Overcoming More Than Physical Borders: The Challenges Gender Creates for Hispanic Immigrants

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Overcoming More Than Physical Borders:
The Challenges Gender Creates for Hispanic Immigrants

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Abstract:
An analysis of T. Coraghessan Boyle’s *The Tortilla Curtain* and Sandra Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek” shows the measures that Mexican women take to find their identity after immigrating. Facing discrimination on the basis of both race and gender, this task is more difficult for females than for their male counterparts. It is a challenge that continues for many women today as they balance two worlds and are expected to fully carry the roles of both. This is a focus on the main characters of the above texts, Americá Rincón and Cleofilas, respectively, as well as personal essays written by first generation Hispanic female immigrants.

Key Points:
- Upon immigrating, women must immediately adapt to serve two different roles based on culture
- The teaching of gender is almost identical in each culture and controls lives
- Machismo is harmful for all parties and prohibits growth
- Mexican women rely on historical identity but are offered limited opportunities to create themselves

Conclusions & Discussion:
Examining the main characters of the texts has shown the additional obstacles recent female immigrants are to face. The women must take on the roles that a new culture impatiently thrusts upon them but also painstakingly maintain the old ones. Gender is not in fact an automatic way of life but a learned identity, something that has been carefully constructed and taught for lifetimes. Their identities have become compromised on the journey and they must find a way to conform as quickly and quietly as possible, overcoming machismo and the already uneven playing field set out.

Works Cited:
Background: http://www.creativealliance.org/sites/default/files/events/2014/08/Untitled-1_8.jpg