which is inherently understood by the curandera. He shows that the curandera performs rituals to allow acceptance of loss in the context of the cultural reality. While the curandera is a powerful healer, healing power does not interfere with destiny. If the curandera is unsuccessful at healing, then it is destiny.

Elderly Chicanos are described by Kergler and Goldstein (1983) as the "repositories of wisdom and values." They proposed a biological theory which states that the elderly perform the function of biologically and culturally preparing the children for the transmission of information. Biologically, they carry low levels of bacteria that allow the children to develop natural immunities against disease. Culturally, the elderly change neurophysiologically, allowing them to better tell stories and transmit cultural information to children. Lewis's literary examples demonstrate the second part of this concept. In the Chicano creative literature, the Chicano elderly, called abuelita/abuelito, the figure of the grandparents, are depicted as "those who embody wisdom, dignity, history and tradition" and are deserving of great respect. They are seen in the stories as role models and sources of information with special communicative skills.

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Critique

Lewis's article presents a creative and exciting approach for understanding the importance elderly people have not only in the family but in the community as well. He blends literary personification, cultural integration, and social science strategies for illustrating Chicano traditions and their relationships to the aging process. Literary works involving curandero/curandera and abuelo/abuela folk traditions depict reverance, honor, power, and prestige as engaging qualities inherited by the elderly. Lewis's analysis of Anaya's *Bless Me Ultima* and Santiago's *Famous All Over Town* illustrate the congruence folk traditions have with the positive aspects of the aging process. By using literature to illustrate how cultural traditions are transmitted, Lewis shows social scientists the importance of creative fiction in rendering accurate, realistic portraits of people.

Too many social scientists ignore the positive and enlightening aspects folk literature brings to bear on cultural and psychological perceptions concerning the aging process. Richard Luevano's "Attitudes of Elderly Mexican Americans Towards Nursing Homes in Stanislaus County" is an example of narrowly focused perceptions concerning Chicano/Mexican families and the elderly. Although Luevano shows how most Mexican/Chicano elderly experience familial dislocation in nursing homes, his contribution would make a greater impact if he had included Mexican/Chicano folk traditions as a means for clearly articulating reasons why the elderly are not culturally suited for the nursing home lifestyle.

Curanderismo, the belief in ritual and faith healing of physical and psychological disorders, is a function reserved for the elderly. The honor and prestige accorded the elderly in this service to the Mexican/Chicano community provides for the healthy integration of cultural values and beliefs within a social structure. The positive aspects concerning the Chicano elderly is clearly illustrated in Lewis's analysis of *Famous All Over Town* and *Bless Me Ultima,* where curanderas exercise control over their families and individuals within the Mexican/Chicano community. Here the elderly have access to powerful positions within the social structure.

Analyses such as Lewis's are important for dealing with issues surrounding Chicano/Mexican perception of the aging process. Chicano literature is an excellent resource for all researchers who pursue cross cultural understanding and would understand ethnic conflict with western models of behavior.

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Note

[1]Richard L. Luevano. "Attitudes of Elderly Mexican Americans Toward Nursing Homes in Stanislaus County." *Campo Libre.* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer, 1981) 213-228.