

## Learning to Drink: Early Drinking Experiences of Chicana and Mexicana Women

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### Abstract

The article explores changing drinking practices and early drinking experiences of U.S. born or raised professional Mexican American women and Mexican born bluecollar and homemaker women. Levels of alcohol use and differences between the women are presented from a survey of 269 Los Angeles based Mexican American women interviewed in 1992. Focus group interviews of early drinking experiences are used to supplement the survey data. The survey data indicates that the more acculturated, professional women drink more and more often than the less acculturated bluecollar and homemaker women. Focus groups interviews indicate that for both groups, early drinking experiences shape later drinking patterns.

Alcohol and drug epidemiology and prevention research has focused more attention on male than female populations. This is due in part to the fact that in many cultures women are less likely to drink and more likely to experience negative social responses due to their drinking compared to men (Ames, 1978). However, the women's movement of the 1970's increased public awareness and attention to sexual inequalities in services including disparities in women's alcohol and drug use research and service programming. Since then, the federal government and associated health agencies have increased efforts to examine alcohol and drug use trends and related problems for women and, as a result, there is increasing recognition by researchers and practitioners that women respond differently from men to

alcohol and other drug use. There is mounting evidence, for example, that women have different physiological, psychological and social experiences with alcohol and other drugs which may require gender-specific treatment and prevention programming (Beckman & Amaro, 1986; Hill, S.Y., 1994). There is also mounting evidence that ethnic minority women practice different drinking patterns and may be more vulnerable for alcohol-related problems.

This paper examines the changing drinking practices and drinking socialization experiences of Chicana professional and bluecollar/homemaker women who were among a selected group of Los Angeles Chicanas interviewed in 1992. The women were part of a survey which examined the relationship between alcohol use and sex role orientation, occupation, social context of alcohol use and acculturation. This paper reviews differences found in drinking styles and early drinking experiences between the professional women and the bluecollar/homemakers and specifically explores differences in the lives of these women that may account for increased consumption among the "more acculturated," socially mobile professional women.

### Background

For Chicanas and other Latinas, a preliminary assessment of alcohol and other drug use patterns and related problems began with several local surveys and one national survey conducted in the 1980's (Caetano, 1985; Holck, et.al., 1984; Markides, et.al., 1988). Regular, social drinking is a fairly new aspect of Chicana life associated with new roles and lifestyles adopted by Chicana women. While immigrant women remain largely light drinkers or abstainers, U.S. born or raised Chicanas are moving away from a light and infrequent drinking cultural style to more frequent and heavier drinking (Caetano, 1985; Gilbert, 1987; 1991). Is this a change that we should be concerned about? Or, is this simply part of a larger transformation in the lives of Chicana women toward more liberating familial and work roles that include the choice to drink? If this is a new trend among Chicanas, when is it most likely to become a "problem" for her and her family and how can we support new roles for Chicanas without encouraging "high

risk" drinking among younger generations of Chicanas? These are questions that we must be concerned about as we develop policies and programs for these women but cannot be fully answered until we understand the social, cultural and economic context of change in the lives of Chicana women and how these changes impact their behavior, including drinking behavior.

### **Drinking Practices Among Chicanos and Chicanas**

A striking difference in drinking styles, patterns and problems is reported for men and women in the Chicano alcohol use research. Most studies of Chicano and Latino drinking point to "drunkenness" and "excessive and public" drinking as a primarily male sanctioned activity (Canino, 1994; Caetano, 1984a). Men in Chicano communities drink to socialize with each other, after work and during sports events (Gilbert, 1985b). Traditionally, Chicanas report less and less frequent drinking compared to men (Caetano, 1985;) and are more likely to prefer "mixed" drinks than beer or wine (Trotter, 1985; Munch, et al., 1981). Chicanas, particularly immigrant women tend to drink lightly, infrequently and primarily at family gatherings and holidays. However, as research examines age, acculturation and socioeconomic status differences among Chicanas, a new pattern of alcohol consumption emerges among Chicanas. This new pattern involves a subset of Chicanas who are increasing their alcohol intake and drinking in a wider range of social settings and environments compared to immigrant women. They tend to be U.S. born or raised Chicanas with higher levels of education and income and who are more acculturated to U.S. social and cultural norms. These women report drinking in a variety of social settings and with a wider range of individuals. They drink at conferences, over lunch with clients, at work-related receptions and meetings, with spouses or boyfriends and with other female friends (Gilbert, 1991). Several researchers have proposed that these Chicanas may be "at risk" for developing alcohol-related problems or alcohol dependence (Gilbert, 1991; Roth, 1991; Ames & Mora, 1988; Canino, 1994).

Most studies of alcohol use among Chicanas and other Latinas indicate that acculturation to U.S. culture is related to an increase in alcohol consumption. In the first national survey of alcohol use among Latinos in the U.S., Caetano (1985) found that women who were 40 years of age and older, who were married, who had a job, who were born in the U.S. and of U.S. born parents, and who were highly acculturated had a higher rate of drinking than other Chicanas. Gilbert (1987; 1989b) and Caetano (1987) also report greater and more frequent drinking among U.S. born Latina women.

Theorists in the study of acculturation generally agree that as individuals are exposed to a new culture, a process of adaptation takes place (Berry, 1980; Padilla, 1980). This process is very complex, not uniform and affected by the age of immigration, degree of exposure to the new culture, willingness to risk and explore the new environment and self-confidence (Negy & Woods, 1992). Being born or raised in the U.S. is one indicator of the degree to which a person has adopted or adapted to U.S. cultural norms. Other factors which show a consistent and significant relationship with level of acculturation are length of time in the host country, age of time of entry, and language usage and preference (Marin, 1992; Alaniz, 1993).

Because acculturation is linked to increased drinking among U.S. born Chicanas, it is important to explore what aspects of the acculturation process are related to this trend and why this is taking place with this segment of the Latino population. According to R. Caetano (1990), the overall effect of acculturation seems to be to "liberalize" drinking, but this is not a uniform pattern among Latinos overall and is related to age, gender, place of birth and perhaps region in the U.S. where a Latino lives. For example, he explains that among Latino men who are foreign born, acculturation is associated with a lower rate of abstention and a lower rate of frequent heavy drinking. Among Latina women who are foreign born, acculturation does not have any effect on drinking patterns, these women remain largely abstainers or light drinkers (Caetano, 1987). Therefore, depending on where a person comes from, their gender, where they

locate and how old they are, acculturation can lead either to continued low rates of use or abstention or more frequent drinking.

While acculturation seems to be a major factor in the different drinking styles among Chicanas, it is important to examine specifically what differences exist in the lives of "more acculturated" and "less acculturated" Chicanas to better understand this change.

Survey data provides broad patterns and distinctions in drinking patterns in a large population or group; however, we must examine specific daily and life experiences of men and women in distinct contexts to better understand why these patterns emerge and change over time. To this end, the Los Angeles study of Chicana drinking gathered both qualitative and quantitative data and addressed issues related to acculturation and drinking practices.

### **Sampling Strategy and Sample Characteristics**

A survey and focus group interviews of Chicanas was conducted in Los Angeles, California to examine changes in drinking practices in this group. To explore further the influences on greater alcohol consumption, the researchers utilized a purposive sample of Chicanas stratified by occupation and home background. The sample consisted of 101 professional Chicanas; 92 blue-collar Chicanas; and 76 homemakers. The professional/managerial women were randomly selected from a list of 330 members of a Chicana/Latina women's voluntary organization in the greater Los Angeles area. These women were employed as hospital administrators, in the medical and legal professions, as directors of community programs, educators and business owners. The blue-collar workers and homemakers were randomly selected from the 338 parents listed on the enrollment rosters of eight Headstart Centers in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles County. These women worked in clerical, manufacturing, service and childcare occupations. The women defined as "homemakers" had not earned wages or worked outside of the home in the last three years. These groups of women tended to stay at home because they had smaller children.

### **Survey Instrument and Data Collection**

Data on drinking rates, acculturation levels, context of alcohol use and demographic information was collected using a structured interview conducted by trained bilingual and bicultural Chicanas and the principal investigators at the respondent's home or place of employment. The 44-page questionnaire was available in English or Spanish and interviews were conducted in the language of the respondent's choice.

The interview schedule included questions on alcohol use patterns used by Caetano in the 1984 National Hispanic Alcohol Survey (Caetano, 1985), the Cuellar, Harris and Jasso Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA) as well as background/demographic questions. Each section of the interview was translated into Spanish through a translation, back translation methodology (Brislin, Lonner & Thorndike, 1973).

The Quantity/Frequency Index (QFI) used by Caetano in the 1984 National Hispanic Survey (1985) was chosen for several reasons. First, it has been used successfully with Hispanic populations, including Mexican Americans. Secondly, the self-report information on alcohol use can be used to build a typology that reflects joint quantity/frequency drinking patterns while quantity and frequency of alcohol use can also be analyzed separately as can the types of beverages consumed. The typology, a version of which was first introduced by Cahalen, Cisen and Crossley in 1969 in a study of the U.S. general population, has been used in a number of studies focused on cross-cultural samples (Roizen, 1981), Mexican Americans and other U.S. Hispanics (Caetano, 1985), Mexicans (Medina-Mora, 1988) as well as African-Americans (Herd, 1985). Thus, the data gathered on this local sample can be broadly compared to other groups. The quantity/frequency categories included in this index are:

**Abstainer:** Drinks less than once a year or has never drunk an alcoholic beverage.

**Infrequent:** Drinks less than once a month but at least once a year, may or may not drink five drinks at a sitting.



**Less Frequent/Low Maximum:** Drinks one to three times a month but never has five or more drinks at a sitting.

**Less Frequent/High Maximum:** Drinks one to three times a month and has five or more drinks at a sitting at least once a year.

**Frequent/Low Maximum:** Drinks once a week or more often but never drinks five or more drinks at a sitting.

**Frequent/High Maximum:** Drinks once a week or more often and has five or more drinks at a sitting at least once a year.

**Frequent/Heavy Drinker:** Drinks once a week or more often and has five or more drinks at a sitting.

Focus group sessions with subsamples of the three occupational groups were also conducted to gather additional information not captured through the survey instruments. The sessions were organized around language preferences. Two were conducted in English and one in Spanish. The focus group interviews elicited information on early experiences with alcohol; the women's social milieus and reasons for drinking; and family alcohol use patterns.

### Sample Characteristics

On a variety of background characteristics, the bluecollar and homemaker women were more like each other than the professional women. The demographic characteristics of the sample can be seen in Table 1. The professional sample was older (mean of 35 years of age compared to 32 for the other two groups); had higher income levels (mean income of \$39,356 compared to approximately \$11,000 for the other groups); and had completed more years of education (mean 17.1 years compared to 8 for the other two groups) than the bluecollar and homemaker

samples. Another major difference between the groups is that a larger percentage of the professional women were U.S. born (87%) or U.S. raised (13%) having come to the U.S. on the average by the age of seven. The bluecollar and homemaker women were primarily Mexican born (79% and 84%) and came to the U.S. at a later age (approximately by age 17). This last difference indicates a distinct difference in the degree of exposure of each group to U.S. culture and environment.

Therefore, on income, education, and even age measures there were significant differences across the groups with the bluecollar and homemaker groups sharing many background characteristics.

Other background differences that can be viewed as indicators of acculturation and perhaps of economic flexibility across the groups were the number of children, inter-marriage and divorce patterns, and the degree of involvement in community organizations and events. The bluecollar/homemaker women had on the average twice as many children (3 to 4) compared to (2) the professional women. In addition, while 76% of the bluecollar and homemakers samples were married, only 48% of the professional women reported being married. A larger percentage of the professional women were either divorced (19%) or had never married (33%). In contrast, the professional sample of women were also more likely to marry outside the ethnic group compared to the other two groups. Of the 48 professional women who reported being married, 20 were married to Anglos, African Americans, other Latinos or "other." Of the 135 bluecollar and homemaker women who were married, 130 reported being married to "Mexicans" or "Mexican Americans."

When we asked the women to tell us whether they participated in or belonged to community organizations or clubs, 100 of the professional women said "yes" with only one saying "no." Five of the bluecollar women did participate in organizations, the majority (87) did not. Nine of the homemakers belonged to organizations, the majority (67) did not. We also found that not only did a larger number of the professional women belong to community groups or organizations, but on the

average they belonged to at least four organizations ranging from political groups, voluntary groups, fitness clubs, school-related groups, or self-help groups. These differences are perhaps indicators of the changing lifestyles and opportunity structures of Chicana women, and we can look more closely into these differences to examine changes in drinking patterns.

### **Survey Results**

The following survey data is briefly presented to illustrate that in this sample, as in other national and local surveys (Caetano, 1985;) the more educated, professional women were also found to be "more acculturated" and reported "more frequent" and "heavier" drinking than the other "less acculturated" women.

#### **Drinking Patterns**

A series of questions were asked to elicit information about the frequency and quantity of alcohol intake. Drinking survey results are shown in Table 2.

A general pattern in the drinking data is that the professional women are more highly concentrated in categories of drinking styles that are characterized by "frequent" and "heavier" drinking while the bluecollar and homemaker women are primarily concentrated in categories of drinking that are associated with less frequent or no drinking.

The bluecollar and homemaker samples in this study can be viewed as primarily "abstainers" or "infrequent" drinkers (drink less than once a year or never; drink less than once a month but at least once a year) based on reports of the quantity and frequency of alcohol they consume. In fact, 84% of the bluecollar and 85% of the homemakers are primarily "abstainers" or "infrequent" drinkers compared to 31% of the professional sample. A larger percentage of professional women (14%) are in the "heavier" drinking categories: frequent/high maximum and frequent/heavy (drinks once a week or more often and has five or more drinks at a sitting at least once a year; drinks once a week or more often and has five or more drinks at a sitting). In contrast, only 2% of the homemakers and no bluecollar women are encountered in the "frequent/high maximum and "frequent/heavy" categories.

Another drinking style difference between the professional and other groups is that 26% of the professional women are represented in the "frequent/low maximum" category (drinks once a week or more often but never drinks five or more drinks at a sitting) compared to only 1% of the homemakers and none of the bluecollar women. This pattern of drinking indicates an overall trend towards "more frequent" drinking among the professional women, a patterns that is in direct contrast to the "occasional" or holiday type drinking among Latina immigrant women.

#### **Acculturation**

Acculturation levels in this study were determined by a 20 item scale developed by Cuellar, Harris and Jasso (1980). The items in this questionnaire measure a variety of language use patterns and preferences for speaking, reading, television viewing and writing. Other measures of acculturation measured by this scale are ethnic identification of the respondent and her parents and ethnic group interaction patterns. The twenty items are scored on a continuum of "Mexican" to "Anglo" orientation and the average acculturation level of each respondent was calculated as the weighted sum of the twenty 5-point items. Those on the lower end of the five point scale are considered to be "less acculturated" and those on the higher end are considered to be "more acculturated."

The average acculturation score for professional women was 3.19 while the average scores for bluecollar women and homemakers 2.20 and 2.08.

The background data, drinking and acculturation results are briefly presented to show the distinct differences between the "professional" women and the other two groups. Clearly, the higher levels of education and income among Chicana professionals result in some interesting changes in their marital options and choices, the number of children they have, their degree of acculturation and interaction with individuals from both cultures and their drinking choices and options. The following section will present data from focus group interviews that will further illustrate the differences in the lives of these women.

### **Focus Group Data**

Four focus group sessions were organized based on language preference and time availability of the respondents. Women who participated in the survey were randomly invited to participate in the focus group sessions and the following group interviews took place: \*two English language groups of professional Chicanas, one group had six participants and the other had three; an English group of combined bluecollar and homemaker women with six participants; and one Spanish group of bluecollar and homemaker women with twelve participants.

The major themes explored in the focus group sessions were: early drinking experiences; reasons and context of alcohol use; and family and sex role issues. For this discussion, only early drinking experiences and context of alcohol use will be presented and compared across the sample.

### **Early Drinking Experiences:**

#### **Spanish Speaking Bluecollar/Homemaker**

Members of the less acculturated, Spanish language bluecollar/homemaker group experienced strong family opposition to their drinking and their stories of first drinking were stories of isolated experiences and secretive in nature. Many of the first drinking experiences for this group took place in Mexico. All of their first drinking experiences took place in their homes, with girlfriends or in family settings. Clearly, drinking outside the home in public places was not allowed. They drank within the confines of the home, in private, with girlfriends. These women were unique in their almost total lack of knowledge about the effects of alcohol. They apparently were not aware that excessive drinking might make them sick. For example, after drinking excessively, several experienced "blackouts," and did not remember much of what took place. They tended to drink whatever was available (beer, brandy "Presidente," "rompo," "margaritas," "tequila") often mixing drinks. The women in this group enjoyed talking about their first drinking experiences, they laughed a lot at their stories and the stories they told were remarkably similar: they drank with girlfriends, at home, drank

excessively, got sick and swore never to drink again. Many of the women indicated that they did not drink after these first negative drinking experiences.

Several of the women's first drink took place during family celebrations and they only drank if encouraged by someone and did so simply to join the family. One woman indicated that her first drink took place in the context of a family birthday celebration and her sister-in-law encouraged her to take a drink, "En un cumpleaños de la familia...y luego me dice mi cuñada, pues tomate un trago, "it was at a family birthday party...and then my sister-in-law told me, why don't you have a drink?"

Another woman stated that her first drink took place on the day that her boyfriend went to her home to ask for her hand in marriage. Apparently, the young man brought cigarettes and brandy as an offering to her father. After the visit, her father was not interested in drinking the brandy and he left the house. The young woman and her girlfriend decided to try it because she felt sad that her friend was getting married. The two young women proceeded to drink the brandy in a fairly secluded room of the house. They both became very ill by the end of the evening. She said,

"...nos metimos al cuarto que estaba mas adentro, ceramos la puerta, ya era la noche por ay como las ocho de la noche pues alli tomamos hasta que a la botella ya no le salia nada...y el caso es que nos tomamos la botella entre las dos y un cigarro y un vaso de vino, y el caso es que cuando la acabamos no se como pero yo me sentia tan mal, me dolia tanto la cabeza...me fui y me acoste y pues no podia dormir, la casa daba vueltas, yo sentia que me queria caer y me daba por vomitarme, pues me tuve que levantar y salirme para afuera para vomitarme porque yo no aguantaba...y senti muy mal y yo pense que nunca mas iba a tomar vino." (we went into the room which was in the back of the house, we closed the door, it was already night time, some time around eight o'clock, well there in the room we drank until nothing came out of the bottle...and it seems that we drank the entire bottle between the two of us, we had a cigarette, a glass of wine, and the situation is that when we finished it, I don't know how, but I felt real bad, my head hurt real bad...I went to bed but I could not sleep, the house



went in circles, I felt like I was going to fall and I felt like throwing up, well I had to get up and go outside to throw up because I couldn't stand it anymore....I felt real bad and I thought that I would never drink wine again).

Another woman talked about first taking a drink of her mother's pure cane alcohol that she had in the house. She described it as follows:

"Y sabe con que me emborrachava, dios mio, con una botellita de alcohol que tenia mi mama de caña y limon, vieran visto que mala dure como una semana mala...no se como estuvo que yo agarre el alcohol y me lo tome, y vieran visto que mala... me pego, me pego mi mama bien feo." (And you know what I used to get drunk with, my god, with a little bottle of pure cane alcohol and lemon that my mother had, you should have seen how sick I got, I was sick for a week...I don't know how it happened but I grabbed the alcohol and I drank it all, and you should have seen how badly she hit me, my mother hit me real bad).

In general, the women in this group indicated that in their adult lives they do drink but drink primarily during family gatherings and occasionally at a dance. The contexts and frequency of alcohol use in this group remains fairly limited.

#### **Early Drinking Experiences: English Speaking Professionals**

In contrast, the more acculturated professional women indicated that their first drinking experiences often took place, "with a group of friends," at parties, or during family celebrations. This group tended to have their first drink more often outside the home with mixed sex friends, at their girlfriends' homes, during family events, such as Christmas celebrations, on vacations while visiting relatives in Mexico or at parties. Generally this group had early drinking experiences associated with higher family incomes. For example, some of the the women talked about going out with friends who had cars or drinking champagne with family members or having their first drink at their friends' parents home where a home bar was available.

One woman described taking her first drink when she was fourteen. A girlfriend invited her to her house, her parents were not home and her friend's older brothers said, "Have a beer," "Have a cigarette." So, she said, "I took a couple of puffs of cigarette - while I was drinking this beer. That's it."

Others talked about Christmas or other special events with family. One woman said, "It was probably at Christmas, at home with family." Another said, "I drank when I was 19 when I went on vacation in Hawaii." Others talked about visiting family in Mexico when they had their first drink. One said:

"When I was 12 I went with my grandparents on a trip to Mexico and we were there all summer and we were visiting a relative who was like the queen of making "rompope" and they said, 'here' it was the first time I had a full serving."

One other said:

"I had a similar first time experience. I think I was maybe four or five. And another celebration in Mexico...tios and tias and primos, you know how everybody segregates...the mothers and the tias were all in the kitchen cookin'. The men were out in the patio drinkin'. There were mariachis. And all the kids in the backyard, you know, just havin' fun.. And I remember being intrigued 'cause I noticed guys havin' really a lot of fun. They kept drinkin' cerveza. And I went over to bother my father and asked him 'Let me try it.' And you know, he kept saying, 'No mija its just for adults,' in Spanish. But I pestered him so much and I was his favorite but he relented and he said, 'Alright you wanna try some,' and I tried some."

Another also had her first drink at a family celebration. She said:

"I was at, it was at a family gathering also where it was like a Christmas celebration, where my parents allowed me to have a little bit of whatever it was, rum or whiskey or somethin' in my coke - I had to have been about 17 or 18."

As adults, these women continue to drink in a variety of settings in mixed sex groups or with spouses. The contexts where these women currently drink range from at dinner with friends,

a glass of wine with dinner at home, at conferences or banquets, at restaurants with boyfriends or co-workers and vacations.

### Discussion

The focus group interviews indicate that for both groups, the early drinking contexts and experiences seem to shape later experiences with alcohol. Early drinking among the more acculturated women was less restrictive and more varied with respect to place and the persons they first drank with than those of the less acculturated women. More acculturated women continue, in their later years, to drink in varied settings and with a wide range of people. The less acculturated women's early experiences were restricted to home and were often "secretive" and experimental in nature. These women continue to drink in culturally limited and prescribed environments.

The data suggests that the more acculturated women are socialized to develop less restricted drinking patterns because of the more permissive cultural norms and attitudes surrounding their earlier drinking experiences. The cultural restrictions against drinking among the less acculturated women seem to serve as protectors against the development of higher risk drinking behaviors. Can we assume as several experts have suggested that more acculturated Chicana/Latina women are at risk for developing alcohol-related problems? Higher levels of alcohol consumption are usually indicative of greater risk and greater consumption is usually accompanied by other risk factors. For example, unemployment, divorce, and other life problems can contribute to problem drinking. We must, therefore be careful in the interpretation of survey data regarding greater use of alcohol among U.S. born Chicanas. While survey research does indicate an increased pattern of alcohol use among Chicanas/Latinas, surveys do not provide qualitative, detailed information about the lives of these women including other risk factors that might indicate greater risk for developing problems. It is possible, for example, that more acculturated Chicanas have a more open attitude towards alcohol use because of their earlier drinking experiences. They are raised in more permissive, open and

public drinking environments and retain these norms in their later life. Thus, while some of these women may be "at risk" for developing alcohol dependence, some may be better equipped to manage alcohol and to public drinking environments and retain these norms in their later life. Thus, while some of these women may be "at risk" for developing alcohol dependence, some may be better equipped to manage alcohol and to develop informed and responsible styles of drinking. On the other hand, the protective drinking environments of the less acculturated women may prohibit them from developing knowledgeable and appropriate drinking behaviors and in fact may promote an infrequent but "excessive" style of drinking. It is clear from the focus group interviews, for example, that the less acculturated women were less knowledgeable about the different types of alcohol and were not aware that excessive consumption could result in "blackouts" or getting sick. Many of them reported experiencing "blackouts" and feeling physically ill because they drank too much the first time they drank. The more acculturated women perhaps because they were introduced to alcohol in public, open social settings never reported excessive drinking or feeling ill because they drank too much. Given this different interpretation, the less acculturated women may also be "at risk" precisely because they are very protected against the use of alcohol and are limited in their knowledge and experience with it. More importantly, because of their lack of knowledge, they may be limited in their ability to serve as teachers or role models for their U.S. born daughters regarding appropriate use of alcohol.

While increased drinking among U.S. born Chicanas and Latinas is cause for concern, we must explore and interpret changes in drinking patterns and styles among Chicanas as part of a broader feminist framework. Restricted cultural roles while seemingly serving a protective role may ultimately serve to be dysfunctional and inappropriate in a fast changing U.S. cultural environment. U.S. born Chicanas/Latinas are leading the way towards developing more egalitarian and broader roles for women. They must be supported in their efforts and at the same time educated about the risk that is associated with increased levels of alcohol consumption.



### Implications for Prevention and Education

This research points to several important directions in the prevention and education of alcohol-related problems among Chicanas. First, the research suggests that there is a major difference between the cultural lives of Mexican immigrant women and their U.S. born daughters. Their different lifestyles and ideas about their roles as women includes different views about the use of alcohol. Younger, U.S. born women have incorporated alcohol as part of a larger sense of themselves in an ever changing and dynamic lifestyles, while their Mexican born mothers continue to be protected from, and be naive about, the use of alcohol. In order for immigrant women to serve as buffers and to effectively practice their important cultural role as teachers and mothers, they need assistance and education to better understand the changing lives of the younger daughters, including the role of alcohol. Education and prevention programs targeted to the Mexican born/immigrant women would assist them to understand the lives of their U.S. born daughters.

Second, the more acculturated Chicanas and Latinas also need education and information about associated risk factors that accompany greater levels of alcohol consumption. Beyond education, these women need greater support from spouses, partners, family and community to assist them in their efforts and ideals of being active, involved women. With appropriate support networks, the greater risk associated with higher consumption of alcohol can be minimized.

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**Table 1: Sample Characteristic**

	<u>%Homemakers</u> (N=76)	<u>%BlueCollar</u> (N=92)	<u>%Professionals</u> (N=101)
Mean Age	32	32	35
Mean Income	\$10,657	\$10,978	\$39,356
Mean Years of Education	7.5	8.6	17.1
Mean N Children*	3.8	3.4	1.8
% U.S. Born	16	21	87
% Mex. Born	84	79	13
Mean Age Came to U.S.	17	17	7
% Married	76	76	48
% Divorced	14	12	19
% Never Married	9	12	33
% Members, Vol. Organizations	12	5.4	99

\*ever married women



**Table 2: Drinking Patterns Among Mexican American by Occupation**

	<u>%Homemakers</u> (N=76)	<u>%BlueCollar</u> (N=92)	<u>%Professionals</u> (N=101)
<u>Quantity/Frequency</u> <u>Category</u>			
Abstainer	22	23	11
Infrequent	63	61	20
Less Frequent/ Low Maximum	11	12	22
Less Frequent/ High Maximum	1	4	7
Frequent/Low Max.	1	0	26
Frequent/High Max.	1	0	11
Frequent/Heavy	1	0	3

**The Other's (Inappropriate) Other:  
Racial Ambiguity and the Multiple Marginalizations  
of Puertorriqueñas in the Northeastern United States**

Caridad Souza

---Hegemony works at leveling out differences and standardizing contexts and expectations in the smallest details of our daily lives. Uncovering this leveling of differences is, therefore, resisting that very notion of difference which defined in the master's terms often resorts to the simplicity of essences (Minha 1990, 372).

---When I learn about Afro-American history I treat it as my own, as part of my identity as a Black woman. I see the accomplishments and survival as a testimony to all people of color. I hope that Black Americans can find pride and strength in Puerto Rican and other Afro-Latin histories, but I know that it will take time for people to see this global Pan-Africanist view (Brady 1988, 47).

---Dialogues among and coalitions with a range of groups, each with its own distinctive set of experiences and specialized thought embedded in those experiences form the larger, more general terrain of intellectual and political discourse necessary for furthering Black feminism. Through dialogues exploring how relations of domination and subordination are maintained and changed, parallels between Black women's experiences and those of other groups become the focus of investigation (Collins, 1990, 36).

In *Black Feminist Thought* (1989), Patricia Hill Collins argues that African American women have a special angle of vision of "outsiders within" based on their social location in the political economy of domination and their historical relationship to European Americans. Collins' analysis of a standpoint epistemology grounded in the lived experiences of African American women has caused me to reflect upon the position of Puertorriqueñas in the United States in relation to notions of