CHAPTER 3

Images

Producing Culture for the Market

What I eat is not a clear indication of who I am. It is more important where I go than where I come from. The color of my hair says nothing of me as a person. I AM NOT A STEREOTYPE. I love my family. Have values. Like rhythm. Have faith. But don't categorize me, don't pigeonhole me. Don't judge me for what I eat, what I wear, by my origin. Believe in me . . . and I will trust you.

So reads an ad published in *Hispanic Business, Latina,* and *People en Español,* among other Latina/Hispanic magazines, its final note an exhortation to *trust* Ford Motor Company. Juxtaposed with the narrative are photographs, images of a woman, an attractive, fortyish brunette, dressed in relaxed contemporary clothes, alongside pictures of a pizza, a hamburger, some palm trees, two teenage youths (her children, perhaps?), and three brands of Ford luxury cars, to underscore the seemingly contradictory picture of a contemporary-looking, middle-aged woman who holds dear her traditional values but nonetheless likes hamburgers and can afford a luxury Ford car (figure 6).

Clearly, stereotypes are a key concern of the Hispanic marketing industry. To sell themselves and their products, those in this industry have not only drawn from existing stereotypes—after all, the above example rests on a Hispanic female type that is traditionally at odds with luxury cars and hamburgers—but have also positioned themselves as the "politically correct" voice with which to challenge stereotypes and educate corporate clients about Hispanic language and culture. These antithetical processes of reinforcing and challenging stereotypes have gone hand in hand in this industry, where advertising staff have long had to con-

Figure 6. "Yo no soy un estereotipo." Playing with stereotypes for Ford Motor Company. Corporate image ad for Ford Motor Company by Zubi Advertising, Coral Gables, Florida.

front, reshape, or reformulate all types of Hispanic conventions in order to maintain a legitimate ethnic niche for this market.

At the same time, the categorization, ordering, and simplification at the heart of any process of stereotyping are necessary components of human interaction and communication. What makes stereotypes so troublesome is not that they order and simplify information by reducing complexities to a few limited conventions, but that in doing so, they both reflect and, more important, engender social hierarchies (Hall 1997; Dyer 1993). As a vast literature has clearly shown, stereotypes are never intrinsically negative or positive, but are always historically created and produced in conversation with social hierarchies of daily life (Gilman 1996; Kanellos 1998; Rodríguez 1997). They work by restricting the range of interpretations and therefore facilitating the evaluations that reproduce and valorize the social distinctions at play in the greater society. Even when individuals may interpret these images and ideas differently or imbue them with idiosyncratic meaning, these renditions are by necessity framed within dominant social conventions.

Awareness of such dynamics, however, should not deter us from asking what struggles and interests are contained in the development and dissemination of particular images or why within the world of advertising—so dependent on its ability to interpellate people as consumers—some images are more appealing or commercially viable, despite their apparent stereotypical foundations. This chapter explores these issues by examining some of the images and themes through which Hispanic advertising has imagined, represented, or aimed to speak to Latinas as a generic "Hispanic market." As we will see, Hispanic images have not been static but have changed according to the varied creation and representation of an imagined audience, one that spans different nationalities, classes, and ethnicities, among other variables. These images are also the outcome of the successful incorporation of themes and images that are relevant or recognizable to the generic group known as "Latinos" and to Anglo sensitivities about Latinos. Thus, changing commercial representations of Latinas evoke not only the changing nature of U.S. Latinidad and of its constitution but of the interests and politics that affect its development. What I suggest is that the commercial representation of Latinidad has led to a recurrence of themes and corrective images that, while becoming tantamount to "Latinidad," have further constrained its representation, ironically bringing to the forefront the pervasiveness of racial hierarchies in the very constitution of corrective images.

THE NATION

The construction of a Hispanic market had long been based on the notion of Hispanics as a nation within a nation. However, while fully alive in the minds of marketing staff, "Hispanic" is ultimately a construct whose representation has presented several dilemmas to advertisers, especially to their quest for images that would produce homogeneity out of multiple heterogeneities.

First, as a U.S.-generated category applying to any Latin American or Spanish-background person in the United States, "Hispanic" is a racial category that places its members into a "minority" status within the U.S. race/class/nation conflation.[1] As a result, not only are representations of Latinidad pervaded by dominant stereotypes applied by greater U.S. society to "Hispanics" as one of its "others," but Hispanic advertising is therefore pressed into becoming a generator of "positive" images in order to instill pride in and at the same time appeal to Hispanics as potential consumers. Moreover, as an imposed category, Hispanic/Latina is subject to constant negotiation with regard to the multiple identifications of Hispanics as also Mexican, Colombian, or "Niuyorican." Here, we need to consider that "Latina" and "Hispanic" are composite constructs which are simultaneously tied to, drawn from, and in turn trigger connections to a Latin American country or countries. Hispanic advertising agencies must not only reconcile the multiple diversities among Latinas while showing deference and evoking positive identifications in their visual representations, but also tackle the problem that such representations may trigger particularized types of identifications. Recall our earlier discussion about how advertisements featuring salsa rhythms were perceived as intrinsically Caribbean and hence foreign in the western United States. These are some of the considerations that have added to the need for generic constructions with which to emphasize unity and mutual recognition among the "Hispanic nation's" countries and cultures.

The concept of a unified Hispanic nation, however, has not remained unchanged, nor has its representation always presented the same types of challenges. What advertisers have meant by Hispanic has varied according to factors such as changing immigration patterns of Latin Americans into the United States, which affect the heterogeneity among populations of Latin American background; the number of corporations seeking nationwide advertising campaigns for the totality of the U.S. Hispanic population; and the actual reach of the national TV networks. During the onset of Hispanic advertising as a specialized industry, for instance, when most campaigns were regionally based and developed for local companies and products, ads could easily present Puerto Ricans as the embodiment of the Hispanic nation in the East and Mexicans in the West. Thus Hispanic served as a synonym for Puerto Ricans or Mexicans respectively.[2] Advertisements for Goya Foods, which advertised solely for the New York and eastern markets in the United States until the 1990s, provide a good example of this trend. Founded by a Spanish immigrant in New York City in 1936, Goya's has historically presented itself as a "Hispanic" company that represents and embodies that which is Hispanic. Today, this is done by catering to the taste of the totality of the Hispanic market through the diversification of products, an expansion of its distribution throughout the entire United States, and through advertisements aimed at representing this totality, as I will discuss later. Until the 1970s, however, Goya's version of Hispanidad was publicly conveyed by pointing to the Spanishness of its products, such as its olive oils, advertised in the 1970s as "coming from Andalucia" and being "pure, virgin, and Spanish," or else by alluding to the products' connec-

tions with Puerto Rican culture. Constituting most of the market in the eastern United States, the Puerto Rican came to be addressed as the generic "Hispanic consumer." This was especially true for products manufactured in Goya's plant in Puerto Rico, established in the mid-1970s, such as beans, nectars, and sauces. An ad for tomato sauce in the 1970s, produced by Goya's in-house ad agency, Interamerican, also founded in the 1960s, asserted that it was "Made in Puerto Rico with our *criollo* taste and that of Goya" *(con sabor criollo de nosotros y de Goya),* feeding on the feelings of nostalgia and longing of Puerto Rican immigrants for its *"sabor criollo."* Goya products were also associated with Puerto Rican culture through the use of Puerto Rican personalities, such as singer Boby Capó, who worked for twelve years doing public relations for Goya as spokesperson for its products, and through Puerto Rican folk music in the ads. Some ads for Goya up to the 1970s were aired concurrently in Puerto Rico, pointing to the symmetry between the New York–based and island-based markets.[3]

This was also the strategy followed by other advertisements for a range of products for the New York market, whose bulk consisted of more Hispanic-identified products like those from Goya, Bustelo and Caribe coffee, Banco de Ponce, or products advertised mostly for the regional market. Thus, clients of SAMS, which was the largest Hispanic agency throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, were mostly local companies. These included La Flor de Mayo Express (a moving company), Alameda Room and Tropicana Restaurant, local restaurants and night clubs, Banco de Ponce (Puerto Rican bank), Azteca Films, Argentine Films Enterprises, and Angel Products (distributors of Spanish films), along with a minority of American companies such as Eastern Brewing Corporation (Old Bohemian beer) and the Rice Growers Association of California (Arroz Sello Rojo) advertising for the local market (National Register Publishing 1964).

The depiction of a Hispanic nation, however, became more complicated with the expansion of network TV, which facilitated the conceptualization and distribution of Hispanic advertising and the recruitment of national corporate clients. After the advent of TV, for instance, SAMS acquired the accounts of Colgate Palmolive in 1966, Bulova watches in 1967, Lorillard Corporation (Kent, Newport, True cigarettes) by 1969, and Libby, Mc Neill, and Libby in 1973,[4] and although most national advertisers would wait until the 1980s to advertise to Hispanics, these accounts provided an early taste of campaigns for the totality of the Hispanic market. The first lesson learned concerned the need for campaigns that were not grounded on any particular group but that represented and spoke to a distinct yet unidentifiable construct.

The tropes with which this unity would be conceived have since been varied, depending on a variety of factors: the particularities of different products; whether the budgets provided for multiple campaigns addressing different subnational groupings rather than a single, encompassing approach; and, most fundamentally, the chosen media. Generally speaking, radio campaigns, a more affordable media than TV, have tended to be adapted or conceived with the particular perceived needs of regional markets in mind. This has allowed them to speak to different national subgroups within particular markets, while TV ads have always tended towards generic strategies because they are so costly to produce, test, and circulate.[5] Additionally, the choice between regional and generic campaign types is also affected by trends in the Hispanic industry at large and by the vision or philosophy of particular agencies. Overall, however, the depiction of the "Hispanic nation" for national distribution would necessitate a concise and marketable definition that would help legitimize to clients the existence of a culturally specific market and also generalize tropes of Latinidad among its prospective audience of consumers. Among the most prevalent are the presentation of a neutral or universal version of Hispanidad—the putatively neutral, "non-accented" Spanish and "generic" Latin look—and ambiguous appeals to a Hispanic spirit, way of being, attitude, or morality, which are supposedly shared among all Latinas.

THE VALUES

Let us start by discussing the visual representation of Hispanics' supposedly greater spirituality, centrality of family, and "tradition." Due to their intangible nature, ideas like these have provided some of the most successful references for the representation of Hispanics, allowing advertisements to avoid visual indexes that may trigger national rather than pan-ethnic forms of identification. Primary among these qualities is Hispanics' family orientation and strong family values vis-à-vis the general-market consumer. In this market, the Latin family could well be considered the maximum advertising "referent system," that is, following Williamson (1978), a system of signs and meanings that are known and generalized, and thus can be used to transfer and translate meaning to products. More than any other trope, the Latin family is implicated in and associated with the process of representation, with a cluster of ideas

deemed by the industry to be representative of all Hispanics, based on their supposed nostalgia for the past, sense of rootlessness over family separations or relatives left behind, or fixed gender roles within the family.

Of course, the family trope is also dominant here because of advertisers' undifferentiated approach to this market and the nature of companies that advertise to Hispanics. In accordance with the view that Hispanics may have lower incomes but larger families, companies like Procter & Gamble, AT&T, Sears, and McDonald's, and producers of packaged foods and family-oriented basic products like Colgate-Palmolive and Johnson & Johnson have historically targeted this market, rather than companies supplying luxury or status products (credit cards, computers, luxury cars) that are more likely to appeal to an individual's aspirations, although the rise of Latina Internet portals and the growing popularity of Internet marketing are likely to affect this trend.[6] Hispanics are also perceived as an undifferentiated entity, in contrast to the general market, which is segmented according to a range of variables that, though not less constructed, recognize diversity along the lines of taste, lifestyle, age, and gender. This homogenous treatment of Hispanics also contributes to the appeal of the family trope as a way to address gender and generational differences simultaneously within the "totality" of the family.

Moreover, representations of the Hispanic family have changed, and an entire chapter could be devoted to this issue, considering the preponderance of family scenes and of the family trope in advertisements since the industry's beginnings. After conducting a content analysis of ads produced in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I found that most ads revolved around families in kitchen situations with women either cooking or taking care of children. The grandmother and a mustached husband were also recurrent figures. SAMS advertising for Fab detergent, "When I Came to This Country" (1970s), where a grandmother didactically explains to her grandchild that they use Fab because they used it in their country and because it leaves clothes "so clean and fresh," epitomizes this very common type of advertising (figure 7). It shows a grandmother with her daughter and grandchild doing the laundry, a family scene that turns into the ideal opportunity to laud the properties of the cleaning product. Notice here that the product is presented as a family tradition, something they used back home and brought with them. Ads in the 1990s, however, while depicting families just as often, show women in contexts other than the kitchen—playing sports or wearing business attire—and men helping around the kitchen or cooking, as in Goya's ad for its codfish fritter ready-mix.[7] What has nonetheless remained consistent is the use of the family to communicate a range of values that are supposedly associated with Hispanics.

Consider, for instance, a 1998 ad for AT&T's auto-redial feature, meant to communicate that the company gives the "tools to impact your life." It depicts a nervous boyfriend asking permission to marry his girlfriend. The couple is shown waiting anxiously, accompanied by an older aunt, until the father, who subsequently agrees to grant his daughter's hand ("but only her hand," jokes the aunt), is finally reached thanks to AT&T's auto-redial feature. As the creative explained, the ad was based on the view that Hispanics have good family values and a religious orientation, which means that permission to marry a woman must come not from her or from her aunt, but from her father, even when he is absent. The result was a thirty-second "family drama" that evoked not only the patriarchal status of an absent father (whose permission is needed for the scene's resolution), but also the authoritative presence of the older aunt, as keeper of sexual norms and bridge between the couple, the father, and the actual territorial separation of the family.

As in this ad, the family is recurrently used to communicate the supposedly "intrinsic" Latin spirit and morality that are believed to characterize Hispanic consumers, such as the idea that they are motivated by family and collective, not individual, needs and desires. Consider, for instance, Nicorette's ads for the Hispanic market. For the general market, this product was advertised by portraying the decision to quit smoking as an individual one, through testimonials in which people discuss conquering the habit as an act of individual achievement. For Hispanics, however, the tactic was different. As a representative of Publicidad Advertising said, "We realized that Hispanics are mostly influenced by their family. It is a personal decision but one that is taken in relation to others; thus, we use the family and a friend influencing people to quit." Their slogan captures the tactic succinctly: "Por tu Bien y el de los Tuyos" (For your well-being and that of those you love). Figure 8 exemplifies a similar tactic: using the smile and trust of "Daddy's little girl" as the primary motivating force. The advertisement for ITT Technical Schools (1997) also uses the family as a trope to communicate so-called Hispanic values. Whereas most ads for community colleges and other types of postsecondary education for the general market draw on people's individual ambitions to succeed and improve themselves, this ad shows a thankful Hispanic character acknowledging the role his family, friends, and ITT Technical School played in helping him advance his dream and become a positive role model for his parents and community. Interspersed in the

Figure 7. The grandmother introduces the little girl to another tradition from their home country—the use of Fab. TV ad by Spanish Advertising and Marketing Services.

narrative are images of his proud parents, images that would rarely be seen in an ad for the general market.

In the same tenor, an Oil of Olay Hispanic ad by FOVA features a woman explaining what "we [Hispanic] women want," which are details, "like a touch, a caress, or a gentle word." As the creative explained, the execution of the ad was also based on the view that, unlike Anglo women, Hispanic women beautify themselves not for "selfish, me-oriented purposes," but in order to please others and obtain their approval and praise.

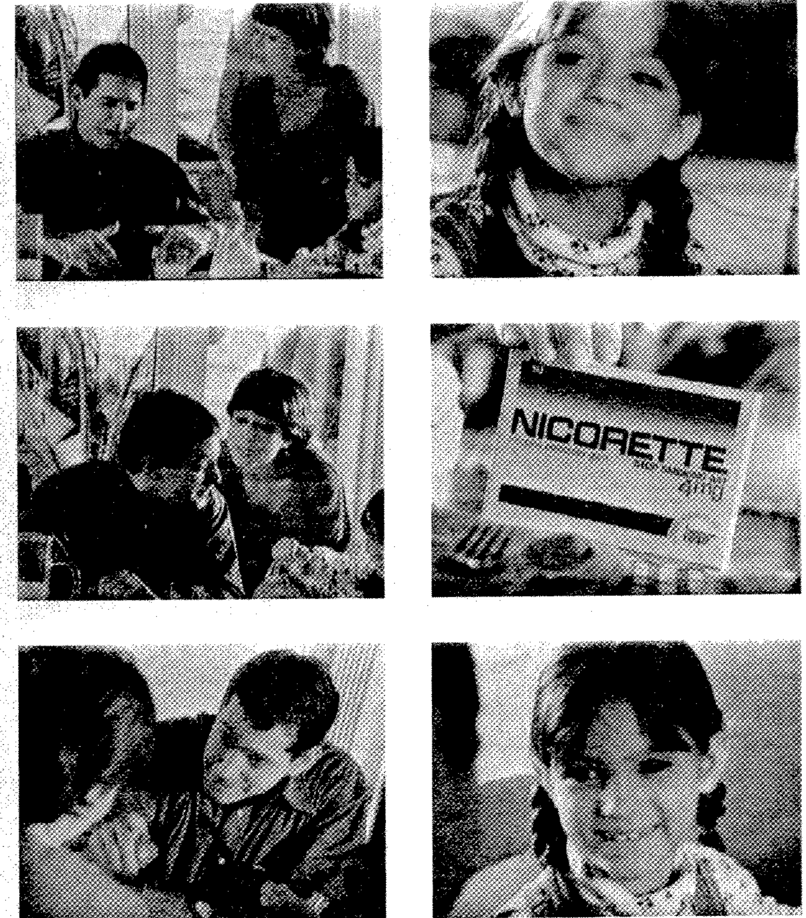


Figure 8. The family—and the trust and smile of a daughter—as incentive to quit smoking in "Decidido," produced for Nicorette by JMCP Publicidad.

Avon's Hispanic strategy for 1996–97 is also based on the view that Hispanic women, in contrast to their analogues in the general market (a euphemism for Anglo), are more emotionally expressive, family-oriented, and feminine. As the brand representative in Avon's Hispanic agency stated, "They need to be engaged, not solely informed"; in other words, appeal to their feelings, not their reason. Whereas in the general market, Avon's makeup products were associated with images of independent professional women manifesting a contemporary yet ap-

proachable beauty, the Hispanic market ad shows women in group shots of family and friends. A voice-over praises the Hispanic woman for her feminine qualities: "You are always dreaming, you turn life into small smiles, you are alive at all moments, you feel emotions more strongly, you are different, you say what you feel." A final example is the milk ad for the Hispanic market. While the general market ad revolves around comic scenes of milk scarcity, prompted by "Got milk?" the Hispanic campaign features a grandmother cooking traditional milk-based desserts with a caption that reads: "Have you given your loved ones enough milk today?" (see figure 9). This campaign was based on the fear that Hispanics would not get the humor of the original ad and that the maternal instincts of the Latin woman would be offended by the thought of lacking such an important provision as milk.

Obviously, value-oriented ads generally present Hispanics as loving and socially caring individuals, values that Hispanic consumers do believe distinguish them from their Anglo-American counterparts. Compared to the usual U.S. stereotype of Latinos as thugs and criminals who are indolent and lazy, these images are generally positive. Nonetheless, the questions to ask here, as Shohat and Stam (1994: 204) remind us, are for whom, in what context, in relation to what and whom, and with what implications are these images positive? Specifically, I want to emphasize that such representations would make little sense if they were not constructed against the binary Anglo/Hispanic behavioral patterns that have long shaped Hispanic stereotypes. They simultaneously limit Latinas' association with so-called Anglo traits like "individualism," thus reproducing the stereotype of the Latina's collective orientation, in turn associated with an inherent conformism and lack of individual ambition. They are an extension of rather than a departure from dominant representations of Hispanics' "intrinsic" spirit, and of the same nineteenth-century ideas that have since been used to sustain hierarchies of values and dispositions among "Anglos" and "Latinas." Are there no motivated and self-reliant Latinas? Could it be something other than their culture that turns them on? Are they not sophisticated enough to "get" the comedic puns of general market ads? Most significant, the commodification of U.S. Latinas involves their re-authentification by association with the "right" way to be an "ethnic," which requires them to be "exotic," that is, culturally different, but to stay within normative patterns in which the traits of upward mobility are always associated with an aspirational Anglo not Latina world.

Figure 9. Outdoor ads in Washington Heights, New York City. The Johnny Walker Black Label ad reads, "Con el Buen Gusto se Nace" ("One Is Born with Good Taste"), and the milk ad asks caregivers (moms, grandmas, etc.) if they gave their loved ones enough milk today.

Perhaps the most obvious example of what I am suggesting is provided by Budweiser's (1996) "Rebudlución" campaign by Castor Advertising.[8] I say "most obvious" because, while most Hispanic ads have tended to present the Hispanic nation as a nation in and of itself with little reference to the broader context mediating Hispanic experiences in this country, this campaign was ground-breaking in presenting Hispanic men interacting with Anglos in distinctively Anglo settings. As a creative said, the dominant trend in advertising had long been to present "an ideal world, where there are no gringos, no one to think you are ugly; where you don't have to struggle to be heard, where you are not a minority, and where if you go into a bar, everyone there is Hispanic, and everyone is your friend." These ads, however, by showing Hispanics and Anglos in the same setting, display overtly some of the dichotomies that are often drawn between "Hispanics" and Anglo-Americans, and thus present a clear view of the pitfalls of representations that revolve around "positive" images. The campaign, aimed at "inverting" and "Latinizing" the values of American society, shows Hispanics prevailing in stereo-

typically American situations through their wit, good humor, and intelligence. As if asserting or reassuring Latino masculinity by redefining the meaning of strength, bravado, or power, it revolves around competitive encounters between males. In one ad, we see two slender Hispanics outwitting a group of bulky Anglo-American football players by hitting the football "soccer" style and proving their greater agility despite their small size. In another, some small and slender Latinos prevail over some stocky Anglos in a bikers' bar (figure 10). The ad shows the Latinos at first threatened by the bikers but then victorious after they challenge the Anglos to eat a hot pepper. The pepper makes the Anglos choke, while the triumphant Hispanic dismisses it as "Mexican candy." Violence and bulk have been devalued against the cool wit of the Hispanic (who can take the heat of the habanero). In the background, a voice-over urges viewers to "Rebudluciona las reglas" (revolutionize the rules). In another ad, a Latino enters what the creative described as a "hillbilly" town in Alabama where everyone is hostile to him, but he wins them over by turning his Budweiser can into a "maraca" and turning the hostile scene into a festive one. The Hispanic way wins once more.

Stuart Hall has warned us of the binaries and polarized extremes that characterize stereotypes and the representation of minorities. As he states, not only do stereotypes work by reducing people to fixed types, ignoring the range of variation and difference or the factors affecting any given "type," but these "types" are in turn constructed through binary oppositions that reduce complexity to two extremes. In this manner, positive images take on meaning in relation to their opposites and can simultaneously invoke them (Hall 1997). Thus, in the examples given, the presentation of Hispanics as positive characters is achieved by conjuring and then inverting the social meanings of the stereotypes and social hierarchies pervading their representation within U.S. society. Ridiculing American men as slow, bulky, and less intelligent, not only exalts Hispanic men but also simultaneously associates them with old stereotypes concerning their temperament and abilities. Hispanic cool and wit is related to their definition as "hot and spicy food lovers," full of wit and rhythm, and musically saucy—values which in the real world would never really "win over" the American way. These are roles that also feminize Latinos in relation to Anglo men, who are associated with aggressive sports and the realm of "real men." Ultimately, these inversions and reversals are still caught within the established, polarized binaries between Anglos and Latinos, leaving unchallenged the dominant representational hierarchies. These hierarchies still compel the use of an Anglo figure to

establish the Latino's virtuosity, even when only featured as an object of mockery, as in the bar scene above.

On the other hand, unambiguous expressions of Latina pride, not subtly presented through positive images, also convey a politics of irreverence and contingency within the world of advertising, as do presentations of Hispanics in contemporary settings. Recall the discussion in chapter 2 of how marketing research constructs Hispanics as unpolluted and authentic, a view that would inhibit their presentation in situations that may appear too modern or contemporary. Insights into this politics of contingency can be gained by assessing changes in the commercial expressions of nationalism and ethnic pride.

NATIONALISM, NOSTALGIA, AND ETHNIC PRIDE

Hispanics' supposedly fervent love of tradition, their ethnic pride, and their nationalism have been recurring themes in Hispanic advertising. Fueled by the generalized view that a defining trait of Hispanics is their deterritorialized status and therefore their longing to "connect," which most Hispanics have either faced personally or experienced through relatives or friends, advertising has long appealed both to their feelings for their homelands and to their pride as Latinas in the United States. This approach involves associating products with particular countries or with some named or unnamed generic Latina heritage or tradition. References to "our" cooking or values, with "our" standing for Latinas as a finished identity and an inclusive whole are also common.

Again, this strategy is tied to the type of advertiser. Long-distance telephone companies, one of the major advertisers to Hispanics, are renowned for urging people to "make that call" by tapping into people's yearning for their homelands and their past. Bravo's ads for AT&T are a good example of ads that have juxtaposed images of Latin American countries, from Mexican pyramids to South American train stations, that are recognized by viewers as such. Figure 11 represents this trend. It summons the many memories from someone's youth, memories of friends and loved ones that remain behind in one's homeland, nostalgically described as the place where "I opened my eyes for the first time." The voice-over urges the viewer to return to his or her homeland again and again through AT&T. However, other advertisers have also applied this strategy, even composing collages of unspecified Latin American nations as a means of expanding the range of identifications a specific ad can trigger in a given consumer. A good example is Kodak's "patria" ad, which was filmed in

Figure 10. In "Chile," a Latino outsmarts a gringo biker by eating a chile. The conflict's resolution is celebrated with a Bud. Ad by Castor Advertising, New York City.

Puerto Rico but included scenes that replicated lush, tropical, mountainous countryside and colonial urban settings that would evoke any coastal, urban, or interior Latin American region.

Appeals to people's new, U.S.-based "Latina" or "Hispanic" identity, on the other hand, have also been common since the beginning of the Hispanic advertising industry, although they have become increasingly more prevalent and self-referential, which indicates the growing consolidation of a pan-Latina identity in the world of commercial TV. Ads in the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, marked Latinas by contrasting them with Anglo people or Anglo ways, or else through culturally loaded icons or images: maracas, Spanish guitars, soccer, different foods, a domino set. As many advertisers were ready to point out, such images were an important necessity in a context where clients, as Lionel Sosa (1998) explains, "expected the bright colors, the sombreros, lowriders, the adobe house, the mustached man, and the rose in the woman's hair." As he noted, advertisers were particularly wary of images that presented Hispanics in contemporary, quotidian situations that they considered were more Americanized rather than authentically Hispanic. Latinas, in their view, he argued, needed to be marked and set apart from whites. "You could not show a Hispanic in a business suit, or wearing a tie." The pro-

Figure 11. Nostalgia for the country left behind to induce Latinos to make that call. "Song" TV ad by The Bravo Group.

gressive shedding by Hispanic marketers of overt Latin indexes or direct reference to "our" traditions as a sales pitch, and the addressing of Hispanics as a unique group without a sharp contrast to Anglo society was thus not an easy development. It emerged from struggles between clients who wanted what in their view constituted authentic ethnic consumers and marketers who wanted to present modern Latina consumers—those who buy U.S. products but are most of all proud of their tradition, without this tradition being contained in a sombrero.

A telling example of this progressive transformation toward the contemporary Latina is provided by Mendoza and Dillon's advertising for Miller beer in the 1980s. This campaign attempted to associate Miller beer with Latinas' values and traditions through the "Miller Beer Anthem" sung against a variety of images meant to index Latina customs. The first anthem for an ad in 1985 presented Miller beer as an American product that Latinas should drink because it was part of the new traditions acquired in the United States. It showed images of Latinas dancing to salsa music, playing baseball, boxing, working at La Reina Foods, going out with their families, watching a vaquero riding in a rodeo, playing "Latin" instruments like maracas and Spanish guitars, and greeting family at a wedding. Singly and together, these images were meant to instill pride in people's new "Latin lifestyle" within the context of the United States and its "American way," which was ultimately praised in the anthem:

> Here where opportunity is so clear, when you know how to strive, and the family can be better off, without forgetting our roots. Here where one embraces with sincerity to seal friendships, you sing with joy here, you drink Miller ice cold. Miller is of this nation as we are full of heart. Clear and honest for all to see. Miller is of this great nation. Miller beer, purity and quality you can clearly see.

The second ad, produced just a few years later (1989), however, sheds any reference to Miller as an American product or to Latinas as being new to this country, and, instead of the almost didactic collage of Latina ways used in the previous ad, the new one revolves around a single event: the family reunion of two *compadres* (fictive kin). As was common throughout the 1980s, the ad was customized for three different nationalities by showing the *compadres* eating a traditional Cuban, Puerto Rican, or Mexican meal and dancing salsa in Cuban or Puerto Rican style or with a rodeo background for Mexicans. In contrast to the earlier anthem, the new anthem more overtly asserts Latina ways, which are directly associated to particular subgroups:

> Things that are clear and from the heart will last a lifetime. Things that always keep their value wherever they might be. Clear and pure is my tradition. That's the way that I am, I would not change it for anything. That's why I toast with ice-cold Miller. Miller has that great tradition from its origin until today, always clear and pure as all can see.

Comparing other ads by Mendoza and Dillon in the early 1980s with those done in the late 1980s and early 1990s further reveals that Anglo

figures, depicted in earlier ads as a contrasting reference to accentuate Latina ways and culture, totally disappear in later ads. Most notably, Anglos are no longer used as authoritative figures who validate the quality of different products to Latinas or who praise their culture, as was a common practice in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Schlitz beer's campaign in the early 1980s provides a good example of this trend. The campaign revolved around a series of scenes where an Anglo, who can't get a task straight (cinch up a horse, fix a car, or pitch a baseball) dares a Latino, an average "Juan," to "give it a try." The Latino succeeds in every task and saves the day, gaining his Anglo peer's praise and of course, the reward of a Schlitz beer. A background chorus sings loudly: "For you who work hard and give it all it takes, for you a Schlitz beer." Today, however, Anglos are no longer authoritative or validating figures; when shown, they are subjects of mockery, as in the aforementioned Budweiser ad. Hispanics are increasingly featured as if living in some Hispanic nation; there is no reference to the larger context in which Latinas live. In this world, the United States may be recognized for its good products and modernity, or referred to as "the new country," but Anglos are never shown interacting with Latinas.

A good example of this approach is the ad entitled "Modern Country/Modern Fab." In this ad (figure 12), in contrast to the product's former advertising strategy, a woman associates using Fab not with the past but with the present, and with her own modernity. As she is shown saying, she buys Fab because she now lives in "the most modern country," where "the most modern things are invented." Another example is provided by the Advil ad "City," where a Latino, astounded with the fast pace of the city, wonders if there is something faster for pain in this country (figure 13). Thus, the United States is only referenced through its products, but because these products are described as superior, new, and modern, this approach concomitantly presents an ironic twist that subverts and qualifies the ads' central message of Latina pride.

In asserting Latina pride, some marketers have even Latinized canonical American symbols, such as the cowboy, jeans, and the Statue of Liberty. Cartel Creativo's ad "Viva la Tradición" (figure 14), for instance, reminds Latinos that "the first cowboys in the United States were Mexican Americans," that "they were called vaqueros," that they invented all we associate with cowboys, and finally that today they wear Wrangler western wear. Cowboys and Wrangler jeans hence become Mexican, not Anglo-American, "traditions." As its artistic creative explained, the ad was a difficult sale; the client was not easily convinced to advertise

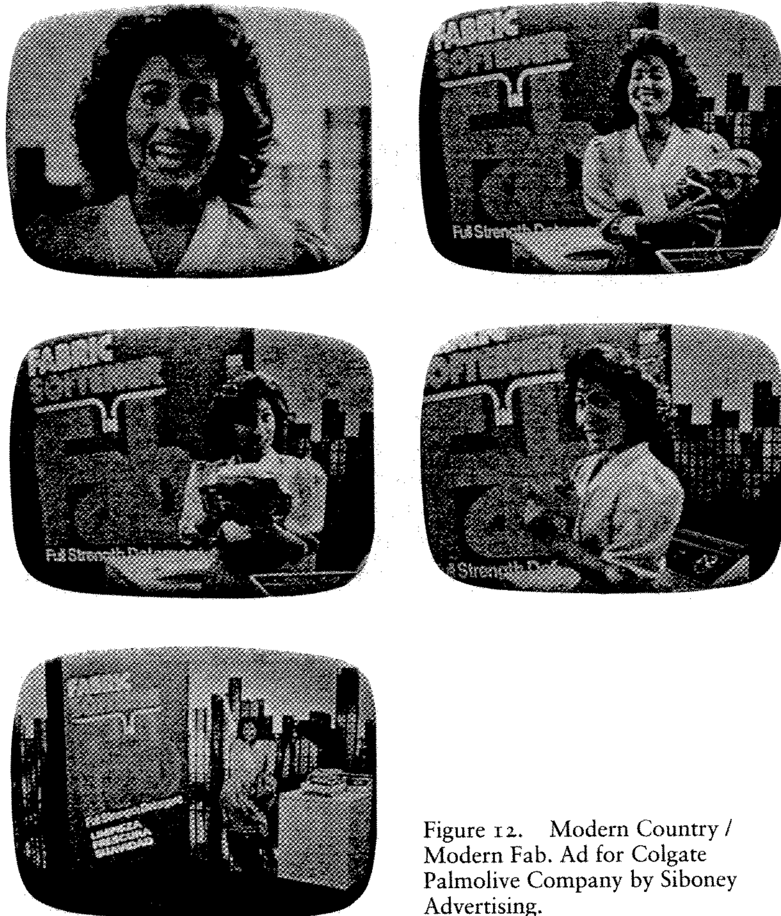


Figure 12. Modern Country / Modern Fab. Ad for Colgate Palmolive Company by Siboney Advertising.

its product with such a divergent representation of the cowboy, but once filmed, the ad was automatically successful, especially in the Southwest. Following a similar strategy, Cartel's ad for Tecate (figure 15) shows a young Latino topping the Statue of Liberty with a Tecate beer banner. The televised event triggers the pride of his buddies, one vowing, "Te dije compadre, ya nos tocaba," or "I told you *compadre* (fictive kin) that our time was coming." The ad ends with the slogan "Tecate llegó para quedarse," or "Tecate came to stay," as if implying that Mexicans, like their beer Tecate, are also here to stay. The creator of this spot explained that his goal was "to dignify Mexican immigration" by linking it to the

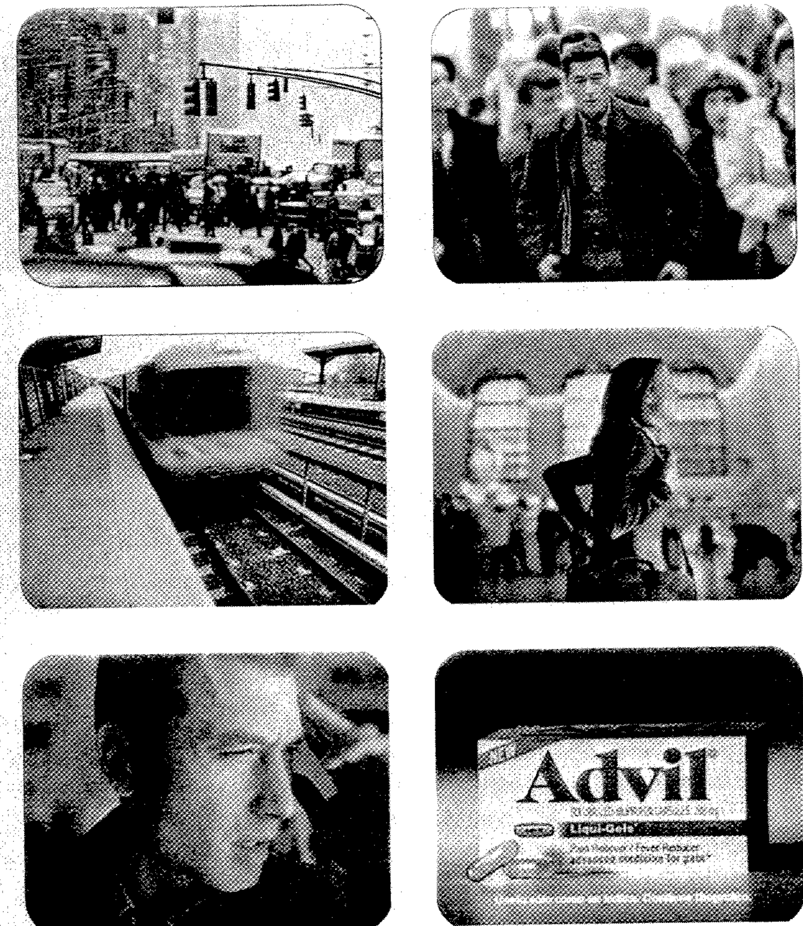


Figure 13. Everything is faster in this country, including pain-killers. "City" TV ad for Advil by The Bravo Group.

most romanticized symbol of European immigration. Most Hispanic ads, however, do not pay such open allegiance to Latinidad. Though Latina pride is always implied, they make fewer and fewer references to Hispanics, their traditions, roots, or values, and instead take Latinas and the existence of the Latin nation for granted.

Most creatives with whom I discussed these transformations considered them welcome signs of the market's maturation and successful consolidation around a pan-Latina or Hispanic identity. This change has al-

Figure 14. "Heritage," produced for Wrangler jeans by Cartel Creativo, asserts that jeans are really Latino.

lowed them to index Latinidad through scenes and situations that are supposedly shared or recognized as being Latina, such as a soccer game in the background, a Hispanic personality, or a popular Latin song or tune. The mere fact that the ad is in Spanish and located in the world of Spanish TV is enough as ads become less dependent on overt signs and marks of Latin "traditions" or on overused nationalistic appeals, suggesting the consolidation in the world of advertising of a more contemporary version of the Latina consumer. This trend has also led to the creation of new references that creatives can draw from as material for their ads, expanding the range of references that are actively mobilized when portraying "Hispanic" images. Because they must be persuasive to both their clients and consumers, however, these would necessarily be more derivative than "new." Typical of this trend are ads for Lincoln and Mercury by Uniworld Advertising, which a creative described as "very Latin." They revolve not around conga lines or maracas, but around spoofs of Mexican soap operas and old Mexican movies. These, according to the creative, are a dominant Latin index in a market dominated by Mexican cultural products. The "Telenovela" spot for Century 21 (figure 16), for instance, dramatizes the appalling situation that may follow if a couple's

Figure 15. "America." Tecate Beer conquers the United States. Ad by Cartel Creativo.

home loan is not approved. Unless they contact Century 21, they may be forced to live, and sleep, with their mother. In this way, ads are increasingly made "Hispanic" not by their direct presentation as such but by their embodiment in Hispanic characters and images. This brings us to the so-called generic "Latin look" and generic, nonregional Spanish, the two most powerful tools used to portray the modern pan-Latina market.

THE LATIN LOOK AND "WALTER CRONKITE SPANISH"

That there is a generic or pan-Hispanic "look" as well as universal Spanish is a view that is shared and taken for granted by almost everyone I talked to in this industry, from producers to creatives and casting directors. This construct dates back to the 1970s and the first nationwide TV campaigns, although it did not consolidate into its present dominant status until after an interlude in the 1980s, when the customization and regionalization of campaigns reached their zenith as marketing strategies. Thus today, even when not everyone may readily know how to define it, or agree with the representativity of this construct, everyone I spoke with

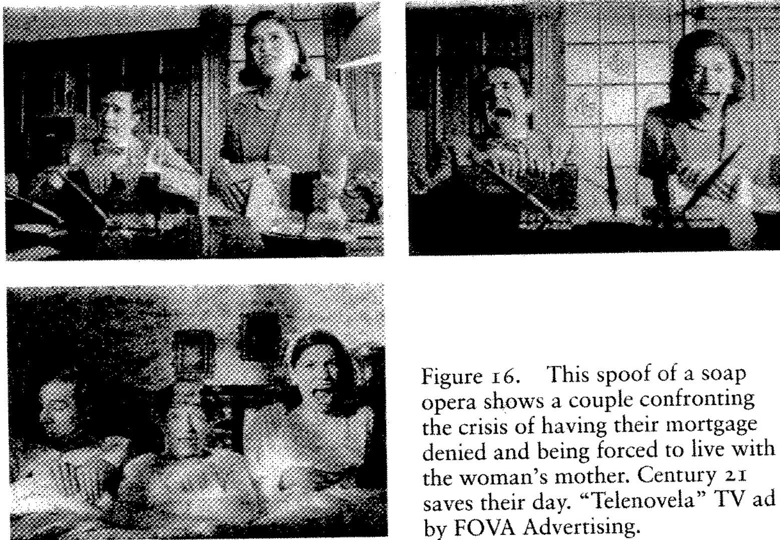


Figure 16. This spoof of a soap opera shows a couple confronting the crisis of having their mortgage denied and being forced to live with the woman's mother. Century 21 saves their day. "Telenovela" TV ad by FOVA Advertising.

took for granted and made constant reference to some sort of generic "Latin look" that any Hispanic can recognize and identify upon seeing. But who and what constitutes the generic Hispanic? A casting director explained, "You know what they want when they ask you for models; it's unspoken. What they want is the long straight hair, olive skin, just enough oliveness to the skin to make them not ambiguous. To make them Hispanic."

What makes anyone Hispanic in advertising, however, is more than olive skin. The so-called generic look is mediated by the beauty-obsessed world of advertising, as well as by the demand that this industry be (or appear to be) representative of its target consumer. Specifically, in contrast to advertising images for Latin American or other North American audiences, images for the U.S. Hispanic market have to be both aspirational (in the sense of showing beautiful, educated, or accomplished individuals) and also representative. Blondes and Nordic types, which are common in Latin American ads, supposedly would not work for U.S. Hispanics who, as minorities, I was told, were looking at ads for representation and confirmation. This does not mean that ad models are indeed representative of U.S. Hispanics—a quick look at Hispanic media images would surely attest to this—but that there is a concerted effort on the part of advertisers to cast aspirational models who are still somewhat representative of the "Hispanic consumer," or at least to sell and stress to clients the need for models who are representative, not just beautiful. However, content analysis of ads filmed in the early 1980s compared with those filmed today confirms what I was told by experienced casting directors and model agents working in this market: the generic look has become whiter and thus less representative of the average Hispanic consumer. Early ads showed a greater percentage of darker Latinas, particularly in male models who were never too dark, yet dark enough to be recognized as ethnic Hispanics. This is what was described to me as the "dark, mustached, Mexican type," or the stereotypical Hispanic look of the past, that creatives had to rely on in order to convince clients that their ads were authentic. They have since been able to replace this look with the so-called more modern and "representative" Latin look. The irony, however, is that in supplanting this stereotype, the industry has created yet another powerful one, namely a white one. As with Vasconcelos's early-twentieth-century dream of Latin American whitening by miscegenation, commercial representations of U.S. Hispanics have become tantamount to showing whiter-looking, Mediterranean Hispanic types. In contrast to racial segregation in the United States, Vasconcelos saw racial mixing in Latin America as the key to the formation of a cosmic race, a new and improved civilization stemming from the harmonious integration of its racial components. Vasconcelos's ideas were developed as an anti-imperialist response to the dominant eugenic thought of the time that rejected mixing as deterioration. His argument was a simple one: as opposed to Anglo-Americans, whose injustice and inhuman materialism had led them to exterminate or exclude indigenous populations from their "civilization," Latin Americans had kindly "mated" with them and assimilated them into a new culture where "inferior" and "lower" races could be improved and ameliorated—yet another proof of Latin America's moral superiority to the barbaric United States (Vasconcelos 1958). This is the same discourse that permeated most Latin American nationalist ideologies and that reverberates in the marketing industry's search and casting recommendations for the perfect look; a look, as Vasconcelos would have it, of balance, harmony, and beauty that is devoid of extreme (ethnic) types. As described by a creative, national advertising campaigns specify Hispanics "with features such as darker/olive-complected skin and brown-black hair over "extreme" types such as Nordic or Indian physical types, as well as generic language "whose accent is not traceable to any distinct population and is therefore not offensive to any particular group." Behind these recommendations, how-

ever, stands the practice of casting "whiter" Latinas. As a casting director tired of always being asked for "light-skinned Latinas" noted,

> What they want is a very conservative, anglicized look, a Hispanic in an anglicized garb. Its very much what in the general market we used to call the "P and G look," [Procter & Gamble look], the very clean-cut, all-American, blond and blue eyes, that was not representative of the United States. That was changed a long time ago, but it's not been thrown out in the Hispanic market. It's been replicated. They are trying to make the squeaky clean, perfect, boxed Latina look, not too dark and not too light.

And when in doubt, she continued, her clients would surely select the lighter over the darker Latina. Standards of beauty within Latin America which favor whiteness and straight, or "good," hair are very much at play here, as are those in the United States, especially beauty trends marked by Hollywood which become dominant in the modeling industry at large. As she insisted, "You also have to consider existing trends in beauty and looks. My roster is full of Jennifer López types, because she's hot, and before that I had a lot of Julia Roberts or Jennifer Anniston types. A client will also ask you for an Antonio Banderas type or a cool Nicolas Cage, and this makes it easy because no one can go through the entire roster of models." Making reference to Hollywood stars may facilitate communication between casting director, agency, and client, but it also translates into the casting of whiter models and actors. There are after all, few black and Latina Hollywood stars who can be independently recalled as "types." Indeed, there is seldom an indigenous or black face in Hispanic ads, unless they are minimally included in group shots. Even ads targeting the Central American and Mexican constituencies in the West consist of whiter, mestizo types. For nationwide campaigns, however, it is the generic/Mediterranean look that rules. When more recognizably "ethnic" types are shown, they tend to be presented as signifiers of cultural authenticity, never of beauty or generic appeal. Thus an ad for Banco Popular shows a woman with Indian traits making tortillas only as part of a collage of people to denote its status as the bank for the people; channel 41's thirty-year anniversary ads present Andean performers and Puerto Rican folk musicians in authentic garb to mark their authenticity as performers in order to appeal to specific subgroups in New York—but they do not speak.

This general lack of nonwhite images coincides with a widespread reticence regarding the issue of racial diversity in advertising. This was evident during the 1998 fall meeting of the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies (AHAA), when Felipe Luciano, former member of the

Young Lords, and the only Afro-Hispanic in the audience, brought up the issue of race and representativity during the question and answer period of one of the plenaries. His statement that most of what he saw was insulting and not representative of Hispanics was met with the common argument that "advertising for U.S. Hispanics is far more representative than Latin American advertisements," or that, after all, only a small percentage of Hispanics are black, and this percentage itself does not warrant a transformation of the Latin image.

In fact, even when Hispanic media and advertising staff express interest in transforming this Latin look, they encounter major obstacles in overcoming the dominant image of the light-skinned Hispanic. As explained by the founder of *Latina* magazine, which since its establishment in 1996 has striven for a more realistic portrayal of contemporary U.S. Latina women, even when staff members ask for darker and more diverse Latina models, agencies tend to send the same type: a size twelve if they ask for a large model, and a light-skinned Latina if they ask for a Latina. To cope with this problem, *Latina* magazine has repeatedly shown celebrities rather than models on its covers and tried to profile readers in some of its regular features, which has allowed it to show a more diverse range of Latina women than modeling agencies are willing to provide. Notwithstanding these attempts at inclusiveness, it still took the magazine over two years to feature an Afro-Hispanic model on its cover, the upcoming TV and film actress Gina Ravera, featured in the November 1998 issue. The cover, a response to previous criticism about the lack of African-descent representation in the magazine, however, displayed a half-naked actress, with only her tresses covering her breasts in a sensual portrayal not matched by the rest of the magazine's covers, which had been dominated by wholesome or romantic-looking Latinas or celebrities. The cover hence triggered yet another letter to the editor criticizing the portrayal of women of African descent as "purely exotic sexual beings" (Dias 1999).

The general-market model agencies contribute to the whiteness of commercial Latina media because they operate within the dichotomous black-and-white racial dynamics of the United States, with a limited roster of Latin actors and models. Meanwhile, Hispanic model agencies, while specializing in this area, are confronted with a paucity of opportunities for their "ambiguous" Latin models, such as Afro- and Indo-Hispanic models, who could be taken for blacks or Asiatics, rather than unambiguous Hispanics. Indeed, a casting director I spoke with had few black or other "exotic" types, as she described them, in her photographic ledger, and

those she had were rarely booked by Hispanic agencies, who feared that these models might blur the uniqueness of Hispanic marketing as not only a cultural but also a racially specific market. Thus her recommendation for an aspiring black Hispanic actress was simple enough: change your name from Mónica Rodríguez to Monica White and market yourself as a black actress instead. The irony is that, as she also explained, the ethnic/racial ambiguity is more easily accepted when the model is a white Latino or Latina.

The so-called generic Latin look has its linguistic match in "Walter Cronkite Spanish"—unaccented, generic, or universal Spanish, supposedly devoid of regionalism or of traceable accent, which is generally believed to be the most effective medium for campaigns reaching the entire market. This is also the Spanish that most creatives and ad executives I spoke with were convinced they themselves had cultivated, in order to corroborate their own pan-ethnicity and thus their authority to address this pan-ethnic market. In this way, Hispanic marketers acted as a "linguistic community," in Michael Silverstein's (1996) phrase, united by their allegiance to the existence and promotion of a "standardized" language, which they treated as a "realizable asset" that they themselves had cultivated and mastered. This "standard" Spanish was conceived as standard English is in the United States, perceived as correct speech and valorized as an instrument of clarity and rational thought. Most of all, it was regarded as the optimum means to avoid the potential double meanings and malapropisms that could ensue from the various speech patterns and codes of different Latin American nationalities. Their adherence to this construct was apparent in marketers' avoidance of regionally marked terminology, in their boasting about their lack of accent, and in the pride with which they reacted to my inability to discover their national background from their speech.

Yet, like any putative standard form of language, "Walter Cronkite Spanish" is not an empirical fact but a "discursive project," reproducing particular language ideology and social distinctions (Woolard 1998); as such, it is not uncritically accepted by all in the industry. Walter Cronkite Spanish is slightly influenced by English at the level of structure, vocabulary, and grammar, and English's lingering threat to Spanish is one factor that guides the hiring of Latin American–born staff. Moreover, although many advertising personnel have reduced their native Latin American accents as a result of their immigration experience and their involvement in the "linguistic community" of advertising, the origin of their accents is still perceptible under scrutiny. In addition, their nationalities are never shed when they reduce their national accents; in fact, Hispanic marketers are quite adept at "reading" each other's camouflaged accents to expose knowledge of each other's background, a knowledge that remains important for social interactions within the industry at large. In fact, some advertising staff I spoke with admitted that the so-called Walter Cronkite Spanish was a cloak for the "Mexicanization" of the language, a perception that is not at all unfounded. Given that Mexican Americans constitute 65 percent of all Hispanics and that many ads are filmed in Mexico with Mexican actors, ads for the national market often end up with a Mexican flavor which, combined with the central role of Mexican soap operas and programming on the U.S. Hispanic airwaves, further strengthens Mexican language, accent, and mannerisms as the embodiment of generic Latinidad. What we therefore have is the dissemination of a media register of a sociolect of mostly upper-class Mexican Spanish, where Mexican (mostly *chilango*, or from the capital) mannerisms and accents are more likely to be accepted as "representative" of the market, whereas Caribbean Spanish is hardly heard in generic advertisements and is highly edited in the Hispanic networks' programming. For example, both the Cuban Cristina Saralegui and the Puerto Rican Ray Arrieta, popular Univision entertainers, have publicly revealed the pressure they faced to tone down their accents. Cristina, who has achieved considerable influence in this industry, struggled and was able to keep her Cuban accent and have it accepted as a trademark of her TV personality, but Raymond had to shed his Puerto Rican "Ay bendito" after the first filming of his new Univision program *Lente Loco*.[9]

For others, generic Spanish is but a myth that never fully appeals to all Hispanics. This view is most prevalent among radio professionals, who work in a more regional medium and are thus inherently less likely to embrace the generic Spanish idea. According to Eduardo Caballero, a primary figure in the development of national Hispanic radio, "The problem is that the generic Spanish is a myth. It's like Walter Cronkite, who, wanting to reach all, would not reach anyone. That's the problem. It's generic, but it is not absolutely relevant or direct." Connecting to consumers, he argued, involved speaking to their "souls" through their particular type of Spanish, enhancing rather than diminishing accents. Later, we will examine how audiences perceive this so-called Latin look and generic Spanish. From what we have seen so far, we can safely infer

that the growing interest in Hispanics as consumers has been paralleled by their being recast into a sellable abstraction that is becoming both more bounded and defined, and more distant from the real heterogeneity of the "average" Hispanic consumer.

"THE NATION AND ITS FRAGMENTS"

As already mentioned, the dominant trend in Hispanic marketing is progressively moving toward a generic "Hispanic nation" and market.[10] The regionalization and customization of campaigns for different national subgroups, however, has also been a common strategy to address this market, even if in decline and in constant competition with the growing consolidation of the so-called generic, or "universal," Hispanic.

Today, such customization has been reduced to the realm of radio and print media, and consists of slight adjustments to national campaigns or of promotions customized for different subgroups. Yet in the early 1980s this task often involved the development of different versions of an ad to appeal to different national subgroups. The irony here is that the few ads for nationwide campaigns done in the early 1970s were conceived in terms of the generic, so-called neutral Spanish, and so, despite the scarcity of nationwide campaigns, the industry had some practice with the generic Hispanic construct, only to abandon it in the 1980s with the growing popularity of the market. This change and eventual recuperation of the generic Hispanic construct is a topic that triggered many explanations from all I talked to. For some, customization and regionalization resulted from growing competition as regional differences became a selling point for new agencies seeking to distinguish themselves in a more competitive market by emphasizing their expertise in the ethnic particularities of different markets. I was also told that this development was related to an overall reaction to the generic campaigns, which were seen in the West as too Caribbean and not representative of the Western-based Hispanic market. Recall that the first ads were devised by a mostly Cuban creative staff and filmed in Puerto Rico. This may explain why, when transmitted alongside the Mexican programming, over 90 percent of which was imported from Mexico until the 1980s, these first ads may have appeared as "foreign" rather than generic in these markets.

Yet another motive for customizing campaigns was the growing budgets attracted by the industry at this time, which facilitated the development of customized campaigns for different regional markets. Amidst the rising interest in the Hispanic market during the 1980s, many corporations began to institute multicultural and Hispanic initiatives, which led to a sudden increase in media budgets for Hispanics.[11] A commercial for Goya's Canilla rice in the mid-1980s, for instance, was filmed three different times, customizing it for Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Colombians (along with Central Americans) through particular themes, casts, backdrops, and music, while maintaining the same message in its jingle. While all of the ads were filmed in the Dominican Republic, each aimed to evoke scenes that would reverberate specifically among these other nationalities. The Dominican version was filmed on the famous beach of Boca Chica, and juxtaposed images of a fisherman and a couple eating in a seashore restaurant. The jingle featured a merengue beat. The Colombian/Central American ad showed a middle-class family scene with more Andean/peasant music, whereas the Puerto Rican ad depicted countryside scenes aimed at recreating Puerto Rican landscapes with a backdrop of Puerto Rican *jíbaro* music.

The ads for Campbell's soup by Conill Advertising also exemplify such customization. These ads present the product as the ideal side dish to traditional Puerto Rican and Mexican meals such as *arroz con pollo* and *chiles rellenos,* with Puerto Rican and Mexican models exhibiting the accent and mannerisms of each national subgroup. Even basic products like soap or detergent have been customized for different regional markets. An advertisement for Tide laundry detergent by Conill in the mid-1980s was filmed twice, using two different musical jingles and backdrops. Both ads showed a woman dancing with the box of detergent, but the West Coast version was accompanied by a soundtrack of "Chapanecas," a traditional Mexican song, while for the East Coast market, the *manicero,* a Cuban salsa-like rhythm, was used.

All the advertising executives I talked to agreed, however, that the increase of generic representations was affected primarily by the requirements of corporate clients, who needed easily marketable Latinas. As one noted, "We were selling them the idea that all Hispanics are alike but then pitching them to do two or three different advertising executions. It got too complicated. We had to make it easy for them. They had to understand that advertising for Hispanics is like advertising for the general market. You just don't do an ad for Alabama and one for New York." Indeed, today most advertisers have left behind this regionalized approach to the market and now address Hispanics as a unique "nation-within-a-nation," with more commonalities than differences. Figures 6, 8, 12, 13, 16, 18, and 20 are all examples of this generic advertising approach. This does not mean that the industry no longer targets specific markets; rather,

customization is now confined to the less costly and therefore more flexible realms of radio and print media. Most national TV campaigns are accompanied by a radio component using salsa musical backgrounds when advertising for East Coast audiences, *conjuntos* for the audiences in the West, and a Caribbean or Mexican scenario, ambiance, or flavor for East and West Coast audiences respectively. Meanwhile, the continued proliferation of festivals such as Miami's Calle Ocho and New York City's Dominican and Puerto Rican parade, as well as of ethnic-specific promotions, is a sure sign that regional/ethnic appeals will continue to be a vibrant component of this industry.

Vidal, Reynardus, and Moya's (now the Vidal Partnership) advertising for Heineken beer provides a good example of this trend. Though its national TV campaign revolved around nondescript music and artistic shots of beer, lacking any Latin index, it was accompanied by an outdoor ad program customized for particular markets, filled with culturally specific references that could only be identified by inhabitants of particular neighborhoods. A poster placed all around my own Manhattan neighborhood, Washington Heights, in the commercial center of 181st Street, uses street signs of this very street along with signs from bodegas and street lights marking this commercial intersection to associate the beer not with New York, but with this particular neighborhood (figure 17). The agency also customized poster ads for other Latina neighborhoods that similarly mixed and matched important landmarks, be they buildings or signs, into a Heineken neighborhood collage.

Univision's New York channel 41 promotional ad provides a good example of the persistence of this trend. For its thirty-year anniversary, while its ads repeatedly appealed to a common Hispanic spirit, language, and heritage, the channel shot different versions using certain performers to appeal to different Latin American constituencies in the city, singing the promotional song in different national rhythms and often accompanied by their respective "national dances." Thus the Dominican version of the ad, filmed in the Dominican Republic, shows Dominican performer Sergio Vargas playing a merengue version of the song in scenes that intercalated the Dominican Flag and tourist spots. Similarly, the Colombian version shows Colombian performers playing the same song, arranged to a *cumbia* rhythm, and the Argentinian version shows a couple dancing the tango, lest any groups feel excluded or offended. What have not changed, however, are the culturalist types of appeals that reduce different subnationalities to culture indexes and traits, such as a type of food, music, or a festival, which are seen as the greatest inducements

Figure 17. Outdoor ads in Washington Heights, New York City. The Heineken ad, placed on 181st Street, incorporates the street sign into the ad to associate the beer more closely with the residents of this Latino community.

to Latinas, irrespective of their background. Consequently, differences of class, race, and lifestyle among members of the same nationality are never addressed, nor are those between different nationalities (except in special cases like the channel 41 ads, which were specifically generated for the New York regional market).

The trend towards addressing Hispanics as a totality for nationwide campaigns, however, is not solely an issue of economics. While such ads are easier to sell to Anglo corporations and appear more authentically

Hispanic, this trend is also fed by a generalized view among advertisers that the United States is indeed undergoing a process of Latinization, and that there is a great degree of cross-fertilization among different Latina groups. As proof, creatives pointed to the advent of Puerto Rican *merengueras* (female Puerto Rican singers of an originally Dominican rhythm), to the popularity of Caribbean salsa among Mexicans and Central Americans, and to the sold-out Madison Square Garden concert of Mexican Alejandro Fernández, the *ranchera* singer, in a market where it is Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, not Mexicans, who form the largest Latina population. The result is that advertising is increasingly less particular to specific markets. Thus, for instance, instead of customizing ads for different markets, Goya's new ads translate "beans" as both *frijoles* and *habichuelas* (as said by different Latina populations) within the same ad, and show the national dishes of different Latin American countries next to each other. For the promotion of Malta drink, Goya's ads show children playing both baseball, popular among Hispanic Caribbeans, and soccer, popular among Central and South Americans. Similarly, Tide's ads in the 1990s appealed to a common Hispanic spirit through scenes of experiences supposedly shared by all Hispanics/Latinas. One of their more recent ads shows a recent immigrant learning English and discussing her difficulties but also her will to succeed in this country, which I was told is a "universal" experience that Hispanics have either had themselves, or experienced vicariously through friends or relatives.

Another common strategy for reconciling the need for inclusiveness with the need for specific representation was described to me as the "café con leche" approach, where unity is constructed and projected from references to difference. However, in contrast to the customized campaigns of the 1980s, where different nationalities were segmented and addressed through culture-specific ads, these ads show different nationalities juxtaposed or, increasingly, mingling and socializing within the same ad. Good examples of the juxtaposition of different nationalities is provided by figures 18 and 19. In "Opinions" (figure 18) Campbell's Soup is simultaneously targeted to Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans who, while chatting with the Campbell's Soup can, are indexed through language mannerisms and regional accents. In "Family Favorites" (figure 19) these three groups are again addressed together but this time through their national cuisines. The ad juxtaposes different models rejoicing at their respective national dishes, such as Mexican *huevos rancheros,* the Cuban beef stew, *ropa vieja,* and the Puerto Rican *bistecito encebollado con yuca* (steak with onions and garlic cassava). The ad concludes with images of

churros, codfish fritters, taquitos, and a very pleased man joyfully exclaiming "Ay, ay, ay."

As for ads showing different Latino nationalities socializing, an ad for AT&T by Bravo (1997) recently teamed up the Cuban singer Jon Secada with the Mexican soap opera star Thalia to appeal simultaneously to two distinct Hispanic subgroups. Drawing from viewers' knowledge of U.S. Hispanic media personalities, the commercial shows Secada arranging a song for Thalia in Mexico to laud the clarity of an AT&T telephone connection. In this case, Secada's dark looks are mediated by his fame, which points to another industry trend: when black Latinas are shown, they are mostly media or entertainment personalities like Celia Cruz or Secada portraying themselves. Black Latinas are seldom signifiers of generic Latinidad. Another example of appealing to different nationalities is K-Mart's Christmas ad, which presents shopping at K-Mart as a Hispanic tradition by juxtaposing a Cuban, a Mexican, and a Puerto Rican woman remembering each group's traditional Christmas requirements of *buñuelos, posadas,* and *aguinaldos;* or Conill's Toyota ad, which shows a car driving through a collage depicting different urban, regional, and Latin American settings—a beach which could be taken for Miami or Puerto Rico, an urban landscape which could be taken for New York or Chicago—to appeal simultaneously to different Latina subnationalities. Miller's 1999 beer ad even features an invented word, the hybrid *salsarengue,* to tell consumers not to argue about whether they like salsa or merengue: dance both and drink Miller. The Bud Light 1999 campaign, for its part, adopted a regional Latina montage drawing from the impersonations of comedian John Leguizamo to present Bud Light as the facilitator that reconciles regional differences among Latinas, facilitating the process of Latinization. In a spot named "Banda," Leguizamo is shown in Tex-Mex gear crashing an audition by Projecto Uno, an East Coast hip-hop and merengue band; tension fills the air, but the potential clash is quickly mitigated with a Bud Light. Additionally, music is increasingly described as "contemporary Latin" rather than Mexican or merengue, and images of soccer and baseball are being dropped for more conceptual images. Even telecommunications companies have abandoned any reference to old countries left behind and now feature relatives calling their friends and family, not "back home" but all across the United States. As one creative said, "Where we need to go is to the point where we show husbands and wives with different accents, because we do intermarry, and where we don't need to even make reference to family or soccer." To get there, however, creatives need first to overcome

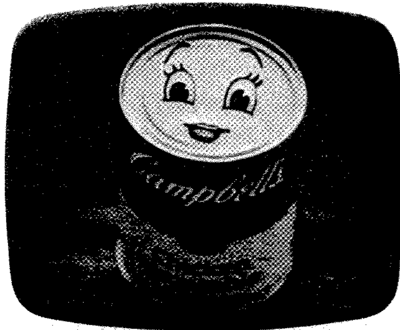
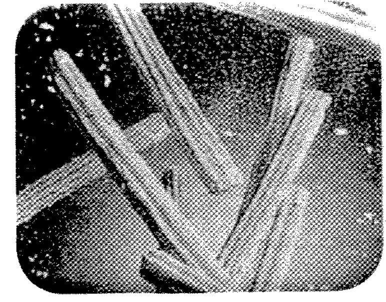


Figure 18. Cambell Soup's "Opinions," featuring Cuban- , Mexican- , and Puerto Rican–accented Spanish. Produced in 1984. Ad by Conill Advertising, New York City.



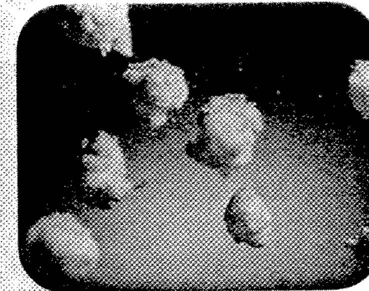


Figure 19. "Family Favorites" TV ad for Mazola by The Bravo Group. MAZOLA is a registered trademark of Bestfoods. Used by permission.

a series of obstacles which work against the expansion of the range of Latina images, as explored in the next chapter.

What is indeed obvious is that in the process of projecting corrective images through lavish portrayals meant to make Latinas proud of themselves and their "Hispanic" identity, the industry has generated additional tropes and stereotypes of the Latina consumer which are more derivative than new. These processes remind us of the constraints against which struggles over what it means to be Latina or Hispanic in the media are being waged—the same struggles that overcame clients' insistence on traditional images of Latinidad, although not necessarily the discourses that gave rise to those images. Recall that the view of the white, moral, and traditional Latina hinges on the dominant U.S.-generated discourses about Latin culture that have been rampant in nineteenth-century ideologies of Latin American elites. The association of Latinas with so-called pride-worthy values and images, has functioned also to reduce what can and cannot be representative of Hispanics in this country to very specific conventions. They are therefore increasingly codified around marketable tropes and images that have become more distant from their everyday realities. After all, a great number of Latinas are trapped in poverty and low-wage jobs or unemployment, and the Mediterranean Hispanic does not compose the majority of the U.S. Latina population, nor does that majority speak upper-class, "Mexican" Spanish. Moreover, while the ways in which these themes are represented have not remained static or unchanged—families have taken less traditional roles, representations of Latinidad have become more self-referential, the generic look has whitened—the references around which they are framed have not been altered. Hispanic advertising still responds to the social hierarchies that subordinate Latinas in this country and is still predicated on the need to project positive images, leading it to rely on the same clichés of the good, traditional, patriotic, not-too-dark/not-too-light Latina which, against the always-present specter of Anglo culture, still dominate their commercial representation. Unfortunately, these are the same clichés that, while making Latinas safe and commercially viable for mass consumption, limit their association with some sort of cultural ethos, keeping them unthreateningly in "their place." The dominant racial and ethnic hierarchies at play in U.S. society thus remain unchallenged. They hinge on the existence of a normative white world, where difference is contained and marked so as never to disturb this world. Untouched as well are the existing ethnic/racial hierarchies among and across Latina subgroups, the same ones that make the lighter Latina the more marketable one, that

favor the so-called standard Spanish over Spanglish, and that treat certain accents as more representative of Latinidad than others. The preceding discussion warns us of the pitfalls of positive images, reminding us that the need for them and their production are still predicated on, and therefore affected by, dominant frameworks of race, ethnicity, and nationality.

At the same time, the growing popularity of generic, national Hispanic advertising suggests that such appeals, while narrow and exclusionary, have attained some generalized acceptance, helping to partially consolidate a highly heterogeneous population around images of a world where everyone is good, no one is a minority, and "everyone is your friend." In this context, the Hispanic marketing industry becomes a mirror of trends in the advertising industry at large, and of the same processes through which differences are ordered, contained, or partially represented. This is because, far from being merely shrewd fabrications, Hispanic ads are also products of strategies of representation aimed at the partial representation of the "Hispanic consumer," even when this simultaneously involves the erasure and reconstitution of differences (such as those of class, race, nationality, etc.) into his or her very construction. Thus we saw that Hispanic models, though generally white and Mediterranean-looking, are indeed darker than most models in the general market. Similarly, intangible cultural values have continued to be popular as a way of reconciling intragroup differences, allowing creatives to avoid reference to particular groups or everyday scenes connected to particular Latina subgroups in ways that might invoke regional, racial, or subnational, rather than the intended pan-Hispanic identification. It is also to this end that most campaigns are still accompanied by an ethnic-specific promotional or radio component that reminds different groups that, despite the commercial abstractions of Latinidad presented in the TV ads, these campaigns are really addressing "them" as "Hispanics." In these processes, these constructs become self-referential of Hispanic culture, even though this "culture" can only be found in the ad world.