

## In Our Own Image?: A Rhetorical Criticism of *Latina* Magazine

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In 1996, *Latina* was introduced to Latinas in the United States as an alternative to mainstream "White" women's magazines. The magazine arose from a joint venture between Essence Communications and founder/publisher Christy Haubegger after she sold her idea to Essence Communication. According to Haubegger there were no magazines that appealed to her as a Latina (Quintanilla, 1997). Therefore, Haubegger went on to create *Latina*, a magazine to which other Latinas could relate (Quintanilla, 1997). Magazines such as *Latina*, *Moderna*, and *Estilo* claim to cater to Latinas by presenting them with images that will boost their self-esteem and foster a positive identity (Arroyo, 1996). The texts symbolize Latinas creating images of themselves to counteract the dominant press that has either stereotyped them or ignored them all together.

When I first read about *Latina* in the summer of 1996, I was intrigued by this magazine that claimed it would show "real" Latinas. I often feel that there is no media or voice that caters to me specifically as an educated Mexican American women. I am an oddity in this country. Furthermore, as a Chicana with white skin and blue eyes, I was interested in seeing how Latina identity was created visually. Several issues are relevant when examining this text. It is essential to examine the ways in which cohesion or a sense of community is created between the readers and the magazine writers, editors, and publishers. Furthermore, it is pertinent to identify how Latina identity is created visually and verbally. These issues must be examined when looking at *Latina* because the way a text represents its audience is important. The persuasive tactics used to unify and empower readers are key to understanding the text. For example, in speaking to the audience does the text rely on rearticulated, preexisting rhetoric, or does it create its own voice? In order to examine the text and the issue

and examine how these roots inform and effect modern representations. Indeed, I found that historical and cultural images did find their way into *Latina*.

In this essay, I argue that *Latina* is a tool for empowerment; however, that empowerment is conditional and contradictory. It is an extremely limited empowerment. The text simply attempts to rearticulate the rhetoric of the Chicano movement within a dominant Eurocentric context. I illustrate my argument through rhetorical analysis, more specifically, a Chicana feminist criticism of *Latina*. I identify two themes in the text: the "traditional" versus the "nontraditional" and issues of power related to appearance or phenotype. Furthermore, the theme of the traditional versus the nontraditional can be broken down into themes of sexuality and religious symbolism. I demonstrate the conditional empowerment by examining the ways in which each of these themes frame Latina identity in the text, as well as the implication of these themes for the readers of the text.

### Historical, Cultural, and Folkloric Representations

In order to examine current representations of Chicanas and other Latinas, historical and past media representations must be examined. Within this framework, perhaps no other figure has affected generations of Chicanas and Mexicanas as much as Malinche. As Anzaldúa (1987) writes, Malinche is one of the three mothers of the culture along with La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Llorona, who set the tone for Mexicana/o and Chicana/o cultures, and more specifically the treatment of women. The story of Malinche, Malintzin Tenepal, or Doña Marina has been passed down in history and has taken on significance in each passing generation. Malinche was an Aztec noble woman who is remembered for her role in aiding the Spaniard Hernan Cortés in his conquest of the indigenous Mexican people. She was a woman who was given to Cortés by her village to serve as an interpreter. For these actions, as well as her role as his lover, Malinche is looked upon with scorn by many in Mexican and Chicana/o cultures. Moraga (1983) draws parallels between Malinche's perceived role in the annihilation and bastardization of the indigenous cultures with her own lesbianism. Both women are perceived to be killing or reject-

ing their cultures. Moraga's (1983) embracement of her sexuality can be likened to Malinche's embracement of her destiny and of her own sexuality.

Chicana feminists such as Alarcón (1981), Castillo (1994), and Moraga (1983) have attempted to rewrite the history of Malinche by showing her story as a story of survival, while others such as Del Castillo (1988) have stated that Malinche acted-out of her strong religious beliefs; as she saw the destruction of the world around her, she chose her own identity (Alarcón, 1981). Despite these revisions of her story, the image of Malinche as the perceived *vendida* (traitor) pervades the culture. Her story has helped to maintain patriarchy and keep women in their position of subordination (Castillo, 1994). Thus, the belief in the "bad woman" has helped to protect a male-centered society. Because this woman is blamed for "selling-out" her culture, Mexican and Mexican American women suffer and feel the repercussions. Her sexuality and self-determination are scorned, and as a result these traits are often discouraged in Mexicanas and Chicanas. Malinche's presence is still felt by Mexican and Mexican American men and women every time the word *Chingada* is uttered, because it serves as a reference to her "betrayal" (Moraga, 1983). Paz (1961) contends that as sons and daughters of Malinche, modern day Chicanas/os and Mexicanas/os bear the shame of being a bastard culture. Paz (1961) writes, "The *hijo de la Chingada* is the offspring of violation, abduction or deceit . . . To the Spaniard, dishonor consists in being the son of a woman who voluntarily surrenders herself: a prostitute. To the Mexican it consists in being the fruit of a violation" (79-80).

Similar to the story of Malinche is that of La Llorona. Like Malinche, La Llorona has been cast in the role of "evil woman" or "bad mother". Popular folklore states that La Llorona was a Mexican woman who killed her children so that she could be with her lover. As a result of her treachery, she must walk the canals of the the world crying and searching for her lost children whom she will never find. Her story has been told to generation after generation of Mexicans and Chicanas/os to frighten children as well as to continue to demonize Mexicanas and Chicanas who embrace and display sexuality. Demonization of sexuality in these cultures is a theme that links the stories of La Llorona and Malinche so much so that they have become intertwined. Modern

writers such as Anaya (1994) and Blea (1992) have written about the two as if they are one in the same. A similar scenario can be seen in Alarcón (1981) who writes that La Llorona symbolically cries for her lost culture that was conquered and destroyed by the Spanish. She has taken on a role similar to that of Malinche as the mother of a bastard culture. Both women have been used to constrain or limit Mexicanas and Chicanas as well as to maintain a patriarchal structure.

The story of La Llorona has roots that date back to the Pre-Columbian period (Mirandé & Enríquez, 1979). The importance of La Llorona as a cultural figure is reflected in the authors' following statement, "Various interpretations of La Llorona reflect varying attitudes toward women" (3). Often she has been connected with Cihuacoatl who is the patron of women who die in childbirth. In this manifestation, she is seen carrying a cradle and a knife. Mirandé and Enríquez note that during the colonial period La Llorona began to be linked with sexual themes and crimes of passion. Despite the various origins of her story, she is always demonized for straying from her "proper role as mother, wife, mistress, lover, or patriot" (33).

Another figure who has continued to limit the lives and the possibilities of Mexicanas and Chicanas is La Virgen de Guadalupe. She was said to have appeared to Juan Diego and through her vision allowed the indigenous people to keep some of their pre-conquest mother worship. As Anzaldúa (1987) explains, "La Virgen de Guadalupe's Indian name is Coatlicueh. She is the central deity connecting us to our Indian ancestry" (27). Although the Virgen allowed the indigenous people to keep some of their traditions, such as mother-goddess worship, in the process she allowed Mexicanas to be placed in a position subordinate to men. As Anzaldúa writes:

After the Conquest, the Spaniards and their Church continued to split Tonantsin/Guadalupe. They desexed Guadalupe, taking Coatlicueh, the serpent/sexuality, out of her. They completed the split begun by the Nahuas by making La Virgen de Guadalupe/Virgen Maria into chaste virgins and Tlazolteotl/Coatlicue/La Chingada into putas (27-28).



The Catholic Church and La Virgen de Guadalupe have set impossible standards for Mexicanas and Chicanas through the concept of virgin birth. She was impregnated without sexual intercourse; therefore, she remains pure despite her motherhood. Castillo (1994) notes, "The Catholic Church and the impossible dichotomy of Virgin Mary who was both caste and a mother have long contributed to the formation of our attitudes as Mexicans" (69). Her presence has had a great effect on perpetuating the worship of purity and the worship of motherhood in Latina/o cultures. As long as Chicanas/os continue to worship virginity, they will set unattainable standards for Chicanas and Mexicanas. Consequently, Latinas are condemned when they openly display sexuality (Castillo, 1994).

The repression of women's sexuality and its harmfulness is a common thread that runs through the stories of La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Llorona, and La Malinche. All three images have operated together to give women limited or constrained roles. As Anzaldúa (1987) writes,

Guadalupe has been used by the Church to mete out institutionalized oppression: to placate the Indians, Mexicanos, and Chicanos. In part, the true identity of all three has been subverted - Guadalupe to make us docile and enduring, La Chingada to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and La Llorona to make us long-suffering people. This obscuring has encouraged the virgin/puta dichotomy (31).

It is because of the sexual natures of La Llorona and La Malinche that destruction ensued. Much in the same way, modern day Mexicanas and Chicanas are still condemned for their sexuality. The patriarchal structure that exists still maintains La Virgen as its patron saint. She is the impossible role model Latinas must conform to in order to be accepted.

All of the above images have helped to create and contribute to the images of Latinas that appear in modern media. Film, which may be argued to be one of the most popular and powerful media today, has played a great part in the construction of Latina images.

Traditionally, in the history of motion pictures, Latinas have been offered four roles; they are: Cantina girl/half breed harlot, faithful/moral/self-sacrificing señorita, vamp/temptress/dark lady, and the jovial manacita (Keller, 1994; Pettit, 1980). These characterizations have been very particular in their depiction of Latinas. Latina sexuality has often been central to characterizations, yet this blatant sexuality also signals an evil or flawed character (Keller, 1994). Such is the case with the vamp/temptress/dark lady. These characters were often women of easy virtue who were willing to commit acts of violence without remorse (Keller, 1994). The theme of sexual repression or the consequences of sexuality are displayed through these characterizations. The theme of *vendida* (traitor) also was created and perpetuated in the characterization of the self-sacrificing señorita. She was often portrayed as a traitor to her culture, a woman who would dump her Mexican lover for the first Anglo who came her way (Keller, 1994). In the end, she could not exist in the Anglo world or her own Mexican world; therefore, she would sacrifice her life to protect her White lover (Keller, 1994). In all of these characters, themes of sexuality and motherhood exist as the only roles for Latinas. In each case, whenever a Latina openly displayed sexuality, she was vilified or punished.

Despite critiques of these images, there have been some recent arguments and discussion about whether the stereotype of the "luscious Latina" is necessarily negative. Menard (1997) describes how some people view the archetype as an image of power, assertiveness, and self-confidence. Menard (1997) writes that Latina actors such as Salma Hayek have used that image or stereotype to get a foot in the door, then moved on to "better" roles. Where and what these roles are, I have yet to see.

In conclusion, historical images have played a large part in the modern construction of Latina images. Malinche, La Virgen, and La Llorona have all contributed to a mentality that keeps women's sexuality repressed and demonized. The representations resulting from these women have been largely negative. Latinas in the media continue to be treated either as oversexed women who are later punished for their sexuality or as saintly virgins. There is no middle ground for Latinas to exist in media. Latina representations have conformed to this virgin/whore dichotomy, and popular culture has pre-

sented Latinas with images that are unrecognizable and foreign.

#### Xicanisma Consciousness

Chicana feminist theories guide this analysis. I use a Chicana feminist lens because Chicanas and Mexican American women are the largest population of Latinas in this country. Furthermore, McGee (1984) and other rhetorical critics acknowledge the positionality of the critic, and as a Chicana feminist researcher, my lens and training are directly affected by my position as a Mexican American woman. I readily acknowledge that my read of this text is in no way generalizable to all Latinas, and I use a Chicana feminist framework not only because of my positionality, but also because of the unique insights it provides on gender in Latina/o communities.

Chicana feminists argue that the Chicana worldview is affected by the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, and class (Pesquera & Segura, 1997). These interlocking pieces shape the unique situation related to the oppressions that Chicanas face. As Castillo (1994) states, the Chicana is a countryless woman who has minimal ties to the White feminist movement and is termed a *vendida* for speaking against the oppression that exists in her own community. Moraga (1983) confirms this position and expands upon the way that Chicana lesbians are further shunned as *vendidas* for their perceived rejection of men. Trujillo (1997) contends that Chicanas are taught that they are nothing unless they are tied to a man. Both Moraga and Trujillo tie much of the perpetuation of this oppression to historical and folkloric characters such as La Virgen de Guadalupe and Malinche. As Trujillo (1997) writes, "Religion is based on the tradition of patriarchal control and sexual, emotional, and psychological repression..." (285). She writes that these religious models propagate motherhood and martyrdom as acceptable roles for Chicanas. Finally, Chicana feminists call for a world in which they are free from sexual oppression and in which they are acknowledged for their "mestizaje-Indian, Spanish, and Africano" heritage (Moraga, 1983, 290). Anzaldúa points out that the situation of Chicanas is one of living on the borderlands of not being truly American or Mexican.

I focused my analysis on letters to the editor, stories, photo-

graphs, and advertisements in seven issues of *Latina* (December-January 1997, February-March 1997, April-May 1997, July 1997, August 1997, September 1997, and October 1997). In particular, this analysis focused on the racial and gender representations of Latinas. In response to the question "How are Latina gender and race created rhetorically in this text?", I found two themes which were prevalent, the struggle between the traditional versus the nontraditional and the issue of appearance/phenotype. I found that *Latina* is caught in a struggle between the traditional and nontraditional. In addition, I conclude that *Latina* constructs issues of skin color and race as evils that plague the community. The text created cohesion through these narratives. Finally, to counteract these evils, the text created a strategy of "brownness" similar to rhetorical strategies of the Chicano movement (see Delgado, 1995; Hammerback, Jensen, & Gutierrez, 1985). However, much of the rearticulation of this rhetoric is drawn from a Eurocentric hegemonic discourse

#### Analysis: Traditional/Nontraditional

In *Latina*, gender is constructed on a tightrope. It is clear that there is a struggle between the traditional and the nontraditional. I conceptualize the traditional as Chicanas and Latinas who are cast in the role of wife or mother and who are connected to the home. Furthermore, this is a stereotypically heterosexual domain. From this perspective, women are kept in these expected roles through the use of religious symbols (Castillo, 1994). This is especially evident in the ever-present virgin/whore dichotomy. This dichotomy has its roots in the Virgen de Guadalupe and Malinche (Castillo, 1994; Moraga, 1983), and reinforces the rejection of sexuality. It is this dichotomy that is presented throughout the magazine to define Latina gender. I conceptualize the nontraditional as a break from Chicanismo (embrace-ment of all forms of Latina sexuality), reinterpretation of cultural symbols (e.g., revisions of La Virgen), an embracement of mestizaje (multi-race-mixture). Though *Latina* tries to create a middle ground for Latinas between the two representations, it is never fully developed. The struggle between the virgin and the whore images of Latina gender is evidenced in two themes throughout *Latina*: these are sexual identity



and religious-symbolism.

### Sexual Identity

The struggle with Latina sexuality is first articulated in the editor's letter in the *Latina* December-January 1997 issue. In this letter, (Duarte 1997) tries to create a middle-ground for Latinas outside of the dichotomy through her justification of a sex survey. She attempts to bring the traditional context into the picture as she describes her fear that, as a youth, her mother might find her birth control pills.

Duarte writes, "I lived in terror that Mami would find the birth control pills in my purse" (8). Later she attempts to justify the need for an examination of Latina sexuality by writing, "We still don't talk much about sex and, what's worse, there is little precious information about our sexual behavior" (8). Her justification for the survey reinforces the fact that Latina sexuality is seen as taboo and tainted. Rather than using the forum as a "safe space", she still feels the need to justify a discussion of sex.

In the same issue, Latina sexuality is once again treated as a problematic issue. In an interview with the Mexican actress Salma Hayek, her persona as a "bombshell" is addressed as the main focus in the issue: "Hollywood's Mexican box office sensation now says she wants to shed her bombshell image. But is she really trying?" (del Barco, 1997, 66). Hayek is seen by many as a throwback to the stereotypical spitfire vamp or whore of the dichotomy, because she is said to have built her career on the image of the luscious Latina. This is the controversy about which Menard (1997) spoke: are these highly sexualized and gendered representations favorable? It is clear when Hayek herself speaks that she too is unsure of how to treat or view her own sexuality:

It doesn't bother me that they say sexy, luscious, bombshell, sexpot. I would prefer not, but it doesn't bother me because they are not saying worse, they're trying to—come se dice—halagarme. They're trying to flatter me, in a way. And it is flattering. Enough of it, though. We can move on now (cited

in del Barco, 1997, 68)

Hayek, tries to define herself beyond the dichotomy; however, she fails against opposition from the writers of *Latina* who are put in the position of either condemning her for her highly sexualized image or celebrating her for her embracement of her sexuality. The story personifies the struggle between the traditional and nontraditional as exemplified by the virgin/whore dichotomy. Chicana feminists call for a reclaiming of sexuality that has been denied to Chicanas for years by forces of patriarchy; however, the story reinforces the struggle to find an ideal sexualized personification. Once again, the struggle of Latinas to move beyond the dichotomy is evidenced. Thus far, Latina sexuality is constructed as limited and problematic.

In another volume of the magazine, a Latina's testimony about anorexia once again highlights the taboo nature of Latina sexuality. In this narrative, a young woman describes how her bout with anorexia was not only tied to her family's desire for assimilation, but also the family's fear of female sexuality. She writes about how she starved herself to appear more boyish and thus, more acceptable to her family. Later she describes the response she received to her "new" healthy body:

I looked at the bodies of my female relatives. Most of them were fat and hidden under layers of asexual clothing. I looked at myself and saw wide hips, a narrow waist, and sensual breasts. And then I understood the jealous glances my cousins were shooting at their husbands, my aunt's glares, and my mother's apologetic eyes. This was not about fat but about sexuality . . . It was threatening . . . I learned that to be "decent," it was necessary to hide my curves (Tierra, 1997, 24).

This article directly ties the issue of Latina sexuality back to traditional gender roles and to the dichotomy of the virgin/whore. In this case, to be desirable and sexual was to be immediately cast into the whore category rather than simply existing in a favorable or "neutral" plane. Furthermore, the narrative highlights the dangers, in some

cases life-threatening, that we put ourselves in to be asexual and to conform to norms. The price of purity is well illustrated in this narrative of one woman's struggle to overcome oppressive cultural standards. There seems to be no "neutral" sexuality that Latinas can embrace without fear of being condemned by their families and communities.

In the advice section of the August 1997 issue, one reader describes her own problem with the traditional versus nontraditional dichotomy in her family. "My boyfriend and I are considering moving in together, I come from a traditional Mexican family, am the only daughter, and my parents expect me to have a beautiful wedding before I share my life with a man . . . If I move in with him how do I tell my parents?" (cited in Vasquez, 1997, 81) The reader's letter clearly illustrates the modern dilemmas Latinas face in regards to their sexuality and the way it is perceived by the family. Latinas are still defined by the traditional/nontraditional/virgin/whore dichotomies. Sexuality becomes problematic for Latinas in their relationships with their families. A break from the traditional is seen as deviant.

The dynamics of Latina sexuality are discussed not only in regards to the cultural or personal level, but also the mainstream media level. Actor/model, Daisy Fuentes, describes her own experiences with Hollywood and its depiction of Latina sexuality:

I get offered the Latin housekeeper or the Latin baby-sitter roles . . . But I won't do the Mexican maid who is brought over to a rich Anglo home to teach the 17-year-old son everything about sex, while running around half-naked through the whole movie. I don't mind silly roles, but I won't contribute to the stereotyping of Latin women (cited in Quirce & Minaya, 1997, 50).

The discussion of Latina sexuality is tied to the public sphere, and a history of stereotypical depictions is acknowledged. This narrative, along with that of Salma Hayek, clearly shows how Latina actors face some of the same issues of sexuality that plague everyday Latinas. This problem or this stereotype is so strong that it pervades all levels of society.

The multidimensional nature of Latina sexuality is further reinforced with a story about Latina lesbians. One Latina describes her experience when her mother discovered she was lesbian: "How could you?" she demanded, aghast by the explicitness of my desire" (Obejas, 1997, 62). In another narrative, Villareal (1997) writes:

Many gay Mexican Americans stay in the closet out of fear. The homophobia that exists in our communities keeps many of us silent. When we do decide to come out, we are often isolated or beaten—sometimes killed. Some Mexican American men treat me like a man, and I have to remind them that I am a woman and ask them to treat me as such (64).

The tone of the narratives reinforces the struggles Latinas face when they break from the traditional paradigm. In their stories, these women mirror Moraga (1983) in her description of herself as a modern day Malinche. Their sexuality is seen as a betrayal of the culture, and a rejection of men and childbirth. They are dealing with an already delicate issue of Latina sexuality, and further confounding it with lesbianism.

Latina sexuality also is addressed in the text by Latinos. In a special men's issue, Latinos were asked about their feelings towards Latinas. The Latino voice is privileged in the dictation of Latina sexuality. One question in particular highlighted the unstable and taboo nature of Latina sexuality: "You're about to have sex for the first time and she pulls out a condom. How do you feel?" (Aranda-Alvarado, 1997a, 73). One male responded, "My response would be, why is she carrying one?" (73). The response is tied to the traditional beliefs that Latinas are only good if they are virgins; sexuality taints them. Health issues and awareness should be secondary to concerns of purity. This example clearly shows the attitudes that Chicana feminists say prevail in our communities. A male's view of a woman's purity is more important than health concerns. This cycle is the same cycle that feminists such as Castillo (1994) claim has endangered Latinas in regards to health issues. Though Latina may attempt to liberate Latinas through a sex survey and a story about orgasms, for the most part,

the magazine is still struggling to locate Latina sexuality in a neutral plane rather than as a problem. This is a reflection of the real life experiences of many Latinas. The text exemplifies the dilemma Chicana feminists have been describing, that of establishing a plane for sexuality that is their own rather than one that is forced and oppressive.

### Religious Symbolism

The second part of the virgin/whore dichotomy that persists in Latina deals with religious values or symbolism. Both Castillo (1994) and Trujillo (1997) testify to the power of religious symbols in oppressing women and keeping social rules alive. Much controversy was generated about an article in Latina (1997) titled, "Santa Selena." In this article, the writer states that Selena was a modern mix of Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe. Within this discussion was a photo of Selena posed as the Virgen, surrounded by light and a man kneeling to her with his cape open. The man clearly represents Juan Diego, the villager to whom the Virgen appeared many years ago. The image is striking because it juxtaposes a very sexual image of Selena with a religious background or theme. The text was equally controversial in the responses it provoked. For example, a reader, Esperanza, asked, "How could the writer even image Our Blessed Mother in a spangled bra and motorcycle cap? This article and photo are unbelievable and unacceptable" (p. 10). Another reader stated, "I can't believe how overboard everyone is getting on Selena's death. 'Santa Selena' really overdid it!" (Anonymous p.12).

Outrage was expressed because of the linking of sexuality with religious symbolism. Latina's intention may have been to provoke a response beyond the dichotomy by poking fun at it or addressing it visually and narratively through the medium in which the dichotomy is most often perpetuated, the media. Both the text and the photo attack the dichotomy head on. However, it is clear that readers were uncomfortable with the linking of sexuality with religious symbols. Once again the dichotomy of virgin/whore stayed strictly in place through the choice of the readers who were unprepared for a break from the traditional. Instead they labeled it sacrilegious. The readers of the magazine were not ready for this parallel; they chose to uphold

the religious values.

The image of La Virgen is once again inserted in the pages of Latina in a fashion layout titled, "East L. A. Gold." The archetypes of the virgin and the whore are directly juxtaposed here. In one photo a Latina is wearing a skimpy gold dress symbolizing the second part of the dichotomy, and is pictured leaning against a car with her head turned to the side. Her head is facing the image in the background of La Virgen de Guadalupe. The caption reads, "Que La Virgen te cuide" or the virgin looks after you (Arando-Alvarado, 1997b, 49). The image of the woman in the skimpy dress seems to directly challenge the symbolism of the Virgen, but La Virgen's pervasiveness in Chicana/o and Mexicana/o cultures is affirmed by the caption. In the same layout, two Latinas dressed in gold are shown talking on the telephone while behind them is a picture of La Virgen protected by iron bars. In each case, the Virgen is in the backdrop while the models are in the forefront. The text can be read as stating that the religious is inescapable. The iron bars around the image of La Virgen reinforce the magnitude and sacredness of the image on Latino cultures. Therefore, this layout can be seen as both an acknowledgment of the pervasiveness of the image as well as a challenge to it through the dressing and placement of the models. The models, with their elaborate dress and ornamental make-up, seem to be challenging the image of the humble, pure virgin. Anzaldúa (1987) described how the ancient goddesses were desexed and turned into the image of the pure Virgen de Guadalupe. The juxtaposition of these two images may in fact be interpreted as a statement of reclamation of that stripped away sexuality described by Anzaldúa. The Latinas stand in front of the image in defiance, they embrace their sexuality and femininity against an image that has long told them to cover their bodies, and remain pure and loyal. The intention here may be the same as in the "Santa Selena" article.

The image of La Virgen de Guadalupe appears in another fashion layout. In this "Fotonovela de la Moda: Las Aventuras de María del transito", the photos are put together in a comic-book fashion with actual models. In this scenario, the models have bubbles coming out from their mouths or heads, which contain their thoughts or words. In the narrative, a new employee, María, at a company is trying to



make her way up the corporate ladder with new stylish clothes and by taking the advice of her male co-workers. The foil, the evil Brunilda, wants her to fail. In one photograph, the reader is shown María's cubicle. María's desk is decorated with two different pictures of La Virgen de Guadalupe. María is on the telephone as the evil Brunilda with her tight clothes, loud make-up, and wild hair is pictured scowling and plotting against María. Later, as the story progresses, an illustration of La Virgen appears in one of the scenes. A bubble, which is coming from her head, allows the reader to see her thoughts. La Virgen's thoughts reaffirm María's status as a victim, as well as her alliance with La Virgen: "Pobrecita María. Pero yo la acompañaré . . ." (77). In this layout, the two women, María and Brunilda, are cast as total opposites. They are placed in the dichotomy that has manifested itself in various forms over time: virgin/whore or vamp/self-sacrificing señorita. In this section, the dichotomy of the virgin/whore is very apparent through the use of La Virgen. She is clearly aligned with María throughout the narrative as well as visually in that María is portrayed as pure, sweet and innocent. Brunilda, on the other hand, is clearly the vamp/whore. Her outrageous hair, bright red lips, and tight, form-fitting clothes establish her as the foil or vamp. In this fashion layout, La Virgen is used to reinforce the presence of the dichotomy in the modern world. The image is used clearly to define the characters as good or evil. As with the "East L. A. Gold" layout, the two images are once again juxtaposed. Perhaps by capturing the images head on in a comic book fashion, *Latina* is attempting to show the ridiculous nature of this dichotomy in strictly defining Latina identity.

The construction of Latina femininity through the use of religious symbolism is apparent in the discussions of motherhood. Traditionally, the Virgen has been provided as a model for Latina motherhood. She is the pure mother whom all Latinas should strive to emulate. Her role as the mother of Jesus Christ exalts motherhood and causes her to be revered by Latinas/os. She is linked with the "positive" side of the dichotomy. As Trujillo (1997) writes, motherhood, martyrdom, and loyalty to men are values that should drive a "good" Latina. In *Latina*, Alvarez (1997) discusses her life as a childless Latina, and how her life is affected by cultural expectations:

A woman who doesn't care to have a child is considered foolish at best. At worst, as I heard one lecturer proclaim, she is 'committing genetic suicide' . . . in my own Latino culture, where being a woman and a mother are practically synonymous, being childless is a choice tantamount to being wicked and selfish (60-61).

Alvarez' testimony is very similar to Moraga's (1983). Both women are scorned as symbolic Malinches. In the end, Alvarez sees herself as a strong woman who is breaking tradition by not having a child. The magazine portrays Alvarez as struggling to create a middle ground to separate from the virgin/whore dichotomy.

*Latina* also plays on this traditional/nontraditional dichotomy, which sets the backdrop for the virgin/whore dichotomy when it defines Latinas' relationships to men. In the area of religion that propagates the virgin side, Latinas have typically been taught that they should be dutiful wives who obey and respect their husbands. They are presented with the pure virgin as a role model for wives and mothers. *Latina* draws upon this theme in various articles. One such article is titled, "When He Says 'Me Voy' . . . What Does He Really Mean?" In this article, Catholic values and expectations are brought up in relation to their shaping of Latina identity and gender:

Many Latin women, raised in predominantly Catholic households, may see themselves as martyrs, nurturers, and the ultimate compromisers. When they buck that system, they feel that even their family will go against them. That their own mothers and fathers will ask them, 'What are you going to do without a man?' (Bonilla-Rodríguez, cited in Luciano, 1997, 35)

This quote can be linked to Anzaldúa's (1987) discussion about good mothers who are seen as long-suffering. The idea that women need men and depend on them is propagated in this text: "A typical response on the part of Latina women is to scream to the male that she will have a nervous breakdown if he leaves" (Bonilla-Rodríguez,



cited in Luciano, 1997, 35). Besides reinforcing Latinas' dependence on males, the article also highlights that Latinas must extend their mothering skills to their husbands, not only to her children: "They (Latino men) tend to be mothered and spoiled, so they expect all women to put up with petulant outbursts and misbehavior" (Luciano, 1997, 40). The theme of Latino machismo is also reinforced in an article titled, "Sharing Parenting Con Tu Marido" from the *Latina*, October 1997 issue. The tone of the article reinforces the belief that a Latina should be considered lucky if her spouse chooses to help out with parenting. "Latin men especially are used to being babied by their mothers. So I want my wife to show me she appreciates what I'm going to do for her" (Gonzalez, Santiago, 1997a, 80). Interestingly, the Latino refers to the job of parenting as a favor he is doing for his wife rather than an obligation to his child.

The reverence or attention on men is highlighted in the monthly section of the magazine titled, "El Papi Chulo" and more recently in the men's issue, which proclaimed on the cover, "Machos We Love." In this section, *Latina* uses the term "papi chulo" (our finest man), to symbolize the kind of Latino the modern Latina wants. In this case, desirable male gender is exemplified in a male who cooks, takes care of his family, can still romance his wife, and keeps ties to his culture. For example, Jon Seda is praised for his devotion to his two year-old son, and Jacob Vargas is touted as "all this y cocina también" (Lopez, 1997, 21). The "Papi Chulo" section pays homage to Latinos while supporting traditional gender roles. One might argue that the column allows Latinas to sexualize or put men on the hot seat. When one looks at the column there is a large photo of a man followed by a small commentary on his desirable attributes, other than just his looks. The immediate image that is celebrated is that of the man as an image of sexuality. There is a sense of empowerment because for years men have gawked at women in magazines. The "Papi Chulo" section attempts to change the customary gaze from a male gaze to a female gaze.

The message of Latina dependence on men and the promotion of the "virgin" ideal or the dutiful wife also are cultivated in an article titled, "Mujeres Who Made It and the Men Who Helped." Successful, Spanish-language, talk show host, Cristina Saralegui, states,

"I am in this position today because of Marcos" (Santiago, 1997b, 69). The article continues to state that this man manages his wife's career, and Saralegui concedes, "He does not play a supporting role; it is a leading role" (Santiago, 1997b, 69).

The image of the dutiful, virgin, wife/mother is supported through numerous narratives in *Latina*. Through these quotes, as well as the others, we see that Latina gender is still being defined through the virgin/whore dichotomy that propagates the image of a dutiful wife and mother who puts other's needs before her own. The themes of sexuality and religious symbolism that are derived from this traditional/nontraditional dichotomy are imposed on the readers of this magazine. As in the case of Julia Alvarez, Salma Hayek, and the other examples presented, *Latina* gives readers stories of Latinas fighting this paradigm. These women are trying to forge a new space for themselves, however, they seem unsuccessful. Therefore, the message of the text can be interpreted as saying that, although Latinas are trying to venture beyond the traditional, there are still many internal road blocks. It seems that each of the examples presented show that Latinas and Latinos are still limiting each other to traditional gender stereotypes. For example, one new Latino father writes of his daughter, "Let rich old fools buy themselves trophy wives. I have my trophy already, who will keep me, with her beauty, energy and sass, poised halfway between a heart attack and eternal youth" (Fernandez, 1997, 98). The quote symbolizes the continuation of machismo or another internal roadblock for another generation. Narratives such as this placed throughout the text continue to reinforce machismo and further oppress Latinas.

### Skin Color and Phenotype

The second dominant theme that relates to Latina gender in the text is appearance. This can be broken down further into issues of skin color/phenotype and identification.

In *Latina*, various narratives are presented on skin color and phenotypes. In different narratives and articles, writers bond with thereaders in sharing their own issues with skin color and phenotype in a race conscious world. Two Latina actresses, Lauren Velez and

Salma Hayek, both brought up occasions when they were judged to not be Latina enough. Hayek states, "In the beginning, people had a hard time believing I was Mexican . . . I didn't look or sound Mexican to them" (cited in del Barco 1997, 68). Those sentiments are echoed by Velez who claims, "Most casting agents have trouble envisioning her as a 'real' Latina. Hollywood wants its Latinas to have olive skin and long straight hair" (Valdes, 1997, 58). These women voice the desire that Moraga (1983) describes for Chicana feminists about being able to exist in a world that values and accepts their "mestizaje-Indian, Spanish and Africano" heritage (290). By having these well-known Latinas share their own frustrations with racial and ethnic categorizations, the magazine seeks to legitimize the experiences of its readers.

Interestingly, the narratives presented by Velez and Hayek highlight how dominant essentialist notions of culture can affect lived experiences. The diversity of Latina/o communities is often ignored or glossed over in mainstream press, as well as in ideologies and rhetorics that emerge from within Chicana/o and Latina/o communities. Though these rhetorics, such as the rhetoric of Chicanismo, help to promote denied images, they do have adverse effects on those individuals who do not fit into the image which is propagated. I use the example of Chicanismo, which I will later term brownness as a case in point. The ideology espoused by writers, such as Jose Angel Gutierrez and Corky Gonzales, focuses on an indigenous, masculine, Chicano identity (Hammerback, Jensen, & Gutierrez, 1985), which may exclude Chicanas, gays, lesbians, and those Chicanas/os who do not physically meet the indigenous ideal.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the rhetoric of the movement does have consequences for other Latina/o groups. Chicanas/os are the largest Latina/o group in the United States; in the eyes of the dominant society, there is no differentiation between ethnic groups. We are all categorized the same.

Latina also used the issue of race/ethnicity and phenotype to address the issue of interracial dating. In an article titled, "Why Latinos Get Involved With White Women", skin color was addressed. The article attempted to examine "Hispanic self-hatred":

And though we Latinos come in all shades, color can still be

an issue for our fellow *étnicos*. "To some Latinos, even a blond Latina is not white enough . . . Even on Spanish-language television, you see all these "white" faces. We grow up believing that "white" represents beauty and success, and thus blackness and brownness are the exact opposite (Luciano, cited in Santiago, R. 1997, 44).

Alongside this article are four pictures featuring a darker skinned Latina looking disgusted and disappointed as a Latino interacts with a blond White woman. The last picture is interesting because it shows the Latina with her head raised high, walking away from the pair as the Latino gazes at her with admiration. The White woman is oblivious to what is taking place. The narrative and the visuals clearly focus on the issue of skin color and the politics behind it in the Latino community. The "dark" woman is clearly contrasted with the fair-skinned, blond woman. This issue also is presented on a lighter side, in the Perspective section titled, "Your Roots Are Showing":

For those who aspire to blondness there is plenty of company among the wanna-be-rubia ranks of Latina stars. (It almost seems the more famous they become, the blonder they get.) Talk show host, Cristina Saralegui, once a red-head, says she "feels prettier" as a blond "because its more attention-getting" and Charytin Goyco, of the GEMS TV show *Charytin, Siouiatra de Mujeres*, widely known as "La Rubia de America" says becoming a blond helped her "feel like who I wanted to be" (Aranda-Alvarado, 1997d, 104).

Even in this lighthearted discussion of the hierarchy of hair color in the Latino community, the seriousness and the favoritism that exists are obvious.

The issue of self-hatred is treated more seriously in a story about the Miss Venezuela pageant. The article described how it is commonplace for women to be surgically altered in order to fit a desired Eurocentric mold or look. Within this discussion, the issue of skin color arises:



Osmel Sousa readily admits to certain racial preferences in his selection of contestants. "Black Venezuelan women are not very beautiful," he says. "Their noses are too big—no one could operate on them! Occasionally, I choose a morenita, but she has to have a White girl's features—just painted dark" (Sousa, cited in Fusco, 1997, 68).

As stated in the previous two examples, self-hatred and assimilation frame the way *Latina* presents the issues of color/appearance and race. *Latina* takes into account both male and female perspectives in defining racial issues. For example, a dark-skinned Latino recalls his own experience in the Southwest where you are "either Mexican or White" (cited in Aranda-Alvarado, 1997a, 74). Interestingly his description reinforces the media stereotype of Mexican Americans or Latinas/os as only "brown" people, denying the spectrum of skin colors that exist in the communities. The adverse effects of "brownness" espoused by the media and Chicano rhetorics are voiced in the narrative of this man who finds that he is limited in the ways that people see him racially. He goes on to describe, "Where I used to work, we'd take kids to the beach. But the little girls only came out once or twice a week, because if they were in the sun too much, they got dark. Their parents didn't want that" (cited in Aranda-Alvarado, 1997a, 74). Another Latino recalls how he was mistaken as African American and treated badly by a date's parents, until they found out he was Latino. *Latina* constructs skin color as a problem for both males and females, but it focuses more on the negative effects that it has on Latina identity. One former anorexic writes, "As a four-year old, I started to dream that I would become blond, that my trigueña skin would get rosy white, and that I would become blond and thin" (Tierra, 1997, 23). Their treatment of the issue can be likened to an essay by Zook (1990) in which she writes, "There is still a very strong rejection of boysenberry black beauty and nappy, nappy hair. This I see" (Zook, 1990, 89). Self-hatred is created because a person of color cannot meet the ideal image of beauty in the society in which she or he exists.

Through the narrative, *Latina* constructs skin color as an evil that has had a horrible effect on Latina identity. Therefore, the maga-

zine has no choice but to answer that with the opposite reaction. *Latina* founder, Christy Haubegger, believes her magazine "gives priority to Hispanic women and their taste . . . 'What I want to see is four ways to make up brown eyes, not just one' she says" (cited in Rodriguez, 1996). *Latina* hopes to create and validate a new image of beauty based on "brownness". *Latina* isolates the issue and then attempts to counteract it visually. As Haubegger states in another interview, "Its purpose is to reflect our beauty, and change what we see about ourselves. It's 100 percent Latina, cover to cover" (cited in Arroyo, 1996). In the July 1997 Editor's Letter, the writer states, "We validate you by presenting women who look, think, and feel like you do" (Duarte, 1997b, 6).

After *Latina* has created a sense of cohesion with its readers, it can then try to conquer the evil. *Latina* attempts to counteract the dominant paradigm of "whiteness" through its adoption of "brownness" with stories and titles such as, "Brown Barbies and Other Great Toys . . . Toys For Us." (Duarte, 1997, 38 and cover). In addition, both professional models and readers featured in the magazine are frequently darker skinned or "brown". Even in illustrations throughout, such as those accompanying the anorexia story, Latinas are portrayed as dark-skinned, dark-haired, and dark-eyed. Through the use of "brownness" *Latina* hopes to create a new gender identity for Latinas. "Brownness" is supported monthly as *Latina* presents its readers with beautiful "brown" women who made it, women such as Mirlam Santos, Lauren Velez, Jennifer Lopez, Salma Hayek, and Linda Chavez-Thompson. Their stories highlight the struggles these women have dealt with as well as their conquering of the struggle. For example, an essay by Chavez-Thompson describes her struggle:

She remembers her childhood as a happy one overall, aside from the sting of racism. When she was about nine years old, little Anglo girls with whom she played were suddenly told to stay away from her by their parents. Other children were told to hold their noses as she walked by. This pattern continued into her teenage years (Pacheco, 1997, 60).

The story goes on to describe Linda Chavez-Thompson's suc-

cess story and her conquering of adversity. In another story, actress Rosie Perez talks about her issues with her heavy accent. The monthly promotion of these success stories reinforces Latina femininity by showing "brown" women who each share a history of adversity based on racial and sexual discrimination, and then offer their tale about how they conquered it.

Latino "brownness" is also validated monthly in the "Papi Chulo" section where Latinos are praised:

... Latino brothers we all know and love. Because they look good. Because they sound good. Because they could have grown up in our neighborhoods. And most of all because they are ours (Balmaseda, 1997, 28).

Latina has attempted to restructure and reclaim "brownness." The embracement of "brownness" can be viewed as a grasp for power.

Unfortunately, the strategy of "brownness" is only employed in the editorial content of the magazine. The advertisements promote a hierarchy in which "whiteness" exists at the top. The most obvious example of this is shown in a popular advertisement that attempted to address the issue of diversity by creating a rainbow of sorts featuring eight models from various racial groups. This type of "all races together" advertisement is consistent with a pattern observed by Colfax and Sternberg (1972). Cindy Crawford, Claudia Schiffer, and biracial actress Haley Berry are placed in front while the other women, including women of color, are relegated space further in the background. The subtext of this advertisement reinforces the racial hierarchies that exist in American society. The placement of the blond, blue-eyed beauty along side the acceptable brunette and the accepted biracial woman of color clearly shows the importance of these women in relation to the others featured in the background. As hooks (1994) and Seiter (1990) write, it is often the biracial or "almost White" Black female who is valued in the African American color-caste system. hooks writes:

The exploitative and oppressive nature of the color-cast system in White supremacist society has always had a gendered

component. A mixture of racist and sexist thinking informed the way the color-caste hierarchies detrimentally affect the lives of black females differently from black males. Light-skin and long, straight hair continue to be traits that define a female as beautiful and desirable in a White Imagination and in the colonized black mind-set (hooks, 1994, 179).

Much in the same way, Latinas are subjected to messages that light skin and extreme thinness are valued over dark-skin and a full body.

Some of the advertisements seemed to create messages beyond the obvious text. One example was an advertisement for Ralph Lauren perfume that featured a tan, blond Anglo American model. The model wears a white tank top with the American flag and the letters USA. Written above was the statement "the architecture of a beautiful body." The advertisement could also be read as saying that the "American Dream" or ideal can only be achieved if you look like this. America is only open to people like this. In addition, both the sexuality and the "whiteness" of the model are highlighted in relation to the patriotic theme. The flag is placed across her chest on a tight white tank top. Ironically, the advertisement reinforces the image of the White woman as the ideal beauty image while ignoring its placement in the Latina magazine. This image, coupled with the images in the make-up advertisements, which predominantly feature White or light-skinned models, reinforce the fact that Latinas still have a degree of invisibility and unimportance in this society. Even though the magazine is geared towards Latinas and the advertisers want their business, in most cases they are still relegated to that back space second to White women, even in their own forum. The magazine is undermining itself through these types of advertisements. The editorial content may be geared specifically toward Latinas, but it is clear that the advertisers have not yet found a way to reach their market. Therefore, the text of "brownness" may be undermined with the juxtaposed images of the advertisements.

The use of "brownness" as a bonding tool can be likened to a similar rhetorical strategy used during the Chicano movement. This ideology surfaced as a result of the continuous discrimination and oppression experienced by Latinas/os in the United States. Chicanas/



os had been subjected to nativist and eugenics movements that described them in the following way: ". . . the Mexican peon is not a 'White' man. He is an Indian . . . [who] embodies no part of that fine Latin American culture which charms visitors to Mexico City . . . creatures somewhere in between a burro and a human being . . . herds of unwashed greasers" (Foley, 1997, 53-54). This type of rhetoric was challenged and answered by leaders of the Chicano movement. The resulting ideology was espoused by leaders, such as José Angel Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez created cohesion by identifying the devil, the ultimate evil, as having white skin and blue eyes (Hammerback, Jensen, & Gutiérrez, 1985). This way of articulating Chicana/o identity was furthered by the community's embracement of indigenous or mestizo roots (Delgado, 1995; Hammerback, Jensen, & Gutiérrez, 1985). Hammerback, Jensen, and Gutiérrez (1985) note that in his epic poem, "Yo soy Joaquín," Corky Gonzales exalts the often ignored and maligned Indian roots as he writes, "I am Cuauhtemoc, proud and noble, leader of men, king of an empire civilized beyond the dreams of the gachupin Cortés, who is also the blood, the image of myself. I am the Maya prince . . ." (71). Delgado (1995) explains this embracement of the indigenous ideal by writing that Chicanos used this as a way to reinterpret and reclaim an identity scorned by the dominant society. He adds that the "consciousness and racial essences" came to the forefront of these reinterpreted identities (Delgado, 1995, 451). It is important to examine the process of reinterpretation in order to see the effects it has on people's lives.

As Flores and McPhail (1997) point out, this may be an effective method for creating cohesion, but its adverse effects include isolation and essentialism. The image presented can be empowering and can promote a frequently denied image; therefore, it is used despite its adverse effects. This rhetoric brings to mind Shome's (1996) and Harayism's (1990) discussion of strategic essentialism that is done to avoid the adoption of hegemony. However, the critic must be aware of his or her own essentialism. The critic only essentializes in order to achieve certain political goals. Shome (1996) cautions, "If in strategically essentializing, the critic lapses into really essentializing and believing in the cultural essence that she or he creates, then the critic ends up being the hegemonic voice that has already predetermined an

indigenous cultural or racial identity" (47). I argue that the strategic essentialism that took place in the past has now become the hegemonic discourse adopted both within and out of the community. This hegemony, within the ideology of "brownness" that has prevailed, has been accepted by Chicanas/os and other Latinas/os. Adverse effects have been felt in communities. Although speaking about literature, Christian (1997) describes the effects of the denial of the diversity within Latina/o cultures as negative because the search for authenticity creates a ghettoized product. Poey and Suárez (1992) add that essentialism is further detrimental because many Whites do not distinguish among Latina/o cultures to begin with. Furthermore, essentialism creates one-dimensional identities. Chicana and Latina feminists, such as Moraga and Alvarez, have addressed these issues and the way in which "whiteness" is both loathed and embraced in Latina/o communities in relation to this rhetoric of "brownness". Brown is normative. Some of the effects and discussion of this essentialism are discussed in the Letters to the Editor.

#### Talking Back: Letters to the Editor

##### Identification

Through their use of "brownness" in the narratives and especially through the visual medium, *Latina* has both unified and isolated its readers. Many readers have responded to *Latina's* ideal enthusiastically. For example, one letter notes, "We will see more dark-haired, olive-skinned Latinas" (Flores, 1997, 11). A second reader comments, "It's great to see your selection of models with our ethnic characteristics: full hips, dark-hair, and cinnamon complexions" (Rodríguez, 1997, 14). "I not only identified with them as women of color, but I bonded with these darker Latina sisters who looked like me" (Sarden, 1997, 12). It is clear that many readers have eagerly accepted this paradigm that *Latina* has presented to them. Through the readers' letters it is evident that "brownness" has become an empowering force for the readers of *Latina*. By redefining what has previously been labeled as "other", *Latina* has created a "safe space" for its readers. This place is reinforced by the constant use of the words "ours" or "we". As one

reader put it, "A quality periodical that focuses primarily on the concerns, challenges, tribulations, and victories of Latinas goes a great distance toward legitimizing and validating our massive and neglected constituency" (Campos-Marquetti, 1997, 14).

However, not all readers are able to fit into Latina's paradigm of beauty, nor are they entirely comfortable with it:

... The models who appear in Latina, as beautiful as they are, do not represent the entire spectrum of our beauty. I feel the more voluptuous Latinas are excluded. I believe that Latina has the power to challenge the stereotype of what beautiful women should look like - not everyone is a size 8. It would be nice to know that the clothes featured in your layouts actually fit fuller women (Reyes, 1997 10).

Another Latina displayed displeasure with an image that Latina had presented of a Tejana:

I wanted to climb the tallest hill and yell to the world that we don't really look like that in San Antonio. . . I can honestly say that I don't know anyone who even looks similar to the woman in the photograph. Enclosed is a picture of myself and a great friend, so you can see what "real" San Antonio women look like (Romero, 1997, 12).

It is clear that although Latina has successfully bonded with many of its readers through the concept of "brownness," it also has isolated some who feel that they do not fit into that paradigm.

Besides the obvious Latina audience, there are other audiences for the text. Within the Letters to the Editor it was shown that the text has reached a much wider audience. To this audience, composed of non-Latinas/os and Latino males, the text is viewed as a means to acquire culture. "As a non-Latina, I have developed an interest in the Hispanic culture . . . I hope Latina will help me increase my understanding of the problems, joys, and inherent diversity in Hispanic culture in the United States" (Faught, 1997, 14). In another letter, a White woman who is married to a Mexicano describes how

she uses the magazine as a confidence builder for her daughter (Espinoza, 1997, 12). Finally, in another letter a male enthusiastically endorses Latina (Ulloa, 1997, 12). I have shown how Latina uses "brownness" as a bonding and empowerment strategy; however, through the various narratives it is clear to see that empowerment is not open for all and is in fact essentialist.

## Conclusions

It is clear based on textual analysis that Latina magazine is indeed a tool for empowerment, but that empowerment is conditional, limited, and contradictory. The discussions occurring in the text regarding race and gender reflect the difficulties we as Latinas face defining ourselves in a Black and White society. There seems to be no area that is gray. 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.

In response to these images, 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. The ideology espoused seems to be a mixture of both the ideology of "brownness" and the dominant society's norms; thus, Latina is empowering for those Latinas who can accept "brownness" and comfortably fit into the old rearticulated paradigm. The identity presented in these issues is contradictory in that it is negated through advertisements, which highlight the ideal White image of beauty and editorial content, which glamorizes extremely thin, brown-skinned women with whom few of the readers can identify. The text clearly illustrates that there never will be a perfect or ideal Latina identity because of the diversity and uniqueness inherent in our communities. Because of the richness and multi-racial nature of our communities, Latina identity will continuously be a site of contradictions and controversy.

There is a constant struggle to try to find a "safe space" or even a place of acceptance or neutrality. That does not mean that we should not keep trying to find that space. The tensions between the traditional and nontraditional are where a lot of us exist. Although



the text may be powerful in promoting "brownness", it still must deal with gender for Latinas. Gender must be defined beyond the virgin/whore dichotomy. Furthermore, brownness must be extended beyond actual phenotypes and extend to encompass mindsets. My own experience as a "white" woman of color brings to mind a line from the film, Bound by Honor: "Chicano's Not a Color, it's the Way You Think and the Way You Live." I am not reflected in the Latina images in Latina magazine. Though I celebrate empowerment for everyone, I do not want to be left out of my own community. If "brownness" is limited solely to specific phenotypes then Latinas are using the same hegemonic discriminatory tactics they claim to abhor.

In conclusion, Latina should be recognized for the contributions that it attempts to make to positive representations of Latina identity. The existence of the text allows others to follow. Furthermore, I believe that there is room for hope and improvement of the text. I only hope we can move towards an acceptance of our communities as multi-racial and non-heterosexist, as well as places of sexual freedom.

#### Endnotes

1. I conceptualize internal roadblocks in the form of regulating family members, cultural, heterosexist, and religious norms. I share my own experience as an example. My awareness of my skin color was heightened by other Chicanas/os. Including family members and friends, who felt it was their place to remind me of my whiteness and the ways in which it was a means of separation from my culture and privilege in that it gave access to dominant external systems of power. My whiteness was both affirmed and negated. In the same manner, I conceptualize internal roadblocks as those Chicanas and Chicanos who deem it their "job" to regulate culture and question my authenticity as a woman of color. I conceptualize the external as consisting of the dominant white American society.

2. I share my own experience of meeting Gutiérrez in 1997, and wondering if my white-skin and blue-eyes qualified me as a "devil" (Ham-

merback, Jensen, & Gutiérrez, 1985). Though he was kind to me I could not dismiss my feelings of uncertainty and uncomfortableness.

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#### Recreating the Macho: Erlinda Gonzales-Berry's Paletitas de Guayaba (1991)

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Latino literature authored by women in recent decades has opened new representations for gender and subjectivity in narrative by resisting traditional plots and conventional authority. This narrative fiction is breaking new ground from earlier literature by Latinas. Latin American women writers, such as Chilean María Luisa Bombal as early as the 1930s, found ways to represent alternate gender by using silence, despair, and madness to resist and subvert traditional plots—a type of madwoman-in-the-attic characterization. Women writers in the early Chicano awareness era of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Estela Portillo-Trambley, developed characters who escaped temporarily from traditional paths in order to realize their dreams. In other words, twentieth-century female characters have tended to turn inward toward a search for identity and self-discovery.

Now, a recent boom of Mexican women writers and several U.S. Latinas are drawing attention to women's characteristics and functions as an alternate authoritative voice in narrative. Their characters are projecting outwards, examining their society and their lack-of-place in it to reveal a search for identity. U.S. Latinas such as Julia Alvarez, Sandra Cisneros, and Helena María Viramontes have highlighted a centrality of gender struggle toward establishing identity. In the 1990s, novels by Latinas have become more innovative in engaging and establishing the female character's subjectivity.

This new female character is altering the traditional interpretation of the "Latina" as a submissive, pious, victim, subject to the actions of the male in her culture. In Mexican writer Brianda Domecq's novel, La Insólita Historia de la Santa de Cabora (1990), the principal character, a woman, takes charge of not only her own but also the destiny of the men in her life. Rosa Nissán's sephardic Jewish-Mexican character in Novia Que le Vea (1992) examines her culture's sexism even as she strikes out on her own as a divorced woman. Dominican-American Julia Alvarez recreates the pages of history with "her"