

EXAMINING RATES OF ALCOHOLISM: THE INTERACTION OF
RACE/ETHNICITY
AND SOCIAL CLASS

THESIS

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Jesse McCoy Rogers, B.A.A.S.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
III. DATA AND METHODS.....	29
IV. RESULTS.....	39
V. DISCUSSION.....	53
REFERENCES.....	61

LIST OF TABLES

I. Univariate Analysis.....	39
II. Bivariate Analysis.....	42
III. Odds Ratios and Standard Errors (in parenthesis) for Logistic Regression Models Predicting Alcohol Dependence and Felt Need for Treatment (Males).....	45
IV. Odds Ratios and Standard Errors (in parenthesis) for Logistic Regression Models Predicting Alcohol Dependence and Felt Need for Treatment (Females).....	49

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One reason that alcoholism is so difficult to understand, predict, and treat is because of its complexity and the variability with which it presents across populations. Although the extent to which alcoholism is biological versus environmental is a relevant discussion, the production, consumption and symbolic value of alcohol is ultimately defined in socio-cultural terms. Therefore, in order to fully understand alcoholism, researchers must understand the extent to which various social and cultural factors affect the use and misuse of alcohol. Significant attention has been given to the relationship between age and alcoholism, race/ethnicity and alcoholism, gender and alcoholism, and social class and alcoholism; far less attention has been given to differences in rates of alcoholism as a result of the *interaction* of race/ethnicity and social class. The purpose of this research is to determine how the interaction of race/ethnicity and social class affect rates of alcoholism among blacks, Hispanics, and whites.

To a significant extent, the questions addressed in this research also address the broader issue of the interaction of race/ethnicity and social class as they affect the overall circumstances and life chances of racial and ethnic groups in the United States. To the extent to which alcoholism is a social problem that results from macro level social processes, it is also reflective of a broader debate about the role of race/ethnicity and

social class as variables that affect the life chances of different groups within the United States.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Race/Ethnicity and Social Class in the United States – Conceptual Frameworks:

Although there is a significant body of empirical research that addresses alcohol related issues among various groups, very little research specifically considers how these issues are affected by the interaction of race/ethnicity and social class. As such, there has yet to be developed a theoretical framework that specifically addresses this issue. This is not to say that the relationship between race/ethnicity and social class as they relate to other social issues, such as employment and education, has been ignored. Social scientists have indeed investigated the extent to which race/ethnicity and social class affect access to structures of opportunity and overall life chances. What remains unclear is the extent to which race/ethnicity and social class function independently or together in terms of life chances. In order to understand the relationship between race/ethnicity, social class, and rates of alcoholism, it is necessary to discuss first the broader issue of race/ethnicity and social class in the United States.

There is an ongoing debate among social scientists and policy makers as to the importance of race and social class as factors that perpetuate disparities between whites and racial/ethnic minorities. By in large, this debate focuses on differences between blacks and whites in the post-civil rights era. Further, the debate is polarized in such a

way that the focus of discussion is on which variable is more determinative, rather than how the two variables interact to affect life chances.

Much of the debate and research that has emerged regarding this issue has been in response to William Julius Wilson's book *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978). In this seminal volume, Wilson argues that class, more than race, is the cause of disparities between whites and blacks. In contrast to this position is the works of researchers such as Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. In their book, *American Apartheid* (1993), they claim that race alone is the variable that has created ongoing disparities between whites and blacks.

Central to Wilson's argument is the idea that the life chances of African Americans are largely, although not solely, based upon their economic class, with race as a far less salient factor. The issue, argues Wilson, is not one of overt racism directed at blacks, but rather the emergence of new barriers that foster *class* subordination. To a significant extent, these barriers are the result of economic changes that have resulted in a burgeoning black underclass that has been trapped within urban areas, with few stable job prospects or opportunities for education or skill development. It is important to clarify at this point that Wilson is not saying that race does not matter at all; in fact, he states that race is still a factor with respect to such things as school desegregation and residential integration. What he is saying is that with respect to economic opportunity and advancement, class is a more significant obstacle.

Wilson identifies three critical periods in the United States that define race relations and black access to opportunity structures: the pre-industrial period, the industrial period, and the current modern industrial period. He argues that during the first

two periods, race was the most significant factor affecting blacks' access to opportunity structures and life chances. In the third stage, he argues that class conflict, irrespective of race, is what has created a burgeoning black underclass characterized by economic stagnation, limited opportunities, and social problems associated with poverty. He supports this assertion by arguing that there has developed in the United States a rising black middle class and that the emergence of this black middle class would not be possible if racial, not economic, stratification were the ascendant variable affecting the life chances of blacks. Although the presence of a black underclass originated because of racial stratification in the pre-industrial and industrial periods, ultimately class subordination has perpetuated the expansion of a black underclass.

In contrast to the arguments posited by Wilson are those of Massey and Denton. Massey and Denton see race alone as the variable that accounts for disparities in life chances between whites and blacks. In addressing the construction of the black ghetto, Massey and Denton (1993) argue that the black ghetto did not emerge because of socio-economic factors, rather it emerged as a product of overt efforts on the part of whites to deny blacks access to housing markets. By isolating blacks in ghettos, whites were able to maintain segregation. Additionally, Massey and Denton argue that ghettotization emerged prior to the economic factors to which Wilson attributes current disparities.

Massey and Denton also argue that the northern migration of poor blacks from the south, who were seeking jobs in the expanding industrial sector, created pressures in urban areas that resulted in the re-emergence of white racist ideologies. As the number of black migrants rose, these attitudes became more prevalent. Working class whites feared the competition for jobs that blacks represented, and middle class whites were disturbed

by the cultural characteristics they associated with these migrants. As additional support for the race argument, Massey and Denton assert that later economic changes and deconcentration of urban areas did little to change segregated residence patterns. Using indices that measure segregation and isolation, Massey and Denton assert that racial segregation still defines residential patterns, and unlike other immigrant groups, blacks alone have failed to make significant social and economic progress, rather they have remained largely confined to ghettos.

The arguments presented by Wilson and by Massey and Denton to explain the persistence of disparities between whites and blacks are both quite compelling, but neither satisfactorily answers the question of which is more important, race, or class. More importantly, both sets of arguments fail to give adequate attention to the interaction of race/ethnicity and social class in the perpetuation of ongoing disparities between, specifically, blacks and whites. A significant weakness that characterizes our understanding of the role race and/or class play in ongoing disparities between whites and blacks is the difficulty of isolating the impact of each variable on overall patterns of outcomes. Although Wilson emphasizes class as the most relevant factor affecting life chances for blacks, he does acknowledge that race is a factor in areas such as residential and school segregation. While his arguments are not wholly satisfactory, they may account for at least some of the post-civil rights era disparities that persist.

On the other hand, Massey and Denton do a much less effective job of making their case. They argue exclusively for race as the factor that determines blacks' life chances, particularly with respect to housing. Where their argument loses some of its validity is that they state that it was the migration of blacks seeking employment from the

south to the north as the consequence of increasing industrialization that was the catalyst for the re-emergence of racist ideologies. This seems to suggest that there is an interaction between race and class. Clearly, part of black segregation and subjugation in the north was the result of working-class whites' perception that blacks represented economic competition.

Whereas Wilson argues that class stratification may find its roots in racism, Massey and Denton seem to be arguing, despite themselves, that to at least some extent racism (or rather its re-emergence in the north as an ideological framework) has its roots in economic pressures that resulted from structural changes in the economy. Racist ideologies may have provided the justification for the marginalization of blacks, but it appears from their account that the motivation for the racist ideology was economic.

Other researchers have also critically examined race/ethnicity and social class as they relate to life chances for racial/ethnic groups in the United States. Another scholar who argues that race is more important than class is Joe R. Feagin. In his book, *Racist America – Roots, Current Realities and Future Reparations* (Feagin 2000), Feagin develops a conceptual framework that attempts to explain racism, and its consequences, as a historically rooted and contemporarily perpetuated feature of American society. Racism in the United States, according to Feagin, is both *systemic* and *total* in its nature, encompassing the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and imbedded in all of our social institutions. Feagin argues that in order to understand the racialized nature of our society, we must understand the ways in which the development of our society, and its perpetuation through time, is in part a consequence of white on black oppression.

Eschewing a reductionist, all-oppression theoretical framework for understanding racism in the United States, Feagin seeks to theoretically define racism in terms of historical context and empirical evidence. Feagin argues that there has been a tendency to examine racism as a minor problem that affects our otherwise healthy and functional society. Feagin suggests that this intellectual orientation fails to recognize the centrality of racism in defining the *identities* of both the oppressed (blacks) and the oppressors (white) in terms of their orientation to one another and the broader social context.

Additionally, Feagin argues that systemic racism is at the core of our history and our society. In contrast to Marxist theory, which Feagin indicates makes important theoretical contributions to our understanding of class conflict, he suggests that there has yet to be developed a comprehensive theory of racism that fully captures the extent and consequences of racism as an integral part of U.S. society. Feagin succinctly describes systemic racism as being about the experiences of day-to-day life – because of historical forces, racism is deeply internalized into the institutional structures of society, and consequently is a dominant feature of how individuals live, work and die – there is no escaping race as a defining feature of all of our lives.

In order to understand the United States as a ‘total racist society’, Feagin examines the enrichment of whites through the unjust impoverishment of black slaves, the consequent racist ideology and support structures that emerge to enhance vested group interests, the costs of racism, the emergence and perpetuation of racist ideology and the development of a resistance to racism. With respect to enrichment and the perpetuation of vested group interests, Feagin argues that the elite white founders of the United States were dependent upon the labor of African slaves in making the burgeoning

nation a going economic concern. Further, in order to perpetuate this exploitation, laws and ideologies were needed (and readily available) in order to justify and expand this oppressive and exploitative relationship, which is the genesis for total and systemic racism.

Feagin also spends a significant amount of time exploring the ways in which the seminal motivations and ideologies that fostered white exploitation of Africans were, and are, socially reproduced. By creating socioeconomic conditions that favor the illegitimate gains of whites and the deprivation of wealth accumulation of blacks, initially through slavery and later through segregation, Feagin argues that blacks continue to face reduced access to the opportunity structures of society, particularly in terms of legal and political protections and access to educational, employment, and housing resources. Finally, Feagin argues that white-black oppression has eroded life chances for blacks, in terms of their ability to have healthy, productive, and economically secure lives. In addition to the perpetuation of racism through institutional structures, the dominant white elitist ideology perpetuates the racialized hierarchy of the United States, particularly in terms of the perceptions of “blackness” as a negative – as viewed by both whites and blacks.

Feagin also argues that African enslavement and the economic exigencies that perpetuated use of slave labor further led to a legitimating ideology that characterized blacks as sub-human or partially human. This ideology thus created racist stereotypes of black men and women that persist even now and serve, along with limited access to institutional opportunity structures, to serve as continuing badges of slavery. Black Codes, and segregation served to disenfranchise and disempower blacks in the post-Civil

War era and this marginalization persists now, particularly as a consequence of the pervasiveness of racist ideology in institutional structures as a consequences of a history of systemized white enrichment from black exploitation.

Although Feagin acknowledges that other racial/ethnic minorities experience systemic racism, he argues that the character of this racism is of a lesser extent than that experienced by African Americans. Drawing on the particular and unique experience of blacks as slaves, Feagin largely ignores the historical and contemporary experiences of racism and its impact on access to opportunity structures and life chances as experienced by other racial/ethnic groups. Feagin argues that other immigrant groups experience a process through which, over time, they become identified more and more at the white end of the spectrum.

Feagin's examination of racism as a systemic and defining characteristic of U.S. society is useful, because it provides an insightful and theoretically supportable basis for understanding the development of a racialized ideology that has become imbedded and socially reproduced throughout our institutions. However, Feagin's treatment raises at least as many questions as it answers; specifically, if as Feagin suggests, this is a total racist society and racism is inherent to our social structures, what is the relationship between race and socioeconomic classes? Although racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in the lower classes, the presence of significant numbers of whites in the lower classes suggests that class subjugation and limited access to structures of opportunity extend beyond racial/ethnic issues. As with Wilson, and as with Massey and Denton, Feagin has not adequately distinguished between class-based and race-based issues as they affect the life chances of blacks.

The United States as a Racialized Social System

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva is another social scientist who has offered a conceptual framework for understanding racial/ethnic disparities in the United States. In a manner similar to Feagin, Bonilla-Silva argues that racialized ideologies emerged in the United States because of the expansion of capitalism into the New World (Bonilla-Silva 1997). Also consistent with Feagin, Bonilla-Silva argues that the pressure to provide cheap labor within emerging markets of production in the New World resulted in the categorization of exploited populations based on physically and geographically identifiable categories. By categorizing people based on race, it became ideologically supportable to establish a hierarchy of dominance; with whites as the dominant group, and black slaves as the subordinate group. Further, this ideology enabled the dominant white group to effectively justify exploitation, prejudice, and discrimination based on ethnocentric beliefs that viewed blacks and their culture as naturally inferior. Over time, this ideology has become imbedded in American society such that racialized ideologies and assumptions are reproduced institutionally, and persist even in the absence of overt racism.

In his book *Racism without Racists* (2003), Bonilla-Silva expands on his conceptualization of the United States as a racialized society by examining how racism has evolved in the post-Civil Rights era. Bonilla-Silva argues that in the U.S. there is an ideology that supports the dominant white power structure through what he terms *color-blind racism*. Racism, for Bonilla-Silva, is about power and the ways in which the dominant group maintains its position. Color-blind racism is an ideological orientation that denies that the United States is racialized, and contends that disparities between

whites and blacks are the product of market forces, naturally occurring phenomena, and cultural limitations that are specific to blacks (despite equality of opportunity). By denying that racism persists, whites are able to support their dominant position ideologically by explaining the failure of blacks to achieve equality of results in their lives in such a manner that race and racial inequality can be denied. This dominant white ideology is institutionally imbedded and socially reproduced.

Central to Bonilla-Silva's argument is the idea that the repudiation of Jim Crow era (overt) racism has resulted in the need to develop an ideological basis for ongoing white dominance. Ideas that previously held sway, such as the idea that blacks are by nature biologically and morally inferior, are no longer viable arguments. Thus, it has become necessary to develop a different set of justificatory rationalizations to explain disparities between whites and blacks. Bonilla-Silva argues that white racial ideology is produced and perpetuated through communicative interaction; in other words, language is imbedded in ideology and the particular language that is utilized supports the dominant ideology's persistence through time. In the case of color-blind racism, Bonilla-Silva argues that specific strategies have emerged that support our racialized social structures without actually using race as a justification for the dominant white power structure. The communicative interactions used by whites serve to foster white solidarity and to produce a negative perception of non-whites. Language and its use are central to Bonilla-Silva's arguments. A primary component of any dominant racial ideology is its conceptual framework for interpreting information, which he refers to as *frames*. He identifies four central frames that are used by whites to support and recreate our current racialized

system. These frames are usually used in combination in order to support the dominant ideological position.

The first frame that Bonilla-Silva identifies, and the one he states is most important, is *abstract liberalism*. Abstract liberalism, which emerged as a philosophical challenge to the feudal order, was originally political and economic in its orientation. Abstract liberalism, as used in racial matters, tends to stress equality of opportunity and individual choice as significant factors that have created the current reality of white domination. As an example, in opposing policies such as affirmative action, whites will cite that all persons in the United States have equality of opportunity, and that programs such as affirmative action pervert this structured equality of opportunity.

The second frame that Bonilla-Silva discusses is *naturalization*. The naturalization frame is used to justify the idea that social phenomena such as segregation and intra-racial marriage occurs because people are naturally disposed to living among, and mating with individuals that are like themselves, the implication is that there is a biological imperative that drives this tendency for individuals to gravitate to those that are like them. The “innate” argument means that separation is not a function of structural racism, and this provides additional support for ideological contentions that the United States is not a racist society.

The third frame that is identified is *cultural racism*. Cultural racism contends that cultural characteristics are perpetuated from one generation to the next. A classic articulation of this frame is the “culture of poverty”; the idea that norms and values associated with poverty are perpetuated from one generation to the next, and run counter to society’s dominant (white) norms and values. This, the argument contends, leads to

crime, lack of educational motivation and unwillingness to work in lieu of receiving welfare. In this example, race is not identified as the issue; rather the issue is the culture associated with poverty. This frame is frequently used in combination with the final frame, which is *minimization of racism*.

Minimization of racism is a technique used by whites to argue that race-based prejudice and discrimination are in the past and no longer have any bearing on the opportunity of blacks. Minimization of racism occurs in the form of direct minimization, indirect minimization, or outright denial. The crux of minimization of racism, no matter how it is articulated, is that the U. S. is now an equal opportunity society, and that black complaints of unfair treatment are unfounded – they are simply using ‘the race card’ in order to justify their failure to make the individual choices that would provide them with social benefits.

Bonilla-Silva spends a significant amount of time examining how frames are used individually and collectively to justify our racialized social system. He examines responses from in-depth interviews that explore a range of topics ranging from relationships and contact with blacks to interracial marriage. The consistent interpretation that Bonilla-Silva makes is that racism is linguistically and rhetorically imbedded in white conceptualizations of current social reality. He is not arguing that individuals are necessarily overtly racist, but rather that color-blind racism perpetuates racism by cloaking it in non-racial terms.

Notable strengths of Bonilla-Silva’s work are his methodology and theoretical development, which provide a sound basis for understanding race relations in the United States relative to the ideology of the dominant (white) group. An additional strength of

this work is that it combines micro level issues such as socialization, interaction, and individual agency with macro level issues such as segregation and institutional inequality. One potential weakness of this work is that it fails to account for the relationship between race and class. White elitist interests are not only vested in a continued subjugation of racial/ethnic minorities, but also in a continued subjugation of the working and lower classes. Although Bonilla-Silva alludes to the intersection of these interests to a certain extent, his work stops short of fully considering the interactive effects of race/ethnicity and social class on the isolation and life chances of racial/ethnic minorities. As with Feagin, Massey and Denton, Bonilla-Silva assumes that race as a variable affecting life chances for African Americans far outweighs social class in importance.

Alcoholism and the Racialized Social System of the United States

With respect to alcohol use and abuse, the ecological framework developed by John M. Wallace Jr., which is consistent with Bonilla-Silva's conceptualization of the United States as a racialized society, adds another dimension to the preceding arguments. It also serves as a useful theoretical framework for testing hypotheses relative to the interaction of race/ethnicity and social class and differential rates of alcoholism.

Building in part on earlier work by Bonilla-Silva (1997), Wallace argues that the racialized nature of American society, and the resultant stereotypes, categorizations, and differential treatment of groups, has resulted in disparities between whites and blacks. Further, Wallace argues that racialized ideologies and practices directly and indirectly influence racial/ethnic differences in alcohol and other substance use (Wallace 1999a; Wallace 1999b). Wallace suggests that factors associated with socioeconomic and contextual, or social ecological level circumstances have resulted in blacks and Hispanics

experiencing greater problems and negative social consequences because of substance use.

Some negative consequences that Wallace cites are legal problems, health problems, and job-related problems. In part, these negative consequences are a result of laws and policies that target blacks and Hispanics living in urban areas with high concentrations of poverty. Wallace argues that one reason for this is that Americans, despite the fact that whites account for over three-fourths of drug use, conceptualize the drug problem in the United States as being an inherently black problem. As a result, federal laws and sentencing mandates disproportionately target groups living in urban areas with high concentrations of poverty, particularly blacks (Wallace 1999a). This argument suggests that whites receive greater implicit and institutional sanctioning of their alcohol use as compared to blacks and Hispanics. This is certainly consistent with Bonilla-Silva's *cultural racism* frame, which defines social problems in terms of the cultural limitations of racial/ethnic minorities. Wallace's argument is also consistent with Feagin's assertion that institutional racism involves the assumption that, blacks in particular, are innately inferior to whites. Greater negative social sanctions for individuals in the lower classes may also reflect negative American attitudes about the poor.

Additionally, the greater negative consequences noted for blacks and Hispanics are present, despite the fact that substance use among black adolescents is consistently lower than that of whites, and Hispanic adolescents' substance use is typically comparable to or exceeded by white adolescent use (Wallace 1999a; Wallace 1999b). Wallace, and others, cite a number of factors that account for lower use rates in

adolescence, such as the more integrated role of religion in the cultural lives of African Americans and Hispanics, which may function as a protective factor against substance use/abuse (Wallace and Bachman 1991; Vega et al 1993). This may be especially true among African American adolescents, who, in addition to experiencing greater integration of religion in their lives also experience a stronger emphasis on extended family networks and familial emphasis on communication and good grades (Wallace and Bachman 1991; Biafora and Zimmerman 1998).

It should be noted that in contrast to these protective factors, many African American adolescents experience significant risk factors, such as low parental educational level, neighborhood violence, and single-parent families (Biafora and Zimmerman 1998; Wallace 1999a). Further, by the age of thirty-five black and Hispanic rates for substance use exceed that of whites (Kandel 1995; Caetano 1997; Wallace 1999b; NEDS 2002). In part, this “age cross-over effect” may be explained by the fact that protective factors present in the lives of black and Hispanic adolescents become attenuated over time. Lacking the ongoing presence of the protective factors present in adolescence, many blacks and Hispanics face significant risk factors associated with substance use such as low educational attainment and poor employment opportunities (Wallace and Bachman 1991; Wallace 1999a). These risk factors, according to Wallace, reflect the racialized nature of American society.

Other contextual factors that Wallace argues contributes to more alcohol and substance related problems and negative consequences are that Hispanics and blacks are disproportionately represented among the poor, have lower levels of wealth, are more likely to be unemployed and receive less pay for equal levels of education (with whites).

Blacks and Hispanics are also more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty. Additionally, poor Hispanic and black neighborhoods have higher concentrations of retail alcohol outlets, thereby increasing the social availability of alcohol. Further, blacks and Hispanics are targeted for the sales of large volume and high alcohol content products. Blacks and Hispanics are also subjected to more billboard and print media alcohol advertisements than are whites, which also serves to increase the social availability of alcohol. Additionally, alcohol advertisers heavily support black and Hispanic-oriented charities, cultural activities, and events. Also in terms of social availability, cheap wines and malt liquors are widely available and aggressively marketed in black communities. With respect to adolescents, black and Hispanic minors are more likely to be sold alcohol than whites minors, and are more likely than whites to state that illicit substances are easily obtainable in their communities, to have seen someone selling drugs and to report having seen people who are drunk or high in their community (Wallace 1999b).

Wallace's ecological framework for understanding differences in patterns of substance use is useful for this research, because unlike other models, it effectively captures *both* racial/ethnic and class based factors that affect use rates. Although Wallace does not specifically investigate the intersection of race/ethnicity and class, his framework does capture the broader social forces (both race and class related) associated with differences in substance use. Additionally, Wallace avoids the "either or arguments" that characterize the debate over the importance of race versus class characteristic of Wilson, Feagin, Bonilla-Silva and Massey and Denton. Further, Wallace recognizes that because of the racialized nature of American society, it is difficult to disentangle race/ethnicity from class when attempting to explain substance use rates.

Additional Patterns of Alcohol Use

In order to more fully understand the nature of alcoholism rates among different populations, it is useful to further review extant research on broad patterns of alcohol use and alcohol related problems. With respect to drinking patterns, it is generally understood that an individual's racial/ethnic background, age, gender, socio-economic status, and protective and risk factors are significant in determining drinking behaviors (Collins 1992; Caetano and Kaskutas 1995; NEDS 2002). As an example, higher income levels result in lower alcohol use (Martin et al 2003) and illicit drug use (Kandel 1992).

Specifically in terms of race/ethnicity, Hispanics have the highest levels of heavy drinking in adulthood, followed by blacks in terms of incidence, prevalence, and stability (Caetano 1983; Caetano and Kaskutas 1995; Kandel 1995). However, blacks are more likely to be abstainers than are whites (Barr et al 1993). Whites and American Indians have the highest rates of annual prevalence and lifetime use of alcohol. In contrast, Asians tend to have the lowest levels of lifetime alcohol consumption (Rebach 1992). As a caution, these findings speak to broad categories of racial/ethnic diversity, and do not reflect heterogeneity within these populations (Rebach 1992; Collins 1992; De La Rosa et al 2000).

Other factors affecting between group differentiations in alcohol use/abuse have to do with racially and ethnically based cultural norms associated with alcohol use. Different groups view drinking in different ways (Robyak et al 1989), consequently, how groups define acceptable substance use will also vary from group to group. Specifically, Robyak et al (1989) found that whites perceive alcohol as a means of alleviating

psychological distress, and blacks tend to view alcohol consumption as improving mental functioning.

Watt and Rogers (2006) argue that among black parents and adolescents, alcohol use may be seen as potentially threatening to life chances, in part because of the social ecological factors noted by Wallace (1999a). Specifically, Wallace suggests that norms that oppose substance use may emerge among blacks, because of the greater likelihood that they will be in contact with, or observe the negative consequences of substance use. Finally, Caetano and Kaskutas (1994) noted that heavy drinking among adult Hispanic males is linked with their perception that they have a “right” to drink upon achieving maturity.

Gender

Gender is another significant variable in terms of alcohol use and alcoholism. In general, women, across all ethnic groups, use alcohol and drugs at much lower rates than males (Hser et al 1987, Caetano 1987). However, Denise Herd (1988) found that irrespective of other variables, race was a more significant issue than gender in terms of abstention and heavy drinking among black and white adult females; black women are less likely to be heavy drinkers and are more likely to abstain from alcohol use. Research findings also indicate that more acculturated Hispanic and Asian-American women tend to have higher use rates than do their less acculturated counterparts (Rebach 1992).

Further, findings from the 2003 National Survey of Drug Use and Health indicate that rate of alcohol abuse and dependence among women were highest among Native Americans and Alaska Natives (19.9%), followed by whites (6.3%), blacks (4.5%), Hispanics (4.4%), and Asians (3.4%) (Office of Applied Studies 2005). In terms of

problems associated with alcohol use, women experience more severe economic and health related consequences, particularly in terms of heavy drinking during pregnancy, which is associated with fetal alcohol syndrome (Dawson 1996a).

Additionally, alcohol dependent women experience more intrapsychic and social functioning problems (Robbins 1989). One reason women experience more severe consequences is because of a telescoping effect, whereby women develop problems over a shorter period of time, even though onset of dependency typically occurs later for females than males (Dawson 1996b; Holdcraft 2002).

Acculturation

Acculturation is also related to differential patterns of substance use, both within and between racial/ethnic groups. The presence of an overarching, dominant social context does not obviate the impact of cultural diversity between the different racial/ethnic groups that comprise the social whole. Factors such as the use of language, cultural participation, and residence in ethnic enclaves all affect a group's degree of acculturation (Schnittker 2002). Biafora and Zimmerman (1998) argue that acculturation occurs across a continuum from "traditional" to "biculturalized" to "acculturated." As such, an "acculturated" African American would be more likely to adopt the attitudes and behaviors of the dominant white society. As a consequence, these individuals would be more likely to adopt substance use patterns consistent with that of whites. In contrast, a more traditional African American would maintain the more rigid norms associated with African American culture.

Acculturation studies indicate that U.S.-born Hispanics tend to have drug and alcohol use rates that are consistent with Whites (Warheit et al 1998). Additionally, U.S.-

born Hispanics with low acculturation tend to have higher rates of drug use and to face more negative sanctions. In contrast, among foreign-born Hispanics, especially Cubans, whose culture notably discourages illicit drug use, there tends to be lower rates of substance use (De La Rosa et al 2000). Finally, more acculturated Hispanic and Asian women tend to have patterns of alcohol consumption that are more like whites than less acculturated Hispanic and Asian women (Caetano 1987; Rebach 1992).

Research on acculturation is important, because it indicates that the extent to which individuals adopt the norms and values of the dominant white, middle-class society affects patterns of substance use. Moreover, such research underscores the problem of using overly broad categories of race/ethnicity (such as Hispanic) to understand patterns of alcohol use and dependency. Focusing on race/ethnicity alone in order to understand alcoholism is insufficient, because as groups become more acculturated, they are ultimately becoming acculturated to white, middle-class norms. In part, it is because of acculturation as a social process that considering the interaction of race and social class is important for understanding patterns of alcohol use and dependency.

Race/Ethnicity and Social Class

Although race/ethnicity and, to a much more limited extent, social class have already been discussed relative to Wallace's ecological framework, it is worthwhile to also review other researcher's finding in this area. It should be noted that this point that alcohol related problems refers to specific negative consequences that result from drinking, such as legal problems, and problems with work, family, health, etc. (Jones-Webb et al 1997). This differs from alcoholism, in that alcoholism, and alcohol

dependence as a diagnostic determination, do not necessarily correspond with alcohol related problems, although significant overlap would be expected. Further, alcohol misuse and risky drinking behaviors may lead to, or contribute to alcoholism, but are but they are not synonymous with alcoholism as it is diagnostically determined.

Several studies have found that the interaction of race/ethnicity with other social factors does seem to contribute to alcohol-related problems among blacks. One such factor, educational attainment, has been found to be associated with alcohol misuse among different racial/ethnic populations (Herd 1992; Barr et al 1993). Paschal et al (2000) found that low educational attainment was positively associated with alcohol misuse among blacks, while high educational attainment was correlated with alcohol misuse among whites. These findings tend to support the idea that there are numerous factors associated with being black that contribute to alcohol related problems.

In addition, Martin et al (2003) found that perceptions among blacks of bias, prejudice, and experiences of discrimination resulted in an increased risk for alcohol problems. Specifically, these perceptions led to job-related escapist motives for drinking, such as drinking to reduce job pressure, drinking to relieve job tension, and drinking to forget work problems. Higher occupational status was correlated with a lower likelihood of engaging in job-related escapist drinking, and higher income levels were correlated with a lower probability of drinking to reduce job pressure.

In addition to job-related motivations to drink, Martin et al found a correlation between perceived discrimination and the increased likelihood that black respondents would be motivated to drink as a way to cheer up when depressed or sad, to relax after work, and to unwind on the weekends. These motivations to drink occurred less among

respondents with higher levels of education. These findings tend to support the arguments of both Feagin and Bonilla-Silva that institutional racism exists, and leads to negative outcomes for blacks. This is particularly interesting with respect to job-related stress, because occupation is important for social mobility.

In a study that specifically addresses Wilson's argument that class, not race, is the most salient factor affecting life chances of blacks, Barr et al (1993) examined differences in alcohol use, alcohol problems, and drug use for middle class and lower class blacks. Wilson's argument that deindustrialization has created a black underclass, according to Barr et al, implies that there should be significant differences in rates of alcohol use and alcohol related problems between middle and lower class blacks. Results of this study support Wilson's argument with respect to alcohol and drug use, but *not* relative to alcohol related problems.

Although income and education were predictors of higher rates of alcohol and drug use among lower class blacks as compared to middle class blacks, they did not correlate with a difference in alcohol related problems. Blacks, irrespective of social class, still experienced greater alcohol related problems than did whites. Barr et al suggest that the relative stability of alcohol related problems across class for blacks might reflect a tendency for middle and upper class blacks to experience greater scrutiny and for their deviant behaviors to be more quickly recognized.

In another study, Jones-Webb et al (1997), using data from the 1992 National Alcohol Follow-up Survey, found that unfavorable economic conditions, which are defined as living in neighborhoods with at least 20% of the households below the poverty line, was associated with higher reports of alcohol-related problems among blacks, when

compared to whites and Hispanics, after controlling for alcohol consumption. These differences were not noted among men living under more affluent conditions. Further, Hispanics, who are supposed to face the same ethnic-based stresses as blacks, did not report higher rates of alcohol-related problems relative to living in impoverished communities. Wallace's finding that economically disadvantaged black males experience more negative alcohol use related consequences than disadvantaged white males is consistent with the results of this research. Additionally, Wallace noted that high SES black males experience significantly fewer alcohol related problems and consequences than do high SES white males (Wallace 1999b).

Jones-Webb et al attribute the higher rate of alcohol-related problems among blacks as being the result of fewer internal and external sources of support as compared to whites and Hispanics living under the same conditions. In addition, Jones-Webb et al note that the impoverished neighborhoods in which black men reside tend to have overall lower levels of employment, higher population density, and a greater police presence than those of white and Hispanic men. Jones-Webb et al also found that these neighborhoods had more alcohol serving establishments. La Veist and Wallace in their 2000 study of the distribution of liquor stores in African American neighborhoods found that there are a disproportionate number of liquor stores in predominantly African American census tracts.

A significant limitation of the Jones-Webb et al study is that it uses cross-sectional data, which makes it difficult to assess causality or to identify underlying processes, which may contribute to the relationship between neighborhood poverty and incidence of alcohol-related problems. The value of this study is that it considers macro-

level environmental issues relative to the presence of alcohol-related problems. Further, it suggests that there is an interaction between race/ethnicity and economic conditions and the presence of problems associated with alcohol use.

Other studies have addressed the specific relationship between race/ethnicity, social class and psychological resiliency and psychiatric impairment (Neff and Husani 1980; Ulbrich 1989). Neff and Husani found that when SES-related variables were controlled for there was no difference in degree of psychiatric impairment across races. Neff and Husani argue that higher rates of psychiatric impairment among blacks are the result of social class standing. This argument tends to support Wilson's argument that class, not race, is the larger issue.

In a study that considers race/ethnicity and social class concomitantly, Ulbrich et al (1989) found that race and SES, as an index comprised of occupation, education, and household income, jointly influence the extent to which negative life events and economic problems contribute to psychological distress. In particular, Ulbrich et al noted that low-SES whites are more vulnerable to psychological distress because of economic problems than are low-SES blacks.

The opposite was true, however, for the impact of negative life events, with low-SES blacks being more psychologically vulnerable than low-SES whites. Further, middle-SES blacks were more resilient than low-SES blacks to both economic problems and negative life events. Interestingly, Ulbrich et al noted that the negative life events that created the most distress for low-SES blacks were role exit events, such as job loss, divorce, etc. This is consistent with other research, which indicates that marriage is a protective factor against alcohol use in general (Monahan and Finney 1996), and

especially for black males. In addition, divorce and separation are correlated with increased alcohol use (Parker et al 1995). Ulbrich et al argue that the overall lower resiliency of low-SES blacks to negative life events is the result of institutionalized racism, which has resulted in the presence of fewer resources and overall life chances for low-SES blacks. Ulbrich et al further argue that low-SES blacks have higher resiliency than low-SES whites in the face of economic problems, because blacks have been exposed to more poverty and have developed coping mechanisms that enable them to cope with poverty. Two adaptations that the researchers note are fatalism, which enables low-SES blacks to attribute their economic condition to social inequality, and an extended black family network, which provides for goods, services, and emotional support. This study usefully demonstrates that how race and class interact to effect vulnerability and adaptability in the face of personal and social issues varies from group to group. A limitation of this study is that it used cross-sectional data, and therefore it is difficult to capture the specific processes through which the differences noted occur.

Taken in sum, the race/social class interaction literature clearly suggests that social class and race are relevant in terms of both life chances and modes of adaptation. Although blacks suffer from the effects of discrimination and low access to opportunity structures, they have developed adaptive strategies that enable them to cope with their historically marginalized place in society. What is far less clear is how issues of race affect Hispanics in terms of marginalization and adaptation. If, as Feagin suggests, blacks suffer significantly greater negative consequences than other racial/ethnic minorities, then Hispanics should experience fewer alcohol related problems than blacks.

Gaps in the Literature

In order to better understand alcoholism and provide effective treatment to different populations, we must first identify those factors that are most salient for various groups. There has been very little research that specifically considers how the interaction of race/ethnicity and social class affect rates of alcoholism across groups. It is clear, however, that cultural norms about alcohol vary across race/ethnicity. We also know that norms and values vary across social class. Therefore, it is important that we understand how the interaction of these factors affects rates of alcoholism for different racial/ethnic groups. It is important not only to consider the pressures associated with race/ethnicity and with social class independently, but also how they interact if we are to develop a comprehensive understanding of the complex social factors that contribute to alcoholism across populations.

CHAPTER III

DATA AND METHODS

Using Wallace's ecological framework, this research investigates the effect of the interaction of race/ethnicity and social class on rates of alcoholism for African Americans, Hispanics, and whites. The specific hypotheses that will be tested are as follows:

- H1 – Females will have lower rates of alcoholism than males, irrespective of race/ethnicity or social class.
- H2 – White females will have higher rates of alcoholism than African Americans and Hispanics, irrespective of social class.
- H3 – Among males, there is a multiplicative effect that results from the interaction between race/ethnicity and social class, which results in higher rates of alcoholism among lower class African Americans, followed by lower class Hispanics, and then lower class whites.
- H4 – Among males, there are higher rates of alcoholism among middle class whites than middle class African Americans or Hispanics, because African Americans and Hispanics experience protective factors associated with cultural norms while avoiding the economic deprivation associated with alcohol use and abuse in the lower class.

- H5 – Among upper class male respondents, there is a higher rate of alcoholism among whites than African Americans or Hispanics.

Sample

This research utilizes secondary data from the National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. The NSDUH is a large, nationally representative survey that is conducted yearly by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Office of Applied Studies. This survey will use a combined data set from years 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 of the NSDUH, which yields a total sample size of 220,472 public use records. All of the records used are for non-institutionalized individuals, age 12 and older. Surveys were conducted in person using both computer assisted interviewing and audio computer assisted self-interviews. This provides certain assurances of both quality control and increases the likelihood of respondent honesty by reducing social desirability bias by increasing anonymity through the computer-assisted technique. Multistage and probability sampling are used for all fifty states and the District of Columbia to assure that the sample is representative and generalizable to the broader population.

Measures – Dependent Variables: This research uses two dichotomous/categorical dependent variables to capture alcoholism. The first variable, *Alcohol Dependence in the Past Year* is a recoded variable that establishes alcohol dependency through DSM-IV criteria. If respondents responded positively to three or more of the six DSM-IV dependence criteria captured through individual questions, and responded positively to a seventh withdrawal criteria question, then they were coded as being alcohol dependent in the past year (NSDUH, 2004; 382-383). The six questions used to assess DSM-IV

dependence criteria are:

- *Spent a great deal of time over a period of a month getting, using, or getting over the effects of alcohol.*
- *Unable to keep set limits on alcohol use or used more often than intended.*
- *Needed to use alcohol more than before to get desired effects or noticed that using the same amount had less effect than before.*
- *Unable to cut down or stop using alcohol every time he or she tried or wanted to.*
- *Continued to use alcohol even though it was causing problems with emotions, nerves, mental health, or physical problems.*
- *Reduced or gave up participation in important activities due to alcohol use.*

The second variable which captures alcoholism is ***Felt Need for Treatment for Use of Alcohol Past 12 Months***. As with the preceding variable, this question is also a proxy for alcoholism, in this instance the logical assumption is that the respondent's stated felt need for treatment indicates alcohol dependency. A respondent was coded as having felt need for treatment for use of alcohol in the past 12 months if they responded positively to either of the two following questions:

- *Needed additional treatment for use of alcohol in the past 12 months.*
- *Needed treatment for use of alcohol in the past 12 months.*

Independent Variables: The independent variables used in this research are *race*, *gender*, *social class by total family income and educational attainment*, and *social class by occupational prestige*. Race and social class (by income and education and by occupational prestige) were also combined to create a variable that captures the interaction of race and social class.

The *race* variable is a recoded variable that includes the categories of Non-

Hispanic white, Non-Hispanic black/African American and Hispanic. Other racial/ethnic categories have been eliminated due to small sample size.

In order to understand the social class variables used in this research, it is important to first address the issue of social class as a concept, and as it pertains to quantitative research. As is commonly known, social class represents far more than income; rather it reflects income, accumulated wealth, educational attainment, prestige and various other characteristics associated with lifestyle. A particular problem that emerges in attempting to capture social class in research is that there is very little clarity in terms of what constitutes discrete categories of social class. For this research, the problem was compounded by the lack of available variables through which a multi-dimensional measure of social class could be developed. In order to provide a valid measure of social class, I have taken two separate approaches. Since the NSDUH does not capture wealth attainment or relevant class related lifestyle characteristics, I have in part had to rely upon total family income and educational attainment as proxies for social class. Given the clear limitations of this measure, due to its lack of dimensionality, I have also developed a measure of social class based on occupational prestige scores. Multivariate analyses were run that included both measures of social class in an effort to assess social class with greater validity than if only one measure was used.

Social class by total family income and educational attainment is coded as follows:

- *Lower class* – Lower class income (less than \$30,000) and educational attainment of less than high school or high school.
- *Middle class* – Middle class income (\$30 - \$74,999) and educational

attainment of high school, some college, or college or more. Respondents were also coded as middle class if they were in the lower class income category and had educational attainment of some college or college or more. This was done in order to capture respondents whose current income may not be consistent with their level of educational attainment, such as recent college graduates, or those respondents who will soon graduate. Finally, a respondent was coded as middle class if he/she were in the upper class income category and had educational attainment of less than high school, high school, or some college. This category is intended to capture those respondents, who, despite lower levels of educational attainment have achieved higher income levels. One potential problem with this category is that it may include individuals with income levels that actually correspond to the upper class. However, the dataset does not provide detailed information on individuals with incomes over \$75,000, and while it is a concern, the number of individuals with extremely high incomes (that perhaps should be classified as upper class) is likely to be small.

- *Upper class* – Upper class income level (\$75,000+) and educational attainment of college or more.

Social class is also measured with occupational prestige. Occupational prestige scores capture the educational attainment and required credentials for specific occupations, and this provides information about the rewards, monetary and otherwise, that are associated with specific occupations (Williams and Collins 1995).

In addition, lifestyle and health related issues are also associated with occupation. The placement of individuals within the broader social structure, particularly as a function of occupation, has implications for health-related behaviors, access to social networks, access to safe and healthy living environments, and access to medical care and other resources. Certain occupations may also influence health because of being psychologically stressful or physically hazardous (House et al 1980; Karasek et al 1981). Alcohol consumption, smoking, and obesity are lifestyle patterns that are also influenced by occupation (Sorenson et al 1985; House et al 1986).

Using the prestige scores derived by Nakao and Treas (1992), and based upon characteristics of the workforce in the 1990 Census, such as occupational education levels and earnings, Robert M. Hauser and John Robert Warren have calculated more current occupational prestige scores, which correspond with 1990 Census occupational categories (Hauser and Warren 1997). The occupational prestige scores used for this research are those calculated by Hauser and Warren.

Multidimensionality is one strength of occupational prestige as measure of social class. Another strength of occupational prestige rankings for determining social class is that they are consistent. Occupational prestige rankings that are derived through occupational prestige surveys yield consistent results, irrespective of respondent differences, such as gender and race (Hauser and Warren 1997). Additionally, it has been consistently shown that respondents are capable of ranking occupations hierarchically based on the perceived status associated with occupations (Nakao 1992).

A problem with occupational prestige is that it can be difficult to assign occupational status, especially for individuals who are not within the paid workforce,

such as retirees, unemployed homemakers, and those involved in the informal economy (Krieger et al 1997). In addition, occupational prestige scores were originally developed based on a work force populated by white males, which obscures the fact that women and non-white workers tend to receive lower pay for equal work and educational attainment, are disproportionately represented in lower-paying positions, and receive fewer opportunities for advancement (Krieger et al 1997).

In order to develop discrete categories of social classes for this research, the original occupation variable contained in all four years of the NSDUH was recoded from a categorical to an ordinal level variable by ranking occupational categories based on the Hauser and Warren occupational prestige scores. Univariate analysis was conducted to determine the mean, median and, standard deviation. The mean occupational prestige value was 6.81, and the median was 7. The standard deviation was 4. In order to maintain discrete categories of occupation, and because the median corresponded closely to the mean, social class categories were assigned based on standard deviations from the median.

Social class as occupational prestige was coded as follows:

- *Lower class* – Between two and three standard deviations left of the median occupational prestige score.
- *Middle class* – Plus and minus one standard deviation from the median occupational prestige score. This measure captures 68% of the sample.
- *Upper class* - Between two and three standard deviations right of the median occupational prestige score.

A significant limitation of using occupational prestige scores to determine social

class in this research is the variable used in the NSDUH to capture respondent occupation; the NSDUH uses only broad categories of occupations, rather than specific occupations. Although Hauser and Warren have calculated weighted average prestige scores for the broad occupational Census categories, there is a significant amount of variation of occupational prestige scores within the broader categories. As an example, the Total SEI for the broad occupations category of *Managerial and Specialty Occupations* is 48.82, but among occupations within this category, the TSEI scores range between 50.86 (Legislators) to 40.91 (Management Related Occupations). It is because of this particular limitation that the decision was made to assess social class using two different measures. The purpose of using both social class as measured by income and educational attainment and social class as measured by occupational prestige was to determine the extent to which there was consistency between the two measures. As will be discussed in detail later, the two measures proved to be inconsistent with one another.

Using both measures of social class (income and education, and occupational prestige), two variables were created, which capture the interaction between race/ethnicity and social class. These two variables identify both the race and class of the respondent. There are consequently nine categories: white upper class, white middle class, white lower class, Hispanic upper class, Hispanic middle class, Hispanic lower class, black upper class, black middle class, and black lower class.

Control Variables: In addition to the use of specific racial/ethnic categories, gender, and social class as controls in and of themselves, this study also utilizes several other control variables, which are intended to isolate the effects of having a specific racial/ethnic and social class identity from other factors that might affect the specific

dependent variable in question. The additional control variables used in this study include *Serious Mental Illness Indicator (SMI)*, *Age*, *Marital Status*, and *Population Density*.

The variable Serious Mental Health Indicator (SMI) is a recoded variable calculated on a scale of 0-4 for six questions related to how frequently respondents experienced: nervousness, hopelessness, felt restless or fidgety, felt so sad or depressed that nothing could cheer them up, felt everything was an effort, and felt no good or worthless. Scores of less than 13 indicated no SMI, and scores \Rightarrow 13 indicated the presence of SMI. This variable is included as a control in portions of the analysis, because alcoholics frequently suffer from mental illness, especially depression (Link 1997). In addition, individuals with mental illness frequently self-medicate with alcohol and other substances (Peirce et al 1994). Finally, the use of alcohol to self-medicate mental illness, especially among populations with limited access to mental health services, may be relevant to our understanding of alcoholism and differential rates of alcoholism across racial/ethnic groups.

Age is measured as a dichotomous variable (*18-34 and 35 years and older*). This variable is included as a control, because substance use patterns vary considerably over the life course by race/ethnicity (age/race crossover effect discussed previously). *Marital Status* is measured as a dichotomous variable (*married and not married*), and is controlled for because marriage is a protective factor against substance abuse. Finally, *Population Density*, (coded as *living in an MSA with 1 million or more persons, living in an MSA with fewer than 1 million persons, or not living in an MSA*) is controlled for, because of the previously noted relationship between poverty, population density, and

substance use/abuse.

Plan of Analysis

All analyses, univariate, bivariate, and multivariate, were conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Statistical significance for all analyses is calculated at the .05 level or less.

Univariate Analysis: Univariate analysis provides descriptive statistics for all study variables.

Bivariate Analysis: Bivariate analyses were conducted to assess differences in rates of alcoholism by race/ethnicity, social class, the interaction of race and social class, gender, age, population density, serious mental illness, and marital status. This initial analysis is intended to replicate findings already noted by other researchers.

Multivariate Analysis: A total of twenty-four multivariate analyses were run to determine if there are statistically significant differences in rates of alcoholism when race and social class interactions are considered, and whether these persist after controls are included in the analysis. The key independent variables in the model are the dummy variables that capture the interaction of race and social class. Specifically, nine dummy variables were created (e.g. white lower class, black lower class, etc.). Eight were included in the models, and white middle class was the excluded reference category variable. The two variables that capture alcoholism were recoded into dummy variables (alcoholism and felt need for treatment), and are included as dependent variables. Controls for age, marital status, population density, and SMI were also included. Finally, all models were run separately for males and females.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Table I. Univariate Analysis:

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>N / %</i>
<i>Alcohol Dependence Past Year</i> 95.9%	Yes	8971 / 4.1%
	No	211501 /
<i>Felt Need for Treatment</i> 99.5%	Yes	855 / 0.5%
	No	164353 /
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i> 72.6%	Non-Hispanic White	149166 /
	Non-Hisp Black/Afr. Amer.	26946 / 13.1%
	Hispanic	29285 / 14.3%
<i>Gender</i> 48.1%	Male	106077 /
	Female	114395 /
<i>Social Class by Inc/Educ.</i>	White/Lower Class	29170 / 17.4%
	White/Middle Class	82664 / 49.4%
	White/Upper Class	9574 / 5.7%
	Black/Lower Class	11822 / 7.1%
	Black/Middle Class	10238 / 6.1%
	Black/Upper Class	554 / 0.3%
	Hispanic/Lower Class	13146 / 7.9%
	Hispanic/Middle Class	9815 / 5.9%
	Hispanic/Upper Class	405 / 0.2%
<i>SES by Occupational Prestige</i>	White/Lower Class	19639 / 17.2%
	White/Middle Class	46722 / 41.0%
	White/Upper Class	19411 / 17.0%
	Black/Lower Class	3703 / 3.3%
	Black/Middle Class	7249 / 6.4%
	Black/Upper Class	1966 / 1.7%
	Hispanic/Lower Class	4430 / 3.9%
	Hispanic/Middle Class	9145 / 8.0%
	Hispanic/Upper Class	1610 / 1.4%

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>N / %</i>
<i>Employment</i>	White Unemployed	4288 / 60.5%
	Black Unemployed	1657 / 23.4%
	Hispanic Unemployed	1143 / 0.5%
Age	18-34 years of age	95154 / 63.9%
	35+ years of age	53682 / 36.1%
<i>Population Density</i>	MSA w/ 1 Million +	78730 / 35.7%
	MSA w/ Less than 1 Million	81855 / 37.1%
	Not in an MSA	59887 / 27.2%
<i>Serious Mental Illness</i>	Yes	17378 / 11.7%
	No	131452 /
88.3%		
<i>Marital Status</i>	Married	60273 / 32.8%
	Not Married	123692 /
56.1%		

The univariate analysis reveals a striking difference between those who were diagnostically categorized as alcohol dependent, as compared to those who felt need for treatment of alcohol use during the past year. It may be a function of the alcoholic disease process that although individuals are diagnostically recognizable as alcoholics they cannot or will not recognize that the problems associated with their alcohol consumption are alcoholic in nature.

The most notable finding from the univariate analysis of independent variables is the difference in the frequency of respondents in various social classes depending upon whether social class was assessed using income and educational attainment or occupational prestige. The disparities in the percentage of respondents in the various race/ social class categories suggest that one of the measures of social class fails to sufficiently capture social class. As an example, 5.7% of respondents are white upper class when class is measured by income and education. In contrast, 17% of respondents are classified as white upper class when occupational prestige is used.

As a result of the extreme differences in respondent distribution across the social classes depending on the measure used, and the inconsistencies that resulted in both the bivariate and multivariate analyses, those findings related to social class as measured by income and educational attainment are not reported. The decision to report and discuss only those findings associated with social class by occupational prestige rests on the fact that occupational prestige, as a measure of social class is more multidimensional than social class as measured by income and educational attainment. Further, the use of occupational prestige as a measure of social class is well supported by the existing literature.

Table II. Bivariate Analysis:

	<i>Alcohol Dependent</i> N / %	<i>Felt Need for Treatment</i> N / %
<i>Gender:</i>		
Male	5281 / 5.0%	491 / 0.6%
Female	3690 / 3.2%	364 / 0.4%
Sig.	.000	.000
<i>Race/Ethnicity:</i>		
White	6247 / 4.2%	548 / 0.5%
Hispanic	1232 / 4.2%	145 / 0.6%
Black	818 / 3.0%	91 / 0.4%
Sig.	.000	.005
<i>Class (Occupational prestige):</i>		
Upper class	893 / 3.6%	65 / 0.4%
Middle class	3510 / 5.2%	326 / 0.6%
Lower class	1695 / 5.7%	161 / 0.8%
Sig.	.000	.000
<i>Class (Occupational prestige):</i>		
White lower class	1197 / 6.1%	107 / 0.8%
White middle class	2462 / 5.3%	195 / 0.5%
White upper class	730 / 3.8%	47 / 0.4%
Hispanic lower class	238 / 5.4%	32 / 1.0%
Hispanic middle class	523 / 5.7%	73 / 1.0%
Hispanic upper class	64 / 4.0%	6 / 0.5%
Black lower class	158 / 4.3%	9 / 0.3%
Black middle class	276 / 3.8%	34 / 0.6%
Black upper class	46 / 2.3%	5 / 0.4%
Sig.	.000	.000
<i>Serious Mental Illness:</i>		
Yes	2288 / 13.2%	320 / 2.3%
No	5114 / 3.9%	388 / 0.4%
Sig.	.000	.000
<i>Married:</i>		
Yes	1326 / 2.2%	146 / 0.3%
No	7360 / 6.0%	680 / 0.7%
Sig.	.000	.000
<i>Age:</i>		
18-34	5944 / 6.2%	493 / 0.7%
35+	1458 / 2.7%	215 / 0.5%
Sig.	.000	.004
<i>Population Density:</i>		
MSA w/ 1 mill. +	3013 / 3.8%	285 / 0.5%
MSA w/ 1 mill. or less	3497 / 4.3%	323 / 0.5%
Not in an MSA	2461 / 4.1%	247 / 0.5%
Sig.	.000	.313
<i>Employment Status:</i>		
Employed	5516 / 5.1%	495 / 0.6%
Not Employed	665 / 8.6%	92 / 1.5%
Sig.	.000	.000

The bivariate analysis reveals that males have both higher rates of alcohol dependence and felt need for treatment than women do. This difference is consistent with the literature, and is as hypothesized.

Also consistent with the literature is the finding that white males and Hispanics have similar rates of alcoholism, and that these rates are greater than for blacks. Whites, however, were less likely than Hispanics to have felt the need for treatment in the past year. This finding is interesting, because although the difference is not substantive, it may reflect cultural factors among both whites and Hispanics, which would create differing perceptions of need. This finding may also reflect greater negative social consequences for Hispanics than whites for alcohol abuse. Blacks may experience a lower perceived need for treatment by virtue of their lower likelihood of dependence.

Lower class respondents, across categories were significantly more likely to be alcohol dependent, which is consistent with the literature. What is unexpected relative to the literature is that lower class whites are more likely than lower class blacks or lower class Hispanics to be alcohol dependent. In terms of felt need for treatment, lower class and middle class Hispanics were more likely to have felt need for treatment, followed by lower class whites and middle class blacks. This finding is unexpected given the literature. Both of these findings suggest that there are race/class interaction effects, which drive differences in rates of alcoholism across racial/social class groups. The nature and extent of these interactions will be explored more thoroughly in the multivariate analysis.

Individuals with serious mental illness were more likely than individuals not classified as having serious mental illness to have been alcohol dependent and to have felt the need for treatment. This finding is consistent with the literature.

Married individuals were significantly less likely to have experienced alcohol dependence or have felt the need for treatment. This finding is also consistent with the literature.

Bivariate analysis also reveals that respondents 18-34 years of age were more likely to experience alcohol dependence and have felt need for treatment. This finding is unsurprising, in that alcohol use is greater among individuals in this age group than among older individuals (Kandel 1992).

There was also a statistically significant relationship between population density and alcohol dependence, but not population density and felt need for treatment. Individuals in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) with fewer than one million persons were more likely to experience alcohol dependency than individuals not within either an MSA, or individuals residing in MSAs with one million or more persons. These findings are interesting in that previous research would suggest that higher rates of alcoholism would be found in densely populated areas with high levels of poverty and a concentration of liquor stores and other alcohol sales outlets. These results may reflect the broader interplay of economic and residency patterns associated with specific population trends.

*Multivariate Analysis:***Table III: Odds Ratios and Standard Errors (in parenthesis) for Logistic Regression Models Predicting Alcohol Dependence and Felt Need for Treatment (Males).**

	<i>Alcohol Dependence</i>		<i>Felt Need for Treatment</i>	
	Without Controls	With Controls	Without Controls	With Controls
White lower class	1.666* (.044)	1.112* (.048)	1.575* (.148)	1.087 (.160)
White middle class (ref group)	-	-	-	-
White upper class	1.034 (.054)	.904 (.057)	.530* (.251)	.422* (.255)
Hispanic lower class	1.664* (.082)	1.135 (.088)	2.821* (.219)	2.034* (.245)
Hispanic middle class	1.680* (.057)	1.145* (.061)	2.583* (.152)	2.108* (.161)
Hispanic upper class	1.225 (.170)	.978 (.173)	1.614 (.506)	1.312 (.284)
Black lower class	1.462* (.103)	.961 (.108)	1.180 (.384)	.777 (.417)
Black middle class	1.390* (.077)	.951 (.080)	2.109* (.203)	1.551* (.212)
Black upper class	.668 (.222)	.521* (.224)	1.190 (.582)	.957 (.586)
White unemployed	2.669* (.069)	1.348* (.071)	3.423* (.188)	1.869* (.194)
Hispanic unemployed	3.276* (.125)	1.806* (.128)	2.658* (.385)	1.794 (.390)
Black unemployed	2.050* (.129)	1.019 (.132)	4.133* (.277)	2.632* (.283)
No SMI		.297* (.038)		.174* (.103)
Not Married		2.260* (.046)		2.079* (.732)
Age (<35)		.921* (.010)		1.127* (.029)
Population Density		1.037 (.020)		1.134* (.064)
*p ≤ .05	N =	5281	4565	491
				428

Race/Social Class Interactions and Alcoholism for Males

Table III reveals the effects of race and social class interactions on alcohol dependence for males. As expected, these results reveal that lower class white, lower class Hispanic, and lower class black males have higher rates of alcohol dependence than do white middle class males. However, the distinctions do not support the hypothesis that lower class black males would have the highest rates of alcohol dependence. Rather, the analysis reveals that lower class whites have the highest rates, followed by lower class Hispanics, then lower class black males. Specifically, lower class white males were 66.6% more likely than middle class white males to have been alcohol dependent. Hispanic males were 66.4% more likely, and blacks were only 46.2% more likely than middle class whites to have been alcohol dependent. Across all races, unemployment significantly increased the likelihood (relative to middle class white males) that respondents were alcohol dependent.

Again, the effect of unemployment was the lowest for lower class black males, followed by lower class white males, then lower class Hispanic males. The addition of the controls variables, SMI, marital status, age, and population density, eliminated the likelihood that black lower class males were significantly more likely than white middle class males to have been alcohol dependent. The addition of controls also reduced the magnitude of the other noted differences.

The results were quite different, however, when examining felt need for treatment. Again, Table III reveals the effects of a race/social class interaction, and again the distinctions are not as hypothesized. Unlike with alcohol dependence, lower class Hispanic males were 282.1% more likely, and lower class white males were 57.5% more likely than white middle class males to have felt need for treatment. Lower class

black males were not significantly different from middle class white males relative to felt need for treatment.

The addition of controls to the model eliminated the greater likelihood (relative to middle class white males) that lower class white males would have felt need for treatment. The inclusion of controls also slightly reduced the magnitude of the relationship for lower class Hispanic males.

Also in terms of felt need for treatment, Table III reveals that unemployed blacks were 4.1 times more likely, unemployed whites were 3.4 times more likely, and unemployed Hispanics were 2.7 times more likely than middle class white males to have felt the need for treatment. The addition of control variables eliminated the relationship for unemployed Hispanics, and reduced the magnitude of the relationship among unemployed blacks and whites.

Table III also reveals that middle class blacks were 39% more likely, and middle class Hispanics were 68% more likely, than middle class white males to have been alcohol dependent. The nature of this relationship is also not as hypothesized, but there is clearly a race/social class interaction. The inclusion of controls eliminates the observed relationship for middle class blacks. In addition, the inclusion of controls reduces the magnitude of this relationship for Hispanics from 68% to 14.5%.

Similarly, Table III reveals that middle class Hispanic males were 258.3%, or 2.6 times more likely, and middle class black males were 210.9%, or 2.1 times more likely, than white middle class males to have felt need for treatment. The magnitude of these relationships are reduced, but not eliminated, after the inclusion of control variables to the model.

Findings with respect to upper class respondents are not as hypothesized, but rather Table III reveals no differences in the likelihood of alcohol dependence between middle class white males and any of the categories of upper class respondents. Including controls in the model, however, did result in upper class black males being 47.9% less likely than the reference group to have been alcohol dependent in the past year.

In terms of felt need for treatment, only upper class white males differed significantly from middle class white males, in that they were 47% less likely to have felt need for treatment. The magnitude of this relationship increased slight with the inclusion of controls in the model.

Table IV: Odds Ratios and Standard Errors (in parenthesis) for Logistic Regression Models Predicting Alcohol Dependence and Felt Need for Treatment (Females).

	<i>Alcohol Dependence</i>		<i>Felt Need for Treatment</i>	
	Without Controls	With Controls	Without Controls	With Controls
White lower class	1.833* (.050)	1.297* (.058)	2.031* (.156)	1.822* (.172)
White upper class	1.096 (.060)	1.184* (.065)	1.230 (.195)	1.282 (.210)
White middle class (reference group)	-	-	-	-
Hispanic lower class	1.204 (.124)	.866 (.139)	1.689 (.341)	1.570 (.367)
Hispanic middle class	1.365* (.086)	.977 (.095)	1.824* (.234)	1.559 (.261)
Hispanic upper class	1.041 (.197)	.854 (.212)	.886 (.712)	.442 (1.006)
Black lower class	.931 (.138)	.679* (.147)	.385 (.711)	.373 (.714)
Black middle class	.726* (.112)	.554* (.118)	.639 (.385)	.639 (.390)
Black upper class	.687 (.203)	.636* (.210)	.641 (.711)	.699 (.715)
White unemployed	2.695* (.089)	1.548* (.093)	4.603* (.208)	2.858* (.217)
Hispanic unemployed	1.575* (.202)	.992 (.206)	3.036* (.454)	2.414 (.462)
Black unemployed	1.248 (.184)	.737 (.187)	.799 (.711)	.601 (.716)
No SMI		.259* (.040)		.161* (.123)
Not Married		2.497* (.054)		2.355* (.163)
Age (<35)		.849* (.012)		1.004 (.035)
Population Density		.948* (.026)		.977 (.079)
* p ≤ .05 N =	3690	2837	364	280

Race/Social Class Interactions and Alcoholism for Females

Table IV reveals the effects of race and social class interactions on alcohol dependence as they pertain to females. These results reveal that among lower class respondents, only white lower class females have higher rates of alcohol dependence than white middle class females. White lower class females were 83.3% more likely than middle class white females to be alcohol dependent. Unemployment significantly increased the likelihood (relative to middle class white females) that respondents were alcohol dependent for only lower class white females (2.7 times more likely) and Hispanics, who were 5.8 times more likely than middle class white females to be alcohol dependent.

The addition of SMI, marital status, age, and population density to the model as controls resulted in one new finding, which was that lower class black females were 32.1% *less* likely to have been alcohol dependent than middle class white females.

Similarly, for felt need for treatment, Table IV reveals that only lower class white females were more likely than middle class females to have felt the need for treatment. Specifically, lower class white females were 2 times more likely than middle class white females to have felt need for treatment.

With respect to employment status and felt need, white unemployed white females were 4.6 times more likely, and unemployed Hispanic females were three times more likely, to have felt the need for treatment than white middle class females. The magnitude of these relationships was reduced with the inclusion of controls to the model.

Table IV also reveals the effects of race/social class interactions for middle class females. Specifically, the model reveals that middle class black females were 27.4% less likely than white middle class females to be alcohol dependent, and middle class

Hispanic women were 36.5% *more* likely than white middle class females to have been alcohol dependent. The addition of controls to the model eliminated the greater likelihood that middle class Hispanic women were alcohol dependent, and increased the magnitude of the relationship for black middle class women.

The results were similar when examining felt need for treatment. Only middle class Hispanic females were significantly different from middle class white females, in that they were 82.4% more likely to have felt the need for treatment. The inclusion of controls to the model eliminated this relationship.

Table IV reveals no statistically different results between middle class white females and the various categories of upper class respondents relative to alcohol dependence. When controls were added to the model, it was revealed that upper class white females were 18.4% more likely to have been alcohol dependent than middle class white females, and upper class black females were 36.4% *less* likely to have been alcohol dependent.

Table IV reveals no statistically significant differences between middle class white females and the categories of upper class respondents relative to felt need for treatment. The inclusion controls to the model resulted in no changes in the findings.

In sum, Table IV partially supports the hypothesis that white females will have higher rates of alcoholism than Hispanics or blacks. The exception is that middle class Hispanic women had higher rates of alcohol dependence and felt need for treatment than middle class white females, although the felt need for treatment relationship disappeared when controls were added to the model. Additionally, the results of Table IV reveal significant differences in terms of the effects of race/social class interactions between

males and females.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The key finding of this research is that there are race/class interactions that effect rates of alcoholism across groups, although the direction of these relationships is not as hypothesized. It was assumed that in a racialized social system there would be a multiplicative effect such that being a racial/ethnic minority *and* lower class would result in lower class blacks and lower class Hispanics having higher rates of alcohol dependence than lower class white males. The results of this research directly contradict this hypothesis; rather lower class white males had the highest rates of alcohol dependence, followed by lower class Hispanics and then lower class blacks. This finding is inconsistent with most of the literature, but it is consistent with Ulbrich et al's finding that whites are more psychologically vulnerable to economic problems than blacks are. Ulbrich et al assert that the greater resiliency of blacks to economic problems may be the result of adaptations, which enable them to cope with economic hardships. This is interesting, because it suggests that the very racialized social system described by Feagin, Bonilla-Silva and Wallace, which limits opportunities for blacks (and other racial minorities), may very well foster the development of coping mechanisms that reduce the likelihood that lower class blacks will be alcohol dependent.

One reason that the findings of this research are inconsistent with most of the other extant literature is because this research focuses on alcohol dependence. In contrast, the extant literature generally focuses on alcohol use rates and the negative consequences associated with alcohol use. It may very well be that blacks and Hispanics have lower alcohol dependence rates, but this is obscured by the fact that they experience greater negative social consequences. It should not be assumed that alcoholism as a diagnostically determined condition occurs concomitantly with alcohol related problems. If, as Wallace has argued, Americans associate blacks with the 'drug problem' in the United States, then the fact that blacks have lower alcohol dependence rates, but experience greater negative social consequences begins to be more readily explainable. Such a difference may very well reflect institutional racism of the sort that Feagin and Bonilla-Silva argue characterize American society. Thus, Wallace's social ecological framework is not wholly inconsistent with the findings of this research, but rather the framework needs to be expanded to reflect the adaptations that marginalized populations make in order to overcome structural limitations to opportunities that are imbedded in the American social system.

What is far less clear is where lower class Hispanics fit into the picture. Most research addresses differences between blacks and whites, which makes it difficult to interpret how institutional racism and the social environment affect Hispanic rates of alcohol dependence. This study revealed no *substantive* differences in alcoholism rates between lower class whites and Hispanics when the variable *Alcohol Dependence in the past Year* was examined. There is, however, a startling difference in rates for felt need for treatment. Specifically, lower class Hispanic males were in excess of four times more

likely than lower class white males to have felt a need for treatment. This extreme difference suggests that lower class whites and Hispanics, despite their similar rates of alcohol dependence, experience the consequences of drinking differently. That Hispanics are much more likely to have felt need for treatment suggests that there are significantly different, and/or greater social consequences for alcohol use. Another possible explanation has to do with the difference in types of drinking that occur between Hispanics and whites. As discussed previously, research does indicate that Hispanics have higher rates of heavy drinking than do whites, and whites have greater rates of annual prevalence and lifetime use. The difference in felt need for treatment may reflect greater negative social consequences because of drinking for Hispanics, or it may reflect differences in problems associated with heavy drinking versus annual prevalence. Similarly, middle class Hispanics are 68% more likely than middle class whites to have felt need for treatment.

In terms of middle class males, higher rates of alcohol dependence among blacks than whites may reflect several factors. First, middle class blacks may drink more because of an attenuation of traditional norms and values associated with alcohol use as they adopt the norms and values associated with the middle class, which is dominated by whites. Second, if Wilson is correct, and deindustrialization has led to a black underclass that is isolated in the inner cities, then middle class blacks may be more spatially removed from traditional support networks, which have historically served to help blacks adapt to a marginalized position in society. Moreover, as has been discussed, risky drinking behaviors are associated with job-related experiences of discrimination and

perceptions of prejudice. Alcohol dependence among middle class blacks may reflect these and other negative experiences associated with institutionalized racism.

Before discussing the findings of this research relative to females, a few things need to be mentioned. First, examining differences in alcoholism rates for females using race/social class interactions may not be as salient as it is for men. In part, this has to do with the role of occupational prestige as a measure of social class. As has been discussed, occupational prestige is more reflective of the social positioning of men than women. In addition, as has been discussed, women are far more constrained by gender-specific social norms that affect their use of alcohol and other substances. Further, women experience greater negative social and physical consequences in a shorter span of time than men do, because of alcohol use.

This research reveals that among lower class females, only lower class white females have higher rates of alcohol dependence and felt need for treatment than middle class white females. This research also reveals that there is no significant difference in alcohol dependence for upper class females, until controls are added to the model, which results in a significantly greater likelihood that upper class white females are alcohol dependent than middle class white females. The addition of controls to the model further reveals that upper class black women are significantly less likely than middle class white females to be alcohol dependent. These findings are unsurprising and are consistent with the literature.

The findings with respect to middle class females were surprising. Specifically, analysis reveals that middle class Hispanic women were 36.5% more likely than white middle class women to be alcohol dependent, and 82.4% more likely to have felt the need

for treatment. Although these relationships were eliminated with the addition of controls, these differences in rates suggest that there is something particular about the interaction of race and class for middle class Hispanic females that accounts for the difference. In part, as has been noted, acculturation to middle class norms may explain increased alcohol use, which may lead to alcohol dependence. Further, increased alcohol dependence may lead to a greater felt need for treatment.

Hispanic women may also face greater scrutiny of their alcohol use, as a cultural feature which in combination with social norms about gender and drinking, may lead to a greater felt need for treatment. Finally, as with black middle class males, middle class Hispanic women may be less connected to traditional forms of social support. What is abundantly clear is that there needs to be much more investigation into the factors that lead to variation in alcoholism across social class groups for women.

Generally, Wallace's ecological framework is useful for understanding the particular social environmental factors that affect risk for alcohol related problems across groups, particularly as they reflect Bonilla-Silva's characterization of the United States as a racialized social system. A limitation of Wallace's approach is that it fails to address how groups adapt to their social environments and circumstances. The extreme variation in findings across gender, race, and social class groups suggests that this framework is insufficient for understanding the complexity of environmental and individual group factors that contribute to differences in rates of alcoholism across groups. A more useful framework would integrate elements of Wallace's work within a broader framework that also captured variables associated with group specific adaptations.

Further, this research indicates that conceptual frameworks which attempt to understand variability in the presence of social problems and overall life chances as an “either or” race/class proposition are of limited utility. Feagin, Bonilla-Silva, and to a lesser extent, Massey and Denton provide valuable and relevant insights into institutional racism and the racialized nature of American society, but their conceptual frameworks fail to account for the ways in which class functions independently of, and in conjunction with race to shape the social lives of different racial and ethnic groups.

Conversely, Wilson’s arguments that class is the most relevant factor affecting black life chances and social positioning is too narrow and does not address the broader interplay of race/social class variables. Again, a more holistic and integrated approach is needed in order to capture the complexity of American social life as it is experienced by different race/ethnicities and social classes.

Limitations of the Research

This research has several limitations, the most significant of which is the measure of social class, which is too broad. The use of occupational prestige scores for broad categories of occupation obscures the amount of variability in occupational prestige within these categories. Thus, social class as a means of understanding where individuals are positioned in the broader social structure, and what this means for their life chances, may not have been sufficiently captured in this research. The use of a more precise measure of social class is necessary in order to better understand the effects of the interaction of race and social class on rates of alcoholism.

Another limitation of this study is that other relevant factors, such as intergenerational mobility, degree of acceptance of class-based and race-based cultural

norms are not captured. Finally, this research attempts to reveal highly complex relationships that may not be adequately captured by the study variables.

Despite these limitations, however, this research does contribute to our understanding of the interactions effects of race and social class on rates of alcoholism across groups. Specifically, this research reveals the variability and complexity of race/social interactions. Moreover, this research challenges expectations about alcoholism across groups. Finally, this research clearly indicates a need for an intensive investigation into the effects of race/social class interactions on not only rates of alcoholism, but also other social problems and overall life chances.

Future Research

In order to develop a fuller understanding of the interaction of race and social class relative to variation in rates of alcoholism across racial/ethnic groups, future research needs to address a range of social and demographic factors. Some social and demographic factors that may be relevant to a clearer understanding of the interaction of race and social class include nativity, intergenerational mobility, differences in race- and class-based norms, and acculturation. The analytic picture remains unclear as to the specific determinants of alcoholism as they pertain to factors associated with both race/ethnicity and social class. The extent to which blacks, Hispanics, and women experience social mobility across generations may have significant impacts on the degree of acculturation to white social norms. Social mobility may also have important consequences for the development or attenuation of traditional support networks among blacks and Hispanics.

Further, future research should clearly differentiate those factors that motivate alcohol use and abuse across groups. This is particularly important with respect to gender, because women not only face different constraints and consequences in terms of alcohol use, but also because social class as an indicator of the positioning of women in society may not be as relevant as other factors.

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VITA

Jesse McCoy Rogers was born in Ft. Worth, Texas, on October 15, 1970, the daughter of Nicholas Walter Rogers and Sheralee Gayle Rogers. After high school graduation in 1989, she attended the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. She subsequently attended Texas State University-San Marcos, earning a B.S.A.S. in December of 2004. In January 2005, she entered the Graduate College at Texas State University-San Marcos.

Permanent address: 1160 Lakeside Drive

Wimberley, TX 78676

This thesis was typed by Jesse McCoy Rogers.