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LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AMONG MEXICAN AND MEXICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE RURAL AND URBAN SOUTHWEST: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Christine Velez Badar

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ABSTRACT

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AMONG MEXICAN AND MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE RURAL AND URBAN SOUTHWEST: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Recent research has suggested that the number of working Mexican American women is rapidly paralleling that of Anglo women. However, some of the research that attributed the increasing labor force participation rates of Chicanas to the changing economy did not take into account the effect of residence on the job-opportunity structure. Data from the Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey were used to compare the occupations and industries, as well as to analyze the effect of age, education, marital status, family size, and level of acculturation on current employment of Mexican American women in urban and rural areas.

Education and acculturation were found to significantly affect female employment. However, there was no evidence that residence differentiated employment status or occupation. When occupation was regressed on the independent variables, only acculturation was significant.

For industry, residence and acculturation were the only independent variables that were found to be significant.

Thesis advisor: Dr. Clifford Broman

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, minority populations have played an important role in the economic development of the United States. They have sold their labor in different markets with high demands for low-wage workers (Gonzales, 1990). Yet these workers are not as highly visible. Occupational segregation channels minorities into differing labor markets. This situation hides the problems that plague their lives and their work environments. Working women from ethnic minorities may be more likely, as a result of their "double minority" status, to serve as an invisible labor resource (Smith & Tienda, 1988). The problems faced by these women have been studied, but until recently not as often for Mexican American women. In this study, the writer compared the employment rates of Mexican American women by area of residence.

Hispanics are the second largest and the fastest growing minority in the United States (Baca Zinn, 1984; Gonzales, 1990).[1] Approximately one-half of all Hispanics living in the United States are Mexican American (Almquist & Wehrle-Einhorn, 1978; Gonzales, 1990; Portes & Truelove, 1987). However, available data on Mexican Americans

indicate that the majority are concentrated in unstable, low-paying jobs (Portes & Truelove, 1987). Consequently, the mean family income of Mexican Americans is much lower than the mean family income of the rest of the total United States population (Gonzales, 1990). Segura (1984) suggested that smaller family income inhibits educational and occupational opportunities, which creates a caste-like system (Penalosa, 1970; Segura, 1984). In this system, a certain segment of the population is denied the potential for social mobility.

This type of sociological phenomenon has been researched in terms of the consequences it has for the Mexican American male and the Mexican American family unit. However, only now has there been much analysis on the contribution of the Mexican American female. Latinas are the fastest growing race/gender group in the United States (Baca Zinn, 1984). Related to this, the literature has suggested that in recent years Mexican American women have been entering the labor force at an increasing rate (see Tables 1 and 2). The characteristics of Mexican American working women, and their work experiences, need to be addressed more adequately. It is the writer's intention in this paper to analyze and discuss these issues. This paper will not only shed light on the situation that exists, but it will clarify the role the

Mexican American woman has played and will play in the development of the Mexican American population.

Table 1.--Civilian labor force participation rates for women 16 years and over, by race and Hispanic origin, 1970 to 1988 (in percent).

Year	Total	White	Black	Hispanic Origin
1970	43.3	42.6	N/A	N/A
1975	46.3	45.9	48.8	N/A
1980	51.5	51.2	53.1	47.4
1985	54.5	54.1	53.5	49.3
1986	55.3	55.0	53.7	50.1
1987	56.0	55.7	54.2	52.0
1988	56.6	56.4	55.2	53.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Handbook of Labor Statistics (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989).

N/A = not available.

Table 2.--Employment status of Mexican American women 16 years and over.

	1986	1987	1988
Civilian Labor Force[a]	1,821	1,952	2,090
Percent of the population	50.5	52.4	53.9
Unemployment rate	11.7	10.4	9.6

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Handbook of Labor Statistics (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989).

[a]Numbers in thousands.

Defining the Population

In the past there have been some methodological problems in the analysis of "Hispanics" because of the lack of clear and comprehensive criteria that define individuals as members of this group. Unlike Blacks and American Indians, there is no standardization across the academic community of the criteria that define persons as Hispanic. This dilemma, as it exists today, makes it difficult to produce reliable data for the Hispanic population. However, Mexican Americans do make up the largest proportion of the Hispanics living in the United States (Portes & Truelove, 1987).

Mexican Americans are not only a numerical minority as compared to the larger population, but they also share certain characteristics that define them as a group. This includes the fact that the majority of Mexican Americans live in the five southwestern states of California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado (Almquist & Wehrle-Einhorn, 1978; Alvirez & Bean, 1976). Unfortunately, most researchers who work with census data assume that individuals of Spanish surname living in the Southwest are Mexican American (Arroyo, 1977) because the majority of Chicanos do live in that part of the country.

This study was concerned with respondents who identified **themselves** as either Mexican, Mexican American, or

Chicano. Mexicans are individuals who were born in Mexico but who later migrated to the United States. Persons of Mexican descent, born in the United States, will most likely choose to call themselves either Mexican American or Chicano when asked about their cultural heritage. Mexican American is the most accepted and widely used term (Melville, 1980). The terms "Mexican American" and "Chicano" are many times used interchangeably, as they are in this study.[2]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Labor Force Participation

When compared to that of Anglo women, the labor force participation rates of Mexican American women have in the past been much lower (Ortiz & Santana-Cooney, 1984). The traditional view has generally looked for an explanation of this situation by examining the gender roles of the Mexican American culture (Baca Zinn, 1979, 1980; Ortiz & Santana-Cooney, 1984). In the past, it was suggested that Mexican American women's participation was lower as compared to white women because of a difference in cultural norms between the two groups. It is this path of inquiry that has led social scientists to believe that cultural norms have a major effect on the labor force participation of Chicana women (Alvirez & Bean, 1976; Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970; Mirande & Enriquez, 1979). The strict cultural regulations that distinctly separate the man's role from the woman's role have kept Chicanas from entering the work force. However, recent writers have focused attention on changing structural factors as an explanation of the rapidly increasing labor force participation of Chicanas (Baca Zinn, 1984; Mindiola, 1980; Oppenheimer, 1973; Santana-Cooney, 1975). Although

Grebler, Moore, and Guzman (1970) advocated the cultural argument, they also acknowledged that the "economic and social environment" also has an effect on the increasing labor force participation of Mexican American women. In light of the evidence brought about by recent research, it seems that the changing gender-role argument alone is insufficient in offering an explanation for the increasing labor force participation among Chicana women.

The Mexican American culture has been stereotyped as a system of "machismo" in which family roles play an integral part. Machismo, and consequently female submissiveness, is basically a term that refers to a system of patriarchy. Machismo and familialism have long been sources of explanation for the low labor force participation of Chicana women. Unfortunately, machismo has merely been another concept used in the formation of the caricature of Mexican American society. Mexican and Mexican American women have been depicted as victims of a culture that values male dominance and familialism to an abnormal degree.

Machismo encompasses all the ideals that keep women confined to the domestic sphere (Mirande & Enriquez, 1979). Woman's roles are seen in their relation to the family. She is wife, mother, daughter, and so on. Women are not encouraged to excel, but to be supportive of male endeavors. According to the "machismo myth," even in the

decision-making process within the home, women defer to men (Grebler et al., 1970). Men are supposed to be strong, the ones who take charge, and consequently it is their responsibility to be the sole financial supporter of the family. Not to live up to these standards is to be a failure as a man. It follows that women are not allowed to work outside the home because it would hurt the man's image and pride (Grebler et al., 1970).

The stereotypical view of Mexican American women depicts them as maternal and self-sacrificing (Alvirez & Bean, 1976; Baca Zinn, 1979). That is, they are extremely family oriented and enjoy staying home to care for the house and the children. Their high fertility and their desire to have large families leave little time for employment (Alvirez & Bean, 1976; Grebler et al., 1970). Chicanas are viewed as women who dedicate all their time and energy to fulfilling the needs of the family and making them happy.

However, the common beliefs about machismo are many times an exaggerated stereotype of Mexican American culture (Baca Zinn, 1984). The male dominance that may exist in certain segments of the Latino population is a reflection of a system of patriarchy that exists in the whole of society and not necessarily solely out of the cultural values and beliefs of the Mexican American culture (Baca

Zinn, 1991). In fact, Baca Zinn (1991) found that patterns and degrees of male dominance within a family are due most notably to class structure and women's employment.

If the stereotypes and exaggerated image of the Mexican American family are taken to be a reflection of reality, the recent increases in the labor force participation of Mexican American women can be attributed to changing attitudes of Mexican Americans toward gender roles (Grebler et al., 1970). This is how much of social science has attempted to explain the trend. This viewpoint sees Chicano men and women as becoming more acculturated. That is, Chicanos are changing their strict traditional beliefs of husband as the domineering breadwinner and wife as the submissive homemaker, and are internalizing a set of beliefs that is more egalitarian and reflective of the rest of society. Acculturation is seen as a change in attitude, which has allowed for a change in employment behavior among Mexican American women.

Recent writers have challenged the idea of acculturation as a viable explanation of Chicanas' increasing labor force participation. The question raised has been: "To what degree are ethnic differences in gender roles due to culture (shared beliefs) or structure (social relations)?" (Baca Zinn, 1991, p. 225). In fact, beliefs are not

necessarily important in determining labor force behavior (Ortiz & Santana Cooney, 1984). In her 1980 study, Baca Zinn showed that a change in gender roles was not necessarily related to acculturation. She found that women who worked outside the home and men who shared household responsibilities still maintained a high level of ethnicity, through ethnic identification, use of Spanish language, ethnic food, and music. Many of the families in her study maintained a traditional (patriarchal) set of beliefs but were actually very egalitarian in practice. These women and others have been found to have high levels of commitment to their jobs despite strong cultural norms to stay home (Baca Zinn, 1980; Zavella, 1984).

To attempt to explain the increased labor force participation of Chicanas in the framework of changing gender roles is to ignore the idea that family relations do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it is structural issues that affect social relations within the family structure. The fact is, many Mexican American women have a financial need to work (Baca Zinn, 1979). Young single women work to help support the family (Lindborg & Ovando, 1977). Upon marriage, many continue to work because they find that their husband's salary is not enough to make ends meet (Mirande & Enriquez, 1979). This literature has suggested that Mexican American families are subject to

economic problems as are Anglo families. Both struggle to deal with these problems in much the same way, by having a two- (or more) income household. Also, Chicana women's work cannot be regarded as merely supplemental (Arroyo, 1977; Zavella, 1984). As the male unemployment rate increases and the number of female-headed households also increases (Smith & Tienda, 1988; Wagner & Schaffer, 1980), women sometimes become the sole support of their families (Zavella, 1984).

Mexican American women also find that employment and working outside the home provides a form of empowerment (Baca Zinn, 1991). It legitimizes their positions as decision makers within the family unit. It also provides the financial means necessary to make decisions and lead lives that are independent of their husbands. For example, in the study by Baca Zinn (1980), some of the working Chicanas had their own checking accounts and drove cars that they bought with their own money.

Bokemeier and Tickamyer (1985) found that structural and economic conditions of regions, and not subcultural differences, determined labor market characteristics. The present study focused away from acculturation and other cultural factors in determining labor force participation. In fact, an overemphasis on culture tends to bypass issues that deal with sources of subordination of minority groups and control of societal institutions by

certain segments of the population (Baca Zinn, 1982). The focus of this study was on residence and its effect on labor force participation of Chicana women.

In their 1989 article, Snipp and Bloomquist discussed the importance of residence because of the types of economic activity that differing geographical areas are able to attract and sustain. How and why this occurs has not necessarily been agreed on, but it has been suggested that these differences may have an effect on economic earnings of workers. In fact, Snipp and Bloomquist stated,

> The literature on this subject is so scant that it is impossible to be certain about what types of areal differences are most important or about how and why labor markets vary between areas. . . . Yet, [spatial organization of labor market structure] may be one of the most productive directions for explaining differential access to economic opportunities in American society. (p. 19)

The increasing relocation of industries out of the Northeast and into the Southwest, where the majority of Mexican Americans reside, has had an influence on the labor force participation of Chicanas. The type of economic development that has been occurring in the Southwest has led to growth in the demand for semiskilled and unskilled labor (Oppenheimer, 1973; Segura, 1984). This changing trend in the economy has served to increase the job opportunities available to Mexican American women (Almquist & Wehrle-Einhorn, 1978; Zavella, 1984). It has

given Chicana women the option to seek and find employment outside the home. Many of these women have a financial need to work, and this situation has seemingly fulfilled the law of supply and demand in this section of the country. However, the labor force experience of Mexican American women has reflected their "triple oppression" of race, class, and gender (Baca Zinn, 1982, 1984; Segura, 1984; Smith & Tienda, 1988).

The Southwest Labor Market and Work Experiences

As was discussed, residence can be an important factor in determining labor force participation. Urban or rural residence can also be important in determining the types of jobs available and the types of industries in which these jobs are found. This approach focuses on "the nature of the opportunity structure and its impact rather than on characteristics of the individual" (Bokemeier & Tickamyer, 1985, p. 54). Professional, managerial, and skilled jobs are classified as primary occupations. Core industries and primary jobs tend to be stable, have larger salaries, and offer medical benefits. On the other hand, peripheral industries tend to pay low wages and offer unstable and seasonal employment within the secondary segments of the labor market (Bokemeier & Tickamyer, 1985; Segura, 1984).

As mentioned earlier, structural factors such as the changing economy of the Southwest have been important phenomena in the explanation of the rising labor force participation among Chicanas. This same variable (residence) may also be important in determining the work experiences of Chicana women. As Tickamyer and Bokemeier (1988) stated, "the opportunities available in a labor market determine the employment options of the workers who live and work in that market" (p. 166). Most probably, Chicanas in urban areas will be increasingly more likely than rural Chicanas to find work in primary jobs and core industries.

Mexican Americans are seen as a marginal supply of labor. In fact, this trend surfaces across a wide range of geographic areas. The Southwest has seen a migration of Mexican American families from rural to urban areas, in search of jobs offered by the sunbelt industrialization (Smith & Tienda, 1988). However, the shift from rural to urban areas does not necessarily signify a better way of life (Grebler et al., 1970). Chicanas tend to suffer from high levels of unemployment (Melville, 1980; Segura, 1984; Sorkin, 1971) and underemployment (Grebler et al., 1970), both of which Mirande and Enriquez (1979) suggested have been underestimated. Of the Chicanas who do participate in the labor force, the majority are concentrated in peripheral industries and secondary occupations (Baca

Zinn, 1982; Bokemeier, 1983; Segura, 1984; Smith & Tienda, 1988). What this means for Chicana workers is that a vast majority of them, more than 90%, are in menial, low-paying jobs (Baca Zinn, 1984; Cotera, 1980; Mirande & Enriquez, 1979; Smith & Tienda, 1988).

This situation reflects the fact that women and minorities are more likely to be in peripheral industries and secondary occupations (Tickamyer & Bokemeier, 1988). This suggests that not only gender but also race/ethnicity adds to the segmentation of differing labor markets (Baca Zinn, 1982; Tickamyer & Bokemeier, 1988). This means that Mexican American women are disadvantaged in the labor market because of their gender and because, historically, Mexican Americans have been channeled into low-wage jobs. Mexican Americans have been viewed and used as a continuous source of cheap labor (Gonzales, 1990). Chicanas entering the labor force are, unfortunately, victims of this legacy.

Individual Factors and Labor Force Experience

Although the Mexican American population is unique in many ways, there is some commonality in the experience of all women by virtue of their gender (Almquist & Wehrle-Einhorn, 1978). As mentioned earlier, structural factors such as the changing economy of the Southwest have been important phenomena in the explanation of the rising labor

force participation among Chicanas. The identification of variables that affect women's labor force participation cannot, however, be pinpointed to one causal factor. Bokemeier, Sachs, and Keith (1983) found that several individual factors, such as age, education, and marital status, affect women's labor force participation. However, these factors may differ among the several different residential groups that exist. Bokemeier et al. found certain trends that were common to women residing in different areas.

Bokemeier et al. (1983) reported that younger and more educated women were more likely to be in the labor force. They also found that married women were less likely to be in the labor force than were women who had never been married or were divorced. A surprisingly high percentage of women in the labor force were found to have children under the age of 18. When the two groups were compared, women in the labor force were less likely to have children than women not in the labor force. A woman's employment can also contribute to the family income. Bokemeier et al. reported a positive relationship between labor force participation and family income.

Bokemeier et al. (1983) compared the labor force participation rates of three different groups of women: metropolitan, non-metropolitan, and farm women.

Metropolitan women had the highest percentage (53.6%) of working women, followed by non-metro (47.7%) and farm (37.8%). However, of the three groups, non-metro women were most likely to be unemployed. Bokemeier et al. found that marital status, education, and number of dependent children explained the largest variance in labor force participation of non-metro women. Among metro women, marital status and number of children showed the strongest relationships. Age and income had a moderate influence, whereas education was not significant.

Bokemeier et al. (1983) also compared occupations and industry by residence. In general, women were more likely to be in the secondary labor force and to have jobs in peripheral industries. Of the three groups, metro women were the most likely to be employed in female professions and clerical jobs and less likely to work in peripheral industries. Non-metro women were the most likely to face unemployment problems due to limited job opportunities in and around the non-metropolitan area.

Although acculturation has been challenged in terms of its importance in determining the decisions of Chicanas to enter the labor force, it must be taken into consideration when analyzing the work experiences of Chicanas. Because Chicanas are seen as culturally different (Baca Zinn, 1982), any minimizing of that difference might affect work experience. Acculturation, when viewed in

terms of language proficiency, may be important in determining occupational placement and mobility.

DESIGN

Hypotheses

In this study, the researcher analyzed the individual factors that influence the labor force experience of Mexican American women by modeling Bokemeier et al.'s (1983) research on labor force participation among Anglo women. The writer expected that the trend in the labor force experience of Mexican American women would be similar to that of Anglo women found by Bokemeier et al. The researcher expected to find the same employment trend between the urban and rural among Mexican American women, as did Bokemeier et al. between metro and non-metro among Anglo women. Residence was expected to be a predictor of employment. Due to the opportunity structure associated with area of residence, women in urban areas are more likely to be working in the labor force than are rural women. Residence is also important in determining the types of occupations and industries of women who are in the labor force. Women not residing in urban areas are more likely to be employed in peripheral and secondary labor markets. However, the researcher also expected that there would be a difference from Bokemeier et al.'s findings in the degree to which these urban and rural

divisions occur, due to the "triple minority" status of Mexican American women.

In this study, the researcher analyzed the effect of age, education, marital status, family size, and acculturation on the employment rates of urban and rural Mexican American women. Although the distinction between urban and rural may be only an approximation of Bokemeier et al.'s metro versus non-metro model, the same theoretical argument was addressed and nonetheless served the purpose of determining whether any differences in job opportunities and employment rates existed between these two residential areas.

The researcher anticipated that, of the women working in the labor force, the majority would be young and more educated than women not in the labor force. The way in which this trend plays itself out also depends on the unique characteristics of the Mexican American population. As a group, the Mexican American population is younger but also less educated than the Anglo population (Gonzales, 1990; Melville, 1980; Mirande & Enriquez, 1979; Segura, 1984). It must also be taken into account that the types of industries opening up in the Southwest have a high demand for low-wage workers. The researcher expected to find, then, not only a positive relationship between education and employment, but among the women in the labor

force, an association between level of education and the types of jobs held.

The researcher expected to find that a large proportion of women in the labor force were not married. However, due to the high percentage of unemployment among Mexican American males (Baca Zinn, 1989), the researcher also expected to find a large percentage of married women in the labor force.

Methods

Data from the Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey were used in this study. The Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey was conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics from July 1982 through December 1984, using multistage, stratified, cluster sampling. There were originally 9,984 people in the sample. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 8,554 people from July 1982 through December 1983. Of these individuals, 7,462 were examined. The respondents were surveyed at 17 locations in California, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and Arizona.

The data were collected during household interviews at which several questionnaires were administered. The Household Screener Questionnaire was used to check the respondent's eligibility for the sample. The Family Questionnaire was used to collect information pertaining to

family relationships, demographics, and housing. Medical information was gathered using either the Adult or the Child Sample Person Questionnaire. (For more information, see National Center for Health Statistics, 1986).

In this study, the researcher examined the labor force experience of Mexican and Mexican American women at least 18 years of age. The sample subset consisted of 1,943 total respondents. The dependent variable was current employment, taken from Question 31 in the survey.[3] Employment was coded 1 for employed, 0 for not employed.

The independent variables were age, education, marital status, family size, acculturation, and residence. Family income was used as a covariate of employment status.[4] Due to the limitations of the data, number of people in family was used as a proxy for the number of dependent children.

The independent variables were measured or recoded as follows: age--self-reported; education--the highest level completed by the respondent, ranging from (0) never attended or kindergarten to (18) graduate school; marital status--recoded into (1) for married and (0) for not married;[5] family size--ranging from 1 through 18;[6] family income--ranging from (1) $1,000 to (27) $50,000 or more; acculturation--ranging from (10) most Mexican orientation to (49) most Anglo orientation. (For more information, see National Center for Health Statistics, 1986). For

Table 1 (cross-tabulations) only, acculturation was recoded (1) most Mexican orientation to (4) most Anglo orientation. This was done for the purpose of illustration.

Acculturation was chosen as one of the independent variables on which regression analysis was to be performed because it is so central an issue in the current literature on the labor force participation and experience of Mexican American women. The acculturation scale was created by HHANES through use of a subset of eight variables from the 20-item Cuellar scale. (For more information, see National Center for Health Statistics, 1986.) The eight variables came from questions dealing with language (four questions), ethnic identification (three questions), and place of birth (one question). Each of the variables was scored from 1 to 5, where 1 represented the strongest Spanish language/Mexican orientation and 5 represented the strongest English language/American orientation. The acculturation score was the arithmetic mean of the scores of these eight variables. The reliability coefficient for this scale was .90 (National Center for Health Statistics, 1986).

ANALYSIS

The first proposition looked at residence and individual characteristics in their relationship to employment. The individual characteristics of women in and out of the labor force were compared by area of residence: urban versus rural. Labor force participation was then regressed on these independent variables for urban and rural women separately. Because the interaction terms were not significant, it was not necessary to show these tables separately. Rather, the regression of labor force participation on the independent variables, including residence, is shown in Table 5.

The second part of the analysis looked at residence and individual characteristics and their relationship to occupation and industry. Occupations and industries in which working women are employed were also compared by residence. This analysis assessed any differences that exist between urban and rural women in the types of jobs they hold or the kinds of industries in which they work. As in Bokemeier et al. (1983), all regression analyses were limited to women between the ages of 18 and 65.

> The standardized beta weights indicate the relative influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable within each regression analysis. The unstandardized beta coefficients allow the comparison of the importance of independent variables across groups. (Bokemeier et al., 1983, p. 522)

At this time, it must be noted that Bokemeier et al. (1983) did not perform a regression analysis for occupation or industry. This researcher went a step further than Bokemeier et al. in analyzing the effect of residence and individual characteristics on occupation and industry. As discussed in the literature review, residence and acculturation may be important factors in differentiating work experiences for Mexican American women. For this reason, the regression analysis for these variables is shown in this study.

Results

The individual characteristics of Mexican American women by residence and by employment status are presented in Table 3. The data show virtually no difference in employment rates between urban and rural women. Forty percent of the rural women and 41.4% of the urban women reported working in the labor force. Forty-one percent of the total respondents reported being currently employed.[7] This figure is only slightly lower than the 46% reported by Bokemeier et al. (1983). Mexican American women in rural areas were only slightly more likely to be

Table 3.--Individual characteristics of urban and rural women in and out of the labor force (in percent).

Characteristic	Urban (N = 1,703)			Rural (N = 240)		
	All	In Labor Force	Not in Labor Force	All	In Labor Force	Not in Labor Force
Employment Status						
Employed	41.4			40.0		
Not employed	57.8			59.2		
Age						
18 to 34	48.3	52.3	45.4	47.9	57.3	41.5
35 to 54	35.6	39.9	32.5	28.2	29.2	27.5
55 to 64	11.2	7.1	14.2	12.2	12.5	12.0
65 and over	4.9	.7	7.9	11.8	1.0	19.0
	Chi-square = 72.4*			Chi-square = 18.7*		
Education						
< High school	61.9	48.7	71.4	62.7	44.8	75.0
High school	23.0	29.2	18.5	28.8	41.7	20.0
Some college	11.7	16.4	8.3	5.5	7.3	4.3
College completed/ or more	3.4	5.7	1.8	3.0	6.3	.7
	Chi-square = 95.0*			Chi-square = 24.3*		
Family Income						
< $10,000	32.2	23.2	38.8	45.2	28.2	56.9
$10,000-$20,000	35.8	36.2	35.5	34.1	43.5	27.6
$20,000-$30,000	17.2	20.2	15.0	15.4	21.2	11.4
$30,000 or more	14.7	20.3	10.7	5.3	7.1	4.1
	Chi-square = 58.2*			Chi-square = 16.8*		
Marital Status						
Never married	15.6	20.3	12.1	10.2	8.3	11.4
Married	64.9	58.6	69.4	62.3	66.7	59.3
Divorced/separated	13.7	17.1	11.2	14.8	16.7	13.6
Widowed	5.9	4.0	7.2	12.7	8.3	15.7
	Chi-square = 42.6*			Chi-square = 3.8		
Family Size Mean	4.38	4.13	4.55	3.90	3.68	4.04
Acculturation Mean	2.37	2.52	2.23	3.21	3.35	3.12

*$p \leq .001$ based on chi-square test, testing for differences between women out of the labor force within urban and rural groups.

unemployed (49.2%) than were urban Mexican American women (57.8%).

In comparing individual characteristics by residence, Table 3 shows that rural women tended to be older. That is, 24% of the rural women were over the age of 55, whereas only 16.1% of the urban women were in this group. Related to this, rural women were twice as likely as urban women to be widowed, and urban women were more likely never to have been married. Urban women had slightly larger family sizes and scored lower (2.37) on the acculturation scale than did rural women (3.21). (That is, urban women tended to be more Mexican oriented than rural women.) Rural women also tended to be less educated and to have lower family incomes than urban women.

Women working in the labor force tended to be younger and to have higher levels of education and higher incomes than women not in the labor force. Working women had slightly smaller family sizes, although there was no difference in acculturation scores between women in and out of the labor force within residence status.

A greater proportion of currently employed rural women (13.5%) were over the age of 55, whereas only 7.8% of employed urban women were in this age group. Although a larger percentage of employed rural women had completed college or more (6.3%) than employed urban women (5.7%), a greater percentage of working rural women had completed

high school or less (86.5%) compared to urban working women (67.9%). That is, although rural working women were less likely to attend college than urban women, those who had done so were more likely to graduate than urban women. Urban working women had higher incomes and were more likely to have never been married than rural women in the labor force. Family size was larger and acculturation scores lower (more Mexican orientation) for urban women in the labor force.

Table 4 is the pairwise correlation matrix. Basically, the results of this table are clearly illustrated in the regressions on Table 5.

The regression of female employment on the independent variables, including residence, is shown in Table 5. This regression illustrates the relative contribution of factors among the independent variables, including residence, to any differences in employment among Chicanas. As family income and age increased, the likelihood of a Mexican American woman working decreased. Family income was a covariate of female employment. That is, income and employment affected each other simultaneously so that as employment increased income also rose, and vice versa. As stated earlier, family income was not used as a causal factor in this analysis. Education and acculturation significantly affected female employment. As education

Table 4.--Zero-order correlation matrix.

	FLFP	Age	Family Income	# in Family	Educ.	Mar.	Acc.	Mean	SD
				Urban (N = 1,698)					
FLFP								.453	.716
Age	-.09**							38.131	14.540
Income	.08**	.02						21.164	21.388
# in family	-.07**	-.19**	.09**					4.376	2.224
Educ.	.19**	-.14**	.10**	-.05*				9.664	9.534
Mar.	.01	.11**	.08**	.08**	-.00			.684	.693
Accul.	.19**	-.15**	.04	-.08**	.27**	-.03		24.797	13.489
				Rural (N = 240)					
FLFP								.467	.848
Age	-.12*							40.158	16.646
Income	.09	.05						22.033	25.507
# in family	-.13	-.31**	.19**					3.904	2.117
Educ.	.56**	-.21**	01	.05				10.141	10.938
Mar.	.02	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.02			.688	.827
Accul.	.43**	-.25**	-.03	.06	.50**	.01		34.179	12.280

*Significant at the .05 level.

**Significant at the .01 level.

and acculturation increased (more American orientation), female employment also increased. However, residence was found to have no effect on Mexican American women's employment.

Table 5.--Regression of labor force participation on independent variables including residence.

	B	Beta
R^2	.094	
N	1,938	
Constant	.182	
Acculturation	.008**	.151
Marital status	.018	.018
Income	.002*	.068
# in family	-.021	-.064
Age	-.003*	-.061
Education	.014**	.188
Residence	.078	.035

Labor force participation coded 1 = yes/0 = no.
B reflects the unstandardized coefficient.
Beta reflects the standardized coefficient.

*Significant at the .05 level.

**Significant at the .01 level.

Table 6 represents the types of occupations, by residence, of currently employed Mexican American women. Approximately 75% of these women worked in secondary occupations. Rural women were slightly more likely to be in secondary occupations.

Table 6.--Occupation of currently employed women, by residence (in percent).

Occupation	Urban (N = 703)	Rural (N = 96)
Primary	28.6	26.0
Secondary	71.4	74.0
Chi-square = 42.5*		

*p < .01 based on chi-square test, testing for differences between women in urban and rural areas.

The residential breakdown of the industries in which currently employed women worked is illustrated in Table 7. These Mexican American women were much more likely (85%) to work in peripheral industries. Rural women (90.6%) were much more likely to be in peripheral industries than were urban women (79.1%).

Table 7.--Industries of currently employed women, by residence (in percent).

Industry	Urban (N = 705)	Rural (N = 96)
Core	20.9	9.4
Periphery	79.1	90.6
Chi-square = 6.3*		

*p < .05 based on chi-square test, testing for differences between women in urban and rural areas.

The regression of industry and occupation on the independent variables, including residence, is presented in Table 8. For industry, residence and acculturation were the only independent variables that were found to be significant. That is, urban Mexican American women were more likely to work in core industries, whereas rural women were more likely to work in peripheral industries. American-oriented women were also more likely than Mexican-oriented women to work in core industries. When occupation was regressed on the independent variables, only acculturation was significant. This, however, must be interpreted with caution. Acculturation was highly correlated with occupation so that causality (directionality) cannot be determined at this time. It is not clear whether American-oriented Mexican American women seek and are given employment in primary occupations, whether the nature of primary occupations influences their acculturation process, or both.

Table 8.--Regression of industry and occupation on independent variables.

	Industry		Occupation	
	B	Beta	B	Beta
R^2	.025		.040	
N	796		799	
Constant	.009		.053	
Acculturation	.003*	.083	.005**	.151
Marital status	.007	.009	.027	.037
Age	-.001	-.041	-.002	-.040
Residence	.140**	.115	.079	.055
Education	.003	.055	.005	.073

Industry coded 1 = core/0 = periphery.
Occupation coded 1 = primary/0 = secondary.
B reflects the unstandardized coefficient.
Beta reflects the standardized coefficient.

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

CONCLUSIONS

Residence was expected to be a predictor of employment and the types of occupations and industries of working Mexican American women. There was no evidence that residence determined employment status or occupation. However, residence was found to be a predictor of the types of industries in which Mexican American women worked. Urban women were more likely to work in core industries, and rural women were more likely to work in peripheral industries.

True to expectations, women working in the labor force were younger and more educated than women not in the labor force. Marital status was not significant in determining female employment. There was also no evidence to show a relationship between education of employed Chicanas and the types of jobs they held or the types of industries in which they worked.

This researcher found the same results as Bokemeier et al. (1983) insofar as residence and age. That is, younger women as well as urban (metro) women were more likely to be employed than rural (non-metro) women. Bokemeier et al. (1983) also found that marital status and

number of dependent children explained the largest variance in labor force participation for both metro and non-metro women. These two variables were not significant at all in differentiating employment of Chicana women. However, education was found to be significant for both urban and rural Chicana women, whereas Bokemeier et al. (1983) found this only to be true for the non-metro women in their study.

Although Bokemeier et al. (1983) did not perform regression analyses for occupation and industry, cross-tabulations did reveal that metro women were more likely to be in secondary occupations and core industries. In this study it was found that residence had no significance on occupations of Chicana women, but the same pattern was found as Bokemeier et al. as far as urban women being more likely to be working in core industries.

Bokemeier et al. (1983) focused on a population of white Kentucky women and residence as a predictor of their labor force participation. This study modeled Bokemeier et al. (1983) but with a Mexican American female population. The researcher's intention was to test the relative importance of residence on labor force participation, but the dimension of ethnicity was added to the equation. Acculturation, defined in terms of language and ethnic identification, was found to be significant in differentiating employment of Chicana women. However, unlike the

population in Bokemeier et al.'s study, Chicana marital status and family size did not influence employment. This finding brings into question the theory that gender roles within the Chicano family structure affect the labor force participation of Mexican American women.

Acculturation, by way of internalizing a set of beliefs (changing gender roles), is not the reason that Chicanas are entering the labor force at an increasing rate. Rather, acculturation in terms of English-language proficiency might offer greater employment opportunities for Chicana women, thus allowing them the ability to take advantage of new employment opportunities opening up in the urban Southwest.

The question raised by all of this is whether race/ethnic theories account for differences in labor force participation rates between Chicanas and white women. Language acculturation is only part of the equation. Ortiz and Santana-Cooney (1984) found that ethnic differences in female participation resulted primarily from differences in educational attainment. This is supported by the finding in this study that education was significant in employment of Chicanas.

The fact that residence had no effect on the occupation of Chicana women, but that approximately 75% of Chicanas work in secondary occupations, reflects the labor

market segmentation of Chicanas as women and as Mexican Americans (Gonzales, 1990; Smith & Tienda, 1988). Although job opportunities are expanding in the Southwest, Chicanas are still relegated to the secondary labor markets, "with all the disadvantages associated with a lower segment of the market" (Gonzales, 1990, p. 190).

As stated by Portes and Truelove (1987), the importance of social networks cannot be discounted. New entrants into the labor market might be directed into jobs similar to those of their friends and family. This pattern, however, also reinforces the orientation of employers. That is, the fact that acculturation was the only variable significant in differentiating occupations of Chicanas may reflect not only language proficiency but also the minimizing of the cultural differences that are perceived by employers.

Even though residence was not significant in determining employment, labor issues are important, as are other issues that focus attention on a social system that denies access to a certain segment of society. The inability of this study to support residence in its effect on employment does not mean it is not an important variable in the labor force participation of Chicana women. The lack of residence as significant in these findings might just be a reflection of the limitations of this study.

The main limitation of this study was the inability to determine causality. The data were taken from a one-time cross-sectional survey, which does not allow for the insight of a longitudinal study. Thus, it was not possible to determine causality in the relationship between residence and employment, although it is probably reasonable to expect residence to influence employment status. Also, causality cannot be determined between family income and employment or between acculturation and employment.

There was also a limitation in the analysis performed. With a dependent dichotomous variable, the optimal mode of analysis would be logistic regression. However, the split on the dependent variable was within the 80:20 range, which made analysis through ordinary least squares regression an acceptable analysis strategy (Broman, personal communication, 1991).

Implications

At this point, it is important to reiterate that this researcher did not set out to disprove or downplay the importance of acculturation as a viable explanation of the increased labor force participation of Mexican and Mexican American women. In fact, it was found that acculturation was significant in determining Chicana employment. However, the researcher attempted to take a step forward in discussing and analyzing Chicana employment in

structural as well as cultural terms. This is a focus that is very much lacking in the available literature.

As the divorce rate, the number of female-headed households, and labor force participation increase, so will the increasing problems faced by those minority women need to be addressed. As Bokemeier et al. (1983) also found, it is true that women in the labor force have a higher education than women not in the labor force. Yet, it is also true that Mexican Americans have the lowest level of educational attainment as compared to Anglos, Blacks, and even some other Hispanic groups (Gonzales, 1990; Smith & Tienda, 1988; Portes & Truelove, 1987). What does this say for the future of the growing number of Mexican American women who will increasingly need jobs? These are issues the researcher cannot see as being addressed through cultural explanations, but rather by focusing on the changing opportunity structure of the labor market as we enter the age of fast-paced communications and information, where literacy and education are of the utmost importance.

Consistent with Bokemeier et al.'s (1983) findings, the majority of women in this study who worked were employed in peripheral industries and secondary occupations. Even though it was found in this study that urban women were more likely to work in core industries and as

Mexican American women might migrate from rural to urban areas in search of jobs (Zavella, 1984), the Southwest labor market still offers only low-wage jobs for the majority of Chicanas. As Bokemeier et al. suggested, urban areas might contain more core industries, but the types of jobs in which women are employed within these industries are still secondary occupations. This is supported by the fact that residence was not significant in predicting occupation. That is, whether residing in urban or rural areas, Chicana women face the same plight as the women in Bokemeier et al.'s study. "Women's placement in core industry, while generally associated by better earnings, benefits and prestige, does not necessarily impact favorably their economic returns if they are in low status occupations" (Bokemeier et al., 1983). This is especially important when we take into account that Chicana women's work is not necessarily supplemental, but rather many times they are the sole support of their families (Zavella, 1984).

ENDNOTES

[1]For the year 1989, persons of Hispanic origin comprised 8.2% of the population, as opposed to 1980, when this same group comprised only 6.5% of the population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990a). This number can be compared to the percentage of the population comprised of Blacks in 1980 (11.8%) and 1988 (12.3%). For whites, the number has actually decreased when comparing 1980 figures (85.9%) to 1988 figures (84.3%) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990b).

[2]The term "Chicano" was originally used in a derogatory sense to refer to low-wage farm workers. Radicals later began to identify themselves as Chicanos as a way of showing solidarity with Mexican American workers (Melville, 1980). Today, a Chicano is a Mexican American who identifies with a militant movement (Alvirez & Bean, 1976).

[3]This question asked the respondent whether, during the past two weeks, she worked at any time at a job or business, not counting work around the house. For this study, employed women consisted of all those who answered "yes," and unemployed consisted of whose who answered "no."

[4]Preliminary analysis was done using the poverty index. However, because of the high level of collinearity between the poverty index and family income, it was not necessary to use both variables.

[5]Married included "married spouse present" and "married spouse not present." Not married included widowed, divorced, separated, and never married.

[6]Family size included all related persons living in the same household.

[7]Compared to the 1986 figure of 50.5% for Mexican American women (U.S. Department of Labor, 1989), the 41% found in this study might seem much lower. However, the reader must take into consideration that HHANES was conducted in 1982 (1982 figure for Mexican American women was

unavailable). This study also measured current employment and not labor force participation. Labor force participation may inflate figures slightly because it includes not only women who are currently employed but also those who are not currently employed but are actively looking for work.

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