



**“El Es Bien Machista”  
(He’s very macho/chauvinistic)**

Presented by  
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# Why are we having this chat?

- Chauvinistic / toxic masculine attitudes have been problematic in Latinx households and families for generations, while also impeding any clinical progress we as mental health professional have sought to accomplish with our clients. I am hoping to share some information on why these behaviors are prevalent in many Latino men, and how we can engage them in treatment to help them become fathers, spouses, etc.

# About Luis

- LMFT in practice since 2009 (in private practice since 2016)
- Treatment specialties include men's mental health (new dads, fatherhood, men's health concerns, relationships) and trauma
- Married to AMFT (working on hours) since 2007
- Father to 3 boys
- Comfortable in my masculinity

# Self disclosure

- Photo of me and my grandpa



# Abuelo had some machista traits

- Sole provider of the home (didn't want my grandma to work)
- Sole disciplinarian and decision maker
- Demanded unconditional respect
- Emotionally absent to my father and aunts/uncles at times
- Very prideful in his achievements
- \*Joined the Air Force in 1946 to leave home

# ¿Qué es el machismo?

- Machismo (Parker, 1996) is a concept that states that a man must adhere to a set of principles which define and protect his manhood/masculinity. Often times this is conveyed through emotional and physical domination over those around him and sexual dominance over his spouse/partner. An adherent to this concept is known as a “machista” or “macho.”

# Machismo en acción

- A man must command the unconditional respect of those around him
- A man can exert dominance (including sexual) and control over his wife or partner as he pleases
- A man is the sole provider in the home and only disciplinarian.
- A man can never express his emotions, especially those conveying hurt and pain
- A man has the ultimate say in the financial and logistical decisions of his family
- As being the sole provider and decision maker of the family, a man can do as he pleases

# Mechanisms that drive machismo

- Fear of a man not living up to expectations set by his father, grandfather, or those set by cultural views of masculinity
- Fear of being seen as not being able to support his family and in essence not being a “real” man
- Fear of being ostracized by men in his family as well as peers for engaging in behavior deemed to be “feminine”



# Toxic Masculinity vs Machismo

- Toxic masculinity and machismo are similar in the idea that they both promote male dominance of his environment and dissuade expression of emotions. However, machismo is more based on the sense of upholding a system or hierarchy (mainly a man's home), whereas toxic masculinity is based on a set of traits socialized into men throughout their lives and often influence their interaction with others.

# ¿De dónde viene el machismo?

- According to Gonzalez-Lopez, the exact beginnings of machismo are unknown yet inconclusive research seems to indicate it has its roots in both indigenous American and European views of masculinity
- It may have fully taken shape during colonial/post-colonial times in Latin American countries when views of the family shifted to those of a man being the sole provider of the home while a woman maintained the home and cared for the children.

# Machiso is not unique to Latinx culture!

- Despite Hollywood and media outlets portraying machismo as a phenomena unique to Latino men, it actually transcends many cultures and ethnicities throughout the world. Unfortunately prejudice and other racial biases have labeled it a characteristic of most Latino men.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIC2pYyqANM&t=124s>

# Some potential consequences of the behaviors of “machista” men

- Poor relationships with their spouses and children
- Sons living in fear they are not living up to their father’s masculine expectations of them and daughters being exposed to aggressive behaviors from their fathers that could shape some twisted norm/outlook in how a women must be subservient to men
- Potential separation / divorce
- Physical violence towards their spouses, including sexual assault
- Lack of meaningful relationships outside of the family

# My clinical experience with “machista” men

- Current client; woman in her 50s leaving her husband due to his overbearing machista behavior
- 2018, a man referred by a former client due to his behavior creating friction between himself and his family
- 2010, a father who was reluctant to participate in family therapy with his son and wife

# Common denominators in all three men in these cases

- Sole providers of the home working long hours
- Lack of involvement/interest in the lives of their children
- Limited connection to extended family
- Worry about family's financial situation
- Lethargy and fatigue
- Isolation / few to no friends
- Excessive alcohol use
- Negative views about therapy and disclosing family matters to non-family members

## Is machismo masking hurt in Latino men?

- Based on the the common denominators mentioned in the slide above, as well as the propensity of machista men to not express their emotions, one may wonder if much of their behavior is a façade which they use to hide the hurt and pain they feel just like any other human being. Often times as lack of familiar or communal support will exacerbate emotional pain that these men are dealing with which in turn will compound their need to display more machismo

# What helped me engage these men

- 2010 case – formally introducing myself to father, coming off as “non-threatening,” inviting him to ask me questions, and playing board games.
- 2018 case – Listening, listening, and listening. Strong therapeutic alliance, limited self disclosure, laughter, modeling and expression of emotions.



# Some ways men can connect with mental health support

- Referrals from family or other mental health / medical professionals
- Recommendations from clergy
- Community presentations at health fairs or similar community functions
- Hearing inspiration from other men who've endured hurt and pain, who were able to overcome adversity via treatment

# Potential interventions to break the barriers

- Listening
- Authenticity or genuine warmth
- Assessment of resources
- Involvement of spouse, partner, and or family
- Accountability
- Limit setting
- Humor

## Barriers to engagement of machista type and men of color into treatment

- Lack of available treatment resources, programs, or mental health funding
- Stigma
- Lack of community education in how treatment works
- Lack of bilingual / culturally competent staff
- Reluctance of mental health entities to try non-traditional approaches to treatment



# Conclusion

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