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Mexican-American Women in the United States: Acculturation Experiences, Language and Self-identity

Diana Hammer '01
Illinois Wesleyan University

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**Mexican-American Women in the United States:
Acculturation Experiences, Language, and Self-identity**

By

Diana J. Hammer

Honors Research in Sociology and Spanish

Chair and Project Advisor: Dr. James Sikora

Committee Members: Dr. Teodora Amoloza

Dr. Carmela Ferradans

Dr. Njeri Mbugua

Illinois Wesleyan University

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ABSTRACT

As a society composed of multiple ethnic groups, the United States is a place where the processes of acculturation and assimilation are never-ending. Today, large numbers of Mexicans, in particular, are immigrating to the U.S. According to Gordon's assimilation model (1964), Anglo-American and Mexican-American ethnic groups will one day be indistinguishable. At the individual level, Gordon believes this process begins with acculturation as members of each group adjust to the differing customs of the other. Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935, 1937) agree that finding a compromise can be especially difficult for "marginal" individuals who have identities in both cultures. From standardized acculturation scales based on variables such as language ability, self-identity, and generational status, research shows that embracing bicultural heritage is a realistic way for immigrants to adjust to life in a new society.

This study explores the nature of the acculturation experience in three generations of ethnic Mexican women in Bloomington/Normal, Illinois. Based on a questionnaire adapted from the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar et al., 1995) and semi-structured conversations with twenty-one women, the researcher has seen that the above theorists' ideas do apply to the experiences of women in the sample. Of the variables investigated, generational status seems to be the most important factor affecting these women's acculturation. This is illustrated in three case studies, which show that marginal characteristics are most applicable to the woman of the midgeneration. Clearly, staying connected to Mexican heritage while living in the U.S. has helped all three women stay secure in their own identities and happy in the country they call home.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, immigration is not a new topic. We are, with the exception of Native Americans, a nation of immigrants representing all ethnicities, generations, nationalities, and cultures. What is it, then, that makes an American? Are recent immigrants automatically “American” the minute they take up permanent residence here? Are they still members of their former home society even though they are physically absent? Can they be a part of both cultures simultaneously? Although there are no easy answers, it is clear that the immigrant's journey does not end at the border. The process an immigrant goes through in adjusting to life in a new culture, called acculturation, continues throughout an immigrant's life and into the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Several misconceptions about immigration and acculturation come to the surface and are addressed here. First, there seems to be a common, unspoken belief particularly in White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) America that one is either “American” or “foreign,” but not both. As we will see, this may have much to do with the fact that the WASP ethnic group is made up of the only nationality groups to be truly assimilated in the U.S. (Gordon, 1964). The women in this study clearly demonstrate that it is possible to be American, and at the same time identify oneself with another nationality, in this case “Mexican.” Second, there are many misunderstandings regarding why immigrants come to the U.S. Americans are often vocal in their censure of illegal immigration which they believe is done with the express purpose of taking away government resources and jobs from legal, tax-paying citizens. Although it is true that the women in this study overwhelmingly agree that the reason they or their family came to the U.S. was to escape poverty and the poor economy in Mexico, it is also true that immigrants in Illinois pay about twice as much in taxes as do native-born citizens for the same amount of government aid (Illinois Immigrant Policy Project, 1998). Third, immigration issues impact not only the private lives of immigrants but the greater

social and political agendas of the U.S. Although native-born WASP America is often content to leave immigration policy in the hands of Congress and border guards, acculturation in particular is an issue that concerns all of us. The 2000 Census reports that 28.4 million people, or 10.4 percent of the total U.S. population, is foreign-born (Lollock, 2001). Throughout the long acculturation process then, some of the most significant contacts immigrants will have with the native culture is with native-born people in normal, routine interaction. According to Gordon (1964), the development of relationships between native-born and foreign-born Americans is one of the most important means to breaking down the divisions that constantly plague our diverse society. We will first describe this process in detail by describing the group process of assimilation and then examining acculturation from the individual perspective.

Based on literature and interviews with twenty-one ethnic Mexican women in Bloomington/Normal, this study finds acculturating to be bicultural is the most realistic immigrant experience, regardless of immigrant generation. While the nature of interaction that the women have with each culture seems to vary depending on age at immigration, it is clear that self-identity and language play key parts in how all of these women perceive their relationship to American and Mexican culture.

Literature Overview

In this paper, we will look at the processes of acculturation and assimilation from both group and individual points of view. Milton Gordon (1964) focuses on the macro-perspective. He describes a seven-step process of assimilation that begins with acculturation and eventually leads to an ethnic group becoming indistinguishable from the surrounding society. Over the course of several generations, Gordon explains that immigrant groups gradually lose all connection to their former culture as they become more like the one in which they currently live. Other researchers

have taken acculturation, the first step of Gordon's model, and studied what this process means to individual immigrants. Keefe and Padilla (1987), for example, recognize that it is unlikely that individuals will become acculturated to the point of losing all connection to their past heritage. They realize that this process takes several generations and is hardly ever smooth or linear. Park (1927) describes people in this process as “marginal.” People caught between two cultures because of immigration may feel comfortable in both, but at the same time distinct from members of either group.

To make the assimilation process more personally applicable, other theorists (Buriel, 1984; Rumbaut, 1994, 1997) focus on the individual's view of assimilation at the first step in Gordon's model: acculturation. These researchers explore acculturation by quantitatively measuring some of the variables that affect an immigrant's experience such as self-identity, generational status, language ability, and language preference (Cuéllar et al., 1995; Marín & Gamba, 1996; Ramirez III, 1984). In addition, several tests have been developed using a combination of these indicators, to measure acculturation more systematically across a wide group. From this research, it seems that staying connected to past heritage while integrating into present culture, or biculturalism, is a valid, realistic possibility for immigrants and their families.

To represent this idea, Cuéllar, Arnold, and Maldonado (1995), Marín and Gamba (1996), and Keefe and Padilla (1987) use multi-dimensional models, which recognize that individuals can participate and feel equally connected to two or more cultures. This approach reflects real life by acknowledging that there are some aspects of a culture which individuals may never adopt as their own, and others which are claimed immediately. As we will see, there is ample evidence showing that it is healthier and more beneficial for immigrants to stay connected to their heritage than to try to acculturate as fast as possible to a totally new life (Buriel, 1984; Rumbaut, 1994, 1995, 1997; Sherraden & Barrera, 1996).

Assimilation and acculturation issues are particularly interesting regarding the Mexican American community in the United States. According to data from the 1997 Current Population Survey, “in 1997, Mexico accounted for 28 percent of the foreign-born population [in the United States]....The population from Mexico was about six times as large as the foreign-born population from the next highest country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).” Recently released data from the 2000 U.S. Census reports that of the 32.8 million Hispanics in the United States, 39.1 percent are foreign-born, and 66.1 percent are of Mexican origin (Therrien & Ramirez, 2000). If only because of the large population, it is worth understanding what immigration, acculturation, and assimilation mean in human terms to the ethnic Mexicans in the United States. This research will specifically concentrate on the point of view of Mexican Americans living in central Illinois.

ACCULTURATION AND ASSIMILATION

The process of becoming American has been the subject of much study for decades (Rumbaut, 1997). The two words most used to describe this process are *acculturation* and *assimilation*. Keefe and Padilla (1987) state: “(1) *acculturation* is the loss of traditional cultural traits and the acceptance of new cultural traits (these can be two distinct processes), while (2) *assimilation* is the social, economic, and political integration of an ethnic minority group into mainstream society” (p. 6, emphasis added). Although these definitions only specify assimilation as a macro-process for groups, there are researchers (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Cuéllar et al., 1995) who use it to refer to an individual process as well. This paper will discuss both of these processes the same way that Gordon (1964) does, treating acculturation as a part of the assimilation process.

Gordon's Macro-perspective

Gordon (1964), who uses the United States as an example to describe how ethnic groups come into contact and the steps through which they pass before truly integrating with each other, bases his theory on definitions which are slightly different from the basic ones presented above.

Both Gordon (1964) and Cuéllar et al. (1995) cite a definition by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936), which explains acculturation as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Gordon, p. 61; Cuéllar et al., p. 278).

Assimilation for Gordon (1964) means, “the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values” (Gordon, p. 81). From this we see that acculturation is simply one step in the larger assimilation process, and it can occur simply as a result of one group living close to another group over time. It is important to realize also that Gordon believes that acculturation on an individual level is not a guarantee of any kind of group assimilation in the future.

According to Gordon, the key for total assimilation is the second step in the model. This step named “structural assimilation,” refers to individuals of the ethnic group having both formal and causal relationships with members of the dominant community. This happens as individual immigrants gain entrance to the organizations, social clubs, political parties, and other social institutions of the native society, a task which is often more difficult than it sounds.

For structural assimilation to be achieved, Gordon stipulates that it is first necessary for the immigrants to desire to be a part of the mainstream life of their new society. Realistically speaking, however, he observes that first-generation immigrants are attached to their home country and often are not interested in changing to be like the new, surrounding culture. The children of immigrants, on the other hand, have roots in both cultures. Rumbaut (1994) defines the generation

of children who were born in another country and moved to the U.S. before the age of 12 as the 1.5 generation. These people, who will be referred to as the “mid-generation” in this paper, as well as second-generation children born in the U.S., are often eager to participate in the social life of what is really their home country, even though it may seem foreign to their parents. Unfortunately, although immigrants or their children may be ready to integrate, the second requirement for structural assimilation is the host society’s desire to include the immigrants (Gordon 1964, p. 111). Gordon specifies that the dominant group must welcome the newcomers as valid participants in the social structure, with a recognition that is not based solely on their ethnicity ***[as in Affirmative Action]. If this does not happen, ethnic communities are left to develop their own parallel social structures that exist within, but remain separate from, the mainstream society (Gordon, 1964).

These divisions in society are often described as pluralism. Keefe and Padilla (1987) attribute this idea to both J. S. Furnival and M. G. Smith (Keefe & Padilla, p. 21), who state that a pluralistic society is one in which multiple ethnic groups live near each other, but engage in limited interaction at all societal levels and have completely different lifestyles and culture. Gordon also discusses what he specifies as “cultural pluralism,” and adds that the idea “offers legitimization of the preservation of sub-national communal life...and justifies the result as providing a more democratic, more interesting, and more dynamically fruitful culture for all Americans” (Gordon, 1964, p. 13). Although attractive, Gordon criticizes this conception of pluralism for smoothing over the differences and inequalities that often exist in a multi-cultural society. Viewing life this way, it is easy to believe that citizens of different ethnic groups are purposely not mixing with each other in order to preserve unique cultural differences. If this were in fact the case, there would be nothing to worry about.

However, Gordon believes that divisions evident among ethnic groups and races are caused by a more institutionalized, deeply-rooted problem. For him, the main division separating ethnic

groups from one another is not a difference in culture but the lack of shared social institutions.

Thus, Gordon believes the term “structural pluralism” fits better than “cultural pluralism,” (1964, p. 159). As soon as ethnic groups come to have regular social interaction, he reasons that the rest of the assimilation process will continue according to his plan. After structural assimilation is accomplished, the last five steps of Gordon’s model continue building on the relationships between the groups until the last step, “absence of value and power conflict” is achieved (Gordon, 1964, p. 71).

In the U.S., Gordon believes that race and religion are causing structural pluralism and thus, hindering structural assimilation. He notes that the mostly white, Christian, Northern European immigrants from Europe that came in the 18th and 19th centuries have completely assimilated after gaining access to all government and social groups of this country. Slavic immigrants, although Jewish, have also become fairly unrecognizable from mainstream American culture. Blacks and Native Americans, on the other hand, who have been here for hundreds of years, are still marginal to mainstream society (Gordon, 1964, p. 159). What is still evident thirty years after Gordon’s observations is that nationality groups have mostly blended together, but African-Americans, Native Americans, or the more recent Latin American and Asian immigrants, are not at all structurally assimilated yet. These groups conform to societal norms of behavior and language, but do not look or worship as a “typical American” should. Today, as Gordon predicted, these individuals form groups which exist more or less independently of each other and of the mainstream culture. These non-white, non-Christian Americans are consistently denied entrance to the dominant social and political institutions and have therefore formed and maintained their own.

Marginality

While the process of group assimilation slowly proceeds along the path to one group's customs and values replacing another as Gordon theorizes, each respective ethnic group's members may experience some confusion. According to Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935, 1937), individuals who already have roots in both of the merging groups have a different struggle. They explain that when two non-assimilated cultures cross inside of one person labeled by Park (1928) as a "marginal man," personal identity becomes an issue of continuous importance. Although Stonequist (1935) discussed this particularly in relation to biracial people, it also seems to apply to bicultural immigrants. First-generation immigrants may wonder if they are still a part of their original society even though they are not geographically present. They may not want to integrate to life in this new place, but at the same time doubt if they are automatically part of the new, dominant group just from living there. Mid- and second-generation immigrants may have many of the same questions, although for them the issue is often exacerbated since the society in which they grow up may demonstrate completely different values and customs than what their family teaches. They may feel at home in both worlds and thus, more torn when the two conflict (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1935). Park (1928) described this type of individual as "a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society" (p. 892).

This position as part of two cultures gives individuals a unique but stressful perspective on the world. Seeing both lifestyles from the inside and from the outside, Park (1928) says, can often cause moral or psychological tension more profound and of longer duration than what a person of only one heritage would feel. Stonequist (1935) elaborates on this idea by describing how marginal people realize their situation and attempt to find a satisfactory understanding of their own identity.

Before there is any kind of identity crisis, Stonequist says individuals must understand that they are a part of two cultures that the rest of the world does not always see as compatible. People must have a certain amount of time to become familiar with both cultures to notice any tension. After a conflict is realized, Stonequist (1935) says that every individual develops a strategy for “enduring,” which may mean choosing to become totally part of one group, if possible, and ignoring the other (p. 11). He acknowledges however that choosing a certain direction often only leads to more confusion and heartache.

From the perspectives of Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935), this state of ambiguity is difficult for individuals affected by it, but absolutely necessary if the assimilation process is to continue at the group level. Stonequist (1935) posits that it is only through the bridge made by marginal individuals that the two cultures continue to have contact until one is sufficiently blended with the other. In his words, “It is in the mind of the marginal man—where the changes and fusions of culture are going on—that we can best study the processes of civilization and progress” (Stonequist, 1935, p. 12).

Negative Results of Acculturation

While marginal individuals seem to have a choice as to which group to identify with, they often experience pressure from both cultures to conform a certain way. Stonequist (1935) explains that marginal persons are often attracted to the lifestyle of the superior group, but at the same time distressed by the treatment this group gives the subordinate group. Regardless of the marginal person’s desire to fit in, members of both groups may reject his or her claim as inauthentic or conversely, regard him or her as a “leader” (Stonequist, 1935, p. 11). Either way, marginal people are constantly made aware of their mixed background regardless of which group they associate with.

In the United States, we see examples of this tendency to pressure immigrants to blend in one way or the other. Mainstream American culture is rarely appreciative of immigrants who do not exert themselves in order to become a part of their new society. There is still a subtle, underlying feeling in the Anglo community which says that people who seem “ethnic” or “foreign” are somehow less American, even if they were born here. Thus, individuals who want to be successful in the United States are encouraged to try as hard as they can to acculturate to the culture and lifestyle here. As Rumbaut (1997) describes, dominant Anglo society is often overly preoccupied with reducing “the social 'costs' of the new immigrants - before they begin to produce net 'benefits' to the new society” (par. 11). However, several researchers (Buriel, 1984; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Rumbaut, 1994, 1997; Sherraden & Barrera, 1996) have seen evidence that this all-or-nothing idea of acculturation is not only unrealistic, but inaccurate when it comes to the every day lives of Mexican immigrants and their families in the United States.

For example, Buriel (1984) cites numerous studies of different generations of Mexican immigrants which show that acculturation is not necessarily helping improve their lives. First, Buriel points out that familiarity with Mexican culture usually decreases from the first to later generations (p. 102). In light of this fact, one would expect that American characteristics and overall life stability would increase. However, from studies on income, educational attainment, and educational performance, Buriel (1984) sees improvement from the first- to the second-generation, and then deterioration from the second- to the third-generation (p. 103).

These studies seem to indicate that second-generation immigrants who feel connected to both parts of their heritage are more successful in the U.S. than either the preceding Mexican generations or the subsequent American generations. Buriel (1984) suggests that one possible reason for this is that ethnic Mexicans who are not familiar with Mexican culture are more likely to believe American stereotypes about Mexicans and consequently be more embarrassed and insecure

in their identities. On the other hand, Mexican-Americans who are proud of their Mexican heritage are more likely to not pay attention to stereotypes and to work to prove them wrong (Buriel, 1984, p. 124).

Rumbaut (1997) is another researcher who cites several studies in the areas of health, education, and language that illustrate the detrimental effects seemingly caused by the acceptance of American culture. In a longitudinal study of first-, mid-, and second-generation immigrant youth in San Diego, Rumbaut (1997) found a “strongly linear assimilative pattern, but in the direction of deteriorating rather than improving outcomes” (Rumbaut, 1997, par. 23). As evidence of assimilation, Rumbaut reports that the percentage of students preferring English increased over the three-year period from 66 percent to 82 percent. Interestingly, the number of students self-identifying by their family’s original national identity also increased between the two studies from 32 percent to 48 percent. Rumbaut indicates that this “reactive ethnic consciousness” seemed to be important to these students’ academic performance (par. 41). The youth had higher grade point averages and lower dropout rates than the school district average. In general there was a “negative association of length of residence in the United States and second-generation status with both GPA and educational aspirations (Rumbaut, 1997, par. 32).”

Rumbaut (1997) describes another study which found that on average, Mexican-born women in the U.S. were later to receive medical attention during pregnancy, endured more financial difficulties, and had more children, although their infants had higher birth weights and lower mortality rates than native-born white and Hispanic women and their babies (Williams et al., 1986, as cited in Rumbaut 1997). Sherraden and Barrera (1996) have also documented similar observations of Mexican women having healthier babies under higher risk conditions than U.S.-born mothers of all ethnicities. In regards to the physical health of adolescents, Rumbaut describes a study by Harris (1997) which found that compared to foreign-born youth, second-generation,

native-born junior high students had “the poorest health and the highest levels of risk behaviors” such as asthma, obesity, drug addictions, or truancy (Rumbaut, 1997, par. 23).

Thus we see, as Stonequist (1937) also described, the dangers of assimilating to the point of hindering, rather than facilitating, adjustment to the new society. In his later book, Stonequist (1937) remarks that the potential for bad experiences with marginality can be avoided when the individual is in an atmosphere of total acceptance, regardless of ethnicity. This allows him or her “to preserve the best in their ancestral heritages while reaching out for the best that America [can] offer” (Stonequist, 1937, p. 206).

Biculturalism

Since denying one side of a person’s heritage in an attempt to fit in with the other side only seems to result in complications and more sociological risk factors, many theorists have begun to realize, as Buriel (1984) explains, that “the adoption of a bicultural identity represents a more realistic and psychologically healthier solution to the ambiguous acculturative demands of Anglo-American society” (p. 126). He and other theorists have noted that acculturation does not require denying one identity in order to take on another, but can simply mean adding to one’s already established cultural heritage (Buriel, p. 127).

To incorporate biculturalism into a theoretical model, Ramirez (1984) believes changes need to be made to traditional ideas which perpetuate the mutually exclusive nature of cultures and belittle the ability of immigrants to integrate both. For example, LaFramboise et al. (1993) discuss these ideas using the “alternation model” which “suggests that it is possible to maintain a positive relationship with both cultures without having to choose between them” (p. 399). While Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) often seem to portray marginal people as victims of their circumstances, the alternation model affirms the power of the individual. This perspective suggests

that societal pressure to conform one way or the other still exists, but in the end it is the individual who chooses to what extent he or she will associate with each culture. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) reiterate that the more connected individuals are to both of their cultures, the more psychologically healthy they will be.

The areas that LaFromboise et al. (1993) have found to be the most important in assuring that an individual will feel integrated to a culture are: “(a) knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, (b) positive attitudes toward both majority and minority groups, (c) bicultural efficacy, (d) communication ability, (e) role repertoire, and (f) a sense of being grounded” (p. 403.) Many other researchers have made similar lists of the aspects they feel are most crucial to a sense of cultural identity. It is important to remember however, that regardless of which particular aspects a researcher defines, bicultural individuals may not necessarily have the same degree of familiarity with each culture in each area. For example, a person may be equally proficient in the language of both native countries, not at all knowledgeable about the history of either group, and only informed about cooking in one culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Cuéllar et al., 1995, Marín & Gamba, 1996; LaFromboise, et al., 1993). To represent this kind of variability, researchers use multi-dimensional models of acculturation (Cuéllar et al., 1995; Marín & Gamba, 1996; Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

An example of this can be seen in Keefe and Padilla’s (1987) three-study series of ethnic Mexicans and Anglos in three California cities. After an extensive series of interviews and almost 50 in-depth case studies, Keefe and Padilla based their measures of acculturation on “Cultural Awareness and Ethnic Loyalty” (p. 48). As they explain, “Cultural awareness refers to an individual’s knowledge of cultural traits (for example, language, history, culture heroes) of the traditional and host cultures. Ethnic loyalty is the preference for one cultural orientation and ethnic group rather than another” (p. 46). With these two measures, five distinct categories of Mexican Americans emerged that clearly show the multi-dimensional nature of the acculturation process.

Keefe and Padilla (1987) described “La raza” (Type I) as people who strongly identify with Mexican culture, had high scores on the Cultural Awareness and Ethnic Loyalty scales, and are mostly first-generation immigrants. “Changing Ethnics” (Type II) are also mostly first-generation, identify less with Mexican culture as indicated by low Ethnic Loyalty scores, but are not very familiar with Anglo culture. The majority of respondents were in the “Cultural Blends” (Type III) group, which largely consisted of native-born Mexican Americans who feel comfortable in both Mexican and Anglo company, although still “retain their ethnic identity and are conscious of their Mexican heritage” (p. 55). “Emerging Americans” (Type IV) are people who also interact in both cultural contexts, but do not identify as strongly with Mexico and were born in the United States. The last and smallest group of mostly third generation immigrants, “New Americans,” (Type V), had low scores on both Cultural Awareness and Ethnic Loyalty, and do not feel connected to Mexican culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987, pp. 54-57).

ACCULTURATION STUDIES

At this point we have seen that becoming completely oriented toward American life may not be as beneficial for immigrants as is commonly thought, especially if it involves immigrants completely abandoning their original culture. However, the research showing this has depended on the assumption that it is possible to measure acculturation concretely. Is it really possible to gauge something that is so abstract? What are the indicators that point towards level of acculturation, and how is it possible to measure them accurately? The following studies show how the variables of language ability, self-identity, generational status, and length of time spent in the U.S., along with other techniques, have been used as measures of acculturation.

As mentioned earlier, Rumbaut (1997) has used self-identity and language preference as indicators of acculturation. In another article, he discusses identity in greater detail, this time using results from the San Diego study in addition to results from a parallel study of immigrant youth in Miami (Rumbaut, 1994). As in San Diego, students in Miami filled out questionnaires regarding their ability in English and their native language, general demographic information, discrimination experienced, educational goals and performance, how they self-identified, and whether they were often embarrassed by their parents. Rumbaut explains that this last question was included because adolescents' decisions of identity may be based as much on how they feel about their parents as on how they feel about the culture as a whole.

Results from this data show that birthplace makes a significant difference in how youth perceive their identity. As would be expected, 43 percent of the foreign-born, and only 11 percent of the U.S.-born identified with their nationality of origin. On the other hand, the plain "American" identity was chosen by only three percent of the foreign-born and 20 percent of the U.S.-born (Rumbaut, 1994, par. 26). Interestingly, only four percent of the U.S.-born Mexican youth identified as "American," the lowest percentage of any Latin American group. Since Rumbaut (1994) mentions that "Jamaican and Mexican youths are the least likely to feel embarrassed by their parents," he hypothesized that they may also be the most willing to keep the identity of their parents (par. 32). Overall this study shows that self-identity seems to be a fairly reliable predictor of connection to a society.

In another effort to measure acculturation, Buriel (1984) explains that it is hard to understand and feel connected to a culture without knowing the language. He was influenced by Stoddard (1973) who says that language really has three purposes: exchange of ideas, transmission of cultural values and information, and uniting the speakers of the language. It is apparent that no matter how accustomed individuals become to a culture, they will never fully understand it or relate

to it until they know the language. Many researchers (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Marín & Gamba, 1996; Cuéllar et al., 1995) have recognized this and use different aspects of language ability as a measure of acculturation.

In order to find out what factors determine Mexican immigrants' language ability in the first place, Espinosa and Massey (1997) used a sample composed mostly of men in Mexico and the U.S., who on average were 33 years old, worked "in agriculture or unskilled occupations," had five years of primary school education, and had made their first visit to the U.S. around age 24 (par. 27). In this study, respondents were asked to report the time of their last trip to the U.S., their age at that time, the total time spent in the U.S., and their English language ability currently and at the time of their last trip.

Espinosa and Massey (1997) found "clear and unambiguous evidence that English proficiency rises sharply with exposure to U.S. society" (par. 46). Having children or other family members in the U.S., more education, and more trips to the U.S. also increased the likelihood of having better English skills. The researchers note that "compared to migrants who worked initially in agriculture, those who worked in other occupations upon first arrival were more likely to learn English proficiently (par. 39)." However, they note that this may simply indicate that people who arrived with better English skills were able to avoid agricultural jobs from the beginning.

It is important to keep in mind that many of the migrant respondents in this study were not permanent residents of the United States and not planning ever to be. They knew English in order to survive during their trips across the border, but they definitely considered themselves citizens of Mexico. Thus it seems clear that knowledge of English is not necessarily indicative of a strong connection to American society, although using English more than Spanish probably is (Espinosa and Massey, 1997). From these researchers' point of view, accurately using language as an indicator of acculturation requires measuring not only fluency, but frequency of use and language

preference. Buriel (1984) adds that especially when studying U.S.-born Mexican Americans it is particularly important to take Spanish language ability into account: “because society and its institutions frequently discourage the use of any language other than English, preservation of Spanish over two or more generations reflects a conscientious attempt to maintain ties with the ancestral culture” and therefore greater connection to Mexican culture (p. 101). In keeping with biculturalism then, the most accurate way to measure acculturation based on language would be to measure abilities and preferences in English and Spanish separately, as Cuéllar et al. (1995) and Marín and Gamba (1996) have done in developing their scales of acculturation.

Standardized Acculturation Scales

One point that stands out with all of these studies mentioned is that researchers use their own ideas as to which variables to measure, how to measure them, and what sample to use for the study. Thus, it is often difficult to generalize these studies to other cases. At least two teams of researchers however, have developed scales that are meant to make acculturation measurement of all Hispanic groups (Marín and Gamba, 1996), and in particular Mexican-Americans (Cuéllar et al., 1995) standardized. These scales use many of the variables discussed above and use multi-dimensional scales to measure a broad range of people’s experiences and knowledge in both Mexican and Anglo cultures. By standardizing measures of acculturation, researchers hope to make it easier to understand how all generations of Mexican individuals in the U.S. orient themselves in relation to both American and Mexican cultures, and thus obtain an idea about the overall extent of assimilation between these two groups.

Probably the most well known of these standardized scales is the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans - II (ARSMA-II) developed by Cuéllar et al. (1995). This test consists of a Mexican Orientation Scale (MOS) and an Anglo Orientation Scale (AOS) which measure

acculturation to one of the cultures independently from the other. Questions regarding “language use and preference” and “ethnic identity and classification” are included in addition to questions measuring the other variables of “cultural heritage and ethnic behaviors” and “ethnic interaction” (Cuéllar et al., 1995, p. 282). In their analyses of the test results, these researchers divided the respondents into five groups based on the compiled scores from the two scales. They note, however, that the results can be divided many different ways to describe more general or more specific degrees of acculturation.

Cuéllar et al. (1995) assert that the ARSMA-II is a reliable and valid test to use for measuring acculturation in Mexican Americans. The first series of questions, some of which were used in the present study, achieved a test-retest reliability after one week of .96. This test also showed a strong correlation (.61) between generational status and level of acculturation. They report that third- and fourth-generation immigrants were significantly more likely to score higher on the Anglo Orientation Scale and lower on the Mexican Orientation Scale than were first-, or second-generation Mexican Americans (p. 290).

In further support of the pivotal role played particularly by language in the acculturation process, Marín and Gamba's (1996) Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS) is based entirely on measures of Spanish and English language ability and use. Although these researchers originally intended also to include a scale measuring participation in ethnic festivals and holidays, they found that the results obtained from this scale were not as reliable as those from the language scales. The BAS is composed of three parts which each include items measuring the Hispanic (Spanish) and non-Hispanic (English) domain: the Language Use Subscale, the Linguistic Proficiency Subscale, and the Electronic Media Subscale. For “generational status” the combined correlation coefficients of all three sub-scales were .57 for non-Hispanic and -.62 for Hispanic items. The three scales had a correlation with “ethnic self-identification” of .52 for non-Hispanic

and -.50 for Hispanic items (Marín & Gamba, 1996, p. 304). Marín and Gamba further note that the “Electronic Media Subscale” seemed to be the least reliable of all three and that the “Language Proficiency Subscale” seemed to give a good estimate of acculturation even when used by itself. Marín and Gamba (1996) developed the BAS to measure acculturation for the entire U.S. Hispanic population, but they obtained the most consistent results from Mexican-Americans on both Hispanic ($\alpha=.93$) and non-Hispanic ($\alpha=.97$) items.

CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE

At this point we have seen that there are different ways to define, order, and measure the processes of acculturation and assimilation. From a macro-perspective of assimilation, Gordon (1964) developed a linear model that begins with acculturation and ultimately ends in the complete disappearance of immigrants as distinct from the dominant group. He believes that “structural pluralism” is a temporary description of a society, such as the U.S., that has not passed through the key step of structural assimilation. From a micro-perspective, Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) describe the position of individuals caught between two merging cultures. While marginal people may feel comfortable with both groups, they may also experience pressure from each side to conform one way or the other. Research (Buriel, 1984; Ramirez, 1984; Sherraden & Barrera, 1996; Rumbaut 1994,1997) has shown however, that attempting to completely assimilate to a new culture while ignoring and forgetting the original culture does not necessarily result in a positive adjustment. A much more realistic option has proven to be biculturalism, in which people continue to stay connected to their initial heritage while at the same time learning about and integrating new cultural traits to their lives. To get a more concrete, empirical picture of acculturation, researchers

have used variables such as language ability, self-identity, generational status, and length of time spent in the U.S. Standardized acculturation scales have also been developed.

While understanding the basic theoretical foundation is interesting to sociologists, it is important to remember that these ideas do not make the slightest difference to the immigrants whose acculturation levels are being argued about. In order to find out if the theories are truly describing what is happening in the lives of ethnic Mexicans in the United States, it is necessary to ask them. In my research I will try to do this, while bringing the discussion to a more local level by investigating the experience of Mexican Americans in central Illinois.

METHODOLOGY

Much of the previous research on the Mexican community in the U.S. has been done in California, Texas and Florida. According to Espinosa and Massey (1997) however, “the second-largest settlement of Mexicans in the United States” is in Chicago (10/24). Although it is certainly possible that the experiences of Mexicans in central Illinois will be vastly different from those in Chicago, more information is obviously needed on immigrants in this part of the country.

Through contact with employees in the Hispanic Outreach office at the city community center and with the help of the participants themselves who offered the names of other people who could participate, a sample of twenty-one ethnic Mexican women in the Bloomington/Normal area was obtained. As the interviewer, I called each woman, introduced myself, and explained the project. The women were assured that the project was in no way related to the government, that no question would be asked about legal status, and that all responses would be confidential. If the woman agreed, an interview was then scheduled to take place usually at the participant's house. At the interview, the participants received a typed copy in English and Spanish of the project details

previously described on the phone, as well as the phone numbers of the interviewer, her advisor, and the head of the institutional review board (see Appendix C). In addition, participants were asked to make a check mark next to a statement saying that they understood the project and gave their informed consent for the interviewer to use their experiences for the project. Participants were reminded that they could change their minds and discontinue the interview at any time. At the end of the interviews, three women were chosen to be written about in case studies. They were contacted again for permission and assured that all identifying personal information would be removed.

Research has shown that regardless of proficiency in a second language, people often prefer to discuss personal topics in their first language (Romaine, 1995). Therefore, in order for participants to feel as comfortable as possible, interviews were conducted in their preferred language. Most of the interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants and did not last more than one hour.

Interview Structure

The interviews were conducted to find out how acculturation varies among generations and among individuals. A semi-structured interview format consisting of planned and unplanned questions was designed to avoid limiting the participants in their answers (See Appendix A and B for complete interview schedule in English and Spanish). Thus, the same information was gathered in each interview, but the participants' circumstances guided the order and the manner in which specific questions were asked. A sample interview started with the participant being asked about why she, or her family in the case of second-generation women, had decided to come to the United States. First- and mid-generation women were asked about the expectations they had of the U.S.

before they got here and how they have changed since coming. Everyone was asked if they note differences between themselves and relatives who have less U.S. experience here or in Mexico.

Next the participant was asked about what parts of Mexican culture she has continued in the U.S. and what parts of American culture she has integrated to her life here. More insight into the participants' relationship toward each culture was gained by asking if there was anything from either of the cultures that she really did not like. This was often done by asking if there was anything she did not want her children to learn from U.S. culture and sometimes by also asking how the woman thought her children would identify themselves when they grew up. After this, the participant was asked how she identified herself from a list of seven possibilities, and invited to choose as many as she felt applied (Figure 1). The ARSMA-II also measures self-identity in a series of four Likert-type items which each ask about the participants' preference for a certain identity. To save time during the interview, the format for this study was condensed to multiple-choice with the options seen below which are not taken from any one specific source. While it was effective in accommodating the various self-identities of the participants, the format of this question caused a few difficulties in coding responses during the analysis which will be discussed later.

Figure 1

**Self-identity Questionnaire Item
(See Appendix B for Spanish version)**

How do you identify yourself? Circle all that apply:

Mexican	American	Mexican-American		
North American	Chicana	Latin American/Latina	Hispanic	

We continued from there to talk about the possibility of being both American and Mexican. The participant was asked about certain aspects or situations in which she feels more American or more Mexican. I asked if she thought individuals needed to lose their Mexican identity in order to be completely American or vice versa. We then discussed what conditions are necessary for a person to be American, and what would be necessary for the woman herself to identify as “American” (an identity which only one person chose from the list). The woman was asked if she thought there is a “typical American” and to describe any characteristics, attitudes, or appearances that a “typical American” has. From there the conversation moved to the woman’s personal American Dream and whether she thought she could attain it. The conversation part of the interview concluded by asking the participant if she felt welcomed and part of the U.S., and welcomed and part of Mexico.

At this point, if not already discussed, participants were asked four questions adapted from the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar et al. 1995) to measure level of social integration among past and present friends and neighbors in Mexico and the U.S. (Figure 2). These questions were asked in a close-ended format in the ARSMA-II which only allowed answers about friends and neighbors of Mexican and Anglo ethnicities. To allow participants the chance to give more detail in their answers and to discuss persons other than those of Mexican or Anglo backgrounds, the questions were not used as presented in the ARSMA-II. Although this method did obtain a clearer picture of the participants’ neighbors and friends, this change unfortunately also created a few methodological difficulties during the data analysis which will also be discussed later.

Figure 2**Open-ended Social Integration Items Adapted from Cuéllar et al. (1995)
(see Appendix B for Spanish version)**

- 1) When you were growing up, of what ethnicity were the majority of your friends?
- 2) Of what ethnicity are the majority of your friends now?
- 3) When you first moved to the United States, of what ethnicity were the majority of your neighbors?*
- 4) Of what ethnicity are the majority of your neighbors now?

*Item number 3 did not apply to second-generation women and was not asked of them.

Although it was always the first informal question asked at the interviews, another questionnaire item was adapted from the ARSMA-II to identify specifically which generation the participant was from. I usually filled this out at the end of the interview (Figure 3) and also asked the participant for the year she was born in order to have some descriptive demographic information on each participant.

Figure 3**Item to Identify Participants' Generational Status Adapted from Cuéllar et al. (1995)
(see Appendix B for Spanish version)**

Circle the choice below that best describes you. Give only one answer.

- 1) You were born in Mexico or in another country (not the United States).
- 1.5) You were born in Mexico or another country and moved to the United States before the age of 12.**
- 2) You were born in the United States and at least one of your parents was born in Mexico or another country.
- 3) You were born in the United States, both of your parents were born in the United States, and all of your grandparents were born in Mexico or another country.
- 4) You and your parents were born in the United States and at least one grandparent was born in Mexico or in another country.
- 5) You, your parents, and all of our grandparents were born in the United States.

**The ARSMA-II does not include an option for members of the 1.5- or mid-generation (Rumbaut, 1997).

Finally, participants filled out a questionnaire of Likert-type items (Figure 1) taken from the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar et al., 1995) to gauge the frequency with which participants use Spanish and English.

Figure 4

Likert-type Items Measuring Frequency of Spanish and English Use in Four Different Areas Taken from the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar et al., 1995)

(see Appendix B for Spanish version)

<i>Circle the number of the answer that best describes you:</i>					
	1 = never 2 = a little, sometimes 3 = moderately, more or less 4 = much, very frequently 5 = very much, almost all the time				
I speak Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I speak English	1	2	3	4	5
I like to read in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I like to read in English	1	2	3	4	5
I write in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I write in English	1	2	3	4	5
I think in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I think in English	1	2	3	4	5

Data Analysis

After interviews were completed, participants' responses to the open-ended and Likert-type items were coded and formed into a Mexican Orientation Scale (MOS) and an Anglo Orientation Scale (AOS) according to the multi-dimensional model used by Cuéllar et al. (1995) in the ARSMA-II. These scales attempt to obtain an empirical understanding of the participants' familiarity and comfort level with each culture independently from the other. If the ideas previously discussed about bicultural individuals are accurate, an individual's score on one scale will not necessarily be indicative of the score on the other. In this study, however, due to the different format of the self-identity and social integration items, the coding for the responses to these questions also was altered from the ARSMA-II, which makes the values for each of the scales more strongly correlated than was originally intended.

Based on the overall impression received from the participants and other research in this area (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Lampe, 1978; Rumbaut, 1994, 1997), the choices for self-identity were arranged in a continuum from Anglo-oriented to Mexican-oriented at the other (Figure 5). Beginning with the most Anglo-oriented response the order decided upon was, "American," "Mexican-American," "Hispanic," "Latin American/Latina," and "Mexican." (No participants selected the identities of "North American" or "Chicana.") In assigning values for self-identity on the AOS, a response of "American" received a 5, while on the MOS it received a 1. For participants who chose more than one identity, the label receiving the highest score for each scale was counted. For example, a woman marking "Mexican-American" and "Mexican" would receive a 4 on the AOS for Mexican-American and a 5 on the MOS for Mexican.

Figure 5
Continuum of Reported Self-identity Responses

MOS values		AOS values
5	Mexican	1
4	Latin-American/Latina	2
3	Hispanic	3
2	Mexican-American	4
1	American	5

A similar system was used to code the ethnicity of friends and neighbors. Responses were coded into the following categories on a continuum, beginning with the most Anglo-oriented: “white (American),” “black (non-white American),” “both, all ethnicities,” “other Hispanic,” “Mexican” (Figure 6). As with self-identity, the same answer was coded twice to fit in to each scale. For example, person with current Guatemalan (non-Mexican Hispanic) friends would receive a 2 on the AOS and a 4 on the MOS. It is important to note that although the term “American” does not by itself imply a racially white person, the researcher noted that that was the meaning implied by the majority of participants who used this word. Thus, all responses of “American” were coded as white unless the respondent specifically stated otherwise.

Figure 6
Continuum of Reported Ethnicity of Friends and Neighbors

MOS values		AOS values
5	Mexican	1
4	non-Mexican Hispanic	2
3	Both/all ethnicities	3
2	African-American/Black	4
1	White (American)	5

Another variable which does not appear on the ARSMA-II was also included in finding the MOS and AOS scale values. “Language of the interview,” is taken from Keefe and Padilla’s (1987) acculturation scale and is scored along the continuum of options they developed: “only English,” “mostly English, some Spanish,” “equal English and Spanish,” “mostly Spanish, some English,” and “only Spanish” (Figure 7). This variable was also coded oppositely for each scale, as previously described for the self-identity and social integration items.

Figure 7
Continuum of Interview Language Options
(Keefe & Padilla, 1987)

MOS values		AOS values
5	Only Spanish	1
4	Mostly Spanish, some English	2
3	Equal English and Spanish	3
2	Mostly English, some Spanish	4
1	Only English	5

As in the ARSMA-II, each participants' MOS and AOS values was obtained by adding the values for each of the variables in the scale and dividing by the total number of items in the scale.

In this study, the AOS for first- and mid-generation immigrants was based on 10 items:

- Frequency speaking English
- Preference for reading English
- Frequency writing English
- Frequency thinking in English
- Participant's self-identity
- Ethnicity of childhood friends
- Ethnicity of current friends
- Ethnicity of first U.S. neighbors
- Ethnicity of current neighbors
- Language of the interview

The MOS scale consisted of the same 10 variables, with the language items referring to use of Spanish. Since "Ethnicity of first U.S. neighbors" does not apply for second-generation participants who were born in the U.S., it is not included, and their AOS and MOS scales are computed out of nine items. Another methodological difference is apparent here since Cuéllar et al. (1995) calculated the AOS value out of 13 items and the MOS out of 17 items.

RESULTS

The researcher called 22 women and completed 21 interviews with ethnic Mexican women in Bloomington/Normal. Most of the 21 women were eager to help with the project, offered information when asked about other women who might be interested in participating as well. The majority (14) of the participants were first-generation women who were born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. after the age of 12. Three participants were of the mid-generation meaning that they were born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. before the age of 12, and four participants were from the second-generation and born in the U.S. Five of the women interviewed were from the same family: three sisters, their sister-in-law, and her daughter, their niece. Two second-generation women were sisters as well. Although quantitatively this may have affected the statistics,

qualitatively the women from the same families had different things to say about their lives and different attitudes about their experiences.

Table 1: Selected Participant Demographic Information and Acculturation Scale Levels

Participant Generation	Number and Percent of Participants	Mean Age	Mean Years in the U.S.	Mean AOS score	Mean MOS score
First	14 (66.7%)	38.71^a	15.93	2.414^a	3.986^a
Mid	3 (14.3%)	23.67	18.33	4.067^b	2.667^b
Second	4 (19.0%)	20.75^b	20.75	4.250^b	2.415^b
Total	21 (100.0%)	33.14	17.19	3.000	3.498

For each column, numbers followed by different letters are significantly different at the 5% level.

With a mean age of 38.71 years, first-generation women were significantly older than both the mid- and the second-generation women, although the difference was only significant when compared to the second-generation (20.75). The AOS and MOS scores for each generation follow the expected pattern of AOS increasing and MOS decreasing the farther removed generationally a person is from Mexico. The mean AOS score for first-generation participants was 2.414, for the mid-generation it was 4.067, and for the second-generation it was 4.250.

For the MOS, the reverse pattern is also true as expected. The MOS mean for first-generation participants was 3.986, for mid-generation the mean was 2.667, and for the second-generation it was 2.415. Once again, we see a significant statistical difference at the .05 level of significance between the first- and mid-generations and between the first- and the second-

generations. There is a difference in the anticipated direction of the scores of the mid and second-generations, but it is not significant.

As hypothesized, there is a significant difference in the mean AOS and MOS scores at the .05 level of significance between the first- and second-generations. This is understandable since one would expect the first-generation to feel more connected to Mexico than the mid- and second-generation who have spent more of their lives in the U.S. This also supports the findings of Cuéllar et al. (1995) who report a .61 correlation between acculturation scale level and generational status in the ARSMA-II (p. 288).

Biculturalism

To further understand the orientation each generation has toward Mexican and American culture it is helpful to see if there is a significant difference between the AOS and MOS scores within each generation.

Table 2: Difference Between Anglo Orientation Scale and Mexican Orientation Scale by Generation

	Number & Percent of Participants	Mean AOS	Mean MOS	Mean difference AOS-MOS	T-Test	Sig.
First	14 (66.7%)	2.414	3.986	-1.571	-4.488	.001**
Mid	3 (14.3%)	4.067	2.667	1.400	2.694	.115 ^{ns}
Second	4 (19.0%)	4.250	2.415	1.835	2.840	.066*
TOTAL	21	3.000	3.498	-.498	-1.158	.260 ^{ns}

* = significant at 10% level

**= significant at 1% level

^{ns} = not significant

As can be seen in Table 2, the difference in AOS and MOS scores is significant at the .01 level of significance for the first-generation. They are still very Mexican-oriented, although, as will be discussed later, they do seem to be progressing toward a more American orientation as they gain U.S. experience. The mid- and second-generations have such low numbers of participants that the t-test results cannot be taken as completely definitive. However, the second-generation does show a difference significant at the .10 level between the AOS and MOS scores. In this case, the AOS score is higher, reflecting the second-generation's overall American orientation, although they also remain somewhat connected to their Mexican heritage. The difference in AOS and MOS scores for the mid-generation was not significant at all. This suggests that the mid-generation is the closest of all three generations to being bicultural, from a statistical point of view, although their AOS score is also slightly higher.

Self-Identity

As previously discussed, the participants were given a list of possible self-identities and asked to choose which ones they thought described them. Twelve participants (57.1%) chose only one identity, and nine (42.9%) chose more than one. No participant selected more than three words, and no participant selected the choices "North American" or "Chicana." In all, 21 participants chose 34 different identities. Table 3 shows a breakdown of identities chosen by each generation.

Table 3: Distribution of Self-Identity Responses by Generation

Participant generation	Mexican	Latin-American, Latina	Hispanic	Mexican-American	American	Total
First (n=14) 66.7%	10 (83.3%)	5 (83.3%)	3 (66.7)	4 (44.4%)	1 (100.0%)	23 (67.6%)
Mid (n=3) 14.3%	2 (16.7%)		1 (16.7%)	2 (22.2%)		5 (14.7%)
Second (n=4) 19.0%		1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)		6 (17.6%)
Total (n=21) 100.0%	12 (100.0%)	6 (100.0%)	6 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	N=34 (100.0%)

Of the 34 total reported identities, the most frequently mentioned identity was Mexican with 83.3 percent of responses coming from the first-generation. The next most popular identity was Mexican-American, with first-generation women reporting 44.4 percent of the responses and the second- and mid-generations close behind with 33.3 percent and 22.2 percent respectively. Examining this data based on the identities preferred for each generation, it seems clear that the first-generation women identify more as Mexican than do the other two. First-generation women chose “Mexican” most often (10 times), followed by “Latin American/Latina” (5 times), and then “Mexican-American” (4 times). The mid-generation women chose “Mexican” and “Mexican-American” an equal amount of times (twice). Second-generation participants mostly identified with “Mexican-American,” selecting that identity 3 times, “Hispanic” twice, and “Latin-American/Latina” once. It is interesting that the only woman to choose “American” as an identity was from the first-generation.

Social Integration

According to Gordon (1964), assimilation can happen only after members of the acculturating group have formed relationships with people in the new society. In order to determine whether this is happening with the participants in this study, each was asked about the ethnicity of their childhood and current friends.

Table 4: Ethnicity of Childhood and Current Friends by Generation

ETHNICITY	<u>Childhood Friends</u>			<u>Current Friends</u>		
	First	Mid	Second	First	Mid	Second
Mexican, Mexican-American	13 (92.9%)		1 (25.0%)	9 (64.3%)	2 (66.7%)	
Non-Mexican Hispanic	1 (7.1%)			2 (14.3%)		
Both Mexican & American, all Ethnicities		1 (33.3%)	1 (25.0%)	3 (21.4%)	1 (33.3%)	2 (50.0%)
Black, African-American						
White (American)		2 (66.7%)	2 (50.0%)			2 (50.0%)
TOTAL N=21 (100.0%)	14 (100.0%)	3 (100.0%)	4 (100.0%)	14 (100.0%)	3 (100.0%)	4 (100.0%)

Overall, the mid- and second-generation women do seem to have more American friends than the first-generation women. This is consistent with what Gordon (1964) predicts should happen over time as first-generation immigrants' children begin to make more contacts with the

dominant society. From childhood to the present, both first- and second-generation women seem to have made more friends from other races besides their own Mexican Hispanic. Thirteen or 92.9 percent of the first-generation women who grew up in Mexico had childhood friends who were Mexican. Currently, nine (64.3 %) still report that the majority of their friends are Mexican, while only two (14.3%) say that most of their friends are non-Mexican Hispanic, and three (21.4%) have friends from a variety of nationalities. Similarly, two (50%) of the second-generation women who grew up in the United States reported having mostly white American childhood friends while one reported friends from a variety of backgrounds, and one reported having friends of Mexican descent. Currently, two second-generation women still report having mostly white friends, while two have friends from all races.

The most revealing change seems to happen in the mid generation. During childhood, two women reported having mostly white American friends and one reported friends from a variety of backgrounds. Currently, the same two women have changed to having friends who are mostly Mexican and one still has friends from different races. One explanation for this comes from the interviews. Several women said that their friends during childhood were their classmates at school. For the mid-generation women this was school in Bloomington/Normal where most of the children are white. Now that they are out of school, it seems that these women have chosen, consciously or not, to associate with Mexicans rather than with Whites.

Language

As discussed in the literature (Buriel, 1984; Stoddard, 1973), language is another factor that affects how a person relates to a culture. Eight Likert-type items adapted from the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar, et al., 1995) measured four different areas of language use for both Spanish and English independently (Figure 4). On a questionnaire in their preferred language, participants gauged how

often they speak, read, write and think in Spanish and English, with one meaning “never” and five meaning “very much, almost all the time.” As seen discussed above, the four items for English were included in the AOS scale and the four items for Spanish were included in the MOS scale to compute the two scale values for each participant. As in the ARSMA-II, using Spanish more than English is considered to be an indicator of Mexican orientation. Conversely, using English more than Spanish indicates a more American-oriented lifestyle. In the analysis below (Table 5), the four items for each language were averaged separately from the AOS and MOS scales.

It is important to recognize that the variable “language use” is different from “language ability” or “language preference,” but overall use assumes ability and may indicate preference to some degree as well. According to the questions used by Cuéllar et al. (1995), three ask how frequently a person speaks, writes, and thinks in Spanish or English. The fourth asks how much a person likes to read in Spanish or English. Frequency of use and preferred use of a language are obviously different dimensions which may have elicited different responses from the participants. This discrepancy was not noticed until half-way through the interviewing process, but it is the same as what appears in the ARSMA-II, which has proven reliable in spite of this inconsistency.

Table 5: Participants' Mean Use of Spanish and English in Speaking, Reading, Writing, Thinking by Generation

LANGUAGE	GENERATION	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Thinking	TOTAL LANGUAGE MEAN
Spanish	First	4.64	4.00 ^a	4.00 ^a	4.57	4.304 ^a
	Mid	4.33	2.33	1.67 ^b	3.33	2.917 ^b
	Second	4.00	1.75 ^b	2.25 ^b	4.00	3.000 ^b
	MEAN	4.48	3.33	3.33	4.29	3.857
English	First	2.21 ^a	2.57	2.64	2.36 ^a	2.446 ^a
	Mid	4.67 ^b	4.33	5.00	4.67 ^b	4.667 ^b
	Second	4.25	4.00	5.00	4.25	4.375 ^b
	MEAN	2.95	3.10	3.43	3.05	3.131

For each column, numbers followed by different letters are significantly different at the 5% level.

As expected, the mean use of Spanish in all four areas for first-generation women (4.304) is significantly higher at the .05 level of significance than the mean use for the mid-generation (2.917) and the second-generation (3.000). The difference in use between the mid- and second-generation is not significant. There was no difference among the frequency which with women from all three generations speak or think in Spanish. First-generation women write significantly more often in Spanish (4.00) than do the mid- (1.67) or the second- (2.25) generation. There is also a significant difference between the frequency first- (4.00) and second- (1.75) generation women read in

Spanish. All three generations speak and think in Spanish much more often than they read or write it. It is interesting to note that mid-generation women report doing all four Spanish activities slightly less often overall than do second-generation women, although the difference is not significant.

For English, the mean difference between the first-generation (2.446) was significantly lower at the .05 level of significance than the means of the mid- (4.667) and the second-generation (4.375). The difference between the mid- and second-generation in English ability is not significant. For all three generations, writing seems to be the most used skill. Speaking English is the least frequent English activity done by the first-generation women (2.21), and is done significantly less than the frequency with which mid-generation women report speaking English (4.67). There is also a significant difference for thinking in English between first-generation women (2.36) and mid-generation women (4.67). The mean reported English reading was the least frequent activity for both the mid- (4.33) and the second-generation (4.00). Contrary to their Spanish usage, mid-generation women report doing all four English activities slightly more often overall than do second-generation women, although the difference is not significant.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Statistics give an interesting empirical description of acculturation which other researchers (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Cuéllar et al., 1995) have used to categorize the immigrant experience based on the standardized measures already discussed. The interviews with the twenty-one participants in this study showed that there are definitely variations in how they react and adjust to their new situation, but no new way of grouping these women arose, aside from immigrant generation. What follows is a summary of the interviews by generation, which demonstrates that

age at the time of immigration greatly affects overall viewpoint on life, but reinforces the fact that the majority of these women have a generally bicultural orientation, regardless of their generation.

First-generation

As seen in Table 1, fourteen interviews were conducted with women from the first-generation. They have a mean age of 33.14 years and have been in the U.S. for a mean of 15.93 years. All fourteen have children. Of the fourteen interviews, twelve were done completely or mostly in Spanish and two were completely or mostly in English.

Thirteen out of the fourteen women (92.9%) said that they came to the U.S. for economic reasons. All fourteen (100%) had family members here before they came, but only six (42.9%) specified that these family members were here to work. The women came from a variety of places in Mexico and had traveled or lived in a variety of places in the U.S. before coming to Bloomington/Normal. Some women mentioned that they chose to come to central Illinois because this city is nicer than bigger metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, and the jobs here also pay better than they do elsewhere. As agreed upon before the interview, no question was ever asked about legal immigration status, although four (28.6%) volunteered that they are U.S. citizens.

When asked about characteristics, appearances, or attitudes that defined a “typical American,” two of the women seemed shy as if nervous about offending me, the American interviewer. Five (35.7%) of the women’s descriptions included the characteristics of someone who knew English, was educated, was born in the U.S., was a U.S. citizen, knew American culture, was not very open-minded, had a good job, and/or had white skin. Another five women (35.7%) said they did not believe that there was a “typical American” at all. One woman explained that before she came to the U.S. she had thought that everyone here had blond hair and blue eyes, but now she sees that there are all kinds of people here who are American.

The overwhelming feeling among this group is that they are still Mexican although they live in the United States and feel connected to this society in varying degrees. One of the women summarized all of their feelings well, “*Estoy aprendiendo de las costumbres americanas, pero mantengo las mías.*” (“I am learning American customs, but I maintain my own.”) A few of the women mentioned that their economic situations and skills such as driving and speaking English have improved, and although one said she feels “*más tranquila*” (“more relaxed”) in the U.S., none of the women believe that they have changed since moving here in their personalities or beliefs. This shows clearly in their answers to the questions about identity and what makes an American. Eight (57.1%) said that they do not believe that a person has to give up her Mexican identity to feel completely American, or vice versa. One stated that it is “*difícil...dejar su origen*” (“difficult to let go of your heritage.”) Another participant, however, said that she knows people who have tried to do this in an attempt to blend in more with American society. Only two (14.3%) of the women said that a person would have to give up her Mexican heritage to be American. One woman explained that becoming American is when “*olvide uno sus raíces,*” (one forgets his or her roots.) This statement is not only insightful with regards to the entire assimilation process as we have seen from Gordon (1964), but also strongly indicative of the sense of betrayal that many would feel in calling themselves American instead of Mexican.

Although these women remain, if not physically present, certainly emotionally and socially connected to Mexico, it is clear that they are also making efforts to acculturate to life in the U.S. as well. Eight (57.1%) said that they feel welcome in the U.S., and twelve (85.7%) agreed that they feel part of the U.S. as well. Their feeling of connectedness to the U.S. is clear in the importance they placed on knowing English. Many of the women, if not already fluent in English, were either attending English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or expressed a desire to do so. They are anything but oblivious to the fact that knowledge of English is an asset in getting jobs, going to

doctor's appointments, shopping, and making non-Spanish speaking friends. English is also something that many will need to know before they can consider themselves "American." The same goal applies to their children. Eleven (78.6%) mentioned that they want their young children to know both English and Spanish, or are happy that their older children already do. Many of the mothers with children growing up in the U.S. are aware that the children feel more American, but hope that they will continue to be proud of their Mexican heritage as well. Most mentioned that they are teaching or have taught their children Mexican language and customs so that they will feel "*parte de allá y parte de acá*." ("part of there and part of here.") The bicultural lifestyle begins even with the first-generation. Although the first-generation women themselves do not feel that they will ever be able to identify themselves as American, their child-rearing efforts are virtually ensuring a second-generation that feels bicultural.

Mid-generation

Since mid- and second-generation women do not need services distinct from the majority of Americans, they are not as accessible through a social service agency focusing on recently-arrived Hispanics. Thus, only three mid-generation participants (14.7 percent of the entire sample) were interviewed for this project. This is not a large enough sample to make any sweeping generalizations, but it is enough to give some idea of what the acculturation process is like for the generation in the middle. As can be seen from Table 1, the mid-generation is slightly younger, with a mean age of 23.67 years, but has lived more years in the U.S. on average (18.33) than the first-generation. Unlike the first-generation, only one mid-generation woman has children. Two mid-generation women moved to the U.S. with their families when they were eight, and the other moved at age five. All three interviews were conducted mostly in English, with two participants changing to Spanish when their relatives came into the room.

As with the majority of the first-generation women, all three of the mid-generation women believe that a person has to give up being Mexican to be American. However, their answers regarding what it would take for them to consider themselves American seem to imply this. For example, one said that she could be American if she moved away from her family and another said that she would have had to be born in the U.S. and raised with an American family. Family being one of the most important aspects of life for most Mexicans, this seems to indicate that for these mid-generation women, being American would mean losing at least a part of their Mexican roots. This belief is also evident in their descriptions of the “typical American.” Two women agreed that, “blue eyes, blond hair, light skin, skinny, [and] tall” describe the typical American. The third answered, “people with the nice houses and the good jobs.” Coming from women who spent the first part of their lives among mostly darker-skinned, poorer people, these answers reflect a keen awareness to the almost completely opposite environment of mostly lighter-skinned, wealthier people in which they now find themselves. They seem to see the racial and economic differences between Mexico and the United States as polar opposites.

Their difficulty in reconciling the extremes of both cultures is strong evidence in support of Stonequist's (1935, 1937) ideas regarding marginal individuals. He thought that people who knew more about both cultures would feel more conflict between the two, and that certainly seems to be the case in regard to these three mid-generation women interviewed. Although all three seem well-rooted in Mexican culture as well as completely fluent in English and familiar with American life, it is clear that they are not sure where they belong. Unlike first-generation women who seem to feel comfortable as Mexicans in America, mid-generation women feel more a part of both cultures and at the same time less a part of either. For example, all three said that they sometimes feel American when they go to Mexico, and two said that they feel Mexican in the U.S. The other tries to *act* Mexican in Mexico and *act* American in the U.S, but one gets the feeling that she does not ever feel

completely comfortable in either place. One explained that, “you just don’t really know what side to go to.” When asked if she thought there was any group that she did belong, she said “probably the Mexican group here.”

Although their present status is a little confusing with respect to identity, all three women's future plans for themselves and their children demonstrate bicultural inclinations. At least two of the women's families came to have “a better life” here in the U.S., and these women seem to have continued this economic goal in their own lives. Two of the participants said that their American Dreams were to be professionals and “run a...company like State Farm.” The other would like to own a house and raise children who have more opportunities than she had growing up. Two women would like their children to learn both English and Spanish. The third did not comment on language, but hoped that her children would learn Mexican religious customs. Overall, instead of feeling at home in both cultures as might be anticipated, these women seem to feel like strangers in both cultures. Based on these three women’s experiences, mid-generation life seems to be a constant juggling act between two worlds.

Second-generation

As with the mid-generation, second-generation participants were also difficult to find. Thus, only four (19.0 percent of the entire sample) were interviewed for this study, two of whom were sisters. The second-generation women have the youngest mean age (20.75 years) of all the generations, which actually translates into the longest average years living in the U.S.

Once again, with only four participants it is difficult to make any generalizations, however the most noticeable aspect was the casual attitude the second-generation women had toward being bicultural. All four participants seemed to approach the interview and answer the questions as though they could have been asked of anybody, not as if they were specifically directed at an ethnic

Mexican woman in the U.S. Unlike first-generation women who have had to be purposeful and persistent in learning and integrating American culture, and unlike mid-generation women who seem to be constantly struggling with how to integrate two completely different ways of life, second-generation women seem more relaxed and matter-of-fact about their bicultural identity. This subtle difference is well captured by two of the participants who said that they are really not different from other Americans. They simply have another culture and language in addition to their American life. It is clear that being bicultural is an advantage for at least three of these women.

The fourth second-generation woman, also the youngest participant in the entire sample, had more in common with those participants in the mid-generation in that she seems to have encountered more anti-Mexican sentiment from Americans. For her then, being Mexican is something to be proud of that does distinguish her from these “basically racist” Americans with whom she interacts daily. In this respect, she has less freedom to choose the parts of each culture to adapt to her life since most of her energy is spent in confronting the conflict between the two. With regard to Mexico she says, “yeah...it’s the place you want to be,” and then later adds, “I have nothing here so better off over there.... I don’t feel like I should be here.” She does agree, however, that she feels welcome and part of both the U.S. and Mexico.

On the whole, however these second-generation women see much more intersection between the two cultures than the mid-generation, who seem to see only conflict. This is especially evident in their self-identity choices. As seen in Table 3, none of the second-generation participants identified themselves as only Mexican or American. They used the more general, combined identities of Mexican-American, Hispanic, and Latina/Latin American. This group was also straightforward about the positive and negative aspects of each culture. All generations were asked about parts of Mexican and American cultures that they like and dislike, but the second-generation seems to have had an easier time integrating aspects from both into their own lives. For example,

one of the participants explained that she really loves the closeness of her family, and she likes going to Mexico because “it gives me their perspective on life.” She would like her children to feel connected to that heritage and strong family unity. However, she does not like the traditional way of life there, mentioning that her grandparents received their first telephone three months ago. She is glad that she can understand how life is in Mexico, but she does not feel under any obligation to live that way herself.

This seemed typical of the second-generation. Where the first- and mid-generations seem to see themselves as betraying one culture or the other in whatever they do, the second-generation is able to integrate the positive aspects of both cultures without guilt. In contrast to the mid-generation, these women are under less obligation from their family members, who understand that they have never actually lived in Mexico. Likewise, since they are native-born Americans, U.S. society often may not even notice that they have Mexican heritage. Being a little more distant from the immigration process seems to give second-generation women more freedom in forming and maintaining individual aspects of culture and identity than the first- and mid-generations have.

This ability to mix and match with each culture is evident in other areas as well. All four women agreed that they would like their children to be bilingual. One would like her children to have an American education, but still be able to talk to Mexican relatives. Another added that she wants her children to learn both languages, but not to learn the racism that she has seen present in the U.S. In regard to the typical American, three of the four women agree that there is no such thing. The fourth said that she used to think that a “typical American would be like...going to school and following your dream....I always thought American would be like a light person, but maybe not anymore. I don’t put that face with the dream.” She thinks that “fitting in with society” is what makes a person American, regardless of birthplace.

Although all four of these women were born in the U.S. and obviously have strong connections in Mexico, the nature of their relationship toward each country varies. Three said that they feel welcome in the U.S. (the fourth was not asked), and all four agreed that they feel part of the U.S. All four women also agreed that they feel welcome in Mexico when they go, but only two would say that they are a part of Mexico. One woman said that she feels a part of her family in Mexico, but not really a part of the official Mexican state (which is also something that one of the first-generation participants said.)

With their own lives solidly established in the U.S. from the beginning, and their families' lives strongly rooted in Mexico, these second-generation women seem to have the least adjustments to make in their lives. They have never lived any other way except as bicultural and to them it seems completely natural and manageable. By viewing themselves as Americans with a blend of different customs and cultural ideas, they are assuring that biculturalism continues in the U.S. as something to be proud of and valued.

CASE STUDIES

As can be seen from the above interview analysis, immigrant generation seems to make an enormous difference in how participants perceive their own identity in American culture. In a study with such a small sample as this on however, it is impossible to tell if generation is really the only variable affecting these women's experiences. Language ability, original Mexican province, reasons for coming to the United States, personality, and other factors not discussed in this study may have also had an affect. For social scientists it is normally difficult, if not impossible, to control for all possible influences in a person's life when measuring something so abstract as acculturation. In this study, however, this task was made simpler by interviewing three sisters.

They have roots in the same Mexican province, learned the same customs and family values, and experienced more or less the same home environment during childhood. For the purposes of this study, however, the only characteristic they do not share in common is the age at which they moved to the United States. Cecilia, the eldest sister, was 14 when the family moved to the United States. Elena, the middle sister, was five, and Rebeca, the youngest, was born in the U.S. shortly after the family moved. (The names and personal information of the participants have been changed in the following case studies to protect their anonymity.)

These women are not representative of the other women in the sample due to the fact that all three, even the first-generation sister, spoke English during the interview. These women were also more straightforward and open about their lives than other participants. It was evident that they had all thought about these issues before and were comfortable talking about their differences in relation to their different life experiences in the United States. In addition, although each woman was interviewed only once individually, each mentioned her sisters in the course of the conversation. This allowed me to put together a picture of each woman from several viewpoints without doing multiple interviews with the same woman. With other possibly relevant variables controlled, comparing these women's stories gives an excellent understanding of how age at immigration can impact a person's bicultural experience. Thanks to their clearly articulated experiences and thoughts, this researcher has gotten a picture of the nature of acculturation in at least one family.

Case Study Family Background

The first point that was obvious with all three women is that their family members are the most important people in their lives. Their father, who died last year from cancer, was particularly special to them. They all emphasized how poor their family had been in Mexico and how much their dad had sacrificed to get them to the United States. Cecilia said that in Mexico they had love,

but not much else. “My dad worked really hard. We hardly had anything.” She remembers that her mom cooked outside without a kitchen, they did not have indoor toilets, and sometimes there was no food. Elena never even knew her dad until she was three because she was born during one of his two or three year trips to work in Texas and California. While he was gone, their mom and their older brother were in charge. Cecilia said that eventually her dad decided that they should all go to the United States. They came to Bloomington where he already knew some people with good jobs. According to Cecilia, he wanted to “save some money, build a nice house in Mexico, and...move back.” From here, the sisters’ stories diverge.

Cecilia

Cecilia tells how she had “heard a lot of good things” about the United States before their family came. However, at 14 it was hard to leave her friends in Mexico. “I used to tell my dad, ‘Send me to my grandma! I want to move back!’” In Mexico, Cecilia only attended school through the sixth grade since the family did not have enough money to send her to junior high. “I used to love school, and I remember I cried because we didn’t have the money for me to go to school.” She explains that her father did not let her attend school in the U.S. either when they moved because he was only planning to stay for a few years. Although Cecilia did not say much more on this subject, Elena added that Cecilia has always been good at school and has regretted not going against her father on this one point. Her sister explains that in his effort to protect his children from the liberal American society, their dad thought it best that his young teenage daughter stay home and out of any risk of trouble with American boys.

Although Cecilia never received any more formal schooling, she took night classes in English taught by a Cuban woman, who used to come to the house the next day if Cecilia had not been in class the night before. Life in the U.S. improved for Cecilia when she turned 16 and was

able to work as a table busser. She met her future husband soon after that. He was from a town 15 minutes away from where Cecilia grew up in Mexico, although they had never met before coming to the United States. They were married when Cecilia was 19 and had four children. Her oldest daughter has a son now as well.

Today after 27 years in the U. S., Cecilia speaks English well, although not as naturally as her sisters do. She works in a management position in a service industry, where both Elena and their mother also work. In the several jobs Cecilia has had, "I always take my mom with me. She doesn't drive so I always try to keep her close so I can help her out with the ride." In addition to keeping her mother physically close, Cecilia also seems to be the closest to her parents in ideals and traditions. Elena mentioned how she and Cecilia rarely agree because Cecilia is always saying, "my mom and dad didn't teach us that" when Elena does something a different way. Cecilia told how her father had always wanted to make sure his grandchildren did not lose their sense of being Mexican. Cecilia and her husband took his advice and spoke Spanish at home to all four of their children so that they would learn both languages.

These two sisters also think differently about children. According to Cecilia, Elena often jokes somewhat seriously about anticipating the day when her kids will be 18 and can move out of the house. Cecilia, aware that this is an American custom, cannot believe that her sister really wants it that way. "I never used to think that about my kids....If they 30...they can still live at home as long as they help with the bills." Elena also criticized Cecilia for not taking care of her grandchild more often so that her daughter, who also works and takes college classes, can have a night out sometimes. About her daughter Cecilia says, "she has it hard...but she's trying to make it in life, and she's trying to do better for herself, and I'm proud of her." She is glad that her children are improving themselves and taking advantage of all of the opportunities which she did not have available during her childhood. Her keen awareness of the differences between her life here and her

life as it could still be in Mexico are obvious. “I thank God and my dad for bringing us over here. I cannot imagine myself living in Mexico with my four kids and living the life that some people lives down there.”

Although now she has lived longer in the United States than in Mexico and is a U.S. citizen, she still identifies herself only as “Mexican.” When asked if it is possible to be Mexican and American at the same time she says yes, and offers her sisters as examples. “They proud to be Mexicans, but....they did grow up a little bit different.” She laughs when telling that both of these sisters are jokingly referred to as “white” or “American” by the rest of the family. Their ideas and actions seem just a bit unusual from a traditional Mexican viewpoint. Cecilia admits that by now she should also feel both Mexican and American since she has lived here for so long, but says, “I don't think I ever will say I'm American....I know my blood is Mexican.”

Elena

Elena does not remember thinking anything in particular about moving to the United States since she was only five at the time. She said that although Cecilia was not allowed to attend school, their brother who is one year younger than Cecilia was, and Elena also started kindergarten here. She remembers being confused with the language at first since everyone at home spoke Spanish, and everyone at school spoke English. Although she was allowed to attend school from the beginning in the United States, Elena was not completely untouched by Mexican customs. She says that during junior high and high school, her dad never allowed her to date, go to basketball games, or do anything outside of school activities for the same reasons that he would not allow Cecilia to attend school at all. Elena said that he was worried that his daughters would get into trouble or get pregnant. “You know, [he was] just thinking the worst,” about this new, more liberal, culture.

American life did not seem so scary to Elena who grew up in it, and she was annoyed by her father when he described Mexican girls as more virtuous and conservative than Americans. What Elena saw of Mexico on their yearly trips was a bit different from what her father described. She realized that what may have been true when her father was young, was not necessarily still true for her generation. From her point of view, Mexican teenagers were behaving much like American teenagers. Throughout the conversation, Elena mentioned more childhood conflict with her parents than her sisters did. In addition to normal parent/child disagreements, her relationship with her parents was complicated with cultural factors. Disagreeing with her parents was not only a family issue, it was equivalent to denigrating an entire culture.

Today, the blurry divisions between cultures, family, and personal preference still seem to cause confusion in Elena's life as she constantly tries to find a satisfactory compromise. For example, although Elena often seems to have disagreed with her father and her family's traditions, she is trying to pass these same values along to her two children, ages five and eight. She believes that rules like not getting pregnant before you are married are important, but she told me, "if it happens it happens." Contrary to the way she was raised, Elena does not want to be overbearing and dictate every move to her children. She wants to be "open-minded" so that her kids will be able to talk to her if they do get into trouble. Elena is similar to Cecilia in her hope that her children will have the "opportunity to take the risk to do something...in their lives." Elena really regrets not being able to leave home before she was married, like her 21-year-old niece who just graduated from a big university, has a job and no husband or children. She says, "I want my kids to experience that.... The Mexican side of you now is like 'the right thing to do: go to school, and then get married, have kids'....[But] it's not about that anymore....It's about getting a career.... " This is one of the reasons Cecilia teases Elena saying, "You don't think like we do. You think like Americans."

Both Elena's attitudes and the actual events of her life have seemed to follow a more stereotypically American path. When she was in her early twenties, Elena became pregnant by her future husband who she had met when they were both visiting family in Mexico one summer. In order to satisfy Mexican tradition, the couple was married by a civil court before the baby was born, but Elena says that neither set of parents recognizes their marriage since they have not been married in a Catholic church. This fact also bothers Elena. "That's the Mexican in me.... I don't feel comfortable just being married by the courts." She and her husband are planning to have a Catholic wedding for their tenth anniversary.

The challenge Elena has had in balancing her two identities is evident in several ways. For example, Elena almost always cooks Mexican food at home, but she does not want to "embarrass" her children by speaking Spanish to them in public. Elena likes going to Mexico and showing her children where they are from, but when she is there, she says she feels "like a tourist." To avoid this, she tries to always speak Spanish in Mexico so that people will not think she is arrogant and purposely showing-off her English.

Elena identifies as "Mexican-American," and does not think she could ever give up her Mexican identity. As she explains, "I will always have it in me.... I'm proud of being...what I am.... I think if I were in Mexico I would be a different person." Although she would not ever want to give up her Mexican identity, she thinks it would be possible if she moved away from her family. Speaking only Spanish to her mom and living near her brothers and sisters is what keeps her connected to Mexican life.

Rebeca

Rebeca, or “Bec” as her sisters call her, was born right after the family moved to the United States. Her knowledge of Mexico is based entirely on the yearly trips her family took there, which makes her life experience almost exactly opposite of Cecilia's. Where Cecilia blended American values into her mostly Mexican outlook, Rebeca has blended Mexican values into her American life. Of the three sisters, Rebeca seems the most relaxed about her two identities. Like Elena, she said that going to school for the first time was a little strange because she had learned Spanish as a first language at home. She remembers having a teacher who sat by her desk in elementary school to help her since she tried to talk in Spanish to everyone at school.

Although language was a struggle at first, it seems that that is as far as the conflict between her two cultures ever went in public. “I'm very fortunate that I've never had a situation where I had to get in an argument about race.... All through school... I didn't feel...out of place or anything. It's just normal to me.” Within her family also, the differences are worked out in teasing. Cecilia jokes about Rebeca being “white” because she likes to go to bars with her husband, or sometimes just with her own friends, while her husband goes out with his own friends. Cecilia says, “Her husband doesn't mind, so we don't mind you know, as long as they get along fine,” but she does think this is strange because in the small town where the family is from in Mexico, bars are only for men.

When asked if there are times when she feels more Mexican or more American, Rebeca mentions visiting family in Mexico, celebrating Mexican holidays with her family in the U.S., and using Spanish with Hispanic customers in her job as times when she feels like a “true Mexican.” For the most part however, “I look at myself as Mexican all the time basically.... I really don't...try to divide myself like that.” Rebeca may always feel Mexican, but she says, “a lot of people don't realize I'm Hispanic until I tell them.” Seeing her American mannerisms, English, and lighter skin-tone, people do not label Rebeca as Mexican the minute they see her. Not only is she culturally able

to interact with Hispanics and white Americans, she looks as though she could belong to either group as well.

Today Rebeca is married to an African-American man and has two children ages five and three-months. She would like the children to learn Mexican history and language, as well as African-American culture, and mainstream Anglo-American culture. "I figure it'd be an advantage to them.... It'd be like knowing three different things...it'd be nice." Her husband also wants the children to learn about their mixed heritage, and Rebeca says he gets upset when she forgets to speak to them in Spanish.

Overall, being bicultural is just a part of life to Rebeca. She has been able to blend both Mexican and American cultures to her life without too much conflict, and now she is adding her husband's culture as well. For Rebeca, this kind of multi-cultural blending is natural, and from looking at her life there seems to be no reason why it should not be. She says that a person just has to know how "to adapt, I guess, to both.... [and] I've always been known to do that."

Discussion

All three sisters, in their own ways, have blended both Mexican and American customs into their lives. This has helped them stay connected to their heritage and to the country they call home. In fact for each them, biculturalism is becoming a way of life, although it looks vastly different in each sister. In Cecilia it is clear that her overall orientation to life is from a Mexican point of view. Her attitudes and actions seem to be the most similar of the three sisters to their parents'. Rebeca, on the other hand, is more American in her orientation to life since she has never actually lived in Mexico. She has been able to add Mexican customs and language to her mostly American life with very little struggle. For the middle sister, Elena, however, life seems to have been a little bit more confusing with respect to identity. At five when the family moved, she does not remember much

about life in Mexico. However, she was old enough to feel the discrepancies between her family's values and the values of the U.S., which she sees as her own.

Of the three sisters, Elena fits more of the characteristics of a marginal individual. She simply seems to work harder at defining her own identity and place in the world than do the other two. One reason for this might be that Cecilia and Rebeca have had more of a choice in how much to identify with either culture. Cecilia, as a foreign-born immigrant and naturalized citizen in the U.S., sees herself as somewhat of an outsider. U.S. society does too and will not expect her to know everything about American culture. Any aspects she chooses to adapt to her life will be to her benefit but will not be counted against her if she does not integrate them to her life. Rebeca, as a native-born American, is in the opposite situation. As already noted, many people do not even recognize that she has Mexican heritage until she tells them. Her natural physical and social camouflage has given her the freedom to choose her own identity and place in society. Being identified as Hispanic Mexican or White American is a decision that Rebeca can make every time she meets someone new.

Unlike her sisters, Elena has not had much help from society in defining her self-identity. Both the foreign-born immigrant and the native-born American roles apply to her in different ways. Where Cecilia and Rebeca were allowed a sort of guided independence within the limits of their respective roles, Elena had both roles thrust upon her with little instructions as to how to balance them. Although mixing two fairly related identities does not, at first glance, seem as though it should cause such uncertainty and confusion, it is obvious from Elena's life that it does. She has formed her identity and sense of self by taking into consideration her family's opinion which is representative of her own Mexican heritage, and her own personal, and more American, preferences. The result is a compromise which conflicts sometimes with her family and sometimes with the larger American society, but still remains somewhat consistent with both. Today, in spite

of this ambiguity, Elena seems to have found a satisfactory middle ground, although she understandably does not seem quite as settled in her identity as her sisters.

POSSIBLE CONFOUNDS

The major drawback of this study is the sample size. The empirical data collected from this sample of 21 participants is obviously not enough to make any kind of predictions or generalizations about an entire population. Several methodological problems in the empirical data collection and analysis have also been noted, however, it is believed that an accurate picture of the acculturation experience was obtained at least for the twenty-one women who participated in this study through the interviews.

Although every effort was made to keep interviews consistent across all participants, individual differences and my own lack of experience in interviewing caused many variations in the style and tone of each conversation. The semi-structured format allowed the individuality of each participant and the interview circumstances to guide the phrasing of questions and the order in which they were asked. This may have affected the answers received, but also allowed much more rapport to develop between the participant and myself. After every interview, I was able to re-evaluate the questions and the order of the interview. As a result, the interview process and technique were modified and improved throughout the interview period. Personalities, time of the interview, and location also likely affected the manner of questioning and responses.

It is also important to remember that the interview responses may have been affected by my own demographic characteristics as the interviewer. While I am competent in Spanish, I am not a native-speaker. Knowing this, participants may have changed their answers and the language used to accommodate my ability. It is also possible that participants adjusted responses, particularly

regarding disliked aspects of American culture, to avoid offending me as a white American. While a few words were missed occasionally, there was only one conversation in which possibly significant information was lost because of a lack of understanding. This conversation happened with a participant who preferred not to have the conversation tape-recorded. There was also only one circumstance in which the participant appeared to choose English for the discussion based on the interviewer being a non-native speaker. It seemed that this participant was simply more accustomed to talking to non-Hispanic people in English.

In the analysis, the question asking about the ethnicity of participants' current neighbors was intended to measure the participants' comfort level with other ethnic groups. Although not reported in a table, the data from the participants shows that the majority (64.7%) of first- and mid-generation participants lived near white Americans when they first lived in the U.S. Now 82.4% of the participants from these two generations live near white Americans. However, it seems likely that these results are more indicative of the homogeneity of Bloomington/Normal than about the participants' preferences for a certain kind of neighborhood. In an upper-middle class, white city, someone who lives only near other Mexicans can be thought of as someone who does not feel comfortable with American neighbors yet, or simply as someone who is too poor to move into a neighborhood where most of the middle-class white people live. Although the variables of first and current neighbors were included in computing the values for the AOS and MOS scales as discussed above, the results were not analyzed in detail for these reasons.

CONCLUSION

By looking at acculturation from the perspective of individuals who are going through that process, one can see that Gordon's (1964) ideas regarding the eventual blending of American and Mexican culture are accurate. All three generations of women seem to be at different stages of

biculturalism. It is also obvious from the interviews that very few women have chosen to forget about their past heritage and completely associate themselves with American culture. As Buriel (1984), Ramirez (1984), and LaFromboise et al. (1993) suggested, biculturalism does seem to be the most realistic option for immigrants of any generation. The first-generation women in this study are doing their best to continue Mexican culture and learn American culture within the better economic conditions of the United States. The mid-generation's experience resonates well with Park (1928) and Stonequist's (1935,1937) ideas about marginality. This group is working hard every day to find a satisfactory balance between two cultures which seem to conflict in many ways. Finally, the second-generation women are adding Mexican culture to their American lives to ensure that they will not lose their family's precious heritage.

While acculturation is an every day process for these Mexican women, it is important to remember that acculturation is not only the job of the newcomers to a society. According to Redfield et al. (1936, in Gordon, 1964), acculturation is a process that requires changes in both groups involved, which in this case are the immigrant community and established American society. Given the mixture of backgrounds and ideas present in our society, it is clear that achieving any kind of unity in the United States will depend on all of us taking part in the redefinition of ourselves and what it is to be American.

At a time when it is difficult even to imagine a country where ethnicity, race, and cultural traditions no longer separate us, one participant's American Dream seems especially prophetic. She said that in the U.S. she has learned to love many different kinds of people regardless of ethnicity or birthplace, and one day she hopes "*que todos nos veamos iguales.*" May we all see each other as equals.

APPENDIX A: English Interview Schedule.

(Open-ended interview questions for the four second-generation participants were adapted slightly from what is shown here to include questions more appropriate for their experiences.)

Circle the number of the answer that best describes you:

- 1 = never**
- 2 = a little, sometimes**
- 3 = moderately, more or less**
- 4 = much, very frequently**
- 5 = very much, almost all the time**

I speak Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I speak English	1	2	3	4	5
I like to read in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I like to read in English	1	2	3	4	5
I write in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I write in English	1	2	3	4	5
I think in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
I think in English	1	2	3	4	5

When you were growing up, of what ethnicity were the majority of your friends?

Of what ethnicity are the majority of your friends now?

When you first moved to the United States, of what ethnicity were the majority of your neighbors?

Of what ethnicity are the majority of your neighbors now?

How do you identify yourself? Circle all that apply:

Mexican American Mexican-American
 North American Chicana Latin American/Latina Hispanic

Circle the choice below that best describes you. Give only one answer.

- 1) You were born in Mexico or in another country (not in the United States).
- 2) You were born in Mexico or another country and moved to the United States before the age of 12.
- 3) You were born in the United States and at least one of your parents was born in Mexico or another country.
- 4) You were born in the United States, both of your parents were born in the United States, and all of your grandparents were born in Mexico or another country.
- 5) You and your parents were born in the United States and at least one grandparent was born in Mexico or in another country.
- 6) You, your parents, and all of your grandparents were born in the United States.

What year were you born? _____

I.

- A.** What part of Mexico is your family from?
- B.** Had you or anyone from your family visited the United States before permanently moving here? for how long?
- C.** Why did you (or your family) decide to come to the United States?
 - Reasons for and against
 - What were your hopes? What attracted you here?
 - What were your fears?
 - What stereotypes did you have of Americans?
 - Did you find what you were expecting?
- D.** When did you come? How long ago?
- E.** Did you come with other members of your family?
Were they already here or did they come later?
Were they an important influence in your decision to come?
- F.** Do you visit Mexico much now? Do you have relatives there?

How have you changed compared to how you were before
OR in comparison to family members in Mexico without as much US experience?

II.

What parts of **Mexican** culture have you continued in your life?

-- holidays, customs, history, food, **language**

What parts of **American** culture have you integrated to your life?

--holidays, customs, history, food, **language**

What aspects of both cultures do you want your children to learn? **What language?**

What do you NOT want your children to learn?

III.

- A.** How do you identify yourself?
- B.** How do you think (hope) your children would (will) identify themselves?
--How do you feel about that?

IV.

- A. Although you identify yourself as _____, are you gradually becoming American from living here? In what aspects or situations?

Although you identify yourself as AMERICAN, are there times when you feel Mexican also? In what aspects or situations?

- B. At what aspects or situations do you feel particularly/more Mexican or particularly/more American?

*when you visit Mexico?

*when you are with certain friends or family members?

Are there ways in which you are both American and Mexican at the same time?

(Some people think that a person can be American and Mexican at the same time. What do you think?)

- C. Is there a typical American? Who do you think of as the typical American? (what type of person?) Are there certain characteristics, attitudes that define an American?

What is necessary to be an American (other than papers)?

--Will there ever be a time when you think of yourself as American?

--What would it take for you to think of yourself as American?

(personal requirements- What is necessary to be American?)

--Can a person be both Mexican and American at the same time?

Would you have to lose one identity completely before you thought of yourself as all Mexican or all American?

- D. People often talk of the American Dream.

--What is your American Dream? goals for the future? Educational, financial

--can you achieve it? Is it a possibility for you?

- E. Do you feel welcome in the United States? In Mexico?

- F. Do you feel that you are a part of the United States? Part of Mexico? Of both?

APPENDIX B: Spanish Interview Schedule

Marque con un circulo el número entre 1 y 5 a la respuesta que sea más adecuada para usted

1 = nada
 2 = un. poquito, a veces
 3 = moderado, más o menos
 4 = mucho, muy frecuente,
 5 = muchísimo, casi siempre

Yo hablo español	1	2	3	4	5
Yo hablo inglés	1	2	3	4	5
Me gusta leer en español	1	2	3	4	5
Me gusta leer en inglés	1	2	3	4	5
Escribo en español	1	2	3	4	5
Escribo en inglés	1	2	3	4	5
Yo pienso en español	1	2	3	4	5
Yo pienso en inglés	1	2	3	4	5

¿De qué origen o etnicidad eran la mayoría de sus amigos de la niñez?

¿De qué origen o etnicidad son la mayoría de sus amigos ahora?

¿Cuándo se mudó a los Estados Unidos la primera vez, de qué origen o etnicidad eran la mayoría de sus vecinos?

¿De qué origen o etnicidad son la mayoría de sus vecinos ahora?

¿Cómo se identifica? Se puede marcar más que una respuesta.

mexicana americana mexicana-americana (estadounidense de origen mexicano)

Norteamericana

Chicana

Latina

Hispana

algo diferente _____

Marque con un círculo la respuesta adecuada. Dé solamente una respuesta.

- 1) Usted nació en México u otro país [no en los Estados Unidos (USA)].
- 2) Usted nació en México u otro país y se mudó a los Estados Unidos antes de los 12 años.
- 3) Usted nació en los Estado, Unidos (USA) y por lo menos uno de sus padres nació en México o en otro país.
- 4) Usted nació en los Estados Unidos (USA), los dos de sus padres nacieron en los Estados Unidos (USA) y todos sus abuelos nacieron en México u otro país.
- 5) Usted nació en los Estados Unidos (USA), sus padres nacieron en los Estados Unidos (USA) y por lo menos uno de sus abuelos nació en México u otro país.
- 6) Usted, sus padres y todos sus abuelos nacieron en los Estados Unidos.

¿En qué año nació? _____

I.

- A. ¿De qué parte de México viene su familia?
- B. ¿Había visitado Ud. o a alguien de su familia los EEUU antes de mudarse aquí finalmente? ¿Por cuánto tiempo?
- C. ¿Por qué Ud. (o su familia) inmigró a los Estados Unidos?
 - razones por y contra inmigrar
 - ¿qué eran sus esperanzas? ¿qué le atrajo?
 - ¿qué eran sus temores?
 - ¿qué ideas preformadas tuvo de los Americanos?
 - ¿encontró lo que esperaba?
- D. ¿Cuándo vino? ¿Hace cuántos años?
- E. ¿Vino con otros miembros de su familia?
 - ¿Estaba la mayoría de su familia aquí o vino después?
 - ¿Tenían ellos una influencia importante en su decisión venir por acá?**
- F. ¿Visita México mucho ahora? ¿tiene parientes que viven allá?

--¿Cómo ha cambiado en comparación a como era antes de mudarse aquí
 O en comparación a sus parientes sin tanta experiencia de los EEUU?

II.

- A. ¿Qué partes de la cultura **mexicana** ha continuado en su vida?
 - fiestas, costumbres, historia, comida, **lenguaje**
- B. ¿Qué partes de la cultura americana ha adaptada a su vida aquí?
 - fiestas, costumbres, historia, comida, **lenguaje**
- C. **¿Qué partes/aspectos de las 2 culturas prefiere que sus hijos aprendan?**
- D. ¿Qué NO quiere que sus hijos aprendan?

III.

- A. ¿Cómo se identifica Ud.?
- B. ¿Cómo piensa que sus hijos se identifiquen?
 - ¿Qué es su opinión sobre eso?

IV.

- A. Aunque se identifica como _____ ¿está haciéndose americana viviendo aquí?
¿En cuáles aspectos o situaciones?

Aunque se identifica como AMERICANA, ¿se siente también mexicana a veces? ¿En cuáles aspectos o situaciones?

- B. ¿En cuáles aspectos o situaciones se sienta más mexicana o más americana?

*¿Cuándo visita México?

*¿Cuándo está con algunos amigos o parientes?

¿Hay aspectos en que se siente Ud. mexicana y americana a la vez?

(Algunas personas piensan que es posible ser Mexicana y Americana a la vez. ¿Qué piensa Ud.?)

- C. ¿Hay un Americano típico? ¿Qué tipo de persona sea para Ud. el Americano típico? ¿Hay algunas características, actitudes que distinguen los Americanos de otra gente?

¿Qué es necesario ser Americano (a pesar de documentos)?

--¿Existiría un tiempo cuando Ud. se identifique como Americana?

--¿Qué será necesario para que Ud. piense de sí misma como Americana?

(requisitos personales - ¿Qué es necesario para hacerse americano/estado-unidense)

¿Puede ser una persona mexicana y americana a la vez?

¿Tendría Ud. que perder su identidad como mexicana antes de que pueda identificarse totalmente como americana?

- D. A veces personas hablan del Sueño Americano.

---¿Qué es su "Sueño Americano?" ¿metas para el futuro? Educativas, financieras

- E. ¿se siente bienvenida en los Estados Unidos? En México?

- F. ¿Se siente parte de los Estados Unidos? Parte de México? Parte de los 2?

APPENDIX C: Information sheet given to participants at the beginning of each interview

¡Gracias por participar en la entrevista!

Se lo agradezco mucho y me gustaría aclarar algunas cosas. Me llamo Diana Hammer y soy una estudiante de la Universidad de Illinois Wesleyan. Este proyecto no tiene nada que ver con el gobierno o el departamento de inmigración. **No voy a preguntar por su condición legal.** Usaré números en vez de nombres verdaderos en todos los apuntes, transcripciones, y/o cintas de la entrevista. Guardaré toda información personal en un lugar seguro y la destruiré cuando haya terminado el proyecto. Usaré la información de las entrevistas solamente para mi proyecto de clase y trabajo final. Ud. no tiene que responder a cualquier pregunta que le haga sentirse incómoda y puede terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento. Me gustaría grabar las entrevistas para ayudarme cuando escriba mi trabajo, pero no las grabaré si la participante lo prefiere así. Es posible que escriba sobre algunas participantes en detalle en el trabajo. Llamaré a estas participantes y escribiré sobre ellas solamente con su permiso y después de quitar los datos personales. Voy a reportar otra información de estilo general para que nadie sepa nada de ninguna persona específica.

Si tiene preguntas o preocupaciones en cualquier momento, favor de llamarme, Diana Hammer (556-2926), a mi profesor, Dr. Jim Sikora (556-3163), o a la jefa del comité de investigaciones de Illinois Wesleyan, Dr. Kathryn Scherck (556-3271). ¡Mil Gracias otra vez!

Thank you for participating in this interview!

I appreciate your help and would like to give you some more information. My name is Diana Hammer, and I am a student at Illinois Wesleyan University. This project has nothing to do with the government or the department of immigration. **I will not ask about legal immigration status.** Numbers will be used instead of names in all notes, transcripts, and/or tapes of the interviews. Identifying information about participants will be stored separately in a secure place and destroyed when the project is over. I will use the information for my class project and final paper only. You may refuse to answer any question and may stop the interview at any time. I would like to tape the interviews to help me write about them later, but I will only do so with your permission. A few participants may be chosen to be written about in detail in the paper. I will contact these participants and only do so with their permission and with all identifying information removed. Other information will be reported in group format and will not be traceable to any one person. If you have questions or concerns at any time please call me, Diana Hammer (556-2926), my professor, Dr. Jim Sikora (556-3163), or the chairperson of Illinois Wesleyan's research committee review board, Dr. Kathryn Scherck (556-3271). Thank you again for your help!

_____ Sí, entiendo y doy permiso a Diana Hammer usar la información de mis experiencias en su trabajo de la universidad según las condiciones que me describió arriba.

_____ Yes, I give permission for Diana Hammer to use information of my experiences in her university project according to the conditions described above.

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