Chapter 15
For Men Life is Hard, for Women Life is Harder: Gender Roles in Central America

Judith L. Gibbons and Sandra E. Luna

In this chapter we describe gender roles and attitudes and how they are enacted in the seven Central American countries of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. What are the challenges and opportunities that characterize women's and men's lives in Central America? What evidence is there for social change and what areas are fruitful directions for further study? In this chapter we provide statistical evidence for gender inequality as well as review the gender attitudes and stereotypes that foster, maintain, and legitimize gender inequality. In critiquing the extant literature, we draw upon contemporary perspectives for examining gender, including social construction and liberation psychology. In light of intersecting and nonorthogonal identities of class, ethnicity, and gender, we emphasize intersectionality—that women's and men's lives occur in niches that are uniquely dependent not only on gender but also on economic condition, ethnicity, and rural–urban residence. Throughout we emphasize the contributions of Latin and Central American perspectives on gender, including *machismo*, *marianismo*, *hembrismo*, and liberation psychology, an approach that focuses on the struggles faced by oppressed people. We also highlight the voices of women and men responding to the challenges they face. The quote in the title of this chapter derives from a saying that is common in Central America, "*La vida es dura.*" [Life is hard] (Lancaster, 1992). We argue that although life is hard for many in Central America, life is even harder for women than for men.

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J. L. Gibbons (✉)
Department of Psychology, Saint Louis University, 3700 Lindell Blvd.,
St. Louis, MO 63108, USA
e-mail: gibbonsjl@slu.edu

S. E. Luna
Departamento de Psicología, Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, Guatemala, Guatemala

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Diversity Within Central America

Although the seven countries of Central America—Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama—share a geographic region and to some extent a common language (Spanish), they are linguistically, ethnically, and economically diverse. Guatemala alone boasts over 20 language groups and a diverse population made up of about 40 % indigenous Maya. According to the World Bank (2014) Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador are characterized as lower-middle-income economies (about $ 1000–$ 4000 average annual income) and Belize, Costa Rica, and Panama are classified as upper-middle-income economies (about $ 4000–$ 12000 average annual income). In terms of their histories, all of Central America shares a background of colonization and violence, but those histories vary, with Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador having emerged more recently from armed conflicts (World Bank, 2014).

Within Central America, women's and men's lives are heterogeneous. For example, the average income for urban women in Guatemala is about half that of urban men. However, indigenous women and women living in rural areas have an income of about one fifth that of urban men (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, PNUD, 2002). Similar disparities exist in Guatemala with respect to literacy; while 95 % of young adult nonindigenous women living in urban settings are literate, only 40 % of same-aged indigenous women living in rural areas can read and write (PNUD, 2002). Older women are more likely to be illiterate than are younger women. With respect to health care, women living in poverty have less access to services (PNUD, 2002).

Ideas about gender are context-dependent, contingent on the specific ecological niche. A gay man in urban Nicaragua described his strict gender socialization, "Since childhood my family kept saying that … I was a boy and had to act like a man. [I couldn't play with girls because] I was a man," (Ugarte Guevara et al., 2012). Likewise, Costa Rican women engaged in sex work revealed their views of gender roles in explaining their strategies for appealing to sex tourists, "We have a way of treating them that European women don't have … We don't feel anything for them, but we make them feel like kings," (Rivers-Moore, 2013, p. 160). Overall, it is clear that gender related issues—attitudes, roles, and experiences are diverse, not only by demographic category, but also by specific ecological niche.

Gender Disparities in Employment, Education, Health, and Political Participation

There are many different ways to compare men and women's standing, circumstances, and empowerment. All reveal that gender disparities in Central America are severe. According to a report by the World Economic Forum (2013) most Central American countries show gaps in the economic opportunities, educational

Table 15.1 Gender gaps in the seven Central American countries

Country	Overall rank	Economic participation	Education	Health	Political empowerment
Nicaragua	10	0.62	0.99	0.98	0.49
Costa Rica	31	0.60	1.0	0.97	0.33
Panama	37	0.71	0.99	0.98	0.18
Honduras	82	0.61	0.99	0.97	0.13
El Salvador	96	0.53	0.99	0.98	0.14
Belize	107	0.65	0.94	0.98	0.01
Guatemala	114	0.54	0.95	0.98	0.05

attainment, health indicators, and political empowerment of women and men (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhuoche, & 2013). That analysis calculates the relative situations of women and men, rather than their absolute conditions. The report revealed that the seven countries of Central America have almost achieved gender equality in educational attainment and health, but that women lag far behind men in political empowerment and economic participation (Table 15.1).

A different analysis by the World Bank (2014) that tracked women's labor market participation over a decade, concluded that although gender parity has increased with respect to education, there have been few changes in women's labor participation. Women continue to work more often in the informal sector than do men, and work is highly gender-segregated. For example, most employees in the textile and clothing sector (*maquilas*) are female (World Bank, 2014). Although the *maquila* workforce is better paid than many other jobs, working conditions may be poor and the wages are not sufficient to support a family (Vargas-Hernández & Núñez-López, 2011).

A third gender inequalities index, the multidimensional gender inequalities index (MGII), is based on eight dimensions, consisting of identity, autonomy of the body, intrafamily laws, political activity, education, health, access to economic resources, and economic activity (Ferrant, 2014a). It thus addresses a wider range of conditions than most indices. Of 109 "developing" (defined as not part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the countries of Central America were mostly in the second quartile (i.e., ranked from 22 to 48), with Costa Rica showing the most gender equality and Guatemala the least. Inequality was most marked in the employment realm, and included both gender segregation and lower wages for women.

Men's and Women's Roles at Work and in the Family

Because work and employment are in the public domain, gender differences are easier to document than are gender roles within the home. As reported above, there are gender disparities throughout Central America with respect to the typical work

for men and women, as well as their earning power. In a case study conducted by Prieto-Carrón (2010), women reported gender discrimination, low wages, and difficulty in finding childcare (Prieto-Carrón, 2010). For example, a Nicaraguan woman claimed that in her job, "There is an injustice. Men always get preference when it comes to promotion. They get the best positions, better salaries, and incentives," (Prieto-Carrón, 2010, p. 4).

The informal economy includes all economic activities that are not state-regulated, including self-employment and small businesses. In Central America it accounts for about 50% of nonagricultural work (Wintour & Garzaro, 2013). In all Central American countries except Panama (there are no data for Belize) women are more likely than men to work in informal employment. The percentage varies from a low of 31.4% in Panama to a high of 62.2% in Guatemala. Workers in the informal economy include domestic workers and street vendors; both are more likely to be women than men. The lack of legal protection for domestic workers is a serious problem. In a case reported by Wintour and Garzaro (2013), a complaint to the Guatemalan Ministry of Labor by a housekeeper who had not received her wages was summarily dismissed.

Under some conditions, working, earning money, and owning land can be empowering. When her partner became ill, Zola of Belize had to find a way to earn money. She started by doing what she knew, making pastries. After she had built up a bit of money she was given a small piece of land that no one wanted. She built a house there, got a job, and planted crops. She presents her story as demonstrating her resourcefulness, independence, and transition out of helplessness (McClaurin, 1996). Similarly, Delfina of Guatemala said, "I love going to work. There, I talk to my colleagues who live in similar conditions as I do. One of them, her husband opposes her working, like mine does …. [My colleagues] tell me, 'Don't retire. Don't ever stop working.'" (Menjívar, 2011, p. 170–171). Like employment, land ownership, especially for rural women, can be a tool for empowerment (Deere & León, 2001; Ferrant, 2014a). Ferrant quotes one Latin American woman who said, "When the land is in my husband's name, I'm only a worker. When it is in my name, I have some position in society," (Ferrant, 2014a, p. 680).

In addition to the many challenges for employed women in Central America, for them there may be fewer distinctions between employment and work at home than for men (Prieto-Carrón, 2010). In a case study, Ana from Nicaragua reported that she went directly from her paid job to cooking and cleaning at home, "That does not leave any time for anything else." (Prieto-Carron, 2010, p. 3).

Studies on how people use their time around the world have shown that women do more unpaid care work, such as child or elder care, housework, and volunteer activities in the community than do men (Budlender, 2010). Although men may engage in more paid work than do women, in most countries men are left with more discretionary time than are women (United Nations, 2000). In a time-use study in Nicaragua, men spent more hours per day in paid employment than did women; women spent more hours per day in unpaid labor (Ferrant, 2014b). Overall, men had slightly more time left for discretionary activities such as leisure and personal care than did women. Nicaraguan women had less discretionary time than women

in Argentina, Japan, Korea, South Africa, or Tanzania, but slightly more than women in India (Ferrant, 2014b). It seems likely that the pattern of greater free-time for men applies to Central America as well as other countries around the world.

Paradoxically, in attempting to relieve the unequal burden on women, programs that aim to alleviate women's poverty may actually make additional demands on their time (Neumann, 2013). Drawing on research conducted in Nicaragua, Neumann showed that programs established by NGOs often require individual women to do substantial amounts of community work. They spend time scheduling and attending meetings, conducting surveys, going house-to-house collecting information. Although the women acknowledge that the work is rewarding, giving them a sense of accomplishment and empowerment, the costs are heavy. They get up even earlier to start the day's tasks; they allocate much of the housekeeping and cooking to their children; and they often face resistance from male partners. Neumann designates this added responsibility, the "triple role." She also points out that not only are the added responsibilities time-consuming, but they also foster an individualistic approach to problem solving; the focus on self-sufficiency may ignore structural approaches to community development (Neumann, 2013).

The additional work done by women compared to men extends to their commitment to and participation in parenting. A study of almost 5000 men from four Central American countries (Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua), revealed attitudes toward fatherhood (Ortega Hegg, Centeno Orozco, & Casillo Venerio, 2005) Men strongly endorsed the father's responsibility of financially supporting his children (78%); however, 40% said it was the mother's responsibility (more than the father's) to care for the children (58% denied that, and the rest were uncertain.) However, when specific tasks were mentioned (feeding the children and changing diapers) men shifted the responsibility more toward the mothers; 66% reported that it was the mother's job. In the same study, a father from Honduras said, "I concern myself with everything in the house, my children don't lack anything, [but] because of my work I don't have time to take care of them" (Ortega Hegg et al., p. 149). In a study in El Salvador, Gaborit and his colleagues found that young adolescents responded that a woman without children was incomplete more often than that a man without children was incomplete (Gaborit, Rodríquez Burgos, Santori, & Paz Narváez, 2003). In other words, adolescents endorsed the motherhood mandate, the assumption that women must be mothers to be whole.

There are many female-headed households in Central America and the number has been increasing (Alatorre, 2002). Although absent fathers can contribute financially to child rearing, female-headed households are often poorer than those headed by men. In ethnographic studies, women often complained about men's irresponsible fatherhood or their lack of participation in parenting their children, even when they were not physically absent. A Ladina woman in Guatemala said, "it's just me, by myself. So yes, even when he's home, I'm the one in charge of the kids" (Menjívar, 2011 p. 150). A Nicaraguan mother said, "there apparently isn't a woman in the world he can say no to! And he isn't supporting any of his children, not really-well, anyway, he isn't supporting mine" (Lancaster, 1992 p. 45). So, at least from the perspective of many women in Central America, fathers are not participating fully in

parenting. This is unfortunate because research consistently shows that when fathers are more involved with their children, not only do the children greatly benefit, but so do their mothers, and even the fathers themselves (Barker & Verani, 2008).

Gender Role Socialization with a Focus on Adolescence

Gender socialization and gender development are complex, multifaceted, and difficult to compare across cultures (e.g., Gibbons, 2000). During infancy and early childhood parents treat their daughters and sons differently, assigning school-aged children different tasks that shape their skills and interests. At adolescence, gender differences become pronounced. Here we highlight some relevant findings from Central America that suggest there are marked differences in boys' and girls' gender socialization experiences.

Children's perceptions of what is desired or appropriate for women and men shape their developmental trajectories. According to a 15-year-old Guatemalan girl, the typical Ladino (nonindigenous) man "is working in his job as a judge, that most often these important positions are held only by them (Ladino men, see Fig. 15.1). A 15-year-old Guatemalan boy describes the typical indigenous woman, "That she doesn't have money, that she eats only beans, and that apart from not having money, she cares for her son and lights a fire to make his food." (see Fig. 15.2). Those stereotypic images underlie the reality of the lives of many women and men in Central America (Ashdown, Gibbons, de Baessa, & Brown, 2013).

Most researchers point out that in Central America the gender roles for girls and boys are clearly demarcated and that socialization for gender begins early. For example, in an ethnographic study, McClaurin (1996) observed three Belizean children (two boys and a girl) playing with a machete. Only the girl was reprimanded for playing with a dangerous object. Play can provide a platform for learning gender

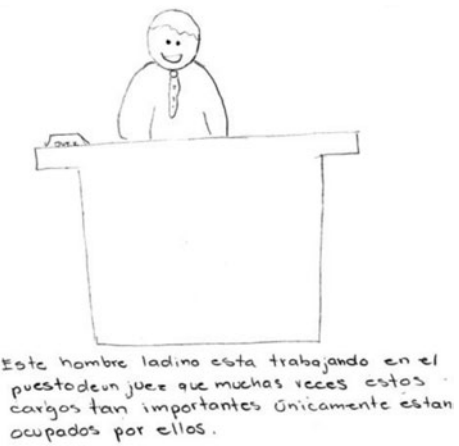

Fig. 15.1 Drawing of the typical Ladino man by a 15-year-old Guatemalan girl. The caption reads, "This Ladino man is working in his job as a judge, that most often these important positions are held only by them [Ladino men]"

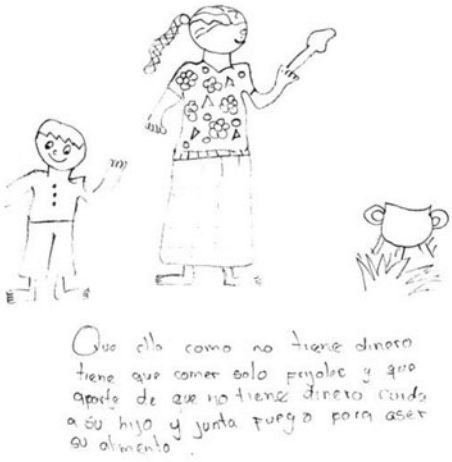

Fig. 15.2 Drawing of the typical indigenous woman by a 15-year-old Guatemalan girl. The caption reads, "That she doesn't have money, that she eats only beans, and that apart from not having money, she cares for her son and lights a fire to make his food"

roles. The song games of children living on Corn Island of Nicaragua revealed gender socialization (Minks, 2008). In a song named "Get ready" girls primped themselves for the arrival of their sailor [boyfriend.] "Here comes the rabbit" is played by older children and primes them for romance, "You will kiss the girl or boy."

In addition, parents' beliefs or ethnotheories about gender development were revealed in a study of low-income Guatemalan mothers' views of the desired qualities of their children (Gibbons, García Egan, Batz, Pauley, & Ashdown, 2013). Although mothers reported that both boys and girls should be respectful and obedient, girls were expected to help with housework, and boys to study hard. One mother said, "A good girl does her chores at once when she is asked … A good boy goes to school and does his homework as soon as he's home. He has good handwriting." McClaurin (1996) similarly observed that Belizean girls were more often assigned chores in the home than were their brothers.

According to Arnett (2010), in traditional cultures the world contracts for girls at adolescence, while it expands for boys. Girls face new restrictions on their behavior, especially with respect to sexuality. Boys have relatively more time with their peers and start to enjoy the privileges reserved for men. Although this perspective represents a generalization across many cultures, evidence from Central America suggests that some of those patterns apply. For example, a report on indigenous girls in Guatemala explained that girls reaching adolescence are not only assuming a large share of household responsibilities, but they are often restricted by their parents from leaving their home or village (UNICEF, 2008).

A study on time-use among adolescents living in "developing" (low-income) countries, including Guatemala and Nicaragua, revealed sizable gender differences (Ritchie, Lloyd, & Grant, 2004). Girls spent more time doing all work than did boys, and this was more pronounced in urban regions and especially when only housework was considered. Boys, on the other hand, spent more hours in labor market work. Over the urban regions of all countries, boys spent more time on leisure activities than did girls, and the difference persisted on both school days and non-school days

(Ritchie et al., 2004). These findings reinforce the interpretation above that young people are being prepared for adult roles that show gender differentiation. There is some evidence that the socialization of teenage boys and girls with respect to sexuality shows the differences described by Arnett (2010) for adolescents growing up in traditional cultures. In a cross-national study of 14–18 year olds that included El Salvador, gender differences were evident in both sexual behavior and in motivation for engaging in sex (Osorio, López-del Burgo, Carlos, Ruiz-Canela, Delgado, & de Irala, 2012). Among 2195 Salvadorean adolescents, 34% of boys and 17% of girls had engaged in sex. Reported reasons for having sex differed by gender with girls more often reporting having sex because they were in love and boys reporting their motivation as wanting to have fun, wanting to know what it was like, "felt like it," wanting to be more popular, and feeling external peer pressure.

A recent phenomenon that has affected many adolescents in Central America is that of migration (Cortés, 2011). In 2011, there were about 3 million immigrants from Central America living in the USA; the primary countries of origin were El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Stoney & Batalova, 2013). There are three ways that migration can impact the lives of Central American adolescents. They can be left behind by migrating parents or they can migrate alone or with kin. In all of those situations, girls are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation than are boys. Participatory action research with teenagers left behind in Guatemala revealed their complex feelings about their situation—feelings of loss and missing their parents, but also pride and understanding that their parents had left to afford them a better life (Lykes & Sibley, 2013).

In sum, gender socialization begins early for children growing up in Central America. Parental attitudes, beliefs, and imposition of rules contribute to gender socialization (Luna, 2011). During adolescence, girls may face increased restrictions and they may also be more vulnerable with respect to migration, an issue that has become increasingly important in Central America.

Violence and Gender

Cada día mueren más mujeres en América Latina por el hecho de ser mujeres (Stiftung, 2010, p. 4.) [Every day in Latin America women die just for being women]. Three Central American countries have been highlighted for their high rates of murders of women—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador (Stiftung, 2010). A word has been coined expressly for women's assassination—*femicidio* [femicide]. The data from Honduras show that 77% of the time, the murderer is not identified. When a perpetrator is identified, he is most often the woman's partner (54%). Young women—teenagers and young adults—seem to be most vulnerable. In Guatemala, a very small percentage of overall homicides (2% according to an oft-cited report) result in a conviction (Worby, 2013). Therefore, those who kill women enjoy impunity.

Domestic violence is a significant problem around the world, and Central America is no exception. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) estimates that 30% of the world's women have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV), and that 38% of all murders of women are committed by their intimate partners. Women who have experienced IPV are more likely to acquire HIV, to be depressed, and to give birth to low-birth-weight babies. IPV may even affect the next generation, as the children of abused women in Nicaragua were more likely to drop out of school and to be hospitalized (Velzboer-Salcedo & Novick, 2000). Occasionally, violence in the home can have unexpected consequences. Anderson-Fye (2010) found that gender-based violence at home motivated some Belizean girls to go to school to both escape the current violence and give them opportunities to avoid abuse in their future lives.

The primary theme that emerged from Mendívar's study of Ladina women in eastern Guatemala is that they were suffering and enduring violence. A health care worker said, "… with the exception of maybe one or two cases, I would say that every woman in this town is mistreated in one way or another (Menjívar 2011, p. 63). Zola from Belize said, "Many women in our country are not safe in their own homes. Women have reported their partners for beating them with such weapons as knives, crowbars, machetes, electric wire, pint bottles, mop sticks, rocks, boards, and rope. Some women are threatened with guns on a regular basis." (McClaurin, 1996, p. 84).

However, it is clear not only that IPV is a risk to women's health, but that it is linked to views of masculinity, including machismo. A woman from Panama explained, "the violence [is] because the husbands are macho, they cheat on their wives, have women in the street, and neglect their homes. When they come home, there are problems." (Velzboer-Salcedo & Novick, 2000, para 33). In sum, IPV and other gender-based violence are significant problems in the Central American countries. Although there are many efforts for change, cultural views about masculinity and femininity and the roles of men and women may need to transform to address this widespread problem.

Physical Health and Sexuality

Although gender plays out in almost all health-related issues, it is most evident with regards to sexuality and sexually-transmitted disorders. As elaborated below, gender roles are linked specifically to sexuality. In Nicaragua, Lancaster (1992) found that the language used for male sexuality, violence, and gender was intertwined. For example, the same words might mean "I'm going to punch you," or "I'm going to put my dick in you." Sexuality for women, on the other hand, is described in more passive terms. In Costa Rica, women living in rural communities may say, "My husband uses me twice/three times a week" (Arroba, 2002, p. 55). In Belize, women's sexuality is shrouded in ambivalence, silence, and often restrictions by girls' parents, and later husbands, to ensure their chastity or fidelity (McClaurin, 1996). In

focus groups of Honduran women in Honduras, participants described what they wished for their daughters' sexuality (Giordano, Thumme, & Sierra, 2009). Above all, mothers wanted their daughters to have choices about having children, and to receive respect from their partners. They saw their own roles as protecting their daughters and also educating their sons not to be macho. "I have four boys, and I have tried to educate my kids as men but not machos." (Giordano et al., 2009, p. 1003). Thus, even within the constrained conditions that they described for themselves, women wanted more agency and better lives for the next generation.

Cultural values about gender roles are instantiated in romantic and sexual behavior. A study of young adults by Dunning (2012) included samples from Belize and Guatemala. There were multiple gender differences in women's and men's knowledge about sexuality, contraception, and HIV transmission, as well as a great deal of misinformation. For example, more men (13%) than women (9%) believed that HIV could be transmitted through vaginal sex, while 35% of women and 30% of men believed that HIV could be transmitted through kissing an infected person. In Guatemala, young adults believed it was always wrong for a woman to have premarital sex (79% of men and 88% of women). Only 32% of men and 19% of women reported that the risk of contracting HIV affects their sexual practices. A sexual double standard among Ladino participants was evident, in that sexual activity among men was encouraged, whereas women were held to standards of chastity.

In a study of people's perceptions of HIV/AIDS among Garífuna communities in Honduras, gender-typed words were associated with the disease (Stansbury & Sierra, 2004). Specifically, risk was associated with "adventuring" and prevention with "being faithful," traits often associated with men and women, respectively. In fact, in Latin America, about two thirds of HIV positive individuals are male (WHO, 2003), possibly a consequence of a view of masculinity that emphasizes sexual prowess. Adherence to strict gender roles may increase the risk of HIV infection for both women and men. Women may feel obligated to accede to partners' demands for sex, and men may express their masculinity through hypersexuality.

Stereotyping, Attitudes, and Ideologies

Gendered behaviors with respect to work and family life, violence, and sexuality are fostered, maintained, and legitimized by attitudes, stereotypes, and ideologies. Like other cultural values, gender ideologies, and stereotypes have both universal and culturally specific elements. Among 25 countries, the adjectives *adventurous, dominant, independent, masculine*, and *strong* were always associated with men and the adjectives *sentimental, submissive*, and *superstitious* always with women (Williams & Best, 1990). Although the sample included four South American samples, Central America was not represented (Williams & Best, 1990).

Gender ideologies also incorporate culturally-specific, or emic concepts (Salas, 2005). Three concepts have been associated with gender stereotypes in Latin America, including Central America. The first is *machismo*, a widely used term that

expresses an exaggerated masculinity, often associated with strength and aggressiveness (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). A second term is *marianismo*, the stereotype of the ideal woman displaying the characteristics of the Virgin Mary, including chastity, virtue, subordination, self-silencing, and serving as the pillar of family and spiritual life (Castillo, Perez, Castillo, & Ghosheh, 2010; Stevens, 1973). The third term *hembrismo* (roughly translated as womanism) is closely related to *marianismo*. It has been characterized by Ignacio Martín-Baró (1983, cited in Gaborit et al., 2003) as encompassing subordination to men, virginity and confinement, sensitivity and emotion, along with conservatism and religiosity.

Men and Masculinity

Many of the masculine behaviors described above, including aggressiveness and hypersexuality, are associated in Latin America with *machismo*. Martín-Baró (1983) characterized machismo as having a focus on genital sexuality, a predilection for physical aggression, an indifference toward or disparaging of anything not associated with the macho image, and an idealization of the mother (cited in Gaborit et al., 2003).

Based on field studies in Nicaragua, Lancaster (1992) has emphasized other aspects of *machismo*. He stresses that *machismo* is as much about power relationships among men, as it is about relationships between men and women. Men must constantly fight for their status in the hierarchy; otherwise they will be considered as *cochones* (men who are penetrated by other men). In a telling incident witnessed by Lancaster, a father urged his infant son to "fight" with an infant girl. When the boy cried after the girl lightly hit him, the father accused him of being a *cochón*. A witness to the lesson pointed out that the father was already teaching his son to beat women. According to Lancaster the core practices of machismo are "hard drinking, excessive gambling, womanizing, wife-beating" (p. 39). Attributing alcohol abuse to machismo is common. Jazmina spoke of her deceased husband, "In most ways he was a good husband. But because Nicaraguan men are machistas, they almost all drink too much. He was an alcoholic … and that's what killed him." (p. 179). Similarly, Ladina women in eastern Guatemala saw masculinity as associated with alcohol, violence, and infidelity (Menjívar, 2011).

Consistent with the idea that machistas look down upon any behavior that is not traditionally masculine, McClaurin (1996) points out that men who perform housework may be stigmatized. In her fieldwork in Belize, a man whispered to her that he was planning to cook dinner for his household. Evidently he feared that he would be teased or ridiculed for assuming women's work. In a study of adolescents' ideal man and ideal woman (Gibbons & Stiles, 2004), one Guatemalan boy drew the ideal man sweeping the floor. However, he explained, "This man is doing the cleaning in his house because his wife is pregnant." In other words, men do not usually do housework.

Studies of masculinity in Guatemala have revealed more nuanced views than the standard accepted stereotype of *machismo*. Luna's (2011) study of young men revealed some elements of traditional *machismo*, for example, that sexuality was a critical component of manhood and that it required both heterosexuality (to be a man was to be heterosexual) and virility (men should be potent and brag about their sexual experiences to other men). Physical violence was also linked to masculinity. Young men reported that their fathers served as icons of manhood conveying the messages that men should not express their feelings, and that fathers should educate, correct, and impose discipline. Less consistent with traditional machismo, the father was also seen as someone who is strong, and defends and protects the family.

In several studies of urban Guatemalan men, it was reported that although *machismo* was influential in defining masculinity (Fajardo Andrade, 2006; Luna, 2011; Ortiz, 2011; Pan American Social Marketing Organization, PASMO, 2007), traditional *machismo* may be losing strength as the central organizing concept for true manhood. Instead, during focus groups, respondents admired men who were responsible, honest, and hard-working (PASMO, 2007). The study identified five images of manhood in Central America, including the powerful man, the energetic man working for social change, the relaxed, tolerant man, the emotional man who expresses his feelings, and the confused young man seeking his own definition of manhood (PASMO, 2007). A study of 1100 urban Guatemalan men studying at a public university reinforced those findings (Ortiz, 2011). Participants saw *machismo* as provoking problems such as violence in the home and the inability of men to express emotions. In response to an open-ended question, men claimed that the most desired qualities for a man were: responsible, faithful, honest, hard-working, loving, caring, sincere, understanding, and intelligent. A similar set of qualities had been reported in a study of Guatemalan adolescents' descriptions of the ideal man (Gibbons, Stiles, Schnellmann, & Morales-Hidalgo, 1990). Additional themes that emerged in studies of masculinity in Guatemala were that men should protect their wives and children, provide for the family through employment, and engage in heterosexual activity (Fajardo Andrade, 2006; Luna, 2011; Ortiz, 2011; PASMO, 2007).

Those more compassionate and moral elements of masculinity are consistent with a view introduced by Arciniega and his colleagues (Arciniega et al., 2008) that *machismo* has two components—a traditional machismo that incorporates hypermasculinity, aggression, and domination of women and a second aspect "caballerismo," that involves emotional connectedness along with nurturance and protection of the family. In a recent study, Guatemalan university students, especially men, endorsed caballerismo while rejecting traditional machismo (Erdmenger de Staebler et al., 2011).

Women and Femininity

Marianismo prescribes that women should have the qualities of the virgin; they should be perfect, the pillar of the family, self-sacrificing, virtuous and chaste,

subordinate to others, self-silencing in order to maintain harmony, and a spiritual pillar (Castillo et al., 2010; Stevens, 1973). *Marianismo* was seen originally as the counterpart to *machismo*, a "cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to, and spiritually stronger than men." (Stevens, 1973, p. 91). It incorporated a cult of the mother, viewed as constantly sad, abject, and in mourning. As the complement to *machismo*, good women are virtuous, passive, and long-suffering in response to men's transgressions. The image of the virtuous woman is contrasted with that of the bad or sexual woman, reviled for her audacious behavior. Paradoxically (with the possible exception of the Virgin Mary), only sexual women can become mothers.

The concept of *marianismo* as the central ideology to describe women's roles in Latin America has been critiqued by Ehlers (1991) in an article titled, "Debunking *marianismo*." Ehlers argues, not that *marianismo* (submissive, passive, and subordinate conduct) does not exist, but that it serves as an adaptive response to unreliable husbands or partners and limited economic power. She points out that subordination is variable, with some women expressing greater agency and mobility, especially when they have economic resources. For example, women are not confined to the home when they are needed to tend the fields and or/sell their produce at the market. Women's apparent subordination is a strategy for survival, rather than submission. Ehlers (1991) describes how communities evolve when men earn income from cash employment and those opportunities are less available to women. For example, in San Antonio Palopó of Guatemala, Kaqchikel women are less likely than men to speak Spanish; they therefore do not interact as much with outsiders, increasing their economic vulnerability. Ehlers claims (as expressed in the title of this chapter), that "Men and women share this impoverished life, but women carry a larger share of the burden." (Ehlers, 1991, p. 6).

Hembrismo according to Martín-Baró (1983) creates three myths or false images of women. The first is the loving wife, who sublimates her own desires to help her husband succeed. This myth can lead to the exploitation of women. The second is the myth of the mother; that myth harnesses women by imposing on them idealized characteristics and qualities. According to Gaborit et al. (2003) this image of motherhood in El Salvador and the rest of Central America hides a sad reality. For many women living in grim circumstances, all they have to offer their children is an uncertain future, with suffering and oppression; they are left feeling socially helpless, unable to live up to the idealized image of motherhood. In addition, self-sacrificing mothers also bolster the established social order and help to maintain structural inequalities by socializing their children into the patriarchal system. The third myth is the myth of the "eternal feminine." This myth exploits women's bodies through promoting beauty rituals, marketing eroticism, and compelling virginity. The ideology of the "eternal feminine" also requires a woman to use her body to achieve, through beauty, a good marriage and an honorable motherhood.

The idealized mother, as described above, is also promoted by religious leaders. Lancaster (1992) relates a priest's homily that concluded, "the true vocation of woman is to produce new men and new women. I say to you: the most exalted role of woman is mother, and it always will be" (Lancaster, 1992, p. 92). The central

role of religion in shaping Latin American ideologies is well-established, and may promote traditional gender ideologies (Garrard-Burnett, 1998; Harrison, 1985).

Consistent with the motherhood myth described by Martín-Baró is the view of motherhood that Menjívar (2011) found among Ladina women in eastern Guatemala. According to her interviewees, motherhood is suffering and sacrifice. Menjívar claims that woman are socially trained to "endure"; they strive to withstand and survive violence and abuse within the home.

In sum, the concepts of *machismo*, *marianismo*, and *hembrismo* are indigenous constructs that shape and buttress gender roles and behaviors in Central America.

Change: Emerging Trends

Having described differences in the lives of women and men in Central America, as well as the constructs that promote them, we turn to evidence for social change. Are gender roles becoming more egalitarian?

A prominent team of researchers has used items from the World Values Survey to explore attitudes about gender equality (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Those authors claim that there is a "rising tide" of gender equality, that across nations, economic and human development is associated with more egalitarian gender role attitudes. The only Central American country survey in that study was El Salvador; there, gender role attitudes were relatively egalitarian, with El Salvador located 22nd of 61 countries. The "rising tide" perspective predicts that modernization in Central America, as in other countries, will be accompanied by more egalitarian gender roles.

Another perspective on social change comes from Central America. Martín-Baró (2006) argues from the framework of liberation psychology that male dominance is sustained by the ideologies of *machismo* and *hembrismo*, the notion that women's subordination to men is innate, inflexible, and morally correct. In contrast, liberation psychology takes the perspective of social construction, that the oppressive ideology can be re-framed to create a new reality. The process of heightened awareness is known as *concientización*. It serves as an instrument of change. Specifically, *concientización* might lead to women recognizing that idealized motherhood is unattainable and men dissociating violence from masculinity. Although she did not name it *concientización*, McClaurin (1996) described a similar process for the Belizean women. For example, Rose, by joining women's groups, came to see her life in a new way. In addition, in a review of Menjívar's (2011) book, Costantino (2012) documented many instances of women's agency in the face of abuse. So, there is evidence from several sources that women are (sometimes) quietly subverting oppression.

Organizations, formed mostly by women, have sprung up all over Central America to address issues of gender equality (e.g., Europe Aid, n.d.; Rodan & Calvo, 2014). An example is the Fundación Sobrevivientes [Survivors Foundation] in Guatemala that focuses on violence against women. Their motto is "To hit one woman

is to hit all women." The organization, led by Norma Cruz, has recently provided testimony and assisted in conviction for five cases of femicide, one of child abuse, and another of rape.

In sum, there are diverse routes to change, and some evidence that efforts toward gender equality are, indeed, effecting change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have described gender roles, attitudes, and ideologies among the seven countries of Central America. Despite diversity due to nationality, ethnicity, economic condition, ethnicity, and rural versus urban residence, there is evidence for a pervasive influence of gender role ideologies that shape people's lives. The ideologies put both men and women at risk for structural inequalities and discrimination in the workplace and the home, for ill-health, for violence (as perpetrator or recipient), and even for death (e.g., from femicide). Overall, the daily lives of men and women are structured by gender ideologies, including *machismo*, *marianismo*, and *hembrismo*, and the result is that women do housework, take care of children, and often work outside the home for pay. Although men may endorse, in general, the idea that they should help care for the children, they see that responsibility as financial support (and that is not always forthcoming). When it comes to changing diapers, most Central American men do not see it as their responsibility.

Spawned in Central America, liberation psychology provides a road map to move forward (Martin-Baró, 1986). A tenet of that perspective is that it is the responsibility of all to align themselves with those who have less power, to opt for the oppressed. With respect to gender, the first step is increased awareness, to recognize that the gender ideologies are coopted by those who have the power in society in order to maintain that power. A practical implication is that one might best support community efforts for gender equality, economic development, and change through accompaniment, rather than by implementation of external programs. Although efforts for change in Central America have been successful at many levels, from the individual woman who starts a business to grassroots organizations implementing effective programs, systemic change is necessary to achieve equality.

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Judith L. Gibbons is professor emerita of psychology and international studies at Saint Louis University. She is the president of the Inter-American Society of Psychology, better known as SIP, its acronym in Spanish. She is the editor of the American Psychological Association Division 52 journal *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation.* Her research interests include intercountry adoption and adolescent development in the majority world, with a focus on girls. During numerous trips to Guatemala, she has studied the development of young adolescents' ideals and hopes for the future, attitudes toward adoption, ethnic prejudice, and eating disorders. In 2011–2012, she was a Fulbright scholar, teaching at the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala and researching gender roles in Central America. She is the author/editor of two books, *The Thoughts of Youth and Intercountry Adoption: Policies, Practices, and Outcomes*.

Sandra E. Luna is a clinical psychologist at the Universidad Rafael Landívar, Guatemala. She has a Masters degree in counseling and mental health from the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala and a Masters and PhD in psychology from the Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala. Her postgraduate study was in neurodevelopment and she earned a certificate in Ericksonian hypnosis. Dr. Luna's work experience includes clinical multidisciplinary teamwork and university teaching in Guatemala City, Escuintla, and other communities in Guatemala. Her research interests are in gender, masculinity, and culture. She is a member and former president (2006–2008) of the Guatemalan Association of Psychology (AGP), a member of the American Psychological Association (APA), a member and vice president for Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean of the Inter-American Psychological Society (SIP), and former president of the Guatemalan Chapter of SIP (2009–2013).