

MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL NORMS RELATED TO ALCOHOL USE AS  
REFLECTED IN DRINKING SETTINGS AND LANGUAGE USE

BY

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Running head: Mexican American cultural norms

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, significant advances have been made in our understanding of the biological basis for alcoholism and alcohol dependence. Specifically, we have enhanced our knowledge about how alcohol affects the body's metabolism of vitamins and other nutrients essential for overall mental and physical health. We are beginning to understand how the drug alters activities of enzymes and proteins important for biological and behavioral equilibrium. Research has also enhanced our insights into how alcohol affects transmission of nerve signals in the brain. Genetic and family studies point to the probability of inherited predisposition to alcohol dependency. These are important steps in our efforts to understand and deal with the problem of alcohol dependence.

Alcoholism, however, has been accurately termed a "biopsychosocial" disorder, which reflects the fact that biological, psychological and <sup>socio-cultural</sup> ~~social~~ factors interact in the etiology of the disease. Further, physical dependency is just one (albeit the most extreme) of a broad spectrum of social and medical problems associated with alcohol abuse. The most critical alcohol-related problems, those affecting the health and well being of enormous numbers of people, are the social problems such as traffic fatalities, family disintegration and violence which result from abusive but not necessarily dependency drinking

patterns.

Inclusion of a <sup>socio-cultural</sup> ~~social~~ factor in the etiology of alcoholism and alcohol abuse draws attention to the importance of the <sup>2</sup> ~~social~~ context or ecology shaping the alcohol-related behavior individuals, and it is widely recognized that this ecology varies extensively across cultures and among cultural subgroups within national societies (Marshall, 1980; Heath, Everett & Wadell 1976; MacAndrew & Edgerton, 1969). ~~Among~~ Members of a ~~given~~ cultural group, <sup>hold</sup> commonly ~~held~~ norms and ideations, <sup>which</sup> specify who may drink what, when, where, with whom and in what quantities. Moreover, cultures have been shown to vary in terms of what is considered deviant as opposed to nondeviant drinking and even what is considered to be <sup>"proper"</sup> drunken comportment (MacAndrew & Edgerton, 1983). Cultural <sup>Norms</sup> (prescriptions and proscriptions) create a set of perimeters for alcohol use within which psychological biological factors interact. ~~For example, to make an extreme case,~~ In a given cultural group, a genetic predisposition to alcohol dependency is likely to be expressed primarily among individuals occupying roles or statuses to which that culture's norms allow access to alcohol. If the culture prohibits alcohol consumption, <sup>then to the extent</sup> the prohibition is honored, ~~the~~ genetic predisposition to alcoholism is meaningless.

In considering the effects of cultural norms on drinking patterns among Mexican Americans, as with any cultural group, <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ heterogeneity of the group must be taken into account. ~~encounter numerous problems. Firstly, there is the problem of determining the what extent norms, attitudes and behaviors are actually shared within a heterogeneous cultural group.~~ The label

"Mexican American" refers both to persons born in Mexico now living in the U.S. and persons whose families have been in the U.S. for generations. Some Mexican Americans are therefore very

<sup>Share</sup> ~~acculturated~~ and their values and attitudes <sup>that are</sup> ~~may be~~ very similar <sup>or identical with</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>groups of</sup> other Americans. <sup>Others</sup> Some retain the norms of the urban or rural

Mexican settings from which they or their families immigrated.

Many ~~like~~ <sup>truly bi-lingual / bi-cultural and can actively express both cultures in their geographic</sup> Mexican Americans also vary by social class and by <sup>region</sup>. ~~It~~

~~may thus be expected that a wide range of factors interact to~~ produce <sup>a wide range of</sup> variation in cultural norms and concepts which shape drinking behaviors within this subcultural group.

~~Secondly,~~ <sup>beliefs,</sup> Cultural norms and ~~ideations~~ out of which drinking behaviors arise, are generally unstated. They are embedded in a complex system of roles, symbols and perceptions which make up the collective world view shared by group members. A group's prescriptive and proscriptive rules about alcohol use are often <sup>And they are</sup> linked to other norms regulating status and social roles, ~~as~~ well <sup>as</sup> rights and obligations accruing to those roles. <sup>learning</sup> ~~Transmission~~

~~in~~ cultural norms, expectations, cognitions and rules takes place through a long, ~~and~~ ongoing socialization process, whereby members of a culture ~~learn through precept and example what behaviors and attitudes are viewed positively and negatively by other members of their culture. Subtleties of interpersonal interaction taking place in specific settings and under specific circumstances, repeatedly observed, are the conduits for this social learning.~~

This can be assessed using various forms

In terms of intergenerational transmission of alcohol-related

norms, it is important to take into consideration a) the extent to which children and adolescents are allowed to view drinking behavior of adults, b) which adults they observe consuming alcohol and c) the cultural meanings that are conveyed to them through the activities and non-verbal cues that occur in drinking environments. <sup>The</sup> ~~Additionally,~~ transmission of cultural ideations also takes place linguistically, through definitions interpretations focused on categorizing persons, places, events and behaviors. Therefore it is important to learn the words which describe classes of drinkers and types of alcohol-related comportment along with the the inclusion criteria which are used by members of the culture to define these classifications.

~~How, then,~~ <sup>we can</sup> given the complexities involved, ~~can we~~ begin to understand the cultural norms that shape alcohol-related behavior among Mexican Americans? ~~As a start in this direction, we have elected to examine~~ <sup>by</sup> ~~research~~ <sup>u)</sup> bearing on ~~just a few~~ <sup>some</sup> of the interacting factors which appear to embody and/or exemplify particular Mexican American norms related to alcohol use. ~~In this paper we have elected to examine research focused on several interacting factors which appear to embody and/or exemplify specific Mexican American norms related to alcohol use.~~ In this paper, we will look at the settings and circumstances in which Mexican Americans engage in alcohol use, noting variation in the actors and behaviors in different settings. Further, several researchers have examined linguistic categories and inclusion

criteria used by Mexican Americans in describing drinkers and comportment while drinking. These studies throw light on the ideations surrounding alcohol use in this ethnic group. In our discussion we will call attention to regional and class variation as well as commonalities as they are described in the studies bearing on settings and language

### SETTINGS AND OCCASIONS FOR ALCOHOL USE AMONG MEXICAN AMERICANS

Important insights into cultural attitudes and norms toward alcohol use can be obtained by examining settings in which group members regularly ~~participate in drinking~~ alcoholic beverages, and occasions which consistently involve the consumption of alcohol by group members. Pertinent considerations include ~~The range of settings/occasions in which drinking occurs among persons in different socially defined statuses, or categories and the kinds of sanctions systematically enjoined on people's comportment in these settings and occasions.~~ <sup>must be identified.</sup> ~~If, for example, persons in a given social category appear, by observation and self-report, to~~ <sup>sub-groups in the culture</sup> ~~appear to~~ <sup>appear to</sup> be narrowly and consistently restricted in terms of number and range of settings and occasions where they may drink, it may be hypothesized that their access to alcohol is subject to greater normative limitation than ~~that of other categories of persons, who are seen to drink in a wider range of settings and occasions.~~ Similarly, <sup>Some social</sup> ~~persons occupying a set of social or status roles~~ may be granted more latitude in their comportment while drinking

than <sup>others,</sup> ~~are persons occupying different social roles.~~ ~~Interacting with these factors is~~ The degree to which drinking activities take place in public or private settings and the inclusion or exclusion of other actors who could observe the actions and interactions surrounding drinking behavior, <sup>interact with these norms.</sup> If, ~~to illustrate,~~ a given category of persons consistently participates in highly visible, public drinking, ~~observable by an unlimited range of others,~~ it may be inferred that cultural norms do not proscribe drinking for that category of person, and, in fact, such visible drinking ~~may~~ indicate<sup>s</sup> tacit permission to consume alcohol.

~~An examination of~~ <sup>R</sup> research findings related to settings in which alcohol is consumed by Mexican Americans clearly indicates important differences in <sup>the</sup> range, number and kinds of settings in which men, as contrasted with women, drink alcohol. In an article describing the social contexts for drinking among California Mexican Americans, Gilbert (1985) points out that men report and are observed to consume alcohol in numerous settings, both public and private, but Mexican American women's drinking is confined principally to \_\_\_\_\_ which

Hispanics in three California locales, a large majority of whom were Mexican Americans (Alcocer and Gilbert, 1979), interviewees were given a list of ten possible circumstances in which alcohol could be consumed: at lunch with co-workers, after work with friends away

from home, on the job, at home after work, at a party, at with friends, at a bar, at children's activities and at recreational activities. Respondents were asked to designate those circumstances in which they consumed alcohol at least weekly. Less than nine percent of the women reported drinking this often in any of the situations. However, thirty-seven percent of the men reported drinking at home following work, 19% at home with friends, 19% after work away from home, 17% at lunch with co-workers, 16% at parties, and 14% each at bars and at recreational activities. Over one-third of the men reported drinking at this frequency in at least three of the listed settings.

Three setting-related practices in particular seem to emphasize greater latitude for male drinking: male drinking in bars and cantinas, male drinking in numerous outdoor locales and male drinking in job-related situations. Gilbert (1985) describes a wide variety of public drinking settings from cantinas serving migrant farmworkers in the San Joaquin Valley to the ubiquitous urban beer bars patronized by working class men in San Jose and Los Angeles. She points out that clientele in these establishments is comprised of men who work together, men who are residents of the same neighborhood and men who have been members of the same drinking groups since late adolescence. Women are involved in these settings solely as barmaids. Additionally, in some locales there are specific bars that draw men who

*Women are "cantineras"? In south Texas they serve more than 1 hour. etc.*

participate in organized sports activities or men who are drawn together as a result of shared characteristics--"pinto" bars patronized by ex-felons and gay bars.

*This could have a sketch of drinking time, virgin etc to be annotated from your notes a little.*

Elsewhere, drinking habits reported by a group of working class Mexican American informants in a small California city described (Gilbert, 1984). These men reported and were observed engaging frequently in informal outdoor drinking groups. Consisting primarily of neighbors, friends and kinsmen, these groups would gather nightly around a car being repaired in someone's driveway, on porches and at picnic tables in neighborhood parks. These informal, publically visible male drinking groups are not restricted to California. Rodriguez-Andrew (1984) found that a usual setting for outdoor alcohol consumption among Mexican American men in a westside Antonio barrio were the picnic tables surrounding "ice houses, local convenience stores that sell alcoholic beverages as well as grocery items. Unlike the "Stop n' Go" and "7-Eleven" stores that also sell alcoholic beverages that are NOT to be consumed on the premises, ice houses provide a setting which encourages public consumption on the premises. She notes in passing that these outlets may be found next to homes, schools and churches and are also frequented by children buying grocery items. Rodriguez-Andrew points out, additionally, that there is a correlation between both the number of liquor outlets, likelihood of their being located in residential area and

socioeconomic character of the neighborhood: in the poorest neighborhoods there are more outlets and many are located next to residences.

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Two other important gender-related differences are associated with the variation in settings in which Mexican American men and women consume alcohol. First, for Mexican American men, drinking figures importantly in same-sex social contexts as well as in situations involving male/female interaction; for women it does not. Allison (1982) in the sole study describing Mexican American drinking practices in Arizona describes male-only environments as places where men's interaction reinforces their masculine identity and where topics of conversation focus on politics, work, sexual conquests and drinking exploits, subjects characterized by her respondents (Mexican American men in treatment for alcoholism) as "male-only." Gilbert and Gonzalves (1986) in a similar vein, point out that among the male patrons in a Los Angeles bar, drinking interaction appears to enhance male bonding and to reinforce friendship and kinship ties

Secondly, different sets of behavioral sanctions appear to operate in mixed-sex as contrasted with same-sex drinking scenarios. Women's drinking is primarily confined to settings such as family celebrations where drinking behavior is regulated. Gilbert (1985) reports several instances in which family members curbed behavior associated with excessive drinking

at family parties. Video tapes of interactions at a child's birthday party taken by one of this paper's authors (Rodriguez-Andrew) show people covering beer cans with napkins. This researcher notes, however, that there was only one female drinker visible to the camera but numerous male drinkers. Further, the tape reveals that even in this family setting men were segregating themselves into same-sex groups within the party setting. <sup>This</sup> ~~A~~ practice <sup>was</sup> also noted by Gilbert (1984) who observed alcohol consumption at family celebrations in California. Both observers point out that in these settings, the focus is on combined eating and drinking <sup>during</sup> ~~and on the~~ activities which surround ~~the~~ religious (wedding receptions, baptisms) or <sup>secular celebrations</sup> ~~other festive~~ occasions (birthdays, house warmings). ~~Further,~~ <sup>Even</sup> when women participate in non-family or out-of-the-home drinking settings, such as nightclubs (Gilbert, 1985) or dance halls (Trotter, 1985), social interaction includes activities other than drinking, eg. dancing, or ~~celebrate~~ birthday celebrations for co-workers.

~~On the other hand,~~ There appears to be a ~~much~~ wider variation in terms of appropriate behavior for men drinking in male-only settings. Allison (1982) reports that only in exclusively male settings does drinking as an activity in and for itself take place. ~~Further,~~ Certain types of behavior forbidden or curtailed in festive or family settings regularly occurs in male-only scenarios. Exclusively male settings observed in California ranged from campesino cantinas where prostitution is

plied, to mixed ethnic bars where females perform for male audiences, to beer bars where obstreperous and aggressive verbal and physical behavior frequently take place (Alcocer & Gilbert, 1979). Reinforcing this notion of greater leniency, <sup>Alcocer and</sup> ~~these~~ <sup>Gilbert</sup> ~~researchers~~ found that their California respondents designated bars as the most appropriate of all places for drinking to the point of getting high or drunk: 46% of the men and 35% of the women interviewed felt it was "o.k. for someone to get high or drunk in a bar as compared to the percentage of men, 35%, and women, 25%, who thought it all right to get high or drunk at a party or friends. Less than 3% of either sex felt it appropriate to get high or drunk while in the company of parents or children.

*Insert  
2* > [Trotter data and discussion of gender-related differences in settings here?]

Patterns of male exclusive cantina and outdoor drinking and restricted, home/family-based drinking among women as described above do not obtain for all Mexican Americans, however, ~~for~~ distinct class and age differences have been observed in terms of gender and drinking settings in both California and Texas. Middle-class Mexican American men and women in Gilbert's California study of couple's drinking patterns 1984 reveal practices different from those reported by working class men and women. Middle class women participate in a wide range of public and private drinking scenarios, accompanied by masculine partners

as well~~as~~ in same-sex groups. Middle class men, on the other hand, report participating in fewer same-sex drinking activities than their working class counterparts and do not as a rule take part in informal outdoor male-only drinking groups. Middle class men and women may drink in same-sex groups but their same-sex drinking most usually takes place in bars, cocktail lounges and restaurants with mixed sex patronage (Alcocer & Gilbert, 1979). Additionally, women in this class group are more likely to incorporate alcohol consumption in same-sex gatherings such as showers, lunches and work related social activities. Other highly visible, public drinking settings which middle class Mexican American men and women consume alcohol tend to be geared around professional, civic and voluntary organization activities, incorporating both intimate and non-intimate others. However these are public drinking settings in which, because of the organized character of accompanying activities, strong sanctions against the appearance of intoxication (stumbling, raucousness, slurred speech, profanity) are operative. Like working class couples, however, these middle class men and women also consume alcohol at numerous kin- and home-based celebrations, parties and picnics. The result of these combined patterns is that middle class Mexican American men and women are more similar in their access to alcoholic beverages than are working class men and women.

[Trotter data on middle-class patterns in Texas?]

Several researchers (Caetano, 1985; Gilbert, 1985, Alcocer & Gilbert, 1979 <sup>Trotter 1982</sup>) report that young Mexican American women (18-30 years of age) are more likely than older women to patronize commercial drinking establishments, usually in same-sex groups, for the purpose of socializing, dancing and meeting members of the opposite sex. One of the authors of this paper (Rodriguez-Andrew) conducting observations in cantinas catering to older Mexican Americans in San Antonio, has, also, noted that older single women as well as men (55+) patronize these establishments where beer is consumed and patrons dance to jukebox music. Rodriguez-Andrew points out that there are subtle differences in the manner in which men and women are treated in these establishments: men are served their drink beer in bottles, women are served theirs in plastic cups accompanied with two napkins, one for the table and one for the lap! No rowdiness, shouting or sexual advances are tolerated in these settings, *due to the cultural norms associated with respectful treatment of women.*

The clear difference in access to alcohol evidenced in the greater range of drinking settings available to most Mexican American men, the relaxation of sanctions for heavy drinking in male-only settings and the greater acceptance of male drinking demonstrated by the many types of publically visible male drinking sites add up to strong cultural norms regulating alcohol consumption according to gender. These largely unspoken rules are acted out in everyday scenarios that are observed by children, adolescents and others, suggesting one important means

of transmitting and validating these norms intergenerationally

However, in most cultural groups, gender roles involve a complex configuration of interrelated rights and duties. Access to and participation in drinking activities appears to be one of the rights that ~~does~~ <sup>is primarily</sup> accrue <sup>A</sup> to the male role, ~~at least~~ <sup>and more evenly in the middle class population.</sup> in large segments of the working class Mexican American population. There is evidence, however, that this right does not go unaccompanied by a corresponding set of culturally prescribed duties. study (Alcocer & Gilbert, 1979) reports that Mexican American respondents regularly made a connection between a man's right to drink and his corresponding obligation to support himself or others. "Yo trabajo, tengo derecho de tomar" (I work, I have the right to drink), asserted one respondent and another, "Yo soy el hombre de la casa, se quiero tomar, tomo cuando me da la gana" (I am the man of the house, and if I want to drink, I drink when I feel like it). Interesting in this connection, ~~is the answer given by many respondents, particularly immigrants and collar workers, when asked to give the age at which a young man may appropriately begin to drink.~~ <sup>state:</sup> "When he's old enough to earn a living, he's old enough to drink.

Thus Drinking is seen to be a right earned by masculine self-sufficiency and the assumption of provider obligations--an earned right. It is not surprising then that the men in this California survey designated work-related or respite-from-work settings and occasions (at home after work, with friends

following work, at lunch with co-workers) as situations in which they were most likely to consume alcohol. Aid ↗

WA (There is significant evidence from Mexico showing that historically and in the present (Roman-Celis, 1984; Natera 1980), alcohol is traditionally sanctioned as a reward for hard work. Hacienda owners rewarded their fieldworkers with alcoholic beverages just as do some growers their migrant workers in fields of California's San Joaquin Valley today) and small landholders rewarded their mutual aid work crews reciprocally involved in planting and harvesting activities with alcohol association of economic self-sufficiency and autonomy with the right to use alcohol is linguistically reinforced in *dichos* (Mexican folk sayings) such as: "*Borracho, pero compracho*" (I'm drunk but I bought it) and "*A bebe me atrevo porque a nadie debo y lo mio bebo*" (I can drink without criticism because I owe no one and I drink what is mine) recounted by Perez (1977). ¶ Seen in this light, male access to alcohol and the sanctioning of highly visible male drinking suggested by the multiple and public drinking settings available to Mexican American men may stem from cultural concepts of reward and reinforcement for role obligations adequately discharged rather than from traditions of indulgent permissiveness. Interesting in this regard is a recent finding (Gilbert, 1987) that second and third generation Mexican American women, many more of whom were in the work force, were significantly more likely to endorse

good point!

drinking after working hard as a reason for consuming alcohol than were immigrant women. This finding suggests that as gender roles change under the impact of economic necessity and acculturation, so too do the intertwined role-related rights and obligations. When traditional role complementarity breaks down in one set of role attributes, such as the provider/economic function, norms and attitudes which coalesce around those attributes also change.

*This finding is further reinforced by the changes in drinking patterns among the middle class, where relative affluence and gender role change would further blur traditional role complementarity.*

The less restricted male access to alcohol described in the discussion above is consistent with the much higher prevalence of alcohol use and heavier drinking among Mexican American men when contrasted with women's drinking patterns as reported in epidemiological data (Caetano, this volume). So, too, is loosening of restrictions on access and the greater acceptance of female consumption evident in reduced abstinence and higher consumption patterns among higher educated, higher income more acculturated women shown in every survey of Mexican American drinking patterns (Caetano, 1985; Holck, et al., 1984; Trotter, 1982; Alcocer & Gilbert, 1979).

#### DRINKERS AND DRUNKENNESS: DESCRIPTIVE TYPOLOGIES

Dwight Heath (1986) has aptly pointed out the dual meaning which distinguishes the verb to *drink* and its many derivatives, noting that this duality occurs in many languages, including

English and Spanish. To remark, for example, that "Uncle Charlie was a drinking man," has a very specific meaning in English <sup>CON</sup> denoting the kind of beverage Uncle Charlie drank and additionally, implying the excessive use of that beverage (eller, 1967). Nevertheless, the verb *to drink* has a very much more generalized meaning in everyday use. Heath further notes that in alcohol-using cultures, languages contain a plethora of words relating to alcohol consumption. He suggests that an examination of those words and the contexts in which they are used can give important insights into the manner in which members of a cultural group perceive issues related to alcohol use. Unfortunately, research to date does not provide us with anything resembling a complete linguistic analysis of alcohol terminology among Mexican Americans. However, a few studies do throw some light on the conceptualization of drinkers and drunkenness among localized subgroups within this population.

The studies which shed the most light on terms used by Mexican Americans to describe drinkers and drunkenness both focus on Spanish language use by opportunistic samples of Mexican Americans in Texas and in Arizona. Clearly, therefore, the information developed in these studies cannot be generalized beyond the groups among whom the research was conducted, since many Mexican Americans are bilingual or monolingual-English speakers. Nevertheless, commonalities across studies suggest shared cultural ideations. One study, conducted by Moore and

Guajardo (N.D.) elicited a typology of drinkers from respondents in the westside barrio of San Antonio, Texas. Another study (Allison, 1982) used ethnomethodological techniques to derive a taxonomy of terms for drunkenness from responses of Mexican American male patients in an alcoholism acute care hospital setting. The terms were further validated by members of an alcohol education class in the same city.

Both studies indicate that there is a rich vocabulary distinguishes between drinkers who are, in the English vernacular, drunks and other drinkers. Further, there are distinctions related to mood, physical manifestations of intoxication and the temporal aspects of drunkenness

In each study *borracho* is the most commonly used word to describe both the state of drunkenness and an individual who is intoxicated. Used by itself the term signifies only the state of being drunk or one who is in that state. It does not convey a derogatory connotation (Moore & Guajardo, N.D.) or a specific degree or kind of drunken behavior (Allison, 1982). In typology developed by Moore and Guajardo, the term *borracho* distinguished from *tomador*, a person who drinks a few drinks but doesn't become intoxicated (California informants in the Alcocer and Gilbert study (1979) also pointed out that the terms *borracho* and *tomador* distinguished these two types of drinkers). However, their typology shows an expansion of the term *borracho* when it is accompanied by modifiers, eg. *borracho social* (a person

becomes drunk for social acceptance and to feel more comfortable in social situations); *borracho del fin de semana* (a weekend drinker); *borracho del semana* (a daily drinker and *borracho temporal* (one who demonstrates long periods of abstinence interspersed with drinking bouts). Other expansions on this word noted by these authors are pejorative: *borracho sin verguenza* (a shameless drunk, one who has lost self respect and the respect of others) and *borracho perdido* (a drunk who has lost everything).

The term *alcoholico* is rarely used according to researchers in California (Alcocer & Gilbert, 1979), Arizona (Allison, 1982) and Texas (Moore & Guajardo, n.d.). The term most nearly conveying the sense of chronic alcohol use reported in San and East Los Angeles is *El Vicio* (The Vice or Habit). Allison reports (1982, p.2) that spouses questioned concerning their husbands' alcohol use upon multiple admissions to the hospital emergency room consistently denied alcoholism, saying "*No es alcoholico, no mas toma mucho en Sabado y Domingo*" (He's not an alcoholic, he only drinks a lot on Saturdays and Sundays). terms *alcoholico* or *alcoholismo* are therefore not well understood or salient to many Mexican Americans. These findings from several regions suggest that a disease model of alcoholism is not widely endorsed by members of the culture.

As in English, the vernacular is replete with colorful terms distinguishing degrees of drunkenness and types of drunken behavior. Allison cites the widely used term *pistiado* referring

to a slightly intoxicated, mellow and happy state and *parrandiado* which connotes getting tipsy while partying. A lively, boisterous drunk is sometimes called a *cohete* (firecracker) and a *celebrado* is a person who has succeeded in celebrating by drinking to excess. Some descriptors are not so positive, however. Two expressions very commonly used among her respondents are *botado* and *anada arrastrando la cobija*, both indicating a very extreme degree of drunkenness characterized by stuporousness. The former possibly is a derivation of *bota* a wineskin, and the latter translates as "dragging the bedclothes." Other expressions cited by this author as descriptors of extreme drunkenness are *disfajado*, connoting drunken disarray in appearance and *hasta las cachas* meaning a sloppy, distasteful state of drunkenness. Allison further reports terms that implicate a beverage type in the drunken state: *teprachado* a low level of inebriation achieved by drinking rum and cola, and *pistiado*, again a milder form of intoxication induced by drinking tequila or other spirits.

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Thus it appears that the Spanish vocabulary used by at least some Mexican Americans is diverse and complex with respect to shades of meaning associated with alcohol and the patterns and consequences of its use. One of the authors of this article (Gilbert) requested Mexican American participants of two DUI (driving under the influence) classes to contribute words associated with alcohol use toward the compilation of a "Mexican

American drinking dictionary. The result was a list of 150 words and phrases, including most of the words listed by Allison, though few of the categorical terms cited by Moore and Guajardo. The list was studded with metaphor and rich in imagery: *andar a gatas* (walking on all fours, like a cat); *changuitos* (a nervous jumpy drunk, like a monkey); *andar como arana* (walking like a spider with legs outspread and staggering) and *ahogado* (literally smothered or drowned in alcohol). Some of the distinctions illustrated here reflect a perception that alcohol interacts with individual personalities, producing distinctive patterns of drinking behavior.

Heath (1986) cites numerous authors (Flexner, 1986; Benjamin Franklin, reviewed in Larsen, 1937; Wilson, 1958 and Dickson 1984) who compiled English synonyms for the words "drunk" and "drunkenness." The lists vary in length from Wilson's 150 words to Dickson's 2,231! While the initial investigations into Spanish drinking vocabulary discussed in this present paper do not show these astonishing numbers (they were not meant to be exhaustive), it is apparent that there is a similar richness and complexity to be found in Spanish idiom surrounding the use of alcohol. Flexner (1976) asserts that most English terms for drunk can be grouped into three categories: words for the initial relaxed feeling; words for the stage of being unsteady on one's feet and words for the final stupor of extreme drunkenness. As we have seen, many of the words used by Mexican Americans could also

~~e~~asily be assigned to these categories, suggesting a similar perception of the stages of drunkenness reflected in two languages.

Heath cites Levine (1981) "who suggests that the powerful imagery used for drunkenness relates not to the destruction of the drinker, but rather to breaking the bonds of normal workaday consciousness, a common end of respite drinking. He goes on to suggest that cultures in which drunkenness or altered states of consciousness are not acceptable behavior have significantly limited and less colorful language surrounding alcohol use (Heath, p.20). It would seem that neither English nor Spanish is one of these languages! Embodied in <sup>Spanish</sup> words and expressions are perceptions about what alcohol does or has the potential for doing to the body and its functions, to the personality and to social relations. And these words and expressions transmit expectations, eg. of liveliness: *cohete* as well as normative judgement, eg. the disparaging comparisons with animals. Thus it is not only through observation of actors, occasions and settings that a culture's concepts and precepts about alcohol are conveyed to its members--much is also transmitted through specific and implied meaning inherent in the words and expressions associated with alcohol use. These studies suggest, for example, that drunkenness per se is not judged negatively among many Mexican Americans nor is male drinking its ~~self~~ subject to disapproval. Rather, certain behaviors while

drinking receive disapprobation. Further, there appears to be little association of disease or mental disorder with the use of alcohol as reflected in the idiom. The language shows that there is a keen recognition of the stages of intoxication through which drinkers pass, and there is also ample recognition of the diverse effects of alcohol on the body and behavior. Additionally concepts embodying the notion that alcohol interacts with personality traits, producing idiosyncratic patterns of intoxicated behavior are reflected in idiomatic useage.

! do. even poor.

These few preliminary studies suggest that there is much to be learned about Mexican American cultural concepts related to alcohol through a study of idiom surrounding alcohol use. For example, though the studies cited show some commonalities, we do not know how widely used are the terms described nor which are most common. Further, we do not know, and it would be interesting to learn, if there are Spanish words and expressions that persist in the drinking vocabularies of bilingual and monolingual-English Mexican Americans. Additionally, while most of the words and expressions emerging from the studies cited above were given masculine form or referred in context to male drinking, the extent of linguistic recognition of female drinking types is unknown.