How Ethnic Are U.S. Ethnic Media: The Case of Latina Magazines

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In this article, I review 3 waves of ethnic media scholarship, and I describe how the dominant paradigm shifted from assimilation concerns to pluralism. I used qualitative and quantitative content analysis to examine news and features in 5 new nationwide women's magazines targeted to U.S. Hispanics. Thirty-eight percent of the manifest content mentioned Latinos and 27% mentioned specific Latin American cultures. These new English-language and bilingual Latina magazines distributed in the United States had simultaneous assimilative and pluralistic functions. One function was the ability to create a pan-Hispanic identity for members of various Latin American cultures. The magazine content does not fit within the confines of current language-based ethnic media models. I propose a revised model of ethnic media that reflects dual functions of assimilative and pluralistic expression and takes into account the possibility of more symbolic ethnic media functions.

The growth of Latino media distributed in the United States has paralleled the exponential growth of U.S. Hispanics. Latinos currently comprise about 11% of the U.S. population (see Byerly and Deardorff, 1995).

Most of the research on U.S. Latino media has described the content, audience uses and gratifications, and effects of usage of Spanish-language broadcasting and newspapers. Little attention has been paid to Latino magazines. Latino magazines in the United States originated as a Spanish-language genre, currently dominated by the behemoth publisher Editorial Televisa. However, in the late 1990s, a number of English-language and bilingual magazines started publication in the United

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1The magazine trade press has documented the growth of Latino media in the United States (e.g., see Caitlin, 1997; Fest, 1997a).
States. Publisher recognition of the enormous underserved audience and increased advertiser recognition of the purchasing power of the Hispanic market have driven these and Spanish-language magazine start-ups.

The terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably in this article to refer to a U.S. resident who self-identifies with the indigenous or Spanish-speaking cultures of Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central America, or South America. Hispanics are also of European Spanish origin, and Portuguese-speaking Brazilians may self-identify as Latin American (although normally not as Hispanic). The feminine form of Latino, Latina, refers to Latin American women. Another term used throughout the article is ethnic media. Ethnic media is defined as mass media targeted to particular ethnic or racial groups.

This study had three purposes. One was to organize the body of knowledge related to ethnic media and Hispanics. The second was to conduct an exploratory analysis of the new genre of Latina magazines and compare the content to existing models of ethnic media functions. The third objective was to suggest any necessary modifications to existing models based on the findings. This topic is important to study because English-language and bilingual ethnic media challenge the assumption that language is central to cultural identity. As U.S. society continues to grapple with issues related to race and ethnicity, it behooves mass media scholars to investigate the role and limitations of ethnic media in this arena.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Concept of Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity “involves the use of some aspect of a group’s cultural background to separate themselves from others” (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 93). This ethnic categorization is socially defined or may be based on cultural, psychological, or biological characteristics (Gordon, 1964; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Jackson & Garner, 1997). A sense of “peoplehood” is the impetus for merging our individual identities into a larger ancestral group (Miller, 1987; Padilla, 1985).

Ethnicity can be self-identified or placed on someone by others. For instance, someone might self-identify as Mexican American or Puerto Rican, but institutional forces (e.g., government agencies, universities) might categorize that person as Hispanic.

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2 The use of these broad terms for the purposes of this article does not mean to slight the ethnicity of Latinos who are more apt to self-identify in relation to a country or indigenous group (e.g., “I am Puerto Rican, I am Dominican, I am Quechua”).
Ethnic Media Research: From Assimilation to Pluralism

Three waves of social science research have investigated the role of mass media in an immigrant's adjustment to mainstream U.S. culture. The first research phase took place in a major U.S. immigration era, the 1920s, and was primarily assimilative in its approach. The concept of assimilation means giving up one culture and taking on another (Gordon, 1964; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Social scientists studying ethnicity in the early 20th century viewed this as the ideal—rejecting one's culture to become American.

The foundations of ethnicity and media scholarship in this period were laid by Chicago School sociologists like Park (1922/1970) at the University of Chicago, who studied the role of U.S. general market media and ethnic media (Persons, 1987). Park said the foreign language press "preserves old memories [and simultaneously is] the gateway to new experiences" (p. 449). The roots of the immigrant press Park described were largely commercial. Early immigrant newspapers were steamship ticket agents' newspapers, merely advertising sheets sent out to prospective customers. Eventually they became standard newspapers. 3 Park also observed the correlation between increases in immigration among various ethnic groups and the increases in newspapers started for those groups.

Later, communication scholars dropped the term assimilation in favor of the concept of acculturation (Berry, 1980). Original definitions of acculturation were initiated by North American anthropologists who defined acculturation as change occurring at the group level as a result of two or more groups of individuals with different cultures coming into contact. Change could occur in any of the groups' cultural patterns. 4

The concept of acculturation became dominant in the second wave of social science and communication research in the 1960s, most likely tied to civil rights movements rather than immigration trends. 5 This body of research emphasized that participation in mainstream communication channels was necessary for acculturation to the host culture (Gordon, 1964; Shibutani & Kwan, 1965), but the expectation was that one would retain aspects of one's own culture. The focus during the 1960s was on minorities' instrumental use of dominant information channels (general market media). Ethnic media on the other hand, especially broadcast media,

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3 The earliest noncommercial immigrant newspapers were connected with religious organizations or published by local communities dominated by churches. Other early immigrant newspapers were connected with political groups (like socialist papers).

4 In addition to identifying change at the group level, acculturation is also used to describe change at the individual level.

5 Although the last bracero program ended in 1964, between 1950 and 1960 more than 300,000 Mexicans entered the United States each year. Castro's rise to power in Cuba also resulted in the emigration of many Cubans during this period.
were classified as vehicles for entertainment or relaxation, and buffers from the assimilation forces of the dominant culture.

Current definitions of acculturation refer to gradual adaptation to the new culture by replacing some norms and values of the old culture with those of the new (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Kim, 1988). Although some intercultural communication scholars focus on minority adaptation to the majority culture, other definitions suggest a reciprocal process (Kim, 1988). The majority culture, too, adapts to the norms or customs of the new culture and the acculturating group can retain some of its customs or values. For instance, in the southwestern United States, White American residents regularly use Spanish phrases, and elsewhere in the United States they may eat Mexican food or use Guatemalan textile designs in their home furnishings.

Beginning in the late 1970s and continuing through the 1990s a robust third period of media scholarship focused not only on immigrants and minorities, but began to include Hispanics, who had been relatively absent from the first two phases. Subervi-Vélez’s (1986) touchstone piece profiled Hispanics and found substantial support for the pluralistic function of media.

At the individual level, pluralism is defined as an internal view of one’s group membership but not a required cultural identity. One can display group membership as one sees fit in a context or situation (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Husband, 1994; Padilla, 1985). For instance, one can self-identify as Latino at a salsa club but as an English-speaking U.S. citizen at work, or as a Salvadoran among other Salvadorans but as Latino among Mexican Americans. At the group level, pluralism refers to sustained ethnic differentiation and heterogeneity, implying practice of one culture while participating in the majority society (Subervi-Vélez, 1986).

Subervi-Vélez’s review of research about Hispanics and media found that unlike some other ethnic groups, Latinos use or prefer a variety of media (Spanish-language or English-language mainstream). He concluded that uses of English-language media, in general, had assimilative tendencies (but noted that in much of the research supporting assimilation functions of mass media, statistical controls for socioeconomic status and ethnicity variables were generally absent). The body of Latino-oriented work in this third wave of ethnic media scholarship included descriptive uses of the mass media by Hispanics (Allen & Clarke, 1980; Faber, O’Guinn, & Meyer, 1986), Hispanic attitudes toward mass media credibility (Tan, 1978), coverage and treatment of Hispanics in the mass media (Greenberg & Baptista-Fernandez, 1980; Lichter, Lichter, Rothman, & Amundson, 1987; Subervi-Vélez, 1994; Turk, Richstad, Bryson, & Johnson, 1989), mass media and Hispanics as consumers (Gutiérrez, 1987; O’Guinn, Faber, & Meyer, 1985; O’Guinn, Imperia, & MacAdams, 1987), mass media and Hispanics as voters (Subervi-Vélez, 1988; Tan, 1983), or combinations of some of these topics (Greenberg & Brand, 1994; Greenberg, Burgoon, Burgoon, & Korzenney, 1983).

Acculturation communication studies with Latinos tended to focus on English-language versus Spanish-language media use and indicated that language of
media used related to acculturation level or ethnic identity (Jeffres & Hur, 1981; Johnson, 1996; Korzenny, Neuendorf, Burgoon, Burgoon, & Greenberg, 1983; Riggins, 1992; Rios, 1993, 1994; Shoemaker, Reese, & Danielson, 1985; Shoemaker, Reese, Danielson, & Hsu, 1987; Zmud, 1992). This research phase included studies about immigrants as well as Hispanics born in the United States.

Ethnic Media Functions

Although the tendency of recent studies has been pluralism oriented, most models of ethnic media functions recognize assimilation and pluralism functions. The following have been delineated as key pluralistic functions of ethnic media: to preserve and transmit native culture and identity by maintaining the language and promoting ethnic pride; to establish a minority news agenda, to announce community events and cover minority social activities (including minority business advertising); to promote the group's political and social interests and motivate them to be socially and politically active; to serve as collective expressions of anger at injustices; and to provide comfort and respite from negative images in general market media (Constantakis-Valdés, 1992; Downing, 1992; Fox, 1996; Gutiérrez, 1977; Huntzicker, 1995; Riggins, 1992; Subervi-Vélez, 1994).

The symbolic empowerment function of ethnic media has been another vital function (Riggins, 1992). In other words, just by having one's own large-circulation magazines, a group symbolically has power. Another recently discussed symbolic function of ethnic media is the unification of subgroups. Husband's (1994) analysis of the relation between ethnicity and media claimed that a "media-invented heritage" (p. 7) is important in the maintenance of an ethnic community. Fox (1996) said that media are the vehicles that will enable Latinos to evolve from a number of subgroup identifiers to one Latino identity. Self-identity as Hispanic is a step toward joining America, rather than identifying oneself as Mexican, Cuban, and so on, he said, to provide a history that emphasizes the common and forgets conflictive elements. Because media allow people to "enter [a group and] television and the newer communications technologies create a virtual Hispanic-land" (p. 7), media support this identity convergence: "No other minority now or in the history of the United States has had such an extensive apparatus for maintaining its language and propagating its myths" (p. 40). Fox said Spanish-language mass media exploit Hispanic heritage to sell an audience to advertisers, and in doing so, end up promoting group consciousness. McCracken (1993) noted that the Latina magazine trade-off for making Latinas visible in society is that they are then visible as consumers to marketers.

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6In this article, subgroups refer to individual Latino cultures such as Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and so on.
Researchers have summarized the assimilation functions of ethnic media as serving as instruments of social control, maintaining the dominant languages of the host society, maintaining the dominant ideology, borrowing general market media genres, and socializing to the modern (Constantakis-Valdés, 1992; Gutiérrez, 1977; Riggins, 1992).

A secondary function is its role for nonethnic groups: Ethnic media can serve as a source of information for those outside the culture (Constantakis-Valdés, 1992; Husband, 1994; Park, 1922/1970).

In summary, models of ethnic media functions have concentrated on pluralism and assimilation functions. Researchers posit that although ethnicity is not media created, it may be media bolstered. However, models of Latino ethnic functions have been based on studies of Spanish-language newspapers and broadcasting. A new genre of Latino media challenges the completeness of existing theoretical models, at least as they apply to Hispanic media. The following case study adds a profile of an evolving Latino magazine genre in the United States to the body of ethnic media research.

The Target Audience

There are 11 million Latinas in the United States and 5 million Latinas aged 16 or over in the U.S. workforce (Byerly & Deardorff, 1995). In the wallets of more than 26 million Latinos and Latinas in the United States is a purchasing power of $348 billion (Kelly, 1997; Nuiry, 1997). Each year, Hispanic women spend 17% more of their income on cosmetics, fragrances, and personal care products than non-Hispanics. Because Latinos have larger households and are younger than national averages, they spend a bigger portion of their income on household items, supplies, food, and clothing (Nuiry, 1997). In short, the Latino market is an attractive group for magazine advertisers. These commercial forces enable Latino magazines to sustain publication, just as commercial forces sustained immigrant publications in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Latina Magazines: A Brief History

The world’s largest publisher of Spanish-language magazines is Editorial Televisa, headquartered in Mexico City with U.S. operations in Miami. Newsstands throughout the United States and Latin America sell their Spanish-language editions of classics like Vanidades (a 37-year-old upscale women’s magazine) and Cristina, among many others. Cosmopolitan has had a Spanish-language edition since 1973, which Editorial Televisa currently publishes via an agreement with Hearst. Other Hearst–Editorial Televisa Spanish-language magazines are Buenhogar (Good
*Housekeeping* and *Harper's Bazaar*. In another business relationship, Editorial Televisa and Marie Claire Album publish *Marie Claire en Español*. In short, whether individually or in agreement with other entities, Editorial Televisa is the queen of Spanish-language magazines in the United States (and elsewhere in the Americas) targeted at women. The circulations of some of these popular publications range from 25,000 to 400,000 in the United States (Kelly, 1997).

Whereas Editorial Televisa’s market has been Spanish speakers, upstart publications in the United States have targeted second- and third-generation Latinas who do not necessarily read Spanish. The trade press reports that the new publications and major advertisers are marketing to upscale, educated, acculturated Latinas (Ballon, 1997; Beam, 1996; Fest, 1997b; Gremillion, 1996).

*Latina Style* was founded in 1994 by Anna Maria Arias to provide cultural, business, and entertainment news. Arias is a former managing editor of *Hispanic Magazine*. *Latina*—published by the company that produces *Essence*—started as a bimonthly and in mid-1997 switched to a monthly, enjoying substantial advertising support and a circulation of 200,000. Both publications are in English but frequently use Spanish phrases, not unlike the code-switching\(^7\) that occurs between Latinos and Anglos in cities like San Diego or Santa Fe.\(^8\)

*Moderna* was published by *Hispanic* magazine in Austin, Texas and had been issued since 1997. At this writing, it has ceased publication. *Estilo* is published by Mandalay Publications in Los Angeles and began in the summer of 1997. Twenty-six-year-old Marisol Barrios-Jordan launched *Latina Bride* in the winter of 1997. These three publications are bilingual.

Despite its size, Editorial Televisa’s traditional corporate reserve has kept it in the background of the magazine industry and almost absent from the trade publications. However, the new bilingual and English-language magazines have come on the scene with aggressive promotional programs. The editor of *Latina*, for instance, has spoken to advertising and business groups across the United States and has received publicity coverage in newspapers nationwide.

How will the continual flow of Spanish speakers into the United States affect the Spanish-language magazines and will the global market for Spanish-language publications that has sustained Editorial Televisa continue? It is interesting that there has been an increase in Spanish-language publications at the same time bilingual and English-language magazines are coming on the market (e.g., the 1998 launch of Condé Nast’s *Glamour en Español* and the new Spanish version of *National Geographic* published by Editorial Televisa).

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\(^7\) *Code-switching* is defined as switching back and forth between languages to maximize relationships. It is used to convey warmth, exhibit group identification, emphasize certain messages, or test whether someone belongs to a group (see Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, pp. 216–218).

\(^8\) Since this study was conducted, *Latina* has featured more articles in both languages, attaining a more bilingual profile.
One viewpoint is that Spanish-language magazines will gradually lose market share to bilingual or English-language magazines. A second outlook is that Spanish-language publications will continue to serve first-generation immigrants, and the bilingual or English-language magazines will serve ensuing generations. Of course, the Spanish-speaking population in the United States is different from other ethnic groups because of many Latino immigrants’ ability to go home and communicate easily and cheaply with their home cultures (Wilson & Gutiérrez, 1995). They may continue to use Spanish-language media in conjunction with English-language and bilingual media depending on the gratifications sought.

Research Questions

Based on the previously discussed ethnic media functions, in this study I explored the transmission of native culture, promotion of ethnic pride, political and social activism, coverage of community activities, terms used as identifiers (unification terms like Hispanic versus subgroup identifiers like Puerto Rican), and evidence of social control. Given these concepts, the following research questions were raised about bilingual and English-language magazines targeted to Latinas in the United States:

RQ1: How much attention was given to the following topics: beauty; fashion; romance and sex; career and education; other self-improvement; film, music, TV, and entertainment; art, dance, and books; celebrity features; parenting and motherhood; health; travel; food; fitness; finance; home design and home arts; consumer information and shopping; religion and healing; wedding or quinceañera plans; or sports?

RQ2: Were diversity issues in education, the workplace, government, or society mentioned?

RQ3: How often were other Hispanic political issues mentioned?

RQ4: How often was information about Latino organizations (activities and announcements) provided?

RQ5: How often were Latino heritage, norms, or values discussed?

RQ6: How frequently did references to the ethnicity of people in news and features occur? When ethnic identity was mentioned in Latina magazines, did it focus on subgroups or Latinas and Hispanics in general?
METHOD

The following describes how these questions were explored. Given the state of flux that the genre was in during the study period, an exploratory approach was used. The purpose was to test the fit of the new developments with current ethnic media models, rather than to provide an exhaustive content analysis of such a new media genre.

Five bilingual or English-language Latina magazines distributed in the United States in an 18-month period (March 1997 to October 1998) were selected for inclusion in the case study. These were the only women's publications distributed nationwide (via subscription or on newsstands) with an editorial mission targeted to Latinas. *Latina* is a monthly, *Estylo* and *Latina Bride* are quarterly, and *Moderna* and *Latina Style* are published six times per year.9

Sample size was limited because four of the five magazines started in 1997, and not many issues were available at the time of the analysis (fall of 1998). The sample included all six issues of the quarterly publications. Six issues were randomly chosen from each of the monthly and semimonthly publications.10

First, a quantitative analysis of each magazine title was conducted to ascertain the amount of coverage given to types of stories and items, mentions of Latino or Hispanic, and mentions of Latin American subcultures (Cuban American, Mexican American, Dominican, etc.). Letters to the editor, question-and-answer columns, and the editor's letter were excluded from the quantitative analysis. Twenty-three percent of the articles were randomly selected for coding by another researcher to assess agreement about the main topic of the story and whether Hispanics or Hispanic subgroups were mentioned.11 Overall intercoder agreement was 87%, with agreement on Latino or Hispanic mentions at 89% and agreement on Latin American subgroup mentions at 86%.

*Latina Bride* was determined to be too different from the other four more homogeneous magazines to be included in the quantitative totals, as weddings were the topic of most articles. A second concern was unequal inclusion, given the three issues of *Latina Bride* in the sample (versus six of the others). However, qualitative findings about the publication were retained and are discussed here to provide some information about this new bilingual magazine. In summary, there were 24 issues (books) in the quantitative analysis and 27 in the qualitative analysis.

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9 Both *Latina* and *Moderna* increased their frequency of publication during the 18-month study period.

10 Only three issues of *Latina Bride* were coded because it is a quarterly publication that began in November 1997.

11 Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998) noted that experts advocate between 5% and 20% of content be chosen for reliability testing. Because of the small sample (increasing the impact of sampling error) and the range of magazines and stories, approximately 20% was determined appropriate.
In the qualitative analysis, the coder reviewed news and feature articles to identify the tone and elaborate on quantitative findings. Coding notes were then grouped by categories and highlights are noted in the results section.

RESULTS

Topics Covered

Six hundred and one items or articles were categorized in the quantitative content analysis of Latina Style, Latina, Estilo, and Moderna. Per the first research question, more than one fifth of the articles were personality features, with another fifth devoted to beauty and fashion. The next most popular topics were romance and sex, careers and education, and health, at 5% each. Specific results of the topics listed in Research Questions 1 through 4 are displayed in Table 1. The following sections review additional quantitative results, along with patterns found in the qualitative analysis.

Diversity Issues, Related Activism, and Politics

Discussions of diversity issues in education, government, the workplace, or society (RQ2) totaled just 3% of the coverage. The tone tended to be more forward-looking ("we are doing better") than complaining or despairing. Estilo and Moderna were less likely to feature such informational articles or mild calls to activism than were Latina Style or Latina. Political items unrelated to diversity (RQ3) comprised less than 1% of the total articles coded in the quantitative analysis. In addition, some personality profiles featured labor, political, or social activists or Latina politicians, with the focus more on the person than on calls to action.

News About Latino Organizations

Four percent of the articles in the quantitative analysis featured news about Latino organizations (activities and announcements; RQ4). Mentions of organizations were diverse and included both regional and national organizations. Examples were the Mariachi Heritage Society, the National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations, and Chicago-based Mujeres Latinas en Acción (Latin Women in Action). In addition, the qualitative analysis revealed that articles primarily about other topics mentioned Latino organizations as well. For instance, one Latina Style article about careers listed some of the professional organizations devoted to Hispanics (e.g., the National Association of Hispanic Nurses).
TABLE 1
Topics in Bilingual and English-Language Latina Magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality/celebrity features</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance/sex</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career/education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other self-improvement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film/music/TV/entertainment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/dance/books</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer information/shopping</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino norms/heritage/values/identity*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino organization information/news*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity issues in education, society, government, and the workplace*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting/motherhood</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal finance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home design/home arts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedding/quinceañeras plans</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics*</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion/healing</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = 601. Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

El Día de los Reyes instead of Christmas, and the Baby Jesus instead of Santa Claus. Another listed ways to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Still another reminded readers that March 14 was Latino History Day. Although not included in the quantitative analysis, the qualitative analysis found that a large section in each issue of Latina Bride was devoted to quinceañeras, the 15th-birthday celebration.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12}Quinceañeras are traditional coming-out parties on a girl's 15th birthday.
Other articles dealt with the psychosocial aspects of being Latina, such as discovering one's ethnicity, dealing with a bicultural identity, the challenges and advantages of going back and forth between cultures, or how hard it is for Latinas to break away from home as they mature (because of family-oriented norms).

Respect for Subcultures But One-Group Orientation

Latino or Hispanic references, RQ6, were in 38% of the articles. These manifest identifiers were connected with the subject of the article (e.g., a personality identified as Latino, a music group popular with Latinos) or addressed the reader directly (e.g., you as a Latina may deal with this problem). These frequent references contributed to pride, but they also were honest about cultural weaknesses—especially among Latin American women. For instance, an article on career building mentioned Latinas’ reluctance to be assertive in interpersonal relations.

Identification with specific Latin American cultures (e.g., Puerto Rican, Dominican) was included in 27% of the articles in Estilo, Modena, Latina, and Latina Style. (Note that an article could have both types of references or just one.) Magazines were respectful about noting personalities’ heritages, even if they also mentioned the person(s) being the only Latina band leader, or the only Latinas owning law firms in New York City. The overall message was that in the present and future, the Latina was succeeding as a U.S. Hispanic, but originally she or her parents came from a place-defined Latin American heritage. Subcultures were also more commonly referenced than Latina or Hispanic in articles about food, travel, art, dance, and books. Latina Bride rarely specifically referred to being a member of a specific Latin American culture or being Latino or Hispanic in general, although Latinas are the targeted readers of the magazine.

In addition to the quantitative and qualitative results based on the original research questions, the qualitative analysis revealed other patterns in the data related to functions of ethnic media. The following section briefly describes magazine content related to empowerment, symbolic credibility, and social control.

Latina Role Models, Achievement, and Empowerment

As noted earlier, more than one fifth of the articles were personality features. Although Modena and Estilo tended to highlight celebrities from pop culture—especially music, film, and television—in their personality profiles, Latina and Latina Style covered a wide diversity of Latinas who have “made it.” These women included those who were contributing to the enhancement of life for all Latinos. Some roles were writer, policymaker, labor executive, editor, human rights activist, activist against police brutality, labor activist, congresswoman, lawyer, con-
struction business owner, physician, and head of the Small Business Association. *Moderna* and *Estylo* were more likely to cover men as well as women who have succeeded in the entertainment industry.

With the exception of *Latina Bride*, the publications conveyed a fierce pride in Latino ethnicity and its relation to success. For instance, a pull-out quote in a *Latina Style* profile on successful Latina physicians said, "It's really an advantage to have been born Latina [because in the health profession Latinas and other women have to be better than others and work harder]" (Thomas, 1998, p. 23). Another *Latina Style* example was the pull-out quote urging that "Latinas need to go after the jobs that offer visibility, mobility, and power" (Wellington, 1998). This proud tone included an upbeat, "we can do" attitude with a "big sister" coaching tone, especially in *Latina*. In a *Latina* article entitled "The Secretos of My Success," one of the successful women featured said, "Every time I was told I couldn't do this or be that because I was a Latina and a woman, I would tell them to go to hell" (Prida, 1998, p. 64). Personality profiles—especially in *Latina* and *Latina Style*—focused on how Latinas had worked their way to the top of social or cultural agencies, government institutions, or corporations. Features about Latina entrepreneurs were popular.

The magazines were individual achievement oriented and focused mostly on self-efficacy rather than structural problems or collective action (like workplace affirmative action programs or political activism). Seven percent of articles discussed self-improvement tips, especially career- and education-oriented tips. Rather than focusing on the past, editorial content concentrated on the future. One example was the *Latina Style* headline, "Latinas in the 21st Century: Life just keeps getting better for Hispanic Women" (Anders, 1998). *Moderna* described "Planning Your Financial Future" (Ramirez, 1997). *Latina* listed "Your Future" (De León, 1997).

Found in other women's magazines—not just ethnic ones—are articles about how to negotiate mainstream society. The magazines in this sample included articles about credit agencies and dealing with credit reports, how to choose a lawyer, and many articles about dealing with workplace issues from sexual harassment to "ways to revitalize your job." Although these articles were often addressed to "you, the Latina," they usually dealt with general problems, rather than issues like how credit reports are affected by immigration or binational status.

**Symbolic Credibility**

*Latina Style* occasionally used guest articles from government executives talking about Latino issues, providing a tone of credibility for the publication as well as credibility for the Hispanic issues. The newness of the formats and publications may have accounted for periodic self-boosterism, not just in editors' letters but elsewhere in the magazines. For instance, an edition of *Moderna* included an article about an editor from the magazine invited to the White House. Cross-publication
references existed, too. One issue of *Latina Style* featured a short article about the new *Latina Bride* editor-in-chief as an example of a Latina success story. *Moderna* profiled the founder and publisher of *Qué Linda!*

Although bilingual magazines included some articles in Spanish, and the English-language publications smattered Spanish phrases throughout, the impact of being Latina was also supported with lots of visuals, including certain typefaces and colors, Latina and Latino models, and use of icons.

Social Control

Social control was most obvious in the role of corporate advertising and nonadvertising consumption-oriented content. Most of the content was more reflective of a consumer culture (beauty and fashion products, parenting products, consumption of popular entertainment) than classic Latin American heritages. Beauty and fashion content alone comprised one fifth of the content of *Latina Style, Latina, Moderna,* and *Estylo.* *Latina Bride* was consumption-oriented as well. For instance, although a *quinceañeras* section was a regular feature of *Latina Bride,* the majority of each section was devoted to buying dresses, keepsakes, and beauty products, in addition to promoting elaborate refreshments and entertainment for the fiestas. The cultural heritage of the *quinceañeras* played a lesser role. Even an article designed to help readers save money on the celebrations promoted spending some money.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Functions of Ethnic Media

This exploratory case study with its small sample is not generalizable. Pluralism functions of preserving and transmitting identity, promoting pride, and announcing ethnic events and activities were noted in the magazines. Activism—content was generally absent. In addition, there was evidence of symbolic empowerment and pan-Hispanic content, although not excluding original Latin American heritages. The magazine articles also were assimilative in the focus on consumer products. However, the small sample, evolving nature of some of the magazines’ content, and brief set of research questions limits the significance of the findings. Given these content indicators, current models of ethnic media are not entirely applicable. As noted earlier, most models were based on media in a native language, and ethnic media scholars have primarily studied newspapers and broadcasting. By initiating an introductory investigation of this media genre, it is my intent to suggest a revised ethnic media model that will require additional inquiry and testing.
Most pointedly, the findings do not lend support to the arguments that identity is language based (Fox, 1996; Rodriguez, 1997) because in this new media genre, identity is created mostly in English. This reflects a trend visible in society at large: Latinos in the United States are forming an identity that is based on Spanish and embellished by Spanish, but not dependent on Spanish. In particular, bilingual Latinos are able to participate in the dominant public sphere and the cultural sphere.

Padilla (1985) said that Latino ethnic identity is a phenomenon of American urban life and has “relatively little to do with Latin America” (p. 144). To become a political force, he said, it is important to be a historic group with a past and a future—a common origin. By featuring heritage articles and by focusing on the future, Latina magazines are accomplishing this creation of a Latino identity.

With the inclusion of specific Latin American cultural origins (Costa Rican, Venezuelan, etc.), the magazines give U.S. Latinas a past rooted in places. Premodern, traditional societies were linked by a sense of place (Miller, 1987). Early immigrant media and ethnic media also were linked to a place—especially newspapers and radio. However, these national magazines remove the geographic indicators from “Latinaness,” so like Latino television networks, they have the capacity to change the nature of Latinoanness as well. However, as politics and activism are largely omitted from the publications, the political force will have to come from interpersonal networks bolstered by this media-enforced Latina identity or from other politically oriented publications.

Optimistic scholars writing about the activism potential of ethnic media should reread Park (1922/1970). He discussed how the immigrant press evolved from subscriber financed to advertising financed (just as the American mainstream press evolved from a mid-1800s subscriber-financed to an advertising-financed medium): “Since the commercial press is interested primarily in circulation, it does not emphasize, and is not radical in its opinions, but prefers news to the interpretation of the news” (p. 355). This case study of the new genre of Latina magazines supports Park’s statements about ethnic media made more than 75 years ago.

Creation of a Virtual Community

Both the manifest content (e.g., 38% Latino references) and the tone of Estilo, Moderna, Latina Style, and Latina bolster a media-created Latina community. Although Latina Bride is the most bilingual given its column-by-column translation of Spanish and English editorial content, as noted previously, the articles in the limited sample rarely specifically mentioned ethnicity.

However, because the magazines celebrate Latina successes, they cement and extend this identity. They serve as a connecting force, which is an additional function of ethnic media as well as general-market media in a nation of residents who may feel increasingly isolated. This media connection function raises the concern
that if general-market media abdicate to specialized media the connection responsibility (through ignoring minority news and issues or perpetuation of stereotypes), general-market media may continue to lose relevance and market share to niche media like Latino magazines.¹³ U.S. general-market media will not only relinquish their moral obligation to be inclusive; they will lose the economic benefits of appealing to such a large population. Moreover, their role as a key institution in the democratic process will continue to deteriorate (Turow, 1997).

A Revised Model of Ethnic Media

These observations about Latina magazines suggest a revised model of ethnic media, at least for use in the United States. First, language also should be omitted as a focus. It is no longer a constant in all ethnic media. Ethnic media can thrive without the native language.

Second, although politics is covered in ethnic media, the political activism function may exist only in specialty ethnic media, not in nationwide ethnic magazines or broadcasting. Although it may exist in some ethnic community newspapers and in nations where media are not commercially supported, the reality of commercial media in the United States means calls for political activism will be a minor part of content (e.g., Downing's [1992] findings about New York Latino media). Ethnic media's contribution to political power may materialize in the more subtle form of cultural projection (Merelman, 1995) than in manifest political messages detected in a quantitative content analysis.

Third, preserving and transmitting ethnic culture and promoting ethnic pride are key functions of ethnic media. Preserving and transmitting culture should include group-specific information (such as Mexican holidays, Cuban values, etc.). Downing's (1992) concepts of community empowerment and Riggins's (1992) inclusion of social activities and community events fit with this function as well. No matter how marginalized Latinas are in general-market media, they can retain cultural identity via their own media.

Fourth, the function of social control is a reality even with minority-owned media, with the realization that in the United States, the main function of magazines is to sell advertising that encourages consumption. Most of the Latina magazines' education and workplace self-improvement articles emphasized having a better economic life. Personal finance features, shopping tips, and consumer information (e.g., comparative shopping for cars) were focused on helping Latinas to buy more. Latina-relevant entertainment, books, clothes, and beauty products were assumed

¹³Studies have shown Latinos and Latinas are mostly absent from general market media (see Greenberg & Brand, 1994; Lichter, Lichter, Rothman, & Amundson, 1987; Subervi-Vélez, 1994).
The shift from words to images assists in this function, as images and icons create a symbolic presence that is more accessible to an ethnic group's nonmembers than foreign words. Because of their reliance on graphics and images, English-language and bilingual magazines can fulfill this function better than Spanish-language newspapers. Because their images are placed in a tactile medium that can be reread, the possibility of impact and retention is stronger than the fleeting images and impressions in Spanish-language broadcasting. These speculations are consistent with Merelman's (1995) views of media as cultural projections; he might argue that although the magazines' cultural projections are not representative of all Latino cultures, they have the potential to move the United States toward cultural change.

Finally, because of the culture of individualism in the United States (in contrast to the more collectivist cultures in Latin America), the media will focus on providing information so that Latinas can conform to aspects of the host culture related to individualism. Moreover, the focus on individual achievement is future oriented, as is optimism about the future of Latinas in the United States.

In summary, the proposed model of ethnic media functions concentrates on five pluralism functions and four assimilation functions, as Figure 1 shows. It reflects that new media outlets may not be pluralistic or assimilative, contrary to old models. One publication or broadcast station can present a range of content that contains
both pluralistic and assimilative messages. In addition, functions may be increasingly symbolic rather than manifest, presenting scholars with new challenges in methodology. Future research can determine this model’s suitability for other U.S. ethnic media and ethnic media outside the United States.

REFERENCES


