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Reconstructing Latina Images: *Modern Family, Ugly Betty,* and the Confirmation Hearings of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor

A Thesis Presented by

Betty Muller

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Abstract of Thesis

**Reconstructing Latina Images: *Modern Family, Ugly Betty,* and the Confirmation Hearings
of
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By

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Abstract:

In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor became the first Latina Supreme Court Justice of the United States. Her Hispanic background, professional success, and political role offer hope and inspiration for Latinas and Latinos who have otherwise been negatively portrayed by the media and television. In particular, the image of Latinas is often misrepresented in American television programs, commercial films, and the media. Sotomayor has been at the center of a great deal of controversy in the American media as opponents suggested that she would be an under qualified and biased justice. My goals in this paper are, first, to argue that the criticisms of Sotomayor were influenced by the misrepresentations of Latinas in television shows and the media and second, to determine whether these portrayals affected her confirmation process as the first Latina Supreme Court Justice. I have chosen to analyze two television shows that were highly popular when the confirmation process was taking place, the series *Modern Family* and *Ugly Betty*.

Dedication page

I dedicate this page to my husband Drew who has supported me through this entire journey of thesis work and study. I would also like to give thanks to all of my family, friends, and college professors for teaching me to have patience when it comes to learning and for encouraging me to believe in my strengths and capabilities. Without all of your support, I would have never made it through this experience.

Table of Contents:

Introduction:

   The first season of *Modern Family*, directed and produced by Christopher Lloyd and

Steven Levitan aired between September 23, 2009 and May 19, 2010 on ABC in the United

States. The ABC prime-time television show *Ugly Betty* written by Silvio Horta and produced by

Silent H, Ventanarosa, and Reveille Productions aired on September 28, 2006 through April 14,

2010. The show is based on the 1999-2001 Colombian telenovela- soap opera *Yo soy Betty, la fea*

written and produced by Fernando Gaitán. Both of these TV series portray Latinas as either,

beautiful and sexy Señoritas that are ignorant and naïve or as unattractive and socially

maladapted women that struggle to meet the needs of American culture. The character of Gloria

Pritchett (Sofia Vergara) and Betty the eponymous character of *Ugly Betty* (America Ferrara) are

two main characters against which I will compare the media's image of Sonia Sotomayor. In

contrast to these examples, I will explain how the movie *Real Women Have Curves* also casting

America Ferrara in a protagonist role, offers a positive image of Latinas and offers a realistic

portrayal to represent *Latinidad.* I will discuss the different ways that these shows have

influenced American audiences to believe stereotypical views of Latinas based on their history in

the United States. I will also demonstrate how present day issues like immigration and illegal

citizenship continue to be topics used to identify with Latin Culture, issues that figured

prominently in the confirmation of now Justice Sotomayor.

   In chapter one, I will discuss the personal life and political history of Sonia Sotomayor. I will

describe how her personal experiences, her education, and her professional career have given her

the background knowledge and experience to be a quality and reputable judge. Sotomayor

graduated from Princeton at the top of her class and received many awards and scholarships for

her academic work and achievements. While studying at Princeton, Sotomayor learned how to be

critical of everything that she defended in her arguments and also learned how to use persuasion as a skill in her debates. After Princeton, Sotomayor attended Yale Law School where she studied to become a lawyer and in1979 she passed the bar exam and also received her JD (Juris Doctor). Sotomayor attributes her inspiration to become a lawyer and judge to watching popular television shows, but most importantly to her mother. Immediately after Law school, she worked as an assistant District Attorney in Manhattan where she gained recognition for her hard work. In 1992, she joined the Southern District Court of New York and became the first Hispanic judge in the State of New York.

Additionally, I will address the controversy that ensued following her appointment to the Supreme Court. Sotomayor had been at the center of a great deal of controversy in the American media due to the question as to whether or not she would be qualified as the next Supreme Court justice. As a result of the 2001 "wise Latina" speech that she made at UC Berkeley, she drew a lot of negative attention because people believed that she was a racist towards white powerful male figures. Because of her past actions as a student, lawyer and judge and also because of her comments made in her "wise Latina" speech, Sotomayor was called an extreme-liberal, proHispanic, a bigot, and Anti-American by politicians, conservatives, radio hosts, and popular television news stations. She was also criticized for being affiliated with groups and organizations that supported her Puerto Rican heritage. These affiliations and past actions affected her confirmation process because Conservatives, Republicans, and the media did not believe that she had enough background experience to be a well-rounded judge. Many of these men and women felt that Sotomayor would use her own experience in order to make decisions in her cases instead of using her critical reasoning skills and make rulings based on facts.

Sotomayor worked on many cases that dealt with civil rights, affirmative action, abortion and also gender and race discrimination. In fact, some politicians believed that she was being unfair in the Ricci v. Destefano case in which it appeared that she was against white firefighters for passing a state exam instead of African-Americans. These cases were revisited during the candidacy hearings to question Sotomayor on her decision making process. In addition to being criticized on her judging, Sotomayor was also called a bully for being outspoken toward lawyers. I believe that women who demonstrate intelligence or who have an aggressive personality are perceived as being out of control, or in Sotomayor's case "hot" headed by television and the media. Therefore, it is my interest to investigate why and how some of these negative connotations made about Sotomayor during her candidacy hearings are relative to the way that Latinas are perceived by American audiences because of the way they are portrayed by television and the media.

   Next, I will discuss what prominent critics and authors say about the way historical and present day television representations have contributed to creating and propagating a negative image of Latinas, an image that becomes a hindrance when women such as Sonia Sotomayor attempt to rise above the perceived bar that is socially set for the Hispanic minority. According to feminist writers who have studied and written on the subjects of ethnicity, race and identity there is no one way to classify what it means to be a Latino. They explain that many Latinas and Latinos do not identify themselves as having only one ethnicity and that many identify themselves using nation of origin, customs, language, religion, and values. Therefore, it is inaccurate to make generalizations about their ethnicity as a whole because as an individual Latinas and Latinos identify themselves in more than one way. It is generally agreed that stereotyping is a method used as a way to place labels on people in order to distinguish them

from other ethnicities. The authors cited in this paper tend to agree that stereotypes are quite often based on personal prejudices towards a specific group of people. Some stereotypes generalize that all Latinas are hyper-sexual, and over-emotional beings unable to control their temper. I believe that some of the misconceptions made about Latinas based in popular culture affects their ability to be successful like everyone else because of the so called negative images used to portray them. The term *Latinidad* is an ethnic label that I will base my argument on since its usage generalizes about what it means to be Latino. The "hot" tempered Latina stereotype might be connected to the depiction of Sonia Sotomayor during her confirmation hearings, as a "hot" tempered judge. The "hot" Latina is one attribute used by television producers to portray Latin women on their TV shows. In the next section I have analyzed two shows that were popular during Sotomayor's confirmation process that commonly utilize a stereotypical view of Latinas.

In chapter two, I will analyze two Latina characters from two popular television shows to illustrate how they address the Latina image and culture, using Sonia Sotomayor's experience as a political model. I will develop my perspective in conjunction with literary scholars who have studied sex, race and ethnicity as they relate to Hispanics in the US. They explain how television producers utilize similar ethnic labels as a way to make Latina characters more appealing to American viewers. The reason that Latinas are depicted through stereotypes on television is because society expects them to fulfill the roles that they have been given throughout American history. For instance, on the show *Modern Family* Gloria (Sofía Vergara) plays a stereotyped Latina bombshell as mother and wife to portray a modernized Latina. The character resembles classic Hollywood Latina actresses from the 1930's to the 1940's. Gloria is rich, beautiful, and funny, but that is all. What we learn from the show is that she is materialistic, naïve, uneducated, and that she is unable to manage her "hot" Latina temper. What makes her character popular

among viewers is that she displays a sexy image that is appealing to Americans. *Modern Family* portrays Latinas in one way and fails to accurately depict the many variations of Latinas across America.

In *Ugly Betty* Hilda plays another stereotypical Latina that is uneducated and who only cares about her looks. Hilda's poor work ethic and life choices portray her as an immigrant that is lazy and irresponsible. Her character displays the stereotype of the Latina that has no future because of her low social status as a Mexican trying to make it in the US. In a similar way to Gloria, Hilda is overly emotional and unable to control her "hot" temper when things do not go her way showing that she is irrational and desperate. She struggles to make the right choices economically and has no choice but to rely on her ill father, an illegal immigrant, and ex- boyfriend Santos, a street hoodlum, to help her. Hilda's Spanish accent and sexy Latina looks exoticizes her and depict her as the foreigner who has yet to assimilate into American culture. Producers that create characters such as Hilda to portray Latinas on their shows are perpetuating old stereotypes that, in fact, do not represent what it is to be a modern day Latina, like Sotomayor. According to several authors, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans have a negative image because of how they have been presented in classic Hollywood films as criminals and also because of the number of immigrants that are living illegally today in the US. Generalizations have been made based these stereotypical representations on television and the news media to depict Latinas as untrustworthy, violent, and irresponsible. The show *Ugly Betty* indicates that appearances have something to do with social status and privilege in the US. It is possible that these portrayals have made Sotomayor appear to be an untrustworthy and racist judge because she has associated herself with her ethnic background as a "Puertorriqueña" and a "Newyorkrican" in many of her speeches.

Meanwhile in contrast to Hilda, her sister Betty plays an unattractive Latina that is struggling to meet the needs of working for an elite American magazine company. As a way for the President of the company to prevent his son Daniel from sleeping around with his secretaries, he hires Betty to be Daniels new assistant. Betty's ugly and dorky appearance instantly places her outside of the in-crowd at *Mode Enterprise*, the magazine company where she works as an assistant. Her taste for fashion and her non- feminine ways are often ridiculed and made fun of by her coworkers. The producers use of stereotypes to portray her Mexican background makes Betty appear less attractive and favorable to viewers. There are many references made about the way Latinas eat, dress, talk, and live. For instance, Betty's personal looks and taste for fashion portray her family's low economic status and displays them as minorities. In addition, the theme of "looks" plays a major role in the show's success. In some ways Betty is the antithesis of the Gloria Delgado Pritchett stereotype and of her sister Hilda. She resembles an alternate Latina image, one that looks more like the Sonia Sotomayor's Puerto Rican ethnicity. The way that Betty appears as the classic "underdog" at *Mode* makes it easy to identify with her character and makes her more appealing and accessible to viewers. Therefore, Betty's beauty is based on morals, etiquette and her good-girl image, instead of her looks like Gloria in *Modern Family.*

Betty's portrayal is a misrepresentation of Latinas, because it suggests that minorities that are intelligent are all ugly, poor, and insecure. In my view I believe that Betty Suárez challenges the stereotype that all Latinas are beautiful and sexy like Gloria and Hilda. The stereotype that she challenges implies that only attractive, empty headed Latinas can be appealing to American audiences. Betty is intelligent, she has a good work ethic, and she practices the customs of American culture which is what also makes her character popular among Americans. In contrast to Latina stereotypical representations, Betty is displayed more as an American girl who has

assimilated and who does not pose a social threat or challenge American ideologies. Sotomayor's image was not popular to American viewers because she was known to be extremely outspoken and tough to lawyers as a female judge. Some Americans did not want to accept her as a powerful figure because of the way that she did not conform to the traditional role expected of Latinas in the U.S, as second class citizens. Some Americans are not accustomed to seeing powerful Latina figures, which is why she poses a threat to males in higher authoritative positions. In addition to her negative attention as a mean judge, Sotomayor was criticized for giving tribute to her Puerto Rican background in a series of speeches in order to honor her heritage. This made her appear like she lacked American values and made her seem more of a foreigner compared to Betty who identifies more with her American side than her Mexican background. On the show Betty speaks mostly in English and not in Spanish like the way her sister Hilda does on *Ugly Betty*. Another reason that Sotomayor cannot be accepted among American audiences is because she does not portray the sexy and beautiful Latina character of Gloria Delgado Pritchett, the image that many Americans are accustomed to seeing Latinas depicted as Gloria's role as the comical, clueless, and senseless housewife draws attention to her Latina character. One does not need to take what she says personally because her character is fictional, merely only to make American viewers laugh. Gloria Delgado depicts Latinas stereotypically, because it portrays them as nothing more than having a good time. On the other hand Sotomayor's Latina image as a serious, and unapproachable, judge makes her difficult for Americans audiences to identify with. Her inability to appear American's gives her an unfavorable image among American citizens because of the way she has been portrayed by the American media as a racist, a bully, and also because she poses as a threat to powerful male figures. I believe that viewers relate to characters in television shows easier than to real professionals

Modern Family and *Ugly Betty* display Latinas as having Hispanic backgrounds. Such ethnic labels add to the stigma of Latinas to represent them to American audiences by representing them all the same way. As a result prejudices will be the only resource that people will use to help them identify with Latinas and Latino Culture. Until additional Latina figures and role models such as Sotomayor step out into the public eye to represent present day Latinos, negative projections of Latinas in the media and television will continue to depict them inaccurately.

In the final section, I provide my own arguments about how the increase of Hispanic population in the United States will influence more Latinas to take on leadership roles and hopefully encourage television producers and the media to portray Latin women in a more positive way. With more Hispanics living in the United States, attending our universities, and their involvement in our culture, they will have a major influence in the American future of our country. Sotomayor has demonstrated through personal determination to overcome hardship, her commitment to her education and her work as a judge that Latinas can become successful regardless of sex, race, and ethnicity. Finally, I will discuss how necessary it is for the production of new television shows to create more substantial and realistic images to represent Latinas in all shapes and forms.

Chapter One: Sonia Sotomayor and the Candidacy Hearings

In this chapter, I will discuss the personal life and political history of Sonia Sotomayor with specific attention to the diverse controversies her nomination has encountered and how these criticisms might be related to her being the first Latina Supreme Court justice for the United

States. The negative portrayal of Latinas by the media and television makes it difficult for women like Sonia Sotomayor to become powerful leaders in American society. Author Clara Rodríguez argues in her book *Latin Looks* that Latinas are often represented as promiscuous, impoverished mothers, victims, and dependent on men. When they appear as strong and independent women, Latinas are criticized as being "hot" tempered and emotional. Rodríguez states, "…too often in today's media the strengths of Latina women are often projected as negatives" (2). By examining Rodríguez's argument, I aim to argue that Latinas are portrayed by the media and television as embodying negative ethnic stereotypes, particularly those involved with race, gender roles, and sexuality. For instance, Sotomayor was criticized for her race and ethnicity by the media and politicians during her nomination as the next Supreme Court Justice.

I.What is a Wise Latina, anyway?

In a 2001 Speech titled, "A Latina Judge's Voice" given at the University of California, Berkeley, Sotomayor felt compelled to mention her Puerto Rican roots and life experiences growing up as a Latina in the Bronx, New York. She begins telling the audience that her experiences as a woman and a minority have given her some important tools and perspectives that she felt she needed to be a productive judge (Gitlin 6-7). The *Wise Latina* speech has created a negative view of Sonia Sotomayor among American audiences. As a result of negative media coverage, Sotomayor had been subjected to racist remarks on her race and ethnicity. Here is one of the most quoted, and now infamous passages from Sotomayor's speech that has caused a lot of controversy in the public eye:

> I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life… Whether born from experience or inherent physiological or cultural differences, our gender and national origin may and will make a difference in our judging. (Gitlin; Emert; Savage; et al)

I believe that Sotomayor was only reflecting upon her life experience as a Latina woman living in the Bronx. She was clearly trying to express the way her personal struggles as a minority helped make her a well-rounded and qualified individual to be an impartial judge. Sotomayor was reacting to a speech given by Judge Sandra Day O'Connor who had been quoted saying, "That a wise old man and a wise woman would reach the same conclusion when deciding cases" (Emert; Gitlin et al). I believe that Sotomayor was disagreeing with Judge O'Connor's remark about men and women being the same**.** In Sotomayor's view, life experience, not race, is what makes an effective judge. In his article "Sotomayor Threw O'Connor UnderThe Bus", William A. Jacobson indicates how Sotomayor used the *Wise Latina* comment as a way to set her- self apart from O'Connor. He claims that her explanation distorted O'Connor's view about men and women judges being equal when it came to their decision making working on the bench (Legal Insurrection, 2009). From Sotomayor's perspective men and women may look at issues differently to reach conclusions in the decision process. Professor and scholar Linda Martín Alcoff notes, "As Sotomayor put it, some people are limited "in their ability to understand the experiences of others", and "others simply do not care" (123). In her study "Sotomayor's Reasoning" Alcoff explains that Sotomayor was indicating how "personal experiences affect the facts that judges choose to see." Sotomayor was only implying that gender, race, and ethnicity should not get in the way of a judge's decision making while working on the bench. But that life experiences play an important part in the shaping of any person and therefore will provide them a unique set of perspectives from which to build a judgment.

According to several critics and authors, the *Wise Latina* speech by Sotomayor was intended to influence Latino students and lawyers in a positive way so they could see the value of their life experiences using her as a model. On the webpage of "The American Bar Association Defending Liberty Pursuing Justice: Hispanic Fact Sheet" shows the number of Latinos that pursue a legal career in the U.S. The ABA indicates, "According to the 2000 US. Census, Latinos constitute 12.5 percent of the U.S. population but only 2.2 percent of the nation's lawyers."These numbers point out that being a minority is not an asset when trying to make it in to the legal profession in the U.S**.** In a *New York Times* article titled "Sonia Sotomayor Hearings Controversy Time Politics: Just What is a 'Wise Latina' anyway?" Carolina Miranda provides her view on Sotomayor's statement. Miranda states, "Sotomayor was clearly trying to say in her 'wise Latina' speech that her breadth of experience lead her to have greater wisdom on certain topics than her white male counterparts." Alcoff also adds:

> Sotomayor argued that every judge must strive to reach beyond their baseline into unfamiliar areas, and one can surmise that, by making the argument Sotomayor does not believe we are irremediably limited by our background, knowledge and experience. (Alcoff 123)

Based on these journalist's views, a judge needs to investigate above and beyond their own experiences and wisdoms when judging people in their cases. Miranda points out how Sotomayor's personal life experiences are what set her apart from the other judges. Alcoff's statement suggests that Sotomayor's ability to place herself in other people's shoes is what makes her a better judge and it is what all judges should do. I agree with Alcoff and in addition I believe that Sotomayor's childhood experiences, her personal struggles, and her ethnicity as a Puerto Rican woman are the tools that have made her the qualified judge that she is today. Sotomayor is an intelligent woman who is extremely passionate about her work. In the following section I will

give background information on Sotomayor's childhood and discuss her professional work as a lawyer and then the cases she worked on as a judge.

II.Who is Sonia Sotomayor ?

Ms. Sotomayor is the daughter of two Puerto Rican immigrant parents. Her personal life story and academic background offer a promising model for future Latina women. She has demonstrated through her determination and commitment to her education and work as a judge that Latinas can contribute their skills to American society and be positive public leaders. Sotomayor is one of the first Latinas to achieve political success in America. She won a full scholarship into Princeton and graduated with a bachelor's degree in history. She received many awards and scholarships both as an undergraduate and as a graduate student. At Princeton Sotomayor was awarded the Pyne Prize for being at the top of her class. In 1976, she was also elected into Phi Beta Kappa. She has also gained recognition and awards for her professional work in the field of law. After graduating from Princeton, Sotomayor earned a Juris Doctor at Yale Law School in 1979. She then took a job as an Assistant District Attorney under New York County DA Robert Morgenthau. Sotomayor's childhood experience growing up in the Bronx, her commitment to her education, and her professional work as a lawyer and judge present s a positive image to represent Latinas in the present U.S.

Sonia Sotomayor was born June 25th 1954 in the Bronx, New York. Her parents Juan Sotomayor and Celina Baez arrived in Manhattan to pursue a better life and to raise a family. "Sotomayor's parents' histories had a powerful impact on their daughter," says Emma Lyn Garcia, an appellate Court Judge in Puerto Rico and friend of Sotomayor. Juan Sotomayor

became a tool-and-die worker in a factory while Celina, who had just finished serving in the Woman's Army Corps, worked as a switch boarder and studied to become a nurse. Sotomayor's younger brother Juan, a doctor, also resides in New York. The family lived in a Southeastern Bronx Puerto Rican housing-community, very close by to the home of Sonia's favorite baseball team the New York Yankees (Emert 66). As many first generation children of immigrant parents, Sonia first began to speak Spanish because it was the only language that both her parents could speak. It was later on while pursuing her career as a nurse that Sonia's mother Celina pushed her daughter to learn and speak English while Sonia studied and attended elementary school (Emert et al).

Life took a rough turn and was extremely difficult for the Sotomayor's after Juan Sotomayor Senior's passing. This death was the first of many obstacles that the family had to face on their own. For instance, Sonia was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at eight years old. Then, Celina Baez struggled to make ends meet in order to support her family. Although the Sotomayor's endured financial hardships, it was important for Celina that her children received a good education. Celina managed to make enough money to purchase an Encyclopedia Britannica as reference for her children to use while they went to school (Emert 16). She placed them in Cardinal Spellman High School one of the most respected Catholic schools of their neighborhood that had gained a reputation as a school for high achievers in the 1970's (Emert 22; Gitlin 24). One of her classmates remembers how the school was segregated at the time, describing how at lunch time black students were sat at one side of the cafeteria and Latinos at another according to Sergio Sotolongo's *Politico* (2). Another, classmate Andrew Oser, states about Sotomayor, "I remember her as bright, high energy, and a confident young lady" (Politico 2). In "Sotomayor'

Always Willing to Speak Up" Elizabeth Landau writes how one fellow classmate of Sotomayor had been quoted saying that, "Sonia was the voice of reason" during her years as a student at Princeton (CNN Politics.com). In a second article by Landau , fellow classmate Robert Klonoff, now the dean of Lewis and Clark Law School, states "She was always willing to speak up and give her point of view…I just remember, even back then, thinking that in a group of very smart people she was destined to go great places." Susan Sturm, a Columbia Law School Professor and former classmate of Sotomayor at Yale University notes:

> She's someone who really respects and admires the law as an institution and, within that, the law's capacity to really respond to concerns running the spectrum of people who are currently disadvantaged and those who have responsibilities. (Politico 2009)

In the 1970s the South Bronx had undergone dramatic economic changes with crime and high unemployment rates that made the area un- fit to live. In Timothy Williams' article, "In Bronx, Job Statistics Paint a Complex Picture" Andrew Breslau, executive director of City Futures, the parent organization of the Center for an Urban Future, states "high unemployment levels [today] should be no surprise given that the Bronx has yet to recover from its nadir in the late 1970s and early 1980s when it was best known for violent crime, abandoned neighborhoods and burning buildings." The article "The South Bronx: From Urban Planning Victim to Victor" from the online webpage of *Demographia City on a Hill* demonstrates the changes that the city endured between the 1970's and 1980's. *Demographia* indicates the loss of population from its 1970 peak of 7,896,000 to 7,092,000 due to property damage, tax increases, housing developments, and the lack of security available to prevent the increase of drugs, crime, violence, and theft. Another reason for resident mobility was because there were not enough good schools in the region ("Demographia City on a Hill"). *Demographia's* webpage also mentions that

expressway construction by Robert Moses ruined the appearance of the neighborhood, making the area not as desirable to live in, another reason for families to move away from the city. Sotomayor for example recalls how her apartment shook because it was so close to the New York City subway (Emert 19). The Sotomayors decided to leave the Bronx because of the landlords who would burn their own buildings in order to collect money from their insurance companies. But, most residents left because of the violence brought into the community by drug dealers (Emert 21-22). Although the Sotomayor's were not living the life one normally associate with students of an Ivy League University such as Princeton, their humble situation did not prevent Sotomayor from receiving an education.

III. Education and Career:

As noted above, Sonia Sotomayor acquired some notoriety during her early years as a student in a respected school and gained fame during her time as a lawyer. After graduating at the top of her class in high school, Sotomayor won a scholarship to attend Princeton University where she studied History and did her senior thesis on Luis Muñoz Marín, the first governor of Puerto Rico. It was titled, "The Impact of the Life of Luis Muñoz Marín on the Political and Economic History of Puerto Rico, 1930-1975" (Emert 29-30; McElroy 17). The thesis describes Sotomayor's support of Puerto Rico's struggle for independence, political and economic issues. In a *Washington Wire* article titled "In College Thesis, Sotomayor Appeared to Support Puerto Rican Independence" Eva Pérez explains how Sotomayor wrote about Muñoz-Marín's influence as a governor and leader who helped Puerto Rico become a commonwealth, a free associated state from the United States. Perez states:

The Princeton thesis was written at a time of heated political debate over Puerto Rico's future. Beginning in 1974 and continuing for nearly a decade, the paramilitary group Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional, or FALN, carried out bombings in the U.S. to push for independence for the island. (Pérez 1)

The thesis was a way for Sotomayor to present her belief in affirmative action on the subject of politics and to address her support for Puerto Rico's struggle for independence. According to Lisa Tucker McElroy in her book "Sonia Sotomayor" her essay was a success. Her work with her thesis led Sotomayor to take affirmative leadership roles to denounce the discrimination of Puerto Rican's on Princeton's campus and later also at Yale Law.

Sonia has admitted openly that she had a difficult time during her first years at Princeton. She knew that she needed to improve her writing and oral skills and has often since expressed to the press and the media how embarrassed she was that she wasn't as prepared as her classmates to meet the University's high expectations. Therefore, Sotomayor searched for help from some of her History professors to teach her how to become a better writer and to enhance her critical thinking skills in order for her to write analytical papers for her classes (Emert 25-27; Gitlin 27; et al). Evan Thomas illustrates Sotomayor's struggles with her writing skills in a statement made by one of her college professors:

She was clearly very intelligent and engaged, but very rough," recalls her professor, Peter Winn. "She was intimidated. She didn't speak in class. She had no idea what she was getting into." Sotomayor has recalled that her writing was "stilted and overly complicated," her "grammar and vocabulary skills weak." Winn undertook to improve it, showing her how to write clear, declarative sentences. More important, he taught her critical thinking. ("Meet the Sotomayors")

According to her professor, it was clearly important for Sotomayor to learn how to hold her position in an argument. Thomas indicates how Winn's advice to Sotomayor was simple. He said

to her "Be critical of everything, especially things you agree with-- and she was extraordinarily determined to learn."

At the time that Sotomayor attended Princeton in the mid 1970's, there were only a small percentage of Latinas enrolled in college according to Fry:

> In 1970, only one-third of young female Hispanics were enrolled in school or college; by 2007, nearly half of young female Hispanics were pursuing schooling. The labor force participation of young female Latinos has also grown during this time period, from 40% in 1970 to 54% in 2007. (Fry 1)

In Lauren Zumbach's article "Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor Recounts Experiences at Princeton University," Sotomayor shares some of her experiences at Princeton as being the only female student in some of her classes. Sotomayor mentions, "I was part of the third class of women at Princeton,"…"I had quite a few classes where I was the only woman in the room" (Sotomayor Shares her Experiences). As a Latina in the law professions, Sotomayor was a pioneer. Statistics show that there are more Latinas entering college and the labor force every day. In comparison a 2011 statistical study conducted by the United States Census Bureau found that "the female enrollment between the ages of 18-19 years old was 52.4% higher than the Hispanic males (56.5% were white males)". In their article "Hispanic Student Enrollment Reach New Highs in 2011" Richard Fry and Mark Hugo López show record highs of enrollment by Latinos attending colleges in 2011. Based on their findings they suggest that the school enrollment rate for both Latino female and males continues to rise within the last several decades. They state "The new milestones reflect a number of continuing upward trends between 1972 and 2011, the Latino share of 18-24 year old college students steadily grew- rising from 2.9% to 16.5%" (Fry 1). Fry's study indicates that there has been a steady rise in the number of Latinos

seeking an education in the United States. This fact about Latinos is often not shared by the television and the media.

These recent statistics showing a rise in the number of Latino students is, in part, due to the increase of Hispanic population in the United States. The United States Census Bureau reports, "More than half of the growth in the total population of the United States between 2000 and 2011 was due to the increase of the Hispanic population" (2). The Pew Hispanic Research and the Census Bureau both mention that Hispanics make up over half of the American population making them one of the largest minority groups in the United States. Pew indicates, "Hispanics are the nation's largest minority group, making up more than 50 million people, or about 16.5% of the U.S. population. Among the 30 million young people ages 18 to 24, 6 million, or 20%, are Hispanics" (Fry 1). Pew and the Census Bureau indicate that the Latino population is growing in America. In his 2009 study "The Changing Paths of Hispanic Youths in Adulthood" Fry mentions that although there is an increase in the number of Latinas and Latinos attending colleges and Universities, Hispanics continue to fall behind the average percent of white Americans when it comes to school and college enrollment. Fry's study shows that although Hispanics value education they do not have the means to attain the same level of education as other people in America. According to the 2012 article "Ensuring Latino Success in College and the Workforce" the National Conference of State Legislature states that many Hispanics cannot afford to go to college. They explain how Latinos who come from low-income families are uneducated about the resources and the financial support that is available for them. They also mention that many Latinos who go to college work either part or full time to help pay their college tuition. The fact is that there are more Latinos that are attending colleges and universities today in order to increase their opportunities economically. However, the media continues to portray Latinas and Latinos as being unable socioeconomically to attend college. Stories about

Latinas aspiring to go to college to increase their chances economically are seldom told by the media and television. This is due in part to the misconception in American society that Latinas and other women are less educated and therefore are not able to project an authoritative political stance within the active American voting body.

In their book *Children of Immigration* authors Carola and Marcelo M. Suárez- Orozoco go in to detail about the issues that foreign-born and native born immigrants continue to face in the United States. According to them immigrant children are subjected to "a variety of stereotypes" (Orozoco 8). Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozoco reference a study by educational researcher Laurie Olsen on high school students from Northern California on their feelings about immigrants. One student shares, "They come to take our jobs, and are willing to break their backs… and we can't compete" (Suárez- Orozoco7). Suárez-Orozoco states that immigrants are nearly always viewed with considerable suspicion. Many fear them as competitors at best or sinister aliens at worst (Suárez-Orozoco 40). Some Americans base their understanding of Latino culture on negative stereotypes. For example, in an article by *Latino Voice* titled "Non-Latinos Buy into Stereotypes of Hispanic Americans" the following was stated: "About 30 percent of non-Latino Americans believe that half or more of the nation's Latino population is made up of undocumented immigrants… half of the nation's non-Latino population also believes that the terms "welfare recipient" and "less well educated" are apt terms to describe the nation's Hispanic population." This article discusses the negative self-image held by many Latino's that stems from the way they are represented on television and in the news. *Latino Voice* states that the media reflects the most common images, characters and stories of Hispanics on their programs. The most common depictions of Hispanics are maids, gardeners, drop outs, and criminals (*Latino Voice* 2012). They also indicate, "About 56 percent of those polled who reported regularly

watching Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor," featuring Bill O'Reilly said that Latinos are on

welfare, 50 percent said they refuse to learn English and 42 percent said Hispanics have too many

children"(*Latino Voice*). When it comes to politics, some Americans believe that Hispanics only

intervene in issues concerning their own community. They also assume that Latinos care less

about matters dealing with the United States. One example of this is demonstrated by scholar

David L. Leal's study *Latino Public Opinion*. He writes, *"*Latinos are the most likely to favor

bilingual education and amnesty for illegal immigrants along with African and Asian Americans

than Anglos" according to a (1987) study by Cain and Kiewiet (qtd. in Espino 27-28). It is also

believed that Latinos are not as involved in stating public opinions as non-Latinos. According to

Desipio, F. García, J.García, and Falcón's (1992) study a popular misconception about Latinos

involved in politics is that they always take a liberal stance (qtd, in Espino 28). In his book *Latino*

Politics: Identity, Mobilization, and Representation author Roldolpho Espino mentions how,

"low socioeconomic status negatively affects Latino political power in a number of ways"

(Espino 7). One reason is that Latino mobility affects the Latino votes for elected office. Since

many Latinos show low rates of homeownership and are known to move frequently it makes it

difficult for candidates and political organizations to contact them in order to encourage voting

during state elections (Espino 7). In Espinos book, author Ricardo Ramírez discusses more about,

"how the characteristics of Latino population shape the strategic choices of candidates and

political parties" (Espino 90-103). Espino states:

> In an analysis of Latino voter behavior in the 2003 municipal election in Houston,Texas, he [Ramírez] discusses how residential mobility plays a role in political mobilization campaigns. Voters who move more often are less likely to report being contacted by a candidate, political party, or political organization, even though they overcame the same voter registration hurdle as those who move less frequently. Thus, lower participation rates among persons who are residentially mobile are not only attributable to institutional barriers or political disinterest, but are also, affected by campaigns that choose to ignore less residentially stable segments of the electorate. (Espino 7)

Based on these studies Latinos in general are not viewed positively by Americans. Many Latinos are perceived as poor, uneducated, undocumented immigrants who do not care for communities where they live and only think about their most immediate families. Meanwhile those that are citizens show little interest in electoral campaigns within their own community.

In contrast to the negative stereotypes of Latinos, Sotomayor embodies another image of a Latina who challenges the dominant perception of Hispanics. As a student Sotomayor became actively involved in social groups at Princeton University. She joined the group Acción Puertoriqueña and several other active groups like *The Third World Center*, where she learned how to debate and could practice her legal skills (Emert 27; Gitlin 28; et al). These groups involved students from diverse backgrounds where they discussed politics and shared their experiences while at Princeton (Gitlin 28). She was very involved in trying to improve the University's lack of Latino class offerings. Several classmates recall that Sotomayor took leadership of the action group and filed a complaint with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare about unfair employment practice on campus Latinos according to *Poltico's 2010* website. In Evan Thomas's article "Meet The Sotomayors" he describes how Sotomayor's experience at Princeton has influenced her to be the strong minded woman that she is often criticized for today by the media:

> Princeton transformed Sotomayor in another way that she did not mention in her speech. It taught her how to play a particular sort of power game, to get ahead the Princeton way—not by assertion or bullying, but by reason and carefully prepared persuasion. These are values that Princeton has long taught and still tries to teach. Change is to be achieved by working within the system, not by tearing things down. (Meet The Sotomayors)

In contrast to her success at Princeton, Sotomayor admitted that she felt like a fish-out ofwater on the university's campus. She describes how she was one of the few Latinas that

studied within what was considered a dominantly white student population. Sotomayor discusses

this feeling in her 1996 speech to the Third World Center:

> My days at Princeton … were the single most transforming experience I have had. It was
> here that I became truly aware of my Latina identity—something I had taken for granted
> during my childhood when I was surrounded by my family and their friends," Sotomayor
> said in a speech to the Third World Center at Princeton in 1996…[At Princeton] She was
> a member of only the fourth class to take women. There were very few blacks or
> Hispanics. It seemed to Sotomayor that the other students had all gone to prep school and
> taken tennis lessons and enjoyed ski vacations. (Thomas 1).

When Sotomayor was a student in the late 1960's to the early 1970's America was

dealing with the repercussions of the civil rights movements and the Vietnam War. For example,

Joe Schuber, a Mexican American friend of Sotomayor during her time at Princeton, made a

statement describing what it was like at the time of Sotomayor's activism during her college

years. He states, "This was the middle of the anti-war days." Student activism was rampant

across campus" (Landau 1). In another article titled "Classmates Remember Sotomayor" by

Kimberly A. Wilson from *Oregon News*, a student recalls this time period as challenging when

topics of race and ethnicity were discussed amongst students at Yale:

> The late 1970s were a time of transitions and uncomfortable conversations about race and
> ethnicity. At Yale, those conversations came to a head during their senior year when
> Sotomayor filed a discrimination complaint with Yale against a powerful Washington,
> D.C., law firm. (Oregon News)

"US Supreme Court Case Tracker: Supreme Court Review" a website dedicated to covering the

Supreme Court, states that Sotomayor took action after a prestigious Washington D.C law firm

had criticized her acceptance into the University. For this reason she filed a complaint to Yale.

The article states:

As a third year student at Yale, Sotomayor attended a recruiting dinner for the Washington, D.C. law firm of Shaw, Pittman, Potts & Trowbridge. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, one the firm's partners, Martin Krall, "asked her whether she would have been admitted to law school if she were not Puerto Rican and whether law firms did a disservice by hiring minority students with inferior credentials and then firing them a few years later." Sotomayor responded by filing a complaint with a student-faculty tribunal that ruled in her favor. The group ordered the firm to issue an apology or risk being banned from on-campus recruitment of Yale Law School students. The firm apologized and news of the event was reported in *The Washington Post*. (Supreme Court Review 2013)

In the 2010 article "Princeton University holds the key to understanding Sonia Sotomayor" by *Politico* Sotomayor describes how she felt her first years at Princeton with her involvement in affirmative action groups, "The school was "an alien land for me….The Third World Center, provided me with an anchor I needed to ground myself in that new and different world" (Politico 2010). At the time that she studied at Princeton there were not enough classes given to educate students on topics about Latin Culture nor were there faculty of Latino descent (Emert; Gitlin et al). This bothered Sotomayor, who took action to address this issue by writing letters complaining to the University about not being fair toward Latinos. Sotomayor's strong willed personality and intelligence helped to diversify the student population at Princeton. Sotomayor graduated in 1976 as a *Summa cum laude* and, as mentioned before, was awarded the Pyne Prize, which is one of the highest academic awards given to Princeton undergraduates. Sotomayor went onto Yale University where she studied law and became an editor for the *Yale Law Journal*. In 1979 she received her JD (Juris Doctor) and passed the bar exam in 1980 (Emert; Gitlin 29-32). Sotomayor admits that although her days as a student were challenging and difficult, she did not let her fears or insecurities get in the way of achieving her goals. The inspiration that Sotomayor received from the people that were around her gave her the confidence that she needed to believe she was capable of becoming a lawyer and a judge. Sotomayor's history as a student and a lawyer are the origins of her current success. Because of her own experience in dealing with social

injustices at Princeton, Sotomayor was well prepared to pursue a career as a judge. Sotomayor demonstrates through her hard work and her own experiences dealing with social injustices and inequality at Princeton gave her the practice that she needed to become a future judge.

IV. Inspiration:

Sonia Sotomayor attributes her motivation as a student and successful career as a lawyer and judge to three main influences: her mother, reading books, and watching television. In a statement Sotomayor was quoted saying to the American Bar Association that she knew she would become a lawyer as a result of watching *The Perry Mason Show*:

> I had been fascinated with reading Nancy Drew [doing detective work] so I decided to become a lawyer", Sotomayor told the American Bar Association in 2000…Once I focused on becoming a lawyer I never deviated from that goal. (CNN Politics 2009)

As a child, Sotomayor said that she had a passion to read the popular children detective *Nancy Drew* books and enjoyed watching the *The Perry Mason Show* because the character in the drama series helped solve crimes. *Nancy Drew* is a fictional character based on a children's fiction mystery series created by publisher Edward Stratemeyer and signed by Carol Keene (a collective pseudonym for the many ghost writers who have written for the series). The books are well known for displaying a strong female character as a teen detective. Nancy Drew is smart, independent, adventurous, talented and worldly. Among other skills Nancy speaks several languages. For displaying unique qualities as a strong minded teenager since its first publication during the 1930's, and through to the 1970's, the 1980's, and up to the present, Nancy Drew has continued to be a good role model for girls (Hoffman; Stowe; et al). In the article "Times Change, But Nancy Drew Has Lost None of Her Appeal" by Jackie Burrell, Jennifer Worrick shares her personal feelings in relating to the Nancy Drew books. She describes how Nancy Drew

24

is an icon that generates new trends that women want to replicate. Worrick states, "Women feel connected to each other and the story… I can talk to my mom about things because she read those books as well. It's a common currency among women of certain ages. (Nancy Drew) kind of transcends trends, in the same way that `Little House on the Prairie' does" (Burrell 1). In an article from the *New York Times* website titled "Nancy Drew's Granddaughters" by Jan Hoffman, Jenn Fisher, an Arizona-based former lawyer who runs Nancy Drew fan conventions, states, "I'm amazed by how people can read the same book and have different perspectives…She's a good role model and she brings the great nostalgia of remembering your childhood" (Hoffman 1). Hoffman adds, "For girls coming of age in a pre-feminist era, Nancy Drew offered a hint at a horizon." In a statement by former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder she says "I needed Nancy Drew…She was smart and she didn't have to hide it! She [Nancy Drew] showed me there was another way to live." Schroeder would earn her pilot's license at 15, and become a feminist politician representing the state of Colorado (qtd, in Hoffman**)**. By being a strong minded, independent, outspoken, and confident girl for her age, Nancy Drew inspired Sotomayor to work as an ambassador of law and the common good of the people. Her ability to pick up clues, and solve puzzles to solve the crimes in her mystery cases, made her an uncommon depiction of a female for her time. She would chase after criminals, be involved in car chases, and escape explosions. Her character brought excitement and adventure to young girls who wanted to be like her. In addition, she showed her willingness to take risks in order to achieve her goals. Overall, Nancy Drew's character challenges conventional roles of women during the 1930's and into the 1970's and encouraged them to achieve their goals under all circumstances.

The *Nancy Drew* series underwent many revisions based on its original 1930's version.

The next edition was called *The Nancy Drew Files* which later became *Girl Detective* in (2004). In her essay, "The Visual Rewriting of Nancy Drew," Jennifer Stowe notes the changes in the revisions of the Nancy Drew books. She indicates that Nancy's character does not display the same independent and strong willed personality in the later editions as she did in the first originally written by Stratemeyer. Stowe explains that the books' original success was because it contrasted with women's previous roles in society as passive and emotional beings. The character inspired women to fantasize about being independent heroines. In the article "Is Nancy Drew Queer? Popular Reading Strategies for the Lesbian Reader," Sherrie A. Inness mentions that the character has proved continuously popular worldwide. At least 80 million copies of the books have been sold (Iness 343-344). According to *Mysterynet.com* "The books have been translated into over 45 languages. Nancy Drew has been featured in five films, two television shows, and a number of popular computer games; she also appears in a variety of merchandise sold over the world." I can see how Nancy Drew has had a positive impact in Sotomayor's role as a woman and her future as a lawyer and judge. Sotomayor's personality resembles that of Nancy Drew; they are independent, strong minded, intelligent, adventurous and have good values and share a passion for helping people.

In addition to Nancy Drew books, Sotomayor was inspired to pursue a legal career and become a lawyer as a result of watching the *Perry Mason Show*. It was after watching the show that Sotomayor thought about becoming a judge. Perry Mason (Raymond Burr) was a defense attorney from Los Angeles who was known for solving difficult cases by using his wit and tactiful skills. According to *IMDb.com* Perry Mason was written by Erle Stanley Gardner in 1933. It began as a popular CBS radio show which later aired on television in 1957 to 1966. The *Perry Mason* show eventually became a national hit (IMDB.com). According to Eva Rodríguez's

article "Perry Mason, Meet Sotomayor "The nominee referred to an episode of the 1960s series when Perry spoke after trial to the prosecutor in the show. Perry's client had been exonerated of a murder, and the real culprit was eventually identified. As Sotomayor tells it, Perry asked the prosecutor if he wasn't troubled that he had spent so much time prosecuting Perry's client only to find he was innocent" ("Perry Mason, Meet Sotomayor"). In a statement cited on the online webpage of *CNN Politics.com*, Sotomayor mentions how "That TV character said something that motivated my choices in life,"(CNN Politics). In the article "Sotomayor: Perry Mason Influenced Her to Become a Prosecutor," Sotomayor is quoted again about how it was actor Raymond Burrs character as a successful defense attorney that gave her the idea to become a lawyer.

In the article "Sotomayor: Inspired by Perry Mason" from the *Los Angeles Times* webpage Johanna Neumann shares one episode from the Perry Mason show that influenced Sotomayor to become a judge. "In one "Perry Mason" episode, the prosecutor was overruled by the judge, leading Sotomayor to conclude that the judge was the most important person in the courtroom" (Neumann 1). The cleverness of the character Perry Mason and his ability to utilize evidence to solve crimes influenced Sotomayor to do the same work later on in her professional career. Sotomayor states:

> I thought, what a wonderful occupation to have," Sotomayor told the New York Times in a 1992 interview. "And I made the quantum leap: If that was the prosecutor's job, then the guy who made the decision to dismiss the case was the judge. That was what I was going to be. (Neumann 1;Gitlin 23).

The Perry Mason Show was not rated an American favorite television show until it reached its second season according to *IMDb.com*. "The series was ranked 19th in TV's "Top 25" in 1958 and it was also the 10th most popular program in America by its third season in the fall of 1959 next to its television competitor *Bonanza*" according to the online webpage *The Perry Mason TV*

Show Book by Brian Kelleher and Diana Merill. It's interesting to note how a television show that had not been very popular at first captured Sotomayor's attention as a young girl. Part of the reason is the character's role as a defense attorney and his commitment to prove the innocence of his clients as he defended them on trials. Perry Mason's passion to solve crimes is what also inspired Sotomayor to be more like him as an adult. As I mentioned before in reference to Sotomayor's *Wise Latina* comment, a focal point in her decision making as a judge was based on facts, past experiences, and was influenced as a result of her string commitment to the principal of innocent until proven guilty. In the same way that Perry Mason believed in the innocence of people until proven guilty, Sotomayor believed in social justice and the rights for all mankind. It is interesting to note that two of her main influences came from two popular American television shows. She is very open to the way that these "low culture" influences have inspired her to become a lawyer and a judge. Mentioning it to the public shows her appreciation for popular culture and how it played an important part in her life decision to become a legal professional. I must also point that during the candidacy hearings Republicans questioned Sotomayor on why she was inspired by a famous lawyer. By being consistent in her beliefs and her philosophy Sotomayor demonstrates that she is a positive role model for Latinas who strive to achieve academic and professional success. In this next section I will briefly demonstrate Sotomayor at work as a reputable lawyer and then judge.

V. Work in Action:

Right after graduating Sotomayor began working as an assistant district attorney in Manhattan, and served as a trial lawyer under District Attorney Lawyer Robert Morgenthau. In regards to this period Emert and Gitlin state, "Sotomayor was responsible for prosecuting

robberies, assaults, murders, police brutality, and child pornography cases" (Emert 34-36; Gitlin 38-39). She also joined the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (now called Latino Justice PRLDF), a civil advocacy group where lawyers discuss legal tactics and priorities for social justice and equality amongst individuals in the State of New York (Emert 40-42).

Sotomayor became increasingly involved in her work, serving in additional areas such as teaching as an adjunct professor at New York University Law School from 1997-2007 and lecturing at Columbia University from 1999 to 2009.

Sotomayor gained recognition from United States Democratic Senators Edward M. Kennedy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and from Republican Senator Alfonso D'Amato for her work in notable cases such as the 1981 and 1982 Tarzan Burglar case. According to Emert and Gitlin, it was one of the most significant cases in her career. The case was prosecuted in 1983 involving Richard Maddicks, a man known as the "Tarzan Murderer" who broke into apartments in Harlem to rob and kill tenants. It was one of the most significant cases in her career (Emert and Gitlin). In her article "Sonia Sotomayor's Legal Career Beginnings and the Tarzan Murderer" Charisse Van Horn explains "This was Sotomayor's first homicide case and also her first time to convict a person." The Tarzan murder trial was a real eye opening case for Sotomayor and taught her how the justice system worked. According the *CNN* 2009 article "Sotomayor Learned the Ropes on 'Tarzan' Case 2009" Ann O, Neil writes:

> Sotomayor joined the Manhattan District Attorney's office in 1979 during an epic crime wave. Muggings, burglaries and assaults were rampant; homicides topped 1,800 a year. She was recruited from Yale Law School by Robert M. Morgenthau, Manhattan's district attorney. She was 25, and her starting salary was $17,000… Sotomayor's five years there, say Manhattan prosecutors past and present, make her uniquely qualified for the nation's highest court. If confirmed, she would be the only justice who prosecuted criminal cases, presided over them and handled criminal appeals. (*CNN.com* 2009)

Neil adds how Robert M. Morgenthau remembers Sotomayor's work in both the Tarzan Burglar case and "in winning the office's first conviction under a rewritten child pornography law". Sotomayor had convinced Maddicks' own girlfriend, Mabel Ivey, to testify against him. Sotomayor informed Ivey that she could take years off of her sentencing from another case that she [Ivey] was involved in, if she had cooperated with her while on trial. The jury linked the murder weapon to Maddicks through a neighbor, a man known as Charles Wirdell Brown. According to former homicide prosecutor Hugh H. Mo, Sotomayor had questioned Wirdell in court, and, "It was a high point in the colorful trial". O'Neil also shares how "Sotomayor left an impression on Mo with her organizational skills and ability to boil a complicated case down to the essential elements that resonate with jurors". She states:

> Sotomayor helped Mo write his opening statement for the five-week trial and -- long before computers and PowerPoint -- crafted People's Exhibit One, a large poster-board chart illustrating the pattern linking the Tarzan Burglar to his crimes…The chart somehow survived nearly three decades in Mo's basement laundry room…During the trial, Sotomayor handled the questioning of half the 40 witnesses…She had the jury in tears as she questioned the girlfriend of a man fatally shot by the Tarzan Burglar.

In addition to the Tarzan Murder trial, a couple of other cases that Sotomayor worked on were the Silverman v. Major League Baseball Player Relations Committee in 1995, Flamer v. City of White Plains, and the infamous Ricci v. DeStefano case involving firefighters who had sued the mayor of New Haven, Connecticut for racial discrimination because of their "Hispanic and white ethnicity". The city had rejected the results of a "firefighter-promotion" test because of the number of whites that had outscored blacks and Hispanics. City officials tossed out the tests results to prevent bias lawsuits against them for discriminating against minorities who did not

"qualify for elevation" (Biskupic). According to the 2009 article "Firefighter Case May Keep Sotomayor in Hot Seat" Joan Biskupic indicates, "The case offers a test of overlapping antidiscrimination laws, as well as of how judges handle incendiary disputes over racial policies. Federal law bars both intentional discrimination and indirect bias from seemingly neutral exams

that disproportionately hurt women or minorities." The fireman case became controversial when Sotomayor had appeared against the white firefighters, who did not receive the promotion that they felt that they deserved for passing the (2003) exams explains O'Neil. When Ricci and the other firefighters appealed to the U.S Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, Sotomayor was on the panel of judges. Ricci's lawyer asked the judges to be sympathetic toward his client for being dyslexic and for being able to pass the exam because of how hard he studied for it. After a vote of 6-7 the panel of judges decided against a rehearing for the civil suit against the city of New Haven. In her article "The Sotomayor Mystery," Emily Bazelon discusses how many people were concerned that Sotomayor was not sensitive toward many of the white working class firefighters that were involved in this lawsuit against New Haven. In the article "Judging Sonia Sotomayor: Nomination ignites pride and stereotypes," the author Cheris Hodges states that Senator Jeff sessions of Alabama told the Associated Press how the Ricci vs Destefano case would be revisited so that Sotomayor could explain why she favored New Haven instead of the white firefighters. Sessions stated, "This case will only raise more questions in the minds of the American people concerning Judge Sotomayor's commitment to treat each individual fairly and not as a member of a group" (Hodges). According to O'Neil, Sotomayor expressed her sympathies toward Ricci and the other firefighters. Sotomayor would be questioned about the way she handled a case of different races. She would be questioned on her decision to vote against white firefighters pleas for a civil suit against New Haven.

Senators Moynihan and D'Amato were both said to have had a role in Sotomayor's appointment as U.S District Court Judge for the Southern District of New York (Emerit; Gitlin et al). President George H. W. Bush nominated Sotomayor for her position in 1992, and she was confirmed unanimously by the U.S senate in August 11, 1992. These cases mentioned were revisited at Sotomayor's confirmation hearings in 2009, in order to base judgments on

Sotomayor's ability as a reputable and fair judge. She would have to demonstrate how she can act as an impartial judge. However it is important to note that "When she joined the court, she was the youngest judge in the Southern District, the first Hispanic Judge in the State of New York, and the first Puerto Rican to serve in the federal court system," (Emert 47).

This last point is an especially important accomplishment for Latinas who have not been portrayed positively in the public over the past 30 years, a point which we will later revisit in this thesis. If all this controversy was not enough, on October 3, 1998, she was elevated to the U.S Second Circuit of Appeals by President William Clinton. She was confirmed by a 68 to 28 vote of the U.S Senate. According to Emert and Gitlin, Sotomayor was the first Latina woman to be nominated for all levels of Judiciary, a moment that marks the progress of history for both a woman and a Latina. From 1993 until 1999 Judge Carmen Consuelo Cerezo was the only Hispanic woman on Federal District Court for Puerto Rico. The article "Statistics on the Integration of the Federal Judiciary" states that "Latinos comprised 2% of about 60,000 sitting federal and state judges in 1997… In 2001 Latinos represented approximately 4.5% of the U.S. district court judges... Also, in 2001 Latino judges for the U.S. courts of appeal consisted of almost 7%". The 2013 article "Women in the Federal Judiciary: Still a Long Way to Go" states:

> Of President Obama's 239 judicial nominees to date (including his nominees to the Supreme Court), 102 are women. Thirty-seven of these nominees have been women of color (18 African-American women, 10 Hispanic women, seven Asian-American women, one woman of Hispanic and Asian descent, and one woman of African-American and Hispanic descent)… The number of women of color on the federal bench has increased dramatically as well. The number of Asian-American women judges has quadrupled, and includes the first Asian-American circuit court judge. Seven states have their first African-American female judges, and three states have their first Hispanic female judge.

These numbers suggest that the percentage of Latinos who have succeeded in achieving judicial careers in the United States is quite low. During her time as an appellate Judge, Sotomayor was

well known for her tough ruling on the bench. There are testimonies made by others that state how Sotomayor took her work very seriously and how she expected lawyers to be prepared and knowledgeable to argue their cases effectively under her supervision. The next step for Sotomayor would be her nomination to the Supreme Court. Although Sotomayor received acclamation for her work she received criticism by Republicans and the media who have called her a liberal judge and a racist. As a result of some negative assumptions about Latinos and Latinas, I intend to explore whether Sotomayor's political position was almost taken from her because of her Puerto Rican background.

VI.What is Latinidad?

In this section I will discuss briefly theories studied by several literary scholars to better understand the meaning and use of the terms stereotyping, ethnicity, and *Latinidad* which I will use throughout this research. In the book *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States*, Clara Rodríguez indicates "Under-representation in itself leads to misrepresentation of Hispanics, and negative perceptions of "ethnic Other" cause many ethnic others to question their identity and experience difficulty defining themselves" (6). The expression ethnic "Other" utilized here by Rodríguez stems from the 1980's and 1990's when the United States Census Bureau office asked people to categorize themselves as white, black, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or "other" in order to identify their race in the category box on their background (Rodríguez 5-7). According to my research Latinos' ability to choose Hispanic as their sole race was often limited when given the opportunity to identify their ethnicity on state applications or tests. Latinos had to select "other race" to identify their ethnicity (Rodríguez; Alcoff). Rodríguez points out in her book how challenging it is to pinpoint an

individual's ethnicity based on these tests since there are people that identify their ethnicity

through nationality, history, religious practice, and customs. According to several scholars, the

notion of ethnicity is different for many people. For instance, some Americans believe that a

person's ethnicity is based on genealogical and biological factors. On the other hand different

Hispanic groups view their own race differently depending on the country that they were born in.

According to several sources Latinos and Latinas base their ethnicity on their culture, nationality,

and social status (Rodríguez 5-11). Professor and literary scholar Linda Martín Alcoff makes

reference to theorist Angelo Corlett in her article, "Latinos and The Categories of Race" in

explaining the complex nature of distinguishing between race and ethnicity to identify with

Latinos. Alcoff states:

> Many argue that what better unites Latinos both across and even within our specific
> national cultures is not race or phenotype but precisely those features associated with
> culture: language, religious and familial traditions, cultural values, musical styles, and
> characteristics of comportment. The ethnicity paradigm denies that race applies to Latino
> identity because to be Latino is to belong to an ethnic group that encompasses different
> nationalities and races within it…Theorists such as Angelo Corlett defend this option on
> the grounds that the concept of ethnicity builds on cultural practices, customs, language,
> religion, and history, rather than the specious biological connotations of race. (Alcoff)

Author David Berrieby makes references to Clara Rodríguez's arguments and thoughts about

Latina identity in his 2000 article "Changing Race". Berrieby mentions that Rodríguez explains

in her essay, "Many people have a core identity, or a self, that is made up of multiple

identities…" (5). Berrieby makes reference to the way that Rodríguez identifies herself as, "a

light skinned Latina, with European features and hair texture ... born and raised in New York

City….whose first language is Spanish." Berrieby points out how a person's identity can change

according to the way a person is viewed by others according to their skin color. For example

Rodríguez discusses in her essay how in her South Bronx neighborhood her "natural tan" was

attractive while downtown it "was [considered] otherizing" (5). In the same way that Rodríguez's

identity was perceived by her skin color by others in her neighborhood, Sotomayor was stereotyped during her hearings for her Puerto Rican American background, and for making reference to her ethnicity in her *Wise Latina* speech. Sotomayor was considered incapable of being the next Supreme Court Justice for stating her own views about how identity is one of the variables that shapes a judge's rational decision making process on the bench. The stereotypes created about Sotomayor were based on the media's poor perception of Hispanics in the United States. According to Rodríguez our perceptions of race are different when we as a society determine who qualifies as white, ethnic other, and a minority. Sotomayor's physical appearance as an ethnic "other" and her Puerto Rican identity provoked unfavorable reactions among many American politicians." Alcoff states in her essay that Sotomayor was called "anti-American, a reverse racist, and a brown bigot…" by politicians and by radio host Rush Limbaugh (Sotomayors Reasoning 124). As a result of demonstrating her strengths, intelligence, and her own appreciation of her Latina identity, Sotomayor was stereotyped and criticized for what she believed would provide inspiration to others. The media's negative portrayal of Latinas also demonstrates their own racism about the meaning of *Latinidad* in the United States. This brings me in to my next discussion on the issues of stereotyping.

Stereotyping is a tool that individuals use to make generalizations about another ethnic group. Some people use stereotyping to make sense of the people or objects that they are unfamiliar with and are uncertain of and make assumptions based someone else's opinions. For example if someone sees a Latina eating Spanish food, they may come to the generalization that all Latinas eat Spanish food. One individual cannot present a "whole" population. Assumptions are used in generalization. The use of stereotyping has negatively affected our society's ability to understand ethnic groups including Latinas and their unique differences. In his study, "Stereotyping in Films in General and of the Hispanic in Particular", Charles Ramírez Berg

states, "in general everyone stereotypes" (105). Berg explains the way social psychologists have agreed that the general use of the term "is a basic cognitive process by which humans make sense of the world" (105). Berg refers to Walter Lippman's study (1991-1992) that offered another point of view to describe the use of stereotyping calling it "pictures in our heads" (105). Berg claims that when a person uses stereotyping as a hateful tool, it is then that the idea of stereotyping is offensive (105). A significant question that Berg poses in his study is the reason behind an individual's use of the stereotype and how it affects their everyday lives (105-106). It is clear then, according to Berg, that the use of stereotypes is the individual's understanding and placement of "Others into symbols", which we will later see in my analysis of the portrayals of Latinas on television shows.

In addition to Berg, Rodríguez argues in her book that stereotypes by the media and television have also directly influenced the way that Latinas view themselves by observing their identity through the lens of the media's negative portrayal. "One of the saddest aspects of stereotyping is that the out-group members [minorities] may begin to believe and accept that stereotype about themselves" (Berg 119). If stereotyping is a way for individuals to understand others and make sense of the world as both Berg and Lippman have asserted, then the news and television media will continue to misrepresent Latina ethnicity in their attempts to portray Hispanic culture. For instance, in her book, *From Bananas to Buttocks*, author Myra Mendible implies that the term Latino is multifaceted and states, "it's too complex to determine one way that we are to identify oneself as Latino/a" (5). Mendible indicates how stereotyping is used negatively to generalize that all Latinas are alike. She also states that the media and televisions use of it does not clearly explain all of the variations of Latinas from different historical and cultural backgrounds that live in the United States. Mendible notes:

> The term "*Latinidad,*" implicated in a history of U.S marketing and entertainment distortions of Latino/a Cultures has understandably met resistance from many Chicano and Latino critics. They have questioned the usefulness and effect of such labeling, for example, its tendency to homogenize peoples whose histories, language usage, and circumstances may differ significantly or to alienate U.S born Latinos, who may speak Spanish or share other identifying criteria (4).

In my view, Latinidad is a term used in the media as a way to generalize about all Latinas. According to Mendible, Latinidad is used as a label to understand Hispanics by placing them under the same category. For instance, often Americans are mistaken as to which national group a particular Latino/a group that they belong to: Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, or Cubans. Some are given the same ethnic physical characteristics to display them: short, brown skin tone, and indigenous facial features. In addition, some Americans believe that all Latinas listen to the same music, eat the same ethnic foods and are all Catholic. In a similar way that negative stereotypes were utilized to portray Sotomayor as being "hotheaded" and untrustworthy, many other Latinas are frequently described as "hot-headed" "calientes", criminals and/or emotionally unstable.

VI. Confirmation Hearings:

A majority of the objections to Sotomayor's confirmation as a Supreme Court judge were based on a series of accusations that we can trace back to instances of racism and discrimination derived from stereotypes coined in the representation of Latinas by the media and television. By 2009, in the context of the confirmation hearings Sotomayor's *Wise Latina* remark had created a lot of controversy, turning a reputable moment in history for Latinos into a tense event (Gitlin 54-57). On the first day of her hearing, Republican Jeff Sessions addressed her membership in the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, her district court case Ricci v. DeStefano, and her *Wise Latina* statement (Emerit; Gitlin; et al). Senator Congressman Sessions understanding of

the PRLDF is sparse at best. In his article "Human Rights Group at the Center of Sotomayor

Fight" Deepti Hajela describes how:

> Conservatives have called the group's stances on capital punishment and abortion rights,
> as well as its advocacy of affirmative action in worker discrimination cases, "extreme"
> and "shocking." Some have suggested Sotomayor's longtime association with the group is
> an indication that she is biased and would be unable to render impartial decisions as a
> Supreme Court justice. (Hajela 2009)

Hajeela also describes Senator Session's characterization of the PRLDF as "a group that has

taken some very shocking positions with respect to terrorism." Terry indicates, "The PRLDEF's

mission is to develop a more equitable society by creating opportunities for Latinos in areas

where they are traditionally underrepresented." In addition she states, "This organization's

purpose is to ensure that Latinos have the legal resources necessary to fully engage in civic life."

An article from the *Latino Justice's* online webpage titled "Four Decades of Protecting Latino

Rights" mentions "Latino Justice PRLDEF has profoundly improved the way Latinos are treated

in U.S. society, working to ensure that they have more opportunities for political, economic,

social and educational equality". Sotomayor was an active member within the PRLDEF for 12

years to promote equal opportunities for Puerto Ricans. It was right after that, that she became a

federal judge in 1992(Gitlin 91-92). Conservatives repeatedly criticized the PRLDF executive

director Cesar Perales as well as Sotomayor's involvement with the organization raising the

argument that her membership in the organization would lead to an extreme liberal pro-Hispanic

bias. Later, Sotomayor was asked to explain what she had meant in her speech at Berkeley by the

U.S Senate Committee on the Judiciary. She responded, " it was meant as a rhetorical flourish

that fell flat… it was bad, because it left an impression that life experiences commanded a result

in a case" (Emerit 63). Sotomayor was also accused of using her own personal views in her

decision making on the Ricci v. Destefano case instead of basing them on evidence and facts.

(Gitlin 78-79). Sessions expressed his concerns and fears that her *Wise Latina* statement was more than unfortunate one time "rhetorical flourish." The senator confided his fears saying, "I am troubled… that you would repeatedly over a decade make such statements" (Emerit 82). Many of the same politicians that questioned Sotomayor's involvement with the PRLDEF belong to a number of associations with clear ideological agendas and none of them sees that as a hindrance to their career, but as an asset. Similarly the *Wise Latina* statement could be read in several ways. The word "wise" implies old white men. The word "Latina" people associate with empty headed sensuality. By placing these categories together Sotomayor is questioning herself about both the "Latina" and the "wise" stereotypes. When senators read about Sotomayor's "wise" Latina statement many took it as a criticism of white male figures by a Latina woman, someone who cannot be seen as "hot" nor as "wise".

As a result the context of the hearings there were many additional cruel and stereotypical comments made about Sotomayor by politicians, radio hosts, and the media to politicize her as being biased. First, Sotomayor was known as being tough and "hot-tempered" while working with lawyers in the Justice system (Gitlin 79). A second article by Cheris Hodges, "Judging Sonia Sotomayor: Nomination Ignites Pride and Stereotypes, " indicates "…since her name was first announced, she's been the subject of discussion, debate and scrutiny; discussion, debate and scrutiny that has, for the most part, been dominated by old white men — despite the fact that race and sex are central to the talk about her historic nomination." Hodges also states "To cable networks like Fox News, which has lined up numerous pundits to question the judge and her qualifications, Sotomayor is a liberal "activist judge" who can't control her emotions." Several right wing-politicians and radio hosts called her a racist while other critics, such as Michael Wolf, called her a lesbian in his article from the *New York Daily News* titled, "Is Sonia Sotomayor

Gay." Professor and scholar Linda Martín Alcoff indicates how radio host Rush Limbaugh announced that, "he was going to send her [Sotomayor] a vacuum cleaner so she can clean up after the Supreme Court meeting" (3). Conservative Republican Newt Gingrich wrote on his twitter, "Imagine a judicial nominee said, "my experience as a white man makes me better than a Latina woman…White man racist nominee would be forced to withdraw, Latina woman racist should also withdraw" according to Huma Kahn's in his 2009 article "Newt Gingrich on Twitter: Sonia Sotomayor 'Racist', Should Withdraw". Later on, Gingrich admitted that his statement was too harsh and added, "The wise Latina speeches reveal a betrayal of a fundamental principle of the American system-that everyone is equal before the law" (Emerit78-79).

In the (2009) CNN documentary *Latinos in America*, journalist Soledad O'Brien reported the struggles of Latino life in present day America. The documentary was intended to teach Americans about Hispanic culture and Latino life in the United States but on a positive note. However, the documentary failed to capture an accurate representation of Latino's living in the United States. In her article "Soledad O'Brien explores Latino experience, mixed-race heritage" O'Brien discusses about making the documentary:

> It was clear that the community felt starved for good solid coverage. No one asked me to do a snow job. Just please don't reduce us to crime, immigration and racial conflicts, they asked. Folks just didn't want to see their community hurt anymore and were very blunt about it…Over and over, I was asked to please report on the people who are so often ignored, the Latinos who do not reflect the "illegal alien" who crosses the border "to steal American jobs. (O'Brien)

Many Latinos requested that Soledad demonstrate an honest portrayal in her documentary about their community and culture. In many people's opinions Soledad O'Brien failed to represent Hispanics accurately. In fact viewers in the Latino community complained that O'Brien portrayed Latinos as dangerous and crime ridden illegal immigrants. One viewer stated that the

documentary actually generated even more stereotypes about Hispanics. In a statement on

O'Brien's website on *CNN.com*. The viewer states:

> I personally think that no matter what your race may be it will always be very difficult to document your culture, your traditions, your struggles, and your success in two days. This showed a "stereotypical" Latino, but that is just a stereotype!…This whole thing going on about Latinos taking from the government, like Food Stamps, or Insurance like Medicaid, or some other just to let you know Latinos aren't the only ones who stand in lines for those services. I hear many people saying that Illegal or undocumented Latinos need to go back to their country, well they don't come here to take your jobs, or to take your money, they come here for a better life for their families.("Latino in America" CNN.com)

Another viewer complained how Dominicans were being represented as being something other

than Dominican:

> I think the young Dominicans had issues with what most people viewed them. Like most people, if their family is Latino, individuals want to review them as Mexican, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Cubans, Dominicans not African Americans. Latinos/Hispanics include individuals who are European, Aztec, Mayan, Inca, Caribbean, African, Asian, Pacific Islander and or Native American racial/ethnic origins. Even Mexico has a group of Afro-Mexicans located in La Costa Chica, Mexicans of African descent. ("Latino in America"CNN.com)

Before the documentary aired on television, famous Latina actress Lupe Ontiveros asked

O'Brien's producer to talk positively about Latinos in their documentary. O'Brien mentions in

her own article that Ontiveros asked her bluntly in Spanish, "Por favor no nos jodan" (Please, just

don't f—us). The intended point here is that negative stories about Latinas are very common in

America by the media. These portrayals of Hispanics negatively impact not only Hispanics views

of themselves, but to a larger extent the image of Hispanics in America to non-Latino Americans.

Soledad O'Brien is one of the Latinas that has fallen into the same role as the media to depict

Latinas and Latinos negatively to American audiences. As Lippman noted in his study, O'Brien's

documentary is the perfect example of how the media can create a negative image of Latinos that

even people of Hispanic heritage can begin to believe and perpetuate. Since 2012 Soledad

O'Brien has been the anchor for the CNN morning show "Starting Point" and has worked at the

network since 2003. Her full name is María de la Soledad Teresa O'Brien. Her mother is Cuban

of Afro descent and her father is part Irish and Scottish from Australia. O'Brien's documentary

demonstrates the challenges that Latinas face in the hands of the media and television to portray

their lives accurately. Her negative portrayal of her own culture reflects the trend of news media

and culture falling back on stereotypes of Hispanics when presenting them to a viewing audience.

From my point of view the documentary adds to the stereotypical stories already told by the

media and television; and represents only one individuals own perspective about culture and

ethnicities. The false assumptions created by O'Brien's documentary are similar to the criticisms

that Sotomayor received from her speech.

Sotomayor's views in her *Wise Latina* speech were obviously not taken very well by

politicians, especially Republicans, or the media. In a number of articles Sotomayor was

criticized for it and she was also called a bully for being aggressive and outspoken towards

lawyers (Media Matters). Rush Limbaugh was quoted in *Media Matters* calling Sotomayor a

reverse racist using the same words to describe President Obama, according to Tommy

Christopher in his article "Rush Limbaugh Calls Sonia Sotomayor, President Obama 'Racists."

Limbaugh stated, "So here you have a racist…you might want to say a reverse racist... Obama is

the greatest living example of a reverse racist, and now he's appointed one (Christopher 1). Noel

Sheppard writes in her article "Pat Buchanan and Rachel Maddow Debate Sonia Sotomayor"

about Limbaugh and his views about Sotomayors nomination in an interview that he had on the

Rachel Maddow Show. According to Buchanan Sotomayor's nomination was a way to use

affirmative action against white male politicians. Buchanan states:

I don't think Judge Sonia Sotomayor is qualified for the United States Supreme Court. She has not shown any great intellect here or any great depth of knowledge of the Constitution… I do believe she's an affirmative action appointment by the president of the United States. He eliminated everyone but four women and then he picked the Hispanic.

Maddow then asks Buchanan what affirmative action had meant to him. He notes, "Affirmative action is to increase diversity by discriminating against white males" (Sheppard). This sentiment is not only gender related, it is also heavily race related and demonstrates Buchanan's own fears of women and minorities becoming appointed in leadership roles. In the rest of her interview, Maddow points out how Buchanan displays sexist views about women in power. As a result of these negative one-sided views about the nominee, Sotomayor's statement was taken as being highly offensive by a section of American politicians and of the American public. Not only was she called a racist, Sotomayor was also not accepted by Americans on her nomination process because of the way that Puerto Ricans are viewed in the United States. According to Richie Pérez's essay "From Assimilation to Annihilation: Puerto Rican Images in U.S. Films" makes reference to a study by Meyer Weinberg (1977) based on the notion of Puerto Ricans as problem people. Pérez states:

Americans believed "that the men carry knives and use them unrestrainedly, that all Puerto Ricans are ignorant, unintelligent and stupid because they do not speak English; that they are colossal liars, that they are very temperamental and hot-headed; that the island is infested with disease and that the Puerto Ricans are clannish.(Rodriguez 146)

There are many Chicana and Latina authors in the United States who have dedicated their professional lives to write about the complex nature of *Latinidad* (what it means to be Latino) in America. Chicana writers like Gloria Andalzúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Rosa Linda Fregoso, have dedicated years to studying racism, stereotyping, sexism, and discrimination issues on *Latinidad* and women of color in America. Based on their theories about ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality, they explain the complexity of understanding *Latinidad* and what Latinas and Latinos symbolize to Americans. As a result of their own cultural and personal histories as Chicanas

43

living in the U.S. it was difficult for Anzaldúa, Moraga, and Fergoso to find an authentically pure, ethnic identity of their own. For this reason they did not expect non-Latinos to understand what either of these authors wrote about when describing their experiences as Chicanas to explain what it is to be a Latina. In the book *Queer Latinidad* Juana María Rodríguez utilizes Anzaldúa's "mestiza consciousness" theory, which I will discuss later in chapter two, to describe the term *Latinidad.* She states "Latinidad is about the dimensions or the directions in motion of the history Latino culture and the geography and language of the self-named identity… It is a constant process of translation and transformation, a movement through and against sites of knowledge"(María-Rodríguez). According to María-Rodríguez, *Latinidad* is complex and there is no one way to determine its meaning. Anzaldúa uses her mestiza consciousness theory as way to identify with her Chicana background and lesbianism. She refers to the way that her identity is constantly changing according to the way she views herself and the way others perceive her in different social settings. From a feminist perspective, some would agree that Sotomayor was being discriminated against on the basis of Latinas' low socio-economic positioning in the United States for relating to her Puerto Rican background in her *Wise Latina* speech. She was being judged and criticized because of the way that Latinos are perceived in America based on their history. From a *Newyorkrican* (a Puerto Rican from New York) and Latina perspective, some would say that Sotomayor was simply identifying with her ethnic background to inspire Puerto Ricans and Latinas who do not feel they have the potential to achieve their goals**.** Latina identity is too complex in nature to determine one sole identity, mainly because of the many different regions and histories that these women come from. Author Rosa Linda Fregoso studies Mexican and Chicana ethnicities in her book *Mexican Encounters*. She brings into focus the life of the Mexican *maquila* factory worker and explains how many of them continue to be misrepresented and portrayed as prostitutes. *Señorita* Maquiladora is a label given to these women by their supervisors during their annual beauty contest. It implies that they should "dress flashy" and that they appear cheap next to their American Chicana sisters from the Mexican border explains Fregoso. The women who live in the Mexican region of Ciudad Juárez have a long history of being represented as hyper-sexual beings who tend towards promiscuous behavior**.** Fregoso

explains how these women were often killed and mistreated because of their low economic and social status and also for being accused of living "la doble vida" (a double life). She continues to explain that the female maquiladora workers were victims mostly because of the belief that they were displaying themselves as hyper-sexual beings. Fregoso indicates:

> …the large measure of maquila workers as "prostitutes" is part of a much longer history of othering practices derived from colonialist fantasies about the border as a zone of "sexual excess" and border women as "culturally bound to sexual chaos"…It is an old colonialist (and now neocolonialist) narrative indeed, this construction of Mexicanas on the border in terms of sexual excess chaos.(Fregoso 11).

Mexican American style of dress is compared to the "Señorita maquiladora" in order to address their class difference. Journalist Debbie Nathans explains how the images produced from the styles of dress by the Mexicana "are part of a way to generalize about this group and describe their social lives along the border." Clothes are used to objectify la maquiladora representing her as sexual and of low class. In reference to María-Rodríguez and Anzaldúa, clothing is used to generalize the maquiladora to understand the complexity of their representation. It is misconceptions like these that make challenging to understand the nature of what defines a Latina**.** According to Nathan the border represents a place of excess, violence, prostitution, drugs, and contraband which reflects the Mexican popular imagery about the maquiladoras (Nathan qtd in Fregoso 12). She explains how the Northern region of Mexico was once a place of "vice and degeneracy" indicates Fregoso. The sexual images of the *maquila* worker are all based on assumptions made by history which has circulated into the public in order to understand this class of women. The false imagery of the Mexican "maquiladora" has made its way into popular television shows, *telenovelas*, and films to represent border women (13). The point here is that images alone used to portray Mexicanas and Chicanas to understand the *maquila* worker in its entirety are based on subjective opinions, the person telling the story. Mexican women in Fregoso's study are portrayed in a discriminatory way according to their class positioning and

past lives in American history. These negative images of maquiladoras are old views of Mexicanas and they do not display the true economic and social changes that *maquila* women are experiencing in present day, argues Fregoso.

In addition to Anzaldúa, Moraga and Fregoso, Clara Rodriguez argues in her book *Latin Looks* about the challenges that Latinas face today to prevent media and television from utilizing the same images to represent all Latinas for whom, "we all look the same"(6). From another perspective, literary scholar Isabel Molina-Guzmán goes into detail in her book *Dangerous Curves* how the "Latina body" is one element that Americans identify with *Latinidad.* Myra Mendible states, "The Latina body is a convenient fiction-a historically contingent, massproduced combination of myth, desire, location, marketing and political expedience" (1). According to Andalzúa, Moraga, Fregoso, Mendible, Rodríguez, and Guzmán Latinas have been portrayed as tropicalized and exoticized visual representations (Guzmán; Mendible).

The idea of placing women next to men in powerful positions is not favored by some Americans and continues to be an issue in the U.S. The controversies that circulated in the media about Sotomayor's speech were based on stereotypes and on her Latina background and role as a woman. The fact that more women are gaining higher level and more powerful positions next to their male-counterparts is not favored among some American politicians, raising the issue of sexism. For instance Hillary Clinton received a lot of criticism by the media claiming that she would not be an effective senator because she was a woman. The reason is that sexism continues to be an issue in the United States. According to Darren Lenard Hutchinson's article titled "Dissenting Justice" and *Feminist Choice* 2009 article "Big Boys Don't Cry: Gender Stereotyping & Sonia Sotomayor" mentions how women in power that display their strong side come off as being mean and bullies. Hutchinson states:

A persistent and ubiquitous gender stereotype portrays smart and aggressive women as domineering, mean, nasty bitches. This stereotype explains much of the negative treatment that Hillary Clinton received during her presidential campaign. Media commentators -- including so-called liberals such as Keith Olbermann and Chris Matthews -- described Clinton with sexist language that would likely result a finding of sex discrimination if companies used it to evaluate women employees.

In spite of women's roles in society changing every day, women still continue to be viewed as second class citizens when demonstrating strength and authority next to men. Sotomayor's strong minded skills and intelligence could be a threat to men that want to remain powerful leaders. As Berg has stated in his essay, stereotyping is a tool used by one group to dominate over another social group because,

When groups see themselves as opposed, competing for the same resources, sub-ordinate groups may view the dominant group as cold, exploiting, cruel, and arrogant. If either group senses that the other is threatening its resources, the descriptive terminology becomes more severely derogatory: "aggressive," "brutal," "corrupt. (107)

In Sotomayors confirmation hearings the judge's experience was driven by stereotypes generated by the media. She was called a racist for being affiliated with the PRLDF. She was accused as being an unfair judge for not showing her support of white and black firefighters in the Ricci vs. Distefano case in New Haven. Sotomayor was also assumed unable to control her emotions while working on the bench and was accused for having a "hot" temper.

VI. Affirmative Action:

In the book *Sonia Sotomayor* Phyllis Emert refers to Barrett's and Bash's explanation of the way that Sotomayor made references in a series of 2003 speeches, on how gender and ethnicity can influence a judge's decision. Barrett and Bash mention that this included the speech that she had given at Berkeley (Emert 77-78). Sotomayor was misunderstood for being honest

about women having their own opinions, and was discriminated against by the media based on her ethnicity and expected role as a woman. I believe that Sotomayor's intentions were positive because she was validating the life experiences of Latinas, a set of skills that are commonly derided and made invisible. By identifying and having empathy for others, Sotomayor has explained that it is one tool that she uses to be a fair judge. In an article called "Racism, Sexism and the Significance of Sotomayor" Adia Harvard Wingfield states:

> Young people need to see someone like themselves in positions of power to help them see that their options are plentiful and far-ranging. Though I think there is some merit to that claim.

I agree with Harvard Wingfield that there are not many role models such as Sotomayor to inspire women and Latinas. It is clear that many politicians and members of the news media took offense at Sotomayor's speech in which they claim was based on her opinions, her gender role, and her physical features. Sotomayor's position as a minority to become the next Supreme Court Justice has been viewed negatively based on portrayals of Latinas by the media. I believe that the judgments made about Sotomayor as a bully by white men were used to portray her as a racist, which is an inaccurate representation based on stereotypes of Latinas. Clara Rodriguez makes reference to Wilson and Gutiérrez's (1995) study, *Race, Multiculturalism and the Media* in noting that:

> We live in a media-oriented society, and because media often serve an entertainment function, we may be lulled into passively accepting the images projected as mirrors of real life and of people. (5)

It is evident that negative portrayals of Hispanics by the media have added to public opinion about Sotomayor.

VII. Remembering her Latina Roots:

One of the things that Sotomayor felt was most important as a judge was remembering who she was and where she came from. In fact, in a series of speeches from 1994-2009, prior to her nomination by President Barack Obama, Sotomayor made references to her experience as a Puerto Rican working as a judge, and explained how it has made her the professional woman that she is today. One fact about Sotomayor is that she knows how to connect with people. As a child of immigrant parents growing up in an impoverished neighborhood in the Bronx, Sonia showed that she can relate to people who have also struggled life's hardships due to their low economic position, ethnicity and race. Sotomayor is a great example of a person starting out with nothing who then rose to the top driven by her ambitions, hard work, and her determination. By facing her challenges Sotomayor is stronger and able to deal with any obstacle that gets in her way. She has demonstrated that she takes her work very seriously and has emphasize in several interviews that a judge should be impartial and not base judgments on personal experiences or biases while working on the bench (Emerit 83). In a speech given during her nomination on May 26 after her nomination, Sotomayor explains the way experiences can contribute to her role as a judge:

> The wealth of experiences personal and professional has helped me appreciate the variety of perspectives that present themselves in every case that I hear. It has helped me to understand, respect, and respond to concerns and arguments of all litigants who appear before me, as well as to the views of my colleagues on the bench. (Gitlin 72)

There were two requests made by President Barack Obama to Sotomayor after he nominated her to be the next Supreme Court Justice. The first, one was to "remain the person that she was" and the second was to "remain connected to her community" (Emerit 75). In order for Sotomayor to feel connected and closer to her community, her family and friends she continued remembering her Latina roots. She describes herself as a *Nuyorican* (Newyorkrican), "she is a born New

Yorker of Puerto Rican born parents who came to the United States during World War II"
(Gitlin 117). Sonia Sotomayor is an American Puerto Rican. She is physically short in height, has
dark curly hair, and has indigenous facial features. She also possesses the stereotypical Latina
look of olive or brown skin complexion. She represents another Latina identity that can be used
to understand the concept of *Latinidad.* Sotomayor is an assimilated Latina and practices the
values and the customs of an American and a Puerto Rican. Sotomayor continues to celebrate her
Latin culture's traditions by eating rice and *gandules* (beans) and listening to salsa and merengue
music. She is the Latin American woman that she is because of her up-bringing, her personal
experiences and the way that she chooses to live as a *Nuyorican* a New York Puerto Rican with
American values. One way she connects to her American culture is by attending Yankee games
with her friends and family. Presently, Sotomayor is living in Washington D.C where she is
working as the first Hispanic female Supreme Court Judge. Sotomayor, originally lived in
Greenwich Village, New York. She spends most of her time working and sharing quality time
with her family and friends. Stories as inspiring as these are seldom told about Latinas by the
media.

I see Sotomayor's personal life and history as the stepping stones that have made her the
first Latina Supreme Judge. By taking a look at Sotomayor's background, we see how she has
made herself who she is because she has ambition, goals, and dreams. It was not Sotomayor's
Latina looks that got her to where she is today, but her intelligence, her passion to learn, her
history as a Puerto Rican and American citizen. Sotomayor's role models Nancy Drew and Perry
Mason, her childhood growing up in the Bronx are what influenced to become a great lawyer and
judge. Her ability to handle difficult trials and her commitment to do her best are a couple of ways
that we can learn about Sotomayor's identity. By the time Sotomayor was nominated as a candidate

for Supreme Court Justice in 2009 she had already achieved experience in every area that dealt with the law.

Sotomayor knew that as a judge she was responsible to follow and obey the law and be an impartial judge. The Democrats that supported her all agreed that Sotomayor had a compelling story to share with American society. According to Manu Raju in *Politico Washington,* Senate majority leader Harry Reid had stated to Sotomayor, "I think your story is so compelling. Americans identify with the underdog and you have been an underdog so many times in your life." He continued, "Everyone in America, I want them to understand that we have the whole package here…her background is very significant we could not have anyone better qualified" (Raju 1-2).

In a statement at a Law School forum in Chicago in January 2011, Sotomayor said "people have views of me and expectations of me that are based on stereotypes". I believe that media and television have had difficulty accepting a positive role model such as Sotomayor's because of the negative portrayal of Latinas in the United States. It is true that there aren't enough positive Latina representatives in American Society and now that we have one in Sotomayor, society does everything it can to prevent her from becoming well-known as a powerful political model. If the United States is founded on the ideal that all Americans should have equal opportunities, I wonder how much of that statement is really true after witnessing negative remarks about Sotomayor by the media.

As a result of Sotomayor's *Wise Latina* speech she has received bad reputation with some American audiences and Republican politicians. Her speech was initially a way for Sotomayor to express how personal experiences affect the facts that judges choose to see. Her statement was taken negatively and was based on racist views by Sotomayor when it comes to being a judge. As

Sotomayor put it, "some people are limited in their ability to understand the experiences of others, and others simply do not care" (Alcoff 123). "What is a Wise Latina" was intended to influence Latino students and future lawyers in a positive way so that they could see the real value of the influence of people experiences using her own experience as a model.

The daughter of immigrant Puerto Rican parent's, and an American citizen herself, Sotomayor's personal life story and her academic background offers a promising future for Latina women that feel that their options in the United States are limited. Sotomayor has demonstrated through determination and commitment to education and her work, Latinas can contribute their skills to American Society. Although, Sotomayor received acclamation for her work she continues to be criticized by Republicans and the media for being a liberal judge and for this reason have called her a "racist".

Therefore, I am interested to find out whether these criticisms and stereotypes of Sotomayor were influenced by the way Latinas are portrayed in American television and the media. In the next chapter I will analyze misrepresentations of Latinas through network television and media portrayals.

Chapter Two: Latina Stereotypes in America's Popular Television Shows

In this chapter I will analyze the representation of Latina femininity in two popular television series *Modern Family* and *Ugly Betty.* These shows were produced between 2004 and 2009 the time period that Sotomayor worked on the Second Circuit as a judge and lasting through the congressional hearings of her nomination as Supreme Court Justice. This time frame marks a special transitional period in Latina history as many Latinas managed to step into highly visible professional positions as movie actresses, television hosts, journalists, authors, and political figures. As a result of Sotomayor's nomination for Supreme Court Justice and the increased population of Hispanics in the U.S more Latinas are applying to colleges to seek careers in a variety of professional field's. According to *The Center for American Progress Fund* "there were 14.4 million Latinas living in the United States in 2008. Their survey also states that, "73 percent of Latinas completed high school in 2006" versus 63 percent of Latin men" and "31 percent of college-age Latinas were enrolled in college in 2008 versus 21 percent of college–age Latino men" (The Center For American Progress Fund 2008). Projecting forward from these data, *The Center for American Process Fund* claims that 61 percent of Latinas that will have professional careers by 2020. Despite the statistics showing Latinas rising presence in American culture, they are still often portrayed on television by a very reductive set of ethnic stereotypes.

I will use Sonia Sotomayor's case analyzed in chapter one to set up a contrast between, on the one hand the life of a "real" Latina and her representation by the media, and, on the other hand, the portrayal of "fictional" Latina characters in two contemporary popular TV series. These shows make it difficult for Latinas to rise above the negative portrayals inherent in the characterization of fictional Latinas but they also offer "acceptable" models of *Latinidad* to some of their American viewers. The goal in this section is to discuss the way fictional characters like Gloria Delgado

Pritchett (Sofía Vergara) and Betty Suárez (America Ferrara) are socially accepted by the American audience, while successful professional models such as Sonia Sotomayor, a real life Latina representative, have more limited acceptance.

I. **Modern Family:**

The first season of this comedy series aired between September 23, 2009 and May 19, 2010 on ABC in the United States. The series focuses on the character Jay Pritchett (Ed O'Neil), and his family. Jay is a middle aged, wealthy business owner and remarried to a younger Colombian woman named Gloria Delgado Pritchett (Sofía Vergara). Jay is helping Gloria raise her pre-teen son Manny (Rico Rodríguez). This show gained instant popularity and critical praise from its first airing. It received a Metacritic score of 86 in its first season. The article "Critical Acclaim: Modern Family" by Joel Keller indicates that many critics considered it the best show of 2009. *Modern Family* was nominated for fourteen Emmy Awards; eight Primetime Emmy Awards and six creative Arts Emmy Awards (IMDb.com). Today, *Modern Family* continues to be a popular television series for the American audience, typically for the portrayal of the characters, their imperfections and their underlying good nature that add to the variety of comic situations in the everyday life of this dysfunctional family.

The show's main purpose is to present American contemporary life as steeped-in diversity. The series offers a true portrayal of Latinas' and their presence into mainstream culture, but not as a true portrayal of Latinas in real life. The overtly sexy Gloria Delgado and her loud obnoxious voice, clueless sense of humor and thickened Colombian accent seems more easily accepted by the public and critics as a representation of Latinas than Sonia Sotomayor, an intelligent woman who does not present herself in accordance with the stereotypical images of a desirable Latina. Sexy

stereotypes are commonly used to represent Latinas. The portrayal of fictional Latinas on television imposes a greater impact on American audiences than on Hispanic ones. In the article, "Modern Family Grows UP", Rose Lacey states that, "the ABC show *Modern Family* has about 13 million viewers that tune into its show each week" (Lacey 1). She also adds, "Modern Family racked in 164 million in spot ad revenue in 2011 making it the second most lucrative comedy behind only *Two and a Half Men*" (Kanta Media cited in Lacey 1). According to *Modern Family's* fan website its viewership was highest amongst adults between the ages "18-49". In the article "Networks Struggle to Appeal to Hispanics" from the *New York Times*, Tanzina Vega mentions how *Modern Family* is not a favorite show with Hispanic viewers. Vega states:

> Out of its overall viewership of 12.9 million [the show] drew an average of only about 798,000 Hispanic viewers in the season. That audience accounts for only 6 percent of the shows viewers-less than half of what you might expect given the 48 million television viewers Nielsen measures" (Networks Struggle to appeal to Hispanics).

According to Vega, Hispanics prefer to watch television shows that provide better representations of Latinas and Latina culture as in *telenovelas* (Spanish soap operas). Also, Vega claims that Hispanics would rather watch television shows that are in Spanish.

Throughout the show, there are many times that Gloria demonstrates her inability to speak English correctly. This repeatedly encourages other members of her family to mock her. It's funny to watch Gloria's lack of patience spin out of control. Her native Spanish often gets twisted with her English making her sound incomprehensible. Out of frustration Gloria reacts impulsively and badmouths Jay, embarrassing him and her-self when they are in public. Gloria's relationship with the other characters on the show is also entertaining to watch unfold because she appears to get easily frustrated and uses her "hot Latina" temper against those that get in her way. These tantrums are presented as entertaining for the audience, but at the same time they cast Gloria as a "hot" Latina" stereotype, this is, as sexy, irascible, dimwitted, and capricious.

I find it ironic that the character Gloria Delgado makes Sofía Vergara one of the most desirable Latinas in Hollywood; portraying her as a positive representative of Latinas unlike the news media portrayal of Sonia Sotomayor. In his article "Sonia Sotomayor: Obama's Bad Choice", Stephen R. Maloney shares some of the negative comments produced as a result of Sotomayor's tough rulings as a judge. For example he mentions, "She is a terror on the bench…She is very outspoken…She is temperamental…She seems angry…She is overly aggressive- not very judicial" (Maloney). Sotomayor is also called an egomaniac and a narcissist by Maloney. By contrast, the character Gloria Delgado, who truly embodies many of the same characteristics attributed to Sotomayor by Maloney, has positioned Sofía Vergara as one of the hottest Latina stars in Hollywood and as a beloved personality of the Latino world according to her biography on the ABC shows website. The bio states, "When she pursued her career in the United States she became one of the few Hispanic Stars to find crossover success on American television." This popularity has translated in a number of high profile commercial sponsorships. Vergara, for example, is the spokesperson for Diet Pepsi commercials, and has helped promote State Farm Insurance Company products. She has appeared on the covers of *Esquire*, *Cover Girl*, and *Allure* magazines. In my opinion, Sofía's character as Gloria Delgado Pritchett has given a negative impression that all Latinas resemble her sexy, flirtatious Colombian bombshell and Barbie doll image. I believe that some Americans view women that are funny as nonthreatening, and for this reason Gloria's character is better received than the strong and outspoken personality of Sotomayor. Sotomayor's being received as tough and too aggressive is symptomatic of a larger issue of men in high standing positions feeling threatened by stronger women. Berg makes reference to Mulvey' who discusses female stereotypes as a result of their supposed place in the dominant system in his study "Film theory and criticism: Introductory readings". Mulvey (1985) states:

Woman…stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bounded by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.(*Latin Looks* 112).

Gloria is also a favorite among American viewers because of her predictability as a female character. One expects Gloria to mess up and make silly mistakes as a result of her lack of common sense. Rather than play a stereotyped ditzy American blonde she plays the ditzy Latina woman. This mockery made about Gloria not only pokes fun of her *Latinidad* but it is also criticizes her role as a feminine character giving her less power and rank within the Pritchett family. *Modern Family* does not portray Latin women as intelligent and powerful and who resemble Sonia Sotomayor.

In preparation for her role in *Modern Family*, Sofía Vergara was made to dye her blonde hair darker for the role as Gloria so that she could resemble more of a traditional Hispanic character (Huff Post Entertainment, 2010). The idea of actresses changing their appearances for Latina roles is a tool used by Hollywood as a way to create images that are more appealing and profitable for today's producers according to literary scholar Isabel Molina-Guzmán in her book *Dangerous Curves.* She states, "Latina celebrities' refusal or desire to lighten and straighten their hair or to transform their bodies to be more profitable, successful, and consumable illustrates the complex nature of docility and discipline" (12). Some Americans assume that Latinas all have dark features and dark hair. The darker a Latin woman is the more ethnic and foreign she appears. The assumption that all Latinas are dark skinned and have dark hair is a false representation of Latinas since many of them have light features, skin, and hair color.

Alternatively, the show positively portrays Gloria as a very passionate and energetic individual who enjoys life and being a loving and supportive mother to her son Manny. Gloria has

the most optimistic life- view amongst the cast of characters, while her husband Jay and his children confront life with cynicism, are set in their ways, and go through life unable to provide affection to one another. Some may say that in his traditional family set-up Jay's main responsibility to the family is to be a provider, not a nurturer. He does not take the role of a parent as seriously as she does. In fact he gets irritated when Gloria asks for his help. *Modern Family* is mocking how American fathers are not emotional and are too busy to spend time with their families because they are overworked. Jay is portrayed as the stereotypical "ugly" American dad who only got lucky to marry his young wife because of his wealth. The initial set up of Jay's and Gloria's marriage shows a relationship built on traditional values and customs between husband and wife. Jay pays the bills while Gloria plays the stay-at-home wife**.** Gloria is supposed to represent the modern Latina woman, but in retrospect doesn't resemble many presently living Latinas at all. The show does not include the Latin looks of Mexicans, Chicanas, Puerto Ricans and other Latin Americans that live in America today. However, *Modern Family* portrays Latinas from one biased perspective. According to the *Pew Research Hispanic Center's* website there are 50,730,000 Hispanics in the U.S today. Gloria is also a non-citizen who does not work, which negatively misrepresents the large percentage of Hispanics that are citizens and that do work in the United States. Literary scholar Charles Ramírez Berg warns his readers about the positive use of stereotypes:

> What is important to remember is that although positive stereotypes emphasize traits highly regarded by the in-group, these images are still stereotypes- still overgeneralized simplifications that depict the Other as outside the acceptable.(115)

Although Gloria's character on the show attempts to portray a Modern day Latina, she still is a misrepresentation of what classifies a modern *Latinidad.*

In the pilot episode of the first season we get a sample of Gloria's hot tempered Latina attitude when she is at Manny's soccer game. She starts shouting and gets very excited while

rooting for Manny from the sideline. She encourages him to focus on the game instead of looking at the girl that he sees walking across the field. Right at that moment, Gloria gets into a fight with another parent who finds her obnoxious and later thinks Jay is her father. This stereotypical portrayal shows Latin women as unable to control their emotional outbursts. This last example resembles the way that Sotomayor was criticized for having a reputation as overly aggressive and unstable judge by the media. In the article "Sotomayor Held to Different Standard of Objectivity, Media Scholar Says" Brian Stauff writes about author Isabel Molina Guzmán's belief that the media and television depict Latinas using stereotypes. Guzmán states, "Latin women are stereotyped as maternal, self-sacrificing, super religious, or hot headed, potentially uncontrollable spitfires" (Stauffer 1). Therefore, the show does not accurately portray a modern Latina. Instead *Modern Family* portrays a reiteration of the traditional stereotypical Hollywood type Latina that is an uncontrollable spitfire.

Another negative belief about Latinas, according to the producer's use of satire, is their desire to marry wealthy Anglo-American men. The intent of satire in this case is used as a way to reinforce the Latina stereotype. For instance, in the episode *Coal Digger*, Gloria is portrayed as just interested in marrying Jay Pritchett, because of his money and also as a way to get into the U.S. Pritchett is much older than she is, and a father of two whose children from his first marriage are the same age as Gloria. Jay and Gloria live in a beautiful modern home in a suburban neighborhood populated by white Americans. Gloria's marriage to Jay gives her more privilege because of her status than most Latinas in the United States. For instance Gloria is lucky enough where she does not have to work or struggle to raise her son. The show portrays Latin women as dependent on their men, greedy, and unable to take care of themselves. This narrow portrayal discriminates against present day Latinas' knowledge and abilities to find their own success within

the American economy; this ignores women who, like Sotomayor have attained wealth and status through hard work and their own merits.

Modern Family depicts Latina's as money hungry and gold diggers. The truth is that there are large numbers of Latinas that are seeking employment in the United States. A 2003 article from *Catalyst* titled "Advancing Latinas in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know" states, "Women of Hispanic origin are one of the fastest growing groups of women in the U.S Labor force. From 1990 to 2001 their total employment increased 76 percent from 3.8 million to 6.7 million, and is projected to increase to another 37 percent to 9.2 million in 2010" (Catalyst 6). These numbers indicate that Latinas' presence in the work force is increasing, contrary to the figure of Gloria as a stay at home wife and mother presented as a gold-digger type. *Catalyst* also notes how the number of Hispanic women earning Bachelor's degrees has increased 150 percent between 1990 and 2000, larger than the rate of increase for any other minority group. In addition the percentage of women who earned a Master's degree also has increased 164 percent during this same time period (Catalyst 6).

Both "Statistical Overview of Women in the Workplace" (*Catalyst* 2012) and The U.S Department of Labor Statistics (1975-2008) state about 60% of women between the ages of 1840 are working compared to 75% of all men. According to the (2011) article titled "Latino Connection", Georgia Pabst's states, "Hispanics represented 15% of the Labor Force in the U.S in 2010". The U.S Department of Labor state, "These numbers are expected to change to 18% by 2018". According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics there were an estimated 56.5 percent of working-age Latinas that participated in the workforce in 2010 (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Based on these statistics Latinas are working in today's present economy. The overgeneralization that Latinas do not work implies that Latinas are lazy, dependent, and

irresponsible. This episode mocks Gloria's capabilities because of the way that the foreign born Latina is portrayed on *Modern Family* as a gold digger. From my perspective Jay's chooses Gloria to be his wife because she is much sexier and younger and naïve than his first wife. These characteristics do not threaten Jay's patriarchal role in the family. What it shows is how Gloria is more connected emotionally and is more responsible with their children than Jay.

In another episode, Gloria was accused of being a gold digger by Claire, Jay's daughter, who had mistakenly confided in her son Luke to keep her suspicions a secret. Claire apologizes for calling Gloria a gold digger but Gloria is not so forgiving at first and walks away upset. Gloria shows her weak and sensitive side, displaying again that Latinas are insecure and explosive but also modest and morally strong. There is a constant power struggle that resides in American culture about Latinos. It is interesting how the show is largely viewed by Caucasian characters and not particularly favored by Hispanic viewers. One of the reasons is the show's dependence on a set of "crude stereotypes" about Latinos and Latino culture argues Vega (Networks Struggle to Appeal to Hispanics 2012). As diverse as America is today Americans are still looking to feel comfortable by laughing at a group and their differences. I believe that some Americans have certain expectations of different ethnic groups and cannot accept them in any other way.

Another reason that I believe that the show has gained popularity is due to the fact that it displays the cultural conflicts of one social group dominating over the others. Berg makes reference to Gilman's (1985) object-relations theory about stereotyping by the dominant group. From a psychological perspective, Gilman explains how stereotyping is a representation of the dominant group's fears and their own repression. He says, "A stereotype…. mirrors repressed desires" (Rodríguez 107-108). Claire accuses Gloria of being a gold digger because of her own repressed desires. Claire is a busy stay at home wife and is married to her dead beat husband Phil. Claire's

busy life prevents her from taking the time to spend on her own physical appearance. She is often overwhelmed and stressed out. Claire is threatened by Gloria's sex appeal and ability to enjoy her carefree and luxurious life with Jay. Later in the show as Claire begs for Gloria to forgive her, Gloria once again displays her insecurities, assuming that Claire does not like her. In their dialogue, there are moments that Gloria has difficulty expressing herself to Claire, making her appear angry, frustrated, acting childlike. Again we observe how Gloria's use of the English language gets in the way of her ability to communicate with Claire. It is evident that Gloria struggles to express herself and is upset when Claire does not understand her. Therefore, it's necessary for Gloria to play her role as the stereotypical emotional Latina woman to make Claire's position as a non-Latina in the family, dominate. The episode *Coal Digger* is indicative of the presence of Latino culture in America, and the culture clashes between both races. Through being portrayed as a gold digger, Gloria embodies the negative image of Latina women in American popular culture as being only interested in money. On the other hand non-Hispanic female characters are also stereotyped. When Claire struggles to balance her professional career and family life she also loses her temper and becomes aggressive, especially when she feels she is losing control over her children. Claire displays control issues like her father Jay. Similar to the portrayal of Gloria, Claire is presented as often being unable to control her emotions in difficult situations. Although the show portrays Claire and Gloria as having the same issues as mothers and housewives, one of them is given higher social status than the other. Next to Claire, Gloria embodies the stereotype of the dimwitted Latina because she is a minority.

Gloria's image emulates classic Latina models and symbols such as the infamous "Mexican spitfire" of Lupe Vélez from the 1930's and similar to the Chiquita banana character of Carmen Miranda from the 1940's. Like Carmen Miranda, Gloria is sexy, has curves, and often

wears revealing clothes. Gloria's hot temperament mimics that of Lupe Vélez, who was also an American favorite popular among American audiences. Feminist writers Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga in their respective works Making Face, Making Soul and Borderlands/La Frontera both describe representations of Latinas as religious and sex symbols throughout history. Anzaldúa and Moraga indicate that Latinas are depicted as having archetype characteristics. The first image they give is *La Virgen de Guadalupe* the virgin mother and the patron Saint to the Mexicans and the Chicanos. Anzaldúa:

> *La Virgin Guadalupe* is the symbol of ethnic identity and of tolerance for ambiguity that Chicanos- *mexicanos*, people of mixed race, people who have Indian blood, people who cross cultures, by necessity possess.(52)

Gloria's character is an ambiguous one. Frequently she is naïve, spontaneous, and innocent but she is also uncontrollable, strong willed, and feisty. The second archetype is *La Chingada* also known as *La Malinche*, the raped mother and first Indian woman to have sexual ties with Spanish blood. *La Malinche* was the first Indian to mother a mestizo child (a mixed race of Spanish and Native American). Throughout history *Malinche's* reputation as a prostitute has negatively influenced the image of Mexicanas and Chicana and adds to the negative portrayals of Latinas as sexual objects (51-53). Anzaldúa explains how many Mexicanas and Chicanas do not embrace these images as their identity. However, she does discuss how these old spiritual entities are still worshiped today by many of them (53). Literary scholar Myra Mendible makes reference in her book *From Bananas to Buttocks* to literary scholar Judith Ortiz Cofer who also mentions the way Latinas continue to "struggle against misconceptions and perpetuated myths" about their identities as being whores, domestics, or criminals in the media and in Hollywood films (16). In *Latin Looks* Pérez discusses how the 1961 movie *West Side Story* depicted Puerto Rican women characters as either innocent, passive, virginal beauties, or hot-blooded, fiery, spontaneous and worldly. Pérez explains how the Madonna/whore dichotomy was used earlier in film to display Mexican women's portrayals (Pérez;

Rodríguez 151). I believe that Gloria's character is also portrayed in a duplicitous image. She is first portrayed as a "hot-Latina" but her character also displays features of the stereotypes of the saintly and submissive wife who always respects her husband's authority.

Research based on acculturation theory, suggests that the mass media is responsible for circulating stereotypes as a way to understand different social groups. According to her study Latinas in Leadership Positions in Pyschology: Obstacles and Successes Nicole Chrisanthi Spanakis uses acculturation as a way to explain why stories about Latinas in leadership roles are not produced often by the media. Spanakis states "Acculturation is considered a continual process where one is socialized into the dominant cultural group with which a minority person and his or her group interfaces" (19). Acculturation also consists of:

> psychological and social change in a minority and an individual and his or her ethnic group including the characteristics of the individual, the intensity and the importance given to the contact between the dominant group and the minority group and the numerical balance between the majority group and the minority group (19).

Spanakis takes a direct quote from a study by Casas and Pytluk in which they explain their take on acculturation process. They indicate:

> From both a sociological and psychological perspective, the process of acculturation is defined as the product of cultural learning that occurs as a result of contact between the members of two or more culturally distinct groups. From this definition, it is also presented as a process of attitudinal and behavioral change undergone, willingly or unwillingly, by individuals who reside in multicultural societies who come in contact with a new culture due to colonization, invasions, or other political changes. (Casas and Pytluk qtd out of Spanakis, 20)

In her (2009) essay "Acculturation, Enculturation, and the Psycho Social Adaptation of Latino Youth" from the *Handbook of the US Latino Psychology Developmental and Community-Based Perspectives* Nancy A. Gonzales also gives her interpretation of acculturation:

-*acculturation* is the term originally used to describe the cultural changes that result at both the group level and the individual psychological level from sustained contact between two or more distinct cultures. (Handbook of the US Latino Psychology Developmental and Community- Based, 15)

Modern Family tries to imply that Latinas are all meek and sexual. Gloria reflects the stereotypical Mexicana and Chicana prostitute and submissive wife duplicities that are expected of Latina characters within U.S popular culture. *Modern Family* perpetuates these images to represent *Latinidad.*

Latinas have been portrayed as secondary roles on television for a long time which adds to the negative depictions of Latinas on *Modern Family*. This maintains that women's roles in society are not as important as the roles of men. Mendible discusses how negative stereotypes against Latinas are responsible for their status as minorities in the United States. She states:

Latinas' signifying power in various consumer tales belies their embodied status as citizens: U.S. Latinas are overrepresented in high school dropout and teen pregnancy rates, while foreign-born Latinas account for a majority share of low-wage factory or domestic jobs. Statistically, U.S Latinas remain second class-citizens. (15)

One of the reasons that Gloria's character appears to be the most popular among American audiences is that her character stands out next to the other characters produced on the show. Her senselessness, naivety, and Latina identity makes her a foreigner. Besides, Cameron (Eric Stonestreet) and Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) Pritchetts's adopted Vietnamese daughter Millie (Aubrey Anderson-Emmons), Gloria is the only non-American on the show.

The idea that patriarchal power governs over women's ideas prohibits both Latina and non-Latin women from having the ability to be powerful themselves. In today's understanding of gender-related issues, this stigma against women still exists in some parts of the American way of life as the Anglo-American male usually is the authoritative and powerful figure in society

(Anzaldúa; Alarcon:, and Moraga). According to Lehman, "*Modern Family* focuses on female gender stereotypes to further promote male-dominant family ideology"(2). Gloria's role is accepted by some American audiences because she is playing her subordinate role, expected of Latinas in the social scale. Charles Ramírez Berg makes reference to Lippmans (1941) study that stated, "stereotypes identify, justify, and support mainstream (Anglo) beliefs" (Rodríguez 111). Berg explains:

> the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes in the movies and the media function to maintain the status quo by representing dominant groups as "naturally" empowered and marginal groups as disenfranchised. (Rodríguez 111)

This is why Gloria's character is negatively portrayed as being unable to maintain her emotions when she has to confront the other members of Jay's family.

Latin women have been stereotyped as being concerned about their appearances and for being sexy on television for long enough (Lehman 3). In his article "Latino Stereotypes Prevail in TV's *Modern Family*" Abel Ortiz says this about the media's portrayals of Latinas through the character Gloria:

> We see a lot of common stereotypes of Latina women on the show through Gloria. Sofia Vergara's character, unlike her husband, doesn't speak English very well, wears tight sexual clothing and is sort of home/trophy wife. This common misconception of the roles of Latina woman is brought on by other Latino media networks like *Univision* and *Telemundo* as well, where the woman are almost always dressed as if they were going to a club(2).

It is a fact that television networks such as *Univisión* and *Telemundo* are famous for their broadcasts of *telenovelas* to the Hispanic community. The networks are known to portray Latinas in sexually revealing clothes. The networks are created as for-profit business organizations and have been criticized by Latinos for not portraying them accurately, according to Mendible (287).

Similar to the way that Latinas are depicted stereotypically, non-Latina women are being negatively represented in *Modern Family*. Jay's daughter Claire seems to be more involved with family affairs and being a mother and is less concerned with her physical appearance than his wife Gloria. In her article "How Modern is *Modern Family*? A Critical Review on the U.S Sitcom Regarding Gender Roles and Hegemonic Ideologies" Caroline Lehman says:

> Contrary to Gloria's stereotypical description, Claire Dunphry represents the traditional stay-at-home-mother, who is dedicated her life to her domestic realm…Compared to Gloria's glamorous looks Claire is dressed more casually, indicating that her priorities lie within the family. Throughout the series the audience discovers that she once had a successful profession, which she quit for her family. (Lehman 3)

Lehman indicates in her article that non-Latin women are perceived as being the better mother figures and role models than Latin American women. Although I don't believe that Lehman was intentionally displaying favoritism to either ethnic side in her article, she does discuss the way that traditional non-Latin women have a tendency to have less concerns for their appearance and put more focus on their involvement with their families than Latin American women. The last part of Lehman's statement implies that Latin women are only concerned about their appearance and have no interest in caring for their families. Therefore it is best to say that each women and their own culture's ethnicity in general are being stereotyped based on their gender on the show. The way that Gloria is presented on *Modern Family* generalizes a small percentage of the Latinas who don't care about having close ties with their families. In my personal experience as a Latina, many native and first generation Latin Americans have close kinships with their relatives and are very spiritual, and religious, but it is equally true that some do not follow these patterns. In addition to this they value their race, identity, and culture. Depicting Latina women as caring more about their appearance then their responsibilities as a mother is nothing more than a gender specific stereotype, and has little basis on fact. Therefore, Gloria's role as a mother is being

criticized through the producers' use of comedy. Claire appears to have her life more together than Gloria. She's a devoted wife, mother, and daughter while Gloria on the other hand, is a single mother who was raising a son on her own until she was fortunate enough to meet Jay.

Some of the show's themes cover basic issues related to Latinas presence in America, homosexual relationships, mixed marriages and adoption which are other reasons for *Modern Family's* popularity. For instance the arguments between Gloria and Jay are intended to illustrate the struggle between American views and Latino views. When Gloria shares her personal opinions, for example, they often clash with Jay's. Gloria displays more liberal views regarding politics something many Latin Americans share while Jay portrays a more conservative and traditional perspective. *Modern Family* attempts to provoke it's audiences by presenting the social and political problems present between both cultures. In one way they are stating that Latinos have liberal views. For example Gloria has a more carefree and positive view on life than Jay, who appears to take a Republican stance. She generally appears more open minded and looks at the best interest of everyone in the family. Meanwhile Jay on the other hand, takes a more negative stance, and looks at all his children at their worst. Gloria is open to new ideas but appears to make decisions illogically while Jay is not as open minded and thinks more along rational lines. The show addresses the acceptance of differences between American and Latin cultures. It also points out the power of one socio-ethnic group over the other, played out between Gloria and Jay. One example is the way in which Gloria and Jay argue over raising Gloria's son Manny. We find that there is difficulty in one side agreeing or compromising with the other's cultural values and beliefs. Jay tries to overpower Gloria when he feels he is correct and makes fun of her when he feels undermined by her negative and harsh comments. Gloria defends herself and gets hot-tempered and emotional when she doesn't get her own way, which adds to the humor and entertainment in

Modern Family. Gloria's childlike behavior in turn influences her son Manny to become more like her. Manny is often sensitive because he is accustomed to getting his own way. Jay's attempt to gain patriarchal power over Gloria already puts her in the position of inferiority to his controlling ways. From the very start of the show's pilot, it is clear that Jay and Gloria share their own personal ideologies and family values because of their opinions on how to raise Manny, and their different backgrounds and personal life experiences get in between them. Gloria wants to spoil Manny and protect him when he becomes upset and discouraged. She would rather baby him than reassure him so that he can act his age. Jay, on the other hand would like Manny to be more like him and become more assertive and less sensitive. Gloria and Jay both want the best for Manny, but as a result of their different backgrounds, and personal experiences their opinions on how to raise Manny do clash. This situation in many ways resembles today's modern women fighting to gain equal power over their lives from the men in society. In the popular 1950's American television show *I Love Lucy* we see the same type of personalities as Jay and Gloria in the characters of Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz) and Lucy Ricardo (Lucille Ball). Similar to Gloria, Lucy is ditzy, naïve, and carefree, except she plays an American housewife and not a Latina. Meanwhile, Desi a Cuban American singer and band leader plays the stereotypical simpleminded and "hot tempered" Latino male who has no patience for his wife's crazy antics. Much of the comedy on the show is portrayed through Ricky and Lucy's heated arguments. Ricky gets frustrated when Lucy tries to help him and makes a mess out of things. This puts her in a position of inferiority because it projects her as a senseless and clueless woman. Instead of addressing Lucy appropriately, Ricky loses his Latin temper and shouts at her in Spanish. In a similar way, Gloria's inability to have full command of the English language makes it difficult to take what she says seriously, which compels Jay to criticize her and makes his views appear more reasonable than hers. In the same way to Gloria and Jay in *Modern Family*, Ricky and Lucy's relationships can be compared. Their different backgrounds and

personal experiences clash which makes it difficult for either couple to arrive to an amicable end result. As a result, the women appear less intelligent next to their husbands, giving the men more credit. This shows that *Modern Family* fails to portray a modern couple the way the title of the show indicates, and portrays women as traditional housewives that are clueless.

As mentioned before Jay demonstrates that he is clearly the patriarch of the family and represents conservative Anglo-American culture. The given role of men being superior to women is often portrayed through Gloria and Jay's marriage. Jay's character does appear more macho than the other male characters on the show. His cold and stubborn ways affect Gloria because it shows that she is the more emotional one of the two and is unable to contain herself in their arguments, showing women's meek side. Gloria at times shows that she is dependent on Jay, demonstrating that she is needy and strives for attention. At times, Jay's old age gets in the way of Gloria's passion for life and her fantasies; and Jay does not embrace her advice often. Gloria tries to get Jay to see her side on life but he is not as receptive towards her or able tolerate her emotions. Gloria's emotional out-bursts is entertaining to American audiences and adds to the humor of the show.

Another stereotype is that Latino mothers have a tendency to raise their sons as spoiled and arrogant men. According to the show, Manny has not received much support from his biological father who had walked out on him and Gloria (Gloria's first husband was Latino). The show is trying to pose Latino men as negligent fathers. Manny's dad Javier Delgado (Benjamin Bratt) makes very few appearances on the show. His lack of parental involvement with his son is representative of a larger misconception about Latino men and their family values. Many Latino men have a huge role within their families. In the article called "Before you Go", Howard Erickson indicates how Hispanics place a huge value on family life. He makes a comparison between Anglo

American families and Hispanic and explains how many Latinos after growing up tend to have closer ties with their families than Anglo-Americans do. He states:

Hispanics expect their children to support them in their old age. Hispanics adults work hard to send money to their families and find the idea of "assisted living" or retirement homes to be abhorrent. This is why reaching a Hispanic head of the household has a high probability of winning an entire family. Hispanics are more likely to process things and make decisions as a group whereas Anglos tend to be more individualistic. (Erickson 1). What makes Manny Delgado's character comedic is that he is the spitting image of his Latin mother because they both have a penchant for good fashion (Manny is usually dressed more formally than the other children on the show). According to Ortiz, "Manny resembles typical stereotypes of Latin men as "Latino Lovers" from a mass media context in the way that the character dresses and behaves in front of his girlfriend"(2). The Latin lover stereotype portrays Latin men as only caring about their appearance in order to attract women. Gloria's concerns about Manny's appearance shows that he is unable to care for himself. Gloria raises Manny as a spoiled mamma's boy which, at times, can be uncomfortable to observe because it makes her appear desperate for little Manny to fit into American culture. Although, Manny is overweight and not that good looking Gloria makes an effort to dress Manny older than his age so that he can fit in. Manny wears cologne, and is often dressed in slacks and button-down shirts. Similarly to Gloria, Manny is insecure and has a difficult time coping with rejection when things don't work out in his way. Jay tries to make up for his past mistakes in his first marriage by being a caring and supportive step-father to Manny. Therefore, Manny is often criticized by Jay, which compels Gloria to stand up for him. Jay wants to raise him to be more like a man, implying that Gloria is making him like a woman. Jay has a tendency to be more critical and honest with Manny than does Gloria, demonstrating the conflict between the

traditional roles of mothers as nurturers versus father's disciplinarians. Manny demonstrates his own insecurities when he is around girls his age. He shows that, like Gloria, he is not able to manage his emotions in challenging situations. Manny's subordinate position is exactly like his mother's. Through Manny's character we see the consequences of being raised under liberal ideologies instead of the traditional and conservative viewpoints of a dominant male such as Jay. Gloria does not to teach Manny to be responsible in the same way that Jay tries to teach him. When Jay confronts Manny, he does not encourage him. Instead, Jay criticizes him and tells him what he does wrong. As the only father figure in his life he does not resemble a good role model for Manny. Gloria tries hard to take care of him, but does it the only way she knows how. This shows that Manny's mother's insecurities have had a negative influence on the child's self-esteem, displaying again that Latin women fail at being single mothers and are bad role models to their children in the world of *Modern Family.*

Another social theme about Latinas on *Modern Family* is in the language barrier between both cultures. Gloria's accent is constantly made fun of by Jay and the other family members on the show. It's very obvious that the language mishaps by Gloria are meant for humor, but after a number of times, the strong accent appears to be portrayed as an unappealing characteristic of Gloria's character. Claire Pritchett becomes frustrated when she can't understand Gloria's expressions and makes fun of her. Here is a scene from the shows first season episode 10, *Undeck The Halls*, where we see Gloria being ridiculed by Jay.

Gloria: Every culture has their own traditions. For example, in our culture, the Baby Jesus is the one that brings the presents, not the Santa Claus.

Jay: That's doesn't make sense. How could a new born baby carry all those presents? They don't even know where their hands are.

Manny: At least a baby could fit through a chimney.

Jay: How could you sit on the Baby Jesus' lap? You'd squish him

The only one who understands Gloria is her son Manny. In many instances Manny has to play interpreter for the rest of the family and for the audience. The humor behind Gloria's language mishaps is a reflection of two things. The first one is addressed in Berg's reference to Gilman's object-related theory. Some Americans fear that they will lose the value of the English language. In our culture speaking English defines being an American and marks our identity. Gloria's inability to speak English well portrays her as non-patriotic and someone not assimilated into American culture. The second reason is that Gloria's imperfections classify her more as a social inferior or, as Edward Said might have put it in his infamous work "Orientalism", that she represents an ethnic "Other". Gloria is often made fun of often because of her incorrect use of English. According to Rodríguez, and Guzmán, Gloria's accent exoticizes her character. Rodríguez indicates, "Latinos who are U.S. citizens, whether or not they speak with an accent, are often met with the query, "So what are you?" (4). Gloria demonstrates her ethnic differences while she struggles to use English to express herself and often makes no sense. Her inability to properly grasp English demonstrates either her lack of interest to try to correct it or her lack of intelligence to do so or both which only contributes to depicting her even more negatively as a Latina. Guzmán mentions in her chapter "Becoming Frida" how Mexican actress Salma Hayek had her own difficulties with her Latina accent. Hayek admits that her accent reminds them (American audiences) "of their service people" (Guzmán 92-94). Some Anglo American's find it offensive that Latinas do not speak English while they live in the United States. Some fear that if Latinas continue to speak in Spanish there is a chance that the English language will lose its value in American culture. As Gilman noted "stereotyping is a representation of the dominant group's fears and repressed desires." In reality there is no real American identity in American culture. Our

culture is made up of many ethnicities with diverse cultures and beliefs. Our culture is changing every day and this change is not going to stop. Some Americans fear that the "Other" will not only change their culture but also take away their own sense of power. The issue of fear is not so much only a patriotic one but a racist one since it is invoked in order for the dominant group to maintain social status. For this reason Latinas are more likely to be made fun of and criticized for not speaking English, which adds to the humor to Gloria's struggle to speak English. Gloria's accent is one way to identify with her *Latinidad.* It shows that she is a foreigner. The way that she is presented makes the notion of being bilingual or multi-lingual unfavorable among American audiences, perpetuating the stereotype that Hispanics do not want to learn English properly. Gloria's famous language mishaps are used to attract viewers to the show.

In the season two the episode *The Kiss* we get to see moments of culture clash again between American traditional values and Latin American culture. Gloria is in the kitchen preparing to host a dinner party to celebrate her Colombian tradition. She cooks a Colombian dish, *Sancocho* (a dish of the small intestines of a pig) that she has set up to share with the family because she feels like she is losing touch with her traditional Latin roots**.** This episode captures the natural essence of Latin Americans that are currently living in the United States who have lost touch with their cultural side because they have already transformed their lives into American culture, a process known as acculturation. This episode demonstrates more assimilation and acceptance as two cultures (the Pritchetts and the Delgados) come together to celebrate a Hispanic traditional meal around the dinner table. Although the producers try to portray this type of family bond as a significant moment in American history, the family (the Pritchett side) does not seem very enthusiastic to try Gloria's meal after she announces what she would be serving. This act of kindness through assimilation demonstrates the Pritchett family refusal's to connect with Gloria's culture by rejecting her meal. The show is also asking the audience if they would try to eat this

food. The family reunion was featured for a mere 2-3 minutes which quickly switched and turned directly toward Jay's distraction with Gloria's sexy outfit, giving it more significance. In this scene, Jay walks into the kitchen and stares directly at Gloria's backside as she prepares the food. The camera narrows in on her backside. Gloria is dressed in high heel shoes, and her hair and make-up are done, giving the impression that some Latin women look "hot" even when they are home cooking dinner.

Modern Family does not portray the variations of *Latinidad* that exist across America. It is not common for every Latina to come to the United States and live the American dream life like Gloria Pritchett has been able to by marrying a wealthy businessman such as Jay. But, for each Latino dreams are different because in reality we all come from different upbringings and environments and yearn for different things. By having Gloria as the only Latina woman in the show, *Modern Family* generalizes that all Latinas resemble Gloria Delgado, and through this the show exoticizes her to represent *Latinidad*. The show is also indicating which version of Latina is welcome and has value in the U.S. If a Latina does not conform to this model she should then realize that she will have no value within American culture. The hot, sexy, and naïve, uneducated Gloria continues to be a popular Latina representation because of her beauty, her wealth, and her charm for American audiences. A common expression in America is that "sex sells." I believe it is true that America enjoys watching Gloria Delgado because of her sex appeal and easy-going persona. In his book Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture Sut Jhally's states:

> The modern world is dominated by a consumer culture that relies almost entirely on a system of images that shape our understanding of "the good life". In this culture, the marketplace is the central institutional structure of society and is ideologically shaped by advertisements. (250)

The notion of beauty is significant to the individual. A person who considers someone or something beautiful bases their decision subjectively. It can stem from a desire, a want, or a need by the person him or herself and the thing that she/he admires. As in Gloria's case she is beautiful and wealthy and these characteristics make her an ideal character to emulate. Anzaldúa's use of historical context in her book *Making Faces, Making Soul* to identify Latin bodies in archetypes, states that the term *Latinidad* has been abused by media and television to portray Latinas in narrow minded ways. She uses the notion of *la mestiza consciousness* as a theory in her work *Borderlands/La Frontera* to explain her own Latina identity. She admits the complexity of portraying Latinas under one image. Originally, Mexican women were represented as whore/virgin archetypes. These are both sexist portrayals of women by men that Anzaldúa's believes needs to be unlearned (106). As a *mestiza* herself, Anzaldúa states that she did not feel that she belonged to any of those categories. Anzaldúa identifies herself as a *mestiza* because of her ethnic background, being a lesbian, a Chicana, a Mexican, and an American. Her *mestiza consciousness* theory is a new strategy for her and other feminist writers to study Latina identities without using past theories based on women from male perspectives. Here is a quote from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and how she indicates the use of *mestiza consciousness* as a methodology for reclaiming and reinventing a Latina identity:

> I am cultureless because as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural /religious male derived beliefs of Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain to the world and our participation in it, a new value system with symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet (102-103).

The way that the media and television portray Latinas underrepresents the essence of Latina identity. According to Anzaldúa there is no one way to represent Latinas because each group in itself is different and complex.

II. Ugly Betty:

Turning now to the ABC prime-time television show *Ugly Betty* (2006-2010), there are several characters that portray Latinas stereotypically. According to the show Latinas are meant to play roles that give them lower status and less opportunity to become professionals and leaders in American society. I will begin this section by analyzing Betty Suárez's (America

Ferrara) older sister Hilda Suárez (Ana Ortiz) whose character perpetuates stereotypes of Latinas. In addition I will briefly mention Betty's father, Ignacio, whose character stereotypically represents Latino males. Later, I will show how Betty Suárez reflects two different images that represent Latina women. I will see if such portrayals from this show have influenced the stereotypes about Sonia Sotomayor to prevent her from winning her seat as Supreme Court

Justice.

The show originates from the 1999 Colombian telenovela *Yo Soy Betty La Fea.* Since it first premiered in the United States *Ugly Betty* became a national hit with American audiences. In September 2006 the show had had an average of 11.3 million viewers according to *Imdb.com*. The series was awarded the primetime Emmy in 2008 and in 2007 won the Golden Globe for best comedy. In 2008 it was awarded the AFI award for television program of the year. In 2007, America Ferrera won the Primetime Emmy Award for outstanding lead actress in a television

series.

The producer's ability to address issues on physical appearances, race, ethnicity, culture, and their diversified cast of characters contributes to *Ugly Betty's* huge fan base. There are gays, blacks, whites, and Latino characters. Each character's flaws adds to the drama and comedy of the

show. For instance, Amanda cannot get skinny enough, Betty cannot get any uglier and Daniel cannot get enough sex. According to Isabel Molina Guzmán in her book *Dangerous Curves* "The need to target larger, more diverse audiences during an era of global media integration has further encouraged three of the major U.S networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) to develop telenovela-based programming" (Guzmán 124). It is more likely that Latinas watch *Ugly Betty* due to the large population of Hispanics living in the U.S today. Guzmán explains how Spanish-speaking Latina audiences tend to be loyal viewers of Spanish-language media and television, whereas second generation Latina audiences often bounce back and forth between watching both English and Spanish related media and television shows (124). Many US born Latinas are more likely to watch English Language television shows than Spanish language ones. Guzmán explains how the show is mostly watched by women. "Given Ugly Betty's focus on fashion, family, career, and, romance it is no surprise that most of its viewers are women" states Guzmán (125). What is more surprising is that Guzman mentions that, "the women come from diverse, ethnic, racial, and age backgrounds, a desirable but rare feat in television programming" (125). "In its first season the show averaged 11.3 million viewers a week with 72 percent of its audiences composed of women, 10.5 percent African Americans, and 9.25 percent Latinas/os" (Guzmán125). The show was cancelled in 2010 after four seasons due to its decline in ratings. Paula Berriero states in her article "Understanding *Ugly Betty*: Negotiating Race in a Culturally Mixed-Text" several reasons *Ugly Betty* became such a favorite television show:

> Betty's character provides an empowered Latina representation by claiming the right to be herself and be welcomed in a place where being physically attractive, white, and wealthy are implicit prerequisites.(34)

Berreiro mentions how audiences can identify with Betty's struggles for self–esteem and the portrayal of her character as an ugly-fish-out-of-water (Berriero34). Another reason for the show's popularity, according to Guzmán, are the producers' efforts to establish universal story lines

regarding human morals and ethics and their ability to, "produce a less ethnically and racially marked Mexican family that is more intentionally marketable" (127). Guzmán indicates:

> *Ugly Betty* demonstrates the transnational flows and interconnections of global media and audiences. The international popularity and portability of programs such as *Ugly Betty* depend on production of universally appealing story lines that captivate audiences regardless of age, gender, race, nationality, and language (119-120).

Although the show tries to portray a positive image of a Latina through the character Betty Suárez which I will demonstrate later, *Ugly Betty* misrepresents Latinas and Latin Culture through the use of stereotypes. According to the show Latinas are portrayed as minorities struggling to fit in to American popular culture. Betty's Mexican background also portrays her and her family as immigrants that are irresponsible, lazy, and dangerous as representations of *Latinidad*. The show focuses less on Betty's own Mexican identity and portrays her more as an American than a Hispanic character. I find that the producers' use of stereotypical images is one strategy used to attract American audiences to the character Betty and her Mexican family.

As mentioned in the first chapter, one negative stereotype about Latinas is that they are usually misrepresented as impoverished and struggling minorities. According to Rodriguéz:

> Hispanics in television entertainment programs have been more likely to be portrayed negatively and less likely to be portrayed positively than any other group. In addition, TV portrayals tend to reinforce derogatory stereotypes of Latinos as people who are poor, low status, lazy, deceptive, and criminals. (29)

Betty's sister Hilda is being stereotyped because she rarely works. Betty demonstrates more discipline in maintaining her priorities, responsibilities, and work ethic as opposed to Hilda, demonstrating the loyal and committed Latina who gives up her dreams for her family. When Betty starts to spend more time at work, her sister Hilda confronts her and makes her chose between her career and family. She blames her father's long term sickness on Betty because she is not able to

take care of him because of working too much. In contrast to Betty's good work ethic, Hilda is unable to hold a real job.

Hilda's main priorities are based on physical appearances and negotiating deals to promote her small business. In the episode *Queens for a Day*, Hilda tries to help Betty with her looks and takes her to a local hair salon for a make-over. Hilda says to Betty: "Oh - we are going to spice you up so much, you are going to forget you are white". Rather than improve Betty's original ugly look, Betty appears like a drag-queen. Her hair, make-up and clothes are exaggerated and make her look more like Hilda, the "hot" Latina. When she walks down the street the producers play *reggaeton* and other Latin rhythms in the background to try to emphasize her Latina identity. "The only few people that are into her looks are the labor workers on the street" according to Guzmán. At the magazine company where Betty works, her coworkers were not impressed with her new change, and criticize her. In fact, it was the character Wilhemina Slater (Vanessa Williams) who remarks about Betty's new look and says, "Looks like Queens threw up". This implies that Betty cannot be taken seriously and that her attempt to enhance her looks has failed. Her co-workers regard her looks as those of a cheap "slut." The producers use many authentic signifiers to portray *Latinidad* and Latin Culture. Another time that music is used to signify Latin culture is when Sofía Reyes (Salma Hayek) first sets foot in-to Meade Enterprise's offices. The sounds of the Spanish guitar are meant to add Latin flavor and spice to her character. The producers also utilize typical authentic elements to emphasize Hilda's exotic Latin background. Hilda dresses very sexy often wearing tight and brightly colored clothing, a lot of jewelry, and make-up. She is often emotional and "hot" tempered about the family's financial situation and when she demonstrates her concerns about her father's illegal status, but does not offer help to Betty to resolve it. Although the *Ugly*

Betty producers use these signifiers as a way for the audience to identify with Latinas and Hispanic culture it really is an overgeneralization to identify it with Latinas.

Hilda struggles between being a stay at home mom and working part time for a scam-diet program to support herself and her gay son Justin. Her story is typical of the bitter Latina who had been abandoned by her ex-boyfriend, a street hoodlum. Because Hilda cannot find a real job she has to depend on her father Ignacio to help her. Hilda demonstrates the hardship of raising a son alone and her own financial struggles. There is a stereotype in American culture that Latinas have the highest rate of pregnancy amongst teenagers. According to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), over the past 3 years (2007 to 2010) total declines in births to Latino teens were steeper than for teens overall [26% decline vs 17% decline](Pregnancy Pause.com, 2013). This show is generalizing that only Latin women have children out of wedlock and are irresponsible mothers. The show is also implying that Latinas are likely to have no money, are jobless and stay at home.

Recent campaigns and advertisements on teen pregnancy have been responsible for circulating negative stories about Latinas. In her the article "NYC Teen Pregnancy Ads Stigmatize Young Mothers, Hurt Latinas, Don' Support Teen Parents," Erin White explains how recent advertisements in NYC had used campaign slogans that discriminated against teenage pregnant mothers (NLIRH, 2013). These slogans add to the stigma that those teenagers that are at risk to get pregnant are school dropouts and come from poor homes. Latinas are assumed to have the highest school dropout rate. In her article "When Campaigns Go Bad: New York City's Teenage Pregnancy Campaign," Shannon Arvizu demonstrates how one slogan read, "I am not twice as likely to graduate from high school because you had me as a teen" (Arvizu 2013). An additional campaign ad found at a public bus stop read "Honestly mom….chances are he won't stay with you. What happens to me?" indicates Leona Desar in her 2013 article titled "New

AntiTeen Pregnancy Ads Feature Kids Shaming Their Parents." White explains how the advertisements add to the stigma that Latinas and women that come from poor homes and are uneducated are more likely to have children young. The article "Latina Adolescent Health" on *The Advocates for Youth* webpage indicates:

> The predominant, non-Hispanic white culture may sometimes perceive Latinos as different and, therefore, "minority," may hold lower expectations of them, and may offer few opportunities for Latina young women to reach their full potential…The combination of low expectations from society and their own expectations for the future may result in Latina teens' engaging in unprotected sexual activity.

There are organizations such as The National Latina Institute of Reproductive Health that strive to help educate Latinas to prevent them from increasing their chances of pregnancy. This institute is an organization that helps Latinas to access the reproductive healthcare services that they need to live healthy lives. This organization educates Latinas on contraception, sex, abortion and pregnancy so that they can make better decisions based on their health and to prevent the increase in pregnancies.

According to the show Latinas that are pretty are not smart and successful. The show is generalizing that appearances have something to do with social status. For instance Hilda's personality and taste for clothes casts her as an uneducated, cheap looking and money hungry Latina. Hilda portrays Mexican Latinas stereotypically claiming that they are sexy and slutty like Colombian Latina Gloria Pritchett from *Modern Family*. I view Hilda as a stereotypical representation of 'Newyorican' Latinas rather than Mexican one. The show misinforms viewers about the variable differences of Latina identity between Mexicans and Puerto Rican ethnicities. Dividing Latinas into smaller groups makes stereotyping more harmful because it limits them to the roles that they are expected to play in society. The show is comparing Hilda's Mexican ethnicity with a Puerto Rican ethnic stereotype. Hilda is one of the only characters on the show who speaks

Spanish. Her accent sounds like a Puerto Rican Queens accent rather than Mexican. According to the United States Census Bureau (2011) there are over 52 million Hispanics living in the U.S. Experian Simmons found that 48% of Hispanics speak predominantly Spanish at home while 57% speak mostly English outside of the home (2012 National Hispanic Consumer Study) . According to the article "When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and their Views of Identity," Paul Taylor states:

> Language use among Hispanics in the U.S. reflects the trajectories that previous immigrant groups have followed. Immigrant Hispanics are most likely to be proficient in Spanish, but least likely to be proficient in English. In the second generation, use of Spanish falls as use of English rises. By the third generation, English use is dominant (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012).

According to Pew and the United Census Bureau Hispanics are speaking English while living in the United States.

The show also addresses issues on illegal immigrants in the U.S. Hilda's character is perpetuating the stereotype that Latinas are overtly emotional and hot tempered while Ignacio stereotypes all Mexicans as undocumented. In the 11th episode entitled *Swag* Hilda becomes worried that her father will be deported to Mexico when the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) comes to their home to arrest him. When Hilda realizes that her father will be deported back to Mexico she decides to look for help elsewhere. Hilda struggles to find a legitimate lawyer to prevent her father Ignacio from being taken away by Immigration. Her lack of patience and naivety make it difficult for her to make rational decisions to find an honest and suitable lawyer. Out of desperation, Hilda has to ask her ex-boyfriend Santos for money to help pay for the lawyer. When Betty learns that Hilda finds one, she recalls that it was the same lawyer that was accused of scamming one of Betty's neighbors. After the attorney runs off with her money Hilda feels remorse for not taking her sister Betty's opinions seriously. The show is insinuating that Latinas are irrational and are not perceptive enough to find suitable resources to help themselves. It also shows that they are neglectful because they did not make it an initial priority to get Ignacio his citizenship

before INS came to arrest him. *Ugly Betty* shows that Latinos are sneaky, fraudulent, and untrustworthy. According to Pew Hispanic Center estimates, there were 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in March 2009. As of 2009, immigrants comprised 12.5 percent (38.5 million) of the total US population. In the (2010) article "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States" on Migration Information Source Jeannie Batalova states, "Mexican-born immigrants accounted for 29.8 percent of all foreign born residing in the United States in 2009, by far the largest immigrant group in the United States." In the (2009) article "Mexican Immigrants How Many Come? How Many Leave?" from the (2009) Pew Hispanic Research Center states:

> Mexico is by far the leading country of origin for U.S. immigrants, accounting for a third (32%) of all foreign-born residents and two-thirds (66%) of Hispanic immigrants. The U.S. is the destination for nearly all people who leave Mexico, and about one-in-ten people born there currently lives in the U.S.

In 2007-2009 the numbers of undocumented immigrants that come from Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean appeared to have declined, according to Pew. I believe that the stereotypes on *Ugly Betty* spill over into American views and popular culture about present day Latina representatives, like Sotomayor. She was discriminated on her looks and on her ability to be a fir judge. Pew states, "More than half of Latinos (54%) say discrimination is a major problem that is keeping Latinos from succeeding in this country, and a quarter (24%) say it is a minor problem. This perception has grown since 2002, when 44% called discrimination a major problem, but declined slightly since 2006, when 58% said the same thing" (Pew Hispanic Research Center). In the same way that Sonia Sotomayor was portrayed negatively through the media, Hilda is also being displayed as a low-class, uneducated, incompetent, and lazy Mexican woman. As television perpetuates old stereotypes about Latin women it augments the challenges that Latinas continue to

face when attempting to be accepted into any other role that exceeds the narrow confines of the media stereotype.

In addition to the Hilda's negative depictions, the increase of illegal immigrants and Mexican population in the United States has also influenced the producers to address this issue negatively on the show. According to *Ugly Betty,* Mexicans are dangerous scam artists. Rodríguez says, "Latinos often reflect the fears and the political, social, and economic conditions of a period" (7). In a similar way to news media, additional nighttime television shows continues to produce stories about Mexicans and Latinas/os in a negative way. Television shows such as the (2005) HBO series *Weeds, NCIS Los Angeles,* and *CSI Miami* portray Hispanics as crafty criminals. Mexicans are accused of being involved in gangs and are held responsible for being violent and conducting killings along the border. Negative stories circulated by the media and television are why Latinas and Latinos are given roles as criminals. This is why Hilda's exboyfriend Santos is portrayed as a gangster and Ignacio as a murder. Now, I will turn my focus to Betty Suárez whose character portrays two polarized images to represent Latinas.

III.Who is Betty Suárez?

Betty Suárez is a young Mexican woman who lives with her father Ignacio, older sister Hilda, and nephew Justin in the borough of Queens. The show's central theme is a minority struggling to fit into the American way of life (Guzmán; Berriero). From the beginning of the show's first season, stereotypes of Latinas are utilized to portray Betty's Hispanic background. In the pilot episode Betty strives to land a job in the corporate world of Meade Enterprise, an elite fashion magazine company in New York City. The reason that Betty gets hired by the company is not for her knowledge and skills in fashion, but instead to discourage the owner's son Daniel Meade,

the vice president, from sleeping around with his personal secretaries. When Betty is hired her foreign, unattractive, and geeky appearance automatically places her outside of the in-crowd at Meade. Betty struggles to keep up with the fashion image of all of her coworkers and is often ridiculed about her taste in clothes, food, and her Latin looks. Guzmán states, "Betty is not feminine enough or is too weirdly feminine to be sexually desireable" (143). There is particular emphasis placed on Betty's ugly looks, her subordinate role at Meade, and her personal relationships.

In some ways Betty's character is the antithesis of Gloria Delgado Pritchett. Betty's Mexican image resembles the minority Latina look alike of Sonia Sotomayor's Puerto Rican ethnicity. Like Sotomayor, Betty is short, plump, has dark eyes and hair, and brown skin tone. As mentioned before, she is characterized as an awkward and geeky looking woman who appears to have no penchant or taste for fashion. Her Latin look aims to portray a Latina who doesn't belong in a professional context, a social misfit. Her eyebrows are overgrown and her braces are so big it exaggerates her ugly looks. Betty wears brightly colored clothing which helps to "tropicalize" her. According to Guzmán, America Ferrara has made remarks that she identifies with her *Ugly Betty's* character and indicated that she also considers herself as, "one who does not belong but who is inherently good and valuable" (130). Betty's story is relatable for viewers because it portrays the typical "ugly duckling" narrative that so many people can identify with. She has no committed relationship, except to her on again off again boyfriend Walter, who was found cheating on Betty with one of her neighbors, known as the town tramp. From my perspective, Betty's stereotypical portrayal as a minority is a misrepresentation of Latinas, claiming that minorities are all ugly, poor, naïve, and insecure.

Betty does everything possible to keep her job as a secretary. She spends long days and puts in extra hours working and doing favors for Daniel while he continues to sleep around with

his other secretaries. Betty shows that she has a good work ethic in contrast to her sister Hilda and demonstrates that her work has more value for her than her family time. Betty's character refutes the stereotype of the lazy Latina. As Betty grows into Daniel's assistant/slave, she forgets about her responsibilities at home. She doesn't even make it to her father's birthday party because she is asked by Daniel to stand watch outside of his apartment so that he could sleep with a prior girlfriend. Betty is given stereotypical characteristics that Latinas are best recognized for, such as a domestic worker. However, she is depicted as a responsible Latina with a good work ethic.

The humor behind *Ugly Betty* resides in the fact that, despite her disregard for appearance, looks play a major role for this show's success. The Latina stereotypes utilized by the show's producers exaggerate well spread common places about the way Latinas talk, dress, and are like in real life. The producers' use of bright colors, Latin music, food (like empanadas and Corona Beer), and language are all signifiers of *Latinidad* according to Guzmán et al. In the pilot episode Betty wears a colorful poncho that reads Guadalajara to her first interview at Meade. The poncho represents her ties to her Mexican culture and also her social class. The Poncho marks Betty as a Mexican and low-class American citizen next to the second interviewee, a tall beautiful blond, who is wearing a more sophisticated and fashionable looking poncho marking her social rank above Betty's. The humor behind this episode is that it is ridiculing the idea that all Mexicans wear Ponchos, as a way to identify with *Latinidad.* Betty's Latina image resembles the Indian or perhaps the *mestiza* Latina image that Anzaldúa was describing about her own Latin identity. Betty's ugliness is also emphasized as a stark contrast next to the beautiful blonde. Her looks challenge the stereotype that all Latinas are beautiful sexy and exotic like her sister Hilda or Gloria from *Modern Family.*

Ferrara was also cast in the (2002) American independent film *Real Women have Curves* to play the role of Ana García, a first generation Mexican-American teenager. The movie debuted at the Sundance film festival winning several prizes and awards. In (2002) the film won the Best Audience and Humanitas Awards. In addition it was also given special recognition by the National Board Review for excellence in film making according to *IMDb.com* website. Ferrara was nominated for the Young Artist award in 2003 for Best Performance in a feature film and Leading Young Actress. The famous Latina actress Lupe Ontiveros was also nominated for an award for playing Ana's mother, Carmen García. It was estimated that the film brought over five million dollars and was well received by critics according to *Box Office Mojo* (2002)*, the *New York Times* (2013), and *IMDb.com* (2002). According to several critics the movie gained its popularity among viewers because it portrayed an accurate and real image of women in general and Latinas in particular. Roger Ebert from the *Chicago Sun-Times* states "*Real Women Have Curves* is a reminder of how rarely the women in the movies are real" (IMBd.com, 2002). Lisa Schwarzbaum from *Entertainment Weekly* indicates how *Real Women Have Curves* producer's ability to address real issues on economic and health that minorities experience daily adds to this movie's success. Jami Bernard from *New York Daily News* mentions how the movie will draw attention to viewers that average over size 12, because of the way it portrays the real body image of most women (IMDb.com, 2002). The movies central theme focuses on female body images. Ana García struggles with her own appearance as an overweight Latina teenager. Like Betty Suárez, Ana is also intelligent. She wants to apply to Columbia University and is encouraged by her teacher Mr. Guzman (George López). Ana's mother does not approve of Ana's decision to go to college and discourages her so that she can stay behind to help her older sister Estela (Ingrid Oliu) in her dress making factory. As Carmen works at Estela's factory, Ana's father works as a landscaper. It is evident that Ana fears for her daughter's safety and is prohibiting her from entering into a world

that is foreign and unfamiliar to her. The Garcia's live in East Los Angeles, a neighborhood mostly consisting of Mexicans and Chicano- American families. The city neighborhood reflects a Mexican community made up of low-income families and workers. The camera is frequently directed to brightly colored signs and advertisements in Spanish attracting local customers to the city's textile shops, and fruit stands. These shots establish the context of the story in an overpopulated atmosphere presided over by a Mexican flavor.

The only person who does not accept Ana's looks is her mother. By criticizing Ana, Carmen believes she is helping her. Instead of calling her by her name, Carmen calls her daughter "¡Desgraciada!" and "¡Gorda!" (fat). Carmen is not aware that her controlling ways stems from her own regrets over for sacrificing her life in order to raise her family. We learn that as a young girl Carmen's worked to help her parents support their family. Carmen married young and had her two daughters Ana and Estela. We identify with Carmen's anger and controlling ways when she is critical of Ana's values and opinions. When Ana chooses not to follow in the same path of her family's traditions, Carmen becomes bitter and emotional, displaying her sensitive side and demonstrates the emotional Latina stereotype. She uses her behavior as a way to manipulate Ana's feelings and to persuade her to do as she wants. Therefore, the stereotypical image of the traditional "hot' tempered Latina is being down played here because Carmen is acting like she is this way. In a similar way to Carmen, Estela also gave up her life to help support her family. Through Estela, Ana's unmarried sister, we can observe Carmen's ideology. As a result of being overworked, Estela has no time to take care of herself. Estela is also fat. This perpetuates the stereotype that all Latinas are overweight because of their lack of financial resources to secure a good education and adequately provide their family with the proper nutrition and proper health care to sustain a healthy lifestyle. The film is pointing out how environmental factors would have the same effect on anybody, Latina and non-Latinas and that a person's ethnicity has nothing to do with how a person

turns out physically. Therefore in doing this, the film destroys the stereotype that says Latinas are fat because of their ethnicity and because they are poor. Estela represents the Latina that is struggling in American culture. On *WomensHealth.gov* webpage research indicates that Latinos that do not have health insurance are at high risk for heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Mexican-American women are one of the largest groups of Latinas in the United States. According to *WomensHealth.gov* about 3 in 4 Mexican-American women are overweight and obese. This is due to lack of exercise to help manage their weight. In the (2010) article "Fact Sheet: Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity" from the Center of American Progress Leslie Russell states that Latinas have a higher risk of health issues, saying:

> A total of 37.9 percent of Latinos age 20 and over were obese in 2008. Obesity rates were higher in women (43 percent) than men (34.3 percent)… Fourteen percent of Hispanics have been diagnosed with diabetes compared with 8 percent of whites. They have higher rates of end-stage renal disease, caused by diabetes, and they are 50 percent more likely to die from diabetes as non-Hispanic whites.

Latinas are also said to be prone to have health issues because they do not know how to speak English. Latinos are less likely to seek medical care and assistance as a result of the language barrier (Russell, 2010). I believe that the producers of *Real Women Have Curves* were not trying to discriminate against Latinas appearances. Instead they are using humor, environmental, and their economic environment as the reasons for these disparities to demonstrate a point about Latinas and women and how they are perceived. According to them the average women is not skinny and perfect. In fact what they are implying is that all women have flaws and all women are beautiful and have the right to be respected no matter what shape, size, race, and ethnicity they are from.

Estela portrays the obedient and meek Latina. She is also intelligent. In contrast to Ana

Estela has no opportunity to get out of her present job as owner of the factory. This image of Estela positions her in a very American light. She has no time to spend on herself because she is overworked. Estela is sensitive and takes criticism by her family members personally. One day Betty criticizes Estela and calls her factory a "sweatshop". Betty points out to her sister that she is working for very low wages. Estela is insulted and turns to Betty and says "I am proud about what I do". Estela has to convince herself that she is happy. She knows that her future is limited. Rather than support Ana's decision to get to college so that she could make something of her life, Carmen own pride and stubbornness gets in the way when she tries to force her daughter to help with the business. Unlike her sister Estela, Ana has more opportunities. Ana is first generation American living in a culture whose ideologies clash with Mexican tradition. This is observed at the end of the movie when Carmen does not give Ana her blessings or says goodbye when she leaves for New York. Through her daughters decision to go to college Carmen demonstrates her own bitterness about her daughters decision to go to college and in doing so shows a lack of support for Ana's own personal struggles.

Carmen often criticizes her daughter because of her weight. When Ana goes to the factory to work she notices a dress on a mannequin that her sister Estela made. Carmen catches Ana eying the dress and says that the dress will never fit her because of her size. Instead of feeling remorse for hurting Ana's feelings Carmen says, "I only tell you for your own good." It's uncommon to see intelligent Latina characters portrayed on film or television, like Sotomayor's image. Ana is educated and wants more out of her life in the same way that Sotomayor is educated and wanted to become a lawyer and a judge to help others. According to *Real Women Have Curves* and *Ugly Betty*, Latinas that are intelligent are not able to be sexy. In a similar way to Ana and Betty, these television shows portray intelligent women as women that look more like Sotomayor and make them ugly and chubby to represent *Latinidad.* However, *Ugly Betty* also attempts to send positive

messages about the way Betty's character is viewed and suggests a more objective interpretation. In a similar way to Ana García's opinionated, independently minded character, Betty's beauty is based on morals, etiquette and her good-girl image as a loyal Latina, a direct contrast to the character of Gloria Delgado's Latina sexy image on *Modern Family*. These values are what some Americans look for in a character, which makes America Ferrara's character well-liked by viewers.

As Ana grows into her independence knowing that she will leave her mother's authoritative control she gains confidence and becomes comfortable with her body. We can clearly see this when Carmen finds out that Ana lost her virginity. One day Ana decides to lose her virginity to her close friend Jimmy (Brian Sites). As they lie in bed and take off their clothes Jimmy turns off the lights. Ana says "Wait… turn the lights on I want you to see me… [as she looks into the mirror]…see this is what I look like". He responds to Ana showing that he approves of her curves and says "¡Qué bonita!" (How beautiful.). For the first time Ana takes charge of her life. In making the decision to sleep with Jimmy, signifies independence. Not only has Ana taken control of her life, thoughts, actions, but also, and most important, her sense of self separating from her mom's controlling ways. It is interesting to note how Jimmy, a nonLatino is more accepting of Ana's body than her own mother. This scene in the film shows that white Anglo males are the last ones to have the final say about the way that Latinas are valued in the U.S. I see a comparison in the roles that politicians played during Sotomayor's candidacy hearings with regards to their decision to distinguish whether or not she had it in her to be a nonbiased- judge, because of her ethnicity. When Carmen assumes that Ana lost her virginity she criticizes her sharply, exclaiming "You're not only fat… you're a 'puta'." I believe that Carmen's difficulty to embrace her daughter's appearance is a projection of her own prejudices with body image. Recall what Lippman stated in his study, that stereotypes are our own repressed desires. Carmen's strict beliefs and values prohibit her from accepting her daughter's differences. Later at the factory shop Carmen has a change of

heart and in the best way she knows how she tries to compliment her daughter on her looks and says "You're not so bad looking if only you were to lose weight". Ana becomes defensive and says to Carmen "You're overweight too!" In the final scene of the movie, Ana complains that she is too hot to work in the "sweatshop" and begins taking her clothes off. Her mother, appalled at her behavior, asks her to stop. Estela and the rest of the factory workers, however, watch how comfortable Ana is in her bra and panties and they all decide to join her and take their clothes off too. Ana tells her mother that she wants to be respected for who she is and not by the way that she looks. Shocked, Carmen says "Pero ¿qué se han vuelto locas?" (What, have you all gone crazy?). The last scene of the movie ends with the women liberating themselves from being judged by the shape of their bodies. They begin to admire each other's body shapes and compare their cellulite, marking their uniqueness and beauty. Carmen, unable to watch this scene, walks off, demonstrating her own insecurities. The positive message in this movie is that real women take chances, have flaws, are not ashamed of their intelligence and above all, embrace their curves. On the other hand, Betty's ethnic appearance is not as socially accepted by some American audiences. Instead it is her personality and morality that makes her popular and beautiful. The film *Real Women Have Curves* gives American audiences another image in opposition to the television spotlight to identify with Latina and Latino culture. Instead of the stereotypical Latina bombshell Gloria who is obnoxious, insecure, and "hot" tempered in *Modern Family*, Ana García is confident, intelligent, and knows what she wants out of life. She knows that she has a future because she is educated and as a result she is not afraid to take risks. Ana will do what it takes to change her present role of working in the factory, a dead end job with no future, regardless of whether or not she will have her family's approval. Similarly, Betty Suárez jumps to take the job at Meade, an elite magazine company populated by beautiful wealthy people, because she will be able to help her family out financially. Although the co-workers at Meade do not accept her at first because of her unattractive and ethnic

appearance, Betty proves that she is intelligent, talented, creative, and has a strong work ethic. Television does not normally portray characters as often like Ana García and Betty Suárez, who are positive representations of Latinas that are strong willed, educated, and responsible like Sotomayor because of the negative image that Hispanics have in the U.S. It is more common to see Latinas represented as having lesser qualities on American television such as the character Gloria in *Modern Family.*

IV. **Additional Examples of Stereotyping Using Social Status in the Show Ugly Betty:**

Additional themes on the show are the positioning of the characters' social statuses conveyed through the continuous conflicts arising between the characters that live in Queens and those that live in Manhattan. In the second episode from season one, *The Box and The Bunny,* Betty mistakenly loses the proofs to an up incoming issue of the magazine. When Daniel finds out he calls his previous secretary Amanda to retrieve it from Betty's house in Queens. Daniels hyper-sexual, promiscuous and anorexic secretary Amanda (Becky Newton) is terrified when she finds out that the magazine was left behind at Betty's house in Queens. Amanda responds to Daniel, "QUEENS"? The show is stereotyping Queens as a dangerous and impoverished borough. Queens is known for its ethnically diverse population. One generalization about Queens is that some of the neighborhoods are oppressive and dangerous because of the different ethnicities that exist in that area (AskANewYorker.com; Urban Dictionary.com). In the 2012 *New York Times* article titled "Roosevelt Avenue, a Corridor of Vice," Sarah Maslin Nir shows how law enforcement officials have been working on Roosevelt Avenue to stop prostitution and illegal counterfeiting taking place in some Mexican restaurants, Dominican bakeries, Colombian boutiques and nightclubs. Many of those involved in these crimes are said to be men and immigrants working to make money to

support their families. Last year alone, the 115th precinct made 255 arrests in the city (Nir, New York Times, 2012). In the article, "Is New York Safe?" Heather Cross states:

> Many people ask me if New York City is dangerous or scary. Having lived here for many years, I'm constantly surprised at the number of people who have a perception of New York City as dangerous and crime ridden. A lot of this has to do with the depiction of New York City from the 1970s in movies like *Taxi Driver* and in television shows, like NYPD Blue and Law & Order.(Ask.com)

Stereotypes are also used negatively to portray Betty's family and her economic struggles by displaying her home as oppressively small as opposed to her spacious and luxurious office at Meade. Queens is viewed as being dangerous because of the Latin population according to the show.

Betty and her family members are struggling economically. Betty's father doesn't work because he is ill and living illegally in the United States. We learn through the narrative that Betty's mother had passed away. As a result of her death, Betty's role in the family is identified as care taker. She has taken over her mother's role to look after her father. Betty reminds Ignacio to take his medication, and to contact his insurance company, so that he can receive his HMO benefit plan. Ignacio spends his day watching *telenovelas* on a tiny television set, which also indicates that he cannot find a job because of his immigration status. This demonstrates he is irresponsibl because he does not take his role seriously while his young daughter works and provides for the family. Ignacio is also hiding from his daughters that he killed his deceased wife's first husband. Apparently Betty's mother's ex-husband had abused her. In the character of Ignacio *Ugly Betty* is perpetuating the Mexican male stereotype. Ignacio is an unemployed, undocumented and violent criminal. Berg makes reference to Wilson and Gutierrez's study *Minorities in the Media* indicating that, "minorities are represented as prone to violence and are morally lax, and dirty (Rodriguéz 116). According to Clara Rodriguez, Guzmán, Anzaldúa, and Mendible Mexicans and Puerto

Ricans have been portrayed as criminals and delinquents by the media which negatively affects public opinion of their race, as well as relations between various ethnicities. The stereotype of Puerto Ricans as violent individuals, poses them as untrustworthy and dangerous to society. This is why Queens is contrasted with Manhattan on the show so negatively to represent Latinas. In addition Ignacio comes across as the sneaky and criminal Mexican with a violent past.

In contrast to Hilda and Ignacio's negative portrayal, Betty is a good example of the classic underdog that Americans can identify with in a similar way that some could with Sotomayor. I do not believe that *Ugly Betty* is popular because America Ferrara is portraying a Latina. The popularity of the show is due to the fact that she is displayed as an American, with American ideologies**.** Betty portrays a young woman who struggles to meet the demands of American society. She has a difficult time trying to please Daniel as his assistant and has trouble with fitting into the culture at Meade. Betty is often criticized that she does not have what it takes to help Daniel run the business. Eventually she shows that by working hard and staying committed to her goals, she can be, successful. *Ugly Betty* shows that regardless of the way Betty looks, that viewers will accept her flaws, because, they can relate with her character's goals and her ambition to achieve the American dream. In the end, the viewers want Betty to succeed in the same way that they would like to. Guzmán indicates about Betty's character, "She is rarely labeled by the reviewers as Mexican, a more racialized ethnic identity; she is a safely assimilated Latin or Latin American" (128). Betty's character expresses ethnic ambiguity so that American viewers can relate to her. She is not a social threat and does not challenge American values. Betty's role as a klutzy, ugly, and dorky young Latina makes her character funny among American viewers**.** I believe people can relate to her failure, and in a way her mistakes remind people of their own. This side of Betty allows the viewer to feel sympathetic for her character.

Also, Betty's good-girl image is another way for viewers to identify with her *Latinidad.* Betty's placement at Meade allows her to be portrayed as a non-Latina and makes her appear more white than Latina. Betty's ethnic background and her determination to work to support her family is attractive to Hispanic viewers. The year that *Ugly Betty* was aired it was one of the very few shows that portrayed Latina characters. In his article "Why 'Ugly Betty' Was a Really Big Deal" Jorge Rivas states:

> Networks are increasingly targeting Latino viewers, but "Ugly Betty" was the first primetime show to address real issues Latinos in the U.S. face—like immigration laws and trying to assimilate to U.S. culture. Lisa Navarrete, a vice president for the National Council of La Raza says "the plot line illustrated the complexity of the lives of many undocumented immigrants who are otherwise integrated into American life. (ColorLines News for Action, 2012)

One of the problems facing a program like *Ugly Betty* is that at the time that it was on television it existed as one of only handful of representations of Latinos in mainstream television. The problem that I see with the show's representation of Latinas is that it does not portray Betty having any affiliation with her Mexican heritage. For instance, Betty does not speak Spanish like her sister Hilda. According to Guzman:

> References to Betty and her family's ethnic identity are rarely mentioned or significantly incorporated into the show's publicity and story lines, with the exception of the storyline dealing with her father Ignacio's citizenship status (126).

When Betty does show that she values her background she is rejected and criticized by her coworkers at Meade. When Betty offers empanadas to the staff at work, they turn her down with an offensive look. Guzmán states, "Betty's ethnicity, race, and sexuality, her social identity is less significant to the heart of the show than her actions, work ethic, and idealized morals" (128).

Betty's positive image is a positive portrayal of Latinas and challenges the negative ones made about Latinas in history. Betty is a working class woman struggling to juggle her family life and work. Her character makes her easy to identify with, which adds to the show's popularity.

Rodríguez questions in her book *Latin Looks* why some Latinas/os in general do not

identify themselves as Americans. She asks: Why don't Latinos forget all about their ancestry stuff

and just say that they are "American"…. Or why don't they just say that they are Americans or

Hispanics of Hispanic descent"? (4). She then answers:

> With greater time in the United States, Latinos have become clearer about being both
> Latinos and Americans- not one or the other but both. Increasingly, for many U.S- born
> Latinos, to say that one is Latino (or Puerto Rican, Ecuadorian, and so on) implies that they
> are also American. They are Latinos from the United States. Inherent in this definition are
> issues of rights and entitlement legitimate claims to cultural heritages and to political,
> economic, and social rights as citizens of the United States (4).

The majority of Latinos living in the U.S identify themselves as Americans. I believe that

Rodríguez was referring to first generation Latinos who identify themselves more according to

their parents' nationality because they are foreign-born. Guzmán states "Mexicans make up the

majority of U.S Latina/o ethnic group and largest Latin American population in the United

States" (126). There is no way to take the culture away with that many Latinas/os living in the

United States. Betty does not have a heavy accent to indicate that she is Hispanic. Her character

represents second generation Latinas who practice both American and Latin American values and

traditions. She is more assimilated into American Culture than Gloria on the show *Modern Family*.

Guzmán:

> By tapping into a more assimilated construction of Mexican identity as well as more
> Universal story lines regarding the human condition, the show produces less ethnically and
> racially marked Mexican family that is more internationally marketable. (127)

Betty's identity as a Latina is more accepted in popular culture when she is displayed as an

American, or for comedic purposes, making her appear klutzy. Sotomayor's inability to appear

American, or to fit into the sexy, exotic and beautiful stereotype makes her Latin image

unpopular among Americans.

Present day television programs that portray Hispanics negatively have made it difficult for Latinas and Latinos to rise above the minority bar inherent to the characterization of fictional Latinas on some of America's popular TV shows, and limit them from gaining professional and powerful leadership roles in the U.S. On the show *Modern Family* the character Gloria depicts Latinas stereotypically by portraying them as sexy "señoritas" that are insecure, emotional, and materialistic. She is supposed to portray the modern Latina mother and house wife, but instead does not represent them at all. On the show *Ugly Betty,* the characters are portrayed as minorities struggling to fit into American culture. Betty's sister Hilda also portrays the stereotypical sexy "hot" tempered Latina that is uneducated, irresponsible and who does not like to work. Meanwhile, Betty's father is characterized as an undocumented immigrant, meant to represent Latinos and their status as minorities. On the other hand both shows do offer acceptable models of *Latinidad* to some of their American viewers. For instance, the character Gloria on *Modern Family* is popular among American audiences because she plays the sexy Latina bombshell that is funny and entertaining and does not pose a threat to Pritchett American ideologies. In some ways Gloria embodies similar characteristics as Sotomayor, but she is not as intelligent or as powerful and ultimately tends to project the more negative impression that all Latinas resemble her sexy Colombian image. Despite this, Vergara's successful role as Gloria has made her one of the most popular Latina actresses in Hollywood. Ironically, her fictional character is viewed more positively than Sotomayor. Betty Suárez is another favorite Latina character among Americans because she embodies a more positive Latina representation due largely to her good work ethic and her good girl image as a loyal Latina. Her character challenges the common stereotype that Latinas are not educated and are irresponsible. Betty is intelligent, talented, and creative. Although, the show highlights Betty's intelligence, creativity and talent it does still imply that Latinas who are ugly cannot be both smart

and pretty and misrepresents Latinas and Latinos through the use of stereotypes in order to portray Betty's Mexican Family. The movie *Real Women Have Curves* portrays an alternate Latina model through Ana García. The intelligent, confident, and assertive Ana is a powerful representation of a Latina, like Sotomayor. Her character destroys stereotypes that suggest Latinas are unable to have professional jobs and command leadership roles because of their ethnicity and their social status in the United States. Ana García and Betty Suárez resemble Latinas much like Sotomayor who are educated, hardworking and who have good work ethics. Latinas like these are seldom portrayed on television to represent the average Latina. Sotomayor clearly was not accepted as much by some viewers because she is not beautiful and sexy like the Latin Gloria on *Modern Family*. Sotomayor's outspoken and assertive personality poses as a threat to white male figures in power. Many politicians, Republicans and Conservatives feared that Sotomayor would use her ethnic background and her experiences as a judge to liberally influence the Supreme Court decisions. The truth is that some Americans fear that the American culture will actually change if there are more Hispanic people who play more authoritative roles in US Politics. This view is sadly irrational because one of the very best strengths of American culture is its basis in diversity.

Conclusion:

The confirmation hearings of Sonia Sotomayor were ostensibly about scrutinizing her career, her ideas, and her ability as a judge. Eventually, however, they gravitated towards a series of specific instances in her past, the "wise Latina" speech, the "firemen discrimination" decision, her participation in minority support associations, and her declarations that she felt "inadequate" when entering Princeton as a young student. The choice and posterior interpretation of these issues ended up forcing Sotomayor within the narrow confines of the stereotypes of Latinas disseminated in film and TV programs. Concurrently to her nomination two very popular series were spawning old Latina stereotypes into new directions. Looking at both the hearings and the fictional representations of Latinas in *Modern Family* and *Ugly Betty* makes us realize now that the confirmation hearings of Sonia Sotomayor also carried an understated debate about which professions, appearances, and political involvement would be accepted for Latina women in current society and which would not be tolerated by those in power. This debate acquired special urgency at the time given recent census data that made visible the current demographic importance of Latinas in the US, an importance that will be greater as their numbers, education, and professional access grow in the up-coming years.

Sotomayor's "Wise Latina" speech for example, was not well received by many American audiences and in large part due to the decontextualizing comments made in her speech. Her appointment to Supreme Court Justice was equally ill-received and was met with much controversy. Her statement was taken negatively by the conservative media and several Republican politicians. Criticisms of Sotomayor's abilities as a judge were often based on negative stereotypes. She was called a "brown bigot," a "lesbian," a "bully," a "racist," and an

"extreme- liberal judge" by Republican politician Newt Gringrich, Conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh, and Fox News. She was portrayed as displaying a "hot" temper for being outspoken and overly aggressive with the lawyers that she worked with on trials. Sotomayor was also criticized by Conservatives and Senator Sessions for being a part of different organizations meant to honor her Puerto Rican heritage. She was called out on her belief in affirmative action and was labeled as being biased.

Modern Family and Ugly Betty are two television programs that utilize old stereotypes in their attempt to present Latinidad. Gloria Pritchett was created to represent the modern Latina woman. Instead, Gloria is a representation and reiteration of the traditional, emotional, and "hot" Latina woman whose sex appeal gets her whatever she wants from her wealthy American husband. The actress Lupe Vélez, famous for her "Mexican spitfire" image in Hollywood movies, was well received by American audiences because of her exotic features and sex appeal. Vélez's outspoken nature, her feistiness, and temperamental disposition made her character comical and entertaining much in the same way as the character Gloria, for whom aspects of her personality were reflected by her broken English, on Modern Family. These are some of the typical hackneyed images used by present day TV producers to portray Latinas in their television programs and placing them in the same category. In contrast to Sotomayor's Latin appearance, Gloria is beautiful and sexy, making women envious and want to mimic her. Gloria is a nonnative who does not speak English well, she is naïve and jobless. Gloria's role is to fulfill Jay's sexual fantasies and be a submissive wife. Gloria plays the stereotypical materialistic, trophy wife for Jay to show off. The show pokes fun at Latinas who believe that being sexy is the only way that wealthy American men will lay their eyes on them. Sofia Vergara is presented on magazines and commercials in a similar manner as on the show, further contributing to stereotypes of Latinas. Lehman states, "Gloria embodies perceptions many Americans have

102

regarding Latin American women, such as passive, dependent on men, and hot tempered…and sexy" (3). According to Mendible the Latina sexy stereotypes is a way to entertain American audiences and fulfill their expectations of Latinas.

This show does not display that Latinas are like Sonia Sotomayor: intelligent, independent, articulate, professionally ambitious, socially committed, and strong minded. Instead, *Modern Family* creates the opposite of anything that Sotomayor represents or has achieved independently as an American Latina model. As mentioned before Gloria is a trophy wife for Jay to show off and that is about all that Latinas are worthy of. Lehman states, "Modern Family gives an inaccurate image of the reality and impact of women in the U.S society has created" (3). I agree with Lehman that Latina women qualities are often determined by old fashioned views by the way they have been perceived poorly by the media and that, the continuation of these generalizations on television does not represent the real social problems that they face in present times. The show does not explore the modern Latin American model of a Sonia Sotomayor, someone who has taken herself out of poverty through her education and hard work and has achieved her dreams. Latinas such as Sonia Sotomayor are not popular among American audiences.

The show *Ugly Betty* generates similar negative characteristics about Latinas but also challenges stereotypes in its presentation of Betty Suárez and her Mexican family. In contrast to Gloria, Betty does not play the sexy Latina. Instead she is awkward, unattractive, and has no penchant for fashion. In fact it is Betty's sister Hilda who plays the stereotypical Latina from Queens who wears tight form fitting clothes and make-up. However, Betty's ugliness is how she is able to land her job as Daniels secretary at the elite magazine Meade Enterprise. In a similar

way to Sotomayor, Betty is the stereotypical Latina who struggles to fit into American culture at the magazine company. Betty portrays a different stereotype: unlike her sister Hilda and Gloria from *Modern Family,* Betty displays low self-esteem. Her social position as a Mexican from Queens makes Betty appear as someone who does not belong, a social misfit. In a similar way that Sotomayor appeared under-qualified as the next nominee because of her upbringing in the Bronx and her Puerto Rican background, Betty struggled to land a job at the affluent magazine company as a result of her Mexican characteristics. *Ugly Betty* reinforces the stereotype that Latinas are lazy and irresponsible by portraying Betty's family as illegal immigrants and criminals because of their Mexican background and low-economic status. However, American audiences have accepted Betty Suárez's character because she reflects American values and also because she does not pose as a threat to American ideologies.

In fact, these same perceptions provide evidence that Sotomayor was correct when she pointed out, "some people are limited in their ability to understand the experiences of others, and others simply do not care" (Alcoff 123). The speech entitled "What is a Wise Latina" was intended to influence Latino students and future lawyers in a positive way so that they could see the real value of their lives and experiences had and how they could become an asset rather than a hindrance.

As the daughter of immigrant Puerto Rican parents, and an American citizen herself, Sotomayor's embracing of her personal life story to enrich her academic background and her way of practicing the law, offers a powerful role- model for Latina women that may feel that their life as minorities may be a burden to grow professionally and that their options in the United States are limited. According to Pew Hispanic research Center Latinos are the fastest

growing minority group in the United States. Mark Hugo and Paul Taylor demonstrate in their

article "Latino Voters in the 2012 Election" the way that Latinos had a huge impact in the

success of President Barrack Obama's 2012 re- election. Hugo and Taylor indicate:

> Latinos voted for President Barack Obama over Mitt Romney by 71% to 27% according to an analysis of exit polls by the Pew Hispanic Center, a project of the Pew Hispanic Center…Obama's national vote share among the voters is the highest by a Democratic candidate since 1996, when President Bill Clinton won 72% of the Hispanic vote… The centers analysis finds that Latinos made up 10% of the electorate, as indicated by the National exit poll up from 9% in 2008 and 8% in 2004. The analysis also shows that as a group, non-white voters made up 28% of the nation's electorate, up from 28% in 2008.

With more Latinos living in the United States their involvement in our culture will have a

positive role in our American future. Sotomayor has demonstrated through personal

determination to overcome hardship, her commitment to education, and her work as a judge, that

Latinas can change their lives and be successful regardless of their sex, race, and ethnicity. I

believe that the image of Latinas in America will change in the future as more Latinas take on

leadership roles. I am hopeful that with the large population of Hispanics living in the United

States, and the models offered by people like Sotomayor, that more Latinas contest and

transcend the stereotypical ways through which they are represented so that American audiences

can view them not by the few narrow perspectives traditionally available and that their

contribution to American culture is recognized and valued.

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