

Women's Magazines in Ecuador: Re-reading "la Chica Cosmo"

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[T]he fashion world is globally dispersed, profoundly implicated in capitalist and colonial/neocolonial relations, and it is perhaps the key site in urban societies for the production and performance of identities as gendered, raced, sexualized class bodies.

Dorinne Kondo, *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater*.

Introduction

The cover of June 2001's Ecuadorian *Cosmopolitan* features indigenous Venezuelan supermodel/actress Patricia Velásquez (Figure 1). Although Patricia has brown skin, dark hair, and dark eyes, her body and appearance conform to Western standards of beauty: she is thin, with long flowing hair and Caucasian features. A feminist analysis of this image would concentrate on her thin body and airbrushed face, however, such an interpretation overlooks other aspects of the depiction of women in Ecuadorian *revistas femeninas* (women's magazines). Velásquez's ethnic other-ness is clearly marked while simultaneously being downplayed by magazine cover photo conventions. The rose-petal print of the dress invokes the stereotype of nonwhite women as being close to nature. More striking is the repetition of the word "*conquista*" (conquest) in large print on the cover and in the article on Velásquez. In Latin America, "*conquista*" is used to describe the violent establishment of Spanish rule in the Americas, which resulted in the decimation and subjugation of Patricia's indigenous ancestors. While the objectification of the female body is relevant in this context, a purely feminist analysis might gloss over messages about race, class, and colonialism encoded in the image. These complex relationships can be more effectively examined using concepts from globalization and postcolonial theories.

Studies of women's magazines typically use feminist theory to explain the misrepresentation of women through text and images. The purpose of such studies is to assert that the words and pictures in publications like *Cosmopolitan* damage women socially and psychologically. Methodologically, such projects are usually characterized by a ranking and categorization of images as liberating, neutral, or negative, and the conclusions stress the need for more "representative" or "accurate" depictions of women (cf. Santa Cruz and Erazo, Wolf). Rather than taking a polarizing view of images of women, in this article I shall explore the usefulness of theoretical approaches that take into account the complexity of popular culture, gender, and race.

Theoretical Considerations

Class, modernity/colonialism, and race are prominent themes in Ecuadorian women's magazines. Drawing from globalization and cultural studies theory, this study examines the significance of each of these three analytical dimensions. *Revistas femeninas* target an audience of a certain social standing. In Ecuador, buying magazines is perceived as cosmopolitan, a sign of prestige in a country where the \$3 spent could buy a meal. The visual language of the *revistas* stresses the importance of having or emulating upper-class style and sensibility. The trope of "class" appears in women's magazines worldwide; it is not particular to Ecuadorian magazines. However, this theme may have unique effects or interpretations in a society starkly divided by class (like Ecuador); regardless of where it is produced, global popular culture is received and interpreted locally.

Ulrich Hannerz believes that global culture exists as an "inter-connectedness" of different territorially-grounded cultures, and as new forms of culture not solely based in any one location. Networks of shared meanings are created by transnational flows of people, goods, and ideas (237). Hannerz states that individuals relate to global culture through the subject positions of "cosmopolitan" or "local". Cosmopolitanism is defined as "an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other" (Hannerz 239). In Latin America, this attitude is associated with the upper class.



Figure 1: Indigenous Venezuelan supermodel Patricia Velásquez is portrayed as both exotic and cosmopolitan. Photo by Richard McLaren

Despite the "entangled" relationship of transnational and territorial cultures (Hannerz 244), some cultures are privileged within the realm of the global. In the case of Ecuador, that which is North American or European is endowed with an aura of prestige and superiority. Mass media enables "just about everybody" to become more cosmopolitan, especially in a place where well over half of all television programming is foreign-produced (Chapkis 1986, 40). The admiration and envy generated by a cosmopolitan's knowledge of other cultures makes possible a world culture, even as some groups are valued more highly than others in this transnational exchange.

Cosmopolitanism and localism are best viewed as two extremes of a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Toward the "cosmopolitan" pole lies a group Leslie Sklair calls the "transnational capitalist class", or TCC (8). This class, according to Sklair's "sociology of the global system," is comprised of individuals who "see their own interests and/or the interests of the nation, as best served by an identification with the interests of the capitalist global system" (8). The members of the TCC are cosmopolitan in cultural orientation, and their economic practices confirm their membership in a global culture and capitalist economy; for Sklair, "culture *always* has an ideological function for consumerism in the capitalist global system" (1991, 42). Viewing culture as simply a means of creating global consumers may be shortsighted, yet consumerism is the dominant value expressed in many transnational cultural products. The female mascot of the TCC may be *la chica Cosmo* ("the Cosmo girl"), a symbol of chic cultured female consumerism propagated by *Cosmopolitan* and other fashion magazines.

The audience of the magazines studied is comprised of female members of the urban middle classes. These women are important to advertisers due to their economic privilege and consumption patterns. Latin American middle- and upper-class women are largely responsible for household consumption. Their use of goods and services sets an example to which members of lower classes aspire, following the Ecuadorian cultural ethic of upward socioeconomic mobility. These *señoras* have the power to introduce foreign products and ideas (promoted in *revistas*) into their family, neighborhood, and society: "[t]hrough their participation in transnational circuits of commodities and capital, women as consummate consumer-subjects fracture totalized cultural identities through the fissures of the foreign into the national body" (Kondo 80). *Revistas femeninas* not only allow upper-class women to imitate foreign trendsetters, but also exploit the middle-class woman's desire to emulate her upper-class counterparts and distinguish herself from the massive lower class (Santa Cruz and Erazo 152). Members of the TCC are the primary intended recipients of the consumerist ideology of the magazines (Santa Cruz and Erazo 39). Multinational corporations are selling not a set of products, but a way of consuming, a lifestyle Santa Cruz and Erazo call "the feminine transnationalized American dream" (39).

The postcolonial theme reaffirms a culture hierarchy that values items and people associated with former colonial powers over those from former colonies.

The valuation of the foreign/Western is obvious among Hannerz's "cosmopolitans" and Sklair's TCC. The TCC goes as far as to "downgrade certain domestic practices by comparison with new and more glamorous transnational practices" with the goal of creating a "'comprador' mentality" (Sklair 63). "The incorporation of American popular culture and Western clothing" must be viewed in the context of "historically specific geopolitical relations" (Kondo 71). Reflecting the legacy of colonialism, Latin American intellectuals, artists and politicians consistently valorize the white/European/First World "other" at the expense of the autochthonous *mestizo* and the dark/indigenous/American "other".

Though most globalization theorists reject modernization theory, the Latin American TCCs often paint Western-style consumerism as desirable due to its association with the "modern," as domestic practices are construed as backward and "traditional". As García Canelini and others have pointed out, the modernity/tradition conceptual dualism is too limited to explain the ways that the old and the new combine and coexist in Latin America (2-3; cf. Sklair 29-30). Yet, "modern" and "traditional" remain relevant, as these words are used to promote products and a cosmopolitan lifestyle of consumption. Capitalist consumption integrates new economic, political, social, and cultural processes into more or less traditional modes of living.

The importance of fashion in signaling identification with modernity or tradition operates as a form of social differentiation in postcolonial societies. During colonization, "clothes were at once commodities and accoutrements of a civilized self" (Comaroff 19). Fashion is an emblem of prestige due to its ability to "render those who do not wear it 'out of date' and parochial" (Comaroff 21). In Ecuador, people are often categorized and treated according to the way they are dressed. An individual's use of clothing associated with either the indigenous or Western world acts as a visual gauge of his or her place on the modern-traditional continuum. In Andean countries this scale is paralleled by a racial continuum anchored by the concepts "white" and "Indian." The success of upwardly mobile women in overcoming the association of women with tradition and authentic Indianness is communicated through their dress and fashion.¹

Racist messages appear in both transnational and national publications. Many advertising campaigns for U.S. or European products are not changed prior to distribution in Latin America, conveying a universalized, generic, and (almost always) white ideal of beauty. Santa Cruz and Erazo quote an American advertising executive as saying that "the desire to be beautiful is universal"; they instead call for cultural specificity in media products (53). Magazines promote European-looking ideal types of beauty to Latin American readers. When models with "Latin" features appear, they are "written over" with the symbolic trappings of transnational models, as described in the case of the Velásquez *Cosmopolitan* cover (Santa Cruz and Erazo 73).

The result of an emphasis on the foreign is the stigmatization of nonwhite features and the construction of Latin Americans as racially and culturally inferior and unattractive (Santa Cruz and Erazo 161). Scholars have confirmed the hege-

mony of whiteness in beauty ideals in various Latin American countries (Rahier, Twine). The physical model of beauty presented in transnational women's magazines is a woman who is "young, white with European features, thin, stylish... well-off, well-dressed, perfectly coiffed, [and] fashionably made up" (Santa Cruz and Erazo 153). The message is that, although Latin American women are inherently less attractive than their first-world counterparts, they can correct this problem through the use of proscribed cosmetics and wardrobes that have the power to blot out cultural, racial, and social differences (Santa Cruz and Erazo 1980, 152). As Kondo puts it, "[c]onfident consumption becomes a way to overcome racial marking" (1997, 93).

Mestizaje is the dominant cultural and political ideology of race in Ecuador. This term references the mixed (indigenous and European) ethnic origins of most Ecuadorians. Though *mestizaje* explicitly celebrates the nation's mixed origins, it implicitly excludes those who are identified or who self-identify as black or indigenous rather than *mestizo* (Stutzman 46). This rhetoric cloaks or euphemizes the practices and ideologies of *blanqueamiento* (whitening). The goal of *mestizaje* is a whiter, less ethnic (less Indian) population (Wade 84-5). Hierarchies of racial superiority place the nation on a path toward physical and cultural whiteness. In *revistas femeninas*, foreign racism and white ideals of beauty combine with home-grown racism and colorism to valorize white femininity and denigrate native or black features and femininities, resulting in a stronger emphasis on whiteness in the transnational publications.

Methods and Preliminary Findings

Women's magazines in Ecuador are marketed to middle- and upper-class women because of their significant role in consuming goods and services. *Revistas* thus assume a certain amount of education, affluence, and sophistication on the part of the reader. Products are promoted as ways of advancing or solidifying socially valued characteristics through the projection of a beautified, fashionable appearance. The price of the magazines makes their purchase by poor women difficult, so the target audience is small but economically equipped to follow trends.

The women's magazine with the largest circulation in this country of 12 million people is *Hogar*, published by the company that produces the other most popular Ecuadorian magazines, *Vistazo* (news) and *Estadio* (sports). *Hogar's* readership is estimated at 30,000. Transnational magazines have a smaller circulation: *Vanidades* is highest with 15,928, followed by *Buenhogar* with 13,676 and *Cosmopolitan* with 12,802 (Strategy Research Corporation 148). *Vanidades* originated in Cuba, and moved its operations to Miami after the revolution; *Buenhogar* and *Cosmopolitan* are operated by the U.S.-based Hearst Corporation. All three are distributed in Latin America by Mexico's Editorial Televisa, part of the media conglomerate that produces many popular television programs (Strategy Research Corporation). Ownership of media marketed to Latin Americans and U.S. Latinos is concentrated, leading to uniformity in the resulting cultural products.

I collected a sample of thirteen issues of women's magazines in the field from 1999 to 2001. Two of the magazines were produced in Ecuador, one in Mexico, and the rest in the U.S. for Latin American distribution. *Cosmopolitan* and *Vanidades* market a special edition for Ecuador, whereas *Glamour*, *Kena* and *Cristina* distribute one version to several Latin American countries. The study focuses on visual (photographic) representations of women and captions or related text. Content analysis produced empirical data on three characteristics of the models: race, nationality (if available), and hair color. These are indices of transnational ideals of beauty. I performed a deeper reading of the symbolism and visual messages to provide an overall picture of how women are portrayed and what themes are created through the visual imagery. Finally, I made comparisons between the visual content of foreign as opposed to Ecuadorian-produced women's magazines.

Overall, the sample was characterized by a predominance of white female models (52%). Only 29% of the women portrayed appeared to be *mestiza*, with 5% black or *mulata*.² The remaining 14% is comprised of models that could not be classified racially; most of these models appeared to be either white or white *mestiza*. In all magazines except Ecuadorian-produced *Hogar*, U.S. women³ were featured more than any other nationality by an overwhelming margin. A preference for blondes was apparent in the sample: a full 49% of models were blonde.

Recurring Themes: Class, Race, and Beauty

The concept of class in these magazines is expressed through images of the "Cosmo girl" lifestyle: an elitist fantasy of travel, luxury items, designer clothes, plastic surgery, shopping trips to Miami, and gossip of the European royalty and nobility. Images in articles and in advertisements encourage consumption as specifically linked to expensive items and the status such items symbolize.

Visual assertions of class status through consumption appear in all the magazines. An advertisement in *Cosmopolitan* urges Ecuadorian women to travel to South Florida to visit Sawgrass Mills mall, where they can experience *más* (more), as in "more stores, more restaurants, and more fun" (27:9, 9). Travel to Miami is an important symbol of elite status in Latin America; upper-class women make this trip regularly. This concrete index of class position, available to only a small group of Ecuadorians, is a goal for those with high social aspirations. The model's class status is affirmed here by a background of brand names such as Tommy Hilfiger and Saks Fifth Avenue, her Caucasian appearance (blonde hair, blue eyes), and her chic color-coordinated outfit. The cosmopolitan aspect of class is emphasized in this and other advertisements by the inclusion of slogans in English. Foreignness is a source of prestige for many goods, such as the Guess jeans displayed on the back cover of another issue of *Cosmopolitan*: the advertisement features the word "authentic" written in English (29:6).

The promises of happiness and beauty so sharply criticized by Santa Cruz and Erazo in 1980 still abound in connection with upper-class identity. Products not only affirm socioeconomic status, but also provide an unmistakable identification

with modernity and the first world. "Today's woman distinguishes herself by her athleticism, her personal trainer and her Swatch," proclaims one magazine. Expensive watches are presented as signs that "you have arrived" socially; they are "attractive, the latest [fashion], and they give *status*" (*Vanidades* 40: 24, 47). Another advertisement sells a watch as "Cindy Crawford's choice," although she is not even wearing it in the photograph (*Vanidades* 40:25, 6). Goods are advertised by stressing their links to the rich and famous.

In the magazines, a modern and attractive appearance, with all the European or North American trappings, is an affirmation of class status. Getting liposuction or a nose job is something you do because you can, because it helps you advance socially and allows you to approximate a thin, Western ideal of beauty (*Hogar* 442, 42). Articles or advertisements for cosmetic surgery appear in many of these magazines, and procedures such as rhinoplasty are quite common among upper-class Ecuadorian women. Miss Ecuador 2002, Isabel Ontaneda, was praised in *Vistazo* for undergoing several cosmetic surgeries the month before the Miss Universe competition (Romero). Whether the visual links made between class, modernity, and beauty reflect transnational or domestic ideologies is impossible to judge, but the salience of these images to the Ecuadorian dream of class mobility and the cultural emphasis on the outward appearance of socioeconomic progress is significant.

As demonstrated by the content analysis, white models and blondes are over-represented in terms of Ecuador's demographic makeup and common phenotypic variations. Most Ecuadorian women, including those that belong to the TCC, are *mestizas*, but the ideology of *blanqueamiento* values whiteness, and it is common to downplay mixed origins. Whiteness is associated with ideals of class, cosmopolitanism, consumption, and modernity in the visual language of these publications, as in popular culture and discourse. The prevailing standard of beauty is thin, white, and fashionable; this ideal is strengthened or exaggerated by the confluence of foreign racism and popular notions of beauty as inseparable from whiteness.

The emphasis on white femininity and the frequent inclusion of attractive white celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow and Nicole Kidman (favorite subjects for photographs and articles in this sample) combine with the stereotyping and degradation of nonwhite women as inferior alternatives. *Mestiza* and black models are frequently depicted outdoors as part of nature, a visual tactic emphasized by dressing them in animal prints, by leaving them half-naked to evoke a savage femininity (Figure 2), or by describing them in animalistic terms in captions. In one photo spread, a light-skinned black model (dark-skinned women rarely appear) is described in hypersexualized language as "indiscreet and audacious," and repeatedly pictured in animal-print clothing, with captions highlighting her animalistic nature (*Cosmopolitan* 28:12, 92-7). An advertisement in *Hogar* features a *mestiza* model in a provocative pose (she appears to be crawling toward the camera) in order to promote a perfume called "Instinct d'Animale" (Animal Instinct); in a further move to prevent the reader's identification with the model, none of the ad's text is in

Spanish. These examples are representative of the condescending portrayal of nonwhite femininities in these publications, reaffirming the association of whites with civilization and modernity and nonwhites with barbarism and backwardness.

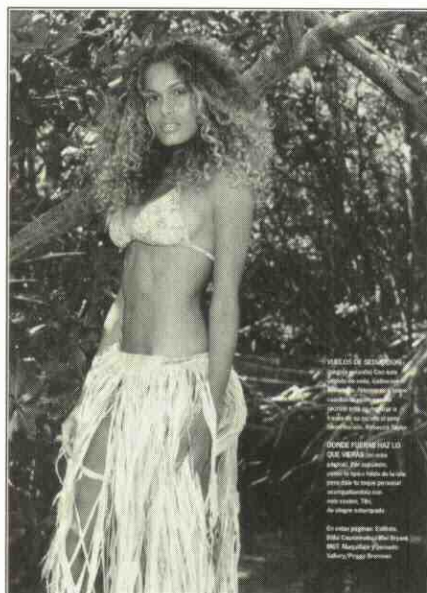


Figure 2: Models with features implying African ancestry are often depicted as backward, rustic, or uncivilized.

Photo by Joseph Regal

Exceptions are made for nonwhite females who are high in class status or possess cosmopolitan qualities. Women of color portrayed positively are frequently of foreign (usually non-Latin American) origin, and have thin bodies, light skin, and Caucasian-type features. Biracial actress/model Halle Berry, featured on the cover of *Cosmopolitan*, is a perfect example; she is one of the most frequently pictured black women in the sample (29:7). This popularity is likely due to her wealth and celebrity status, light skin and “delicate” features, thin body, and association with the U.S. Among Ecuadorian women, the term “delicate” (*delicada/s*), when applied to facial features, is often a euphemism for whiteness and traits that are associated with Caucasian or European ethnic origins. Darker-skinned models, though they may also be wealthy and foreign, appear much less frequently. Another cover model of color, Venezuelan Patricia Velásquez, is of indigenous ethnic origin. Her racial inferiority, however, is moderated by the fact that she was raised for part of her childhood in France (a prestigious center of Western culture), and that she has achieved success in the international world of modeling (69). She is therefore seen as an exception, an Indian who doesn’t look (or act) Indian, rather than as an impetus for more diverse ideals of beauty.

The focus of these women's magazines is ostensibly beauty and fashion, and here the strands of class and race are interwoven with ideals of physical appearance. Beauty is presented as the essence of femininity, in the form of tips, style ideas, cosmetics, and fashion trends. As with the acquisition of status goods, projecting a certain physical appearance connotes class standing and modernity. Women readers are encouraged to ask themselves "What are people wearing now?," a question answered by the "modern" products presented in the publications (*Cosmopolitan* 29:7, 30). Every issue and advertisement analyzed connects cosmetics and clothing to the now, the current, the modern.

Modernity as expressed through beauty and fashion is connoted with youth. An attractive woman is "young, modern and sophisticated"; the "Chanel woman" gets "younger every day" (*Vanidades* 40:25). Nearly all the women featured are in their twenties or teens; Madonna is the oldest woman frequently pictured. Readers are encouraged to copy the style and appearance of celebrity women and models, from hairdos to nail polish (cf. *Cosmopolitan* 27:7, 56-7; *Cosmopolitan* 28:11, 18; *Cosmopolitan* 29:6, 32; *Vanidades* 40:24, 36).

Women are encouraged to imitate (primarily North American) celebrities through diet and exercise. The "perfection" of models' bodies is emphasized, and suggestions are given to help readers move toward this goal: women are told how to get flat stomachs, tight buttocks to show off in *tanga* swimsuits, and thighs that do not touch (*Cosmopolitan* 28:11, 43; *Cosmopolitan* 29:7, 36 and 105). Predictably, "perfect" feminine bodies are almost always white bodies, such as the blonde model promoting light dairy products to help Ecuadorian women achieve "the perfect measurements: 90-60-90 [cm]."

Hogar: Ecuador's Version of the Transnational Women's Magazine

All of the above fits Santa Cruz and Erazo's cultural imperialist argument about women's magazines: the ubiquitousness of the foreign, class, and whiteness does exclude the majority of Latin American women. However, some themes and images in the Ecuadorian *Hogar*, which sells twice as many copies as the next transnational competitor, counter the assumption of a simple imposition of inauthentic models on third-world women. *Hogar's* versions of race, class, and beauty, while similar to those of *Cosmopolitan* and other foreign magazines, differ in important ways.

First, the greater representation of Latin American women, especially Ecuadorian *mestizas* (mostly white *mestizas*), is a departure from the transnational magazines. In the issues of *Hogar* analyzed, a full 68.5% of the women depicted in photographs were *mestiza*, compared to 21.5% white and 2% black. The undecided category (either white or *mestiza*) made up only 7.5% of images, as opposed to 14% for the entire sample. This orientation toward Ecuadorian *mestizas* is clearly demonstrated by the fact that Ecuadorian women appear 9 to 10 times more often than women of other nationalities. In all the other issues put together, only one Ecuadorian woman appeared, one time. Of course, the women repre-

sented in *Hogar* still tend to have light or white skin, Caucasian features, and thin bodies (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The Ecuadorian-produced *Hogar* features many more mestiza models than its transnational counterparts; most, however, still have light skin and Caucasian features.

Images of women in *Hogar* represent a slight but significant alteration of the ideals of beauty depicted in the other magazines, which tend to exclude or denigrate “Latin” features. The only other magazine espousing this alternative ideal of beauty, a sort of “generic Latina” type, is *Cristina*. Because of this publication’s links to the *Univisión* television network, it is in its economic interest to picture the women commonly featured in Spanish-language programming (marketed all over the Americas) as beautiful and attractive. The lack of national or ethnic specificity of this generic type allows for the broad distribution of cultural products and the marketing of goods on a pan-Latin American scale, including Hispanic consumers in the United States.

Famous women representing this generic Latina type include Salma Hayek, Jennifer López, and Penélope Cruz. Their bodies have become universal signifiers of feminine Latinness or Latin femininity, as demonstrated by the fact that they are cast to play characters of various Latin backgrounds. The young Ecuadorian women I interviewed as part of a project on ideals of beauty and body image

understand these women to embody a distinct ideal type of beauty, one that embraces Latin features and is seen as more authentic and healthy than white ideal types (Casanova 16). Indeed, beauty as an outward sign of good health is stressed frequently in *Hogar*, associating physical beauty as much with general well-being, grooming, and hygiene as with bodily perfection or idealized features (*Hogar* 419, 57; *Hogar* 442, 105 and 131).

In terms of class, *Hogar* recognizes the harsh economic realities of living in Ecuador, which affect even the upper and middle classes. Rather than focusing solely on expensive cosmetics and beauty treatments, these magazines provide affordable beauty ideas. For example, one issue presented the cosmetic uses of household substances such as olive oil and aloe vera (*Hogar* 419, 38). An article on planning a honeymoon suggested relatively inexpensive options such as sightseeing within Ecuador, along with more pricey international destinations (*Hogar* 442, 54). These articles illustrate a willingness to acknowledge the economic difficulties of the country, while still maintaining an emphasis on class status and targeting well-off consumers.

Although this magazine makes an effort to adapt the genre of the transnational women's magazine to the (*mestizo*) Ecuadorian context, there are similarities in format and focus to foreign magazines. *Hogar* does not seem, at present, to provide a radical space for challenging classist, racist ideals of feminine beauty. It does, however, have greater cultural and ethnic specificity, which may account for its higher sales.

Conclusion

The differences observed between the publications originating within and outside Ecuador provide evidence for the usefulness of a globalization approach, as opposed to more common frameworks of cultural imperialism and feminist theory. Images of women in these transnational contexts cannot be seen simply as domination of the Ecuadorian transnational capitalist class by outside media producers, nor can they be adequately categorized as more or less negative, authentic, or traditional. Modernity is stressed in these magazines, but not necessarily at the expense of tradition. Whiteness is valorized, but the celebration of *mestizo* or pan-Latino ethnic identity also allows for the representation and approbation of brown-skinned, "Latin" (even Ecuadorian) females. Cosmopolitanism has historically been linked to status in these societies, so is it accurate or fair to see the "Cosmo girl" as a new agent of Northern imperialism? In the end, a more balanced approach is necessary to understand the dynamic interaction between transnational and national or regional cultural forces. In a poor country like Ecuador, the concentration of cultural capital in the hands of the upper classes makes the development of a non-classist mass-mediated popular culture quite difficult. Although the images that appear in magazines like *Hogar* are more representative of readers' realities than those presented in transnational magazines, their class bias reflects the control of media by members of the wealthy oligarchy and the hierarchical

organization of Ecuadorian society. In agreement with the theories of García Canclini, the results of this study suggest that a healthy skepticism about the capability of mass cultures premised on "popularity" and consumption to bring about large-scale social change is warranted (203).

A focal point of this study is the tangled intersection of Western racism with domestic racism and colorism (discrimination among nonwhites based on skin color). Different racial schemata are used in North American and Latin American societies. Both privilege whiteness, but the U.S. conception of race results in two categories: black and white. Brown is not included in this dichotomy. In Ecuador, white is the apex of the racial pyramid, but black is so stigmatized that it is virtually excluded, resulting in a blurry spectrum of lighter to darker brown. The criteria of racial categorization are both visual and nonvisual, but skin color, features, and dress are important indicators.

Two observations should be made by way of conclusion. First, the more racist content in the transnational magazines as opposed to *Hogar* (and, to a lesser extent, *Cristina*) seems to be a result of the compounding of white North American/European ideals of beauty by Latin American racism. These two ideologies, when combined, lead to the greater emphasis on whiteness in transnational magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Vanidades*. *Hogar*, while still influenced by the format and content of the women's magazine genre, is less influenced by foreign ideas about race. Whiteness is valued, but brown is also acceptable (when combined with the right features, clothing, and class status). The absence of the augmenting effect of combined national and transnational ideologies leads to a more racially inclusive visual layout in *Hogar*; at least, more inclusive of *mestiza* femininities.

Second, the framing of female models of color in transnational magazines leads to the re-presentation of native phenotypes and dark-skinned women to Latin American readers as "exotic" or "other." The visual language of these photographs encourages a dis-identification on the part of the viewer. Kondo calls this "autoexoticizing," and it involves the adoption of a white Western gaze by non-white postcolonial subjects (57). The artificial distance created between the non-white viewer and the exoticized ethnic "other" could have potentially alienating effects for Ecuadorian and other Latina women, who are urged by the logic of these images to see brown-skinned women as inferior. This could lead to the strengthening of cultural tendencies to valorize whiteness and degrade "ethnic" features (and nonwhite appearance) that have existed in one form or another in Latin America since colonial times.

Notes

1. See the work of Mary Crain and Suzanne Brenner for insight into why women are consistently identified with tradition, ethnic identity, and traditional dress.
2. A *mulata* is of mixed African, European, and possibly indigenous descent.

3. The model's nationality was only noted if mentioned in the photo's caption or if she was a known celebrity; guesses as to nationality were not made.

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