



Episode 8: What Happens When We Adultify Our Children

Dariana Urbina is just 17 years old, but she is responsible for far more than the average teenager. She takes care of her three younger siblings—budgeting, cooking and cleaning, and doing paperwork and translation for her parents, who work jobs with grueling hours. Dariana’s heightened burden of responsibility is an example of what experts call “adultification” or “parentification”, in which children are forced to take on the responsibilities of the adults, often due to their families’ socioeconomic status. In this episode, reporter Brenda Ordoñez unpacks adultification’s causes and mental health impacts on children, and what can be done to protect and celebrate families instead.

Brenda Ordoñez: This episode of 100 Latina Birthdays discusses suicide and suicidal ideation. If this subject is uncomfortable for you, please listen with a friend, listen when you feel ready, or skip to the next episode in our series. As always, take care of you.

This is 100 Latina Birthdays, an original open source podcast from LWC Studios about the health, wellness, and lifetime outcomes of Latinas in the US and their impact on the health of the country's economy. Our narrative series was reported in the greater Chicago area, but our findings have national implications. In this first season, we will chronicle the lives of Latina women and girls in the first two decades, from birth to age 20.

I'm Brenda Ordoñez, a second generation Mexican-American journalist, born and raised in Chicago. I'm the youngest of four, and I'm passionate about reporting stories from underserved communities. In this episode of 100 Latina Birthdays, we're going to meet the Urbinas, Mexican-American family living in a small village just outside of Chicago, known as Wonder Lake. The Urbinas moved here from the neighboring town of Woodstock where the movie Groundhog Day was filmed. The Urbinas loved Woodstock, but they wanted to trade in their apartment for a house for their growing family.

They moved to the less expensive Wonder Lake in 2018, settling in a quaint two-story home. The small community is shrouded in greenery and smells of damp moss. Miguel and Adriana Urbina depend heavily on their eldest daughter, 17-year-old Dariana Urbina. She helps run her household and watches her two brothers and sister.

Dariana Urbina: It's like sharing custody, but not sharing custody, because that's not how you say it, but sharing the things to do around the house. We split it in half and we help out each other.

Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana has three younger siblings.

Dariana Urbina: My brother, Angel, who's 14.

Angel Urbina: Hola. Hi.

Dariana Urbina: My other brother, Danilo, who's six.

Danilo Urbina: Hi.

Dariana Urbina: And my sister Mariana, who's three.

Mariana Urbina: Estas son las mañanitas que cantaba el rey David...

Dariana Urbina: They're a lot sometimes.

Brenda Ordoñez: On the outside, Dariana looks like an average teenager. She has thick, black, shiny curls that reach just past her shoulders. She has deep, dark brown eyes that make her caramel skin glow bright. She loves going to school, playing soccer, and most of all...

Dariana Urbina: Going shopping. I usually buy things either for my siblings, or even a little bit for me, but mostly for them.

Brenda Ordoñez: Mentally, Dariana is not an average teenager. She cooks elaborate meals, cleans the house, nurtures her young siblings, budgets her family's finances, and translates legal and medical documents for her parents. In many ways, and for many years now, Dariana has been a parentified – or adultified – child.

Pamela Fullerton: In our community we tend to adultify children, particularly young girls, when we are asking them to do things that adults are supposed to be doing.

I am [Pamela Fullerton](#). I'm a licensed clinical professional counselor here in Chicago, Illinois. I own a private practice called Advocacy and Education Consulting, where we support individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy, couples therapy, and I also run therapy groups for Black and Latina adolescent girls.

Brenda Ordoñez: Pamela's mental health practice is located on the outskirts of Chicago. Her office is cozy, with eggshell colored walls and wooden paneling. It feels intimate and peaceful. The only sound inside the room is the hum of a white noise machine that she strategically places outside of her office during appointments to ensure the privacy of those conversations. Pamela says young Latinas like Dariana may experience forced adultification more often due to their family's socioeconomic status. [According to Pew Research](#), the median household income for Latinos in 2021 was \$59,000 a year. It was [over \\$70,000](#) across all demographics.

Pamela Fullerton: When you're highly stressed because you're living in a cycle of poverty, which many immigrants and many Latinos are, we're [one of the most impoverished](#) racial ethnic groups in the United States, we know that that causes stress on the family unit. The effect that we see is that our parents are working and the kids are at home kind of raising themselves.

Brenda Ordoñez: [Research suggests](#) that impoverished families have a higher chance of adultifying children due to the precariousness of their lives. Pew Research found that in 2021, [18% of Hispanics](#) in the US lived in poverty, compared to 13% of all Americans. Data from the National Library of Medicine shows that poverty rates among Hispanic children [are disproportionately high](#), particularly among first and second generation children with two foreign born parents, like Dariana.

Dariana Urbina: Both of my parents are from Mexico in Michoacán, and I was born here in the US, in Woodstock, Illinois.

Brenda Ordoñez: [Child poverty in the US](#) has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University, or CWLA, the monthly child poverty rate [increased from 12 to 17%](#) between December 2021 and January 2022. Latino and Black children experienced the largest point increase, 7.1 and 5.9 percentage points respectively. The Center on Poverty attributes this to the expiration of the monthly [Child Tax Credit](#) at the end of 2021. These were part of the American Rescue Plan Act and gave families between \$250 and \$300 per child per month.

But for Latinos especially, some experts believe there are other risk factors that contribute to poverty. According to a study conducted by the Migration Policy Institute, poverty is correlated [with lower levels of formal education](#) among all immigrant parents. This is true for Miguel and Adriana Urbina.

Dariana Urbina: He never finished school. He only made it 'til his freshman year in high school. And on my mom's side, she was over there 'til she was about 17. In Mexico, since a young age, she always worked. It was all about the working style, working life. I think she only got to elementary school. She didn't even make it to middle school.

Brenda Ordoñez: Lower educational attainment has been linked to long-term job insecurity and low earnings that can impact everyone in the household. According to the [Illinois Department of Employment Security](#), people with less than a high school diploma had the highest rate of unemployment, compared to individuals who had their high school diploma or a college degree. In 2022, workers without a high school diploma also [earned 25% less](#) than those with one, per the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Miguel, Dariana's father, works at the nearby Dura Wax company, packaging cleaning supplies, and polishing floors. Adriana, her mother, took a break from working a few years ago when their family began receiving government

assistance, but she works for a cleaning company now. They work opposite schedules, Miguel in the morning, Adriana in the evening.

Miguel Urbina: Right now, it's difficult. We're starting to realize that we don't have this same communication. If I want to tell her something, I have to send her a text or call her on the phone, so I can say that household duties are not easy. It's a job that must be done every day for the wellbeing of our kids.

Brenda Ordoñez: So Miguel and Adriana rely on their eldest daughter to fill in where they fall short. Dariana began sharing adult responsibilities when she was in elementary school. She was tasked with caring for her only brother at the time, Angel, while her parents worked.

Dariana Urbina: My mom would always be like, "Take care of your brother", "que se porte bien" and everything, and I was like, "Okay." I was getting annoyed by it, because I was like, okay, I am in third grade, fourth grade, and I have school. I want to have fun.

Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana began feeling pressures that are not typically experienced at such a young age.

Dariana Urbina: I've always been treated as an adult. I've had a childhood, but it's not saying that you've had a childhood with toys, and having a childhood with going on playgrounds. It would always be like, "Oh, help me on this," or "How do you get into this?" Especially online.

Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana also taught her mom, Adriana, English. She still struggles with the new language.

Dariana Urbina: Always on doctor or medical records or anything that was in English, I would always have to fill it out for her. So maybe my knowledge from that is all of the pressure that I've been learning, of reading all of these things, reading all the papers and documents that they've given me, is building up of all of these things that I know and it doesn't fit in my brain. I've always been the big sister. I would always have to be my best because my parents would always have that title on me of like, "Oh, you're like a second mom," or like, "Oh, you're a big sister. You have to be that role." And I was like, "Okay." And I didn't know any better. I just wanted to make them proud.

Brenda Ordoñez: Part of what contributes to this teen's adultification is how she appears on the outside: composed, mature. Here's her father.

Miguel Urbina: Since Dariana turned 15, I knew she was no longer a child. Actually, I knew much earlier, because I watched her development and how she was learning things. So even though at the age of 13 or 14, her physical body wasn't fully developed, her mentality was no longer that of a young girl.

- Brenda Ordoñez: It's a way of treating children that extends to other demographic groups, says Pamela.
- Pamela Fullerton: So adultifying really came from some studies about Black and African-American urban youth. Particularly girls have found that societal stereotypes have shown that they make girls appear older than they are. So black and Latina girls tend to kind of look a little bit older, a little bit more mature. Maybe their bodies are a little bit more developed. And so, as a reason, we start to treat them a little bit more like they're adults.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Pamela says hyper-sexualizing these girls is part of adultification. It impacts them at home, but also in other spaces.
- Pamela Fullerton: We see that they have worse consequences in schools. They're not treated the same way as like a white girl, for example. So we see higher rates of suspensions and expulsions in school, even though a white girl could do the same exact behavior and she would get a much lesser consequence, because we see our Black and Latina girls as being adultified. We see them as being older, and therefore they should be getting more severe or older consequences.
- Brenda Ordoñez: According to the advocacy organization [Center for Policing Equity](#), Black children are often treated as adults by the age of 13. In the case of Latina girls who are adultified, there's a combination of factors contributing to how they're perceived and treated.
- Pamela Fullerton: What happens with some of our Latina girls who may be the older child in the family, where they're now responsible to be, as what some of my clients say, the second mother, and they're now responsible for their siblings, and they have to cook for the household, and they have to clean for the household, and maybe even have to get a job and help pay bills for the household. And that's where we say, I would tell my clients, that idea is being adultified. So even though you were 14, 15, 16 years old, you were acting like the adult in the household, and you were being put pressure on to be that way, even though developmentally you were still a child.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana is heavily involved in managing her family's finances.
- Dariana Urbina: Us being a low income family, EBT has helped a lot. We call it la milagrosa, because every time we call the phone number on the card and it tells us how much there is, I'm like, oh my God, that's a lot. \$300 is a lot for us.
- Brenda Ordoñez: According to [the National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families](#), more than 90% of Latino children were born in the US. This means they qualify for [government aid like SNAP and TANF](#). SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, [is the largest federal nutrition assistance program](#), providing resources for eligible low-income individuals and families to buy food using EBT, or what was formerly known as food stamps.

But eligibility and access can be tricky for families with mixed status households. About one in four Latino children have [at least one parent](#) who is an unauthorized immigrant. Researchers from the Migration Policy Institute found that during the first three years of the Trump administration, participation in TANF, SNAP and Medicaid [declined twice as fast among non-citizens as citizens](#).

According to [the National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families](#), Latino families are less likely than other ethnic groups to apply for some public assistance programs, even if they're eligible. In some instances, it could be due to a lack of information, like for Miguel and Adriana Urbina.

Dariana Urbina: She found out because of her other friends that were also low income. She asked one of her friends, she was like, "Oh, we both work. I don't know what to do anymore. We can't go out to eat. I can't take them to anywhere. They're just sitting in the house and I can't do anything for them because we don't have that money." So my mom's friend, she was like, "You can go to City Hall and tell them that you need government help."

Brenda Ordoñez: After some financially difficult years, the Urbinas began receiving SNAP benefits. According to [USDA data published in 2022](#), more than four million Latinos are eligible for SNAP, yet remain unenrolled.

Dariana Urbina: Being able to have that card is something that the government is... I am so happy because of that.

Brenda Ordoñez: The Urbinas also receive additional food assistance through the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children, better known as WIC. [This USDA program](#) is meant to service low income, pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to the age of five by providing nutritious food for their health.

Dariana Urbina: They give you the amount of the specific food items that you can grab. So we have an app and it tells you, oh, you have \$75 for fruits and vegetables. You have seven gallons of lactose milk, or whatever milk that the child needs.

Brenda Ordoñez: According to Unidos US, in 2021, [two out of five WIC participants](#) were Latino. Dariana says, without this help, they wouldn't have enough money for groceries. And childcare is definitely an expense they cannot afford, so Dariana also watches her siblings.

Miguel Urbina: In her role in the house, for me, she's a huge help, because she can contribute in a lot of ways, such as cleaning the house, caring for the kids, helping us to pay a bill or go to the store. So I see her as a second pair of hands for me and my wife and my other children.

Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana loves her family and has been aware of their financial difficulties for years. This has motivated her to lean into these adult roles without hesitation.

Being a parentified child like Dariana may have an immeasurable impact on the growth and development of Latina teens. Here's Pamela.

- Pamela Fullerton: Nothing in our field is a cause effect, right? So it's not like X causes Y in mental health. There's no cause. It's just more so an association, so something could contribute to some issues.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Pamela says the adultification of Latinas puts a lot of pressure on them and can cause conflict in the family.
- Pamela Fullerton: What we see happening, and what the research is showing us, is that Latina girls specifically, when they have high levels of family stress, family stress caused by these kinds of things where the girl feels like you put me in a position of being an adult and then you want to restrict me or reprimand me like I'm a child, and now there's conflict in that. That's where we see the highest levels of depression and anxiety amongst Latina girls, is when that family unit is in distress because of those differences.
- Brenda Ordoñez: According to research on the adultification of youths experiencing homelessness, published in the Children and Youth Services Review, youth who are adultified run a greater risk of developing [elevated levels of stress and mental strain](#) as they try to cope with more responsibility. Dariana felt these added responsibilities and mounting pressures, reaching a breaking point at the age of 13.
- Dariana Urbina: I did get really depressed, and parents don't know what depression is, especially Hispanics and people that come from over there.
- Brenda Ordoñez: As a result, she says her parents didn't always give her useful advice.
- Dariana Urbina: They're like, "oh, with depression, se quita con una chinga", right?
- Brenda Ordoñez: Which roughly translates to "getting punished to take away the depression". This is not an uncommon reaction from Latinos. According to [the National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), the stigma around mental health in the Latino community can lead to a shortage of information and symptoms not being recognized or addressed.
- Miguel Urbina: Sometimes we don't realize what's happening with our kids or what they have until it gets to that moment, them feeling depressed. In reality, I don't know what depression is. In my childhood home, we never talked about it. Depression for us was always a scolding or getting spanked with a "chancla."
- Brenda Ordoñez: Researchers for [the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai](#) in New York found that Latinos, and Latino children in particular, underutilized mental health resources due to stigma, lack of knowledge, fear, and financial barriers, such as [not having health insurance](#).

- Dariana Urbina: With depression comes all of these thoughts, and the thoughts that I had were not very good thoughts. They were thoughts of harming myself, or those dumb thoughts, suicidal thoughts. I was like, how can I be feeling like this? How am I thinking, like pensando, like this? I can't believe I'm thinking like that. How can I ever end my life when I live great? And I was tricking my brain into thinking that I was fine.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana says she couldn't sustain a sense of "everything is fine" for very long.
- Dariana Urbina: I was in school and I was like, I'm done. And I went to the bathroom and I just sat in the bathroom. I was like, I don't know what to do. And I started having this panic attack, and I'm like, I don't know what to do. What should I do? Should I end it, or should I just let it be? All of these thoughts, all of this emotion started running into my head, and I really didn't know. I was just gone. I was like, I don't know.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana says she doesn't know how she overcame those intense thoughts in that bathroom stall. All she knows is...
- Dariana Urbina: The minute that it was over, I was like, "okay, let's go back. That never happened. That was just something dumb. It never happened".
- Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana went back to class and says she didn't tell her parents until months later.
- Dariana Urbina: They were so mad. They were like, "How can you be thinking like that?" And instead of helping you, they were just making it worse. They were like, I don't know what it is, if other families have that too. But I'm sure that if I was another race or if I was came from another place, they would be helping me. They'd be like, "Oh, I'll help you." But they were just like, "oh si quieres le llamo a la policia que te lleve" or "Oh, if you want, I'll send you to a mental institution. What is wrong with you?" And I was just getting all of this. It's like, darn it, what is going... Help me. I'm telling you because I want you to help me. I'm not telling you so I can get more backlash on what I'm thinking of. And that was just a moment where I was like, really? My parents can't help me?
- Brenda Ordoñez: Miguel and Adriana's initial response may have not helped her in the moment, but her candidness pushed her parents to learn more about the importance of mental health.
- Dariana Urbina: Sharing that did help, because my mom, she never realized what depression was. She never realized what anxiety was. But she searched up depression. She searched up what anxiety was, what it felt like, and she was like, my daughter has all of these things. She has mood swings. She doesn't want to do anything. She's lacking in school. And I feel like she was like, "oh, I have to reach out".
- Brenda Ordoñez: A study by [researchers from Duke and Indiana Universities](#) found that Latina adolescents run a higher risk of developing depressive symptoms, yet are less

likely to receive mental health care than their non-Latino white peers. Without care, these mental health issues can have deadly consequences. [The American Psychiatric Association](#) reported that in 2019, one in six, or 20% of Latino high school students reported having serious thoughts of suicide, including nearly one in four, or 23% of Latina teens.

Pamela Fullerton: [One in four children in the United States are Latino](#), which is a huge population, and of that, more of them are female than there are male. So we know that this really is a public health concern that we're not prioritizing. And that's just sheer based on numbers. The amount of Latinas that there are in this country right now, we need to be prioritizing the fact that we are seeing higher rates of suicide attempts, higher rates of depression, higher rates of anxiety amongst this population.

Brenda Ordoñez: When Dariana is in her mid-forties, [one in four women](#) in the US will be Latina just like her. The support Dariana gets now as she's about to turn 18 could define the job she has when she's an adult and how capable she'll be of supporting herself, her health, and her own family. According to Pamela, anxiety and depression can stem from various things, like the rules a person is given, whether that's from their birth order or from their gender. These adult-like roles can make children feel overwhelmed and inadequate, leading them to have negative feelings about themselves.

Pamela Fullerton: When we start to put adult things onto children, like “we need you to help care for your younger siblings”, you're teaching them, this is what your role is going to be. What if I don't want that role? What if I'm constantly being told I need to be a mother and a wife and a caretaker, but maybe I'm not good at it? Then that starts to influence the way I feel about myself. What if I do it and it hinders my ability to do things I really want to do? Then that starts to have an impact on the way that I see myself and my self-worth and my self-esteem.

Brenda Ordoñez: Pamela says her clients feel the ramifications of these imposed roles even when they're older.

Pamela Fullerton: What we're seeing many women experience now is, what if I have an issue with infertility? Am I less than because I can't have children or don't want children? And again, the narrative is now they're not worth enough. Now they're less than because they can't fulfill these duties that were put onto us as children.

Brenda Ordoñez: Like Dariana's panic attack in the bathroom, this pressure and negative self-talk can have dire long-term consequences.

Pamela Fullerton: That hit on our self-esteem, that anxiety that comes from thinking you're not good enough, so you're constantly then overworking, overcompensating, burning yourself out. That's what those things can really lead to.

Brenda Ordoñez: According to an article [published in Psych Central](#), it is common that children in these parentified roles never speak out about the pressures that come with managing these responsibilities. They learn to believe they are independent and don't need to ask for help

Dariana Urbina: Because of the pressures, I didn't really say anything. I didn't think of that being a big deal, because like I said, do it yourself. You can do it. I don't need to talk to anybody. And having that pressure at home, I was like, people get hit, people get abused. I'm just getting screamed at. That's nothing. Or I'm just being told to take care of my siblings, and I was like, that's no big deal. I can deal with that. In my mindset, especially right now as I get older, I was like, this is nothing. People have way bigger problems. The world has way bigger problems, and mine is just a little piece of the world, and that wasn't a big deal for me.

Brenda Ordoñez: According to [the CALDA Clinic](#), based in Switzerland, suppressing emotions is linked to physical and psychological effects, like becoming more aggressive or engaging in substance and alcohol abuse. Dariana says she stops seeing her therapist two months after her first visit.

Dariana Urbina: It took me a while to deal with my stress and to learn how to deal with my stress.

Brenda Ordoñez: Suppressing her emotions became taxing, so she says she found another outlet.

Dariana Urbina: The coping things that I used was just like, go outside and sit. Just go outside and get rid of all the noises. Get rid of the yelling of my siblings. Get, just everything. Listen to every noise that was surrounding in nature. And it was really nice, and I think that really helped me deal with my stress.

Brenda Ordoñez: The Urbinas say they feel an immense amount of gratitude for Dariana's strength in assuming the role of a second mother, and many Latino families, Dariana's parents spent years looking forward to one important expression of their love and gratitude, her quinceañera.

Dariana Urbina: Having a quince was always something that I had stored, and I would always be so excited to plan my quince, have that color of the dress I wanted and everything.

Brenda Ordoñez: There was just one huge obstacle. Dariana turned 15 in December, 2020, nine months into the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dariana Urbina: Once the pandemic hit, I was like, oh no. Where's my quince going to go? Am I still having a party? Am I still going to have that party that my parents wanted? And just like the process of understanding that I couldn't have a party, I couldn't have the dress of my dreams, was just something that fell on us, and not just on me, but on my whole family, because it's a big deal. For us Hispanos, quinceañeras is a big deal.

- Brenda Ordoñez: Over 400,000 quinceaneras happen every year in the US, [according to Forbes](#). It's a [traditional religious and cultural celebration](#) meant to mark a Latina's passage from girlhood to womanhood. There's usually a special mass followed by an elaborate party with plenty of food, music, and guests. The quinceanera and her damas and chambelanes, the girls and boys in her court, prepare choreographed dances that hold different meanings. Most of them revolve around the young teen transitioning into a new phase of her life. And while the way the party is celebrated has evolved over the years, its significance and importance within the Latino culture remains largely the same. Dariana planned everything for her quince.
- Dariana Urbina: I was knowing who my padrinos, my godparents, were going to be, who was going to give me my flowers, where I was going to get my dress from. Everything was planned. I was planning everything, but then I heard that we were on lockdown, and I was like, is this going to last this winter break? Is it going to be more than a month? So just the thought of not being able to keep going, it was just a disaster. Everything, my plan, their plan was all completely just a fail.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Not wanting to completely miss the chance to give Dariana some part of the traditional birthday, the Urbinas adapted.
- Dariana Urbina: Instead of having a big party and everything, my mom obviously still wanted me to have a little birthday celebration, and us being a religious family, I really wanted my mass. So my mom was like, "Let's go to the mall, or let's go where they sell quince dresses and let's go pick one out."
- Brenda Ordoñez: Quince dresses can be expensive, ranging anywhere between \$200 to \$1,000. It's an expense many Latinos are willing to make, since the dress is [one of the most important parts](#) of the celebration. From picking the fabric and color to choosing the design and neckline, each quince dress is one of a kind and tailored to reflect the quinceanera's personality.
- Dariana Urbina: My dress was pink, and my mom's dress was pink, also. It had lacing at the bottom. It had gems around the chest, and there was off the shoulder sleeves. Even with the camera, if you put the flash on, it would bling everywhere.
- Brenda Ordoñez: But while each dress is created special for its quinceanera, there's one thing they all have in common.
- Dariana Urbina: It was poofy, like a normal quinceanera dress, but it was less poofy than other ones. When I walked, you can't see my feet because it had the things surrounding it, so it would make it even more poofier. And I also dressed them with some nice Converse. I loved my dress, and even though it wasn't my exact dream dress, it was still a dress that my mom picked out. When she saw my dress, she was like, "This one looks like mine." And I was so happy for her for that, because me being the firstborn and all, she totally loved it.

- Brenda Ordoñez: What Dariana didn't know is that her family had planned a surprise for her mini quince.
- Dariana Urbina: We did my mass, and when we came back from the mass, they blindfolded me so I wouldn't see. And I'm like, "Where are we going?" But then we got to my house and I'm like, okay, so they blinded me for nothing just to get to my house? But then I saw that cars started lining up in front of my house, and I'm like, whoa. It was a small party. There wasn't going to be this many people because of COVID and the regulations.
- And then the first car drove up and they're like, "Happy birthday, happy quince day." And I was like, "Oh!" And then they're handing me these presents. And a lot of people, like they almost closed down the street. We had the normal celebrations that a quince would have, just a smaller, smaller version than that. But I feel like it was way more special and more a conserving moment, because all of my family was there, and having that relationships with my family, having that bonding moment with them, especially on my quince day, was a bonding moment for everyone and not just me.
- Brenda Ordoñez: According to [Chicana and Latino studies scholars](#), a traditional quince is also another way gender norms are reinforced. As the quinceanera celebrates the end of her childhood, she symbolically transitions into womanhood, fulfilling the expectations that come with that.
- Marilyn Rodriguez: When we think about traditional Latinx households, there's very distinct gender roles, where the woman is expected to learn how to cook, to be responsible for any household chores. And the men, the boys are seen as providers, and so they tend to work and do more physical labor.
- Brenda Ordoñez: [Marilyn Rodriguez](#) is a bilingual psychotherapist and community liaison at Latinx talk therapy in Chicago.
- Marilyn Rodriguez: I think that a lot of it comes from just the lack of exposure, education. For a lot of immigrant families, they're shielded to what they know, and what they know comes from generational experiences and what their lives were in their hometowns.
- Brenda Ordoñez: And without exposure and education, Marilyn says gender norms in Latino households will continue to be passed down.
- Marilyn Rodriguez: You learn from what you're modeled, and so if you see your mom in the house, cooking, cleaning, then that's also what you're going to perform.
- Dariana Urbina: Those gender roles is something that I wish would like less of in my household.
- Brenda Ordoñez: For Dariana, she says she sees gender roles play out in her family in the way her dad treats his sons differently than he treats her.

- Dariana Urbina: He always loved me. He would always treat me well. But then when my brother came along, he started playing soccer with him. All of these gendered sports. Like girls dance, girls do cheerleading, girls clean, girls cook, and having that familiarity of having those gender roles there. And I would always get jealous, because I'm like, how is he playing with my brother? I want to play too. I want to play soccer. I want to play video games. But he didn't have that same bonding experience that my brother had. And he would always like, "Oh, go help your mom, or go shopping with her, or go do something with her."
- Brenda Ordoñez: Machismo in Latino culture characterizes the female role in the family as caretaker, so unlike her younger brothers, Dariana was taught how to cook and care for children at a young age.
- Dariana Urbina: Coming from a household where gender roles are really strict of how the male sits down, waits for his plates, the female cooks and cleans, brings his plate to the table, serves him water.
- Brenda Ordoñez: But Dariana says this bothered her, so she slowly pushed her family to discard the more archaic norms.
- Dariana Urbina: I've showed them. I've taught them how in our generation right now, it's not a lot of that.
- Brenda Ordoñez: For Pamela, compromise among family members is important for the mental health of the Latina girl and also the family dynamic.
- Pamela Fullerton: I'd love to see compromise happen in families. Like, fine, your kid may need to work in order for you guys to survive as a family. I'm not going to shame you for that. That may be what your family needs to do. Can you give the kid something to be a kid still? Can you let them have one day a week where they can socialize and be with friends, join a club, do "normal kid things?" Because they're still growing up in American society, and if they don't have a piece of what it's like to grow up that way, they're going to feel very conflicted, and that's going to cause some kind of stress in the household.
- Brenda Ordoñez: For Latinas and Latinos who are experiencing mental health issues like depression or anxiety and may be unsure about how to get help, TherapyForLatinx.com has an online directory of therapists in each major city around the country, including those who offer sliding scale fees. [Mental Health America](http://MentalHealthAmerica) provides resources in Spanish if you search for MHANational.org/recursos-en-espanol. For immediate care, [call or text 988](http://988) for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
- Pamela Fullerton: The caretaking child of the family, be gentle on yourself. You have a lot of responsibility on you, and you're an amazing individual for taking that responsibility on. So be careful about putting extra pressure on yourself. Be careful about always feeling the need to achieve, to achieve more, to work

harder than anybody else. You don't always have to do that. Find times where you can just be you. Times where you can have fun and laugh and play, and find people in your life who are also willing to take care of you, because you deserve it just as much as you're giving out.

Brenda Ordoñez: When therapy may not be an option, and when communication between the kids and the parents may be severed, Pamela believes there are still ways an adultified child can find some relief.

Pamela Fullerton: As a child, they may not be able to establish a boundary. They may not be able to extract themselves from what's happening within their household. They're children, right? They may not have an opportunity to do any of that, so what can they do? Well, even a small amount of choice is maybe enough to sustain. What can you choose? You can choose how well you succeed in school. You can choose friends, really good friends that can help support you. You can choose to have relationships with teachers and mentors that may be able to help you as you get older, when you finally get a chance to get outside of that house. You can choose to make good decisions now that will help set you up for a much better, more successful future.

Brenda Ordoñez: For Dariana, she's on the brink of a major choice for her future: where to continue her education.

Dariana Urbina: I want to go to Illinois State, which is my first option, or NIU, which is my second option.

Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana is planning to leave home to attend a four-year university in the fall of 2024. NIU is a public university located just over an hour drive from Dariana's hometown, while Illinois State University is over two hours, and known for its education program.

Dariana Urbina: And what I want is just going on and just teaching. I was planning, and I still am planning, on teaching seventh grade dual language, especially literature in Spanish, teaching for three years in seventh grade, but then moving up to high school and hopefully becoming an actual college professor.

Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana would be the first person in her family to go to college, and her parents say they couldn't be more proud. According to [Excelencia in Education](#), about 44% of Latinos are first generation college students, the highest among all demographic groups.

Miguel Urbina: I am very happy that she's going to college, because I never went. I have siblings that graduated, but I didn't. I'm so proud that my daughter is going to go to a university and graduate, and that all her dreams will come true. And of course, she will have all her support so that she can go study what she sets her mind to, and that she will be able to accomplish all of her goals.

- Brenda Ordoñez: But Dariana leaving for college would mean a big transition for the Urbina family. Her parents decided that this new beginning warranted a celebration.
- Miguel Urbina: Well, yeah, if we weren't planning this for her 18th birthday, I could tell you I'd feel bad because we didn't give her a quince. And now that we're planning it, we're like, why not? Time flies, but it's never too late to have a celebration.
- Brenda Ordoñez: For her 18th birthday in December, 2023, Dariana's family is planning a quinceanera 2.0.
- Dariana Urbina: After the pandemic and everything happened, my mom decided, and I decided that I wanted to still have an 18, but instead of being an 18, it would be like another quince. Right now, we are in the process of finding music for it. And in my family, it's really important to have music, especially live music like Vanda or Grupos.
- Brenda Ordoñez: She's going all out this time.
- Dariana Urbina: My dress is going to be a really dark navy blue. I love navy blue, just because it represents so many things in nature. When you see blue, you think of the sky, or you think of the ocean. You think of so many things, and blue has always been my color. So that's something that I am really excited about.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana says she feels a little stressed out about it. A quinceanera can cost a lot of money, [anywhere from \\$5,000 to \\$20,000](#), depending on the venue and number of guests.
- Dariana Urbina: I saw my mom getting tired and tired of more days that she's been working, especially right now, and I was like, "You should stop working." And she's like, "No, I'm doing this for you. I'm doing it because I want you to have your birthday." And I feel like the pressure of being a role model for my siblings is really hard right now. I come back from school. I don't have time to really do my homework because I have to be taking care of them.
- Brenda Ordoñez: But while she's feeling the stress of financing the party and taking on more of the childcare, Dariana says she's also excited.
- Dariana Urbina: I feel bad because I'm like, wow, I pressured them into me having an 18. But then I give credit to myself a little bit, because I'm like, I feel like I deserve it, everything that I do. And I've lived 18 years, especially with all of these thoughts that I've had in the past and all of these, depression and anxiety. I made it through 18 years, and I'm proud of that.
- Brenda Ordoñez: Miguel and Adriana say they are proud of her too. They are working hard to make this party happen, in part to honor their traditions and customs, but also to bid Dariana a farewell and thank her for her role in the family all these years.

Miguel Urbina: I'm very excited. I want to give her a party because she really deserves it. And what other way is there to thank your kids than with good things? Thank them just for the way that they behave with you. Just like they give us, we need to give back to them.

Dariana Urbina: I love our family. I would never change my family for anything else. Without my parents, without those bad moments, bad experiences, I wouldn't know how to treat other people in the future. So I appreciate my parents. I appreciate everybody who has been there for me. I feel like all of these events, all of this craziness in my life has really helped me build who I am now.

Brenda Ordoñez: Dariana is a kind and compassionate leader who never shies away from taking charge and helping out. While her experience growing up affected her mental health, it also became a part of who she is, contributing to a rich and fulfilling life.

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For more information, resources, photos, an annotated transcript of this episode, and a Spanish translation, visit 100LatinaBirthdays.com. That's the number 100, Latina Birthdays. And follow us on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @100LatinaBirthdays.

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