LATINA MAGAZINE:
HOW DO LATINAS NEGOTIATE THE MAGAZINE'S IDEOLOGY
OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LATINA?

By

LAUREN ANN RUSSELL

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2005

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

already. Finally, I would like to thank my dad who provided incredible encouragement

for continuing my education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract of Thesis presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

LATINA MAGAZINE:
HOW DO LATINAS NEGOTIATE THE MAGAZINE'S IDEOLOGY
OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LATINA?

By

Lauren Ann Russell

August 2005

Chair: Michael Leslie
Major Department: Latin American Studies

The purpose of my study was to attempt to understand how Latinas negotiate

Latina magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina. According to previous

research, ideological messages in women's magazines have powerful effects on the

women who read them. However, no study has explored how Latinas negotiate the

messages in a magazine designed specifically for them. My study was the first to explore

how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine and whether they accepted, questioned, or

rejected the messages in the magazine.

My study used qualitative methods to collect data from three focus groups

comprising a total of 20 self-identified Latinas. Findings suggest that the focus group

participants perceived the mediated Latina ideal in *Latina* magazine as similar to the

mediated Latina ideal found in mainstream media: curvy, sexy, tan skin, dark eyes, and

dark hair. My findings suggest, as previous research suggested, that *Latina* magazine is reproducing dominant ideology.

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method was used to organize and analyze the data and showed that the women's readings of *Latina* magazine were complex and sometimes inconsistent. Most of the women's attitudes were, at one point or another, resistant to many of *Latina* magazine's messages. Consequently, the readings of *Latina* magazine were largely negotiated and, at times, oppositional. Many of the women were aware of the dominant standards in the magazine but most did not articulate in-depth criticism that exposed underlying dominant ideology. The women often indicated that their beliefs and sometimes their behaviors aligned with dominant ideology.

In addition, findings suggest that *Latina* magazine may not be catering to its target audience, because many of the women in the focus groups conveyed that they felt alienated by the magazine. Many of the women perceived the magazine as upholding new standards for qualifying as Latina in terms of physical appearance, beliefs, traditions, behaviors, and values.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

> I speak English with my friends and colleagues and Spanish with my
> familia. I eat flan and apple pie. I'm a modern woman but I'm firmly
> rooted in tradition. I want a magazine that speaks to me in both worlds,
> and in both my languages, that covers beauty in all shades and shapes, a
> magazine that shows successful Latinas achieving their dreams. Latina is
> that publication. (Latina Mission Statement, 2004)

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Women's magazines and the women who read them have been researched for

more than 20 years (Adegbola 2002; Britt 2003; Duke 2000; Durham 1996,1998,

1999a,b; Ferguson 1978; Frazer 1987; Goodman 2002; McRobbie 1978, McRobbie 1996;

Pompper and Koenig 2004; Woodward 2003). Some research about women's magazine

focuses on how minority women or women of color negotiate mainstream women's

magazines (Britt 2003; Duke 2000; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002). Virtually no

attention, however, has been paid to how U.S. Latinas negotiate women's magazines

designed for them. This is original research about how self-identified U.S. Latinas

negotiate *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina.[1]

---

[1] This thesis uses the term "Latina" to refer to women who live in the United States who trace their origins to Spanish-speaking Latin American and Caribbean nations. While the term "Latina" disregards the diversity of women with Latin American connections, it should be noted that the author does not believe that any woman of Latin American origin is actually part of a homogeneous group. Nevertheless, the term "Latina" is used throughout this thesis because the magazine that is explored in this thesis is called *Latina*. The term "Latina" relates to U.S. experiences (Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002). The term "U.S. Latina" is more precise but is somewhat redundant, therefore the term "Latina" is used throughout this thesis.

Magazines and Women

Ferguson (1978) said that a woman's magazine is one "whose content and advertising is aimed primarily at a female audience and at female areas of concern and competence, as customarily defined within our culture" and that these publications "function to transmit cultural prescriptions of female role performance" (p. 97).

Women's magazines are popular with many women in the United States. In fact, one survey (The Female Persuasion, 2002) conducted in 2002, found that 60% of women had read a women's lifestyle magazine in the past year. Perhaps the popularity of these publications is what drives researchers to study them.

Trends In Women's Magazine Research

According to Gough-Yates (2003), research about women's magazines shows the negative representations of women in these magazines. An abundance of literature links women's magazines to negative representation and misrepresentation, and much research suggests that the dominant ideologies in these magazines subjugate women (Calafell 2001; Duke 2000; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002; Hedrick 2001; McRobbie 1978). According to Durham (1999a), "Literally hundreds of studies of mass media content in the past 20 years have produced evidence of detrimental representations of women and femininity" (p. 216).

Most of the literature about women's magazines since the 1970s has been written by feminist media scholars who have reached similar conclusions: these magazines are problematic for women because their hegemonic standards of beauty and patriarchal and commercial messages (i.e., dominant ideological messages) perpetuate gender, racial, ethnic, and class inequalities and stereotypes, thereby oppressing the construction of positive feminine identities (Gough-Yates 2003; McRobbie 1996). In sum, according to

existing studies, women's magazines support and reflect the ruling ideology (Calafell 2001; Duke 2002; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002, McRobbie 1978).

Ruling or dominant ideology refers to the ruling ideas or standards of society that revolve around the ruling classes and institutions (Althusser 1971; Hall 1982). In the United States, for example, Whiteness is privileged, as is heterosexuality; men hold the most power, and capitalism flourishes. Hence, the ruling ideas and standards are those supported by White supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. There is no one "unified and stable" dominant ideology; rather, ideology is constructed of the core assumptions in a culture or society that make certain beliefs, values, and ways of life seem normal or "common-sensical" (Kellner 1995, p. 58). That is to say, our collective common-sense understanding of the way things are, so to speak, results from ideology.

Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology accounts for how the ruling or hegemonic classes or institutions perpetuate our consent to the dominant ideology. According to Hall (1982), media institutions produce and reproduce dominant ideologies and "powerfully secure consent" (p. 86). Media institutions are not independent of dominant ideological influence; rather the media incorporate hegemonic standards and transmit them to media audiences (Hall 1982). According to Hall (1982), "ideology is a function of the discourse and of the logic of social processes, rather than an intention of the agent" (p. 88). In other words, theories on ideology would support that a magazine producer "unwittingly, unconsciously . . . has served as a support for the reproduction of a dominant ideological discursive field" (p. 88).

Often support for dominant ideology by magazine producers is manifest in advertising. That is to say, advertising needs often dictate editorial content (Steinem

1995). According to Steinem (1995), there is an "ad-edit linkage" that pressures magazine editors to praise particular products in editorial copy and to position ads next to what companies deem appropriate or complementary editorial content so as to attract advertisers (p. 329). Says Steinem (1995), advertising is pulled or not even considered when magazine producers do not provide editorial content that advertising companies approve.

Using theories on ideology, McRobbie (1996) said that, for researchers, the common attitude toward women's magazines is critical and that "Women's and girl's magazines not only failed the women they claimed to represent, they actively damaged them, constructing injured and subordinate subjectivities" (p. 173). For media scholars, incorporating theories on ideology such as Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology served to make research about women's magazines more "theoretically sophisticated" (McRobbie 1996). Gough-Yates (2003) said, "The women's magazine industry is understood as a monolithic meaning-producer, circulating magazines that contain 'messages' and 'signs' about the nature of femininity that serve to promote and legitimate dominant interests" (p. 7). Many studies classify magazine producers as instruments of the dominant class who spread its ideological messages or as cunning business people aware of how to attract advertising and high circulation (Gough-Yates 2003). "In these terms those working in media production are seen as conspiring in the promotion of both capitalism and patriarchy" (Gough-Yates 2003, p. 7).

In sum, critical stances toward women's magazines often highlight the hegemonic attitudes and dominant standards promoted by magazine producers, and often the point of such criticism is to draw attention to these things so that female readers may be more

aware of the ideological messages and more adept to challenging those oppressive

messages (Gough-Yates 2003; McRobbie 1996).

Questioning the power of ideology. In the 1980s, the power of ideology was

challenged (Frazer 1987). One big problem some researchers had with theories on

ideology was that, simply put, "ideology makes people do things" (Frazer 1987, p. 410).

According to Frazer (1987), if the ideological effects of a text caused people to have

certain beliefs, attitudes, and opinions; and ultimately, influenced their behaviors, then

why were the theorists who explained the power of ideology not affected? Could these

theorists maintain more agency than the average magazine reader?

Even the perspective of Angela McRobbie, a veteran women's magazine

researcher who avidly implemented theories on ideology and who wrote that through

magazines, "a concerted effort is . . . made to win and shape the consent of the readers to

a set of particular values," (McRobbie 1989, p. 203), later questioned the power of

ideology and considered reader agency. McRobbie (1996) later wrote, "If we feminists

turned out not so badly, on what basis can we assume that magazines have such a

damaging and dangerous effect on all their other readers?" (McRobbie 1996, p. 175).

Hence, the emphasis on how ideology victimized women diminished because the line

between feminists and "ordinary" women became blurred (McRobbie 1996).

Although, it could be argued that perhaps one could maintain more agency when

reading media if the reader's consciousness were raised. According to hooks (2000),

consciousness-raising is when people, via communication and dialogue, become more

aware of how social systems of domination and oppression work in every day life or,

more specifically, how women may "clarify our collective understanding of the nature of

male domination" (p. 8). Consciousness-raising is about understanding the roots of our sexist thinking that we often accept without question (hooks 2000). For example, a woman who has had her consciousness raised has "gained the strength to challenge patriarchal forces at work and at home" (p. 8).

Another factor that challenged the power of ideology was the pleasure that even feminist writers admitted to experiencing when reading women's magazines (McRobbie 1996). "Ostensibly, these magazines are positive projections of the future self, for few would buy these publications were they overtly to present negative images" (McCracken 1993, p. 136). People take pleasure in consuming media texts (Lindlof and Taylor 2002).

A prominent exemplar that demonstrates how women derive pleasure from a medium is the work of Janice Radway (1984). In a study of women reading romance novels, Radway (1984) found that housewives viewed their readings as an escape and as a way to assert their independence. But why do women experience pleasure when consuming a mass medium? A pleasureful reading of a popular text may result from identifying with the content, but Kellner (1995) says that experiencing such enjoyment from reading a text is not completely innocent or without consequence. Kellner (1995) said, "Pleasures . . . should thus be problematized . . . and interrogated as to whether they contribute to the production of a better life and society, or help trap us into modes of everyday life that ultimately oppress and degrade us" (p. 39).

Similarly, McCracken (1993) said that "the attractive experiences are ideologically weighted and not simply innocent arenas of pleasure . . . along with the pleasure come messages that encourage insecurities, heighten gender stereotypes, and

urge reifying definitions of the self through consumer goods" (p. 8-9). In other words, pleasureful readings of media texts have a way of naturalizing dominant ideology.

Agency of the magazine reader. Historically, much research about women's magazines has not emphasized the power or even the role of magazine readers (Gough-Yates 2003; McRobbie 1996). McRobbie (1996) says that magazine researchers should posit questions about magazine consumers because readers are not as often assumed to be naïve "cultural dupes" as they were in the past. Eventually, researchers did question that texts could always be read exactly as they were produced or that meaning was inherent (Johnson 1986-1987). Messages in texts are now often thought to be polysemic, or open to multiple interpretations (Fiske 1986). Moreover, ideological effects cannot be assumed (Johnson 1986-1987). According to Johnson (1986-1987),

> It is important not to assume that public-ation only and always works in dominating or in demeaning ways. We need careful analyses of where and how public representations work to seal social groups into the existing relations of dependence and where and how they have some emancipatory tendency. (p. 52)

Readers may accept the messages in a text without question, and they also may negotiate or even reject them (Hall 1979). The ability to actually resist media messages, however, is debatable (Durham 1999a). According to Thompson (1990), one reason the ability to reject ideological messages in the media is debatable is because the way ideology works is it gives people just enough autonomy so that they think they have power to resist ruling forces and so they will not actively revolt. In other words, said Thompson (1990),

> The ruling or dominant ideology may incorporate elements drawn from subordinate groups or classes, and there may be ideologies or 'ideological sub-systems' which correspond to subordinate groups or classes and which have a 'relative autonomy' with regard to the dominant ideology.

But these ideological sub-systems are constrained by the dominant ideology; they are part of an ideological field which is ultimately structured by the ideology of the dominant class. It is in this way—to employ Gramsi's term—that the dominant class secures 'hegemony': through the structuring of the ideological field, the dominant class or class faction is able to exercise political leadership based on the 'active consent' of subordinate classes and to integrate the various factions of the dominant class into a relatively stable power bloc. (p. 94)

Ideology and Ethnic Media

Ideology as it relates to ethnic media is especially interesting because it addresses typically subordinate audiences (i.e., ethnic audiences). Yet, little attention has been paid toward magazines designed for minority audiences. Applying theories on ideology when researching so-called U.S. ethnic media, however, is appropriate because these magazines are created in the United States within dominant ideology (Calafell 2001; Johnson 2000). Yet, these publications also serve as respite from mainstream publications that do not reflect, for the most part, diverse ethnicities (Johnson 2000).

Johnson (2000) concluded that ethnic media produced in the United States have assimilative functions that, a theorist on ideology might argue, produces and reproduces dominant ideologies. Johnson (2000) said that media research assumes that ethnic media have assimilative functions that include "serving as instruments of social control, maintaining the dominant languages of the host society, maintaining the dominant ideology, borrowing general market media genres and socializing to the modern" (p. 234). Besides encouraging readers to be members of mainstream society, Johnson (2000) says that ethnic media simultaneously have pluralistic functions as well, and so the content is designed to also sustain one's heritage or culture.

Latina **Magazine**

Latina magazine is one of the top 10 publications read by Hispanics/Latinos in the United States, and it is the most widely read of English-language Latina magazines (Magazine Publishers of America 2004).

Latina magazine attempts to reflect what it means to be Latina. The magazine also attempts to communicate what Latinas look like, what traditions they uphold, and what beliefs and values they have, just to name a few examples. The current editorial director, Betty Cortina, says that *Latina* magazine reflects "the world through that unique Latina lens" (Cortina 2003, p. 34). *Latina* magazine has a concept of what it means to be Latina, and that concept is communicated via the text and images in the magazine. *Latina* magazine has an ideology of what it means to be Latina.

Latina **Magazine's Ideology of What It Means To Be Latina**

Latina magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina, as it is manifest almost every month in the pages of the magazine, must be born of some thing. Theories on ideology would suggest that the producers of *Latina* magazine are guided by dominant ideology; hence, the ideology of *Latina* magazine may reflect those dominant standards. Calafell (2001) said, "We are bombarded with media images, historical images, and cultural images that define what we should be as Latinas. Many of these racist and stereotypical images have been created and maintained by the dominant society" (p. 39).

One might argue that dominant ideas dictate that consumerism and a panethnic impulse become a part of a woman's magazine created for Latinas and that these factors influence *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina.

Consumerism and Panethnicity

Latinos wield $653 billion in purchasing power, a number that is expected to nearly double by 2008 (Humphreys 2003). When considering Latino purchasing power, it is no surprise that this growing sector of the population is a prime target for marketing a product like *Latina* magazine. McCracken (1993) says that magazines for ethnic minorities have been successful at reaching "a substantial growing sector with consumerist messages that are ostensibly personalized with the specific cultural heritage of minority groups" (p. 223). *Latina* magazine markets to the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States. The magazine contains advertising—much of it identical to other women's mainstream magazines—which grosses revenue.

Panethnicity is encouraged by the Hispanic/Latino market (Dávila 2001). Latino panethnicity refers to people of Latin American decent belonging to one, unitary group (Dávila 2001, 2002). In terms of panethnic mass media audiences, Dávila (2002) said that Latino-oriented media have contributed to "Latinization—the consolidation of a common Latino identity among different Latino subgroups" (p. 27) and the idea that U.S. Latinos are part of a distinct symbolic or imagined community (Anderson 1983; Dávila 2001). *Latina* magazine supports the invocation of family and identification of heritage so as to situate readers "within an imagined panethnic Latino family" (Martínez 2004, p. 163).

To make a profit, magazine producers must create a publication that identifies and targets a specific market, yet at the same time that magazine should capture the interest of as many people as possible. Panethnicity, therefore, works for those seeking to tap into the Hispanic/Latino sector. Panethnicity is marketable (Dávila 2001).

Latina magazine supports a pan-Hispanic or U. S. Latino panethnicity (Johnson 2000). Espinoza (1998) said that magazines like *Latina* are a site for the construction,

negotiation, contestation, and affirmation of Latina identity because it's an "identity, which resonates with a panethnic population in the United States" (pp. 6-7).

Latina magazine invites a broad readership, and consequently, refers to Latinas as members of a panethnic group who are sometimes of a generic or pan-Hispanic look (Dávila 2001). If a magazine were to solely target Puerto Rican women or only address the Argentine market, it would not attract as many advertising dollars because few companies would shell out necessary funds to create ad campaigns to be seen by a small readership. Rather, big-money advertisers are drawn to magazines that reach big audiences. Thus, one reason *Latina* magazine encourages U.S. Latino panethnicity is to bring in advertising dollars. Johnson (2000) said that a common sentiment is that "Spanish-language mass media exploit Hispanic heritage to sell an audience to advertisers, and in doing so, end up promoting group consciousness" (p. 233).

Much literature condemns marketing to Hispanics and magazines such as *Latina* for capitalizing on and marketing Latina ethnicity, for addressing Latinas as "objects of consumption" (Hedrick 2001, p. 150; Shorris 1992), and for hindering Latinas from constructing non-consumerist identities (Beer 2002). According to Negrón-Muntaner (1997):

> "Latino," in this case, does not refer to a cultural identity, but to a specifically American national currency for economic and political deal making; a technology to demand and deliver emotions, votes, markets, and resources on the same level as other racialized minorities. (p. 184)

Problems with panethnicity. Suárez-Orozco and Páez (2002) said, "The very term Latino has meaning only in reference to the U.S. experience. Outside the United States, we don't speak of Latinos; we speak of Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and so forth. Latinos are made in the USA" (p. 4). Keeping in mind that Hispanics and Latinos

have not historically referred to themselves as neither Hispanic nor Latino, the idea of encouraging U.S. panethnicity is a lofty, utopian ambition and sometimes contentious. Latinos may share a language (and sometimes they do not even share a language), but they are of various and distinct nationalities, cultures, and experiences. Nevertheless, Flores-Gonzalez (1999) said, "Recent research suggests that second and subsequent generations are more likely to self-identify panethnically, and to adopt different self-identities that convey the degree of assimilation into the *white middle class*" (p. 5). Of course, this excludes Latinos with African heritage.

One might argue that *Latina* magazine appears to encourage panethnicity for the same reason many scholars, politicians, authors, and national organizations like La Raza encourage U.S. Latino panethnicity—to create a solidarity that advances Latino recognition, protections, and consciousness. Panethnicity for such purposes sounds somewhat like Padilla's (1985) concept of Latinismo. Padilla (1985) calls for the uniting of two of more Spanish-speaking groups to mobilize efficiently toward objective goals. "This view assumes that Latino identity is situational and contextual, being activated under specific circumstances and for political purposes, and deactivated once goals are reached" (Flores-Gonzalez 1999). According to Latina magazine, U.S. Latinas share common experiences simply because they have Latin American roots, and thus, can learn from each other and advance with each other. Espinoza (1998) said, "Their unique experiences as Latinas in the United States is the common thread that ties them together" (p. 15). Latinas are united from "shared social location, despite their diverse historical backgrounds" (Espinoza 1998, p. 15). Still, some argue that this panethnic approach

blurs the diversity that is reality. Scholar and author Arlene Dávila is quoted in Latina and said,

> I think we need to not necessarily think that the 'Latino' category is what we should go for. For example, right now in New York City, the Puerto Rican and Mexican communities are organizing according to their national groupings, with Mexicans organizing as Mexicans for immigrant rights and amnesty. So I'm thinking that perhaps we need to be more open, to be more embracing, thinking about the real diversity and the ways in which we could connect and disconnect with the incredible variety. (Ocaña, 2004, p. 120)

In contrast, Lisa Navarrete, vice president of the National Council of La Raza, responds to Dávila by saying that today it is becoming more in people's interests (i.e., equating visibility with power) to identify as Latino rather than by nationality compared to during the 1990s when most people identified themselves by nationality. Navarrete cites the example of when Italians first immigrated to the United States and identifying themselves as Sicilian, Milanese, and the like. "You can't have power as a Milanese, but you can have power as Italian Americans . . . 'Doesn't it make more sense to be part of 38 million people than to be part of 308,000?'" (Ocaña 2004, p. 120). Whether this integration of nationalities and cultures is a step in the right direction in terms of power in numbers or whether this homogenous impulse leads to "blissful ignorance" (Hedrick 2001, p. 141), will continue to be debated. One point of contention that will remain constant, however is that in reality there is no "Latino market" and that the illusion of a Latino community was created to facilitate delivering to advertisers (Dávila 2001; Shorris 1992).

Latinidad

Somewhat similar to panethnicity is the concept of Latinidad. Latinidad is a term used in a variety of way in various disciplines (Aparicio 2003). Latinidad, for the purpose

of my study, is a concept born of panethnicity. Latinidad describes a common cultural identity (Dávila 2002; Valdivia 2004). Also, one's sense of what it means to be Latina is Latinidad; one's Latin-ness or Latinity, as *Latina* magazine calls it. *Latina* magazine encourages readers to embrace their Latinity.

Dávila's (2001) definition of Latinidad also requires the conglomeration of women with Latin American roots. However, again, the lumping together of women of Latin American background into one category has consumerist implications, says Dávila (2001), which may influence *Latina* magazine's ideology. Dávila (2001) uses the term "Latinidad" to refer to the enactments, definitions, and representations of Hispanic and Latino culture that manifest as a result of Hispanic marketing (p. 17).

More About *Latina* Magazine

In an interview with *Folio* magazine, Christy Haubegger, the founder of *Latina* magazine, a Mexican-American from Houston, Texas, says her purpose for starting the magazine was that, "There wasn't a magazine for me—no one in the magazines looked even remotely like me" (Beam 1996, p. 23). Haubegger has also said that there were no magazines that spoke of the Mexican-American experience (Christy Haubegger, 2002). Interestingly, Haubegger was adopted into "a tall, blond family named Haubegger" when she was less than a year old (Veilleux 2002; Prather n.d.). "I grew up in a household that emphasized the importance of my own heritage," Haubegger is quoted as saying, "[My parents] made me speak Spanish."

After graduating from Stanford Law School, Haubegger conducted research to learn what Latinas were reading and in what language (Martínez 2004). Consequently, she learned that the Spanish-language literature produced outside of the United States did not speak of the lives and experiences of Latinos living in the United States (Martínez

2004). After conducting focus groups and analyzing marketing surveys and census data,

Haubegger decided there was a need for a magazine for bilingual, middle-class Latinas

created by Latinas (Martínez 2004).

In June 1996, Haubgger launched *Latina* magazine with the backing of Essence

Communications (Martínez 2004). Haubegger says she designed the magazine in the

hopes of changing the negative image of Hispanic women in the United States. She also

is quoted as saying that she hoped *Latina* magazine would be like *Essence* magazine in

the sense that *Essence* is a "bible" for African-American women (Beam 1996; Briggs

2002). *Essence*'s editorial mission conveys that the magazine attempts to guide African-

American women to be successful in relationships and in the workplace, independent,

spiritual, empowered, ambitious, and socially conscious. It proclaims that it informs,

inspires, advises and affirms the needs and desires of African-American women

(Editorial Mission 2005). *Essence*'s mission is similar to that of *Latina* magazine.

Latina's mission statement: "To inspire women to be the Latinas they want to be. *Latina*

empowers, illuminates, and validates, encouraging women to embrace and explore their

individual styles while celebrating their shared experiences. It balances a modern

sensibility with wisdom grounded in tradition" (Latina Mission 2004).

Latina's content is similar to mainstream women's lifestyle publications with

fashion, beauty, health, cuisine, celebrity profiles, and interviews. Yet, the current

editorial director, Betty Cortina, says that *Latina* magazine reflects "the world through

that unique Latina lens" (Cortina 2003, p. 34). According to a *Latina* magazine editor, the

cultura (culture) section is what separates *Latina* from any other magazine in the world.

The *cultura* section is dedicated to exploring "Latino culture," including its roots and

traditions. Culture is not only addressed in the *cultura* section, it is addressed throughout the magazine. In fact, the topic of culture infuses the entire magazine. For example, sample topics gleaned from the *Latina* magazine's *cultura* section include an exhibit of Latin American portraits that can be visited in the United States, a profile on a "Texican" music group called Los Lonely Boys, and a story about how some Chicano students are using an ancient Aztec language called Najuatl.

Generic topics are Latinized. These are topics that could just as well appear in mainstream, non-Latina magazines. These generic topics are given a Latin slant so they appeal to Latinas. For instance, an article about the importance of donating blood—a topic that could appear in any medium for any audience—is infused with statistics about Latinos and cultural myths that often deter Latinos from donating blood.

By targeting U.S. Latinas, editors and publishers home in on U.S. and Latin American-born women in English and with an editorial slant that acknowledges readers as English-dominant, U.S. residents (Beer 2002, p. 170). Producers of *Latina* magazine say the magazine is an English-language magazine, although many articles are condensed and summarized in Spanish, and simplified code-switching[2] is common throughout the magazine. For instance, one *Latina* article reads, "*Mi mama* has always said that the best products are at our fingertips, and she usually meant in *la cocina*" (You Ask 2004).

The median age of *Latina* magazine readers is 29, and 68% of its readership is between ages 18 and 34. *Latina* magazine readers are largely identified as college-educated, acculturated, and mostly born in the United States—women who are "living between two cultures" (Coleman 1996, p. 71; Martínez 2004). A quick glance through the

---

[2] *Code-switching* refers to when speakers go back and forth between using two different languages, such as Spanish and English, to maximize relationships (Johnson 2000).

pages of the magazine reveals that many women from Latin America are featured as well. According to Martínez (2004), most readers earn between $27,000 and $60,000 a year (those figures based on literature dating as far back as 1997).

And although *Latina* magazine producers set out to model the magazine after *Essence* magazine, *Latina* has not yet proved to reach as many Latinas as *Essence* does African-American women. Latina's circulation has increased 20% over the past two years, which means nearly every month 350,000 women read the magazine (Press Kit 2004). However, due to the pass-along rate, the magazine producers estimate the reading audience is actually 1.7 million bicultural women (Press Kit 2004; Martínez 2004).[3] In comparison, *Essence*'s monthly circulation is 1,063,000, and its readership is an estimated 7 million (Our Company 2005).

Latina's advertising pages have steadily increased. In fact, they increased 29.8%, up nearly 100 pages from the previous year (Press Kit 2004; Holt 2004). *Latina* magazine is second only to *People en Español* in advertising revenue (Hispanic Magazine Monitor 2004).

Haubegger, who stepped down at *Latina* to assume the role of founder and to work as brand agent for Creative Artists Agency in Los Angeles (Latina Magazine CEO 2001; Target: Teens 2004), says that before *Latina* magazine was published, women of Latin American descent were forced to turn to general interest women's magazines, which did not reflect their experiences, or to Spanish-language magazines, which were produced outside of the United States and often proved useless to Latinas not comfortable reading in the Spanish language.

---

[3] Regional demographics were not available, according to an editor at *Latina* magazine.

The History of Hispanic/Latina Magazines

In the United States, when Hispanic publications first started to surface, they were printed in the Spanish language. Hispanic publications for Latin American women were first published, in the Spanish-language, in the United States in the 1960s (Beer 2002). Headquartered in Mexico City, with offices in Miami, Editorial Televisa has been the main producer of this genre of magazines (Johnson 2000). Hispanic publications in Spanish were viewed as sufficient for Latin American immigrants; however, for Latinas publishers had a different kind of magazine in mind.

In the mid-1990s, a new wave of magazines for women of Latin American descent emerged in the English language. For the first time, publications were produced for first, second, and third-generation Latinas living in the United States. The first of the English-language magazines, *Latina Style*, arrived in 1994 to cater to contemporary, Hispanic businesswomen. *Latina* magazine launched in 1996. Three other Latina magazines: *Estylo*, *Latina Bride*, and *Moderna* commenced in 1997. *Moderna* ceased publication in 1998. There was room for this genre of magazines because as Pérez Firmat says (1994), "it is one thing to be Cuban in America, and quite another to be Cuban American" (p. 3).

Since the 1970s, the number of Hispanic publications for both sexes in the United States has increased 219% (Dávila 2001). This should come as no surprise considering the Hispanic/Latino population recently increased 58% in 10 years (Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002). Within the United States, 80% of Hispanic/Latino adults read magazines (Magazine Publishers of America, 2004). Advertising dollars devoted to Hispanic magazines grew 24% in 2003 over 2002 (Jordan 2004), and recently, advertising revenue

for Spanish-language publications outgrew general market publications when it reached

$854 million last year (Grow 2004).

New Considerations and New Research

Previous research about women's magazines laid essential groundwork for how to

examine these popular texts. Incorporating theories on ideology often aids magazine

researchers and make their claims more theoretically sophisticated (McRobbie 1996).

Today, more research examines the magazine audiences, which is key to understanding

women's magazines and their implications.

The growing Hispanic/Latino population in the United States and the growth of

the mass media that targets them has spurred communication research that analyzes how

Hispanic/Latina women read women's magazines (Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002;

Pompper and Koenig 2004). Still, there are gaps to fill in this area of research.

Research about women's magazines often does not focus on how women of color

negotiate magazines designed especially for them but rather how they negotiate

mainstream magazines that have predominantly Anglo audiences (Britt 2003; Duke 2000,

2002; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002). Two studies have explored how African-

American women negotiate *Essence* magazine (Adegbola 2002; Woodward 2003).

This research seeks to understand how women of color, specifically U.S. Latinas,

negotiate a magazine "created by Latinas for Latinas" (Beer 2002, p. 170), *Latina*

magazine. Exploring what it means to be Latina as defined by *Latina* magazine provides

a research opportunity to understand how U.S. Latinas—the magazine's target

audience—negotiate a text that is supposed to describe and reflect them and whether they

are cognizant of how dominant ideology works.

Research Question

How do Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine's vision of what it means to be

Latina? Focus groups were conducted to answer this question.

Justification

McRobbie (1996) says that typically, the "most straightforward way to respond to

these [women's] magazines, as a feminist, is to condemn them" (p. 200). However,

McRobbie (1996) suggests that media scholars move beyond solely emphasizing the

ideological and take a sociological approach that considers lived experience. What is

needed in magazine research, says McRobbie (1996), is dialogue with magazine

consumers. Yet media studies with Latino audiences are relatively rare, said Dávila

(2002)

> In addressing Latinos as a single, encompassing group, these initiatives
> have certainly helped shape and refurbish the existence of a common
> Latino/a identity, but seldom have we looked at the ways people respond
> to these culturally specific media and to the "Latinness" so promoted by
> their programming and representations. (pp. 25-26)

Although media studies with Latino audiences are becoming more popular (Rojas

2004), there is still a dearth of research in terms of how Latinas interact with women's

magazines and, moreover, with magazines that target them. Previous studies conducted

with Latina audiences have focused on representations of women on Spanish-language

television (Dávila 2002; Rojas 2004) and how Latinas negotiate physical representations

(i.e., the mediated ideal body) of non-Latinas in the media (Goodman 2002; Pompper and

Koenig 2004).

Relevant Latina/o audience studies are few and while one study did address how

Hispanic women negotiate images of women, most other research addresses how Latinos

interpret television and radio. For example, Pompper and Koenig (2004) analyzed the

perceptions held by Hispanic women toward body image. Rojas (2004) conducted 27 in-depth interviews with immigrant and non-immigrant Latinas of various income levels to understand how they evaluate and negotiate the representations of women on talk shows on the Hispanic networks, Univisión and Telemundo. In another study, Dávila (2002) conducted focus groups with Latinas and Latinos to understand how they feel about Latino-oriented media.

Published studies about *Latina* magazine are limited to content and rhetorical analyses (Beer 2002; Calafell 2001; Johnson 2000), and these studies lack Latina voices. This, despite the fact that there are over three million Latinas in the United States between ages 15 and 24 and over six million Latinas between the ages of 25 and 59, a number estimated to soon exceed eight million (Joiner 2002; R. E. Spraggins personal communication, August 5, 2005). Moreover, women ages 15 to 24 are known to read magazines in great numbers (Duke 2002). Still, little attention has been paid to this burgeoning sector in terms of media research.

Moreover, the topic of how popular culture may define a group of people is a hot one. Romero and Habell-Pallán (2002) said about the terms Latino and Latina, "The power to define these terms is political and economic and plays out symbolically in the imaginative products of the popular culture machine" (p. 2).

Latina magazine, a popular text for nearly a decade, attempts to communicate what is Latina. Yet, the magazine has yet to be used in media studies with a Latina audience. How Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine—whether they accept, negotiate, or reject the messages—has yet to be explored. Hence, my

study aims to explore how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine's ideology of what

it means to be Latina.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Representations of Latinas

There has been consistent negative representation, misrepresentation, and Latino absence in the media (Albert 1998; Calafell and Delgado 2004; Espinoza 1998; Flores and Holling 1999; Hedrick 2001; Menard 1997; Papper 1994; Pérez Firmat 1994; Rosaldo 1994; Taylor and Bang 1997; Wilson et al. 2003).

Historical representations. Flores and Holling (1999) said that, historically, media representations of Latinos were characteristically lecherous, thieving, dirty, violent, and cowardly (p. 340). Latinos have also been depicted as illegal or unlawful. Rosaldo (1994) said,

> . . . whether or not we belong in this country is always in question . . . The mass media often present sensational views of Latinos as new immigrant communities with the consequence, intended or not, of questioning our citizenship and hardening racialized relations of dominance and subordination. (pp. 31-32)

In addition, Latinas have primarily been portrayed as sexually enticing (Calafell 2001; Flores and Holling 1999; Menard 1997). Early U.S. film may have seemingly broadened its conception of beauty to include "exotic" looking actresses with dark features, but the women who bore these features were often perceived merely as sexualized bodies (Flores and Holling 1999). When Hollywood filmmakers began casting Latinas in the 1920s, these actresses were typically cast to fill the role of spitfire (i.e., overly emotional and oversexed), exotic, and promiscuous or tempestuous (Flores and Holling 1999; Menard 1997; Wilson et al. 2003).

23

In contrast, Hollywood also encouraged Latina actresses to alter their physical appearances to appear more White. For example, Rita Hayworth, the Brooklyn, New York-born, Spanish-Irish actress, born Margarita Carmen Cansino, underwent hair lightening, weight loss, and heightened her forehead to become the all-American girl who starred in U.S. films during the 1930s and 1940s (Hedrick 2001). "Hayworth was transformed from the dark lady to an auburn-haired love goddess" (Menard 1997).

Current representations. Historical representations have influenced modern-day media representations of Latinas (Calafell 2001). Consequently, scholarly work and popular criticism condemns current media representations of Latinas. One reason for the criticism is that mass media rarely reflect the fluidity and diversity of Latinas (Calafell and Delgado 2004, p. 2). "We're either maids or sex symbols," says Dorothy Caram of the Institute for Hispanic Culture in Houston Texas, (Menard 1997). The modern-day Latina archetype in the media is primarily one of sexuality (Calafell 2001; Menard 1997; Wilson et al. 2003). According to Wilson et al. (2003), Latinas are typically portrayed in "ways that connote sex and sexuality" (p. 198). Wilson et al. (2003) use as an exemplar the cover of *Sports Illustrated* Winter 2002, which features Argentinean cover model Yamila Diaz-Rahi. Next to Diaz-Rahi's cover image are the words "red-hot" and "sizzles."

A *Latina* magazine article entitled "What is Latina style?" uses similar language. The article reads, "For sure, Latina fashion has to have fire—you know, some flesh and some flash" (Quintanilla 2003, p. 124).

The flesh of Latina pop-culture icon Jennifer Lopez, a Puerto Rican-American from the Bronx, New York, is often in the media. Media attention often focuses on

Lopez's rear end, which ostensibly is perceived as a quintessential Latina physical characteristic (Negrón-Muntaner 1997). Similarly, Iris Chacón, another Puerto Rican dancer and singer of days past, was famous for her rear end (Negrón-Muntaner 1997).

The stereotypical representations of Latinas that focus on the body are said to be what spurred Anna Maria Arias to create *Latina Style* magazine. Apparently, Arias was "tired of the media's portrayal of Latinas as sequined sexpots and ghetto gangstas" (Ballon 1997). Magazines are criticized for presenting women as sex objects and as luscious and exotic (Menard 1997). But are the consumers of these magazines opposed to these sexualized images? No, according to a *Hispanic* magazine article in which Menard (1997) said, "The basic attitude among Latinas seems to be, 'We know the stereotype exists, and we like it.'"

Another common portrayal of Latinas in the media is that they are inarticulate and subservient; hence, the stereotypical representation of Latinas as maids (Menard 1997). Caram of the Institute for Hispanic Culture says, "Unfortunately, you seem to have two extremes, and neither one gives us credit for having intelligence" (Menard 1997). According to a *Hispanic* magazine article, "The biggest limitation has been that they [Latino actors] don't get to play everyday people, and for Latinas that includes playing hardworking moms or professionals" (Menard 1997).

The absence of Latina representation. Equally detrimental as negative representation may be the absence of Latinos in the mass media. Espinoza (1998) said, "For Latinos, the national culture of the United States manifests itself in everyday life with institutions (such as the media) that render them invisible further reinforcing their marginalization and exclusion as full members of society" (p. 26).

Comparing Hispanic presence to Caucasian presence in the broadcast television news workforce, the numbers are 8.9% to 78.2%, respectively, according to Papper (2004). Moreover, a content analysis by Taylor and Bang (1997) found that Latinos are significantly under-represented in U.S. magazine advertisements appearing in only 4.7% of non-Spanish language ads.

The exclusion of Latinas in mainstream mass media and the stereotypical portrayals of these women are elements of Gaye Tuchman's (1978) concept of symbolic annihilation. Women in the media are symbolically annihilated when they are erased from positions in which they would convey social power and when they are negatively stereotyped (Caputi 1999). Using Tuchman's (1978) reflection hypothesis, the absence of Latinas in the media has strong societal implications. Tuchman (1978) posits that media reflections are actually reflections of the dominant values and hierarchies of a society and that people may view media representations—or the absence thereof—as reflections of reality. Consequently, negative representation of Latinas and/or their absence in magazines may affect how they perceive themselves and how others perceive them (Espinoza 1998, p. 6). Thus, there may be consequences to the negative media representations or Latina absence (Calafell 2001; Duke 2000; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002; Hedrick 2001; McRobbie 1978).

For years, media studies have explored and speculated how women negotiate representations of women in the media and magazines (Adegbola 2002; Britt 2003; Duke 2000; Durham, 1996, 1998; 1999a,b; Ferguson, 1978; Frazer 1987; Goodman 2002; McRobbie 1978, 1996; Pompper and Koenig 2004; Woodward 2003). Studies about how women of color negotiate media, although less frequent, provide insight into media

representations of women of color and how these women negotiate media that targets predominantly Anglo audiences and media designed for specifically for them. Considering these media studies is essential to understanding how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine.

Media Studies

Existing studies discuss how adolescent girls and women of various races and ethnicities negotiate media and mainstream magazines that target predominantly Anglo women (Britt 2003; Duke 2000, 2002; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002). Very few studies address how women of color negotiate media and magazines that target them (Adegbola 2002; Gordon 2004; Woodward 2003). Most of the media research with women of color involves African-American women (Adegbola 2002; Britt 2003: Duke 2000, 2002; Gordon 2004; Woodward 2003). Only one study was readily available that involved Asian-American girls (Durham 2004).

Media studies with women of color. Duke (2000, 2002) tackled the question of how race influences girls' readings of mainstream teen magazines. Duke (2000) conducted a qualitative study in which African-American female adolescents and Anglo female adolescents were interviewed about how they used or ignored the notions of feminine beauty present in the three most popular teen magazines, *Teen*, *Seventeen*, and *YM*. Duke (2000) found that the African-American girls did not identify with the beauty sections of the mainstream teen magazines because they did not resonate with the African-American community's standards of beauty (Duke 2000). The African-American girls did not notice the bias toward Anglo representation present in the teen magazines, and they were less susceptible to the media messages about beauty than the Anglo girls studied.

As part of a longitudinal study, Duke (2002) used in-depth interviews with African-American girls ages 13 to 18 who regularly read three mainstream magazines (*Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen*) to understand how they negotiate the dominant culture's mediated ideals. Using Lincoln and Guba's method of categorizing data and Glaser and Strauss' constant comparative method, Duke (2002) found that the African-American girls typically assumed an anti-consumption role. That is to say, they recognized the texts as targeting Anglo girls, and therefore, used it to gratify their needs but did not perceive the magazine content as realistic or something to aspire to. Duke (2002) said that the African-American girls perceived the "Euro-centric feminine ideals as *not real*" and they "*preferred their reality to it*" (p. 211). The African-American girls' beliefs, opinions, and values regarding notions of femininity were guided by their culture rather than the mediated ideal.

Britt (2003) conducted qualitative research with middle-class, African-American women. Two focus group sessions were the held to gather perceptions about how the women perceive African-American models in mainstream magazine advertisements. The women were asked to construct two facial composites using facial features. One facial composite was supposed to represent the features of women most likely to be seen in magazine advertisements, and the other composite was comprised of features that represented themselves. Britt's study (2003) showed that the African-American women in the focus groups did not perceive themselves to look like the women portrayed in the magazine advertisements. According to Britt (2003), the reason the African-American women did not see themselves in the advertisements is because the images of Black women in mainstream magazine advertisements portray them as having Eurocentric

features: light skin; long, straight hair; and thin noses. Features the women did not

perceive themselves as having. Britt (2003) says the results of her study indicate a

hegemonic effect, meaning these features are associated with an ideal image of beauty in

the United States.

Durham (2004) conducted in-depth focus group and individual interviews with

South Asian Indian American girls in an attempt to understand how the media (American

and Indian) influence their constructions of sexual identity. The focus group was

comprised of five teenage girls whose parents immigrated to the United States. The girls

were born in India, and their parents brought them to the United States as infants or

toddlers. Durham's (2004) analysis of the data revealed that the girls' parents relied on

the media as guides for their parental restrictions, and the girls' usage of American media

aided in their assimilation at school although they also consumed Indian popular culture.

The girls claimed to critically watch and perceive as unrealistic both American and

Indian media. However, the girls regarded the Indian media as their connection to the

Indian community, and they were less critical of it. Even so, overall, the girls rejected

much media content.

In her analysis, Durham (2004) says that the girls appeared as outsiders of both

worlds, Indian and American. Rather than their belonging to one world over the other, the

girls felt a need to assert a new identity position, says Durham (2004), "that, in a sense,

rejected the options offered by Indian and American media texts. As consumers,

therefore, their textual readings involve a radical questioning of the sexual mores

instantiated by the television shows, films, and popular music they consumed" (p. 155).

The girls' rejection of the media content should not be dismissed, says Durham (2004),

because it was born of their cultures. For instance, the girls did not view certain media as realistic in terms of their lives because their of cultural cues that advise them they should not act like the sexually active women portrayed in this media. The girls' opposition is substantial, says Durham (2004), because their critiques of media "create the potential for new sexual identities that have emancipatory possibilities for them as girls in-between, or girls embarking on the project of forging new ethnicities" (p. 157).

African-American women negotiating Black media. Media studies about women of color and the magazines designed for them are rare, although there are a few notable studies (Gordon 2004).

According to Gordon (2004), her study was the first to link the media to African-American girls' sense of self. Gordon (2004) said that the stereotypical images of Black women in the media have the power to limit girls' conceptions of themselves and what it means to be a woman. Using surveys, Gordon (2004) examined connections between Black media and 176 African-American girls' self-concepts. Gordon (2004) hypothesized that higher levels of media exposure amongst the African-American girls would be associated with lower self-esteem, higher emphasis on physical looks and romantic appeal, and endorsement of sex object attitudes. The findings of Gordon's (2004) study indicate that media portrayals of Black women as sex objects contribute to African American adolescent girl poor self-image. As a corollary to this main finding, Gordon (2004) also found that some factors buffered the negative effects of the media such as exposure to less objectifying media images of Black women, parental involvement, and religion.

Adegbola (2002) conducted a study with African-American women at Northeastern University to explore how they negotiated images of Black women in *Essence* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines and to understand if they images in magazines reflect their lived experiences. Adegbola (2002) sought to understand how Black women interpret images of Black women in magazine advertisements, what influences their reception of images of Black women in women's lifestyle/fashion magazines, and if there were similarities between how the Black women and researchers interpret the images of Black women in the media. According to Adegbola (2002), researchers have determined that images of Black women in fashion magazines are stereotypical. Adegbola (2002) said, "The stereotype identifies Black women in magazines as having Eurocentric facial features, with small noses, thin lips, and long wavy hair" (p. 62).

Adegbola's (2002) study followed that the audience was active, the women in the study were able to recognize dominant patterns in the media messages, and that each individual's life experiences would influence how she read the magazines.

There were three parts to Adegbola's (2002) research method. First, a survey questionnaire was given to participants, second, they were given journals to take home and write in for a week. In the journals, the participants wrote about their impressions of images of Black women in magazines. Third, focus groups were conducted.

During Adegbola's (2002) analysis of the data, she addressed how the women comprehended the images, if/how they identified with the images, and if/how they would change the images if they could. To analyze how participants comprehended the images, Adegbola (2002) used Hall's encoding/decoding model and the three main reading positions: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional.

Adegbola (2002) found that the participants' impressions of Black women in the magazines were that they looked Eurocentric with White features (i.e., light skin, thin noses and lips, and straight hair). Adegbola (2002) also compared how the participants described stereotypical images of Black women in the media to the descriptions of researchers. She found some similarities in how the participants and researchers described stereotypical images of Black women; however, there were also differences. For example, some participants said that they perceived the women in the magazines as having brown skin tones. Adegbola (2002) notes that what may account for the difference in descriptions is the lack of consensus about the definition of "brown skin."

And finally, when Adegbola analyzed how participants receive the images of Black women in magazines, she found that the women assumed all three reading positions, dominant, negotiated, and oppositional. Some of the women accepted the dominant standards of beauty present in the magazine. Some of the women found the images problematic and critiqued the images, and so they partially accepted the images. Finally, some women had oppositional readings because they expressed that they do not emulate magazines' standards of beauty and that they do not think that women should buy the magazines or the products advertised in the magazines. In sum, Adegbola (2002) found no consensus in how African-American women negotiated images of Black women in magazines because their responses varied, but Adegbola (2002) does say that the manner in which these women receive/decode magazine messages is determined by their social and cultural contexts. Adegbola (2002) says that more research is needed to understand how women conceptualize images and how their social and cultural contexts and definitions influence their conceptualization.

In another audience-reception analysis, Woodward (2003) used focus groups with African-American women to explore how they use *Essence* magazine in their everyday lives. Specifically, Woodward (2003) sought to find out if the focus group participants used *Essence* to combat sexism, racism, and other "isms" that Black women are faced with.

Woodward explored research questions such as "does *Essence* work as a liberating feminist text/voice that dispels current and historical stereotypical images of Black women or does it reproduce dominant meanings in a repackaged form that situates Black women even deeper into a hegemonic powerless situation?" (p. 87).

Woodward (2003) conducted eight focus groups in California, Georgia, New York, and Tennessee. Each focus group was comprised of four to six women. To analyze the focus group data, Woodward (2003) used Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model. Woodward's (2003) analysis illuminated four themes that emerged during the focus groups. First, she found that the women felt symbolic ownership of *Essence*. Even the women who had discontinued reading it felt that it magazine portrayed them positively, and they used the magazine as a educational tool for how to be middle-class Black women and as a tool of empowerment. Second, the women did not "feel that the magazine was tearing them down so that they would buy advertised products and feel better." Woodward (2003) says of the third theme, the women found self-esteem and knowledge about their identities in *Essence* magazine. The fourth theme came from Woodward's (2003) deduction that the women were "homophobic, classist, and racist towards each other and their inner selves," and *Essence* was concluded to be effective in helping women cope with this and love each other and themselves (p. vii).

Woodward (2003) concludes that *Essence* does empower Black women, but it also reflects a false reality; one that revolves around consumer capitalism. Woodward (2003) said, "*Essence* is both a libratory and resistant site in the social construction of meaning yet also as a hegemonic tool that reinforces structures of power" (vii).

Media studies with Latinas. As a whole, there is a paucity of published research about Latinas and the media. Existing studies focus on Latina representation, visual images of Latinas in the media, ethnicity and identity construction (Calafell 2001; Calafell and Delgado 2004; Dávila 2002; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002; Johnson 2000; Moran, 2000; Pompper and Koenig 2004; Rojas 2004). Media studies in terms of television and Latinas/os are more common than studies with magazines (Dávila 2002; Moran, 2000; Rojas 2004). None of the research done to date examines how Latinas negotiate a magazine designed to target them or specifically how they negotiate *Latina* magazine.

Rojas (2004) conducted 27 in-depth interviews with immigrant and non-immigrant Latinas of various income levels to understand how they evaluate and negotiate the representations of women on talk shows that air in the United States on the Hispanic networks Univisión and Telemundo. The findings indicate that the women felt offended by the representations, yet they did not convey that the television shows should cease to exist.

Rojas (2004) said that she discovered four themes in her audience analysis. The first was that the women criticized the over-sexualization of the Latinas on television. Rojas (2004) says that the women felt "attacked, insulted, offended, and embarrassed" (p. 144). Rojas (2004) notes how her findings indicate that both Latin American women and

U.S.-born, English-dominant Latinas were equally appalled at the television representations, which, she points out, contrasts Dávila (2001) who contends that Latin American women and U.S.-born Latinas view media representations differently. Rojas (2004) cites Dávila (2001) who said, "U.S. sensibilities about race and gender are markedly different from those of Latin Americans" (p. 212).

The second emergent theme involved the class markers that the women used to categorize other Latinas, especially those who watched the television shows outside of the study. Rojas (2004) discovered that the women defined class in terms of material capital and moral values.

Thirdly, the women contested the often-promoted mediated concept of Latinidad, or cultural unity of Latinas/os of various backgrounds. The U.S.-born Latinas wished to see more representations of people like themselves (non-immigrant) on Univisión and Telemundo. Thus, while the television programming is aired in the United States, the people on these talk shows typically do not represent U.S. Latinas/os. Rojas (2004) said, "the perception of the Latinidad presented on the Hispanic television content is strongly influenced by Latinos' national origin and their class location in U.S. society" (p. 145).

The final theme that emerged was that most of the women interviewed contested the idea of the shows' abilities to promote Latina empowerment; rather they viewed the representations as promoting stereotype, violence, the Latin American patriarchal ideology, and criticized the White skin tone of the talks show hosts.

Dávila (2002) conducted a study using focus groups to interview New York-based Latinos about their views and opinions on Latino-oriented media (Spanish-language and non-Spanish-language). Television and radio were the topics most discussed (Dávila

2002). The focus groups enabled Dávila to gauge how the participants negotiated media representations of Latinidad. She examined their responses in relation to "how Latinos position themselves within the all-encompassing category of identity in which these representations are predicated" (Dávila 2002, p. 26). The focus group participants often commented on how representations of Latinos on U.S. television (Spanish and non-Spanish language) are typically White. Dávila (2002) comments on this:

> . . . on the one hand, the dominance of Mediterranean Hispanic types in Spanish TV negates and leaves no room for acknowledging Latinos' racial and ethnic diversity, while diversity is accordingly reduced to iconic and essentialist representations that are presented as 'belonging' neatly to some groups but not others. (p. 29)

While the focus group participants criticized media representations of Latinos as being too white and for not representing their heterogeneity, the participants ultimately made clear that they had "internalized, or made theirs, particular dynamics and conventions of Latinidad disseminated in the media" (Dávila 2002, p. 35). Hence, while it may be possible to contest the concept of Latinidad as represented in a medium, one may still subscribe to it in their everyday attitudes, perceptions, and even behaviors. The Dávila (2002) study also found that internalizing the dominant definition of Latinidad promoted by Spanish-language television, which involved being able to speak Spanish and having Latin American connections, led to many questioning their authenticity as Latinos (Dávila 2002).

In a study with Latina adolescent girls, Moran (2000) explored how girls use Mexican *telenovelas* (Spanish-language soap operas) in the construction of their sexuality. The research question Moran posed was "What is the role of entertainment television in Latina teenagers' understanding of romantic relationships in the United

States?" Moran (2000) research methods included content analysis, focus groups, and interviews. Moran (2000) found that the girls involved their individual values systems when interpreting the media messages. Factors integral to their values systems were culture, family, friends, and religion. Moran (2000) discovered that the girls felt that the *telenovelas* have the power to influence others positively and negatively, but they did not express that the *telenovelas* directly influenced them. Moran's (2000) analysis of the teens' interpretations of the messages in the *telenovelas* led her to conclude that the girls did not react as previous studies suggest and adopt similar behaviors to those they see on television. Rather they used the *telenovelas* to reaffirm their value systems and they judged the television characters' promiscuous behavior as wrong.

Using participant observation and in-depth interviewing, Durham (1999b) observed adolescent girls at two middle schools to understand how the peer context influences the negotiation of media and sexuality by girls of different race and classes. Many of the girls observed were Latina and many were Anglo. Durham (1999b) observed the pop-culture media references that arose during the five months and noted that all references were to television, magazines, and movies. Most of the girls at both schools subscribed to *Seventeen* and *YM* magazines. Durham (1999b) says that the most notable theme that surfaced during her research was that the girls exhibited that they understood and constantly attempted to adopt the dominant sociocultural norm of heterosexuality, and that their use of popular culture was tied to this understanding. Heterosexuality, Durham (1999b) said, was observed as the core ideology of the girls' group interactions, and it guided the girls' beliefs and behaviors.

The girls in one clique observed were categorized as underprivileged and academic underachievers, and they were all Latina. These girls most frequently used *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Glamour* magazines when putting on makeup at school. The girls compared themselves to the images in the magazines and expressed that they needed certain products that were advertised. Durham (1999b) connected familiarity and acquisition of beauty products with popularity. The girls demonstrated that they used the media for guidance in the areas of clothing and makeup and eating habits. They also appeared to highly regard images of motherhood and maternity. Teenage pregnancy was a big problem at the middle schools where the Latinas were observed, and one Latina ended up dropping out of school later in the year after she became pregnant. The girls expressed disdain toward homosexuality.

Durham (1999b) concluded that the girls adopted the dominant ideology of femininity and this was linked to their use of mass media. The peer and social context was observed to be an important factor in determining how the girls defined ideal femininity. Durham (1999b) says that individually girls may be able to more critically examine media messages, but overall, when the girls were in peer groups their ability to critically examine media messages was undermined.

Additionally, Durham (1999b) says that race and class influenced how the girls negotiated media messages and their cultures "functioned to uphold different aspects of dominant ideologies of femininity" (Durham 1999b, p. 211). There were differences in how the Latina and the Anglo girls used the media in their lives. For example, the Latinas demonstrated more interest in makeup, clothing, beautification, and maternity.

Goodman (2002) conducted a qualitative study using focus groups with Anglo women and Latinas ages 18 to 24. The women were asked to share their opinions, attitudes, and beliefs toward the body ideal pictured in magazines. Using Glaser and Strauss' constant comparative method, Goodman (2002) demonstrated that Latinas and Anglo women had primarily negotiated readings toward images of excessively thin women and mostly hegemonic readings with regard to their everyday behavior. In sum, both Latina and Anglo women criticized the ideal body shape in magazines although they desired it and took measures to achieve it. Differences between the groups of women in opinions, beliefs, and opinions toward the mediated ideal body shape may be attributed to the Hispanic culture (Goodman 2002). Regarding Latinas, "They were more critical of the mediated ideal, knowing that their physical differences excluded them from attaining the ideal and that that Latino culture and Hispanic men appreciated a more voluptuous female form" (Goodman 2002, p. 72).

Adding to Goodman's (2002) work, Pompper and Koenig (2004) conducted another study that focused on the mediated body ideal. Guided by social comparison theory, which describes the relationship between women and their motivations to mirror a mediated body image, Pompper and Koenig (2004) examined the responses of two groups of Hispanic women, who were separated by age, to the mediated body ideal found in magazines. Focus groups were comprised of women ages 18 to 35, while telephone interviews were conducted with study participants who were ages 36 and older. Using these research methods, the researchers set out to explore a sector the U.S. population largely ignored in the previous literature about media use and women—the Hispanic population.

Three research questions were central to this research: How do Hispanic women regard magazine standards of ideal body image? How might Hispanic women's perceptions of ideal body image change over time? And, what role might language and culture play in setting standards for Hispanic women's perceptions of ideal body image? The study participants were also given seven photographs and questioned about how the images related to their perceptions of ideal body image. Some of the images were extracted from Hispanic media such as *People en Español*.

Pompper and Koenig (2004) analyzed the perceptions held by the women toward body image in the media and found that the women assimilated to magazine standards. The researchers found, consistent with previous research, that the women viewed being thin as ideal, regardless of their age. The behaviors of women ages 36 and older did indicate that they strived to emulate the body ideal as much as the younger women. The researchers also found that younger women, who were mostly born in the United States, identified with images of Anglo women and tended to prefer English-language magazines, suggesting that their perception of the ideal body image was Americanized and perhaps unrealistic. Pompper and Koenig (2004) said,

> They compare their physical appearance to magazines' stylized portrayals
> and strive to achieve that image in order to fit into American society.
> Surely, attempts to conform to English-language magazines'
> representations of the "ideal" body image and U.S. social standards, while
> clinging to a cultural heritage that focuses on food and dining, creates a
> major conflict for Latinas living in the United States who in their everyday
> lives negotiate between two cultures. (p. 100)

Media Analyses of Latino Media and *Latina* Magazine. There are a few content and rhetorical analyses of Latino media and *Latina* magazine that are relevant to

my study, and these are summarized below (Calafell 2001; Calafell and Delgado 2004; Espinoza 1998; Johnson 2000; Martínez 2004).

Calafell and Delgado's (2004) essay about *Americanos*, a photographic documentary, examined Latino representations of life and cultural practices. In their essay, Calafell and Delgado (2004) demonstrate how a text is capable of projecting an imagined Latino/a community (i.e., the panethnic community) while underscoring the diversity of Latinas/os by, for instance, broadening the visual concept of what Latinas look like (Calafell and Delgado 2004). Calafell and Delgado (2004) assert that the images in *Americanos* have the power to "articulate the experiences, aspirations, and ideologies of given communities" (p. 5).

Similar to Calafell and Delgado (2004), who contend that a text may project a panethnic community, Johnson (2000) found that English-language Latina magazines, such as *Latina*, foster a panethnic identity while encouraging that Latinas preserve and promote their cultures, heritages, and traditions. Johnson used a qualitative and quantitative content analysis to examine the news and features sections of English-language Latina magazines including *Latina*. Johnson (2000) discovered that the content of these magazines is both pluralistic and assimilative in function. That is, the content is designed to sustain one's heritage or culture, while encouraging them to be members of mainstream society.

Johnson (2000) says that there are four assimilative functions of ethnic media like *Latina* magazine: promotion of Western consumption, focus on individual change, focus on the future, and socializing to the modern. She lists as pluralistic functions of ethnic media: preservation and transmission of ethnic culture, promotion of ethnic pride,

symbolic ethnicity and unification of subgroups, respite from general market media, and culture transmission to non-ethnic groups.

In her rhetorical analysis of *Latina* magazine and another English-language Latina magazine, Espinoza (1998) is guided by Rosaldo's (1994) theory of Latina cultural citizenship. Espinoza (1998) contends that *Latina* and *Moderna* magazines create a space for "Latina cultural citizenship" or Latinisma. Specifically, Espinoza discusses how these magazines "serve as a site for construction, negotiation, contestation, and affirmation of Latina identity—an identity which resonates with a panethnic Latina population in the United States" (Espinoza 1998, p. 6-7). In her analysis section of *Latina* and *Moderna* magazines, Espinoza (1998) describes each magazine's content and general layout. Espinoza then discusses certain themes: health, family, contemporary social issues, beauty/fashion, and career. Identifying these themes and citing specific articles under the umbrella of these themes leads Espinoza (1998) to assert that these magazines are "crafting a Latina cultural identity—Latinisma" (p. 59). She said that the articles are culturally sensitive and therefore, call to Latinas. In her conclusion section, Espinoza (1998) said that these magazines are a form of cultural production that indicate the first-steps toward Latina representation as compared to the past when Latinas were virtually non-existent in the media or continually portrayed negatively. She repeatedly says that these magazines are beginning to articulate a Latina identity. Espinoza (1998) takes a positive stance toward the magazines. For instance, Espinoza (1998) said that the magazines empower Latinas.

> As cultural forms of production, the magazines contribute to the development and evolution of an emerging Latina consciousness—a consciousness that allows Latinas to incorporate themselves into society and maintain their Latina identity at the same time. As Rosaldo's (1994)

theory suggests, the creation of a "cultural citizenship" can then be characterized as a means to create agency through empowerment. (pp. 62-63)

Espinoza (1998) also asserts that *Latina* is a counter-hegemonic text (p. 63), meaning the magazine attempts to resist the hegemonic ideas of the dominant classes, and that it allows Latinas an opportunity to become more visible in U.S. society and to create agency (p. 65). Espinoza's (1998) thesis in contrast to my study, does not explore how Latinas themselves negotiate *Latina* magazine, which is essential to understanding its intended reading audience, how the reading audience's view of Latinidad and their identities line up with that of the magazine producers', and if their newfound representation is something viewed as positive or negatively by Latinas.

In her study of *Latina* magazine, Martínez (2004) incorporates a textual analysis of six years' worth of articles and interviews with the editorial staff. Martínez (2004) focuses on how *Latina* magazine invokes a panethnic Latino community via familial identification and panethnic solidarity with Latino entertainment figures. Martínez (2004) says that the magazine serves a purpose that mainstream magazines do not; *Latina* critiques exclusionary practices in the U.S. entertainment industry and challenges stereotypes of Latino men. The magazine also glorifies Latinos in the entertainment industry and uses them as "tools that facilitate the emergence of a cultural citizenship" to connect with readers, creating the familial bond. Martínez (2004) argues that although the magazine's marketing and advertising goals have steered the content into an entertainment-focused arena, the magazine should not be dismissed as it does serve to reconstruct Latino images and address problems of representation.

Martínez's (2004) exploration of *Latina* magazine's construction of Latinidad leads her to argue that readers are left with a decision: Latinas can use a magazine like *Latina* to affirm a "positive self-definition to advocate for the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for all members of their panethnic family" or they can "blindly celebrate social membership that is equated with the consumption of goods" (p. 171).

In one of the few content analyses that exists using *Latina* magazine, Calafell (2001), in a qualitative textual analysis, determined that the text empowers Latinas. However, Calafell (2001) also contends that the text is rife with contradiction and that this may negate positive and accurate characterizations and representations of Latinas. For example, *Latina* magazine encourages Latinas to proudly own their brownness and their curvy figures, yet advertisements and even the fashion pages designed by the producers of the magazine portray very thin women with skin tones that one would hardly consider brown. According to Calafell (2001), the image of what is Latina as conveyed by *Latina* magazine marginalizes Latinas who do not fit the mold. Calafell (2001) is a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Chicana. She says that there are Latinas, like herself, who do not fit the paradigm of Latina beauty as defined by *Latina* magazine. Calafell (2001) also acknowledges that *Latina* magazine reflects the cultural tug and pull that Latinas may experience as a result of being Latin American and U.S. American.

Outside of physical appearance, Calafell (2001) acknowledges that *Latina* magazine characterizes Latinas as women who are concerned with cultural and familial expectations; Latinas' identities are shaped by expectations related to their sexuality and religion. Calafell (2001) cites examples from *Latina* magazine in which authors discuss

the struggle between the desire to assume non-traditional roles influenced by U.S. society and conforming to traditional roles as mothers, martyrs, and devoted wives (Calafell 2001, p. 26). Calafell (2001) said, "We are bombarded with media images, historical images, and cultural images that define what we should be as Latinas. Many of these racist and stereotypical images have been created and maintained by the dominant society" (p. 39). Calafell (2001) says that *Latina* magazine does promote ideas similar to that of the Chicano movement, which began in the mid-1960s and served to empower Latinas/os; yet, she said, "much of the underlying sentiment is still informed by dominant White standards" (p. 39). Theories on such dominant standards or ideology guide my study.

Theoretical Considerations

To better understand how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine, my study is informed by theories on ideology and literature about audience interpretation of media texts.

Cultural studies. Cultural studies dates back to the Frankfurt School when, during the early-to-mid 20th century, theorists in Germany began to analyze and criticize the mass production of culture via media forms and the sociological and ideological effects these media had on society (Kellner 1995). After the Frankfurt School slowed in its development of significant theoretical media culture models in the 1950 and 1960s, British cultural studies came to the forefront of media culture studies with the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in England (Hall 1980; Kellner 1995).

The British view of cultural studies differed from the Frankfurt School in that everything was not reduced to economics and class; rather, social relations became an

important factor in cultural studies (Curran et al. 1982). Race, gender, ethnicity, and class began to be analyzed as well (Kellner 1995). As a result of the Birmingham School, cultural studies became interdisciplinary, factoring in other fields like sociology, politics, history, literary and cultural theory, philosophy, and economics (Kellner 1995, p. 27). In sum, cultural studies address at how the interpretation of a text may have been influenced by societal and cultural factors (Labre 2004, p. 50).

Cultural studies investigates the desire people have to consume media texts and the meanings and pleasures the texts generate within people's belief systems (Lindlof and Taylor 2002, p. 59). A prominent exemplar that demonstrates how women derive pleasure from a medium is the work of Janice Radway (1984).

In a study of women reading romance novels, Radway (1984) found that housewives viewed their readings as an escape and as a way to assert their independence. A cultural studies perspective requires taking a critical stance in terms of why women experience pleasure when consuming a mass medium. A pleasureful reading of a popular text may result from identifying with the content, but Kellner (1995) says that experiencing such enjoyment from reading a text is not completely innocent or without consequence. Kellner (1995) said, "Pleasures . . . should thus be problematized . . . and interrogated as to whether they contribute to the production of a better life and society, or help trap us into modes of everyday life that ultimately oppress and degrade us" (p. 39). Similarly, McCracken (1993) said that "the attractive experiences are ideologically weighted and not simply innocent arenas of pleasure . . . along with the pleasure come messages that encourage insecurities, heighten gender stereotypes, and urge reifying definitions of the self through consumer goods" (p. 8-9).

Hence, cultural studies emphasizes the ways in which the media serve to advance the interests of dominant groups and how the media act as tools of empowerment and resistance against the dominant groups (Kellner 1995, p. 31). The struggle between dominant and subordinate groups—the dominant group typically being upper-class, White-males and the subordinate typically people of color, women, and/or people of lower economic status—is highlighted in cultural studies (Kellner 1995; Lindlof and Taylor 2002, p. 58). According to Morley (1992), different groups in a society are vying for the "'power to define' events and values," and these power relations influence individuals' meaning construction (p. 91).

In sum, the media are viewed as ideological tools for upholding the views and values of dominant, hegemonic powers (Kellner 1995). Italian Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci (1971) is often credited with developing a notion of hegemony, which describes how one dominant, social class can rule over others through political or ideological means (Gramsci 1971; Kellner 1995). In line with Gramsci, Gough-Yates (2003) defines hegemony as "a situation in which a class or class faction is able to secure a moral, cultural, intellectual (and thereby political) leadership in society through an ongoing process of ideological struggle and compromise" (p. 9). Thus, the values of the dominant class are projected through the media and "others" accept that view as natural or the norm, and this subordinates them (Kellner 1995).

Relating the concept of hegemony to the media, Morley's (1992) definition of hegemony links how audiences construct meaning from texts to the hierarchies of the society in which they live. This is why Kellner (1995) says that media researchers should examine a text and the "culture and society that constitutes the text" (Kellner 1995, p.

28). The hegemonic view of the dominant class is believed to infuse media content and to interpellate (i.e., hail) media audiences as their subjects (Althusser 1971; Caputi 1999; Curran et al. 1982). That is to say, media messages attempt to speak directly to audiences, influencing them to subscribe to the messages and manipulating their attitudes and behaviors. When the media interpellate media audiences, cultural studies purports that the media have contradictory effects on the audiences. That is, the media may simultaneously oppress, subordinate, and marginalize while serving as an ally or a voice for oppressed groups or those considered other (e.g., people of color or women) (Kellner 1995).

How the media may serve as an ally for those considered other is similar to counter-hegemony. Counter-hegemonic practices encourage resistance and struggle against dominant groups (Hall 1980; Kellner 1995, p. 31). Counter-hegemonic alternatives (e.g., feminism or socialism) describe the forces that contest hegemony or the dominant ideology. Hence, a text may encourage individuals of an inferior group to fight the expectations of a superior group. For example, a feminist magazine may encourage women to fight the expectations of patriarchal society. In sum, counter-hegemonic practices serve to shatter the common-sense knowledge created by hegemony.

Ideology. Ideology is our collective understanding of what is the norm or common-sensical. Antonio Gramsci (1971) broadly defines ideology as a specific "system of ideas" (p. 376). But ideology is clearly more complex than the above definition. There is no one "unified and stable" dominant ideology; rather, ideology is constructed of the core assumptions in a culture or society that make certain beliefs, values, and way of life seem normal or "common-sensical" (Kellner 1995, p. 58).

Ideology is of central importance to cultural studies because dominant ideologies are said to reproduce social relations of domination and subordination (Hall 1980; Kellner 1995). Ruling or dominant ideology refers to the ruling ideas or standards of society that revolve around the ruling classes and institutions (Althusser 1971; Hall 1982). In the United States, for example, White men hold the most power and capitalism thrives. Hence, the ruling ideas and standards are those supported by the Caucasian race, patriarchy, and capitalism.

Ideology came to the forefront of cultural studies through the work of the Frankfurt School, Antonio Gramsci, and other scholars in the 1920s and through the work of British cultural theorists (Kellner 1995). Karl Marx first approached ideology as media manipulation. Gledhill (1997) said of Marx's view, "those groups who own the means of production thereby control the means of producing and circulating a society's ideas" (p. 347). The Marxian tradition was to characterize ideology as the ideas of the ruling class that advanced their goals (Kellner 1995). For Marxists, ideology is about upholding an economic base (Ballaster et al. 1991). "Hence, ideology is always dictated by dominant material interests," say Ballaster et al. (1991).

Another figure to consider when dissecting the concept of ideology is Louis Althusser, a French Marxist philosopher. Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology accounts for how the ruling or hegemonic classes or institutions perpetuate our consent to the dominant ideology. Althusser's (1971) perspective revolves around the State (i.e., the government or legal system) and the subject (i.e., the citizen). According to Althusser (1971), citizens of a State understand the rules of their government and behave accordingly. They do so because of Repressive State Apparatuses (e.g., the police) and

Ideological State Apparatuses (e.g., schools, mass media, and religion), which work together to ensure that people behave accordingly. Repressive States Apparatuses are the forces (e.g., justice systems) that enforce people's behavior directly. In other words, our physical behavior is dictated by Repressive State Apparatuses. Ideological State Apparatuses are the institutions that corral us into understandings of how society works or of what is normal, and these institutions help us to form our belief systems. Although Althusser (1971) notes that the ideological State apparatuses are in the private sphere, he still stresses that they buttress the agenda of the State (Althusser 1971). Both the Repressive States Apparatuses and the Ideological State Apparatuses work together to get us to submit to dominant ideology, but the Repressive State Apparatuses are more physically compelling than the Ideological State Apparatuses, which sort of will us into submission. Yet, the Repressive State Apparatuses like the police are not necessary for securing consent; the ideological structures are powerful enough (Gramsci 1971).

Ideology has the power to enlist people into certain belief systems. Hence, according to Althusser, we come to understand reality via messages of media institutions which may reflect the ideologies of other institutions. Similarly, Gramsci's perspective on ideology is that it is "essentially mystificatory, functioning to mask inequality and injustice" (Ballaster et al. 1991, p. 19).

Again, this perspective of ideology and media institutions as architects of reality is similar to Tuchman's (1978) reflection hypothesis, which holds that the media representations we believe reflect reality actually reflect the values of the dominant forces. Ideology is an imaginary representation that we understand in the context of our realities (Althusser 1971). We never know what is real objectively because our realities

are constructed on the basis of our surroundings. Therefore, what is real to us is based on

our perceptions of reality, which are influenced by Ideological State Apparatuses like the

media.

We may feel compelled conform to this false reflection of reality, and we do this

unconsciously, says Althusser (1971), as do the media. The media are not forced to

articulate the social norms that favor the hegemonic powers (Hall 1980); rather, it is the

consensus of the majority or dominant groups that guide and possibly subconsciously

pressure media producers to articulate such norms that ultimately marginalize and

oppress the others (i.e., non-Whites). Gough-Yates (2003) said that women's magazines

studies informed by Althusser viewed women's magazines as

> "closed texts" that imprisoned their women readers within a dominant set
> of ideologies. For some, such an approach offered an overly pessimistic
> account of readers' relationships with their magazines, reducing the text to
> little more than an agent in the service of patriarchal capitalism. (p. 9)

But for some researchers the audience was active. That is to say, media texts do

not have the power to imprison women readers.

The active audience. Historically, the lived experiences of magazine readers

were not often considered in the realm of cultural studies, which mostly focused on

representation and meaning (McRobbie 1996). However, the Birmingham School

stressed the importance of the audience and, as a result, cultural studies scholars are

concerned with how an audience may interpret a text (Curran et al. 1982; McQuail 1994).

Typically, audience research focused on how the media wielded ideological

domination via economic and class interests. However, contemporary perspectives

regarding media audiences differ from those of the past, which assumed that audiences

were passive absorbers of media messages (Morley 1992). The contemporary view is to

approach the media audience as an audience that does not passively absorb whatever messages the media spit out. At the same time, the contemporary perspective is to not award the media audience too much power; the audience does not have that much power when it comes to interpreting and negotiating a text (Morley 1992).

According to Gough-Yates (2003), in the 1980s, textually based approaches to women's magazine research evolved from solely looking at texts as ideological tools to incorporating the Gramscian theory of hegemony, which approached women's magazines as sites where women's oppression was debated and negotiated not just reinforced (p. 10). Such debating and negotiating implies that the media audience is active.

Audience-reception studies indicate that individuals may interpret a media message in multiple ways (Alasuutari, 1999; Duke 2000; Goodman 2002; Morley 1992). Readers absorb what they read, see, or hear; apply their prior knowledge, opinions, and beliefs to that information; and form their own opinions about the text (MacLachlan and Reid 1994). Philo (2001) said, "Some people believe and accept the message, others reject knowledge from their own experience or can use processes of logic of other rationales to criticise what is being said" (p. 26). Gough-Yates (2003) adds that another reason to consider reader agency is that there has been a shift in the awareness of women readers. That is to say, some magazine readers may be more accustomed to critically reading magazines because of their educations (Gough-Yates 2003).

An individual's reading of a text may differ from another's based on his or her social context making the message polysemic, meaning it is open to multiple interpretations (Durham 1999a; Fiske 1986; Hall 1982; McQuail 1994; Philo 1999). However, Kitzinger (1999) points out that just because an audience may interpret a text

in a variety of ways, that does not mean that the media are without influence or

ineffectual (Kitzinger 1999). Preexisting beliefs are powerful, yet "the 'active' audience

is not immune from influence" (Kitzinger 1999, p. 19). In sum, contemporary audience-

based studies view the media as powerful, but the audience still retains agency.

The work of Stuart Hall is appropriate when looking at the active audience

(Alasuutari 1999). Hall's (1979) encoding/decoding model purports to show that

the producers of a message encode it with a preferred meaning and that the

receivers of the message decode it, or interpret it, albeit often in a myriad of ways.

The receiver of the message will assume the dominant hegemonic position, a

negotiated position, or an oppositional position. Hall's (1979) encoding/decoding

model was developed with power in mind; the media exerted power and influence

over an audience by encoding preferred meaning into products to promote the

dominant ideology (Alasuutari 1999).

The dominant hegemonic position indicates that a reader has accepted what he or

she has read just as the text's producers intended; it is a preferred reading (Alasuutari

1999; Hall 1979). The reader does not question the media message. The dominant

hegemonic position or a preferred reading indicates that the audience interpretation is

predetermined, and receivers of the message accept the dominant ideology with which

the message is encoded without question (Duke 2000).

Hall's (1979) notion that texts' readings can be dominant or hegemonic is similar

to McRobbie's findings using the British magazine *Jackie!*, which was one of the first

studies (1978) to claim that magazines transmitted ideological messages to readers.

McRobbie (1978) said that *Jackie!* "is merely a mouthpiece for ruling class ideology" (p.

5). McRobbie (1989) also credited popular publications with the power to "define and shape the woman's world, spanning from every stage of childhood to old age" (p. 203).

However, studies that have been conducted since Hall (1979) and McRobbie's (1978) give credence that audiences are active (Goodman 2002). Hall (1982) acknowledged that media came to be viewed as not as influential as previously thought, and McRobbie (1997) acknowledged that some teen women's magazines promote not just dominant, negative ideology but self-confidence. One might argue that the dominant hegemonic position harkens back to the era of "cultural dupes" that audiences were once believed to be.

Most people experience negotiated readings (Alasuutari 1999). In the negotiated position, the reader criticizes the dominant or institutional ideology, although they accept it (Goodman 2002; Hall 1979). MacLachlan and Reid (1994) said, "Writer and reader are engaged (albeit unconsciously) in a power struggle through which each tries to control interpretation of the text" (p. 109). Morley (1992) said that when there is a negotiated reading, "the decoder may take the meaning broadly as encoded, but by relating his/her position and interests, the reader may modify or partially inflect the given preferred reading" (p. 89). For example, readers of women's magazines may criticize how thin the models are even though they aspire to be thin and take measure to achieve thinness (Goodman 2002). This supports Frazer's (1997) view, which holds that readers are not passive and that ideological messages do not simply infiltrate every reader of women's magazines. Rather, when young women read magazines, it is their interaction with the textual content and with their peers that causes them to create meaning.

Currie (1997) formed an interesting sort of middle ground when she analyzed how

teenage women read advertisements in magazines and how they negotiated "what it

means to be a woman" (p. 453). Currie (1997) said that women who read magazines are

not "cultural dupes" as McRobbie originally suggested, however, they do not have the

power to reject completely reject or remain unaffected by what they read and see in

magazines (p. 474).

When readers adopt the oppositional position, they reject the producer's inherent

message (defy the ideology) in favor of their own alternative meaning (Goodman 2002;

Hall 1979. Morley (1992) said, "the decoder may recognize how the message has been

contextually encoded, but may bring to bear an alternative frame of reference which sets

to one side the encoded framework and superimposes on the message an interpretation

which works in a directly 'oppositional' way" (p. 89). Take, for example, a woman who

is presented with the image of a thin model in a magazine. Rather than adopt the

hegemonic attitude and desire thinness, she will recognize that the industry idealizes

thinness because it is associated with positive social characteristics (Goodman 2002).

This ability to resist media messages has been addressed by scholars (Duke 2000;

Durham 1999a; Frazer 1987). According to Durham (1999a),

> There is a paucity of studies wherein girls' spoken voices are heard . . . but
> what there is provides little evidence that any girls are able to engage in
> what Hall classified as oppositional readings of media messages--readings
> that completely reject and change the dominant ideology carried in the
> message. (p. 220)

It should be noted that Durham (1999a) bases her judgment on her study of

adolescent female readers of texts and resistance to media messages as related to the

patriarchal popular culture. According to Durham (1999a), being of adolescent age means

these young women are not able assume the oppositional position when faced with media messages. However, a later study by Durham (2004) revealed that some adolescents were able to read somewhat oppositionally. On the other hand, one might argue that older audiences are better able to resist media messages. Gough-Yates (2003) said of older audiences, "Keen magazine readers themselves, they were frequently graduates of university degree courses that had encouraged a critical understanding of media texts" (p. 17).

In terms of my study, which seeks to understand how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina, audience-based theories suggest that readers will interpret the magazine's content in a variety of ways. Each woman's cultural and social experiences will influence how they negotiate the messages in *Latina* magazine. Their experiences are influenced by the society in which they live in, and that society already has certain ideas about what it means to be Latina. Therefore, the context in which these readings take place—U.S. society—is important.

Additionally, in line with Hall's (1979) encoding/decoding model, when women read *Latina* magazine, they will accept the *Latina*'s ideology as reflecting reality and subscribe to the messages in the magazine, disagree with or criticize the ideology but still subscribe to it, or reject the ideology and the messages in the magazine.

CHAPTER 3
METHOD

This section describes the focus group as the primary means of qualitative data

collection for my study; it details the research design; summarizes the magazine content

used in the research and the moderator's guide; and explains the method of analysis.

The Focus Group

The focus group is a method of collecting data that has been used in the social

sciences for decades, often in marketing and politics when firms or consultants are

interested in how people respond to media messages or products (Lindlof and Taylor

2002, pp. 181-182). Morgan (1997) offers a broad definition of the focus group

describing it as a "research technique that collects data through group interaction on a

topic determined by the researcher" (p. 6). The key to the focus group is group interaction

(Lindlof and Taylor 2002). During the focus group, a structured group interview allows

for group interaction among focus group participants (Morgan 1997). As opposed to a

one-on-one interview in which the researcher interviews one subject at a time, once the

researcher poses a question to a group, participants discuss the topic freely among one

another. It is natural that the responses of the focus group participants will play off of one

another. As a result of this group interaction, a group effect may ensue (Lindlof and

Taylor 2002). That is, being in a group may influence how participants respond to the

topic at hand, for instance, the depth of their responses. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) said,

"In the group context, the members are stimulated by ideas and experiences expressed by

each other. What occurs is a kind of 'chaining' or 'cascading' effect—talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it" (p. 182).

The focus group may be used as a self-contained research method, meaning it is the primary means of collecting data, or as a supplementary method, meaning the data collected via the focus group is supplemental to other methods of research. My study uses the focus group as a self-contained method because it is not a preliminary nor an exploratory research method to be backed up with other methods (Morgan 1997, p. 18).

Advantages and disadvantages of using focus groups. As a qualitative research method, the focus group has many benefits. As previously mentioned, a focus group instigates group interaction in a reasonably naturalistic setting, which spurs greater insight into the research question. Focus groups also allow for the observation of group dynamics such as how being part of a group setting influences attitude formation and attitude change. The researcher may gain insight into how participants negotiate issues with one another. Another advantage is that intergroup comparisons of participant point of view, attitude, and motivation are made possible with focus groups. In addition, the focus group moderator has the power to keep the conversation on track so that the most relevant information can be attained in a short amount of time (Morgan 1997).

As opposed to other methods of data collection such as surveys, the focus group allows the researcher to question participants about unanticipated topics. Freedom to posit follow-up questions or unanticipated, relevant topics may lead a researcher to a more thorough understanding of the research topic. In addition, in the focus group setting, sensitive topics may be broached with greater ease than during a one-on-one interview

(Lindlof and Taylor 2002), especially if focus group participants share similarities, whether in sex, ethnicity, age, experiences or other traits.

On the other hand, the very presence of a group may negatively influence how one responds during a focus group session. For example, one may feel she must conform to the views of other participants (Morgan 1997). Thus, there are also disadvantages to using the focus group as the primary means of collecting qualitative data. There is not only of the possibility of participant conformity but also of polarization, which is when a participant expresses extreme views more so than she would outside of the group setting (Morgan 1997, p. 15). Also, there is the possibility that participants would not feel comfortable speaking up in a group setting (Morgan 1997).

Another weakness of the focus group is, when compared to another method of research, the individual interview, the focus group may obtain less depth and detail. As opposed to a one-on-one interview in which the researcher talks in-depth with a subject, a researcher who is moderating a focus group comprised of 10 participants will find that participants do not have the opportunity to say as much as they would during a one-on-one interview. Additionally, because the focus group moderator is steering the discussion, this type of research method is less naturalistic than, for instance, observation. Steering the discussion may be difficult for a focus group moderator, especially if the focus group is large or if opinions are divergent.

Research Design

According to Morgan (1997), a simple test for determining whether the focus group is an appropriate research method is to "ask how actively and easily participants would discuss the topic of interest" (p. 17). It was predicted that the women who would choose to participate in the focus groups for my study would be willing to voice their

opinions, and therefore, the focus group would be an appropriate method of research for my study.

Of course, there are more issues to consider when planning and preparing for focus groups. Planning and preparing for focus groups are time-consuming and sometimes costly ventures. There are three major factors to consider when planning a focus group, says Morgan (1997). The first involves ethical concerns. However, privacy issues were tackled early on in the preparation of focus groups when the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) approved the protocol. In addition, all focus group participants read and signed the approved informed consent, which specified that their responses will remain anonymous and that the audio and video recording of the sessions will be kept securely in the home of the researcher.

The second major factor involves budget issues (Morgan 1997). In comparison to focus groups held for non-academic purposes, this study was not very expensive. Still, there was no outside source of funding to aid in this study, so an inexpensive method of research was required. The major costs involved purchasing audio recording equipment and providing $5 compensation to each focus group participant and food and beverages. It was determined that compensation should be provided to facilitate recruitment of participants.

The third factor to consider when planning focus groups involves time constraints (Morgan 1997). In academic research, time constraints may be personal to the researcher and his or her thesis committee. Time may be constrained if the researcher works alone on the project and divides her time between the research and other commitments.

After weighing the ethical, budgetary, and time factors and the advantages and the disadvantages of the focus group as a method of research, it was decided that interviewing many women at once would be a suitable method of research.

Next, and of great importance to consider, is how the data will be collected (Morgan 1997). This stage of the planning process involves determining who will be recruited for participation in the focus groups, the structure of the sessions, the level of moderator involvement, the ideal number of participants for each group, and the number of focus groups that will take place (Morgan 1997).

Selection of participants. The focus group participants in this study were self-identified Latinas. The demographic composition of the focus groups was designed to be as similar to the demographic composition of *Latina* magazine readership; however, women were required to be at least 18 years of age to facilitate IRB approval. Because *Latina* magazine readership is comprised of women of all ages, no cap was put on how old participants could be, although it was assumed that most participants would be between the ages of 18 and 24, the typical ages of students in a university setting. Each focus group was homogenous because each group was comprised of women of similar ethnic backgrounds (i.e., self-identified Latinas).

The goal of this study was not to achieve generalizations about Latinas but to receive a range of opinions that would aid in answering the research question. The findings would then be applicable only to the sample used in the study, although it was predicted that the theory that would emerge would be applicable to future studies about Latinas and the media.

Theoretical sampling was implemented in this study because the research was driven by theoretical inquiry (Lindlof and Taylor 2002). Theoretical sampling is used when the researcher theorizes that a specific sample will satisfy the research question (Lindlof and Taylor 2002). Hence, to answer the question of how Latinas feel about *Latina* magazine, participants were selected if they met two requirements: (1) participants were required to consider themselves Latina and (2) participants were required to be at least 18 years of age (although this had more to do with facilitating IRB approval than answering the research question). The sample was homogeneous in that it was comprised of Latinas. Although the sample was homogeneous, the participants did represent various nationalities, language abilities, ages, and Latin American cultural exposures and experiences. Such a group composition was sought after because it was predicted that these women would have something to say about *Latina* magazine and about being Latina. Additionally, it was predicted that they would feel comfortable discussing the topic amongst other Latinas (Morgan 1997).

Prior knowledge of or familiarity with *Latina* magazine was neither required nor necessary because participants were presented with the text before they were asked to comment on it. Nevertheless, to account for the possibility that *Latina* magazine readers may having differing opinions from that of non-*Latina* magazine readers, an attempt was made to separate *Latina* readers from non-*Latina* readers. To segment the sample in such a way proved to be a difficult process that did not work. The reason being, for instance, a non-*Latina* magazine reader would only be able to commit to the *Latina*-readers focus group sessions because of schedule conflicts. Thus, the option of refusing a potential focus group participant the opportunity to participate at all because she could not make

the proper session was not desirable, and mixing *Latina* magazine readers with non-readers proved more efficient for gaining the ideal number of participants.

In addition, once potential participants showed interest in contributing to a focus group session, an attempt to separate them into groups designated by generation was made and is outlined as follows: first-generation Latinas, or those born in the United States who have at least one parent considered Latin American in one group, and second-generation Latinas, or those born to at least one Latino parent and Latin American-born women in another group. Segmenting the population in this manner also proved to eliminate participants all together, so this strategy was eliminated.

Nevertheless, a questionnaire presented to the women at the beginning of the focus groups enabled the researcher to obtain knowledge about who read *Latina* magazine and who was first, second, and so on, generation Latinas.

Recruiting. Two weeks before the focus groups were held, e-mails, phone calls, and in-person requests were used to recruit Latinas from a major university. Information about the focus groups was e-mailed to university-affiliated listservs, such as those in connection with the Hispanic/Latino organizations and sororities. Phone calls, e-mails, and in-person requests were made to Hispanic/Latino organizations and sororities so that during organization meetings, leaders could inform members about the focus groups. Advertising to recruit Latinas was vague enough so as not to give away the purpose of the study. The main line of the flyer and e-mail read, "Seeking Latinas to participate in focus groups."

Recruiting materials that were posted and e-mailed specified that Latinas would receive $5 compensation and free food and beverages for participating. An incentive of

$25 was offered to Hispanic/Latino organizations and sororities if they could provide participants, but no organizations accepted the offer.

When potential participants expressed interest, follow-ups were made via e-mail and telephone to remind potential participants of the dates and time of the focus group sessions. Participants were over-recruited to account for possible no-shows (Morgan 1997, p. 42). The strategy was to over-recruit by 20% to make up for possible no-shows. Typically, 90% will show (R. Goodman, personal communication, February 17, 2004).

Size of groups. Ideally, focus groups are comprised of six to 12 participants (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Morgan 1997). Less than six may hinder a sustainable discussion, and with more than 12, some participants may not have an opportunity to speak, they may talk over one another, or have side conversations (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Morgan 1997). In the event that greater than 12 potential participants showed, the last ones to appear were to be given a list of questions to answer in writing away from the group. Fortunately, focus groups for my study did not exceed eight participants.

Number of groups. Using the "rule-of-thumb," it was decided before the first focus group took place that a minimum of three focus groups would be conducted (Morgan 1997, p. 43). Yet, to reach theoretical saturation, more groups were planned just in case. Theoretical saturation occurs when a researcher realizes that no new information is being obtained and it is decided that additional focus groups will not result in new ideas (Morgan 1997). For my study, theoretical saturation was achieved using three focus groups. The focus groups were conducted for three consecutive days in a one-week period in February 2005.

Structure. Each focus group was highly structured so that each question in the moderator's guide was answered thoroughly. Each focus group lasted 90 minutes to two hours, which is typical of focus groups (Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Morgan 1997). Participants were informed of the anticipated time length. The focus groups were structured similarly so that each group discussed the same topics. Structuring the sessions similarly allows the data collected to be comparable across all groups (Morgan 1997).

An assistant moderator was present at two out of the three focus groups to pass out materials, assist with late-comers, operate audio, video and projection equipment, run last-minute or emergency errands, and to take notes. It was determined that an assistant moderator would not be necessary for the third focus group. Before the focus group sessions, the expectations for the structure of the focus groups were outlined for the assistant moderator.

During the focus groups, the moderator and assistant moderator said as little as possible so that participants discussed the topics freely. Participants were informed that they were expected to have a free-flowing conversation amongst one another. They were also told that they were not expected to direct their answers back to the moderator. The moderator asked questions scripted in the moderator's guide and unanticipated relevant or follow-up questions when they were warranted. Successful focus groups are those in which participants initiate issues the researcher did not anticipate (Morgan 1997). Prompt questions were used when participants did not initiate responses that were most relevant to the research.

Given the provocative and debatable nature of the topics at hand and combination of focus group participants (e.g., Cuban-American, Colombian, Dominican-American,

etc.), the group effect sought during these focus groups was argumentative interaction. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe argumentative interaction as consisting of differing and clashing opinions based on various personal experiences. This type of interaction is beneficial because researchers are able to gain insight into what factors influence Latinas' interpretations and how they form their points of view about the articles presented to them during the focus groups (Lindlof and Taylor 2002).

Equipment. Most of the participants were expected to be local students; therefore, an area on the university campus was sought because this area was thought to be most convenient for the participants. The study site for the focus groups was a conference room on the university campus where computer and audio recording equipment could be assembled. This room has a bare, white wall to project the pages of the magazine. The area accommodates at least 12 people and allowed the participants to sit in a circle, facing one another. Such a seating arrangement was ideal because it allowed for a more intimate and conversational setting.

This setting also allowed for the audio recording equipment to be placed in close proximity to the participants so that it could record the conversations clearly. Audio recording equipment was placed in the middle of a conference room table where the participants sat. Each participant was informed via the IRB consent form that their names would not be attributed to any information that they provided. A written seating chart was made that identified each participant by name, age and country of family origin (e.g., Danielle, 23, Puerto Rican) so as to keep track of the participants and their responses.

Interview content. As participants entered the conference room to take part in the focus group, they were given a questionnaire. They were asked to provide their name, e-

mail address, phone number, age, major in school, hometown, nationality, whether they were first-generation, second-generation, etc. Latina, parents' educational levels, whether they read *Latina* magazine, and a list of other magazines they read. Questionnaires were used to get a sense of who comprised the groups and to make connections as to why they felt the way they did. For example, if most of the women in the focus groups felt a certain way about an issue, it may be attributed to the fact that they have mostly highly educated parents or are mostly Cuban-American (Morgan 1997).

Once everyone was seated and the questionnaires completed, introductory remarks were made regarding who the moderators were and why the participants were there (see Appendix A). Guidelines and expectations were expressed. For example, it was explained that there were no right or wrong answers, side conversations were to be avoided, they did not have to raise their hands to speak, and the moderators present were observers to their discussion. Participant confidentiality was stressed. They were asked to remain on a first-name basis during the sessions.

Next, participants were informed about the contents of a large envelope they were given. Each envelope contained six photocopied articles from *Latina* magazine. Giving the participants the pages extracted from the magazine, rather than reading the excerpts aloud to them, allowed them to see, read, and comprehend the text in English and in Spanish and at their own pace. Participants were also told that two of the six articles would be projected from a color transparency onto the wall in front of them. The purpose of projecting the color copies were so that they could see more accurately how the women pictured in the articles look in the magazine.

The photocopied excerpts from *Latina* magazine were used as an autodriving technique to stimulate discussion (McCracken 1988). According to McCracken (1988), autodriving is a technique that requires that participants be provided with a stimulus (e.g., a text) to elicit response. It should be noted that autodriving is a term frequently used to refer to photo elicitation, which is a qualitative method that involves introducing photographs into the interview context to provoke a response (Clark-Ibáñez 2004). According to Collier (1979), photo elicitation has proved useful because "picture interviews were flooded with encyclopeaedic community information whereas in the exclusively verbal interviews, communication difficulties and memory blocks inhibited the flow of information (p. 281). Citing one of his studies, Collier (1979) said that when showing pictures an interview can go on indefinitely as long as new stimuli are shown. In contrast, when doing an interview without such stimuli, interviewees seem to run out of responses. In sum, this study would not be possible without the aid of excerpted images and text from *Latina* magazine.

Finally, each participant introduced herself and said where she was from, what nationality she identified with, her parents or grandparents country of origin, and whether she read *Latina* magazine.

After introductory remarks were made, the participants were taken through an eight-step interview process (see Appendix B). First, the participants were asked about their general impressions of Latinas in the media today such as in magazines, television, movies and advertisements. The purpose of asking this general question was to get a sense of how they perceived the media as portraying Latinas. The participants were asked about their impressions of mainstream mass media and Spanish-language media to see if

they perceived there to be differences in how Latinas are portrayed in both types of media. When they did not address how these Latinas look or act in the media, they were prompted to address these questions.

Second, the participants were questioned about their impressions of Latinas in women's fashion magazines. They were prompted about what Latinas the magazines feature the most, what these magazines have to say about these women, and how the Latinas look in the fashion magazines.

Next, the participants were introduced to *Latina* magazine. Any content shown during the group was chosen carefully because of its relationship to the research question of how Latinas negotiate the magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina. For example, these articles addressed what Latinas look like, their attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors, and how they perceive themselves in U.S. society.

Next, the participants were introduced the inside content of *Latina* magazine. They were shown a total of six articles from the magazine. The first article read by the participants was from *Latina* magazine's beauty section, and it described different makeup trends and how to apply makeup. The second article was excerpted from the fashion pages of *Latina* magazine. Each month, this front-of-the-book section is devoted to dressing real Latinas (i.e., not fashion models) and to discussing what looks they prefer for their body shapes. Name and country of origin identifies the women pictured.

The third article addressed the positive aspects of biculturalism. The fourth article discussed relations and expectations in Latino families. The fifth article spoke of religion and the relation of Catholic saints to indigenous goddesses. And the sixth, brief article encouraged Latinas to keep up a Latin American tradition of linking surnames once

married. There are two main reasons for choosing these articles: First, the topic, tone, and

purpose of these articles set them apart from articles in other women's magazines.

Second, these articles are suitable for a discussion of how Latinas negotiate the

magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina because these articles appear to be

attempting to reflect and define what it means to be Latina.

They were told they had a few minutes to read through each excerpt. After each

article, the participants were asked about their thoughts and opinions about the article.

Additionally, they were often prompted with the questions, "How does this article

resonate your experiences in life?" "How does this article reflect the Latina experience?"

"Is this article positive or negative, helpful or not, revealing, boring, etc.?"

The closing of each focus group session began with the question, "In your opinion

and experience, what does it mean to be a Latina?" The purpose of asking this is to get a

sense of whether the participants' views are similar or different to those in *Latina*

magazine. The last question of the session was, "Is there anything else you would like to

add before we wrap it up?" The purpose of asking the participants this question is to give

everyone an opportunity to say anything they may not have had a chance to say prior.

<div align="center">**Analysis**</div>

Focus group data compiled for analysis consisted of 105 pages of transcribed

audiotape recordings. All of the responses provided during the focus groups and during

time of transcription were categorized and coded for analysis by the researcher.[4]

---

[4] Because this thesis involves qualitative methods of research, the researcher is the research instrument. Hence, the researcher's perspective influences how the focus group data is interpreted. How one researcher interprets the data may differ from how another researcher interprets the data.

Grounded theory. This study followed Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory method for generating theory, a widely used and influential model for coding qualitative data (Lindlof and Taylor 2002). Glaser and Strauss' (1967) comparative analysis and its method of analysis, the constant comparative method were used.

Grounded theory came about as an antidote to logico-deductive theory, which sought to verify existing theories that previously proved to already work. When the goal is verification, Glaser and Strauss (1967) say that researchers attempt to verify a theory by essentially collecting data and then tacking on a logically deduced theory that could have come to mind through mere happen stance, conjecture, or common sense (pp. 4-6).

When using grounded theory, on the other hand, the researcher does not begin with an assumption and then set out to verify it; it does not begin with an assumption from which a logically deduced theory is derived. Instead, the goal is to generate a theory (i.e., which explains or predicts something) as the data is collected and even after all the data have been transcribed (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 31). The theory generated for this research attempts to explain how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina.

To generate a theory entails a process of research that is on going. The development of a theory does not end when the researcher has conducted his or her last focus group. The theory that is discovered over time is continually and inextricably linked to the data. This theory cannot be refuted because it is always linked to the specific data systematically obtained by the researcher (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 4).

Using comparative analysis, the researcher may develop conceptual categories and their conceptual properties. A category "stands by itself as a conceptual element of a

theory" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 36). A property of a category is a "conceptual aspect or element of a category" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 36). Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out that when constructing categories and their properties, it is important to remember that both the categories and their properties are concepts indicated by the data. They are not constructed of the data itself (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 36). For the purposes of this research, comparative analysis was used to compare each response obtained from each woman who participated in a focus group.

Constant comparative method. This study espouses the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This method enables the researcher to code, categorize, and conceptualize the data collected (Lindlof and Taylor 2002). The constant comparative method is comprised of four stages: (1) coding each response into as many categories as possible (2) integrating categories (3) delimiting, reducing, and saturating the categories (4) writing the theory.

First, the researcher codes each incident or response provided by each focus group participant into as many categories as possible (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lindlof and Taylor 2002). During this process of open coding, notes were made in the margins of the printed transcripts to acknowledge what category each response could fit into, and each of the possible categories were listed in a computer file to create a codebook (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lindlof and Taylor 2002). Two codebooks were created. The first codebook categorized the participants' responses into various topic such as "Recurring words and statements," "Perceptions of Latinas in the media," "Their perceptions of what is Latina," and "Perceptions of Latin American cultures versus U.S. culture."

When coding each response, it was compared with a previous response to determine what category it would fit into. This measure is consistent Glaser and Strauss' "defining rule" of the constant comparative method (p. 106). "This constant comparison of the incidents very soon starts to generate theoretical properties of the category" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 106).

Categories that emerge during this first stage may be created by the researcher, originate from the literature review, or be gleaned from terms the participants in the focus groups used (in vivo coding*)* (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lindlof and Taylor 2002).

Every so often, a break was taken from the coding process to record personal ideas and to reflect on the emerging theoretical notions (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This was useful for seeing the evolution of categories.

Hall's (1979) encoding/decoding model was used during the coding process to determine whether the focus group participants' responses indicated they had a dominant reading, a negotiated reading, or an oppositional reading. The second codebook is comprised of all responses to the articles that fell into one of Hall's (1979) three reading positions: dominant, negotiated, or oppositional, which indicates the type of reading each woman had who interacted with *Latina* magazine. It should be noted that readers do not always firmly remain in one reading position. For example, a dominant reading may give way to a negotiated reading.

For the purposes of my study, Hall's (1979) encoding/decoding model is used as follows. When presented with an article in *Latina* magazine, focus group participants may accept what the magazine defines as Latina (e.g., appearance, attitude, behaviors, etc.) as realistic and common-sensical, and they do not question the magazine producers'

preferred message. This describes a dominant reading. A dominant or preferred reading is one in which a reader accepts and/or identifies with what the article is communicating, and they do not question the message.

Others may find the messages in *Latina* magazine unrealistic, problematic, or they may criticize them, but the key is that they do not expose any underlying dominant ideology. Hence, a negotiated reading is one in which a reader challenges a message. A negotiated reading may also be one in which a reader partially accepts a media message. For example, when a reader's lived experiences run counter to the preferred messages, but she recognizes that the content may reflect reality for other Latinas.

Finally, readers may reject what they read in favor of their own interpretation that exposes the underlying dominant ideology. For example, a reader criticizes the magazine for addressing Latinas as a homogeneous group, and she exposes the marketing or capitalistic motives for addressing Latinas as one, similar group.

The second stage of the constant comparative method involves integrating categories and their properties (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lindlof and Taylor 2002). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) refer to this integration process as axial coding, which refers to "using codes that make connections between categories and thus result in the creation of either new categories or a theme that spans many categories" (p. 220). Response is no longer compared to previous response (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Rather response is compared to properties of categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This process encourages the researcher to make "some related theoretical sense of each comparison" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 109).

The second stage of the constant comparative method quickly evolves into the third stage because the researcher delimits the categories and theories (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 110). It is during this third stage that the data becomes more manageable in the sense that the number of categories is narrowed, and the nature of the categories is refined (Lindlof and Taylor 2002). Glaser and Strauss (1967) sum up this stage as "mainly on the order of clarifying the logic, taking out non-relevant properties, integrating elaborating details of properties into the major outline of interrelated categories and—most important—reduction" (p. 110).

It is at this juncture that theoretical saturation of categories occurs. After continual coding, the researcher is eventually able to quickly determine whether a new incident (i.e., response or statement) fits into an existing category or if it is distinct enough to be coded for a new category (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) said,

> After an analyst has coded incidents for the same category a number of times, he learns to see quickly whether or not the next applicable incident points to a new aspect. If yes, then the incident is coded and compared. If no, the incident is not coded, since it only adds bulk to the coded data and nothing to the theory. (p. 111)

The fourth and final stage of the constant comparative method involves taking in all the coded data, the ensuing categories, the theory that emerged, and writing the findings (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of focus group data. The results include the themes that emerged from the data and supporting responses from the transcripts. Exploring these themes and exemplars provide an understanding of how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina.

Focus Group Demographics

A total of 20self-identified Latinas attended three focus group sessions. There were six women in group one, six women in group two, and eight women in group three. The average age was 20. The age range of participants was 18 to 23. All women attended a major Florida university. Of the 20 women, 11 were born in the United States and nine were born in a Latin American country. These Latin American nations included Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Panama, Peru, and Puerto Rico. Of those born in a Latin American country, most were raised in the United States. Two women moved to the United States at age 17, and therefore were not considered raised in the United States.

All of the women had at least one parent who was born in Latin America. These countries included Argentina, Belize, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama, Peru, and Puerto Rico. Of the 20 women, three said they read *Latina* magazine regularly, two said they "occasionally" read it, one said she "sometimes" read it, another said she "rarely" read it, and 13 focus group participants said they did not read the magazine. Most of the women possessed fluent Spanish-language skills. One woman expressed that she was not fluent but proficient, and the rest (three) had limited or

minimal Spanish-language skills. The demographics of the focus groups are outlined in

Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Demographics of focus groups

Characteristic	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3
Age Range	18-23	19-22	18-22
Year in school	1 grad student 2 senior 2 sophomore 1 freshman	1 senior 3 junior 1 sophomore 1 freshman	4 senior 2 junior 2 freshmen
Nationality	Cuban-American Argentinean-American Colombian-American 2 Dominican-American Puerto Rican	Peruvian Belizean-Honduran-American Honduran Panamanian Cuban-American Colombian-Argentinean-American	2 Puerto Rican 3 Cuban-American Colombian Peruvian Colombian-American
Father's Education	3 high school 2 Bachelor's degree 1 MD	2 Master's degree 1 college (didn't specify) 1 Bachelor's degree 1 high school or less 1 general (didn't specify)	1 Ph.D 1 Master's degree 1 Bachelor's degree 2 high school or less 1 Law school 1 college or less 1 technical
Mother's Education	1 high school 1 technical 3 Bachelor's degree 1 PhD	2 Bachelor's degree 1 college (didn't specify) 1 high school 1 general (didn't specify) 1 college or less	2 Master's degree 2 technical 1 RN 1 Montessori teacher 2 high school
Read *Latina* magazine	1 don't read, used to 5 don't read	1 read 2 don't read 2 rarely read 1 occasionally read	2 read 4 don't read 1 sometimes read 1 occasionally read

Summary of Findings

The focus group participants were presented six articles from *Latina* magazine

regarding these topics: beauty, fashion, biculturalism, family, religion, and tradition. In

general, the women's attitudes and opinions regarding *Latina* magazine were largely

negotiated and, at times, oppositional at varying levels. Significant factors that influenced

their negotiations of the magazine were the topic of article at hand and their individual

life experiences, cultures, and nationalities.

This chapter begins by exploring the mediated Latina ideal in mainstream

mass media and how Latinas negotiate that ideal. Next, this chapter explores the

focus group participants' perceptions about Latina beauty, body type, culture,

family, religion, and tradition, as defined by *Latina* magazine.

<div align="center">

The Mediated Latina Ideal

</div>

The focus group participants were asked about their impressions of Latinas in the

mainstream mass media. The participants described similar impressions of Latinas in the

media, and these descriptions indicate that they perceived the media to portray a Latina

ideal.

The body. Their impressions tended to focus on physical appearance,

namely the body or the "Latina figure" as one participant called it. Women in all

three groups recognized that there was a mediated ideal Latina body, and they

criticized its existence. When discussing what Latinas look like in the mainstream

media, women in all three groups said that the mediated ideal Latina body was

curvy with a "big booty" yet slim. Many of the women also implied that this

mediated Latina ideal is unrealistic. Discussed below is each of the mediated ideal

Latina physical attributes: (1) "curvy" (2) "big booty" and (3) a "slim" body. Also

briefly discussed is how some of the women perceived the mediated Latina ideal

to be unrealistic.

> Interviewer: So if you do see Latinas, what Latinas do the magazines
> feature the most, and what do these magazines say about these women?

Ana[5], Colombian-American: Their bodies. It's mostly like showing off.

Claudia, Puerto Rican: "They're proud to have these curves." [says in a mocking tone]

Many participants used the word "curvy" to describe their impressions of Latinas in the media. They seemed to associate being curvaceous with the rear end (Negrón-Muntaner 1997). According to Negrón-Muntaner (1997), not only is the media obsessed with Latinas and curves, but also Latinas themselves may see a curvy body—namely having a "big booty"—as a desirable Latina characteristic.

Patricia, Puerto Rican: Girls do it all the time. "My butt looks big in these jeans." I'm like, that's when I buy jeans. When my butt looks bigger, I buy those jeans.

Carina, Peruvian: Exactly. I want my butt to look bigger. Yeah.

Laura, Cuban: Because, I mean [pause] Like no. Nobody wants to have a flat butt. Like, there's people who get implants on their butt. It's disgusting, but they do.

Both Patricia's and Laura's comments indicate that they perceive that there is a strong desire for women in the United States have to have a larger rear end. One might argue that buying jeans that make one's butt look bigger and getting buttock implants is similar to investing in a Wonderbra or a tummy tuck to give the allusion of bigger breasts and to achieve a smaller waist, respectively. In fact, buttock implants are on the rise in the United States (Mundell 2004), and jeans are now sold with rear padding. Hence, one might say that U.S. dominant standards for an attractive physique may be adopting a characteristic that is arguably "Latina." Yet, it is interesting that one participant said, "Black women had the curves before Latin women if anything." Nevertheless, the "big booty" ideal is often associated with actress/singer Jennifer Lopez or J. Lo (Negrón-

---

[5] The participants' names were changed to maintain their confidentiality.

Muntaner 1997). One plastic surgeon is quoted as saying, "As many people that you might have that criticize her [Lopez's] buttocks as being too big, she has impacted on what is perceived to be an attractive buttock" (Mundell 2004). A few participants supported this statement.

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: Like the big booty I think came with J. Lo. She kind of established that it was okay. Before that, big booty was you're fat, you know?
>
> Veronica, Cuban-American: Very true.
>
> Patricia: And to us, big booty is Yes. You will lose weight, but you don't want to lose the booty.

Many of the women expressed that they believed that Latinas in the mainstream media are expected to have larger rear ends. All of the participants tended to accept media portrayals of Latinas with larger rear ends, indicating that their more dominant reading of mediated images of Latinas came from their experiences that larger rear ends were desirable and attractive.

A couple women expressed that the "big booty" ideal may be rooted in their cultures as well in the media (Pompper and Koenig 2004; Goodman 2002).

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: But you know, I think here, it's not as big of an issue. For example, in Puerto Rico, there's a word. *Chumbo* or *chumba* is a word to describe somebody who doesn't have a butt. And it's an insult [redirects thought] And it's something that a girl's self-conscious about— not having a butt. And here, it's like, girls are always like, "I have to hide my butt."

Patricia's comment possibly indicates that the ideal Latina figure is reproduced in the media and rooted in Latin American culture. Patricia also emphasizes the differences she perceives between Anglo women and Puerto Rican women when she says that "here . . . girls are always like, 'I have to hide my butt,'" indicating that she may perceive the

acceptance or desire to have a larger rear as a cultural. Although she did not convey that the media influences any dominant behavior on her part, her culture may influence a dominant behavior within her culture. Negrón-Muntaner (1997) echoes this sentiment when she said that Caribbean ethnicities are associated with the "popular imagination of big butts" (p. 185).

Like Patricia associated the desire to have a larger rear with her Puerto Rican culture, another participant pointed out that a having a "big booty" was a Latin Caribbean characteristic and not necessarily a Latin American characteristic.

> Melissa, Colombian: Yeah. I was, I was going to say like uh, I notice like also you know there is a difference in bodies between Latinas like from the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Like Caribbeans think to have like a big butt, and uh, more curves and then in South America we are not as curvy than Caribbean or like we tend to have like maybe the upper part tends to be like bigger maybe than the lower part.

Melissa's more negotiated reading of mediated images of Latinas came from her personal experience that, in reality, many Latinas do not have large rear ends. While many participants recognized an ideal Latina body, criticized its ubiquity in mainstream media, and some even expressed that they desired it, one recognized that it was not realistic for some Latinas based on their country of origin—a generalization in itself. In sum, their opinions tended to be more negotiated while their stories of buying jeans that accentuated their rears and stories of being called *chumba* aligned with dominant ideology that fosters Latinas as curvaceous with larger rear ends.

While the participants' impressions of Latinas in the mainstream media included perceiving them as curvy and having large rear ends, they also perceived the ideal Latina body as being slim at the same time.

Claudia, Puerto Rican: Curvy but skinny still.

Jennifer, Dominican-American: Curvy skinny.

Patricia, Puerto Rican: I think that Latinas are portrayed maybe now with a bigger booty, but usually they [the media images] still go with the skinny Penelope Cruz [pause] She's Spanish, but [voice trails off].

According to Pompper and Koenig's (2004) study of Hispanic women and the ideal body, some Hispanic women are less concerned with weight loss. They cite *Latina* magazine editors as saying that Latinas believe that there is "nothing wrong with a larger body" and that "Hispanic culture offer a unique ideal of femininity" (p. 92). Yet, Patricia's comment about how Latinas in the media may be portrayed with "a bigger booty, but usually they still go with the skinny [Latinas]" also indicates her awareness of the dominant ideology that prefers thin images of women in the media (Pompper and Koenig 2004; Goodman 2002).

Mainstream mass media are overrun with images of thin women because thinness is the dominant ideal and associated with success and happiness (Goodman 2002; Pompper and Koenig 2004). Hence, not surprisingly, women in all three focus groups perceived Latinas in the mainstream magazines as slim. A few of the women viewed this ideal as unrealistic for most women including Latinas (Pompper and Koenig 2004). For example, one participant called the typical mediated look in women's fashion magazines "very stick-figure" and said that she believed Latinas are incapable of looking like the women in fashion magazines. She added that she did not think, "the majority of Hispanic women would be capable of being runway models with the height thing and the boobs." She was referring to her opinion that Latinas tend to be shorter and without large breasts.

Similar to the participant who said she believed that Latinas are incapable of

looking like the women in fashion magazines, some of the participants conveyed that the

mediated Latina ideal is unrealistic.

> Claudia, Puerto Rican: You don't see the everyday Latin woman. And like
> magazines have been pretty good about getting a lot more realistic lately,
> but not when it comes to Latin women.

Claudia questions the mediated images of Latinas and perceives them as

unrealistic because her lived experiences tell her that Latinas in real life do not look like

the women in the magazines. This indicates a negotiated reading of the mediated images.

Similarly, some of the other participants conveyed that they also perceived the Latina

ideal as unrealistic. Their perceptions of the mediated ideal as unrealistic may be the

reason that although they perceived the mediated Latina ideal as slim, none of them

conveyed that they desired it. Although most of the participants were born in the United

States or moved to the United States at a young age, research suggests that Latinas who

immigrate to the United States after age 17 are more likely to prefer a larger body as the

ideal because they are more accustomed to "certain cultural practices" that include food

"playing a central role in their culture" (Goodman 2002, p. 715; Pompper and Koenig

2004, p. 93). Yet, one might argue that even for those participants who were raised in the

United States, having Latin American parents may influence one's perception of the ideal

body. Overall, achieving a thin body was not something that the women talked about—

with one exception. Danielle said that pressure to be thin comes from her family. Her

response countered Patricia, another Puerto Rican woman.

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: . . . I think that white women have the stereotypes
> to live up to be super-skinny this, but we have our mothers and our
> *abuelas*. "Oh, those women are not like you. You don't have to be like
> them." So, it's almost like we have a sense of pride almost thanks to the

fact that we haven't had an influence as strong from the media as other women of other ethnicities.

Danielle, Puerto Rican: I would, I would disagree with that. I think that in my family, weight is a huge deal. Um, especially my grandmother. She thinks that what you look like is absolutely everything. Um, you know, she thinks it's important to have an education, but whether I actually do anything with it, eh.

Unlike previous research that says that Latinas feel less pressure to be thin because of their cultures (Goodman 2002; Pompper and Koenig 2004), Danielle's statement indicates that her Puerto Rican family is central to pressure to conform to an ideal thin body. Danielle's and the other participants' responses indicate that while the media play a central role in reproducing dominant ideology that support images of curvy, slim Latinas, cultures also play a role in dictating how Latinas feel they should look.

Skin tone and facial features. Besides the participants awareness of an ideal body in mainstream mass media, the women were aware of the media's tendency to portray ideal beauty that emphasized Anglo features like "breasts, straight noses, blonde hair, and (white) faces" (Dávila 2001; Duke 2000; Negrón-Muntaner 1997, p. 187). Women in all three groups also described similar impressions of the skin tones and facial features of Latinas in the mainstream media. They included having tan skin, dark, wavy hair, and dark eyes.

The participants acknowledged that there is an ideal Latina skin tone in mainstream mass media. For example, Negrón-Muntaner (1997) says the ideal Latina beauty, "that is, neither too dark nor too light" (p. 183). This rule of "not to dark and not too light" is the dominant standard in Hollywood, according to Dávila (2001, p. 112).

Patricia, Puerto Rican: I think the skin color is something big. Because it's not that they're dark. They're not white. It's this kind of like *trigueña* [dark-complected]. Like, it's like they're tan.

Laura, Cuban: They're tan.

Patricia: That's almost like a requirement to be Latina, which is wrong because there's a lot of variety in Hispanic women.

Ana, Colombian-American: They're tan. They're usually tan and sometimes with like usually dark hair and dark eyes.

The women expressed frustration at only seeing Latinas in the media with dark skin; dark, wavy hair; and dark eyes. The participants spoke of how, in reality, Latinas have different types of hair and various hair, eye, and skin colors.

Ana: And there's like, I mean my cousins, my aunt's like redhead, and you know she's Colombian redhead with freckles. Like they usually don't show [pause]. Everyone thinks like we run around as Indians and like other countries. Like they don't show like that there's blondes and blacks

Priscilla: Blue-eyed.

Ana: and everything else.

Claudia, Puerto Rican: And we don't all. OK, there's like what? Two of us in here have curly hair. Everyone assumes that we have curly hair.

Their perceptions of Latinas in mainstream media did not include Latinas with various hair, eye, and skin colors, and they criticized this as not accurately reflecting reality. Rather, the women perceived mainstream media portrayals of Latinas as stereotypical, consistently using "dark hair and dark eyes", "wavy hair," and "brown skin, the same kind of skin." The participants' responses indicated that not only do the media project a homogeneous image of Latinas (i.e., with dark, thick, wavy hair; dark eyes; and tan skin), but this tendency to believe that Latinas look a certain way is also prevalent within U.S. society and among non-Latinos. Furthermore, the participants' perceptions of the homogeneity of mediated Latina beauty support Dávila (2001) who says that within the United States there is a "generic or pan-Hispanic 'look.'" (p. 109). Dávila (2001) says

that this generic look is generated by the world of advertising and that it is a marketing strategy designed to convey that advertisements are representing target consumers.

In sum, the participants were aware of an Anglo and Latina beauty standard in mainstream mass media, and they questioned this standard, but they did not offer any opinions as to why the standard may exist. In other words, their more negotiated reading of mainstream media was a result of their tendency to not recognize nor expose any underlying dominant ideology that stresses a homogenous or generic look for marketing purposes. A couple women also expressed that the images of ideal beauty in mainstream mass media excluded them (Calafell 2001; Espinoza 1998).

> Katie, Cuban-American: Something that's just kind of interesting that I've noted just as a little kid flipping through magazines particularly, all the models I thought when I was growing up were blonde hair and they had blue eyes, and even if they had dark hair, they had light eyes. It was like exotic. I never saw a girl with like brown eyes in like a Maybelline ad. Ever. Until recently after like J. Lo, and all that kind resurfaced.

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: So for a long time, Hispanic girls, we didn't grow up with any image. It was always blonde girls, so we don't compare ourselves. We just go, "Oh, she's not like me."

These quotes show that these participants recognized an ideal standard of beauty, and they also were aware that they did not fit the standard of beauty because they did not have blonde hair and blue eyes. Most of the participants were aware of an absence in the media of women that looked like them, and a couple of participants associated blonde hair and blue eyes as representing Anglo women (Dávila 2001).

Despite the criticisms of the stereotypical images of Latina beauty in mainstream mass media, most participants themselves exhibited stereotyping. For example, one participant said that Latinas featured in mainstream magazines looked Americanized if they have blonde hair or blue eyes.

Carina, Peruvian: [speaking of *Cosmopolitan* magazine] There was specifically like one cover I remember that the model looked white and she had a tattoo that says *sabor latino*, which is Latin taste or something, Latin flavor. And um, she said she had got that because she said people kept thinking that she's white and white and white, but she's really Mexican. And that she got that to show people that she's Hispanic. So, I think like in other magazines, sometimes, maybe I could see one or two [Latinas], but I'm not even sure because they're so Americanized.

Although most of the participants expressed that they would like to see more variety in the mainstream mass media, Carina's quote exemplifies how some of them also question the authenticity of Latinas who possess a spectrum of features, namely Latinas who have blonde hair or blue eyes (Dávila 2001). Carina's skepticism of the Americanized Latinas in mainstream media parallels Dávila (2001) who says that U.S. advertisers targeting Latinos tend not to use "Blondes and Nordic types" in their ads because they believe Latinos do not connect with these images even though many Latinos are blonde-haired and blue-eyed. As Dávila (2001) says, Carina's quote indicates that she did question the image on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine and did not feel it represented an authentic "Latina look."

Perhaps Carina's weariness of the authenticity of the Latinas she sees in mainstream media comes from her awareness of Hollywood's tendency to alter Latinas' features to make them appear Anglo (Hedrick 2001; Menard 1997). Conversely, another participant mentioned how she was aware of how Hollywood influenced a Colombian model to change her hair color to look more stereotypically Latina.

Melissa, Colombian: Yeah. Actually, I don't know if any of you know Sofia Vergara?

Others: Yeah.

Melissa: A Colombian model. And she is going to like Hollywood, and she had to change her hair color. She has, um, how you call it? *Rubia*?

Someone: Blonde.

Melissa: Yeah. She's blonde. Naturally blonde. And she had to change her hair color to dark to [inaudible] Latina.

While many participants criticized the media for portraying stereotypical images of Latinas with dark hair, dark eyes, and dark skin tones, the participants' comments also convey that they had internalized the assumption that Latinas look a certain way. In other words, they contradicted themselves. For example, when the participants were asked, "What do Latinas in the mainstream media look like?" They responded with comments like, "There's no one [Latina] look," "There are so many different looks," and "I think what's actually beautiful about Latinas is that they don't look the same." However, their politically correct responses gave way to stereotypical comments during their free-flowing conversations, indicating their attitudes contradicted their behaviors. For example, one participant said, "A lot of Colombians look White;" another participant said that the mediated Latina look is "almost like Brazilian;" and a couple of participants said to another, "You don't look Hispanic." The latter comments exemplify the women's tendency to stereotype just as they accused the mainstream media of doing.

Therefore, while their discussions and opinions surrounding mediated ideal Latina beauty were more negotiated because they questioned the mediated image and said that it did not reflect reality, their subsequent discussions indicated that their beliefs actually aligned with the dominant ideology that fosters one, ideal Latina look. One explanation for why their actual beliefs and behaviors would tend to align with dominant ideology is that most of the participants (all but two) were raised in the United States. Because they

experience U.S. culture daily, one might argue that they learned and internalized the dominant ideology.

Sexualization and exoticism. Many of the participants expressed that Latinas in the media are also portrayed as "sex objects" and as "exotic." Their acknowledgements of such portrayals paralleled those found in the literature (Calafell 2001; Flores and Holling 1999; Menard 1997; Wilson et al. 2003). Specifically, words the participants used to describe what they saw as common portrayals of Latinas were, "Sexy. You have to be sexy," "*caliente*" and "hot-blooded" (Menard 1997; Wilson et al. 2003).

> Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: And I think most times the media portrays them as like hot-blooded Latin women like just ready to have sex and ready to order men around also.

Most of the women tended to be critical of such negative representations of Latinas in mainstream media because they associated such representations with appearing to be promiscuous, low-class, and uneducated. Nevertheless, even though the participants acknowledged that the media emphasizes Latina sexuality, many of them did not convey that they did not want to be portrayed as sexy.

> Patrician, Puerto Rican: I think also with Hispanic women in a more generic magazine are used usually for a message that has to do with—she mentioned it—sensuality, seduction, wearing something more daring or maybe things that we would consider more Hispanic like wearing red lipstick. Things like seeing a Hispanic woman and when you see the displays of a, um, of a fashion line and they have the cute pink dress that you could wear and then they have the tight red one. You would most likely see the woman in the tight red one. So it's kind of a little more [pause] I don't know, I'm not complaining. I'm just saying.

Patricia's comment supports a quote from a *Hispanic* magazine article that reads, "The basic attitude among Latinas seems to be, 'We know the stereotype exists, and we

like it'" (Menard 1997). In sum, because the women recognized what they perceived as negative stereotyping, but did not expose any dominant ideology that supports it and because many of the women conveyed that they are not opposed to being sexy, their opinions reflected a more negotiated position of mediated images of Latinas.

Some of the women also expressed that people in the United States and the mainstream mass media "associate like exotic things with Hispanic women." This association may stem from early U.S. film depictions of Latinas that capitalized on the supposed "exotic" looks of Latinas (Flores and Holling 1999). These women perceived this as a prevalent stereotype.

Laura, Cuban: Exotic definitely is what they portray Latin women looking.

Claudia, Puerto Rican: They [the magazines] expect us all to be beautiful and exotic

The participants' acknowledgement that the media portrays Latinas as being exotic parallels the literature (Flores and Holling 1999). Although some of the women expressed that they were aware of stereotypical portrayals of Latinas as exotic, they did not explain why they thought Latinas were portrayed as exotic. To be exotic is to be foreign to a place. Yet, according to Suárez-Orozco and Páez (2002), the term "Latina" relates to U.S. experiences. Thus, in reality, Latinas are no more foreign to the United States than others born and raised in the United States.

Summary of the Latina Ideal

Overall, during the discussions about Latinas in the mainstream media, the women did not speculate about the absence of Latina representation or the presence of negative representation; they merely noted this. Tuchman's (1978) concept of symbolic annihilation holds that women in the media are "symbolically annihilated" when they are

negatively stereotyped and when they are erased from positions in which they would convey social power (Caputi 1999). Similarly, Tuchman's reflection hypothesis suggests that media reflections are actually reflections of the dominant values of a society and that people may view media representations—or the absence thereof—as reflections of reality. Hence, the participants' awareness of the negative representation of Latinas in the mainstream media and their absence from the mainstream media indicate that these women learned the dominant standards of beauty and femininity from the media. Consequently, negative representation and/or absence in magazines may affect how Latinas perceive themselves and how others perceive them (Espinoza 1998, p. 6). The discussions are evidence that the participants are aware that they are often considered other in U.S. society because of media representations (Tuchman 1978).

Negotiating *Latina* Magazine's Ideology of What It Means To Be Latina

After discussing the participants' impressions of Latinas in the media, they were asked to read six articles from *Latina* magazine. Two significant factors that influenced their negotiations of the magazine were the topic of the article at hand and their individual life experiences, cultures, and nationalities. In general, the women's attitudes and opinions regarding *Latina* magazine were mixed. Overall, their readings were negotiated and, at times, oppositional at varying levels. Often, their more negotiated reading gave way to a dominant reading, which was typically dependent on the article topic at hand.

Beauty

The women were asked to read an article that describes makeup and how to apply it. Two major themes emerged from the focus group participants' readings. Most of the participants conveyed that they were aware of *Latina* magazine's tendency to showcase

Latinas with "tan" or "brown" skin, and virtually all participants tended to resist the
Latina look that they perceived the magazine to endorse.

Celebrating brownness. Women in all three focus groups criticized what they
perceived as *Latina* magazine's tendency to portray a "generic or pan-Hispanic 'look'"
(Dávila 2001, p. 109). The women expressed that they did not like the generalizations
and stereotypes about Latina physical appearance. The predominant criticism revolved
around skin tone.

> Sonia, Cuban-American: Then here it says [reading], "Start by creating the
> ideal backdrop to showcase those eyes: warm, bronzed skin." So, they're
> saying like we all have warm, brown skin, the same kind of a skin, like a
> homogeneous idea of what it is to be Latina or whatever.

Sonia's statement represents a common sentiment voiced during all three groups.
Their more negotiated reading came from their personal experiences that taught them that
all Latinas do not have the same skin tone even though some Latinas do have the shade of
skin the magazine describes. They were critical of what they perceived as a
generalization.

Calafell (2001) also recognizes *Latina* magazine's tendency to showcase brown
skin, and she offers an explanation as to why the magazine does this: "*Latina* attempts to
counteract the dominant paradigm of 'whiteness' through its adoption of 'brownness'"(p.
33). The participants did not convey that they perceived *Latina* magazine's "adoption of
'brownness'" as a way to counter hegemony; they merely criticized the generalization
(Calafell 2001, p. 33).

If indeed *Latina* magazine does engage in this counter-hegemonic practice that
defies the dominant norm of portraying Whiteness, it may overcorrect. As a consequence
of emphasizing darker skin, Calafell (2001) says that *Latina* magazine marginalizes

Latinas who do not fit the paradigm of Latina beauty as defined by the magazine (i.e.,

marginalizes those who do not have brown, tan, or olive skin). Like Calafell (2001),

many focus group participants recognized generalizations of brownness in the magazine

and they demonstrated that such generalizations do have the power to marginalize Latinas

who do not have the skin tones celebrated in the magazine.

> Lilly, Argentinean-American: I know that I could never, I never relate to
> the assumed stereotype of what Latina women look like. I'm sure if I
> would look at a whole issue of this, most of the people are going to have
> darker skin and thick hair and all that kind of stuff. And just the people I
> tell that I'm Hispanic, and they're like "What?" And they don't believe
> me. So it's kind of like I never fit into the look.

Because Lilly did not see herself as being represented in the magazine she was

less likely to accept the makeup suggestions, indicating a negotiated reading. Based on

the participants' perceptions, they learned rules of ideal Latina beauty from the media

(Dávila 2001; Britt 2003; Ferguson 1983; Negrón-Muntaner 1997). However, that is not

to say that they buy into the rules of ideal beauty, so to speak.

> Danielle, Puerto Rican: I can go to the MAC counter and play with
> makeup and figure out what I want to do. I don't have to specifically look
> like a Latina. Like *I am* Latina, so by default, I always look like one.

Danielle's resistance to the magazine's suggestions of makeup and her resistance

to the magazine's suggestion that she should try to look Latina, indicate a more

negotiated reading. In fact, none of the women expressed that they would use the makeup

in the magazine to achieve a Latina look. Hence, their more negotiated reading came

from their refusal to buy into the idea that makeup can be used to look Latina, and their

failure to link makeup in magazines to any dominant ideology.

In addition to the discussion of makeup, the image of a woman on the beauty page spurred one focus group participant to point out how *Latina* magazine portrays Latinas with Eurocentric features (Dávila 2001).

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: . . . *Pero* [But], you know, she has uh, a thinner nose. You don't see factions of, you know, our African ancestors. So it's kind of like a tan look, but you have to have white features. You know? That's still what Latina is pretty.

Patricia's recognition of a dominant standard of beauty and her lack of speculation about why the magazine would feature Latinas with "White features" indicates a negotiated reading. Furthermore, the other participants did not add anything to her comment. Dávila (2001) said that standards of beauty that favor whiteness and straight hair are prevalent in Latin America as they are in the United States. Hence, Patricia's more negotiated reading of the beauty page and the lack of response from the other participants indicates that the women may have learned dominant standards of beauty from the media in Latin America and the United States and furthermore, they may not be looking at images of women of color very critically or associating the mediated image of ideal beauty with dominant standards of beauty. That is to say, the women did not offer discussion about how the mediated ideal espouses women of color with facial features that appear to be acceptable and Anglo (e.g., thinner noses) and the relation that these features have to dominant standards of beauty.

Additionally, while most of the participants recognized that the magazine celebrates tan skin, they also pointed out how the magazine fails to celebrate the skin tones of certain Latinas, namely Latinas with apparent indigenous features and Black Latinas.

Katie, Cuban-American: I went to Nicaragua in October, and definitely most of the people there had like the sloping forehead, the flat nose. They look very, very much indigenous tribal Native American. And yeah, you don't see that girl like in *Latina* magazine.

Melissa, Colombian: No, you wouldn't see something like that. Yeah.

Again, although their comments indicate that they learned the dominant standards of beauty, in general, the women did not expose any underlying dominant ideology that prefers ideal beauty (i.e., White beauty) to ethnic beauty (Dávila 2001). Thus, once more their more negotiated reading was a result of their awareness of an ideal and a lack of critical analysis. In contrast, one participant's oppositional reading indicated that she understood that beauty is associated with capital gain and power (Ferguson 1983).

Danielle, Puerto Rican: That's just because no matter what culture, we're all held up to the same standards of beauty. Like, there is like this universal like unspoken thing. And I think that part of it has to do with like when different places are colonized it was the Europeans who came in, they had all this money, and so people want to be like those people who have all the money and all the resources.

The fact that other participants did not elaborate on this comment nor instigate a discussion about beauty and material capital or power indicates that these women may not read media critically nor may be able to resist consumer messages that link beauty to power (Durham 1999b; Ferguson 1983; McRobbie 1978).

Resisting the Latina look. Criticisms of generalizations in the beauty pages evolved from skin tone to makeup usage. Again, most of the women were critical of the magazine's tendency to assume that all Latinas use or can use (i.e., based on their skin tones) certain shades or styles of makeup. Moreover, they were critical of the suggestion that makeup can or should be used to achieve a Latina look, as the magazine seemed to be suggesting.

Lilly, Argentinean-American: And like, just at the beginning [*reading*], "The crisp look of liquid liner, nothing could be more chic (or more Latina)." Because apparently if you're Latina, . . . [she expresses amusement, but not genuine laughter]

Lilly: you wear very crisp black eyeliner

Claudia, Puerto Rican: Never.

Lilly: as you seen on my face right now [says sarcastically].

[Laughter from the group]

Lilly: [laughing] So it's just kind of assuming that that's something that's innate or something.

Hence, virtually none of the participants absorbed the intended magazine message that Latinas should use makeup to look Latina because they were critical of the magazine's assumption. This indicates a negotiated reading.

In terms of the makeup the magazine suggested, some of the women expressed that they believed Latinas would prefer a different color, and they perceived the suggested colors incompatible with their skin tones.

Ana, Colombian-American [speaking of the eyeliner suggestion]: I don't know any. Well, I feel like the older ones [women] they wear they use like liquid blue [eyeliner] or something.

Claudia, Puerto Rican: Blue is a more common color.

Ana: Like if you go back to Colombia, like you'll see the blue, but [voice trails off]

Patricia, Puerto Rican: I think, you know, it's funny that they say [reading], "Warm pink blush." And maybe it's just me though, when I think of pink, I don't think of a color I would wear in blush because it's like it's too light for my skin.

Thus, their more negotiated reading came from their personal experiences such as their knowledge of Latinas who would prefer blue over black eyeliner. They also

perceived their skin tones to be incompatible with the makeup colors suggested even though they did not dispute that other women's skin tones would be compatible. The participants' opinions grew more negative as most of them perceived the magazine to be pressuring them to use the makeup suggested to achieve a Latina "look."

> Interviewer: So, the first sentence [reading]: "Ah, the crisp look of liquid eyeliner. Nothing could be more chic or more Latina." How can one look Latina?

> Jessica, Belizean-Honduran-American: They turn it from being [pause] They almost make it like it's not a category, like a racial category. It's like a overall a word that describes a personality type almost like, you know what I mean? Like it's not like um.

> Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: Like an image that you're trying to create.

> Jessica: Yeah.

> Karla: Like you're trying to maintain an image that goes accordingly with the culture or with your heritage, but you really shouldn't have to.

> Rachel, Panamanian: Exactly.

> Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: You should just be who you are and look the way you are and not have to add anything extra to it.

Because many of the women questioned the article's goal of suggesting that all Latinas should create an image that makes them appear Latina and disagreed with the suggestion, their reading was more negotiated. A couple of participants recognized the motivation of the beauty page is to support consumerism. For example, one participant mentioned how "it's [the article is] supposed to make someone who is Latina feel that this is just for them which would, you know, cause somebody to buy this magazine."

> Danielle, Puerto Rican: I think part of it also is that this is a marketing tool.

> [Others agree and say, "Yeah."]

Danielle: And so they're just trying to make us feel that this is part of our identity. I mean part of the reason why, you know, shows and the media and stuff pick up on specific minorities is because they realize they have a market there. And we are a very big market. Um, I don't know about other cultures, but Puerto Ricans are huge consumers so I mean, if they're going to target something toward us, we're going to be like, "Man, liquid liner is what we look like? I gotta get some." You know, you don't want to be left behind.

Danielle is the only participant in all of the groups who went into some detail about her belief of the magazine's capitalistic motives for the beauty article; therefore, her oppositional reading is a result of her awareness of how magazines attempt to interpellate readers to influence their consumer behavior (Althusser 1971; Curran et al. 1982).

Indeed, Latinos wield $653 billion in purchasing power (Humphreys 2003). And according to McCracken (1993), magazines for ethnic minorities have been successful at reaching "a substantial growing sector with consumerist messages that are ostensibly personalized with the specific cultural heritage of minority groups" (p. 223). Because the magazine is designed specifically for Latinas, the magazine's messages attempt to speak directly to Latinas (Althusser 1971; Curran et al. 1982). McRobbie (1978) contends that ideological messages directly interpellate readers. That is to say, the magazine messages attempt to speak directly to readers, influencing them to subscribe to the messages in the magazine and manipulating their attitudes and behaviors. Contrary to McRobbie's (1978) theory, when Danielle recognized the magazine was attempting to speak to them via messages about makeup, she questioned the motive. This was not the norm however.

Ferguson (1983) said, "Female beauty is a generalised cultural ideal" (p. 59). This is evident in women's mainstream magazines, and it is evident in *Latina* magazine.

Women in all three focus groups were familiar with women's magazines and their tendency to give beauty and fashion advice. Most of the participants did not express that they were opposed to the makeup tips or to the consumer messages, although many of the women expressed that they did not believe that a magazine should be suggesting how to look Latina, and one participant out of 20 was critical of the article's consumerist messages (Ferguson 1983). Even though their behaviors tended to support the dominant ideology because most of the women expressed that they did use makeup (Ferguson 1983), their perceptions of the beauty pages in terms of makeup were largely negotiated and somewhat oppositional.

Hence, based on the women's perceptions of the beauty pages, all of them conveyed that they learned the rules of beauty from the media and that they adopted consumer behavior in general (i.e., they buy and use makeup products). However, none of the women conveyed that they would adopt consumer behavior in terms of the *Latina* magazine's makeup advice because of their personal experiences and because of some of their awareness and criticisms of the consumerist messages. In sum, many of the participants were aware of the capitalization on Latino ethnicities via the marketing of makeup products and *Latina* magazine in general (Dávila 2001), but they did not express that marketing to Latinas should cease to exist.

Fashion

The fashion article the focus group participants were asked to read featured real Latinas, not models, wearing clothing intended to flatter their various body types. Oddly enough, the women's discussion of the fashion pages did not center on clothing but rather on quotes and images concerning the body.

Their more negotiated reading of the fashion article came from three sources. First, most of the women criticized the fashion article for perpetuating stereotypes about Latinas. Second, most of the women praised the magazine for portraying women of various body types. And finally, most of the women criticized the ideal Latina body that they saw in the fashion pages.

Perpetuating stereotypes. All three groups of women criticized the fashion pages for their incessant focus on curves and sexiness. Most of the women immediately recognized the magazine's tendency to highlight and praise curves and perceived this practice as perpetuating stereotypes about Latinas and their bodies.

> Lilly, Argentinean-American: Because we all have *curvas*. All of us. [says sarcastically]
>
> Claudia, Puerto Rican: Oh yeah.
>
> Voice 1: Yeah
>
> Claudia: Well, you know what? You're not Latin if you don't, OK?
> [saying sarcastically]
>
> Diana, Peruvian: And it's telling the readers basically that the stereotypical Latina has curves.

Similar to the mainstream media's tendency to stereotype Latinas as curvaceous, most of the women perceived *Latina* magazine to perpetuate this stereotype as well (Negrón-Muntaner 1997). The above quotes are examples of a more negotiated reading because most of the participants did not dispute that some Latinas do have curves, but they were defensive against the assumption that all Latinas have curves.

Similar to the mainstream media's tendency to stereotype Latinas as curvaceous, many of the women perceived *Latina* magazine to also perpetuate the stereotype that women are sex objects (Calafell 2001; Menard 1997; Wilson et al. 2003).

Jennifer, Dominican-American: And like the word sexy appears like eight times. It's just like you have to be sexy if you're Latina—curvy and sexy, that's what it's all about. [She says speaking of the media's tendency to portray Latinas as sexy].

Priscilla, Dominican-American: Which is just like a typical teen magazine.

Jennifer: Yeah. That's true.

Their more negotiated reading is a result of them criticizing the magazine yet still accepting the dominant ideology that dictates that women in magazines are to be sexy. Because they view sexy portrayals of women in magazines as normal or "typical," this indicates that they have learned the dominant ideology from the media.

Beyond women in general, Latinas are commonly portrayed in the media as sexually enticing (Calafell 2001; Flores and Holling 1999; Menard 1997). The participants conveyed that they also recognized this.

Danielle, Puerto Rican: They've [Latinas] always been portrayed as sexy though—always.

Although some of the women criticized *Latina* magazine for sexualizing the women in the fashion pages, they did not link the magazine's practice to any dominant ideology. Besides simply expecting magazines to portray women as sexy, some of the participants conveyed that they learned the adage "sex sells" and therefore expected magazines to emphasize women's sexuality for capital gain. Because they expected to see sexual portrayals of women in magazines, they may have been less inclined to have an oppositional reading.

Karla, Cuban-American: It's always, you're man will love this, you know, eyelash curler, and you just think OK. Like they [the magazine producers] have to make it sexual, and sex sells.

As previously mentioned, overall, the women did not speak nearly as much about the clothing featured in the fashion article as they did about the body. One exception to that trend was a comment that was also defensive like previous responses.

> Ana, Colombian-American: [reading] "I dress for things that show it, not hide it." Her belly. Like she's pregnant, but like I said before, they [Latinas in the media] always have to be showing a lot of skin for some reason. Like what pregnant woman likes to walk around with her belly out? Like I haven't seen many that are like, you know, showing their belly. It's usually long shirts that cover it. And all of a sudden this Latin woman wants to walk around with her belly out. Like [*voice trails off*]

> Ana's response indicates a more negotiated reading because she is defensive and critical of the article, but she does not offer a larger reason as to why the magazine would quote a pregnant woman saying that she likes to show off her belly.

> Women in all three groups were especially critical of a quote about sexiness because they perceived it as detrimental to their image as Latinas and as women in general.

> Claudia, Puerto Rican [reading the quote]: "As long as my cleavage is showing I feel sexy and beautiful."

> Sonia, Cuban-American: Yeah, and look at the sentence after it. [Reading] "Even in the office, Maria likes to turn up the heat *un poquito*." Like how embarrassing is that, you know, because Hispanic women at work still like to be like the

> Claudia: Center of attention?

> Sonia: Whatever.

> Claudia, Puerto Rican: [laughing]. It's making us angry.

> Voice 1: Hey, you used to read it [*Latina* magazine].

> Sonia: Yeah, and I stopped.

> Claudia: Yeah, because of this.

Their more negotiated reading comes from their defensive reactions to the quote and their lack of explanation as to why they are really offended by the quote. To explain, although many of the participants criticized the implication that all Latinas want to look sexy at work, no one in any of the groups discussed why they do not want to be perceived as sexy at work. In fact, some of the participants said that there was nothing wrong with appearing sexy in real life indicating that their beliefs conformed to ideal femininity that requires women to appear sexy (Calafell 2001; Menard 1997; McRobbie 1996; Wilson et al. 2003).

Perhaps the participants spoke defensively about the sexy portrayals of Latinas at work because the media tends to portray Latinas as sex objects, and the women previously indicated that they perceived such representations as ones that indicate promiscuousness (Calafell 2001; Menard 1997; Wilson et al. 2003). In film, for example, Latinas have often been portrayed as promiscuous or tempestuous (Flores and Holling 1999; Wilson et al. 2003).

Or perhaps their defensiveness toward the magazine's assumption that Latinas want to look sexy at work comes from another source. Although none of the women elaborated on why they were defensive about this section of the article, Wolf (1990) says that a sexy woman is not taken seriously at work. "If the working girl was sexy, her sexiness had to make her work look ridiculous" (Wolf 1990, p. 18).

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: . . . and another thing was this, the Dominican girl. I feel like what she's saying or the way they put it could be misunderstood. Like, the leaving my top button open. [*Reading*] "At work I want to keep it sexy too." I mean, we're definitely sexy and everything, but that doesn't mean we're unprofessional. And, I don't know if it's like taking it a little too much.
>
> Katie, Cuban-American: Right.

> Patricia: Just because we want to look good doesn't mean I need to unbutton my shirt.

> Laura, Cuban: No self-respect for, uh, for themselves kind of thing. Saying, "Oh yeah, I'm going to unbutton my shirt at the office," is like I don't really have any respect for myself.

Their more negotiated reading of messages came from their simultaneous beliefs that Latinas can be sexy but that it may not be appropriate to be sexy at work. The discussions about being sexy at work revealed that they believed that being sexy was not necessarily a bad thing, but there are positive and negative concepts of sexy. Being sexy at work is negative because it looks unprofessional (Wolf 1990). Wolf (1990) says that women struggle with attempting to appear both professional and feminine at work, and that their femininity is often mistook as extending an invitation for harassment and to not be taken seriously. Similarly, the women in the article appear feminine in their dress and the focus group participants questioned their professionalism.

Overall, however, even though the women were defensive, they did not expose any underlying dominant ideology that pressures women to be beautiful (e.g., professional success is associated with beauty) while punishing them for being beautiful at work (Wolf 1990).

Praising variety. Women in all three groups expressed that they liked how the magazine featured women with different body shapes. Specifically, they conveyed that they liked how *Latina* magazine featured heavier women more than other mainstream magazines.

> Julie, Cuban-American: I like it how they actually showed the curvaceous women like it's not all about the perfect skinny [pause] the perfect figure, like what we were talking about earlier on T.V. Like the perfect figure, Latinas [pause] It's more like everyone, the curvaceous ones.

Priscilla, Dominican-American: . . . I mean, cause I look at that woman over there, and she's not anorexic, and I like that at least. At least it's like not unattainable beauty.

Their dominant reading of the fashion pages stemmed from their inclination to praise images of women of a variety of body shapes and sizes in *Latina* magazine. Because they perceived women in reality to be of various body shapes and sizes, they conveyed that it was pleasing to them to see this reflection of reality in the magazine.

Priscilla and Julie's comments about the women in the magazine appearing to be "not anorexic," "curvaceous," and as conveying "not unattainable beauty" possibly indicated that they had come to expect women in fashion magazines to be appear excessively thin and that this look does not reflect women's bodies in real life. Their comments also indicated that they perceive the magazine to expect them to achieve unattainable beauty that involves achieving a "perfect figure" (Ferguson 1983). They conveyed that the women's body shapes and sizes pictured in the fashion pages were more true to life.

Many of the women also conveyed that seeing a variety of body shapes and sizes in mainstream women's fashion magazines is not the norm. Previous studies confirm that the female body in media portrayals is typically excessively thin, and the media encourage thin standards (Goodman 2002; Pompper and Koenig 2004). Accordingly, women in all three groups expressed that they "think it's good" to "present different bodies, different shapes" in *Latina* magazine.

Their references to "different shapes" and the "curvaceous" figures pictured in the magazine were euphemisms to describe women who are heavier than one would typically see in mainstream fashion magazines. In other words, the body types they praised were

praised because they were heavier than the norm in women's magazines. Only one

participant commented about the presence of an underlying message that promotes

thinness.

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: Well, I think it's funny because if you notice on the first page they have um, [reading] "We took our cues from a Los Angeles native and put her in a knee-length skirt." And between parentheses, they say, "With a straight cut to give the illusion of slimmer hips." So it's kind of like they even though they are talking about oh being Latina, they're still saying you have to make yourself look slimmer. The hips are not [re-directs thought] And then on second page, it also talked about, [reading] "the combination gives Kimberly's slim yet curvy figure." So it's kind of like, you can be curvy but [inaudible].

Patricia's negotiated reading of the fashion article indicates that she recognized

the dominant standard that promotes making oneself look slimmer, but she did not delve

into why *Latina* magazine or the media in general glorifies images of slim women

(Goodman 2002). Furthermore, the other focus group participants did not expand on her

comment, possibly indicating that they had come to expect seeing images of thin women

in the media even though, as previous discussions indicate, they did not see being

excessively thin as realistic.

Criticizing the new ideal. Their universal approval expressed toward *Latina*

magazine for showing more shapely women tended to quickly evolve into attacks on

messages that they perceived as dictating that Latinas need to have a shapelier body

figure.

> Sonia, Cuban-American: You know I think it's commendable in the sense that at least it has like a little more variety. [inaudible] But then the girl who is thin, not curvy, is still trying to fit that stereotype, which I would say, "No." I mean, she probably fits in fine in another subculture or in other mainstream cultures, she's probably fine.

> Ana, Colombian-American: Yeah, all of this is like [reading], "I didn't inherit much in the back!"

Priscilla, Dominican-American: Yeah, this putting these standards.

While the women commended the fashion pages for featuring women who are not necessarily thin, their more negotiated reading came from their perception that the magazine put forth a new, curvaceous ideal to aspire to, which did not match dominant ideology of extreme thinness. Sonia's reference to the quote that reads, "I'm slim and not as curvy as the typical Latina, so I look for ways to enhance my shape," indicates a negotiated reading because Sonia recognized a Latina ideal to aspire to, and she disapproved of trying to fit that stereotype that says as a Latina one should be curvy. Women in all three groups expressed that they also disapproved of the magazine's tendency to convey that Latinas should look curvy.

> Laura, Cuban: Yeah I think that was good that they portrayed the different body types and they said, oh, well, I'm normally, you know, like I don't look Latin and I am so how I can I . . .

> Veronica, Cuban-American: Look Latin.

> Laura: But it just it's funny that they say oh, the way to look Latin is to . . .

> Veronica: Get curves.

Their more negotiated reading stemmed from their views that women feel pressure from society and the media to look a certain way (Duke 2000; Ferguson 1983; Goodman 2002). Women in all three groups expressed that the magazine's glorification of the curvaceous figure may have a detrimental effect on Latinas because it reproduces the pressure to look a certain way.

> Claudia, Puerto Rican: I think even Latin women now feel they have to look a certain way because of magazines like this. It makes me feel like if I don't have dark skin, dark hair, the perfect accent, the perfect curves.

Ana, Colombian-American: Yeah. [reading] "People don't think I look Latina so for me accentuating what I have is very important."

Claudia: Exactly.

Claudia's comment indicates that although she recognizes that achieving a "perfect" Latina look is unrealistic, she also feels pressure to conform to the ideal Latina look. Because she recognizes the standards the magazine places on Latinas to look "a certain way" and because she questions the message yet says that it makes her feel possibly somehow inadequate, her reading is more negotiated. Other participants also conveyed that the magazine, like other media, is pressuring women to look achieve a certain ideal appearance.

Interviewer: What do you think about the 2nd quote? That's the pull-quote on the 2nd page. [Pull quote reads: "People don't think I look Latina. So for me, accentuating what I have is very important."]

Jessica, Belezean-Honduran-American: It kind of bothers me that she feels pressured. To look Latina [pause] It's like something you shouldn't [re-directs thought] Women are pressured enough by the media to look a certain way. If anything she shouldn't feel like [pause] I mean, so many people want to look like her probably, and she still feels like she wants to look like something else. I don't know. It's strange. It's a strange quote.

Jessica's comment indicates that she questions the quote. She sees it as pressuring Latinas to look a certain way, indicating a more negotiated reading.

Latina magazine complies with the idea that the ideal Latina body is curvy (Negrón-Muntaner 1997). Based on the above-mentioned conversations regarding the ideal body featured in *Latina* magazine, it seems as though the participants perceived the magazine as upholding this ideal. Overall, although the participants conveyed that such a body ideal pressures women into thinking they should strive to or achieve or emphasize a

curvy figure most of the women did not explore any dangers in the magazine upholding this ideal.

Women in all three groups viewed the ideal Latina body in *Latina* magazine as unrealistic and recognized pressure to conform to it as detrimental to Latinas' self-images. But they only acknowledged the pressure and merely questioned and criticized the article with comments like "It's like why do you need to wear your heritage out on your body?" and "I disagree with it" and "It's not necessarily the best [thing for a magazine to do]." In general, their lack of in-depth criticism indicates that they are able to question magazine messages, but whether they are actually able to resist such media messages was not assessed because of the lack of detail in their responses.

Overall, their interpretations indicated that they rejected the *suggestion* that Latinas should strive to achieve an ideal Latina body, especially one that suggests sexiness or curves. They did not delve into any deeper meanings regarding why this ideal exists.

Moreover, even though virtually all of the women criticized the magazine's suggestion of achieving an ideal Latina body, a couple women indicated that they might feel pressure to have the ideal Latina body from their cultures. For instance, recall that some of the participants said they buy jeans that emphasize their rear ends and that in Puerto Rico a woman with a flat rear end is *chumba*. In sum, the participants did not let on that they respond to the media with dominant ideological behaviors, but their behaviors of buying jeans to emphasize their butts and the reference to *chumba* indicate that some of their behaviors do align with the dominant behavior for their cultures. Therefore, it seems as though the pressure to conform to the ideal Latina body comes

from their cultures of origin, the mainstream media, and *Latina* magazine, but their cultures may provide a more influential pressure.

Biculturalism

The third article presented during the focus group entitled "*Que vivan* our dualities!" addresses biculturalism, and bicultural Latinas comprise *Latina* magazine's target audience. The article begins, "Here it is again. Hispanic Heritage Month." A brief historical run down of what is celebrated during this month follows. Next, the article highlights the positive aspects of Columbus's entrance into the New World and the liberation of several Latin American nations from Spain. According to the article, these positive aspects of being bicultural include being bilingual, celebrating mix-and-match holidays with various types of Latin American and American foods, and appreciating Latin American heritage and more modern aspects of U.S. culture.

Their primarily negotiated reading of the article came from two sources. First, many of the women criticized the magazine's tendency to generalize about the traditions, beliefs, and practices of Latinas even if they partially identified with them. Second, some participants recognized that the article appeals to a dominant audience, namely Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Mexicans.

Criticizing generalizations. Not one woman in all three focus groups completely identified with the article. Rather, most of the women in the focus groups partially identified with the article, meaning they were either directly or indirectly familiar with at least some of the traditions, practices, and celebrations mentioned.

> Rachel, Panamanian: For the most part. I mean like she said, we don't have [pause] like Cinco de Mayo, we don't really do that. We have *pachangas* but we don't do like hot dogs and tequila. We don't drink that.

The author's reference to specific Latina traditions instigated criticisms from the women. The main criticism of the article was that it implied that *all* Latinas are and act as the article suggests, and therefore their personal experiences that told them other caused a more negotiated reading. For example, the article reads, "How much luckier can you be to enjoy Thanksgiving turkey stuffed with rice and beans; a Fourth of July picnic with fajitas and fireworks; a Cinco de Mayo *pachanga* with hot dogs and tequila" (Prida 2003, p. 82).

> Claudia, Puerto Rican: It's a bit much. And like we don't all drink tequila. I have personally never stuffed turkey with rice and beans.
>
> Jennifer, Dominican-American: Or like here too it says [reading], "Light a candle to *la virgencita*." I don't know about you guys but I'm not religious. That's like a big stereotype like they're all Catholic and really religious.

Their more negotiated reading came from most of the women expressing that they did practice some of the things the article spoke of even though they criticized that the articles was generalizing. Once again, like the common criticisms of the previously discussed articles, the women did not approve of the article addressing them as a homogenous group. Hence, the notion of a symbolic or imagined community shaped by a mass medium such as *Latina* was not appealing to the women in the focus groups, and it inhibited them from accepting the messages in the magazine without question (Anderson 1983; Dávila 2001).

> Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: There's just SO many different traditions from each country and so many different sayings
>
> Voice 1: Right.
>
> Voice 2: Right.
>
> Karla: that you can't just encompass them all.

Diana, Peruvian: in one article.

Karla: Yeah.

Although women in all three groups expressed that they did not approve of the

magazine's generalizations in regards to the Latina practices and traditions, not one

participant conveyed that she recognized any consumerist implications to the

conglomeration of Latinas. One focus group participant merely said, "Well, I mean they

had to sum everyone up." However, marketing needs and requirements downplay

heterogeneity, and therefore, the reason the article generalizes is to reach a mass audience

(Dávila 2001, p. 80). Referring to the Latinas as a panethnic audience aids in marketing

to a mass audience, but it is appealing to a dominant audience (e.g., the audience with the

most purchasing power) that is also effective when marketing a product (Dávila 2001).

Appealing to a dominant audience. Women in all three groups expressed that they

believed the article would best appeal to Latinas of certain national origin, namely Cuba,

Mexico, Puerto Rico. A few women also commented on how they thought the magazine

targeted Latinas of Caribbean origin.

> Laura, Cuban: [Reading a line from the article] And *por si las moscas*. It's
> really funny, but I really, really think it targets like Cubans a lot. It targets
> Mexicans a lot.

> Ana, Colombian-American: Like the [reading], "light the candle to *la
> virgencita*" I see that more as a Cuban thing, personally, like I don't see it
> *[voice trails off]*

> Claudia, Puerto Rican: Really? I see that as Mexican.

> Jennifer, Dominican-American: Yeah, Mexican.

> Melissa, Colombian: Yeah. Actually, I was going to say that. I'd see this
> text and the picture is more focused for Caribbean woman. Like Puerto
> Rican, Cuban, Dominican.

According to Dávila (2001), narrowing an audience that is of various origins, cultures, and nationalities makes it easier for marketers to appeal to an audience. Understanding "the specific nationalities that dominate each market within specific regional areas" enables *Latina* magazine to reach Latinas that dominate the magazine market, whether it be Puerto Ricans in New York or Cubans in Miami (Dávila 2001, p. 80). Of course, *Latina* magazine does not explicitly say that the magazine is for Latinas of a specific country of origin. Nevertheless, the women felt that the magazine targets Latinas of specific national origin, which may indicate that the magazine is attempting to reach Latinas that are in the greatest numbers in the United States. However, this may not be the case because, according to U.S. Census data, Hispanics of Mexican origin comprise 66.9% of the Hispanic population in the United States, Hispanics of Puerto Rican origin 8.6%, and Hispanics of Cuban origin 3.7% (U.S. Census Bureau 2002).[6] Nevertheless, the participants' negotiated reading of the article indicate that while they simultaneously identify with the content but loathe that the magazine lumps women of various roots together, they fail to demonstrate that they recognize the dominant ideology, which supports consumerism via mass target audiences (Dávila 2001).

Family

The women were asked to read an article that purports to describe typical Latino family relations. The major theme that emerged from the participants' responses was that most of the women identified with the article's assertion that Latinas struggle to balance pursuing their individual lives and pleasing their parents, who stress the importance of

---

[6] The U.S. Census Bureau's 2002 Hispanic Population report does not specify what % of the Hispanic population is Dominican. According to the report, Hispanics of Central and South American origin comprise 14.3 % of the population and "other Hispanic" comprise 6.3% of the population (p. 1)

family. Their identification with the article indicated that, as the article purported to

show, the women live between their Latin American culture and their U.S. culture,

although they tend to identify with the supposed U.S. norm that emphasizes

individualism (Dávila 2001).

Adhering to the U.S. norm. A psychologist is quoted in the article, "You have to

understand that your parents come from a close-knit community where the family unit is

in a way more important that the individual." The article describes the tug and pull that

Latinas may feel to please their parents and themselves at the same time. The article

states that "any Latina who wasn't adopted by Scandinavian socialists knows" that being

"*una niña buena*" (a good girl) means sacrificing "anything and everything for *la*

familia." The article then states, "But what if that's not you? What if you need to take

risks, push limits, or just be yourself instead of trying to fit into some preconceived

notion of who your family thinks you should be?" The article conveys that this tug and

pull is common and that Latinas "must accept that it's okay if your world and theirs

aren't the same. Ultimately, it's your life, and only you can decide what behavior feels

right."

The article complies with the assumption that Latinos and Anglos have certain

cultural traits. That is, that Latinos have "obedient and dependent children," while Anglos

"supposedly see themselves as individuals, rely on themselves and institutions rather than

on family" (Albert 1998; Dávila 2001, p. 70; Shorris 1992). Albert (1998) said, "There is

a substantial body of evidence that Latinos/as from all origins are deeply committed to

their families" (p. 165). Yet, unlike the participants' attacks of the generalizations in the

other articles, most of the women did not attack the article's generalization about Latino

families.

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: . . . And I think that one thing she says is very true.
> In our families, we're much more oriented toward the family than the
> individual. If you're parents are going and it's a family reunion, you guys
> are going.

The participants' mostly dominant reading of the article indicated that they

learned the value that U.S. culture places on individualism (supposedly) and the value

that Latin American cultures (supposedly) place on the family unit. The assumption

exists that Latinos are more focused on family than individualism (Shorris 1992). Shorris

(1992) said, "Individualism, which defines the world according to the person, creates

different structures in the mind, looser, more free flowing, not necessarily less loyal, but

less bound to loyalty; no one could ever mistake Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David

Thoreau for a Latino" (p. 332).

Additionally, the assumption exists that there is a traditional Latino family and

that there are rules (Shorris 1992). Shorris (1992) said, "If a Latino faces a choice

between family and education, family must come first. To choose otherwise would be

unmanly, ungrateful, inhuman, sinful" (p. 218). Similarly, the more dominant reading

indicated that the women identified with the article's assumption that there are rules in

the "traditional Latino family." For example, a few of the focus group participants told

stories of how it was initially difficult for their parents to accept their moving out of the

house to attend a university. The women viewed their struggle for independence as a

cultural thing that Anglos, for the most part, are not familiar with.

> Sonia, Cuban-American: . . . You know, it was scary. Even up to the day
> where like I was moving up here. Whatever it was, a Saturday or a
> Sunday. And my dad had already rented a pickup to like move my stuff

and everything. I was really scared the night before that he was going to wake up and tell me, "Unpack everything you aren't going anywhere."

Like Sonia's story of her struggle to leave her parents' home, a few other participants told similar stories, and these accounts aligned with the article. Hence, their more dominant reading of the article came from their personal experiences aligning with the experiences discussed in the article. Most of the women perceived the article as reflecting reality and did not question it.

For other participants, their negotiated reading resulted from identifying with parts of the article but not others. For example, a few women expressed that their mothers are more "liberal," and therefore, they less directly identified with the part of the article that spoke of mothers.

Additionally, they recognized the discord between the two cultures (Dávila 2001). This recognition parallels Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) who write that some biculturals experience internal conflict because they recognize discrepancies between their two distinct cultures. The women directly associated "being Latina" with emphasis on being family-oriented.

> Julie, Cuban-American: "I love the way we react with family. Everybody is close-knit. And to me, that's what Latina is. It's having that bond with the rest of your family. That's what it means to be honestly. Cause that's just [re-directs thought] you can look at my dad's family [Dad is Anglo]. We probably see my uncle, my dad's twin, like once every five years. Honestly, we barely see his side of the family. But my parent's family, my mom's family [Mom is Cuban] is very close-knit. Every one is always together. And to me, like that's what I think of honestly."

> Ana, Colombian-American: . . . So, it's like you have to remember you have a family name to continue with supposedly you know but, I don't, I'm like first-generation here, and I don't follow like I have to make my family proud it's really like me.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, you say you don't follow that you have to make your family proud. Can you elaborate on that?

Ana: Yeah. Like, I don't have to do what, like I don't do what they want, like I don't keep them in mind when I want to do something. Like well, this would make my dad really mad if I did this, you know like, or what would my aunt say? Like, I'm just like, well, whatever, it's not their lives. They have their own to handle. You know, they're not living my life. My mom has always been like, "whatever you want to do, you know, It's your life." So [voice trails off]

Ana's more negotiated reading is an example of some minor hints of difference in the women's negotiations of this article. Ana's negotiated reading comes from her personal experience. She does not accept the message in the article that says as a Latina she is naturally concerned with her parents' expectations, but she still does accept the message in the article that Latinas have the desire to thwart parental expectations and exhibits this when she says, "I don't do what they want." Ana attributes her desire to do this to being born in the United State unlike her family who is from Colombia.

Similarly, some of the other participants expressed that they are not as concerned with parental expectations as the magazine suggests. Rather, they are concerned about different parental expectations that the specific ones mentioned in the article. Nevertheless, even though some participants expressed that they are not as concerned about parental or family expectations, they still expressed that they are thwarting their parents' expectations, which complies with the magazines message. Such negotiations of the article indicate a more negotiated reading.

Johnson (2000) says that ethnic media produced in the United States have assimilative functions that, a theorist on ideology might argue, produce and reproduce dominant ideologies. Using Johnson's (2000) definition, *Latina* magazine demonstrates through this article that it does encourage readers to be members of mainstream society,

meaning the magazine encourages Latinas to stand by their personal beliefs and to explain to their parents how their generation differs from that of their parents. The participants' discussions parallel Pompper and Koenig (2004) who said, "While many Hispanic parents orient themselves with a cultural heritage beyond U.S. borders, their children attend more to the culture in which they find themselves (p. 100).

Although most of the participants expressed that their parents and families have certain expectations, women in all three groups conveyed that they were independent of their parents' beliefs, indicating they had socialized to the supposed dominant U.S. norm that fosters individualism (Albert 1998; Dávila 2001; Shorris 1992). Even the women who expressed that, *unlike* the article conveys, they do not have their parents in mind all of the time indicated that they had learned the social norm of being individuals.

The article is hegemonic in the sense that it supports the supposed U.S. value of individualism and thwarts the supposed Latin American ideal that centers on family (Candelaria et al. 2004; Dávila 2001; Shorris 1992). The participants indicated that they learned the behavior of the dominant group. That is, they were assimilated and learned to respect their families but to also pursue their individual desires.

Religion

The women were asked to read an article that describes the relation of Catholic virgin goddesses to indigenous goddesses. In all three focus groups, this article did not incite much conversation. Most of the women did not engage in the article because they considered themselves "not religious" or not devout Catholics. Even the couple participants who said they were very religious or "strong Catholic" Women in all three groups merely found the article to be "interesting," "educational," "informative," and "cool."

The Catholic assumption. Women in all three groups were aware of the assumption that Latinas are Catholic (Albert 1998; Cadena 1998). Today, 70% of Latin America is Catholic (Hagopian 2005). According to Chabrán and Chabrán (1996), "As of the early 1990's, Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion of Latinos," and "Latinos in the United States were estimated to be 78% Catholic" (p. 1363). Although previous conversations with the participants indicated that they recognized and somewhat criticized the assumption that Latinas are Catholic, in general, the women did not focus their discussions on criticizing the article for assuming that Latinas are Catholic, with the some exception.

> Lilly, Argentinean-American: Well, this is cool like I'm in an anthropology class or something. And I don't think it's trying to like assume that this is what everyone believes.

> Sonia, Cuban-American: Yeah, it says like where it's from and stuff.

> Ana, Colombian-American: Except for the part that says, [reading] "And like our mixed blood, our mixed beliefs traces our roots to La Conquista"

> Lilly: How do they know I have mixed blood? My parents could be from France and they moved to Argentina. And I'm actually totally French or something.

> Ana: Or mixed beliefs.

The other participants did not add anything to elaborate on the above-mentioned comments, which showed again how the participants tended to be defensive against any generalizations. Their defensive comments indicated that these two participants questioned the article, indicating a more negotiated reading. Such defensive comments, however, were not the norm in terms of this article. Overall, the discussions of this article were brief and positive. Moreover, their discussions focused on their individual beliefs and how they differed from those of their families instead of the article content.

Most of the women in the focus groups were not Catholic, but most of the women's families were Catholic. Many of the women expressed that they did not agree with Catholicism and what they perceived as its strict doctrines or that they preferred another denomination.

> Julie, Cuban-American: It's a type of religion where everything is in a square. It's a box. It's perfect. Like you can't take anything . . . like you know what I mean? It's hard to explain. Like you can't um add your own perspective to it because it's like what's in the book.

> Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: It's already perfect.

> Julie: Thank you. Yeah.

> Karla: There's no room for any additions or changes.

> Julie: Exactly.

> Diana, Peruvian: It's very structured.

> Julie: I went to a non-denominational church with my friend last year, and I loved it.

> Diana: I love it. [The non-denominational church.]

> Julie: Cause this is too strict for me. It's like it's this way or no way. And I don't really like that, but I do like the traditions and stuff like that.

Their criticisms of the religion did not coincide with any criticism of the article because, in general, there were nearly no criticisms of the article. The article was simply about an aspect of Catholicism that most of them were unfamiliar. They did not dislike the article nor convey that other Latinas would not relate, they simply did not relate because of their personal beliefs.

Tradition

The women were asked to read a very brief article that describes the Latin American tradition of linking surnames once married. The first line of the article

reads, "When Cuquita Pérez marries Fulano González in any Latin American country, she becomes Cuquita Pérez de González." The article clearly suggests that readers should adopt this Latin American tradition of linking surnames so as to maintain their maiden names and to make it easier should they divorce. It reads, "So, mujeres (women) unite! Keep alive the Latin American tradition of linking surnames."

Overall, none of the participants expressed that they would not do as the article suggests and add "*de*." The participants' responses could be categorized as follows. First, there were participants who expressed that they would not add "*de*" to their names, and they would like to keep their maiden name once married (oppositional). Second, there were participants who expressed that they would not add "*de*" to their names, and they would give up their maiden names to take on their husbands' last names (dominant). Third, there were participants who expressed that they would not add "*de*" to their names, and they would keep their last names *and* add their husbands' last names either with a space or a dash (negotiated).

The proprietary "de." Their more oppositional reading came from one source: The participants recognized the proprietary implications of the "*de*." Although, it should be noted that the article highlighted such proprietary implications. The article reads, "And while Cuquita may indeed grumble about adding the proprietary "de," she probably realizes it's better than losing her maiden name entirely."

> Melissa, Colombian: The way I see it I mean, like a personal way, when they say Cuquita Perez de Gonzalez it's like she's like a property of him.

Voice 1: Yeah

Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: Yeah. That's the way it sounds.

Laura, Cuban: Yeah.

Melissa: So, I don't agree with that. That's why [voice trails off]

Their more oppositional reading came from their resistance to accepting the "*de*"

and the dominant ideology that supports patriarchy. In once instance, a participant's

examination of the suggestion of linking surnames caused her to view the tradition as a

positive feminist practice, although she likely viewed the idea of a woman retaining her

maiden name as the more positive factor.

> Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: . . . It's a nice idea. And I think that you often picture Hispanic women as being less feminist than American women, and this is one of those things that American women should be incorporating, I think, into their lives more often. And a lot of feminists do do it here. But I don't think that a lot of people really view it as that over there. It's just like tradition. Nobody really questions why it's been happening, but I think it's a nice feminist thing to incorporate in your life when you get married.

> Jessica, Belezean-Honduran-American: If you really want to be picky and contradictory and about everything you could say Perez de Gonzalez—of Gonzalez—that's somehow not feminist but, but I think it's a [pause] I agree with everyone. I think it's a cool idea, and um. It does make sense. Like especially if you have a career like this is saying and you're known by that name. Why should you have to change it? You know? And make everyone get used to your new name."

Many of the participants expressed that they liked the idea of keeping their

maiden names once married so as to maintain a sense of identity and to maintain name

recognition in their careers, indicating an oppositional reading of the dominant ideology

that supports a woman taking on her husband's name. On the other hand, a few of the

participants expressed that they like the idea of keeping their maiden names *and* adding

their husbands' names.

> Karla, Colombian-Argentinean-American: It's just nice to be able to view the marriage as more of a uniting process with both of your names being included as opposed to like throwing away who you are, throwing away like who you were when you take away your own maiden last name.

> Patricia, Puerto Rican: To me it's like I don't change when I get married. I'm still Patricia [last name]. And if someone, if he wants to put his name at the end of mine and I can put mine at the end of his, it doesn't matter. But to me it's like I want people to know me by my name for the rest of my life. Not for people to see Patricia whatever and then be like is this the same one I knew? [pause] I don't know.

A few of women expressed that it was acceptable to add their future husbands'

names to theirs with a dash or a space. But they linked the "*de*" to a stamp of ownership.

Thus, for these women their more negotiated reading came from their desire to hold onto

their maiden name and their ultimate conformance to dominant standards that espouse

taking on the husband's name. These women, like all the women in the groups,

disapproved of incorporating the word "*de.*" Hence, their more negotiated reading came

from their resistance to the "*de*" and their resistance to giving up their maiden names, but

their ultimate acceptance of the dominant ideology.

Practicality. Many participants expressed that keeping their maiden name was

not practical, and a couple of other participants conveyed that they would drop their

maiden names to take on their married names, indicating their views align with the

dominant ideology that supports patriarchy.

> Laura, Cuban: Family. I mean you claim like your taxes and you fill out your paperwork, it's just easier if the whole family has the same last name. "what you do" in the United States, her subscription to the U.S. norm supports dominant ideology, even though she rejects the magazine's message that suggests keeping the maiden name and adopting the Latin American practice of adding "*de*."

Overall, like the religion article, the participants' responses to this brief article were limited. A few women had strong opinions about either taking or not taking on their spouses' last names, and many of the women discussed the article but did not have strong opinions either way. Another issue that the participants did not voice strong opinions about nor really *any* opinion or even observation about was how the magazine assumed that readers would fall in love with and marry men. In short, none of the women in the groups challenged the heterosexual norm that exists indicating that they learned and internalized this norm.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Research suggests that women are susceptible to the messages in women's magazines; therefore, my study sought to explore how a group of Latinas negotiated a magazine designed specifically for them and whether they accepted, questioned, or rejected the messages in the magazine. My study does not intend to provide a general conclusion about Latinas or *Latina* magazine. Rather, it attempts to provide an understanding of *Latina* magazine through 20 self-identified Latinas' perspectives.

Summary of Findings

The research question central to my study is "How do Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina?" Women in all three focus groups negotiated *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina in similar and dissimilar ways. Two factors that influenced the participants' negotiations of *Latina* magazine were their lived experiences and how their lived experiences related to the article at hand.

Most of the women's attitudes were, at one point or another, resistant to many of the magazine's messages. Consequently, the readings of *Latina* magazine were largely negotiated and, at times, oppositional. However, the women also often indicated that their beliefs and sometimes their behaviors aligned with dominant ideology.

In general, the women's negotiations of *Latina* magazine were complex, at times inconsistent and contradictory, and they frequently indicated that they felt defensive toward the messages. To explain, their responses were complex because they often

assumed all three reading positions (i.e., dominant, negotiated, and oppositional). That is, they accepted some messages without question, they partially accepted the other messages, and they rejected others—sometimes all within the same article. In addition, sometimes a negotiated reading would give way to a preferred reading.

The participants' responses were sometimes inconsistent because they contradicted themselves. For example, the participants' main criticism of *Latina* magazine was that they thought "it's not good to generalize Latinas as like Latinas as like this whole group because there are many sub-cultures and we are very different between cultures."

Yet, in spite of their many attitudinal criticisms of the magazine's generalizations, they too demonstrated a tendency to generalize about Latina appearance, beliefs, and behaviors. For instance, they demonstrated that their attitudes contradicted their behaviors when they said that the mediated Latina ideal look was "Brazilian" and when a couple of participants said to another, "You don't look Hispanic."

Finally, their defensive responses toward the magazine's messages appeared to stem from their concerns about the media reproducing stereotypes and misrepresenting Latinas. They appeared to also be defensive because they were concerned about *Latina* magazine confirming negative stereotypes that could potentially make them appear promiscuous, uneducated, or unprofessional while in the workplace.

Participant Awareness of Mediated Ideals

The participants expressed that they are aware that there is a Latina ideal in mainstream mass media. The women defined the Latina ideal in physical terms. Women in all three groups described the mediated Latina ideal as "curvy" with a "big booty" yet "slim." The Latina ideal also includes "tan skin," "dark, wavy hair," and "dark eyes."

Additionally, the ideal is perceived as "sexy" and "exotic." Additionally, the participants were aware of how the mainstream mediated Latina ideal was different from other mediated ideal beauty, namely the ubiquitous ideal beauty that prefers blonde hair and blue eyes. A couple of the participants expressed that this ideal excluded them.

Their negotiations of the mediated Latina ideal in mainstream media somewhat matched their negotiations of the mediated Latina ideal in *Latina* magazine in terms of skin tone, hair type and color, body type and sexiness. For example, like their impressions of Latinas in the mainstream mass media, they perceived *Latina* magazine to portray "brown skin, the same kind of a skin, like a homogeneous idea of what it is to be Latina." This also supports Dávila (2001) who says that the media typically portray a "generic or pan-Hispanic 'look'" for marketing purposes (Dávila 2001, p. 109). Their impressions of Latinas in mainstream media included dark, wavy hair, and similarly, they spoke of how the Latinas pictured in the magazine had dark, "thick," and "poofy" hair. They recognized the curvaceous Latina body ideal in both mainstream mass media and *Latina* magazine. And finally, they also expressed that being Latina, according to *Latina* magazine, means that "You have to be sexy."

They expressed criticism of the Latina ideal in *Latina* magazine because they perceived the magazine to be pressuring Latinas to conform to it, and sometimes they saw this as an unrealistic expectation. For the most part, the participants' responses appeared to be attempting to resist messages that promoted the Latina ideal in the magazine. Still, a couple of the participants' comments about how they buy jeans that accentuate their rear ends and one participant's brief reference to the aesthetic preferences in Puerto Rico indicated that cultures might influence dominant behavior for

a minority group. Moreover, the participants' comments hinted at not only how *Latina* magazine supports dominant standards of beauty, but how the magazine may also reproduce dominant standards of beauty for minority cultures.

Trends in Negotiating the Other Articles

Beyond physical appearance and in terms of their negotiations of the articles about biculturalism, family, religion, and tradition, their attitudes were mostly negotiated because many of the women partially identified with many of the articles' messages but also questioned, criticized, or were defensive toward them. In general, the women were less likely to question or criticize the generalizations in the articles when they perceived the articles as reflecting their personal realities.

For example, in terms of the article about biculturalism, many participants were familiar with the some of the traditions mentioned in the article because their families celebrated those traditions, but they were not accustomed to partaking in the other traditions mentioned. This caused the women to perceive some of the magazine messages as realistic and to question the rest. When reading the article about family, many participants expressed that they somewhat saw their own families described in the article or they were indirectly aware of Latino families like the one described, but the article did not completely or directly relate to their lived experiences. In short, their more negotiated readings (which were the most frequent type of reading position assumed) came from accepting some of the preferred message in an article but not all of it.

Implications of Findings

Considering the findings of this study, there are three main implications: First, many of the participants were aware of dominant standards in the magazine, but they did not demonstrate the ability to fully articulate in-depth criticism. Second, *Latina* magazine

has created a new standard in terms of qualifying as Latina. Third, *Latina* magazine is alienating its target audience.

Awareness when reading a women's magazine. Gough-Yates (2003) said, "The women's magazine industry is understood as a monolithic meaning-producer, circulating magazines that contain 'messages' and 'signs' about the nature of femininity that serve to promote and legitimate dominant interests" (p. 7). Likewise, according to existing studies, women's magazines support and reflect ruling ideology (Calafell 2001; Duke 2002; Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002, McRobbie 1978). Hence, theories on ideology guided this research. Like previous studies have shown, the findings of this study indicate that the focus group participants perceived *Latina* magazine as reproducing dominant ideology even if they were not always aware of how or why the magazine was doing so.

One contemporary perspective about media audiences is that they do not have that much power when it comes to interpreting and negotiating a text (Morley 1992). Consequently, much existing research about women's magazines fails to emphasize the power or even the role of magazine readers (Gough-Yates 2003; McRobbie 1996). Yet, it is important to consider readers when assessing women's magazines because ideological effects cannot be assumed (Johnson 1986-1987). The reason being, one's reading of a text may differ from another's based on his or her social context, making the messages polysemic, meaning they are open to multiple interpretations (Durham 1999a; Fiske 1986; Hall 1982; McQuail 1994; Philo 1999). Keeping this in mind, some studies have explored audience ability to recognize and expose dominant ideology (Adegbola 2002; Goodman 2002; Duke 2002; Durham 2004; Woodward 2003). The same researchers who have explored readers' abilities to recognize and expose dominant ideology have often

found that, try as they might, audiences are not able to completely resist hegemonic messages (Adegbola 2002; Goodman 2002; Duke 2002; Durham 2004; Woodward 2003). Therefore, much research about women's magazines concludes that women are susceptible to magazine messages even if they are active readers and may maintain some agency and ability to resist some messages.

The findings of this study support what previous research has concluded. As previous research suggests, the participants in all three focus groups conducted for my study demonstrated that they were somewhat aware of the presence of dominant standards in some of the articles, and this resulted in their more negotiated reading of *Latina* magazine as a whole. To explain, most of the participants did express criticism of the articles (one participant even remarked how as college students, they are more apt to critically analyze the text), and their criticisms seemed to prevent them from accepting many of the magazine's messages.

Still, although the participants conveyed some awareness and criticism of dominant standards, for the most part, they did not exhibit that they were able to fully articulate their awareness of any underlying dominant ideology. That is to say, the participants did not convey that they were aware of why *Latina* magazine's ideology typically aligned with dominant ideology, and they did not specifically link the dominant standards in the magazine to power relations—with a few exceptions. One participant exposed the dominant ideology in two out of the six articles. And the other oppositional readings to the tradition article about linking surnames once married were likely a result of the magazine alerting the readers to the proprietary implications. In sum, truly oppositional readings were scarce.

The findings of this study infer that when Latinas read a magazine designed especially for them, they may be more apt to criticize it because it speaks of "us" and "we" and because it claims to represent them. Yet, just because readers are apt to voice criticisms of magazine messages does not mean that they are equipped to resist all magazine messages.

According to a couple studies, Latina/Hispanic women may be more able to resist the mediated ideal in mainstream mass media that targets a predominantly Anglo audience (Goodman 2002; Pompper and Koenig 2004). How well Latinas are able to resist ideological messages in an ethnic mass medium designed especially for them, however, is still not very well understood even though the findings of this study indicate that the women were able to resist some messages (mainly because they did not identify with them, and not because they exposed any dominant ideology). In sum, the lack of oppositional readings implies that Latinas may be susceptible to *Latina* magazine's messages even if they do criticize them, however, their susceptibility to these messages as they would apply (or would not apply) to them in real life was not determined from this study.

Similarly, studies with Latinas/os negotiating Latino media indicate that they are often offended by the representations, criticize the portrayals, and do not perceive themselves to be as they are represented in the media (Dávila 2002; Rojas 2004). Nonetheless, like the women in this study demonstrated, these other studies also found that even though the Latina/o study participants criticized media representations, they still internalized dominant definitions of what it means to be Latina/o and often subscribed to

the dominant ideology in their everyday attitudes, perceptions, and even behaviors

(Dávila 2002).

Additionally, although one study suggests that South Asian Indian American

adolescents may be able to reject media messages because of cultural cues that sway

them to remain uninfluenced by U.S. media in terms of sexual behavior (Durham 2004),

the findings of my study did not definitively imply that Latin American cultural cues

caused the women to reject the magazine's messages. Though their cultural cues may

have inspired many of their negotiated readings. For example, one participant said that

Latinas are not as strongly influenced by the media as White women because of their

mothers and *abuelas* (grandmothers) who say, "Oh, those women are not like you. You

don't have to be like them." While the participants did not always specifically express

that their culture was the reason they were able to reject the messages, as the above-

mentioned quote demonstrates, they often alluded to the fact that their cultures,

nationalities, and lived experiences inhibited them from accepting the magazine's

preferred messages. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the participants' Latin

American cultures caused them to have oppositional readings. If anything, their higher

educational experiences appeared to be the cause of the few oppositional readings.

In summation, exploring how these women read *Latina* magazine has larger

implications for how they read all media every day. Today, for many young women,

media are *the* source of information about the world. The importance of studying whether

the women read the magazine critically is as Kellner (1995) said,

> When individuals learn to perceive how media culture transmits
> oppressive representations of class, race, gender, sexuality, and so on that
> influence thought and behavior, they are able to develop critical distance
> from the works of media culture and thus gain power over their culture.

> Such empowerment can help promote a more general questioning of the organization of society and can help induce individuals to join and participate in radical political movements struggling for social transformation. (pp. 60-61)

Therefore, although the women exhibited general questioning of the magazine's messages, their lack of understanding about how the media "transmits oppressive representations" may inhibit them from truly gaining power and equal status in U.S. society (Kellner 1995, p. 60).

A new ideal to live up to. Besides exploring the implications of the participants' awareness of dominant standards in the magazine, there is a second key implication of the findings. *Latina* magazine has created a new standard in terms of qualifying as Latina.

Most of the research and literature about women's magazines since the 1970s has been written by feminist media scholars who have reached similar conclusions; these magazines are problematic for women because their hegemonic standards of beauty and their dominant ideological messages perpetuate gender, racial, ethnic, and class inequalities, and stereotypes, thereby oppressing the construction of positive feminine identities (Gough-Yates 2003; McRobbie 1996).

While the findings of this study cannot suggest definitively that *Latina* magazine oppresses the prospect of positive identities within this group of women, it is evident that the women found the magazine to be problematic. And although they did not always explicitly express that dominant ideology was problematic, women in all three groups conveyed that they were aware and critical of the dominant ideology present in the magazine. This indicates that dominant ideology guides *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina.

Because *Latina* magazine is published in the United States in the English-language, one might argue that the magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina is influenced by U.S. dominant ideology. This dominant ideology dictates the magazine's concept of what it means to be Latina and, thus, one might argue, what Latinas may perceive as common sense or normal. Hence, according to *Latina* magazine, the "normal" Latina has curves, tan skin, and dark, wavy hair. The "normal" Latina also celebrates Cinco de Mayo, has a very close-knit family, is Catholic, and would consider her heritage as cause for linking her maiden name with "*de*" to her future husband's last name. These are just some of the elements of the Latina norm or ideal in *Latina* magazine that the participants saw in *Latina* magazine, and many of them expressed that this Latina ideal excluded them. For example, one participant said, "The more I read *Latina*, the less Latina I feel." This sentiment parallels Calafell (2001) who said, "I am not reflected in the Latina images in *Latina* magazine . . . I do not want to be left out of my own community" (p. 40).

These statements also support Tuchman's (1978) reflection hypothesis, which posits that media reflections are actually reflections of the dominant values and hierarchies of a society, and people may view these media representations as reflections of reality. If Latinas do not see themselves in the pages of *Latina* magazine or do not identify with the content, they are more likely to be marginalized and feel less Latina (Calafell 2001). A couple of the women conveyed that the magazine had the power to create a new standard that women may feel pressured to live up to. For instance, one participant said that *Latina* magazine made her feel like she is supposed to have "dark skin, dark hair, the perfect accent, the perfect curves." Her subsequent contributions to

the discussion did not suggest that she took any measures to be like the Latinas in the magazine.

While the magazine appears to attempt to invite all Latinas into its textually based Latina community, it marginalizes Latinas who do not fit the mold described in the magazine (Calafell 2001). On the other hand, *Latina* magazine may have the power to affirm one's authenticity as a Latina. In fact, one participant conveyed that she was pleasantly surprised to see her family's traditions as represented in the magazine because she viewed herself to be "probably the least Hispanic out of all of us." In sum, while the women often criticized some of the magazine's messages, they demonstrated that they were not impervious to feeling left out or uninvited into this textually based Latina community.

Nevertheless, unlike other media studies in which women conveyed that they strive to be like the women they see (Durham 1999b; Goodman 2002; Pompper and Koenig 2004), none of the women in this study overtly expressed that they wanted be the Latina described in the magazine. Rather, they assessed whether they identified or not. If they did not identify, they were more likely to criticize the magazine, and if they did identify, they were more likely to talk about how their personal experiences relate to the article.

Alienating the target audience. Besides the conclusion that *Latina* magazine may have the power to make the women in the focus groups feel less Latina, there are other ways in which the magazine alienates its target audience. The magazine was criticized by many participants for being "just another *Cosmopolitan*," and a few of the participants expressed that they have different expectations for a magazine targeting

Latinas than they would other mainstream magazines. Although *Latina* magazine has an opportunity to be different from other women's magazines, it still conforms to dominant standards of beauty and femininity. For example, one participant noted how she perceived the magazine's definition of beauty as having White features. *Latina* magazine also supports consumerism and the pan-ethnic impulse just like other mainstream media. Hence, it is apparent that dominant ideas that make consumerism and the pan-ethnic impulse the norm steer *Latina* magazine's ideology of what it means to be Latina. One might argue that because *Latina* magazine is marketed to a pan-ethnic, mass audience in the United States, it will do just as other mainstream women's magazines that market to a mass audience do and that is reproduce dominant ideology. In sum, the women perceived *Latina* magazine as doing "what the American magazines do too," and this alienated them. When a few participants were asked how they would make the magazine better, they responded by saying that it should be more open to diversity and portray fewer stereotypes.

In terms of the other articles, which did not address physical appearance but rather culture, family, religion, and tradition, the magazine also supported dominant standards and reproduced U.S. dominant ideologies. For example, the women perceived the article about biculturalism to appeal to dominant audiences, and this somewhat supports the marketing strategy of targeting specific nationalities that dominate each market and that have the most purchasing power (Dávila 2001). The article about family supported the U.S. ideal of individualism. The women perceived the article about religion as supporting the U.S. assumption that all Latinas are Catholic. The women perceived the article about tradition as suggesting they uphold a Latin American tradition, but one that is still linked

to patriarchy. In other words, although *Latina* magazine claims to reflect "Latino culture," one might argue, and the participants' comments indicate, that it may more so reflects U.S. ideals. This gives credence to the argument that there is no Latino culture. Like Suárez-Orozco and Páez (2002) said, the term "Latino" only relates to the U.S. experience. Therefore, there is not much that is truly Latin American about *Latina* magazine. Similarly, Calafell (2001) said, "*Latina* has rearticulated some of the same rhetoric of the Chicano movement, but much of the underlying sentiment is still informed by dominant White standards" (p. 39).

Because *Latina* magazine reproduces U.S. ideals and standards, each woman with Latin American roots is not truly able to uphold her Latin American heritage, but rather she learns that it is better to align her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors with the dominant ideology. Hence, there is a contradiction within the magazine. *Latina* magazine glamorizes the aspects that make Latinas other in the mainstream society in which they live, uplifting them, and to apparently make them feel positive about themselves, but the magazine itself simultaneously makes Latinas feel as though they are other in their own textually based Latina community.

Filling a Gap in Research

The implications of the findings support and add to the body of literature about women's magazines, Latinas, and theories on ideology. For example, this study supports previous research that asserts that while women magazine readers are able to retain some agency, they are not always capable of truly rejecting messages.

More importantly, this study adds to the body of literature because this is the first study to explore Latinas negotiating an ethnic mass medium designed especially for Latinas. Although there are a couple studies about how Hispanic women read magazines

that predominantly target Anglo women and a few textual and rhetorical analyses of *Latina* magazine, no one has researched how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine.

Limitations

Even though this research adds to the literature, there are points of weakness. First, at the expense of a more in-depth an analysis of one piece or aspect of the magazine, the entire magazine was taken into consideration. The existing body of literature might have benefited more from a study that took one aspect of *Latina* magazine into consideration (e.g., the mediated Latina ideal, mediated Latino traditions) because the findings would have been more in-depth.

Second, the magazine articles chosen for the focus group participants were chosen because they were perceived as more clearly representative of *Latina* magazine's definition of what it means to be Latina. The chosen articles appeared to attempt to speak directly to *Latina* magazine's target audience, while other articles (e.g., articles reviewing music groups or books) were not considered because it was assumed that these articles would not incite as much discussion in the focus groups. In sum, the choice of articles indicates that this study is not really about how Latinas negotiate *Latina* magazine as a whole but how they negotiate these articles in the magazine. The participants' responses may have been different had different articles been chosen.

Third, most of the focus group participants did not regularly read the magazine, so it is likely that the study's findings would be different had responses from a group of *Latina* magazine readers been analyzed instead. That is not to say that this study is less valid because it was conducted with readers and non-readers, but to compare reader and non-reader responses would have been interesting and more insightful. In attempting to

recruit Latinas for the focus groups, however, it proved much easier to recruit self-identified Latinas in general rather than only Latina readers of *Latina* magazine.

Finally, I am a White woman from an upper-middle class family, and I earn a living writing for women's magazines. I believe that it is impossible to remain objective when conducting a study like this; however, it was my goal to not let my personal background influence my study and to remain as objective as possible. Everything I have written is based on what I have read in the literature and existing studies. The fact that I am White and the participants were Latina might also be considered a limitation for this study because the women may not have felt that they could talk in front of me as openly as if I were Latina.

Future Research

The weaknesses of this research may inspire future research on this topic. More research is needed to understand how Latinas negotiate mediated ideals in terms of cultural practices. Previous research explores the mediated ideal in terms of physical appearance (Goodman 2002; Pompper and Koenig 2004), but there are no studies with Latinas that specifically focus on how they negotiate mediated ideas about their cultures. Mediated ideas about traditions, beliefs, and values systems are as important as mediated images because these aspects also contribute to an understanding of what is common sense or normal.

Furthermore, the body of literature about Latinas and the media would benefit from a study with only *Latina* magazine readers. While it appears from the findings of this study that the participants were able to resist some messages (mainly because they did not identify with them), uncertainty still remains about how well Latinas are able to resist the mediated Latina ideal and other ideology present in an ethnic magazine that

targets only Latinas. In other words, while their attitudes during the focus groups

indicated that they disliked much of the magazine, it was hard to determine how they

would use the magazine in real life (i.e., outside of the focus groups). Hence, a study with

only *Latina* magazine readers would serve to understand how regular readers negotiate

the magazine and how their behaviors are influenced or not influenced by the magazine.

APPENDIX A
MODERATOR'S INTRODUCTORY TEXT

Hello everyone. Welcome to tonight's session. First, I just want to let you know how much I appreciate you all taking time out from your evening to be here. Your presence is an essential component of this research, so it is highly valued. My name is Lauren Russell. I am a graduate student working on my master's degree in Latin American Studies and International Communication. This is my assistant for today, _____. She is a _____ student in _____.

You are here tonight to take part in a discussion about Latinas and *Latina* magazine. Our discussion tonight will revolve around your experiences, opinions and thoughts as they relate to being Latina and *Latina* magazine. Your input is no less valuable if you are not familiar with *Latina* magazine. We are interested in all of your thoughts and opinions. It is expected that your point of view may differ or disagree with that of someone else. There are no right of wrong answers. Also, we are just as interested in negative comments and positive comments.

Before we begin, let me offer some suggestions for how we can keep the discussion flowing. First, please speak freely. You don't need to raise your hand to speak. With that in mind, try to avoid talking over others. After the session, I will be transcribing this session from the audio recording equipment, and it may be difficult to distinguish speakers, or I could miss something valuable that one of you said.

As the place cards in front of you indicate, we are on a first-name basis. Any of your responses used in the research will be attributed anonymously. Please be assured of the measures we take to secure confidentiality.

Although the discussion will be guided by my questions, <u>(assistant moderator's name)</u> and I are basically here to observe a conversation amongst yourselves. I will not be part of the conversations.

You have been given a large envelope with photocopied excerpts from Latina magazine. There are a total of seven excerpts. Each excerpt will also be projected onto a color transparency onto the wall in front of you. You can either read the excerpt from the copy you are given or read the projected copy on the wall.

So, let's get started by introducing ourselves. What your first name is, where you are from, what nationality you identify with, your parents or grandparents country of origin, and whether you read *Latina* magazine.

MODERATOR'S GUIDE

1. Preparation   5 min
   Give handouts (questionnaire, articles, place cards, pens) as participants enter the
   room.

2. Introduction   5 min
   a) See Moderator's Introductory Text (Why they are here, there are no right or
       wrong answers, no side conversations, do not have to raise their hands to
       speak, confidentiality, first-name basis, moderators are just observers)
   b) Around-the-table introductions

3. General impressions about Latinas in the media   5 min
   a) What do you think about how Latinas are portrayed in the media, such as
       television, movies, advertisements, and magazines?
   b) Prompts: What do Latinas look like? How do they act?
   c) What are your impressions of Latinas in the Spanish-language media?

4. Impressions about Latinas in women's fashion magazines   5 min
   a) Now, specifically, what are your impressions of Latinas in fashion
       magazines?
   b) Prompts: What Latinas do the magazines feature the most? What do these
       magazines say about these women?
   c) What do Latinas in fashion magazines look like?

Transition: OK. Thank you. Now please open the envelopes you were given at the
beginning of the session and take out Excerpt #1. I will also project each excerpt onto the
wall so that you can see it in color. You may read from your copy or from the projected
transparency.

5. Article topic #1: The "Latina look" achieved through makeup   10 min
   a) Please read the text and look at the image. What are your thoughts about this
       article?
   b) Prompt: How can one look Latina?

Transition: OK. Please take out Excerpt #2

   Continuing topic #1: The "Latina look": body shape   10 min
   c) What are you thoughts about this article?

Transition: Thank you. Please take out Excerpt #3. Please read the title of the article, the subtitle, and then the body of the article. The entire article is not there for you to read, so don't worry about feeling that you haven't read the entire thing.

6. Article topic #2: Culture   10 min
 a) What are your thoughts about what is said here?
 b) Prompt: How does this resonate your experiences in life? How does this article reflect the Latina experience? Is this article positive or negative, helpful or not, revealing, boring, etc.

Transition: Thank you. Please take out Excerpt #4. Again, please read the title of the article, the subtitle, and the body of the article.

7. Article topic #3: Family   10 min
 a) What are your thoughts about what is said here?
 b) Prompt: How does this resonate your experiences in life? How does this article reflect the Latina experience? Is this article positive or negative, helpful or not, revealing, boring, etc.

Transition: Thank you. Please take out Excerpt #5. Please read the title of the article, the subtitle, and the body of the article.

8. Article topic #4: Religion   10 min
 a) What are your thoughts about what is said here?
 b) Prompt: How does this resonate your experiences in life? How does this article reflect the Latina experience? Is this article positive or negative, helpful or not, revealing, boring, etc.

Transition: Thank you. Please take out Excerpt #5. Please read the title of the article, the subtitle, and the body of the article.

9. Article topic #5: Tradition   10 min
 a) What are your thoughts about what is said here?
 b) Prompt: How does this resonate your experiences in life? How does this article reflect the Latina experience? Is this article positive or negative, helpful or not, revealing, boring, etc.
 c) At this point, if the participants have not brought up the use of Spanish and English in the text, I will prompt them: What are your thought on the use of Spanish in the article?

10. In your opinion and experience, what does it mean to be a Latina? 5 min

11. Closing question   5 min
 Is there anything else you would like to add to the discussion before we wrap it up?

LIST OF REFERENCES

Adegbola, O. M. (2002). *Black students' reception of Black female images in women's fashion/lifestyle magazines*. Doctoral dissertation, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Alasuutari, P. (1999). *Rethinking the media audience*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Albert, R. D. (1998). Latinos/Latinas in the United States: diversity, cultural patterns, and misconceptions. In K. S Sitaram & M Prosser (Eds.), *Civic discourse: multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and global communication: Vol. 1* (pp. 157-175). Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing.

Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Anderson, B. R. O'G. (1983). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

Aparacio, F. R. (2003). Jennifer as Selena: rethinking Latinidad in media and popular culture. *Latino Studies*, *1*(1), 90-105

Ballaster, R., Beetham, M., Frazer, E., & Hebron, S. (1991). *Women's worlds: ideology, femininity and the woman's magazine*. London: Macmillan.

Ballon, M. (1997, September). Upstarts: start-up mambos to beat of booming market. *Inc.com.* Retrieved July 30, 2004, from http://www.inc.com/magazine/19970901/1310.html

Beam, C. (September, 1996). The Latina link in two languages. *Folio: the Magazine for Magazine Management*, *25*(12), 23-24.

Beer, A. (2002). Periodical pleasure: magazines for U. S. Latinas. In E. R. Meehan & E. Riordan (Eds.), *Sex & Money: feminism and political economy in the media*. (pp. 164–180). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Benet-Martínez, V., Leu, J., & Lee, F. (2002). Negotiating biculturalism: Cultural frame switching in biculturals with oppositional versus compatible cultural identities. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *33*, 492-516.

Briggs, J. (2002, December). Haubegger's homework: Latina media powerhouse Christy Haubegger tells writer Jimmie Briggs how she developed the first bilingual magazine targeted to Hispanic women. *Latino Leaders: The National Magazine of the Successful American Latino*. Retrieved January 22, 2005, from http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0PCH/is_6_3/ai_113053359

Britt, M. S. (2003). *Passing for Black: A cultural hegemonic perspective on the signification of contemporary images of Black women in mainstream magazine advertisements to African-American female consumers*. Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.

Cadena, G. R. (1998). Latinos and Latinas in the Catholic church: Cohesion and conflict. In M. Cousineau (Ed.), *Religion in a changing world: comparative studies in sociology* (pp. 109-118). Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.

Calafell, B. M. (2001). In our own image?!: A rhetorical criticism of *Latina* magazine. *Voces: A Journal of Chicana and Latina Studies*, 3, 1/2, 12-46.

Calafell, B. M. & Delgado, F. P. (2004). Reading Latina/o images: Interrogating Americanos. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21, 1-21.

Candelaria, C. C., Aldama, A. J., García, P. J., & Alvarez-Smith, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Encyclopedia of Latino popular culture: Vol. 1*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Caputi, J. (1999). The pornography of everyday life. In M. Meyers (Ed.). *Mediated women* (pp. 57–79). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.

Chabrán, R, & Chabrán, R. (Eds.). (1996). *The Latino encyclopedia*. New York: Marshall Cavendish. Volume 5.

Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2004) Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews. *47*(12), 1507-1527.

Coleman, S. (1996, June 12). The essence of Latinas. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved March 15, 2005, from *The Boston Globe* Database.

Collier, J. (1979). Visual anthropology. In J. Wagner (Ed.). *Images of Information: Still photography in the social sciences* (pp. 271-281). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Cortina, B. (2003). Entre nos . . . A few words from our editora. *Latina*. *8*(4), 34.

Curran, J., M. Gurevitch, & J. Woollacott. (1982). The study of the media: theoretical approaches. In M. T. Gurevitch, J. Bennet, J. Curran & J. Woollacott (Eds.), *Culture, Society, and the media* (pp. 12-55). New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Currie, D. H. (1997). *Gender and Society*, *11*(4), 453-477.

Dávila, A. (2001). *Latinos, Inc.: The marketing and making of a people*. Berkeley, CA: University California Press.

Dávila, A. (2002). Talking back: Spanish media and U.S. Latinidad. In M. Habell-Pallán & M. Romero (Eds.), *Latina/o popular culture* (pp. 25-37). New York: New York University Press.

Duke, L. (2000). Black in a blonde world: Race and girls' interpretations of teen magazines. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *77*(2), 211-233.

Duke, L. (2002). Get real! Cultural relevance and resistance to the mediated feminine ideal. *Psychology & Marketing*. *19*(2), 211-233.

Durham, M. G. (1996). The taming of the shrew: Women's magazines and the regulation of desire. *Journal of Communication Inquiry 20*(1), 18-31.

Durham, M. G. (1998, March). Dilemmas of desire: representations of adolescent sexuality in two teen magazines. *Youth & Society*, *29*(3), 369-390.

Durham, M. G. (1999a). Articulating adolescent girls' resistance to patriarchal discourse in popular media. *Women's Studies in Mass Communication*. *22*(2), 210-229.

Durham, M. G. (1999b). Girls, media, and the negotiation of sexuality: A study of race, class, and gender in adolescent peer groups. *Journalism of Communication Inquiry*. *22*(1), 48-72.

Durham, M. G. (2003). The girling of America: Critical reflections on gender and popular communication. *Popular Communication*. *1*(1), 23–31

Durham, M. G. (2004). Constructing the 'new ethnicities': media, sexuality and diaspora identity in the lives of South Asian immigrant girls. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *21*(2), 140-161.

Espinoza, R. R. (1998). *Creating Latina cultural citizenship: A rhetorical analysis of Latinisma in Moderna and Latina and magazines*. Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

Ferguson, M. (1978). Imagery and ideology: The cover photographs of traditional women's magazines. In G. Tuchman, A.K. Daniels, & J. Benet (Eds.), *Hearth and home: Images of women in the mass media*. (pp. 97-115). New York: Oxford University Press.

Fiske, J. (1986). Television: polysemy and popularity. *Critical studies in mass communication*. *3*(4), 391-406.

Fiske, J. (1987) *Television culture*. New York: Routledge.

Flores, L. A. & Holling, M. A. (1999). Las familias y las Latinas: mediated representations of gender roles. In M. Meyers (Ed.), *Mediated women* (pp. 339–354). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.

Flores-Gonzalez, N. (1999) The racialization of Latinos: the meaning of Latino identity for the second generation. *Latino Studies Journal. 10*(3), 3-31.

Frazer, E. (1987). Teenage girls reading *Jackie!*. *Media Culture and Society, 9*, 407-425.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Gledhill, C. (1997). Genre and gender: the case of soap opera. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices* (p. 347). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Goodman, R. J. (2002). Flabless if fabulous: how Latina and Anglo women read and incorporate the excessively thin body ideal into everyday experience. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. 79*(3), 712-727.

Gordon, M. P. (2004). *Media images of women and African American girls' sense of self.* Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Gough-Yates, A. (2003). *Understanding women's magazines: publishing, markets and readerships*. New York: Routledge.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from prison notebooks*. In Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith. (Trans. & Eds.). New York: International Publishers.

Grow, B. (2004). A rising tide of *ediciones españolas. BusinessWeek*, *3894*, 12. Retrieved November 15, 2004, from LexisNexis database.

Hagopian, F. (2005). Prepared for the conference, "Contemporary Catholicism, Religious Pluralism, and Democracy in Latin America: Challenges, Responses, and Impact," University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, March 31-April 1, 2005.

Hall, S. (1979). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis. (Eds.), *Culture, media and language: Working papers in cultural studies* (pp. 128-38). London: Hutchinson.

Hall, S. (1980). Cultural studies and the centre: Some problematics and problems. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis. (Eds.), *Culture, media, and language: Working papers in cultural studies, 1972-79* (pp. 15-47). London: Hutchinson.

Hall, S. (1982). The rediscovery of "ideology": return of the repressed in media studies. In M. Gurevitch, T. Bennet, J. Curran, and J. Woollacott (Eds.), *Culture, society, and the media* (pp. 56-90). New York: Methuen.

Hedrick, T. (2001) Are you pura Latina? or, menudo every day: *Tacones* and symbolic ethnicity. In S. Benstock & S. Ferris (Eds.), *Footnotes: On shoes* (pp. 135–155). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Holt, K. (2004, March 1). Say hola to your next consumer. Retrieved April 14, 2004, from http://foliomag.com/ar/marketing_say_hola_next/index.htm

hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Humphreys, J. M. (2003, second quarter). The multicultural economy: 2003 America's minority buying power. *Georgia business and economic conditions*. *63*(2), 1-26. The University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

Johnson, M. A. (2000). How ethnic are U.S. ethnic media: The case of Latina magazines. *Mass Communication & Society*, *3*(2&3), 229-248.

Johnson, R. (1986-1987). What is cultural studies anyway? *Social text*, 16, 38-80.

Joiner, W. (2002). Lead Launch. *Folio*. Retrieved March 20, 2004, from http://foliomag.com/mag/lead_launch_2/index.html

Jordan, M. (2004, March 3). Hispanic magazines gain ad dollars. *The Wallstreet Journal*. Retrieved March 6, 2004, from LexisNexis database.

Kellner, D. (1995). *Media culture: cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Kitzinger, J. (1999). A sociology of media power: Key issues in audience research. In G. Philo (Ed.). *Message received* (pp. 3-20). Essex, England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.

Labre, M. P. (2004). *The relationship between the reading of fitness magazines and concerns with leanness and muscularity among college men*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

Lindlof, T. R. & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

MacLachlan, G. & Reid, I. (1994). *Framing and interpretation*. Victoria, Australia: Melbourne University Press.

Martínez, K. Z. (2004) Latina magazine and the invocation of a panethnic family: Latino identity as it is informed by celebrities and *papis chulos*. *The Communication Review*, *7*(2), 155-174.

McCracken, E. (1993). *Decoding women's magazines: From Mademoiselle to Ms*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

McCracken, G. D. (1988). *The long interview*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass communication theory: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McRobbie, A. (1978). *Jackie*: *an ideology of adolescent femininity*. Birmingham, England: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

McRobbie, A. (1989). *Jackie!*: An ideology of adolescent femininity. In B. Ashley (Ed.), *The study of popular fiction: a source book* (pp. 203-206). University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia.

McRobbie, A (1996). More! New sexualities in girls' and women's magazines. In J. Curran, D. Morley, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Cultural studies and communications* (pp. 172-194). New York: Arnold.

McRobbie, A. (1997). More! New sexualities in girls' and women's magazines. In A. McRobbie (Ed.), *Back to reality?: Social experience and cultural studies* (pp.190-209). New York: Manchester University Press.

Menard, V. (1997). Luscious Latinas: The pros and cons of an evolving stereotype [Electronic version]. *Hispanic*, *10*(5), 21.

Moran, K. C. E. (2000). *Mexican telenovelas and Latina teenagers' understanding of romantic relationships: A reception analysis*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Morley, D. (1992). *Television, audiences, and cultural studies*. New York: Routledge.

Negrón-Muntaner, F. (1997). Jennifer's butt. *Aztlán*, *22*(2), 181-194.

Ocaña, D. (2004). United we stand? *Latina*. *9*(1), 118-121.

Padilla, F. M. (1985). *Latino ethnic consciousness: The case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Pérez Firmat, G. (1994). *Life on the hyphen: The Cuban-American way*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Philo, G. (Ed). (1999). *Message received*. Essex, England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.

Philo G. (2001). Media effects and the active audience. *Sociology Review*, *10*(3), 26-30.

Pompper, D & Koenig, J. (2004). Cross-cultural-generational perceptions of ideal body image: Hispanic women and magazine standards. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *81*(1), 89-108.

Prather, M. (n. d.). Leading role. *Entrepreneaur.com*. Retrieved May 14, 2005, from http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/0,4621,228754-6,00.html

Quintanilla, M. (September 2003). What is Latina style? *Latina*, *8*(2), 124.

Radway, J. (1984). *Reading the romance: Women, patriarchy, and popular literature*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Rojas, V. (2004). The gender of Latinidad: Latinas speak About hispanic television. *The Communication Review*, *7*(2), 125-153.

Romero, M & Habell-Pallan, M. (2002). Introduction. In M. Habell-Pallán & M. Romero (Eds.), Latino/a popular culture (pp. 1-21). New York: New York University Press.

Rosaldo, R. (1994). Cultural citizenship, inequality, and multiculturalism. In F. V. Flores & R. Benmayor (Eds.), *Latino cultural citizenship: Claiming identity, space and rights* (pp. 27-38). Boston, Beacon Press.

Shorris, E. (1992). *Latinos: A biography of the people*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Steinem, G. (1995). Sex, lies, and advertising. In J. Freeman (Ed.), *Women: A feminist perspective* (pp. 316-330). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Páez, M. M. (2002). *Latinos: Remaking America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Taylor, C. R. & Bang, H. K. (1997). Portrayals of Latinos in magazine advertising. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. *74*(2), 285-303.

Thompson, J. B. (1990). *Ideology and modern culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Tuchman, G. (1978). Introduction: The symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media. In G. Tuchman, A. Daniels, & J. Benet (Eds.), *Hearth and home: Images of women in the mass media* (pp. 3-38). New York: Oxford University Press.

Valdivia, A. N. (2004). Latina/o communication and media studies today: an introduction. *The Communication Review*, *7*, 107-112.

Veilleux, R. (2002, March 11). Latina businesswoman tells of trials faced in establishing magazine. Retrieved January 22, 2005, from http://www.advance.uconn.edu/2002/020311/02031101.htm

Wilson, C. C., Gutiérrez , F & Chao, L. M. (2003). *Racism, sexism, and the media: The rise of class communication in multicultural America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Woodward, J. B. (2003). *Exploring "Essence": African-American women's readings and cultural meanings*. Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

Wolf, N. (1990). *The beauty myth*. London: Chatto & Windus

You ask, *Latina* answers. (2004). *Latina*, *8*(11), 32.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born and raised in Flagler Beach, Florida, Lauren Ann Russell has a BS in journalism. Lauren transferred to the University of Florida solely to pursue a career in magazine journalism. Lauren is a journalist and a writer who has been published in national magazines. Her work is mainly on issues of health. Lauren's travels inspired her to pursue a master's degree with an international angle. As a master's student at the University of Florida, Lauren focused on topics relating to international communication, the media, and Latin America, such as how Latinas interpret U.S. ethnic media. One graduate course even took her to Nicaragua to write a story. After graduation, she will relocate to New York City to continue her freelance writing.