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# Choosing American: The Acculturation Experience of Mexican Women in the U.S.

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Oral Presentation 2.1

**CHOOSING AMERICAN: THE ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCE  
OF MEXICAN WOMEN IN THE U.S.**

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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 1.5 generation. 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.