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CINCO DE MAYO, INC.: REINTERPRETING LATINO CULTURE INTO A COMMERCIAL HOLIDAY

José M. Alamillo

ABSTRACT

Cinco de Mayo celebrations have become more popular in the United States than in Mexico. In the past few decades, this historic day has changed from a regional celebration of Mexican American culture into nationwide Latino/a holiday hijacked by the alcohol industry and other commercial interests. This chapter closely examines the varied ways in which Cinco de Mayo has been represented by U.S. advertisers, marketers, and restaurant owners. Using content analysis of Cinco de Mayo advertisements in magazines, billboards, liquor ads, and store displays from 2000 to 2006, five mediated representations emerged: Mexico's Fourth of July, Mexican St. Patrick's Day, Drinko de Mayo, Sexism in a Bottle, and Mexican Otherness. These representations are anchored in a new racism ideology that emphasizes cultural difference, individualism, liberalism, and colorblindness, which reinforce existing racial inequalities. The implications of the alcohol industry's Cinco de Mayo advertisements is the increased targeting of Latino/a youth from working-class communities with high rates of alcohol-related violent deaths and illnesses.

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Several weeks before May 5, 1994, a Michigan radio station offered listeners their "own personal Mexican" as the winning prize for a Cinco de Mayo-inspired contest. The radio dick jockey announced that "Members of the station and their families are not eligible to own Mexicans—bathing and delousing of Mexicans is a winner's responsibility. The station assumes no responsibility for infectious diseases carried by Mexicans" (Bender, 2005). The view of dirty Mexican bodies carrying infectious diseases and polluting the American way of life seeks to justify their chief function as "cheap" exploitable labor that can be disposed at will. Cinco de Mayo presents a marketing opportunity for radio stations to mock Mexicans for profit (Calafell, 2006). Packaged commodified images and narratives of Cinco de Mayo are deployed and reinterpreted year after year by corporations and advertisers to sell food and beverage products. To do this effectively, marketers appropriate, refigure, and resell images of Mexican history, tradition, culture, and language to establish closer market relationships between a particular product brand and consumers.

At the beginning of the new millennium, there is no question that Cinco de Mayo has entered American mainstream. While many view this trend as a sign of progress, whereby Latino/a culture is becoming visible and reaching national recognition, others are more suspicious about its commercialization. The rising immigration rates and high birth-rates among Latino/as have contributed to the holiday's increased popularity. These demographic changes have led to the Latinization of Cinco de Mayo in selected cities, transforming the holiday from its exclusive Mexican-American focus to a festive day to celebrate pan-Latino pride and culture (Sommers, 1991). Cinco de Mayo celebrations can now be found in rather unexpected places in the East Coast, the South, Hawaii, and Alaska. During springtime, over 500 cities across the United States organize Cinco de Mayo celebrations. The largest of these draw high attendance and generate corporate sponsorship including Los Angeles' Fiesta Broadway, Chicago South side's Cinco de Mayo parade, St. Paul's Cinco de Mayo in District del Sol, Denver's Cinco de Mayo: Celebrate Culture Festival, and Portland's Cinco de Mayo Fiesta. The adoption of a Cinco de Mayo first-class stamp in 1998 and the 2001 celebration in the White House lawn were the latest examples of its growing recognition by the federal government. One geographer has even claimed that Cinco de Mayo has become more popular than St. Patrick's Day (Carlson, 1998, p. 13).

Less understood is the role of big business in contributing to the holiday's popularity. How have marketers and advertisers used Latino/a culture to sell products? Has increased Latino/a consumer power contributed to increased attention of Latino/a cultural traditions? In *Once upon a Quinceañera*,

Julia Alvarez (2007, p. 84) offers a biting critique of the commercialization of a Latina tradition that marks a young girl's entry into womanhood that reveals "how our traditions are remade in the USA, repackaged and sold back to us as authentic at a higher price". In *Latinos Inc.*, Arlene Dávila (2001) shows how both Latino/a and non-Latino/a advertising agencies perpetuate stereotypical images of Latino/as, and construct a Latinidad that is commercially safe for consumption without challenging social inequities that continues to impact the Latino/a community. Some of these stereotypes include Latino/as as exotic, family-oriented, hot and spicy food lovers, cultural traditionalist and hyper-nationalistic, being present-oriented and overly emotional, prone to listen to radio, watch television, but not reading, and fiercely loyal to name brands. These stereotypes are continually being reconfigured by marketing agencies to explain Latino/a consumer behavior and to tap into their buying power. The amount of goods purchased by U.S. Latino/as increased from 1986 to 1996 reaching over \$223 billion. According to a 2003 report by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia, Latino/a buying power is expected to increase from 5.2% in 1990 to 9.6% in 2008. Another report estimated that Latino/as currently spend \$400 billion annually in the United States (Douglas, 1996).

The commercialization of Cinco de Mayo should force one to pay attention to the gradual colonization of young Latino/a bodies by market forces. The alcohol and beer industry have been especially aggressive in spending millions in advertising to Latino/a youth. According to a report by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University, Hispanic youth ages 12–20 saw and heard 20% more alcohol advertising in English-only magazines and on English and Spanish radio and television during 2003 and 2004 than young people in their age group (Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2005). During the same years, alcohol companies spent more than 3.5 million in advertising in both English and Spanish language media. As the director of Hispanic Marketing for Molson Coors Brewing Company put it, "If you're going to succeed in the beer business, you have to succeed in the Hispanic market" (Edwards, 2005, p.2). Corporate America's salvation for a growing Latino/a consumer base will continue to transform Cinco de Mayo into a selling opportunity while ignoring the high school drop-out rates and prison incarceration numbers among young Latino/as.

This chapter examines the multiple ways in which Cinco de Mayo is reinterpreted into a commodified holiday by advertisers, marketers, and restaurant owners. First, I will trace the origins and the development of the Hispanic market and show how during the 1980s the beer and alcohol industry appropriated Cinco de Mayo to gain a foothold into the lucrative

Latino/a consumer base. Second, I will analyze the mediated representations of Cinco de Mayo in billboards, print media articles, television commercials, and restaurant menus. These mediated representations have real social consequences for Latino/a community plagued with higher alcohol abuse rates, a negative self-image among youth, destructive forms of gender and familial relations, and other alcohol-related community problems. From a content analysis of advertisements in magazines, billboards, liquor ads, and store displays from 2000 to 2006, five dominant representations emerged. These include (1) A historical misreading of the holiday as "Mexico's Fourth of July," (2) The holiday's association with drinking also known as a "Mexican St. Patrick's Day," (3) The beer and alcohol industry has attempted to reinterpret the holiday into "Drinko de Mayo" by using appeals to nationalist symbols and cultural authenticity, (4) Marketers use sexual appeal and gendered representations of hyper-masculine Mexican males and "hot" "spicy" oversexed Latina women in their Cinco de Mayo ads, and (5) The holiday becomes an occasion for non-Latino/as to consumer "Mexican Otherness" inside bars and restaurants. Finally, I will examine the connections between the commodification of Cinco de Mayo and rise of the new racism in the United States. Ultimately, I will argue that the commodification of Cinco de Mayo resembles a form of "new racism" that relies upon racialized and gendered representations of "Mexicanness" that transforms a cultural tradition into a selling opportunity and distorts the historical and cultural significance of Cinco de Mayo.

This chapter foregrounds the ways in which racialized and gendered representations about Cinco de Mayo are produced and circulated in U.S. advertisements and restaurants. These "mediated representations" are powerful rhetorical forces that offer a positive, negative, or neutral interpretation with underlying racial assumptions and real socio-political consequences (Ono & Sloop, 2002). The analysis is drawn from a variety of alcohol and beer advertisements located inside mainstream magazines, grocery stores, billboards, liquor stores, and nightclubs and restaurants, and event posters. Using a discourse analysis (textual and visual), I seek to show the ways in which racial and gender ideology operates in contemporary understandings of Cinco de Mayo and Latino/a culture in the United States.

MARKETING CINCO DE MAYO

The emergence of the "Hispanic Market" during the 1980s, also known by advertisers as the "Decade of the Hispanic," contributed to the widespread

popularity of ethnic festivals. Cinco de Mayo resembled New York's Puerto Rican Day Parade and other festivals that increased in popularity as they attracted more sponsors and direct marketing advertising (Dávila, 2001). For example, *USA Today* reported that "Until 10 years ago, Cinco de Mayo was largely ignored by the non-Latin community. Then, perhaps because there were a few other spring marketing opportunities or because they just realized what an untapped market Hispanics were, several large beer and soft-drink companies began sponsoring local events" (Stone, 1988, p. 1B). Since the 1920s, U.S. advertisers and retailers have appealed to the consumer tastes of Mexican immigrants and their children by tapping into their cultural traditions, Spanish language, and nationalist ideologies to sell products (Sanchez, 1994; Halter, 2000). By the mid-1970s, national magazines were predicting a sharp increase in the Latino/a population, and after the release of the 1980 census, companies were pleasantly surprised by the largely youthful Latino/a population (21-34 ages) and thus began bolstering advertising budgets and opening marketing departments to harness this growing Latino/a purchasing power. The construction of the "Hispanic market" emerged with the collapsing of U.S. residents of Latin American descent, originating from national, ethnic, class, and racial backgrounds into the homogenizing category of "Hispanic" (Dávila, 2001). To distinguish Hispanics from general American consumers, advertisers and marketing officials relied on a host of racial stereotypes to explain consumer behavior and used the Spanish language as the primary identity marker (Astroff, 1989; Peñaloza, 1994; Yankelovich & White, 1981).

During the early 1980s, Anheuser-Busch and Miller Company created their own Hispanic marketing departments and began to sponsor Cinco de Mayo celebrations. Apart from print and television advertising, Miller experimented with event marketing that included sponsoring concerts, art shows, and cultural festivals (McDowell, 1981). In 1989, Anheuser-Busch and Miller sponsored one of the largest Cinco de Mayo celebrations in Lincoln Park and Olvera Street in Los Angeles. However, the three-day celebration reportedly ended early when drunken individuals became rowdy, engaged in street brawls, and fired shots at a passing car (Maxwell & Jacobson, 1989). By the end of the night, six people were injured and one person killed. A Latino activist who attended the event observed, "They're [Companies] pushing a legalized drug [beer] upon our community. You're asking for trouble" (Maxwell & Jacobson, 1989, p. 49).

Despite the violence that resulted from heavy drinking at Cinco de Mayo festivals, Anheuser-Busch and Miller continued to woo Hispanic consumers. In 1996, Hispanic buying power convinced the beer and alcohol industry to spend over 26.3 million in advertising (Zate, 1996). Two years later, the top

three domestic brewers (Amheuser-Busch, Coors, and Miller) spent a combined total of 37.65 million in Hispanic advertising. More recently, Miller Brewing Company secured a three-year \$100 million contract with Univision Communications, the largest Spanish language broadcaster in the United States (Elliott, 2004). U.S. alcohol companies are not the sole promoters of Cinco de Mayo. Corona beer, which is produced in Mexico by Modelo Group, spent over 5 million in advertising during the two-week promotional window in 2003 and claimed to sell over 100 million bottles (Kane, 2003). The Spanish language media also plays a role in commercializing Cinco de Mayo. In fact, beer and alcohol advertising in the Spanish language media is a key strategy used to reach bilingual and Spanish dominant consumers (Perez, 2004).

In the 1980s, Adolph Coors Company declared the "decade of the Hispanic" and invested over 60 million in Hispanic advertising, promotion, and community relations in an attempt to improve its negative reputation in the Hispanic community. Since 1966, the Coors Brewing Company and its products have been a target of protests and boycotts by Chicano organizations in Colorado for their discriminatory hiring practices, opposition to affirmative action and bilingual education, and support for "English Only" initiatives (Bellant, 1991). Fear of losing ground to this lucrative Hispanic Market, Coors made an unprecedented move by signing the "Hispanic Agreement" in 1984 with a coalition of Hispanic organizations to improve hiring and promotion of Hispanic employees, enlisting Hispanic-owned suppliers and providing for scholarship awards and donations for Hispanic groups. Coors sponsored Hispanic events to sample its product, like the 1986 "Discovery of America Day" in Miami, Florida, that attracted over 20,000 people to see the re-enactment of Christopher Columbus and his crew disembark from the Santa Maria ship. Although Coors has attempted to correct its negative image by donating money to Hispanic foundations and sponsoring events, strong opposition to the company continues. During the 2003 Cinco de Mayo celebration in Denver, Colorado, a group of Chicano students distributed flyers urging festival goers to boycott Coors for its support of stricter immigration measures. To this day, Coors products only reach 4% of the Hispanic market, far below Corona beer, which commands 63% of the total beer market (Aguilera & Espinoza, 2003).

CONSUMING CINCO DE MAYO

Stereotypical images of Latinos and Latinas in U.S. television, radio, and print media have a longstanding history. These images range from the

Mexican bandit, Latin lover, sexy señorita, and poor illiterate peon, to the contemporary "illegal alien" and urban gangster (Rodríguez, 1997; Noriega, 1992). Advertising campaigns have been some of the worst perpetrators of negative Latino and Latina representations (Martínez, 1994). One of the most notorious was the "Frito Bandito" created in 1967 by the advertising firm Foote, Cone, and Belding for the Frito-Lay's Corporation. This television and magazine advertising campaign featured a "sneaky" Mexican thief who stole corn ships at gun point (Smith, 1976). Because of mounting pressure from Mexican American civil rights groups, Frito Lay reluctantly dropped its "bandito" campaign in 1971, even though bandito-like portrayals continued in cigarette, deodorant, and watch advertisements. Advertisers also deployed benevolent stereotypes of the "traditional" Hispanic family. Brand loyalty, compulsiveness, aural and visual shopping, and machismo and self-sacrificing mothers were dominant tropes mobilized to explain Latino/a consumer behavior (Nuiry, 1996). Ironically, the same stereotypes previously cited as the main reasons for the lack of assimilation among Hispanic families became redefined as "Spanish gold" (Astroff, 1989). Resistance to negative representations of Latinos and Latinas also have a long history ranging from organized boycotts, letter writing, protests at movie theatres, and "brownout" campaigns (Limon, 1974; Noriega, 2000).

Today, in part, because of increased Hispanic purchasing power and pressure from watchdog media groups, corporate America is more careful not to offend Latino and Latina consumers with overtly racist and sexist images. Instead, they use coded messages that include a misreading of the holiday's historical significance, use of indirect subtle racialized and gendered images, coded race-neutral language, and emphasis on cultural differences or cultural "Otherness." These discursive frames resemble the "new racism" that emerged in the post-civil rights era replacing the "old" Jim Crow racism that relied on overt expressions of racial exclusion and hostility. The main features of "new racism", according to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2001), includes the covert nature of racial discourse, avoidance of racial terminology or race neutrality, and invisibility of racial structure that reproduces racial inequality or "color blindness." As part of the racialized social system, the mass media has played an important role in reinforcing racial, gender, and class inequalities. Advertisements are not only a means to sell commercial products but communicated notions of nationalism, gender, and cultural difference (Marchand, 1985; Barthel, 1988; O'Barr, 1994). In her analysis of British soap advertisements, Anne McClintock (1995) shows how "commodity racism" and "commodity sexism" were interwoven constructing a "racialized domesticity" in which soap product advertisements

promised to wash away dirt and black skin color while rendering women's unpaid labor invisible. Similarly, Cinco de Mayo advertisements also rely on racialized and gendered images to sell food and beverage products, which encourages excessive consumerism and celebration without truly understanding the day's historical significance.

In analyzing Cinco de Mayo advertisements between 2000 and 2006, I have identified five main representations. These include (1) "Mexico's Fourth of July," (2) "Mexican St. Patrick's Day," (3) "Drinko de Mayo," (4) Sexism in a Bottle, and (5) "Mexican Otherness."

Mexico's Fourth of July

On May 4, 2005, President George W. Bush welcomed distinguished Hispanic leaders to the White House Rose Garden to celebrate Cinco de Mayo then joked that "My only problem this year is I scheduled the dinner on *cuatro* de Mayo. Next year I'm going to have to work on my math." He added, "I always look forward to Cinco de Mayo especially because it gives me a chance to practice my Spanish" (Zoretich, 2005, p. A4). The superficial rendering of the holiday is not limited to the President of the United States, but is commonplace among ordinary Americans. Most Americans consider Cinco de Mayo as Mexico's independence from Spain, which is commemorated on the 16 September, rather than remembering the poorly outfitted Indian peasants that defeated the well-armed French army in the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. "Is it Mexico's Fourth of July?" asked one customer eating at a Mexican restaurant and added "I'm not sure, but I celebrate it with a whole lot of food and lots of beer" (De la Cruz, 2005, p. A3). When a Texas reporter moved to Denver, Colorado, to start a Spanish language newspaper, he was surprised to hear a television station proclaim Cinco de Mayo as Mexico's Independence Day (Quintero, 2005). The misreading of the day's significance in Mexican history represents a historical amnesia with Latin American history in general, but because an educational component is missing in its corporate advertisement and sponsorship, it is not surprising that celebrants have no idea about its historical importance. The historical confusion over Cinco de Mayo also resembles the historical amnesia of St. Patrick's Day.

Mexican St. Patrick's Day

Cinco de Mayo's emergence as a popular drinking holiday is often compared with St. Patrick's Day. As one Denver partygoer put it, "Many

people don't know why you wear green or drink beer on that day, but who cares, as long as you get to get out of work early to go and drink? ... Cinco de Mayo is great excuse to get out and party" (Quintero, 2005, p. A32). St. Patrick's Day's honors St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, who converted many pagans to Christianity and became Ireland's second bishop until his death on March 17, 461 (Cronin & Adair, 2002). The holiday was first introduced in the United States on March 17, 1766, by Irish immigrants who then transformed the holiday into their own, whether using it to support Ireland's independence from Britain, demonstrate against anti-Irish hostility in the United States, or celebrate Irish American contributions to America (Marston, 1989). Today, with Irish Americans achieving political and economic success, the holiday is frequently used as a reason to "Go Green" by finding the nearest Irish pub and drink Guinness beer. Considered the most "authentic" Irish beer, Guinness recently embarked in a petition campaign to make St. Patrick's Day an official American holiday. Guinness' clever marketing play has made the beer synonymous with Ireland and St. Patrick's Day (Archer & Lee, 2004).

In many ways, Cinco de Mayo has followed the same path as St. Patrick's Day in becoming a drinking holiday. In attempt to merge both holidays, Corona Beer premiered a television commercial in 2002 called "Cinco de Mayo in Ireland." The commercial opens with an Irish man dressed in a long black coat and black hat walking toward a small town in rural Ireland while traditional Irish music plays in the background. The narration follows, "And if you arrive on that most special day in Ireland you will find the town celebrating their favorite holiday in traditional fashion." Then as the visitor opens the pub door, the music abruptly switches to mariachi music and finds a "Cinco de Mayo" celebration underway as the Irish bartender, wearing a large sombrero and grabbing four Corona beers, shouts his name "Hiya Sean, Happy Cinco de Mayo." The visitor immediately takes off his hat and coat to reveal his bright party shirt and grabs a Corona beer. At the end, we see two Corona beers standing in front of a blurred image of a light-skinned Irish woman. The message behind this television commercial is that anyone, including Irish men in Ireland's pubs, can find a "wild" Cinco de Mayo party wherever Corona beer is sold and once you find a fiesta you can become a "Mexican" for that night. Becoming "Mexican" for Irish Americans means something altogether different when compared to Mexican Americans. As Mary Waters (1990) has suggested, "white ethnics" can choose aspects of their European culture and language, whereas people of color did not have the same options in a racialized U.S. social system that positions Latino/as as "perpetual foreigners" (Rocco, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2004).

Drinko de Mayo

In recent years, newspaper reports have dubbed Cinco de Mayo as "Drinko de Mayo" to draw attention to its close relationship with the beer and alcohol industry and to express discontent with the commercialization of the holiday. Since the 1980s, the beer and alcohol industry has used Cinco de Mayo to promote sales of their products by spending millions in both English and Spanish language advertising and sponsoring celebrations (Alamillo, 2004). Beer advertisers use a "market segmentation" strategy that requires research on a Latino/a population to determine which messages and images resonate with their cultural "Otherness." When U.S. racial minority groups or immigrants are turned into a commodity form, it is their exoticism, "authenticity," and "Otherness," which are emphasized in a celebratory and non-threatening way that encourages consumption while at the same time blurring power relations (O'Barr, 1994). The insertion of Spanish terms in advertising slogans such as "Drinko de Mayo" or "Drinko for Cinco" are a form of covert racial discourse or what Jane Hill (1993) termed "Mock Spanish." Anglo American users of "Mock Spanish" may claim their intent is for innocuous or humorous reasons, but when users have "access to very negative racializing representations of Chicanos and Latino/as as stupid, politically corrupt, sexually loose, lazy, dirty, and disorderly," then it accomplishes the "elevation of whiteness" by indexing Latino/as indirectly and therefore "in need of linguistic control" (p. 145).

Alcohol and beer companies have been very effective in appropriating and transforming Latino/a cultural forms, religious symbols, and Spanish language into commodified cultural signs that perpetuate negative stereotypes about the Mexican community and Mexican history and culture. Take for example Corona Extra Beer's "Drinko for Cinco" promotional campaign (Courch, 2004). This campaign includes network and cable television commercials, radio spots, billboards, and store displays in key market locations: Los Angeles, San Antonio, Miami, Chicago, and New York. One of these store displays is located in the front entrances of major supermarkets and features an eight-foot high stack of Corona 12-packs surrounded by a colorful cabana with colorful slogan: "The Drinko de Mayo" (Strumpf, 2006). One of the promotional posters displays a map of Mexico with a parrot on the tip of Yucatan adorned with a Mexican sombrero, sunglasses, and a multi-colored serape. The parrot holds a bottle of Corona Extra and Corona Light in each claw. The poster's slogan is "Miles Away from Ordinary." Through this store display and poster, Corona Beer is inviting consumers to leave their "ordinary lives" behind and

drink Corona and in the process consume Mexican "Otherness" in the safety of their homes while imagining being "miles away." Attempts to reproduce a Cinco de Mayo "fiesta" inside grocery stores is another example of how beer companies have commodified the Mexican fiesta for profit. For example, one Cinco de Mayo store promotion featured a "Mexican Hut" full of Mexican beer brands inside. Customers were encouraged to enter a hacienda-type hut and to purchase any of the three Mexican beer brands: Carta Blanca, Sol, Tecate, and Dos Equis. "It's very festive and has all the typical Mexican fiesta themes and all the branding," commented the Director of Mexican Brands for Labatt USA (Courch, 2004, p. 1).

Expropriating elements of Mexican culture for profit according to a spokesperson from San Antonio-based Gambrinus Co., the largest U.S. importer of Corona beer, is "really a cornerstone of our annual marketing plan" (Pritchard, 2001). The use of Mexican nationalist symbols is another common strategy by beer companies. Budweiser appropriated a popular Mexican saying, "Como Mexico no hay dos" (There's only one Mexico) and added "Como Budweiser tampoco" (Budweiser, too) (Strumpf, 2006). One liquor store ad went so far as to claim that Tecate beer was "Pura Vitamina Mexicana" (pure Mexican vitamin), suggesting that an essential part of Mexican identity, culture, and nutrition is consuming Tecate beer (Courch, 2004). Coors Light's slogan "Sabemos como celebrar" (We know how to celebrate) claims that Mexican people are culturally predisposed to party. Additionally, Mexican religious symbols have appeared in beer and alcohol ads. Another example is a Jose Cuervo tequila ad featuring a blender making margaritas on top of a Mayan pyramid at Chichen Itza, a sacred pre-Columbian symbol that connects this tequila to an "authentic" indigenous Mexico (Alaniz & Wilkes, 1995). For its 2003 Cinco de Mayo campaign, Jose Cuervo tequila launched its "CuervoNation" program that offers loyal drinkers an opportunity to win a trip to their eight-acre "outpost" in a Caribbean Island (Sherer, 2003). Even though tequila originated in western Mexico, contest winners will travel to "CuervoNation outposts" in the Caribbean island. Another Jose Cuervo tequila ad appealed to the cultural memory of Mexican American consumers by using the tagline "Si Se Puede" (made famous by the labor leader Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers movement) alongside "Si Se Party, Si Se Cuervo" (Sherer, 2003). Tequila, according to Gaytán (2008b), continues to play a important role in shaping Mexican nationalism and masculinity.

These ads appealed to "authentic" Mexican cultural icons ranging from pre-Columbian cultural artifacts, traditional clothing styles, and historic

figures and Cinco de Mayo events. As part of the Mexican American Alcohol Study, Maria Alaniz and Chris Wilkes (1995) analyzed over 124 alcohol advertisements and found three dominant themes: (a) hyper masculinity, (b) authenticity, and (c) petty nationalism. In the Cinco de Mayo Advertisements produced by Budweiser and Tecate, they found all three themes. Alaniz and Wilkes (1995, p. 442) argue that "Often combined, calls to nationalism and authenticity, however falsely constructed they might be, make the attempt to draw the consumer-citizen into the game of the market, to blur the distinctions between label and country, between the Mexican experience and the experience of the Latino away from Mexico, to use the familiar world of flag, history, and tradition in order to make unknown products familiar".

Defenders of "Drinko de Mayo" advertisements and Alcohol-sponsored Cinco de Mayo events typically employ the rhetorical frames of "individual responsibility" and "cultural drinking habits," which are associated to the ideology of color-blindness. The first frame invokes free-market and *laissez faire* arguments to justify contemporary forms of racial inequality. The second frame uses culture-based explanations to explain drinking behavior (Bonilla-Silva, 2004). Industry giant Anheuser-Busch Co. took offense to calls to stop targeting Latino/a youth by issuing a written statement: "To suggest that people of a certain ethnic origin should be protected from types of advertising is elitist, condescending and insulting" (Maggs, 1998, p. G3). The director of communications for Grupo Modelo, owner of Corona Beer, defended its sponsorship of Cinco de Mayo by making the following argument, "I think there is nothing wrong with having a Mexican drink to celebrate the day. It is the individual's choice to drink, not ours" (Mohan, 2002, p. B1). Proponents of alcohol-free Cinco de Mayo events, however, point to statistics that show the high number of alcohol-related health problems and deaths among Latino/as. "These (alcohol free Cinco) people need to get a life and worry about teaching people about drinking responsibly" claimed one participant at a San Francisco celebration (Garofoli, 2002, p. A5).

These arguments fail to recognize the ideological and structural forms of racial inequality that contribute to alcohol-related illnesses, deaths, and violence among Latinos and Latinas. A recent report by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University found that Latino/a youth below the age of 21 are more likely to be exposed to beer and alcohol ads more than any other racial and ethnic group (2005). One study on billboard advertising found that African American and Latino/a neighborhoods had more billboards advertising alcohol and tobacco

compared to Anglo or Asian neighborhoods (Alman, Schooler, & Basil, 1991). The availability and overexposure of alcohol advertising has contributed to higher rates of alcohol consumption among Latino men. A 1992 study found 23% of Latino men drank more alcohol compared with 15% of African American men and 12% white men (Caetano & Kaskutas, 1995). These high consumption rates have led to destructive forms of behavior and health problems including chronic liver diseases, traffic crashes, homicides, and violence against women (Maxwell & Jacobson, 1989).

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) between 1999 and 2005, an average of 43% of highway fatalities have occurred on May 5 or early morning on May 6. The federal agency's solution to reduce highway fatalities is to designate a sober driver. Modeled after anti-drunk driving campaigns around the country, the NHTSA created a "Amigos Don't Let Amigos Drive Drunk" campaign (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2005). The NHTSA website offers a "Cinco de Mayo Planner" that consists of sample press releases, letters to the editor, talking points, posters and coasters, and radio scripts. This planner is available online for event organizers and partygoers to use prior to May 5th. However, a closer analysis of the images and rhetoric of the "Cinco de Mayo Planner" reveals a reproduction of the holiday as a drinking celebration. Take for examples the two posters featured on their planning kit. One of the posters features a worm inside a shot of tequila with the caption "Before you drink so much this starts looking good to you, designate the sober driver." Another poster resembles a police mug shot with an Anglo man wearing a sombrero and holding up a sign with the letters, "Redford County Jail, 05-06-06, Drive Impaired on Cinco de Mayo and Spend Sies de Mayo in Jail." Although these posters attempt to be eye-catching and tongue-in-cheek to drive home a message, they reinforce the image of Cinco de Mayo as a drinking holiday and misrepresenting the historical and cultural significance of the holiday.

Sexism in a Bottle

In many beer and alcohol advertisements, Latina women's bodies are transformed into a commodity form, presented as passive, waiting, and sexually available for the male drinker/consumer. Alcohol researchers Alaniz and Wilkes (1995) found in their study a clear pattern of alcohol

