close relationship, or even a conversation. However, since the observations I have not severed all of my ties these families, meeting some of them on a regular basis, always in the context of the Church.

The sampling technique was quota sampling. All families participating in the classes -14 in total- were invited to participate in the study through a presentation in the first Quinceañeras classes. After the session I approached nine families directly to discuss their participation; two of them gave different reasons not to participate; seven accepted and gave me their contact information. From the positive answers five cases were be selected, trying to include as much diversity as possible in the sample. The diversity criterion was family composition.

A five case sample was chosen because this research focuses on depth. Extensive and intensive observation was necessary, and every case was studied in detail, trying to answer the how and why present in the research questions.

Data Collection

This exploratory research was conducted in the Metro Atlanta area using an ethnographic approach, based in John Van Maanen's (1998) theory. To put it simply, he argues that ethnography is a researcher writing a story about something he or she saw. Van Maanen argues that ethnographers have not received or developed formal training about their work. They receive methodological tools to face their fieldwork, but their final piece, the tale, is the product of a free, personal style of writing.

Ethnographers see themselves as social scientists who learn from other social scientists. Although that statement is true, according to Van Maanen (1988), they forget that they way they

tell the story is crucial to their work. In that respect, narrative theory is not only important, it is in fact mandatory for them to perform their work correctly. Based on Van Maanen's classification, I chose the form of jointly told tales. In this case the ethnographer allows the local voices to "talk" directly in the text, without intervention, without any interpretation coming from the "foreigner." Van Maanen explains that these tales accept the fact that the natives are able to talk about their culture and thus to provide legitimate and valid voices to explain it.

The study uses a cross-sectional time dimension, because I am interested in a these families at one point in their lives, and not in the future consequence of the Quince Años. In addition, my focus is the social and ethnic situation of a new immigrant population, like Georgia's Hispanics at this point, rather than its development over time. However, this research looks for the transition process taking place in this particular time frame. Preparation, event and immediate consequences in the household have been observed and evaluated in order to explore the complexity of this rite of passage for both individual and community.

The research consisted in a participant observation of the arrangements for the Quince Años celebration. That observation took place in the family's house, in their friends' houses, in church and in stores.

In addition, every girl received a personal journal, in which each of them was asked to describe her feelings and thoughts about her Quince Años. This technique was used by Greenfield et al (2002) in "Understanding Intercultural Relations on Multiethnic High School Sports Teams". These journals were only accessed by the girls and the researcher. After the transcription of the journal's contents, they were returned to the girls to keep and destroy as they saw fit. Journals transcripts and copies have been kept in a locked file cabinet to protect subjects.

Each journal included an instruction page, and the girls were given every opportunity to ask any question they might have had about the journal writing.

Participant observation began in the Quinceañeras preparation classes and ended with a final encounter some days after the celebration, between February and June 2007. The time frame of observation with every family went from three to five weeks, depending on the date of their Quince Años. The observation was limited to instances of preparation of the celebration, like the classes, selection of products or guests and other occasions. The observation of the Quince Años celebration was decided by each family. For more information about this topic, please refer to appendix A.

During the observation only necessary notes about details were taken on the spot. The observation notes would be written down immediately after the end of the observation in a place which was not the participants' houses or environment. This was a way to create the most natural and comfortable environment for family interaction, conditions that were only minimally altered by my presence. The quotes included in the following pages are not transcripts of tape recordings. They were found in my notes and cannot be considered strictly literal although they were transcribed as faithfully as possible.. In addition, they are presented in a translation from Spanish to English, so that they are not strictly speaking the original words used by the subjects. However, the following "quotes" were carefully translated in order to keep their original meaning and intent.

Risks and Data protection

In this study, the participants did not face any more risks than they would have in a normal day of their everyday life. Taking part in this study may not benefit the participants

personally. Overall, the aim is to gain a better understanding of Hispanic communities and of their family issues to try to help them more efficiently.

The records are being kept private to the extent allowed by law. A pseudonym was used on study records. Only the researcher and her direct advisor were able to access the information. It was be stored in a password- and firewall-protected computer. Names and other facts that might point to the participants will not appear when this study is presented or its results published. The participants are not identified personally.

Three kinds of consent forms were used: adults consenting to their participation, minors consenting to their participation and each parent or legal guardian consenting to their children's participation. In addition to the consent form in English, a consent form in Spanish was available in case the participant preferred to read and sign it.

The participants, forming a potentially vulnerable group if undocumented, were clearly informed that the participation in this research would not put them at risk of being identified by immigration authorities and would not have any influence on their legal status in the country.

Conversations with the girls as well as their journals have been kept private, shared only between the researcher and the girls themselves. At the beginning of the study, parents were informed that the information given by their daughters could not be shared with them by the researcher.

Research notes used the pseudonym selected for each family and family member. In this way no data can be related to the participants. The girls were asked to use pseudonyms or initials in their journals, which were different from those given for the notes, so as to avoid future identification.

Field notes and all other transcriptions could only be accessed by the researcher alone, and by the chair of the thesis committee, if necessary.

Design strengths and limitations

This design for this research shares the strengths and limitations of most qualitative research. It has limited generalizability because it studies only a small group in a small amount of time in only one city of the United States. It has limited reliability, because the author's interpretation and even presence in the interviews bear on the results. And, in addition, bias exists, because the researcher herself is part of the Hispanic community and is bound to have her own point of views or opinions on the topic.

The strengths of this design are that it allows in-depth phenomena analysis, it analyzes subjective information, and it deals with value-laden questions, all of these being necessary information to answer the research question. The researcher's interpretation plays a very important role in this design, and in this case I have knowledge of the context and community. I can conduct interviews in Spanish and English, which helped me obtain all relevant information. In addition, I am a woman of Latino heritage and this might help the girls identify with me. Finally, I believe that I could easily understand their issues, because I was facing intercultural problems with my family and classmates as well when I was their age.

In sum, the aim of this research is to explore an important population group in Atlanta in a special and significant cultural occasion, using an ethnographic approach methodology through participant observation and personal journals written by the Quinceañeras, in order to describe the importance and implications of this celebration.

Data Analysis

Field notes brought to light situations, the general environment and, in the cases when specific conversations were written down, quotes. The language of the notes can be either English or Spanish, but my conversations with the families were conducted in Spanish, understood naturally as the easiest language of interaction between us.

The girl's journals were collected in the last encounter, some days after their Quince Años.

To analyze the data collected I used grounded theory approach. Grounded Theory Methods (GTM) is a "multivariate nonstatistical (or quasistatistical) set of procedures" (LaRossa 2005: 837) In which theory is derived from data, at the end of a three-stage process described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Open coding is the first phase of GTM. It consists in a detailed classification or coding of the material – notes, interviews, choice of language, etc- to produce provisional concepts, originated by indicators. This concept-indicator model allows the researcher to convert the narrative into different variables, through constant comparison between the indicators. In simpler terms, the researcher encodes and classifies the different verbal indicators under a category or topic (such as "education" or "family"). This stage allows the researcher to describe specifically what is understood in every concept, and the definition given to the concept by the population studied.

Axial coding, considered the second stage of GMT, was then applied to the data. In this phase the researcher situates one variable or category in the center of the analysis, trying to discover its links. Every variable has a context, causes, consequences, conditions, etc, and in this phase the researcher tries to determine all this circumstances around each variable. This phase is the first step in the development of theory after the generation of concepts. In this study, axial

coding resulted in selecting ethnic identity and family cohesion as key variables from which relevant theory could be developed.

Finally, Ground Theory Methodology calls for Selective Coding. In this phase it becomes possible to determine the core category, or the variable with the greatest number of links to the other variables. In other words, this phase allows the researcher to discover what the story is about, and determine all its elements. After determining the core category, the researcher begins to code selectively, that is, to consider only the codes related to the core variable which has been single out as most relevant. In this way, the researcher will construct the findings behind all those relationships. This is where the theory is finally built. The complex relationships reveal causes and consequences of the main significant variable. In this phase the entire research leads up to a theory which is backed up by strong relationships found in the data.

The entire coding process was done by hand, without relying on software programs of any kind. Observation notes were coded first, followed by the girls' journals. Indicators were identified and brought together through color codes. Categories began to emerge when similar indicators became clearly visible in notes taken while observing different families. Thus axial coding made it clear that parents kept referring to grades and to the need for their daughters to go to college as prerequisites for the celebration of Quince Años. "Education" was therefore considered an indicator. This example is quite revealing of the way unexpected categories can be brought to light in the first two stages of open and axial coding. In this case, the 15-year-olds' party is revealed to be part of a complex educational process showing complex dynamics both inside and outside the ethnic community. "Education" emerges as a concept. Fear of pregnancy, importance of family values and hopes for a better life were other categories emerging from the open coding of the notes.

Ultimately, some of these categories became so recurrent, the related data so repetitive, that they were considered theoretically saturated (Strauss and Corbin 1998). "Importance of education for parents" was one of them, as were "parents' fear of pregnancy" and "ethnic identity." Once brought together, connected to each other and compared through selective coding, they helped determine the core category. Both ethnic identity and family cohesion showed the greatest number of links and connection with all other themes. The latter was ultimately chosen as focal variable, as it appeared to offer the most comprehensive and efficient explanation to the various dimensions of the phenomenon. Figure 1 shows the two core variables, Family Cohesion and Ethnic Identity, which also have a relationship between them.

Figure 1.- Core Variables

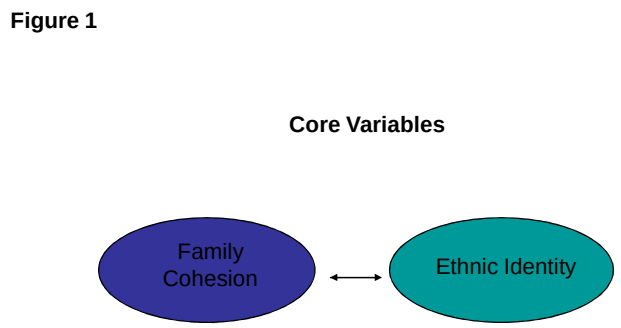


Figure two and three, show the relationship between the rest of the variables and the two core variables. The important analysis here is that, even when some variables are linked to others, all of them have a relationship to the core variables.

Figure 2.- Family Cohesion Variable Links

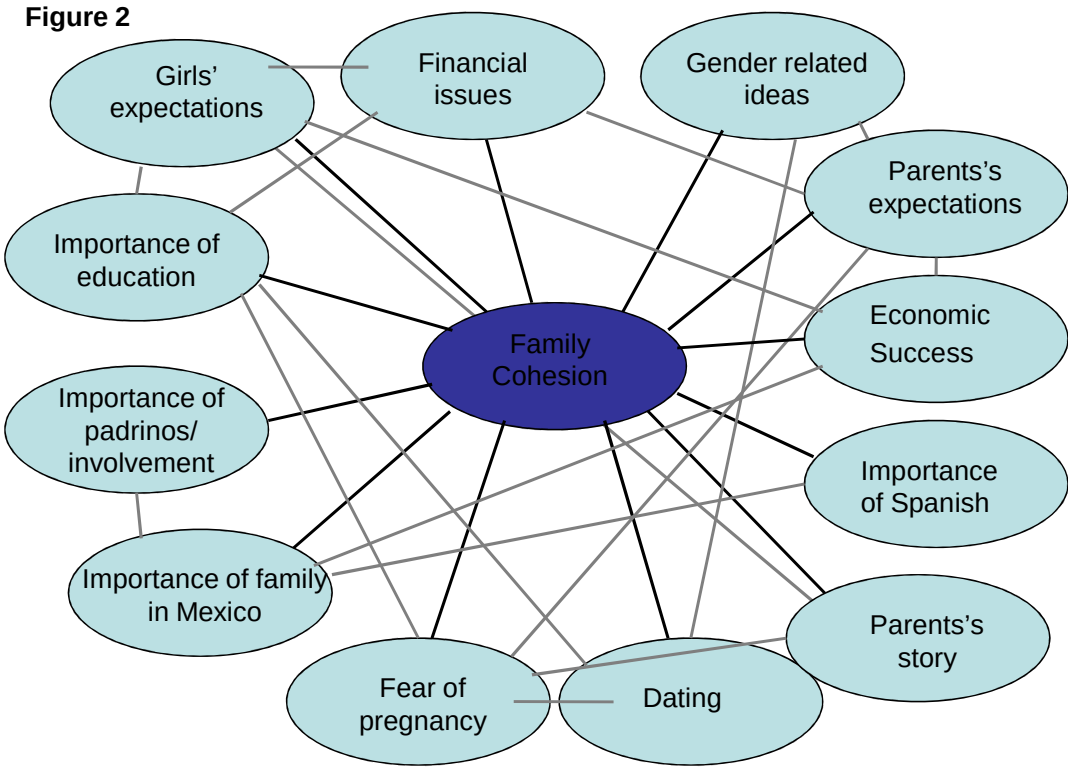
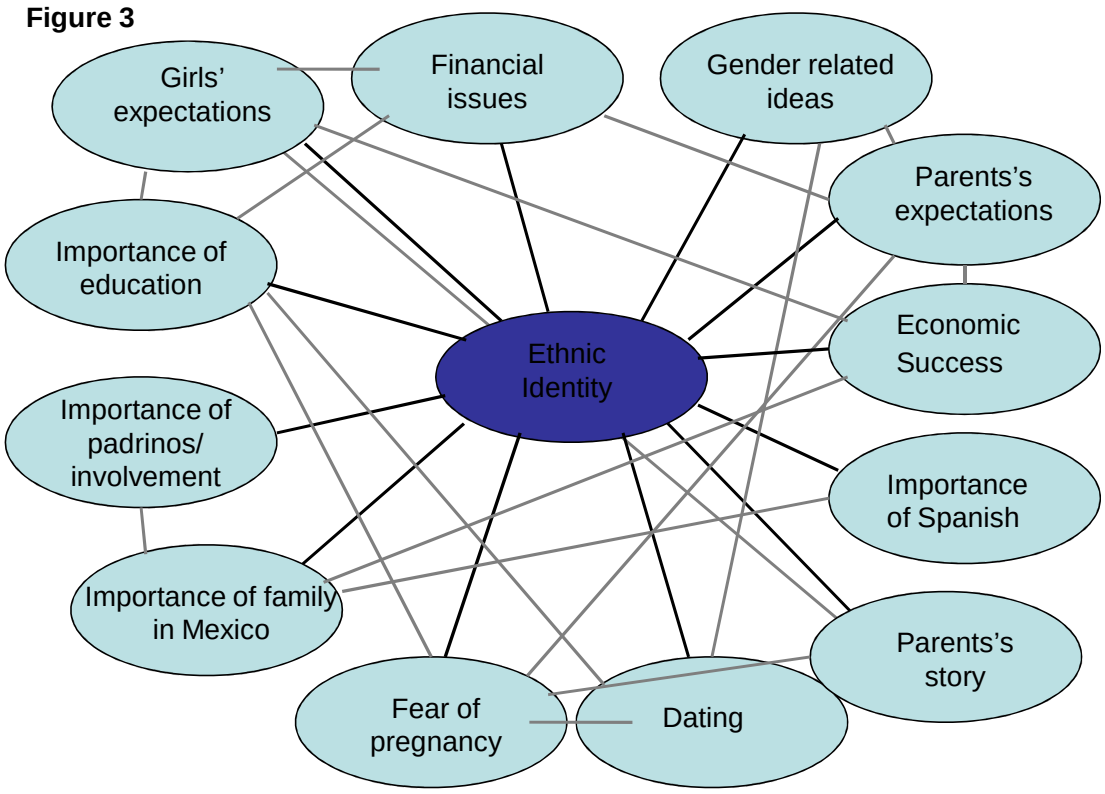


Figure 3.- Ethnic Identity Variable Links



Personal Disclaimer

My undergraduate experience and former work as journalist taught me that objectivity is only a philosophical aspiration, which must be kept in mind at all times yet is ultimately impossible to reach. In that sense, I think it is necessary for me to explain my personal position as a member of the same community as some of the families that I observed.

I feel some degree of identification with the Quinceañeras. We share gender, and, in a way, we do not have a big age difference –in other words, I could not be their mother, and I may have looked like an older sister to them - . Some of them even looked at me as if I had been even

younger."You almost look as a Quinceañera yourself," one of them told me one once. Maybe this had positive consequences on the outcome of the observations and conversations.

At the time of the observation, I could identify myself as a young married Latino woman living in Atlanta. However, my experience was very different from these girls', because I did not grew up in the United States. Thus Marcela (from the Estay family) is probably the one whose life has been closest to my own. Nevertheless**,** I had to face a multicultural experience within my family when I was their age, and, in that sense, maybe I can feel some degree of identification with the experiences of all of these girls.

Even though I was born in Mexico, I did not have a Quince Años. My parents and my social milieu had a bad opinion about the excessive amount of money that people spend in these fiestas, and for many years I shared that point of view and I would have preferred to be given a trip or some other present instead of the fiesta. However, when I turned 14 we were not longer living in Mexico, so I did not have to face the negotiation with my parents, and my 15th birthday was completely similar to any other birthday.

As a consequence, my own experience and my own family background had made me critical of several aspects of the Quince Años tradition. This opinion has been altered by my research, which has brought to light the importance of this tradition as part of Mexican-Americans' cultural identity, as my conclusions will show.

In the current political climate surrounding the issue of immigration, my position about these families is more defensive. Not only do I share an affective link because we have a similar cultural background and language, but I support them as immigrant workers and worthy elements of US society. Even though the topic of immigration was not explicit in the research, it was a

pervasive reality. I have the best opinion of the situation of these families, and I join their cause and hopes.

CHAPTER FOUR

LA FAMILIA- THE FAMILY

In *Quince Años* ceremonies, relationships between family and community are constantly re-affirmed and redefined. As the 15-year old daughter becomes a woman, her transformation focuses the attention and involvement of a circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances that play various roles in the ceremony. This process confirms that notions of family are socially and situational located (Merino and Morales 2002; Weisser 2003). Observations of, and discussions with, five sample families reveal that this term is in fact much more complex than initially envisioned. Definitions of *familia* often take shape on the occasion of a daughter's *Quince Años*, and tend to include *padrinos*, *chambelanes* and their parents, all of whom are involved in various degrees in the preparation and celebration of the ritual. As such, the ceremony is not simply a family occasion in which the family presents itself to the rest of the community. And it is not only about the young woman's place in family and society. It also allows for a self-definition of each specific *familia*, according to its own inner dynamics as well as its extension to members of the community that are not blood-related (Browning- Aiken 2005). The sample families chosen for this research includes various compositions and representations of what *familia* means, a diversity which is brought to light by the rules, formal and informal, that govern the planning of the Quince Años. Although the members of the nuclear family are usually in charge of the organization itself, the *padrinos'* contributions and the *chambelanes'* involvement are significant of the constitutive interplay between family and community. In this chapter I examine the way in which the Quince Años ceremony is not only a rite of passage for the teenage girl, but also as a tool of family building and an example of its definition within the socio- structural milieu, in the

“American” context –defining themselves as a Mexican family in the United States-, but also as a particular unit in their own community context.

The families in the sample are extremely varied in their composition. In spite of this diversity, however, the respondents' experience consistently suggested that the quince años remained a defining event for the family. I look specifically at the role of the godparents (*padrinos*) and friends of the quincenera and her parents as significant structural contexts; conversely however, their inclusion in the ritual highlights the situational nature of family definition.

Defining a family

When asked about “family” some respondents' answers only referred to blood related relatives. However, in many cases, the term “family” referred to close friends also, as Elena, a mother, explains: “We only will invite the family, and some friends of her (…) you know, everybody is from the same town in Mexico, old neighbors, friends, people that is like family.”

The concept of family commonly included not only blood relatives, but also the “compadres” and “comadres”, close friends that are chosen as godparents of one of the children, and become an active part of the family.

> My godparents have been with us for many years. They are like my family. For me they are just like my parents’ brothers and sisters, and I have the confidence to ask them the same things even that I ask my parents. *Cecilia Diaz*, Quinceañera

In that sense, the definition of a family in this sample is based not only on biological connections, but also on the experience and friendship developed through the years, finding that is consistent with the literature concerning importance of community and social cohesion in

Latino culture (Denner et al 2001). In this case, the presence of the community and extended family in the preparation of the Quince Años shows the importance and value that these girls have in their social settings.

As a result, "familia" in this research comes to mean any close person that has an affectional link with the Quinceañera, her parents and siblings. Some of them are blood related, but it is the concern and time devoted to the family which makes a person a "relative". As they do not make any difference between "blood relatives" and "love relatives", the results presented in this study will not make any distinction between them.[2]

***Las Familias* (Family structures)**

The Araya family is a very tight-knit family. This family of six has lived in the Atlanta area for 14 years and all its members are very involved in their church. Both parents, Anastasio and Patricia, are involved in the planning on Andrea's Quinceañera and her three brothers, ages 16, 10, and 8, are included when possible. For example, the whole family visited banquet halls and is aware of the details of the party arrangements. They are all proud of Andrea, the Quinceañera.

The mother-daughter unit is central to the Bernal family. Ashley was born in Mexico, when her mother was single. Now Elena, the mother, is married to a man who is referred to as "Ashley's father", but it was unclear if he was her biological father, or just her mother's husband. Ashley has a younger brother, who is about 12 years old. In this case, only Ashley and her mother have been working on the Quince Años. The fact that the father and the brother, although present, never participated in activities related to the Quince Años (like the

2 During the observations were almost impossible to make a distinction between the different kinds of relatives, and when I asked about that, some answers were confuse, so I understood that the families do not make any difference.

Quinceañeras mandatory workshop for example) suggests that Ashley's "father" might have been in fact her stepfather— This lack of involvement is also an indication that the roles of "family" is defined by such cultural or personal constructions, determined by an inner family logic, and not only for the cultural context.

The parents of Casas family are divorced and the father is disengaged from the family. Jen, the mother, is divorced from Destiny and her younger sister's father. The father lives in California, and the girls have maintained ties with him. The mother and the girls live with the maternal grandmother. Destiny's father is not helping in any way to organize the party, he is not even sure if he is going to travel to Atlanta, because he has a different religion and he does not want to attend to the Catholic mass. In addition, his religion is very strict about celebrations and disapproves dancing. Destiny wants to dance the waltz with his father in her Quince Años, and she is negotiating with her father for him to be present. Destiny and her mother are taking all the decisions about the Quince Años.

The Diaz family is a blended family in which both stepfather and father are involved. Though geographically separated, the latter stays engaged with his daughter. Cecilia, the Quinceañera, is an only child, and her mother, Adriana, is expecting a baby. Her father is in Mexico, and even if he is not longer with her mother, they maintain a good relationship. Her mother got married again in Atlanta, and now is expecting a son of her new husband. Cecilia's step father participates in some parts of the organization of the Quince Años, like the Quinceañeras classes. Cecilia's father will not be able to come to the party, because he does not have a visa to enter the United States, but he and his family are helping in several ways, such as sending some special supplies from Mexico, or giving money. In addition, Cecilia went to visit his father in Mexico some weeks before her birthday to have a small celebration with him.

Cecilia's baptism godparents are participating very actively in the organization of the Quince Años too; they even join Cecilia in the classes and participate with enthusiasm.

The Estay family is reunited after a period of geographic separation. Marcela lived in Mexico with her maternal family (grandmother and aunts) while her parents were living in the United States. Just some months before her 15th birthday, her parents could take her with them and her younger brother, who was born in the United States. Marcela and her family are not only experiencing the Quince Años preparation, but also the adaptation process of living together after many years of being apart. Marcela's parents are very enthusiastic about the Quince Años, but they are planning a small gathering, because they do not have many family members living in Georgia, and because Marcela does not have many friends yet. Marcela would prefer to celebrate her Quince Años in Mexico, but, at the same time she is happy to be able to share this occasion with her parents, and with her new boyfriend from her new school.

Choosing padrinos

In the Quince Años the role of the padrinos[3] (literally translated as "godparents") is different from what it is in the other religious occasions or sacraments (Baptism or First Communion for example). The Quinceañera has several padrinos, who are the relatives or the family's close friends that will collaborate with some aspect of the party.

In that sense, this is the reason why the criteria to select to select the padrinos are different. Some families decided to include only very close relatives, while others opened that opportunity to friends and coworkers, as Elena explains, "Only my brothers (the Quinceañera's

[3] Padrino means Godfather, and Madrina means Godmother, but in Spanish the neutral plural is masculine. That is the reason why the word padrinos is used as a way to refer to both males and females.

uncles) will be padrinos. I didn't want to ask anything to anyone else. I didn't want to ask things to the neighbor, or to a friend, nothing."

> The padrinos will be all my aunts and uncles. Some of them are not real aunts or uncles, they are friends of the family, and people who wanted to helped my family in my Quince Años. *Destiny Casas*, Quinceañera.

> Some coworkers asked me if they could be padrinos of something, and I said yes to them, because I had helped some of them or other coworkers with their daughter's Quince Años, and I know the people feel good when they can help others. I felt that way when I helped other girls to have a good memory for the rest of their life. *Anastasio Araya*, father.

> We (mother and daughter) decided together the padrinos, but I explained to her that I wanted to ask to very close people, who are very close, which means close relatives and close friends only, and not to too many people. This is my present to my daughter, and I would like to keep it like that, but, of course, I don't want to stop nice people who I know care and love my daughter very much. *Jen Casas*, mother.

> Some friends of my parents asked if they could help with some stuffs, and we accept, but nothing else. My aunts and grandmother in Mexico decided to send me nice things as a way to help my parents, but also to be present in some way here. One aunt made the invitations, another the

> party favors, and my grandmother wants to make my dress, but we haven't decided yet if we will do it that way. *Marcela Estay*, Quinceañera

For members of other cultures to collaborate in an economic way can be an uncomfortable situation. In the families and friends of the quinceañeras in the sample, the situation is not only normal, but desirable (Browning- Aiken 2005). In many cases the padrinos took the initiative and offered their economic support before being asked, like Anastasio tells: "They (padrinos) called us with months of anticipation asking what we needed for the party, and offering their help."

> My baptism godmother called me for my 14th birthday and told me that she wanted to buy my Quinceañera dress, so she would be waiting for my call when I was ready. *Andrea Araya*, Quinceañera

> I told her that she will have only what her father and I could give to her, but the padrinos learned that we were organizing a party for her and they called us to tell that they wanted to be part of it. *Elena Bernal*, mother.

For these families the external contributions to the party have different meanings and aims. First, it generates a sense of community and extended family, which many of them have lost when they moved to the United States.

> My family in Mexico calls me and says that they would love to be here, with us, and help in the arrangements, but I tell them that thanks to God we have

> people here that want to help us, that love us, and we love them too. It's true, they are not our family, but we have to generate a new family, especially for our children that deserve to be loved by many people. *Patricia Araya*, mother.

Second, they feel that the outside participation is a recognition for their daughters and for their work as parents.

> I'm giving this party to my daughter because she is a good girl. She is a good student, a good daughter and sister, a good friend, I'm very happy about her and I feel hope about her future; but, you know, we, the parents, always see the children as almost perfect, but when a friend, a coworker, or a relative not only participates, but even calls us to offer their help, I know I am right: My girl is a good girl, because everybody wants to see her happy, everybody feels that she deserves it. *Jen Casas*, mother.

And, third, for most of these families it is the only way to afford this celebration.

> We figure that the party will cost around $12,000, but with the help of the padrinos we will spend only $4,000. On average, each will spend $500 in collaboration, and also they will give a present to the Quinceañera, of course, it's her birthday! On other occasions we have been padrinos and we have spent around the same amount. *Anastasio Araya*, father

Asked what the padrinos would receive in exchange for their collaboration, respondents generally looked puzzled, and in two cases the question had to be explained, as if the real meaning of the role of the padrinos went without saying:

Cecilia: Do you mean if we will give them something special? Well, I think is a honor to be a padrino or madrina, and people don't expect anything in exchange. However, because is a honor they receive a special treatment during the celebration.

Daniela: That's what my question was driving at, something like a special role, or placement in the party.

Cecilia Diaz: Well, of course. For example, they are given special credit in the video, they are the first to dance the waltz with the Quinceañera after her father and the chambelanes; they will have a special photo with the Quinceañera, and things like that. They are important guests.

The amount of padrinos is an indication of the willingness of the family to be helped. In the Beltran family, for example, Ashley's mother decided that she didn't want external help, but her brothers wanted to help and she didn't prevent them from doing so. In this case, the girl's only padrinos will be her two uncles, and their wives. As part of the collaboration, Ashley accepted to give her little cousins a part in the celebration, as flower girls or "pajes". In addition, she will dance waltz with both her uncles.

In contrast, some families, like the Araya and Casas families, couldn't specify the exact number of padrinos, nor their roles.

> We don't know really, because some people just wanted to help us with something, sometimes small, you know, and they don't want to participate in a special way in the celebration, they just want to help. So, I'm afraid that I have to think about your question, because I don't

> know if all of them will be padrinos o madrinas, or what, but there's many people, I'm pleasantly surprised! *Adriana Diaz*, mother.

All the families emphasize that this celebration is something for the girl, and because of that she is the one who decides what she wants. In that sense, the participation of the padrinos, in general, is reduced to give the money necessary for the thing that they offered to pay. Sometimes, they have a more active role joining the quinceañera and her mother to visit stores or the people who will offer the service that they will pay for.

On the Quince Años day, in general, they are mentioned in the toasts, some of them walk in the aisle in the church with the Quinceañera, padrinos dance the waltz, they have especial pictures with the Quinceañera, sometimes they wear especial clothes or symbols, like buttoniers, etc.

In this context, padrinos can be considered as symbols of the ties with the community, and the understanding that care, obligation and protection are not dependent on blood ties in the strict sense of that term. In this sense, when these girls refer to their families, they think about their parents, siblings and whoever they define as a close relative in the first place, but they keep in mind that they belong to an extended network of love and commitment, that they owe and need –"a link net"-. This tight community with a "family taste" also exercises an influence on these girls' ethnic identity. Not only do they underline the importance of the family usually associated to Latino traditions, but they also reinforce a definition of the family which is quite different from US mainstream culture.

“Just amigos”

Another important character in the Quince Años, is the Chambelán, or the Quinceañera’s male companion. In general seven couples are chosen to escort the Quinceañera to the altar, but the number and form of the party are decisions made by the Quinceañera.

Andrea: I didn’t want to have maids.

Daniela: Why? You didn’t want to have competition…

Andrea Araya: Nooo, ha,ha…well, yes, I didn’t want to have other girls around me, this is my day, so I only will have 5 chambelanes.

I will have chambelanes and maids, but I didn’t want to have like a special chambelán, because they are just amigos, not a boyfriend, or something like that, so I didn’t want to make any difference. *Destiny Casas*, Quinceañera.

The decision to have maids, chambelanes, and an official chambelán depends on many elements. For example, Marcela has a boyfriend –known by her parents, and recognized publicly by her. Not a single one of the girls admitted in front of her parents or wrote in her journals that she had a boyfriend. However, when asked the question, almost all the parents answered first and very quickly that the girl was not allowed to date a boy. So when this actually happens, daughters are very careful to do not reveal that information.-

This is the context in which the rite of chambelanes must be understood. They can be considered either as symbolic male partners showing the social understanding of the Quinceañera as a woman –even when parents try to avoid that idea- or even as guardians for the girls, what

can explained the presence of brother or cousins in this group. All the parents agree with the participation of the chambelanes. In general, they justified their openness because of tradition and because it was their daughter's decision.

However, observations and conversations reveal that the parents' trust required at least two additional elements. One is shared cultural background –in all the cases, 100% of the chambelanes were Latinos; The other is the involvement of the boy's parents –which in most of the cases was actively asked by the Quinceañera's mother through a phone call or a personal visit. As the literature shows (Valenzuela 1999), for this community to maintain the virginity of these girls is an important issue, and, in this case, the presence of boys is accepted as long that some kind of social control is possible.

To be a chambelan entails many obligations, which even start months before the Quince Años.

> They have to practice the choreography every Thursday and Saturday, for around 4 or 5 months, depending of how well they dance. We practice in my apartment's parking lot, and it's funny. It takes a lot of time, but their families are cool with that. *Andrea Araya*, Quinceañera.

Again, external collaboration is present in the Quince Años. These young girls and boys not only have to commit months of their time to the preparation, but they must buy special clothes for the occasion. They have to pay for the clothes: a tuxedo, and a special outfit for the surprise dance.

> I know it's expensive, so my mother called some of the mothers to ask if they give authorization to their sons and all of them said yes. Some of them even called me before my mother's call to say that they were

> very excited about their sons being chambelanes, and offering extra help, not only the money that they have to spend on the clothes. I know most of them, but they are not family, yet they wanted to help anyway. *Cecilia Diaz*, Quinceañera.

In this case other families are asked to make a financial effort for the party, and in all the cases they accepted without hesitation, and even offered extra help.

> Now, my daughter is the Quinceañera, but my son has been chambelán twice, and for me it is important too. I like to see him involved with good people, our people, good families, and even learning! Because now I have a son who can dance! And, if I can help, I do it cheerfully, because that's good for the girl, a good girl, but it's good for my boy too, because if he wasn't be a good boy, he wouldn't be chosen as chambelán in the first place. *Anastasio Araya*, father.

Again, community cohesion is a constant element present in the quince años arrangements. Not only do these boys accept to participate, they also invest time in rehearsals, and their families have to invest money for their participation. This agreement shows the importance of the other within the community, but also the emphasis on traditions. For the girls, choosing Mexican boys as chambelanes reinforces their own ethnic identity as "mexicanas", because their own ethnic group is where they find understanding and support, and people who are capable of sharing the same meaningful experiences.

Family Business

The role of other members of the family varies from one family to another. For example, Andrea's older brother joins her and her parents to every visit or meeting in connection with the Quince Años, and he feels comfortable with that role. Andrea's younger brothers do not participate in the same way, because of their age, but they try to help to the best of their abilities. Ashley's younger brother does not participate in any part of the arrangements, nor does his father, who considers the Quince Años as a "women thing". In the other cases, sisters, grandmothers and other relatives living in the same household assist in the great event.

The external assistance in general is only financial. The task of overlooking for every aspect of the party belongs to the Quinceañera and her immediate family.

> My padrinos are paying for many things, for example, the cake, but I'm the one who has to choose the cake, what I want it to look like, and where to order it. Sometimes they help me, if they know someone or if they have good references, or the join us to visit and test different alternatives, but in general my parents and I are in charge of finding everything, we put the party together. *Destiny Casas*, Quinceañera.

> My padrinos only join us when we have to pay, but we have to look for everything ourselves. Sometimes we have several options, and they help us to choose. This is my party, but I don't want to take advantage of their help, so we try to look for good prices, and if I want something that maybe is a little more expensive, I try to explain them why, and see if they can spend that money. *Marcela Estay*, Quinceañera.

The level of involvement of each member of the family depends of the family's own organization. In my sample, the highest level of involvement by family members was present in Andrea's family, which tends to do many activities together.

However, even with external assistance, and the help of siblings, grandparents and other family members, the Quinceañera's parents, especially mothers, are the persons who are most involved in the organization, after the Quinceañera herself. Her time investment generates hopes and motivations that will be explored in the next chapter.

The involvement of each family was a good way to understand the inner dynamics of each family. Some families were tighter, and those showed a higher level of involvement from more members of the family. The families with less traditional structures, such as Ashley's (who is not her father's biological daughter), or Destiny's (whose religion is different from her father's), showed a lower involvement, or even some problems originating in the preparation of the Quince Años. Divorce is nor a good predictor of the family involvement, because the two families that presented that reality had a complete different outcome – while Destiny's father does not want to collaborate in the celebration, Cecilia's father, in spite of the legal obstacle preventing his participation in the party, found a way to share with her the especial occasion.-

"La familia" becomes a main element of interaction and socialization for the girls in this sample. For socio- cultural reasons, Mexican families have a greater level of familism, adherence to home culture and community culture (Suárez- Orozco and Suárez- Orozco 1995), which can be explained, in part, as a way to protect the members in a social context which can be perceived as hostile or simply different, such as the United States. This cohesion transforms a family celebration into an achievement for the whole community, because the quinceañera is the result of everybody's efforts. This thick social environment, that promotes a sense of the collective over

individualism, is crucial in the construction of the ethnic and gender identity of these girls and their families.

CHAPTER FIVE

LOS PADRES- PARENTS

The parents in this sample are the most important characters after the Quinceañera. It is fair to say that during research, the same amount of time was spent with parents as with the Quinceañeras, but the interaction with adults was usually more fecund (more prolific). When questions were directed to the entire family, parents were always the first to answer. The Quinceañera answered first only if addressed directly and specifically, a fact that was a confirmation that the methodology of journaling. Reading was necessary to obtain information from the girls.

Andrea, Destiny, Cecilia, Marcela and Ashley are girls with different personalities, however none of them can be characterized as especially shy. On the contrary, they are very assertive and proactive girls[4]. Nevertheless, their parents are very strong figures, not only because of their personalities, but because of their role in this cultural context.

The different conformation of the families makes for different meanings of the word "parents" in this research: a couple of biological parents who are still married, a divorced mother and a distant father, a mother married to a stepfather who is called "father", a mother married to a stepfather while a distant father keeps an active part of his daughter's life, and a couple of married biological parents who spent some years apart from their daughter.

[4] As part of my disclaimer I have to admit some level of affective link between the researcher and these girls, especially with the ones that I have continued to meet because we attend to the same church. I tried to put aside my personal opinion in the observations, but I also attempted to be involved in an useful way as a privileged, educated member of the same community. I did not only ask questions about my research, but I also discussed college education and educational opportunities with the girls and their parents. I answered their questions and, in addition, I made suggestions and offered my help in future college applications and other activities. However, I think that my opinion about the capacities of these girls can be quite accurate, especially because all of them are successful examples of good assimilation of a bicultural/ bilingual teenage life experience.

The circumstances and conditions of observation were very different from family to family As a result, some of the parents cannot be quoted because of limited or nonexistent interaction with the researcher. .

The figure of the parents is crucial in the social interaction that could be observed. Their guidance and expectations, fears and life trajectory (their own life story) influence their daughters, making them and their opinions a relevant element in the interaction generated around the quince años.

Great expectations

None of the parents were born in the United States. I decided not to ask them about their legal status, but some of them talked openly about their undocumented status. All of them are immigrants, and one of the main reasons for them to leave Mexico was to offer their children better opportunities. Almost all of them came from the South of Mexico, and from some of the poorest states in the country. Originally, four of the five families came from rural zones with high poverty rates. With the exception of one family, all came for the first time to the United States more than 10 years ago, and many of these parents arrived when they were under 20 years old.

The predominant profile is that of young people who had left their families while still very young, and who entered the labor market at a very young age, many of them without completing secondary education.

This life trajectory can explain in part the high expectations that they have for their children, as they are planning a better future for them. None of the families showed any kind of shame because of their background, which can be confirmed by the fact that discussions with the

daughters never brought to the surface any issue that these girls might have had with their parents' lives.

> I got married and left my family in Mexico when I was 16, can you imagine?! Almost Andrea's age…and now I see her, and I see my baby, still. I'm very grateful for my life, we are fine here, I have good, healthy children, I'm happy, but I want something different for my daughter. If we had to make great sacrifices, they were only meant to offer her a better chance. *Patricia Araya*, mother.

Education is the main concern for these parents. All of them want their daughter to go to college, and some of them had already asked for information and help thinking of their child's future applications. School was the main topic that came up when questions dealt with the conditions that the girls had to meet to have their fiesta.

> I told her, and she knows, that if she doesn't have good grades in school, the fiesta is over. I'm giving this to her because she is a good girl at home and a good student in school, but if that changes, I will not do it. *Adriana Diaz*, mother.

Education is not only an aspiration, but rather one of the goals which determines the decision to stay in the United States.

> We are OK here, I cannot complain, but this is not my home. I would love to go back to Mexico and live with my parents and my siblings, but the only reason why I stay are my children and their opportunities here. I always tell them 'you must to be a good student, if you don't take this

opportunity all of my life's efforts will be a waste. *Corina*, Marcela's mother.

Education (*educación*) is a highly valued asset in Mexican immigrant families, because it is seen as the key to a better future, but also as an comprehensive process, where academic knowledge is completed by values and traditions (Browning-Aitken 2005). In this sense, education is merely seen as the way to obtain school degrees and a better economic future, but also as part of the proper behavior that the community and the family expects from the children. Thus the importance of education in these families has a special link with the ethnic identity and cultural closeness, but also with their own status as immigrants, because of the lack of opportunities in the parents' past, and the hope parents entertain for their children.

¿Novio?... ¡No!

In order to meet their parents' expectations, girls have to follow a certain number of rules. Maybe the main one is that boyfriends or "novios" are completely prohibited until some later yet undetermined age.

Anastasio Araya: No, no, no. She doesn't have the authorization to have a boyfriend. First she has to study, finish her college, to understand what she wants.

Daniela: So she has to wait until the end of college? She will be like 22 by then…

Anastasio: Yes.

Excluding the possibility of having a boyfriend is directly associated with two elements: first, the life trajectories (stories) of the parents themselves, and second the fear of a teenage pregnancy that would put an end to all the expectations that the parents have for their daughters. The Quinceañera's workshop that the parents and the girls have to take points to this fear specifically, as María, the workshop's coordinator explains:

> We began doing this workshop because we learned from the experience of other dioceses in other states that in many cases the Quince Años was the last time that the parents had control over their daughters. After that, many of them decided to elope with their boyfriend, and just returned one or two years later after having abandoned school and with one or even two babies, and obviously without the boyfriend!

In the workshop parents and daughters have different activities in two separate rooms, and get together at the end to talk about the conclusions and make some closing remarks. One of the activities for the adults (parents and relatives) is to ask to all the mothers what they wanted to do with their lives when they were their daughters' age. The board is filled with many plans, especially about going to college and finding a career as nurses, teachers, and even artists. After that the coordinator asks how many of them had reached that goal. Observation for this research found that only one of them had obtained the accounting degree that she wanted, all the rest had not. This list and the results are shown to the Quinceañeras when they arrive in the room after their separate session.

"¿Y quieren saber qué fue lo que les pasó a sus mamás que no pudieron lograr sus sueños?"[5] -asks the coordinator to the girls. "Well, let's see," he says while he reveals a new list. *"Veamos: conocí a un muchacho, me casé, fui mamá, se me atravesó un individuo, conocí a mi marido…como ven niñas, a todas uy! Se les atravesó un individuo en el camino. ¡Si casi es más peligroso eso a que se le atraviese un carro a uno!"*[6]

[5] Do you want to know what happened to your mothers, so that they couldn't reach their dreams?
[6] Let's see: I met a guy, I got married, I became a mother, someone crossed my path, I met my husband…as you can see, girls, Uh! To all of them someone crossed their path, That is more dangerous than a car crossing in front of you!

The girls laugh because the coordinator is making a point of presenting the issues in a funny way, but, maybe for the first time, they are learning and evaluating their mothers' lives. *"Les pido que hablen de esto en sus casas,"* the coordinator concludes.[7]

In the sample only Marcela has a boyfriend with the authorization of her parents. However, they maintain a very strict set of rules about visits and encounters. Basically Marcela can see him when he goes to visit her in her house, and they are only allowed to stay in the living room, where constantly, Marcela's parents go back and forth or sit to talk to them about various topics. They can see each other at school, maybe the place where they can be freest. If they want to go to the movies or do other activities, they go with Marcela's family, or sometimes with a group of friends. "We are not against the idea of a boyfriend, even if we like him, he is a good boy, but they are teenagers, they are not responsible. But we are, so we have to be in charge." *Carlos*, father.

The possibility of a teen pregnancy has moral and economic dimensions, with consequences on parents' expectations. All the families that were observed for this research are Catholic with some differences of degree in their religiosity. Some of them go to mass every Sunday, and participate in actively as volunteers. Others simply identify themselves as Catholic but are not very disciplined as far as church attendance is concerned. However, all of them revealed that they had raised their daughters trying to teach them Catholic morals and principles, especially the idea of postponing sexual intercourse until they got married.

> I don't believe it is some kind of crazy idea or ideal, I think it is possible. We did it in that way and I hope that my daughter shows some respect for herself too. *Anastasio Araya*, father.

[7] I asked you to talk about this at home.

In other words, the possibility of sexual intercourse for these parents is wrong in itself, even without resulting in pregnancy.

> In Mexico 'los casan'[8] if the parents find out that the couple has had sexual relations. Even if the boy doesn't want to 'responder'[9] sometimes the father of the girl goes to his house with a gun! Maybe now that is not that common, but if they are discovered they have to face many bad things. *Elena Bernal*, mother

A second element in the fear of a teenage pregnancy is economic consequences. Parents are concerned that if their daughters get pregnant, they will end up being responsible for the baby's well being.

> I can't send a 15 years old girl to work, no, she has to continue in school and take care of the baby, and I can't trust the boy, so at the end that baby would be like another child for us, and I don't want to have another mouth to feed now. *Jen Casas*, mother.

Adriana even makes a link with her current situation: "I'm having a baby myself right now! Imagine, it would be like having twins…and I don't want to take care of twins." However, maybe the parents' main concern is the change of life that their daughters will face if they are young mothers. As mentioned earlier, the possibility of a better educational and economic future for the children is one of the main, if not the ultimate, reason to immigrate and to remain in the United States, in some cases even as undocumented workers. In that sense, these girls have grown up hearing that they have to fulfill their parents' dreams, as a way to thank them for their efforts.

---

[8] To force the couple to get married
[9] Assume his responsibility

> She has everything! She is completely bilingual, she speaks English as well as an American, she understands their culture, and she was born here so she is American. She is 15 and she has more than I can ever dream about for myself. With such a start she has to obtain big things in her life. *Patricia Araya*, mother.

A baby, in the parents' opinion, would be the end of those plans.

> If that were the case, well she should understand that the child is first, so she will need to take care of the baby, and as soon as she finishes high school she must look for a job because she has an extra mouth to feed. *Elena Bernal*, mother.

The fear of pregnancy is directly related to the importance of education, expectations for the future, but also with gender and ethnic identity, because some of these fears are linked with the role of women in the community, and the implicit value of virginity for girls, as opposed to a much greater tolerance about boys' sexual lives.

Quince Años

One of the research questions was, "what is the meaning of the Quince Años for the family?" Again, despite the diverse compositions of the families in the sample, they had very similar positions about this topic.

Parents see the Quince Años as a prize and present for a good girl, a deserving daughter. In addition, they want to believe that their daughter will have a nice memory of that moment. They see it also as an important event in a cultural/ ethnic sense, but they do not want to impose it to their daughters, showing a respect for their own identity.

> We want to her to have a nice memory of her Quince Años, so that she keeps it in mind, so that she knows that we value her, and so that she learns to value us too, so that she can see all we do for her and that we will always be there for her. *Patricia Araya*, mother.
>
> She is a good daughter, she helps at home, she is doing fine in school, she is a good sister, so if we can make this effort and give her this joy, Why shouldn't we do it? *Corina Estay*, mother.

Even though parents recognize the ethnic meaning of the celebration, they are careful not to impose it on their daughters. However, if they were asked to have an American "Sweet 16" instead of a Quince Años, the answer would be negative.

> It is not because we think there's something wrong with it, but it is not our tradition, so if she wants to make a big celebration it makes more sense to do this than the other. We don't know how Americans celebrate it, but I think they don't go to church, for example, and that is something important for us, we are not just throwing a party here. *Anastasio Araya*, father.

So, although they do not want to impose the Quince Años to their daughters,that is the only option that they offer as rite of passage. However, for these families this is not a source of tension, because it is consistent with the girls' own sense of identity –as will be described in the next chapter.

In the sample, only two of the mothers had a Quince Años themselves, but in both cases they were described as "algo muy sencillo" –something very simple. That antecedent is mentioned as other reason to celebrate their daughters' Quince Años .

> I did not have this opportunity. I don't know if I miss it, I don't think so. My family was poor, that was something that was completely beyond our means, so I wasn't disappointed, even though, yes, sure, it would have been nice. We have been working so hard for many years, and because of that we have the opportunity to give this present to our daughter, so we really want to do it. *Adriana Diaz*, mother.

The idea of trying to give to the children a better life than theirs, in this case, is linked also to the idea of the goal of immigration. 100 percent of the parents in the sample were born outside of the United States, and they decided to immigrate to the United States for economical reasons. In this case, the Quince Años is an opportunity, in some cases the first one, to "show the world" that they have achieved the success that they were looking for when they came.

> We have been working so hard for many years, and we do this for our family; for the ones in Mexico, but especially for our children. Maybe this is the first real luxury that we can give to ourselves. This is expensive, but we are doing this for our family, to celebrate that things went OK here in the United States. *Hector Estay*, father.

In this way, the Quince Años celebration not only has an important ethnic meaning, but it is seen as a sign of economic success. This can be identified easily in some of the decisions about the party, such as the fact that the limousine can no longer be dispensed with. Also, the

selection of settings for the pictures –which generally are shared with friends and family– shows this implied meaning. Girls are pictured in their rooms, but, also frequently in front of the limousine or of the special luxury car that was rented or borrowed for the occasion, which is somewhat ironical, because of the emphasis placed on a possession that it is not even owned by the family.

Parents are facing an emotional moment in their lives, which is a measure of their own success both as immigrants and as guardians of their daughter's education and future. As such, the Quince Años is a highly valued goal, an occasion which was eagerly awaited, but, at the same time, it means also a new beginning, with new fears and expectations. Parents are facing an evaluation of their ability to offer their children something they were not always fortunate enough to have. They can also demonstrate to the community their willingness to preserve the ethnic and cultural heritage they have had to leave behind for economic reasons. The Quince años can thus be seen as symbolic for the parents as well as their daughters. On the one hand, the celebration validates the success of their choice to immigrate and improve their socio-economic conditions; on the other, it can be seen as sign to the community that its core values are being transmitted to the next generation. . At the same time, the party is a good means to generate a new frame of rules and the occasion to reward the attitudes that they want to reinforce in their children. The parents' ideas, values and expectations play an important role in their daughters' identities and in the social interaction and meanings of the quince años.

CHAPTER SIX

LAS QUINCEAÑERAS

The five girls in the sample share similar characteristics, even though they come from families with different structures. Even though their personal presentation and preferences can vary in some degree, it was very easy to find constant features among them.

All the girls are attending a public high school. All of them have a good attendance level, good grades[10], they take care of their appearance, none of them dress in ways commonly associated with gangs, their clothes are neither tight nor provocative, they are affectionate and well-mannered with their families, and polite with new people, as their behavior during this research made clear.

In the course of the conversations conducted during the observation, it was very common for them to look at their parents before answering, as if they were waiting for approval or confirmation of their words. This could certainly be interpreted as a sign of respect, rather than fear, because nothing in this families' interaction suggested violence or tension.

Only one of the girls had a "public" boyfriend, who was accepted by the parents. The other girls said that they were not dating anyone. However, since they did not have their parents' authorization to do it, it would have been a problem for them to admit it if that had been the case.

Identity

One of the main goals of this research was to explore the ethnic identity of teenagers living a bicultural life. In the sample three of the girls were born in the United States, one arrived when she was a toddler, and the fifth one had just moved from Mexico.

[10] I decided not to ask for their grades directly, because it was not a relevant datum for this research and, in addition, it could be seen as rudeness on my part. However, the parents or the girls mentioned at some point that the girl had " good grades in school", or was " a good student" . The family's perception of the performance as a student is more important for this research that the grade by itself.

With the only exception of the last one (Marcela), the life experience of these girls has been mainly American, and what they know about Mexico and its culture they have learned through their parents and family. Andrea Araya went to Mexico once to visit the village where her parents are from.

> I had fun there. It was a very poor and remote place, but it felt very good to be with my family. Actually, I think it was sad that my grandfather had to wait for us with a sign with my brother's and my name on it because we didn't know each other. But now I know everyone in my family and they know me.

When asked how they identified themselves, the girls always came up with the same answer: "*Soy mexicana.*"[11] This may have been the most surprising response generated in the course of this research. This unexpected unanimity justified further questions about why they felt that way, since they were born in the United States and had never lived in Mexico.

> I know, but it doesn't matter. I think my culture is the Mexican culture, because that is the education that my family has given to me. I like my family; I like to speak Spanish, a like Mexican food better. I don't know, these are my family's values, and my values also. *Andrea Araya*.

The cohesion of the family group can partly explain this feeling. It seems that what matters is not the structure of the family, but rather its practices. These girls tend to spend much of their time in their families, parents and children share activities together. They are what is called in Mexico "*hijas de familia*" (family girls) or "*niñas de bien*" (good girls), which means girls who behave well, who have "values" and have been "well raised" by receiving a good

education from their families. Their ethnic identity seems to be located and defined through family and community interaction, rather than in the relationships with a specific place (whether Mexico or the United States).

These girls spend great amounts of time with their families, participate in activities with the extended family and community, and live in neighborhoods with a large proportion of Hispanic population. When I asked them about their friends, their answer in all the cases was that their closest friends, whether at school, in the neighborhood, at church or in any other social setting were Latinos. However, they say that they do not have any problem with other ethnic groups. Simply, they are not their main group of friends. But all of them will have at least one "American" friend invited to the Quince Años, and in two cases even, one of the *chambelanes* will not be a latino boy.

Here again it is easy to notice the strong relationship between family cohesion and ethnic identity. In other words, these girls have a partial experience of what to be "Mexicana" means, an experience mediated by their families and the immediate social milieu, so, in a way, they associated their families' values and ways to their understanding of Mexican culture. Because they feel very close to their parents and relatives, they extrapolate this experience to construct their ethnic identity.

These girls use *Mexicana* as their main ethnic identity. "Mexicana" implies a greatest level of detail, and is generally used by the Quinceneras to distinguish themselves from other Latin American identities. However, other labels like "Latina" or "Hipanic" work for them, because they include people from Mexico. Generally speaking, they are used in non-Latino contexts, to suggest a sense of "brotherhood" and kinship according to which all Latin Americans belong to the same group. This Pan American identity is promoted by the Spanish-

[11] I am Mexican

speaking media in the United States. During such popular events as the Miss Universe contest, anchors routinely talk about *"nuestros países"* ("our countries"), as they claim that "it doesn't matter which country wins, as long as Miss Universe is a Latina." Social organizations and the Catholic Church are other cases of institutions which tend to use these generalizations.

However, their identity is not only determined by their social network. Although physical appearance was not originally mentioned in the questions addressed to the girls, , some of them referred to it as a component of the process.

> Even though I was born here, people in the street don't think that I'm American. I look Mexican, I'm dark-skinned, and although I speak perfect English, they can't help thinking that I'm not American. *Destiny Casas*

> I don't spend all day thinking about how I look. I think Atlanta is a diverse place, and I don't think people stop to think 'uhm, she is a Latina' every time that they see me, but sure they can identify me that way, I think it's a very obvious thing to notice. *Marcela*. Estay

Or as Ashley says: I like how I look. I don't look American, I think I'm prettier than them. Even if they do not put a special emphasis on their appearance, they describe themselves as looking "not American," a fact that they believe is noticeable for the rest of the population.

Thus the second element in the composition of these girls' identity as "Mexicana", next to their social/ cultural close milieu, is their physical appearance. It is clearly influenced by the "other", the mainstream and black American environment that makes them self-conscious. They realize that they can be identified as members of a specific ethnic group because of the way they look.

To conclude on this point, two primary elements seem to emerge from interviews to help define the process of ethnic identity for these girls; their social/ cultural milieu, and their physical appearance. These two elements make them feel that they belong to a group, but also that others identify them as part of that particular group. This identity building, generated by the interaction between external and internal forces of the social group, is consistent with Nagel (1994). In this sense, the celebration of the Quince Años comes as a reaffirmation of that identity, for both their social group, and the "external" society, through the public expression of an ethnic rite in a different national setting.

The journals

Discussions with all these girls demonstrated consistently their impressive command of the Spanish language: perfect accent, perfect grammar, and little vocabulary problems–even though all of them use a great amount of Mexican slang. However, reading their journals confirmed the researcher's original idea that these girls learned Spanish informally, speaking it with their family. Only one of the girls had received formal instruction in Spanish, the others had gone to American schools only. Although their written Spanish is very clear, they make many mistakes which show that they write phonetically, trying to reproduce sounds they hear, and that they were never taught how to write the language. This observation is not meant to be a criticism of their education, but to show it as an example of the role of the family in the formation of these girls' identity. They speak perfect conversation Spanish because of the closeness that they have with their families, and not by any other means of formal instruction, like school for example.

Each girl was given a journal at the end of the first meeting. they could choose among different styles of notebooks the one that they preferred. The goals of journal-writing was explained to them, and they were provided with written instructions. Even though it was hard to

recover all the journals at the end of observation – around a month to obtain all of them-, it was clear that they had invested time writing down their experiences. The shortest one had 10 pages, and the longest 18.

They decided to approach the task in different ways. Some of them followed the instructions closely and answered as if responding to a questionnaire. Others simply decided to write down what was happening, adding a couple of paragraphs every time that something new came up.

They gave importance to different aspects of the preparation of the party. For example, one of them spent a couple of pages describing the dance teacher that was preparing the dances, explaining that he was gay, and that ultimately he was not able to continue because he had surgery, so they had to look for another one. All of them detailed the search for the dress and how hard was to find the right one, especially the color, an aspect which is mentioned and explained very specifically: "My dress is *rosé*, that is not the same than *rosa*[12]. It's a very beautiful color." *Ashley Bernal.*

All the girls give especial importance to their parents' efforts to put the party together and they recognize the financial burden of the event.

> My parents are buying the sodas little by little, a few at a time. Every time we go to the grocery store they buy a pack, because in that way they don't need to buy everything at once. Even if many people are helping us, this is a big expense. *Andrea Araya*.

They acknowledge the collaboration of other members of the family, and, in general, the way they deal with relatives is a good example of how the family is now looking at them as responsible individuals, maybe for the first time. Andrea says that "My uncles have been calling

me to give me the money for the party." And Ashley explains "Today I called my aunt to let her know the price of the dress. She is paying for it."

Relatives do not merely help with costs, they also participate in the organization and their collaboration is appreciated.

> "We are worried because maybe the ballroom is too small for the whole family. My father was not sure, but today my uncles went to check it and they say it is OK, so we will keep it." *Cecilia Diaz*.

These journals show the importance of the family on this occasion. Even though at times they mention their *chambelanes* or their girlfriend, almost everything is about their parents and other relatives.

However, they acknowledge the fact that they are offered the party because they have been "good girls." Ashley Bernal says that "I think I deserve this party. I never cause my mother any problem, so I think it is fair for me to have it."

At the same time, they see this occasion as a source of new obligations: "I know that from now on I will have to behave even better. I see the effort that my parents are making to give me this, so now I don't want to disappoint them." *Cecilia Diaz*.

These new obligations, and also the causes for the reward, are closely linked to education. Girls recognize grades and school as the most important obligations, followed by domestic chores, family and community obligations, and religion. This emphasis in education is not only is consistent with their parents' concern, but also with their closeness to their families, because their dedication to school is seen as a way to express love and concern to their parents (Browning- Aiken 2005)

---

[12] Rosa is pink in Spanish

The religious aspect is another recurrent topic in the journals. These girls are attending a religious workshop, and some of them are active participants in the Catholic church, so religion plays an important part in their lives. They constantly refer to God and to their Quince Años mass in the journals, like Destiny Casas: “I like the idea of having a mass. In that moment I will be with God. I have to thank God and my parents for everything.”

Having the opportunity to express themselves without parental control, these girls chose to be consistent with their public behavior, but also with their parents’ ideas and expectations, identity, priorities and behavior, which confirm the tight link between ethnic identity and family cohesion that have been present in this sample. The Quince Años celebration, although it is a "rite of passage" toward adulthood, seems to be perceived by daughters and families in very similar ways, as an experience which contributes to the unity of family, children and kin defining themselves as members of a shared ethnic community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

The five families in this research show different compositions and realities, which allows to try and find patterns and results that might be generalizable to this community and not only to a particular family composition.

Using Grounded Theory Methodology, the coding process developed a model where the variables generating the greatest number of connections were “Family Cohesion” and “Ethnic Identity” (Figure 1, page 28). They variables were also connected to each other. These strong links were considered significant enough to make "family cohesion" and "ethnic identity" the core variables of this thesis, and its main finding. All the other variables were connected with one or both of these variables to complete the story, or “tale,” to use Van Maanen’s (1988) concepts.

The meaning of “*familia*” varies according to the families, but, in general, the findings show that the term has an extended conformation, and it is not characterized by a definition based on “blood” links. Familia is whoever shares the love and concern for the other members of the group. These Quinceañeras respect and have confidence in those “love relatives,” to the point where meaningful distinctions are almost impossible.

In the Quince Años context, the notion of "familia" is nowhere more evident than in the role of the padrinos. Helping in the economic aspects of the celebration, relatives, friends and the community show the concern and love that they have for the family and the Quinceañera. For the parents the external help is not only a form of help which is indispensable in order to afford a

very expensive celebration; it is also a way to mesaure the respect and appreciation that others have for their daughters, and for themselves as parents.

The chambelanes are another example of the community's involvement in the Quince Años. Their parents authorize the boys to spend long hours rehearsing, but in addition they also contribute by buying the expensive attire and other supplies. The cultural background of the boys is an unavoidable prerequisite, not only because they must be able to understand the meaning of the celebration, but also as a way to protect the girls from outside and potentially harmful influences. The choice of the chambelans, the tasks they perform and the significance of their participation in the ceremony is a striking example of the role of community in defining and reinforcing moral and sexual mores, as Denner suggested (2001). Although their presence underlines the transition from childhood to adulthood for the Quinceanera, they are not "novios". Thus the passage to adulthood is strictly controlled by the community, and the girl understands that it does not grant her sexual independence. In that way, it seems quite clear that the celebration is perceived as a way to maintain a strong connection between sexuality and community, and ultimately to reinforce such institution as marriage, which tends to be more stable in the Latino community than in non-Latino families, as Domenech and Rodriguez showed (1996).

This may be perceived by the community as even more important in a context where young Latina girls are in frequent interaction with other cultural values and other social practices. In the United States, Valenzuela (1999) and Jurkovic (2004) have demonstrated that many parents count on their daughters to facilitate communication and interaction with the English-speaking culture surrounding the family. Under these circumstances, the community might fear that the family values taught by its traditions will be altered by the girls' constant

interaction with mainstream American culture. It is quite obvious (as the choice of chambelanes shows) that the Quince Anos is seen as a way to reaffirm gendered roles in the Latina family, and to remind the teenage girl of the behaviour and attitude which is expected from her in her own community.

It is because of this underlying fear of an early pregnancy or marriage – which was the situation of most of the mothers in the sample- that the Quinceañera workshop was created, to try to avoid a phenomenon that is often perceived as a burden for the Latina teenagers.

The parents are immigrants, and they lived their childhood in poverty. This background can explain the great expectations that they have for their daughters. According to them, their children have much better conditions to build their life than they did: their daughters speak English, and most of them were born in the United States which makes them citizens. These parents put a special emphasis on education as the way to succeed in the future, and these girls understand and take this as they priority also, as a way to show respect and love toward their parents.

Parents are especially tough with girls, which can be based on cultural reasons, but also in the fear of teenage pregnancy, a condition that would affect the possibilities of the girls to reach the educational and professional goals they have for them. Maybe this is the topic, which is inseparable from the celebration, where the three times that Bengston and Allen (1993) described are easiest to observe. The ontogenic time of the girls, especially as it is highlighted by the symbolic meaning of celebration as a rite of passage toward womanhood, is turning the attention of the parents to new topics which maybe had not concerned them earlier, such as the possibility of dating and the chance of an early pregnancy. The generational time of these families is

revealed through their position in the kinship, but also because of their life experience. Some of these parents were teenagers when their daughters were born, so the “natural” knowledge about life that parents claim to have is in fact related to personal experience. Generational time in this case is complemented with cultural change, because they live in the United States, so the difference of generations is influenced also by differences in the life experience between parents and their children.

For parents, the Quince Años are seen as a tradition, a connection with Mexico, but also as a privilege that they now can offer to their daughters. Most of the mothers did not have a quince años party for themselves, because their families were very poor, so to be able to offer this chance to their daughters has a special meaning.

This celebration is linked with their identity as immigrants also because it is seen as a way to show that they have reached their economical goals.

Identity

The quinceañeras identity –in every case as “Mexicanas”- is provoked by the dialectical process between the individual and they immediate context, and the external or hegemonic groups (Nagel 1994; Omi and Winant 1994). First, this research shows the intense influence of the family in the formation of identity, independent of the family's composition. The cohesion of the family group and the constant interaction of the girls with their families and community have generated a strong identification with their parents and families' ethnic and cultural identity.

Regardless of the fact that they are in the US, their families are Mexican and that is their main identity. The second element, external pressure, is present also. They identify it as how “the

others” make a difference, or see them as different because of they way they look. In their own words, “they look Mexican”, they are seen as that, and they see themselves in that way also.

The meaning that the quince años celebration has for these girls is another example of the relevant role of their families in their lives. For these girls this celebration is first a family tradition, and in a second place it has an ethnic/cultural meaning. Thirdly, it takes a religious meaning for them.

The decision of celebrating the quince años is seen as the “natural” option for these girls, because it fits with their cultural identity, so this is not a source of conflict with their parents.

The celebration is seen as a reward, but also as a new commitment to behave well. These girls experience a revalorization of their parents because they appreciate their effort.

In conclusion this research shows the importance of family interaction and closeness in the development of ethnic identity, regardless of other elements like the structure of the family. Quinceañeras are girls whose behavior can be understood as a marker of their education and of their parents' success as guardians. The source of that behavior can be explained by this family cohesion, which can be appreciated in elements such as the fluency in the language and their involvement in religion. This circle of influences can explain also the absence of conflict about the celebration, because for these girls the option of celebrate the Quince Años is not seen as an imposition, but a natural option in accordance to their main identity.

These findings confirm a number of conclusions reached by recent research on Latino communities, and presented earlier as part of my Literature Review section. The Quince Años celebration is a clear manifestation of that family tightness which is often described as typical of Hispanic culture (Valenzuela 1999; Domenech Rodriguez et al 2006), and the special role attributed to girls within the family structure (Valenzuela 1999; Jurkovic et al 2004). High

expectations, extra care and a sense of responsibility are part of the girls' gendered identity (Denner et al 2004). An acute sense of ethnic identity (Williams et al 2002) is also played out in this coming-of-age tradition: as these teenage girls become adults, they present themselves to the community as belonging to their parents' culture, in spite of the fact that they have been growing up in a country in which these traditions are not predominant or mainstream.

These conclusions appear consistent with previous research on related topics, which suggests that the qualitative nature of this study has produced reliable data and models. I believe that this type of work is valuable in so far as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of actual cases and situations, thus allowing for greater insight. The obvious drawback of this method, however, is that the sample that was chosen is fairly small, which necessarily affects generalizability.

The other limitation of this work is related to time and continuity, which suggests implications for further research. It would be useful to follow the Quinceañeras during and after the celebration, to know if the ceremony has fulfilled their expectations, and to get a sense of their own experience of it. This research was conducted to determine how different members of the community imagined and organized the celebration and its meaning, especially in relation to family cohesion and ethnic identity. As we have seen, the commonly shared assumption is that this tradition reinforces the traditional gender role of girls in Latin American culture and their commitment to their "roots". But the Quince Años is a rite of passage, which may give the girls a new sense of independence and self-definition. Does a sense of emancipation follow the ceremony, or does it actually reinforce community cohesion, as is claimed by the participants?

Perhaps these questions would be best answered by a long-term study of the way these young women actually maintain the traditions – or not – in future years. At this point in their

lives, all of them describe the event as a happy, important moment. All of them claim their intention to repeat it with their daughters in the future. It is a tradition that they intend to keep. Will they end up doing it? Will the ceremony and its conventions undergo significant changes? Another interesting way to approach this question would be to observe intercultural transfers which might be encouraged by the media for example. Although this research has made it clear that the Mexican community in Atlanta has a very clear sense of the differences in ritual and meaning between Quince Años and Sweet Sixteen, the standardization of cultural practices generated by television may affect both the ceremony and its meaning (see for example MTV's *My Super Sweet Sixteen* which features Quince Años on a regular basis). In other words, research could focus on the way these widely available "mainstream" representations of a specific cultural tradition might turn out to affect the signification of this celebration. Does the inclusion of such ethnic celebrations suggest a wider acceptation of Hispanic culture in non-Latin contexts, or will this interplay eventually affect family cohesion and ethnic identity through the transformation of the Quince Años? In the context of a multicultural community such as Atlanta, the evolution of the different communities' traditional celebrations is a remarkable topic for research, which appears quite significant of the dynamics between mainstream and "minority" culture, as well as the evolution of ethnic culture within a specific group.

REFERENCES

Asociación Latinoamericana Atlanta. 2005. No official estimations of Hispanic population in Georgia. Data obtained personally by the researcher.

Bengston, Vern and Katherine R. Allen. 1993. "The Life Course Perspective Applied to Families Over Time." Pp. 469- 491 in *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach*, edited by P.G. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm, & S.K. Steinmetz. New York: Plenum Press, New York, 1993.

Browning- Aiken, Anne. 2005. "Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms" Pp 167-182 in *Border Crossings: Funds of Knowledge Within an Immigrant Household*, edited by Norma González, Luis C. Moll and Cathy Amanti.New York: Routledge

Dávalos, Karen Mary. 1996. "La Quinceañera: Making gender and ethnic identities" *Frontiers*. 1996.Vol.16, Iss. 2-3; pp. 101-104.

Dameron, Rebecca and Arthur Murphy. 1997. "An international city too busy to hate? Social and cultural change in Atlanta: 1970-1995". *Urban Antropology*. Vol 26 (1). Pp. 43-69.

Denner, Jill, Douglas Kirby, Karin Coyle and Claire Brindis. 2001. "The Protective Role

of Social Capital and Cultural Norms in Latino Communities: A Study of Adolescent Births". *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 23 No. 1, February 2001 3-21

Domenech Rodríguez , Melanie, Melissa R. Davis, Jesús Rodríguez, and Scott C. Bates. 2006. "Observed Parenting Practices of first-generation Latino families". *Journal of community psychology*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 133–148

Giarrusso, R., Stallings, M., & Bengtson, V. L.1995. The "intergenerational stake" hypothesis revisited: Parent-child differences in perceptions of relationships 20 years later. 227-263 in *Intergenerational issues in aging: Effects of societal change,* edited by V. L. Bengtson, K. W Schaie, & L. M. Burton.. New York, NY: Springer.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. 1994. *Gendered Transitions: Mexican experiences of Immigration*. California

Jurkovic, Kuperminc, Perilla, Murphy, Ibañez, and Casey. 2004**.** **"**Ecological and Ethical Perspectives on Filial Responsibility: Implications for Primary Prevention with Immigrant Latino Adolescents" *The Journal of Primary Prevention,* Vol. 25, No. 1, September 2004: 81-104

LaRossa, Ralph. 2005. "Grounded Theory Methods and Qualitative Family Research." Journal *of Marriage and Family* 67:837-857.

Merino, Emilia and Francisca Morales. 2002. “Participación de la Familia” *Cuadernillos para la recepción pedagógica* 2002: 6-22

Nagel, Joane. 1994. “Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture” *Social Problems*, Vol. 41, No. 1, pp. 152-176

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York, NY: Routledge

Rees, Martha. 2001. “How many are there? Ethnographic estimates of Mexican American women in Atlanta, Georgia” in *Latino workers in the contemporary South*, Georgia Press 2001.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Suárez- Orozco, Carola and Marcelo Suárez- Orozco. 1995. Transformations: Immigration, Family Life and Achievement Motivation Among Latino Adolescents. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Szapocznik, J., & Kurtines,W. M. 1993. “Family psychology and cultural diversity: Opportunities for theory, research and application”. *American Psychologist*, 48*:* 400–407.

The Atlanta Journal Constitution. 2006. “Immigration rallies fill nation's streets. Latinos test political, economic muscle” The Atlanta Journal Constitution, April, 12, A1.

Turner, Victor. 1995. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago, Aldine Transaction; Reprint edition.

U.S. Census Bureau. 1999. *The Hispanic Population in the United States: Population Characteristics.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2006. “Special Edition” of the *Facts for Features: 5 de Mayo.*

U.S Census Buerau. 2001. “Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin” Census 2000 Brief

U.S. Census Bureau. 2004. State and County QuickFacts.

Van Gennep, Arnold. 1960. *The rites of passage*. University of Chicago Press.

Valenzuela, Aberl Jr. 1999. Gender Roles and Settlement Activities Among Children and Their Immigrant Families. *American Behavioral Scientist.* Vol. 42 No. 4, January 1999 720-742

Van Maanen, John. 1988. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago

Waisser, Bernardita. 2003. “Representaciones Sociales de Familia en Mujeres Urbanas Populares” Cyber humanitas Universidad de Chile 27 invierno 2003: 1-11

Watters, Bert. 1998. “Quinceañera: The Mexican-American initiation ritual of young women” in *The American Ritual Tapestry: Social and cultural meanings.*

Williams, Susan, Sandra Álvarez, Kevin Andrade. 2002. “My Name is Not María: Young Latinas Seeking Home in the Heartland” *Social Problems* Vol. 49, No. 4: 563– 584.

APPENDIX A

FAMILIES OBSERVATIONS

Araya Family

Members Observed	Dates	Settings	Duration
Father, mother, 3 sons, quinceañera. Uncle, aunt – padrinos- , neighbor, chambelanes, choreographer, priest.	Between early February and early May 2007	Quinceañera's workshop Church Family home Bakery	The observations lasted from 15 minutes, to three hours.

Bernal Family

Members Observed	Dates	Settings	Duration
Father, mother, 1 son, quinceañera.	Between March and early May 2007	Quinceañera's workshop Church Family home	The observations lasted from 30 minutes, to one hour and a half.

Casas Family

Members Observed	Dates	Settings	Duration
Mother, 1 daughter, grandmother, quinceañera. Family and friends during the Quince Años.	Between April and early June 2007	Quinceañera's workshop Church Family home Quince Años	The observations lasted from 45 minutes, to four hours.

Díaz Family

Members Observed	Dates	Settings	Duration
Mother, Stepfather, padrino, madrina, quinceañera. Family and friends during the Quince Años.	Between April and early June 2007	Quinceañera's workshop Church Family home Quince Años	The observations lasted from 30 minutes, to 3 hours.

Estay Family

Members Observed	Dates	Settings	Duration
Mother, father, son, boyfriend, friend, quinceañera.	Between early May and late June 2007	Quinceañera's workshop Church Family home	The observations lasted from 30 minutes, to 1 hour 15 minutes.