

Q'VIVA: THE CHOSEN: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL OF
LATINOS IN A REALITY TV SHOW

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Master of Arts

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the portrayal of Latinos in a reality television show, *Q'Viva*. In the current political climate shaped largely by the media in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, Latino immigrants, as well as citizens, have come under intense scrutiny in American media. Countering dominant and stereotypic trends in the mainstream media, a new television format is allowing minorities, Latinos in particular, a place in the televisual environment. Reality television is becoming a staple on major television networks and may be a pedagogical resource in advancing intercultural interaction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. Introduction.....	1
Research Questions.....	5
II. Literature Review.....	6
The Post 9/11 World.....	6
The Media as a Socializing Agent.....	9
Media and Race.....	11
Media and Politics.....	13
Media Frames.....	15
Latinos in the Media.....	17
Reality TV.....	20
Reality TV as Pedagogy.....	23
Race and Reality TV.....	25
III. Methods.....	30
IV. Findings.....	35
Why study reality TV?.....	35
The Journey.....	37
Motivation: Family.....	39
Motivation: Pride.....	42
Experiencing Latino Culture.....	44
Culture Clash.....	48

Struggle.....	53
Perseverance.....	56
Unity.....	58
V. Discussion.....	61
Reality Show Comparison.....	61
Themes.....	68
Latino Images.....	71
Implications.....	74
Limitations.....	77
Future Research.....	80
Conclusion.....	81
References.....	83
Appendix.....	91

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Context

One of the most politicized issues today is the debate over immigration. Since the attacks of September 11, the immigration issue has been thrust into the spotlight of American politics. As Hansen (2009) states, "Since the 9/11 attacks on the United States, border insecurity has become one of the most controversial and contentious public policy issues." (340) The media, which contributes to Americans' understanding of the debate, has been charged by scholars of increasing the conflict of such politically charged issues. Soderlund (2007) describes how media customs guide topic narratives, "journalistic norms and news standards require that a news story present controversial issues as 'value choices' and that these stories try to create a perception of heightened conflict." (p. 171) The media have been credited with creating a competitive tone regarding divisive issues. "The structure of the mainstream mass media [is] based on a competitive environment that flourishes on controversy." (De la Fuente, 2010, p. 88) This controversy is evident in the media's framing of immigration issues.

Frames focus the narrative of the debate in the media. Sparrow (2008) details this, "Framing refers to the media's capacity to identify and categorize particular political issues by virtue of the media's choices of and emphases on which aspects of issues to report." (p. 584) According to Brooks and Rada (2002), this framing affects race relations in the U.S., "The meaning of race and specific racial categories are defined and contested throughout society in collective action and personal practice, which include media discourses about race." (p. 117) Research indicates the media has been less than efficient

in covering the immigration debate. Rubio (2011) characterizes the media's coverage on this issue, "the media coverage of the immigration debate in the United States in recent years—inaccurate, incomplete, and insufficient. (p. 50) According to the *Hispanic Outlook on Higher Education* (2006), one study released by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists found that of the 18 stories on Latinos published in prominent magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*), twelve focused solely on the issue of immigration. The representation of immigration issues in the media affects not just immigrant Latinos, but all Latinos.

Polarized depictions surrounding immigration have persisted in the media. Rubio (2011) states, "there [has been] an "undeniable" consensus that the media framing around illegal immigration was stuck in a simplistic, us-vs.-them, black-or-white, conflict-driven narrative, often featuring the same voices making familiar arguments." (p. 51) Combatting the polarity produced by the media, new media formats are developing with the potential to illustrate the debate through narrative and consideration. Recently, a new genre has emerged that allows the audience and the performers to do precisely that.

Reality television has become a prominent feature on prime-time television. "The popular press reported that 63.4 million people cast votes for the spring 2006 finale of *American Idol*, which is more than those who cast votes for George Bush in the 2004 presidential election." (Godlewski and Perse, 2010, p. 148) This statistic points to the fact that more Americans are tuned in to pop culture than politics in American society. In this newly prevalent genre of reality TV, the blending of real and artificial is blurred, and emotions are amplified, as viewers follow the stories of actual people and not simply characters in a story. "Like precision sentiments captured in the packaged greeting card,

reality TV monologues exploit the commodity features of the emotion by heightening the sense of intimacy between speaker and audience." (Bonsu, Darmody, Parmentier, 2010, p. 100) The genre of reality television has many formats in representing the 'real.' There is documentary reality, where the ordinary and everyday citizen is suddenly thrust into stardom as cameras follow them around in the routine of their daily lives, sample shows include *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, several *Housewives* series, *Supernanny*, and *Wife Swap*. Other formats of reality television include news programs, courtroom dramas (examples include *Judge Judy*, *Divorce Court*, and *People's Court*), talk shows (such as *Jerry Springer*, *Maury Povich* and *Dr. Phil*), and game shows such as: *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, and *Biggest Loser*, that stick contestants in the same living space as audiences watch the characters battle it out in winner-take-all competitions.

It is a phenomenon that has engaged an immense following as entire seasons are dedicated to following a core group of participants as they engage in producer constructed versions of daily life. Reality shows take time, are shown for several weeks and reveal the personal lives and backgrounds of the characters involved. "Because of the nature of the programs, they encourage viewers to attend to and become involved with ordinary people in extraordinary settings." (Godlewski and Perse, 2010, p. 149) The audience is allowed to look in on the cast in their homes, with their families, and as they struggle when real life takes an ugly turn. It is through this intimate and revealing medium that two newly divorced pop culture idols have chosen to portray the Latino culture.

QViva! The Chosen is a show created by Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony to showcase the talent, and more significantly, the lives of performers from several different

Latin American countries, as well as the U.S. What makes this show unique is its ability to discuss the Latino culture through stories that call for purposeful deliberation. Beyond the framing of the issues in the mass media, are real people with real lives, who may come from different places and backgrounds, but who can unite to achieve a common goal. It is a show aimed at renegotiating the image of Hispanics in the media. In the words of Jennifer Lopez in the opening credits, "This is my chance to ring that bell, we are Latino and this is who we are." *QViva* offers a new kind of reality that is less about competition and more about the narrative of each individual performer's life. It is about the characteristics of the Latino community and the human spirit that transcends cultural boundaries.

Through six, sixty to eighty-six minute episodes, Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony along with Jamie King travel the globe in search of talented acts for a live Las Vegas performance to be showcased in the United States. Unlike any other reality show, the producers seek out the talent, visit their homes, engage with their families and hear each prospective performer's story. Even though most of the dialogue in the show takes place in Spanish (captions are used for the convenience of the American audience), *QViva* was broadcast on an English station, the Fox network. It was intended to reach a mainstream audience and to deliver a significant message about the Latino identity, which is diverse, complex, and quite contrary to the often unilateral and singular representation of Latinos shown in the mainstream media.

In the following chapters, I will discuss the media's illustration of the immigration debate, as well as, the general portrayal of Hispanics on television. Chapter two will consider the literature on the mainstream media and its use of framing on such a

significant cultural issue and how a new genre of media may allow for alternative perspectives. In Chapter three, I will describe the necessary use of qualitative content analysis to uncover relevant themes from media episodes. In Chapter 4 I will identify my findings using discursive elements from the show including both verbal and nonverbal elements transcribed from each episode. And finally, in chapter 5, I will discuss the implications of my findings and answer the following research questions: (1) What makes *QViva* unique in the context of reality television? (2) What messages and themes emerge from the journey of the talent search to the final show? And lastly, (3) how does *QViva* both counter and promote the portrayal of Latinos in the media and what potential pedagogical affects may it have on the general population?

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will describe the context of the post-9/11 world which helped to bring immigration to the forefront as a cultural and political issue. I will also describe the significance of the messages and meanings found in our media with regards to Latino culture and how the media has portrayed Hispanics in the past, as well as, the representations it advances today. Finally, I will discuss the genre of reality TV and the characteristics of this format that early research suggests may engage the audience on a pedagogical level.

The Post 9/11 World

A catalyst for immigration taking center stage in our political debates, mass media, and cultural conversations was the September 11 attacks in 2001. According to Doty (2007), "After 9/11, anti-immigrant forces were able to link their agenda to national security by drawing on the fears and uncertainty that resulted from the attacks." (p. 123) The 'war on terror' was not just on distant and remote lands, but was utilized in addressing political issues here at home. "Under the rubric of fighting terrorism, the government has vigorously pursued the objective of cutting down on the numbers of so-called 'illegal immigrants' and 'criminal aliens' within the nation's border." (Murray, 2010, p. 15) It has been more than ten years since the World Trade Center was brought down in the most horrific terrorist attack on U.S. soil ever accomplished. Still, the social and political outcomes are still being felt in communities all over the country. Many of these outcomes have affected immigrant minorities in the U.S. despite the lack of evidence that immigration policies had any role in the terrorists' ability to enter the

United States. According to Doty (2007), "none of the 9/11 hijackers entered the United States through the Mexico-U.S. border." (p. 114) In addition Griswold (2002) states "they [the terrorists] all arrived in the United States with valid temporary nonimmigrant tourist or student visas. None of them arrived via Mexico. None of them were Mexican." (p. 17) What emerged from a time of shock and panic in the aftermath of 9/11 has helped to garner mass media attention to the immigration issue, particularly in regards to Latinos.

Some researchers claim discriminating policies have emerged, including racial profiling, allowing for the detention or arrest of Latinos based on 'perceived' immigration status. "Racial profiling has become a generic term that describes the practice of targeting racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities by law enforcement agencies for stops, searches, or arrest." (Bah, 2006, p. 78) For example, one bill proposal is cited by Barreto (2009), "Proposition 187 denied public services to undocumented immigrants and required public employees to report suspected illegal immigrants." Miah (2010) describes another bill, Arizona's SB 1070, "The new law states that cops must (not merely can) stop all individuals who they determine have a 'reasonable suspicion' of being 'illegal.'" (p. 2) In response to Arizona's new law proposal, one reporter had this to say,

"At least we don't have to pretend anymore,' writes African-American columnist Eugene Robinson of The Washington Post. "Arizona's passing of that mean-spirited, new immigration law wasn't about high-minded principle or the need to maintain public order. Apparently it was all about putting Latinos in their place." (Miah, 2010, p. 2)

The media's portrayal of the debate surrounding these propositions included, "extensive coverage of the marches in local and national television, newspaper, and radio outlets [which] pushed immigration to the top of the political agenda and onto Sunday morning news shows." Nairn, Raymond, Pega, Frank and McCreanor (2006) charge that the, "media focused on the tactics of protest rather than the injustices that stimulated the protest." (p. 191) The framing of new immigration policies did not affect all immigrants, but most especially Latinos, and not just immigrant Latinos, but even American citizens were targeted.

Researchers suggest that even American-born Latinos have been detained by deportation agencies. Murray (2010) tells us, "Given the haste with which people are processed for deportation...and the fact that they are not entitled to a lawyer under immigration law, it is not surprising that legal residents and even US citizens have been deported." (p. 16) Hing (2006) generally states, "The vast powers embodied in the law provide expanded authority to search, monitor, and detain citizens and non-citizens alike." (p. 197) He goes on to indicate, "we would not have caught the hijackers if the new systems were in place prior to 9/11." (Hing, 2006, p. 115) Griswold (2002) more dramatically states, "Sealing the Mexican border with a three-tiered, 2,000 mile replica of the Berlin Wall patrolled by thousands of U.S. troops would not have kept a single September 11 terrorist out of the United States." (p. 17) In fact, it may have done more harm than good. As Rodriguez (2008) indicates, "These national-security-related immigration policies... are exacerbating existing tensions and producing new sets of ethnic and racialized conflicts in the United States." (p. 379) On a more global scale, Bah (2006) declares, "The critical question is how democratic is a country that violates

the civil liberties of minorities and fails to give them equal protection of the law." (p. 77)

It is a question largely ignored by the media.

However, the link between terrorism and immigration persists in the mainstream media. De la Fuente (2010) explains the media's narrow narrative of the immigration issue, "Not only has the media fashioned a fearful population, but they have successfully maintained a narrative that does not allow for alternative issues to be addressed with the immigration paradigm." (p.70) Cisneros (2008) expands the argument, "Not only are images of crime and terrorism used to connote the dangers of unchecked illegal immigration, they also provide avenues for media to call for particular governmental actions to address these problems". (p. 586) These governmental actions do not just affect undocumented Latinos, but American Latinos as well.

The rhetoric over immigration has affected the entire Latino population. As Martinez (2008) indicates, "many Latinos found themselves either directly or indirectly targeted by anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiments." (p. 560) In a study of racial attitudes and television viewing, Ramasubramanian (2010) describes the effect of television's influence on public perceptions, "Real world beliefs toward...Latino-Americans closely paralleled perceptions of how typical members of these groups were portrayed on television." (p. 115) Mendoza (2012) describes the experience of many Latinos, "Whether you're fourth generation or a recent immigrant, you are always marginalized by the color of your skin." (p. 14) This marginalization exists not only in society, but also in the media.

The Media as a Socializing agent

A primary influencer in allowing and legitimizing the cultural climate at large is the media. As Sparrow (2008) indicates, "Almost all of what Americans know about national politics, the U.S. government, their fellow citizens and the larger world is communicated through the media." (p. 579) The media are purveyors of discourse that help to shape American culture. McKenzie-Elliot (2001) further endorses this argument, "The media are powerful agents of socialization in modern society influencing values, beliefs, and attitudes of the culture that produces them." (p. 3) In her article, Mitu (2011) illustrates the all-encompassing influence of television, describing it as, "interwoven in the fabric of everyday life, dominating leisure time, shaping people's political opinions and social behaviors and providing materials in which people build their own identity." (p. 897) In a more summing statement, Olivares (1998) found that, "representations do not exist in isolation nor are they self-contained entities." (p. 432) More specifically, he illustrates how this is accomplished,

Images and ideas are contained within society and culture and are organized, orchestrated, and activated through language in its intrinsic connection with meaning. That is how we come to know of cultural experiences and life processes. (Olivares, 1998, p. 432)

Television is especially powerful because of its location in our lives. Bottinelli (2012) states, "Television is considered more egalitarian than other audio-visual media because it reaches many viewers from many different strata of society in the personal sphere of their homes." (p. 306) The intimate and personal space occupied by television, allows this medium an influential role in the lives of many Americans.

With such an instrumental role in American society, many question the incontrovertible authority with which the media are able to operate. "Media theorists and researchers, both local and international, have little doubt that the mass media are hugely influential, but remarkably unaccountable sources of made meanings and reality maintenance in contemporary societies." (Nairn, Pega and McCreanor, 2006, p. 192) The media is a powerful agent in American democracy that grants every member of society a voice. As Austin (2011) points out, "In an age where the next great technological advancement is just five minutes away, one might think American society has access to a plethora of information to make us better informed," but as he points out, "with a few Big Media companies controlling all facets of communication such as radio, television, cable, newspapers and the Internet, we are reading and seeing recycled stories that cater to a majoritarian audience." (p. 734) The danger is in creating the illusion that every voice sounds in unity. Boyle, Chanda, Hardenbergh, Henley, and Rio (2008) describe this, "One of the principal effects of media mega-conglomeration is homogeneity in news content and lack of democracy in meaning-making. It is not accidental that whether we listen to the radio, read local or national papers, or watch television news shows, we are subjected to similar perspectives." (p. 755) They go on to criticize the media on this point, "commercial media outlets perform a spectacle of truth, creating the illusion of debate." (Boyle et. al, 2008, 755) Ramasubramanian (2010) warns, "Media representations that are consistent and intense become mentally available for influencing real-world perceptions, beliefs, and values." (p. 107) This is considerably evident when it comes to race relations in the U.S.

Media and Race

The very concept of race is a social construct that has been influentially shaped, in part, by the media. Its interpretation and dissemination in the media is worth exploring. Katznew (2011) observes, "Considering the widespread reach of the television media, and the considerable time people invest in watching, it is imperative to analyze the images and the depictions (and particularly repeated stereotypes) viewers are presented regarding race, ethnicity and gender." (p. 303) Cisneros (2008) illuminates the role of visual media's impact on race relations, "Visual images create social visions, constitute identities, create publics, and influence individual and group interrelationships." (p. 573) The media's interpretations help to guide society's understandings of race. Wolfgang (2006) describes the negotiation of racial affiliation, "People do not simply choose affiliations, they have to negotiate them with others and are positioned within them by others." (p. 109) Media's narrative is a dynamic influencer in negotiating and assigning those affiliations.

Through discourse, both in the media and in the real world, the narrative of categorizations is deliberated. "It is through discourse - a regulated system of writing, speaking, and ultimately, producing knowledge about the world - and especially media discourse, that we construct and share understandings about race." (Brooks and Rada, 2002, p. 118) Wolfgang (2006) agrees, "Discursive negotiation is at the heart of the matter." (p.109) He goes on to discuss how the media's classifications and categorizations of race organize society, "Questions of when to bring up a story, how to frame it, what to leave out and what to integrate, are all relevant for negotiating position and affiliation." (p. 109) Ramasubramanian (2010) continues this thought, "Through habitual exposure to television, media stereotypes become part of the dominant symbolic environment." (p.

103) Researchers describe how media is involved in the social construction of race.

"Since social reality is socially constructed and the mass media provide frameworks for constructing that reality, then among the media's more conspicuous roles is its contribution to our understanding of race." (Brooks and Rada, 2002, p. 115) While the power dimensions regarding race have been constructed socially, their legitimization has been enacted politically.

Media and Politics

On television, the images and perceptions we see, have an influential affect on not only people, but policies. Soderlund (2007) describes how the media impacts the very laws and policies that guide our society, "The news media is a powerful tool because it provides the public with crucial information; but more importantly, the manner in which news pieces are presented can determine how viewers form their opinions about different public issues." (p. 167) Ramasubramanian (2010) argues, "Heavy television viewers tend to internalize the media's messages (such as televised portrayals of racial/ethnic outgroups) as being valid and realistic." (p. 107) The media is an influencer of people, of society, and even of the legislation that guides us all. Sparrow (2008) makes this clear, "for practical purposes, media reality *is* political reality." (p. 579) What happens on television screens and, consequently in family homes around the country, has a real impact in our daily lives.

It should be obvious in all cases that these processes are not mental exercises, but urgent social contests involving such concrete political issues as immigration laws, the legislation of personal conduct, the constitution of orthodoxy, the legitimization of violence and/or insurrection. (Said, 1994, p. 331)

The images in the media have very real consequences in the living world. Lugo-Lugo (2012) describes the consequences of the media's images, "These perceptions, along with a barrage of reports of Latinos being harassed, beaten, incarcerated, detained, and deported tell us that the category un-American has been extended to include Latinos, and in many cases without regard for citizenship." (p. 72) In the minds of many Americans, the difference between immigrant Latinos and Latino citizens is often blurred as a consequence of the televisual politics encountered daily in the media.

The laws regarding immigration have been most notably reinforced through legislative acts being initiated all across the country. "As the years have passed, both the public and the press have been increasingly conditioned to accept just about any measure draped in the verbal garb of 'national security'" (Murray, 2010) The legislation regarding immigration policy came down promptly and swiftly after 9/11 in what Doty (2007) called, "a rash of nationwide immigration measures aimed at denying undocumented migrants access to jobs, healthcare, homes, and legal protection." From Colorado's 2006 law, which limited public benefits for illegal immigrants, to Indiana's 2011 law, which allowed for warrantless arrests of suspected illegal immigrants (The Washington Post, June 26, 2012), legislation targeting a specific group of people has been implemented across the country. According to the Spartanburg Herald (2008), "more than 35 bills have been introduced" by the states, even though "immigration is a federal issue." Such legislation is not without consequences. Hing (2006) acknowledges how new laws have, "diverted resources from more pressing counterterrorism needs, strained relations... and alienated immigrants." (204) Some scholars blame the media and its silence on civil liberties for the current environment surrounding Latinos. "Many commentators,

including members of the media itself, say the press has failed to do its job as the guardian of democracy." (Abdolian and Takooshian, 2003, p. 1434) Researchers argue that renewed governmental immigration efforts have met little resistance from the mainstream media. As Abdolian and Takooshian (2003) point out, "Very few news reports discussed the dangers involved in pushing aside civil liberties during a national crisis." (p. 1434) Now, over a decade later, it is time to reconsider the media frames that got us here.

Media Frames

Media frames disregard the complex in favor of what can be most simply stated. De la Fuente (2010) describes the utility of frames, explaining that "frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed and above all, how it will not be discussed." (p. 62) Frames in the media narrow the scope of an issue, leaving very little room for compromise and collaboration.

Frames give shape to what gets focused on in a policy dispute and what gets eclipsed. They highlight a particular version of the issues and tell a particular story. They influence political and public perceptions of what the problem is and how it may be resolved. In so doing, frames eclipse other ways of seeing the "problem" and, therefore, other ways to resolve the issues. (Mukherjee, 2000, p. 33)

Frames structure the parameters and the content of the argument. Without many resources of their own, the American public is largely dependent upon the media to supply them with the information of the day and has little means to counter or broaden

the spectrum of debate, though the advent of new media technologies is beginning to change this.

The issues of race and ethnicity are simply too complex for TV in today's culture. "The U.S. public has been trained to view the news in a certain way that is quick, snappy, exciting and adventurous." (De la Fuente, 2010, p. 57) According to the literature, media firms often use embellishment to garner the attention of viewers. De la Fuente (2010) states it this way, "Mass media... relies on sensationalism to compete financially with fellow TV stations." (p. 88) Nafziger (2009) contends that, "Encouragement from media personalities stirred the normal debate about immigration. The debate became shrill and polarized, if not downright venomous." (p. 561) The amplified frames used by the media have influenced public perceptions of immigration and Latinos, in general.

The media portrayal of race relations often ignores the conversation regarding Latinos. McKenzie-Elliott (2001) states, "story lines dealing with such issues as prejudice, discrimination, and interracial or interethnic relationships focused primarily on Black-Anglo relations." (p. 27) In an era of soundbites and snappy headlines, there is little time for a thorough investigation of race. "There is a dichotomous, either/or narrative [in the media]" which "leaves little room for more diverse and complex representations." (Bell-Jordan, 2008, p. 360) Due to the near omission of discussion about the Latino population, "ambivalence and ambiguity have always characterized the racial status of Latinos." (Padin, 2005, p. 50) As far as the media is concerned, Pinto (2002) agrees, "Hispanics remain one of the least represented groups in Hollywood." (p. 19) In fact, according to Olivares (1998), one study showed that "51% of all Latinos on television could be found on just two series." (p. 429) He goes on to discuss the

consequences of this reality, "The omission deprives an entire community of a source of cultural pride and reality and the country-at-large of a true picture of the American mosaic, thus deepening the racial and ethnic rifts that divide us." (Pinto, 2002, p. 20) The portrayal, and even significant absence, of Latinos in the media provides researchers commentary on the state of Latino perceptions in society.

Latinos in the Media

The media's influence has a two-pronged approach. "Both the quantity and quality of Latino images in the media may reflect and reinforce the place of Latinos in United States society." (McKenzie-Elliot, 2001, p. 3) The negative images and minimal depictions of the Latin American culture on television is a reflection of society at large. In his own research of *Ugly Betty*, an American show whose lead character is a smart Latina, but as the title implies 'ugly,' Esposito (2009) states, "Representations of Latinos/as reflect larger societal issues." (p. 525) As Ramasubramanian (2010) states, "Television has a longstanding history of underrepresenting, marginalizing, and caricaturing non-White characters in that media." (p. 103) American media has helped to create a strained relationship with the Latino community. Beckham (2005), in his research on films about the U.S.-Mexico border points out, "Accordingly, media forces---initially newspapers and now cinema---have generally only added to the bad blood between the two countries through continued stereotypic portrayals and skewed ideological constructs." (p. 131) Many of the original representations of Latinos that began in the advent of mass media continue today.

Even when they are shown, often Latinos are negatively portrayed. Mastro and Behm-Marowitz (2005) characterize the roles of Latinos in the media, "Content analyses

have also established that, when depicted, Latinos have historically been confined to a narrow set of stereotypic, oftentimes negative, characterizations." (p. 111) The authors go on to categorize the portrayals, "They include the criminal, the law enforcer, the Latin lover, the Harlot, and the comic/buffoon." (Mastro and Behm-Marowitz, 2005, p. 111) McKenzie-Elliott (2001) describes one media-activist's sentiment, "Alex Nogales, chairman of the National Hispanic Media Coalition, asserted, 'Not only have we been penalized and offended by being excluded [from television], but we're being insulted with the kinds of roles we get.'" (p. 2) Summarizing her findings, McKenzie-Elliott (2001) found that, "Latinos were not only ignored [on television], but when portrayed were often stereotyped and ridiculed." (p.1) With little time to invest in meaningful dialogue and discussion, the media must quickly capture the ever-fleeting attention of the American audience and stereotypical portrayals serve a simplifying purpose.

In an effort to engage an attention deficient audience, characters must be quickly comprehended, interpreted and accepted in order for the storyline to move along quickly. In fact, even in real life, "research on cognitive models of information processing suggests that humans are hardwired to categorize objects, people, and so forth, into groups to reduce complex data as well as increase the speed and ease of information processing." (Mastro & Tukachinsky, 2011, p.917) For this reason, often, the Latino is shown as a one-dimensional figure that is required to represent all Latin American countries and cultures. McKenzie-Elliott (2001) describes it this way, "Even when a character's Latin heritage is evident [on TV], identified perhaps by the character's surname, the role is commonly developed with a generic background, no reference to national origin, no culture, no history, and no differences portrayed." (p. 31) "Almost

without exception, Latinos...are represented in prime time by one person whose ethnicity, class, generation, and social status are minimized or erased to narrowly represent the *racial* group.” (p. 341) Olivares (1998) describes the media’s disregard for diversity within the Latino culture, stating, “Since the term Hispanic classifies various people as one, certain traits...are overemphasized and have become symbolic.” (p. 427) However, each Latin American country differs significantly, divided by customs, histories and traditions, but it is “a fact rarely mentioned in the media.” (Olivares, 1998, p. 427) The kaleidoscope array of histories, cultures and customs is often reduced to a simplistic, often biased, portrayal. Beckham (2005) states, “American cinema has, for years, worked its magic to manipulate popular opinion, machinating to fortify racial stereotypes.” (p. 130) The Latino community is made up of vastly different countries with elaborately diverse histories and geographic locations, though the evidence of this in the media is nearly non-existent.

While Latinos continue to be underrepresented in the media, their presence in the general population continues to grow. In an analysis of prime-time television McKenzie-Elliott (2001) found, "Latinos represent only 3% of prime-time television characters, less than one-fourth of their proportion of the nation's population." (p. 709) The statistic is further diminished when one considers starring roles, "Compared to non-Hispanic Whites, Blacks, and Asians, Latinos are the group least likely to occupy major roles in prime-time entertainment shows and represent only 1.9% of the total opening cast credits." (McKenzie-Elliott, 2001, p. 4) This exclusion comes in spite of the fact that, "Hispanic households watch an average of over 57 hours of television each week; more than the total U.S. television household average of 53 hours." (McKenzie-Elliott, 2001, p.

1) The author goes on to narrow her scope, "Prime-time viewing, specifically is higher for Hispanic households with an average of 17.5 hours compared to the total average of 13 hours." (McKenzie-Elliott, 2001, p. 1) The Nielson Media Reports (2000) agree, "Latino households watch television an average of four hours per week more than non-Latino households." (p. 1) Despite these statistics, countless studies argue that Latinos are rarely shown on American English speaking channels. Graves (1999) supports this argument, "Among visible racial and ethnic groups, African Americans are most likely to be shown on television, with virtual invisibility for Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans." (p. 709) It is an invisibility unjustified by reality's demographics, but a new television genre has already shown the capacity to impact the statistics.

Reality TV

The newest contender in the battle of media ratings is reality TV. Grazian (2010) describes the competitive nature of this format, "Although the very design of competitive reality programs like *The Apprentice* or *Hell's Kitchen* guarantees that nearly all players must lose, such shows inevitably emphasize the moral failings of each contestant just before they are deposed." (p. 70) He goes on to describe two shows that further illustrate this phenomenon, "Both *Survivor* and the *Apprentice* require sixteen or more participants to fiercely compete against one another in winner-take-all contests guaranteed to produce extreme levels of social inequality." (Grazian, 2010, p. 69) Much of reality TV is seemingly contradictory, and the schemas involved are no different. Grazian (2010) points this out, "Although team members are initially expected to work cooperatively on *Survivor*, they eventually vote their collaborators out of the game in naked displays of individualism and self-interest, it's like the last days of Enron, only with war paint and

coconuts." (p. 69) This type of blood-thirsty programming seems to be a fit target for its audience.

In one study, in which researchers surveyed participants in an effort to understand who is watching reality TV, they found that viewers of reality TV "are more motivated by vengeance than are non-viewers" (Reiss and Reiss, 2009, p. 374). In an effort to understand this result, the researchers explained the correlation this way, "people who avoid conflict, anger, and competition may avoid viewing reality television shows because these shows often portray competition and interpersonal conflict." (Reiss and Reiss, 2009, p. 374) Ellis (2009) seems to confirm this finding, "Reality TV formats tend to place participants in stressful situations and their responses to stress can often trigger behavior that many viewers find objectionable." (p. 111) Still reality TV shows continue to grow in number on television networks.

Reality television, once thought to be a quirky, low-budget fad, has grown into a major segment of prime-time programming. "No longer an off-season summer trend, reality television has become a leading prime time program staple, often dominating the ratings in numerous coveted timeslots." (Godlewski and Perse, 2010, p. 148) Of course, the name itself begs the question, how 'real' is reality television. According to most researchers, not really. Even in its early stages, Fetveit (1999) had this to say, "It is not reality, it is reality TV, reality *show*." (p. 798) More recently, Bonsu, Darmody, and Parmentier (2010) claim, "The term purposely implies that the shows are based on reality without suggesting that they are reality." (p. 92) The fact is, there is some semblance of 'real' in reality TV. "Myth and mimesis (of the real) are co-conspirators in constructing a mediated reality." (Ibrahim, 2007, p. 41) Still, there is no doubt, that much of what the

viewers see are carefully crafted frames that have been strewn together by producers and editors in an attempt to create a conceivable storyline.

It seems viewers do not mind the constructed reality of these programs. Gorton (2008) has found, "There are many viewers who take pleasure in reality and lifestyle programmes even when they are conscious of their constructed and ideologically questionable nature." (p. 12) Bonsu, et al (2010) maintain, "realism is not a matter of fidelity to an empirical reality, but of the discursive conventions by which and for which a sense of reality is constructed." (p. 95) While each reality show may vary in content, there are many features that remain the same. For instance, all of them tend to feature, "the use of an omniscient voice-over that informs us about 'what is actually taking place'...and also orients the narrative." (Bourdon, 2012, p. 68) Another famous feature is, "all reality games have confessional moments when participants talk directly to audiences or answer questions of an interviewer about their personal feelings." (Bourdon, 2012, p. 72) One researcher provides a broad summary of the genre as a whole, "Characteristically, these reality shows are unscripted programs, with nonprofessional actors as participants in a variety of situations that claim to present reality." (Godlewski and Perse, 2010, p. 148) Containing both fact and fiction, reality television has managed to capture American audiences.

Researchers argue that both the artificial and the authentic aspects of reality TV are appealing to its viewers. Ibrahim (2007) calls it, "a mythic space [that] fuses both reality and fiction, but also intrinsically communicates our anxieties, fears, as well as hopes." (p. 51) Holmes (2008) puts it this way, "As the interactive power of the audience is woven into the narrative textures of reality TV, the programmes make claims for

viewer agency, and posits a more permeable boundary between viewer and screen." (p.

14) This permeable boundary between audience and entertainment is largely an emotional one.

A distinctive aspect of reality television is that the programs allow us to vicariously experience the 'real' world through observation of others' trials and tribulations. As a result, audience members become not only cognitively involved, but emotionally involved with the program. (Godlewski and Perse, 2010, p. 151)

Most researchers concur, that it is the emotion of reality TV that motivates viewers' attention. "The fact that participants are real people (as opposed to fictional characters) heightens the sense that viewers are privy to intimate feelings and therefore there is a sense that this will increase an emphatic response." (Gorton, 2008, p. 10) Bonsu et. al (2010) assert, "This 'emotional turn' sustains reality TV, which feeds on suspense, intrigue and various other captivating personal details to engage emotive audiences." (p. 92) Later they confirm, "Building emotional connections gives the show its authentic currency for drawing audiences." (Bonsu et al, 2010, p. 95) Tan (2008) agrees with the centrality of emotion in reality TV, "emotion is one of the root causes of perceived reality." (p. 41) If reality television has the ability to gain the hearts of viewers, early research is beginning to suggest, it may also have the power to sway their minds.

Reality TV as Pedagogy

Due to the emotional nature of reality television, researchers are beginning to take note of its ability to influence not only people's emotions, but also people's perceptions. Tan (2008) describes the inevitability of learning, "Without any awareness of learning or

learning potential, we engage in it because we feel like doing it." (p. 37) He later explains this viewing process, "entertainment users do not deliberately turn a switch that controls belief modes, but we are sucked into an experience that has emotional believability. This may happen rapidly and largely outside the user's consciousness, as emotions may take us unawares." (Tan, 2008, p. 42) For this reason, Tan (2008) claims, "emotional strength is directly related to pedagogical effectiveness." (p. 42) Brader et. al (2008) puts forth, "A long line of research also suggests that eliciting emotions can motivate changes in attention, opinion, and behavior." (p. 962) Through its emotional capacity, reality television is impacting its audience.

Scholars have found that reality television may have the capability of teaching and influencing changes in the behavior of its viewers. Mitu (2011) states simply, "Television can be educational and beneficial." (p. 916) In one investigation of the reality show, *Supernanny*, which documents an English nanny assisting parents with their out of control children, Ganeshasundaram and Henley (2009) found, "that it is possible to effectively deliver social messages to a large audience using the medium of reality television. Most respondents agreed that the program informed them...and a third reported learning something new...as a result of watching the episodes." (p. 316) Of course, this type of programming can have adverse effects as well.

One study by Chiou and Lopez (2010) on *Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County*, a show that followed affluent teenagers "in their social circle," "partying and shopping," found that in the wake of the show's success "Laguna Beach 11th graders had the highest incidences of drug and alcohol abuse." (p. 333) Also cited in police reports, the researchers discovered, "suggestive evidence that non-residential burglaries, auto

thefts, and rapes increased during the period following the show's debut." (p. 333) This evidence suggests that reality TV has the ability to influence social behavior.

Television is not simply ideological, but also impactful. Bonsu (2010) states, "television is a powerful ideological tool that shapes our understanding of reality, thus changing reality itself." (p. 93) The viewer's connection to the characters, in the case of reality television: actual people, even identifying with them, creates the opportunity for agency. As Godlewski and Perse (2010) found in their research, "Identification is a sort of vicarious experience that occurs during media use, and is especially encouraged by reality programs." (p. 152) They go on to draw the connection, "Identification with reality show participants clearly grows out of instrumental viewing. Watching to learn is a prime marker of instrumental motivation." (p. 153) Gorton (2008) argues, "Many reality or lifestyle programmes...seek legitimacy through a suggestion that they play a deeper pedagogic role: they invite us, the audience, to reflect on our intimate feelings and relationships through an empathetic engagement with the participants." (p. 3) She goes on to more globally describe the pedagogical power of reality television, "As viewers we are drawn into an emotional engagement with the participants, which on many levels reiterates our feelings of community, belonging and humanity." (Gorton, 2008, p. 14) In other research on entertainment education, Moyer-Gusé (2008) found, "that involvement with characters and narrative storylines are important determinants of the persuasive effects of entertainment-education programming." (p. 421) For this reason, a handful of reality shows have already begun the investigation into intercultural relations and reality television.

Race and Reality TV

Through the constructed nature of reality television, we are engaged in considering what is on the screen before us. Ellis (2009) explains, "TV has enabled us to take a close look at people who previously were distant or invisible: we have a close-up view...we see our fellow citizens as they experience stress in documentaries, or talk about stress on daytime TV." (p. 103) In her research on reality TV and civic functions, Ouellette (2012) found, "reality TV does not 'divert' passive audiences from the serious operations of democracy and public life as much as it translates broader sociopolitical currents and circulates instructions, resources, and scripts for navigating the changing expectations and demands of citizenship." (p. 68) In support of the impact of counterimages that stray from dominant portrayals, Mastro & Tukachinsky (2011) explain, "exposure to every new exemplar alters the central tendency of the category." (p. 918) They further their argument, saying, 'Media exposure can dramatically increase the number and variety of images of outgroup members to which audiences are exposed. (p. 918) As the demography of America's landscape continues to change, the rules on intercultural communication will continue to advance and develop on television. Mitu (2011) agrees, "Television contributes to individuals becoming inconsequential spectators of a changing world." (p. 897) Through reality television, intercultural engagement is beginning to eventualize in the living rooms of American audiences.

One such example of racial interaction being taken on by the reality television industry is a series called, *Black. White.* Investigative researchers describe the show this way,

Black. White. is a provocative reality TV series ... that explores racism and race relations in a unique format. Through special-effects makeup, two middle-class

families, the Sparkses, a Black family from Atlanta, and Wurgels, a White family from Santa Monica, "swap races" in hopes of better understanding what it means to be Black and White in America today. (Johnson, Tracy and Snow, 2006, p. 1)

While in many regards, the show was ground-breaking in its exploration of "intercultural communication, cultural mistrust, unintentional and institutional racism, and the impact of racism on worldview and interpersonal interactions," (Johnson et al, 2006, p. 3), it promoted the binary view of racial tensions that tends to narrow the conversation. Drew (2011) states, "an 'us-them' dichotomy is often drawn in television." (p. 342) Also problematic, was the dramatization of race through the use of makeup and superficial means. "On reality TV, race continues to be constructed in superficial, reductive, and often hegemonic ways - and this process has increasingly come to define the genre." (Bell-Jordan, 2008, p. 369) This pattern seems to be repeated across another series.

Another example showcasing an even more pronounced superficiality of race was demonstrated in a reality show about Amish teenagers living in New York City. The participants were instructed to participate in intercultural understanding by shopping in ethnically concentrated areas of the city. Bottinelli (2012) describes the show, "In each instance of cultural exposure - Mexican market, Chinatown, "Little India", and the Muslim Mosque - the social actors try on clothing from another culture. These minor instances of ethnography - of trying to comprehend and represent the other - are limited to the material, the surface." (p. 316) This superficial attempt at an intercultural experience appears counterproductive. "The understanding is that cultural acceptance and identification - the cliché of walking, literally in this case, in another's shoes - is implicit to beginning to understand all that makes up a group that is different than one's own."

(Bottinelli, 2012, p. 316) In this type of framing, cultural understanding is primarily artificial.

A final example of the engagement of race on reality TV was offered in *Survivor's* 'Race Wars.' In this series, four tribes battled it out in competitions until the numbers of players was reduced so greatly, they became one tribe, and then, the individuals left were forced to vote each other off. In the 'Race Wars' season, each tribe represented a different race: Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans and Whites. (Drew, 2011, p. 341) Drew (2011) found, "*Survivor's* 'race wars' season attempted to reinforce a 'postracial' narrative that race no longer matters in contemporary U.S. society while simultaneously perpetuating the familiar representations that reproduce racial ideology." (p. 326) One concern she discovered was, "Television creators and producers have also been socialized into the dominant ideologies of their society and reproduce them subconsciously in their construction of television." (p. 331) She goes on to discuss how reality is framed for the viewing audience, "Although the content is presented as simply reflecting 'reality,' producers' interview questions remain invisible, hundreds of hours of footage go unused, and all of the images and commentary that do not fit the season's narrative remain invisible." (Drew, 2011, p. 341) Drew (2011) further explains, "*Survivor* demonstrated its own reliance on the significance of race for exploiting conflicts to attract audiences." (p. 343) So, while attempting to present content counter to dominant portrayals, *Survivor*, in the end, reproduced many of the same racial ideologies found in the mainstream media. While *Survivor* did offer some unique viewpoints: going beyond a binary racial system, allowing for intergroup differences, and addressing the general absence of people of color

on television, overall, the series did more to justify intercultural anxieties than to challenge them.

Through the connections created by reality television between the audience and participants, reality television has the capability of not only moving people emotionally, but also pedagogically. Historically, non-white populations have been negatively represented in the mainstream media. For Latinos, the nearly non-existent roles available are often one-sided and seemingly devoid of any history or distinct characteristics. Slowly, the non-traditional genre of reality television has allowed for the discussion of diverse and cultural topics, but much needs to be done before these issues can be explored entirely in the confines of mass media. Still, early research has shown the ability of reality television to engage an instrumental viewing audience that is open to considering new opinions, perspectives, and world-views. As I explore the messages, themes and portrayals of the Latino culture in *QViva*, it is worth considering how its messages have the potential to impact the American audience.

Chapter III

Methods

Reality television is a fairly recent phenomenon in the mass media industry, and given its rise to popularity, it is a genre that is gaining in format and function. Season 1 of *Q'Viva* followed Jennifer Lopez, Marc Anthony and Jamie King on their travels to 21 Latin American countries in search of Latino talent for a live Las Vegas show. In an interview to *Access Hollywood*, Marc Anthony described it this way, "We've travelled to countless countries, walked the streets, knocked on their doors, took tips from people – from casting directors, from video submissions, went and saw them personally, and found some amazing talent." As the stars visited with prospective talent, they handed many of the prospects tickets to Los Angeles if they were accepted into the next round of casting auditions. The video footage of the stars' travel revealed to the viewers - countries, communities, homes and families from various ethnic and cultural traditions that make up the Latin American community. In order to investigate the themes of this show, a framework is needed that is both structured and flexible to document an accurate understanding of this genre.

The emotional component of reality television cannot be negated. The emotional narrative of reality television, including both narrative and non-verbal cues, transmit the messages and the meanings critical to identifying the show's central themes. Ellis (2009) describes this connection, "The emotions that we find are performed. They are disclosed to us by more or less conventional indicators, by the expressions and gestures known as 'body language,' a language that can be involuntary just as much as consciously performed." (p. 104) For this reason, while transcribing each episode of *QViva*, I will not

only transcribe the dialogue, but also many of the visual cues available. A qualitative investigation into the emergent themes put forth by the show's directors is necessary in capturing the complete experience of engaging with *QViva*.

The method used to investigate *QViva* was qualitative content analysis.

Qualitative content analysis was appropriate for this research study because it allowed for the flexibility necessary to derive meaning from the words, actions, frames, and moving pictures that transmit media messages. Guzman (2007) points out, "Qualitative research seeks to understand, interpret, and attribute meaning to events or relationships as they evolve." (p. 79) A constraint of relying on theoretical models or pre-determined categories imposes a classification on data that have yet to be realized. Altheide (2000) describes how the purpose of qualitative content analysis allows for interactive data, "the main emphasis is on discovery and description, including the search for underlying meanings, patterns, and processes, rather than mere quality or numerical relationships between two or more variables." (p. 290) The research questions for this project, which seek to uncover the meanings intended by the discourse contained within *QViva*, require an in-depth consideration of the data.

Much of the show's focus is on the narratives of the stars as well as the prospective performers. Severinsson (2003) indicates the importance of capturing the meanings behind narrative data, "As narratives are primarily understood as meaning-making systems, they can serve as tools for understanding the storyteller's views of the world." As I watched each frame, I wrote down every word of dialogue, as well as, the general impressions I not only saw, but felt. Next, I identified recurring and emerging themes while I drew together the core and sub-themes identified by the discourse as well

as the visually available non-verbal elements of the show. Figueroa (2008) describes the process this way, "It begins with the global, broader meanings of a text and moves to its smaller parts, trying to specify them, to establish their interrelationships, and how not only the literal meanings, but also the suggested, latent, deeper meanings emerge from the text." (p. 8) In an effort to gauge my full understanding of the transactional communication, I also coded interviews conducted with the show's hosts, Jennifer Lopez, Marc Anthony and Jamie King, leading up to the show's premiere. It was worth including the intended purpose of the show as described by the show's own creators.

During the transcribing process, the images before me were taken at face value as I tried to capture the messages and themes in *QViva*, though I was aware directorial liberties had an impact on the narratives that were analyzed. As Fetveit (1999) points out, "Photographic images cannot account for their own production process very eloquently; they cannot tell us where, when and how they are taken." (p. 573) I was forced to rely on the context provided by the show, mostly by a narrator. Fetveit (1999) describes this process of being blindly led through the drama, "Though we are often successful in our guesses on issues like these, our only way of knowing is by way of a truthful account from the producer or some other person who knows" (p. 794). He illustrates this concept, "The blurred and chaotic images at the height of drama seem to need powerful support from linguistic sources for us to make sense of them. The description ... helps to focus, not simply our gaze, but also our understanding." (Fetveit, 1999, p. 794) Though *QViva* is constructed and edited, just as any other reality show, its messages, meanings and emerging themes consciously put forth by producers are worth investigating in their final, made-for-TV, format.

In conducting qualitative content analysis, I began by transcribing each show and keeping a journal of connections and challenges I encountered along the way. One difficulty was in translating audio-visual elements into text on a page. Turning many visually stunning and rich depictions of color, tradition, music and dance into black letters on white paper was certainly challenging. Many of the nonverbal elements available to the television viewer were likely lost in translation. Also problematic, was recording transactional conversations where messages are sent and received simultaneously and frequently on top of each other into the linear inevitability available in the text version. Another issue arose from the translation of the messages themselves. About 40-60% of the verbal discourse of each show was in Spanish and although I am Latina and know some Spanish, I was mostly reliant on the translated text provided by the show that may have concealed hidden undertones and meanings that native Spanish speakers may have been able to interpret. Still, I may have understood more of the underlying messages and meanings than many Americans who may not be as familiar with the Spanish language.

Next, I grouped each statement into categories. The categories began very simply, often using words or phrases directly out of the statements that were made. As reality television often uses the voice of a narrator to orient the show, there were times the verbal did not match the nonverbal on TV. Also, what one cast member said and how they said it, completely altered the meaning of the spoken words. In these cases, it was the intended meaning, based on the entire context of the scene in which a final category was determined. At times, many categories were evident in a single statement and at other times, the entirety of a conversational exchange determined the category of several

lines of dialogue. The interactional and multi-sensory content, at times, was difficult to compact into neat and tidy categorical delineations

For the next level of my research, I considered the messages within each category and considered how they are connected to each other. I developed questions related to the data in order to more effectively group the transcribed elements of the show into themes that revealed not only what was communicated on the show, but it's significance. These questions included: Why did the casting agents choose the performers who made it to the final round instead of others who were turned away and what motivated the majority of these performers to leave the only world many of them have ever known while others turned the opportunity down? Also, what inspired the stars to take on the *QViva* project? These were the guiding questions used to uncover the themes in this qualitative exploration.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

Why study reality TV?

Reality television is a cultural artifact of American life. "The success of creators of pop culture relies on their reaching as large an audience as possible; thus pop culture artifacts must reflect the feelings of the consumers and can be considered gauges of popular attitudes." (McKenzie-Elliott, 2001, p. 1) Lugo-Lugo (2012) echoes this thought, "Popular culture is an integral component of the society from which it emerges and develops, expertly mimicking the fears and anxieties embedded in mainstream culture." (p. 71) Markert (2005) describes how television is often viewed by its audience, "Television has been likened to a window on the world because television's reality is often interpreted by regular viewers as reality." (p. 148) Even so, while reality TV is not reality, it does provide researchers commentary on the reality in which it was created.

Though discourse is always changing, media are able to capture moments in time. Lugo-Lugo (2012) notes this, "Popular culture can be used to understand a particular society during a particular historical juncture." (p. 85) In his research of a series depicting Latinos in lead roles, Esposito (2009) agrees, "These discursive constructions of race are always structured within particular historical, political, and economic moments." (p. 525) Studying media tells us not only about the discourse involved in the media, but the rhetoric of the society at large. "Television and video do not exist in a vacuum." (Graves, 1999, p. 721) At the same time as presenting reality, reality television, itself, is adapted to suit its own purposes. "Television has the ability to create its own culture and its own forms and to impose its singular narrative while drawing contradictory and incompatible

discourses together." (Ibrahim, 2007, p. 53) And yet, the media are still at the mercy of the world in which its content is produced. "Reality TV's visual incursion...is mediated by cultural, social, economic, and political processes that inform what is meaningful, acceptable, and entertaining behavior and what is not." (p. 550) While *QViva* offers one interpretation of the Latino culture, it is still in many ways structured by the expectations guiding the social structure in which it is created.

QViva fits the genre of reality television. Bonsu et al (2010) describe the general format, "reality TV...refers broadly to shows that are unscripted, though most have a very specific structure (with set tasks and events for each episode)." (p. 92) It is the real dialogue of TV show participants that engages the viewing audience, often moving them to tears as Bonsu et. al (2010) points out, "They smile, cry and even tremble with excitement, all of which are significant components of what constitutes the show." (p. 102) Gorton (2008) more profoundly states, "The value of emotion in a text can be understood as something that creates good television and constructs a sense of connectedness and belonging." (p. 12) This emotional connection is what many researchers indicate is the key to reality television's success.

The first three of six episodes of *Q'Viva* documented the stars' journey to different locations throughout the Latin American world as they auditioned talent for the live show. In episode three, after the final auditions, over 200 performers descended on Los Angeles in order to continue their try-outs for *Q'Viva Live*, the final stage show. By episode 4, the number of performers was reduced to 60 and the remaining contestants were given different performance challenges to complete in order to secure their place in the final casting. These challenges mostly consisted of partnering up performers from

various countries to create a whole new routine which challenged all performers' artistic abilities. These presentations would then be performed in front of the casting stars, Jennifer Lopez, Marc Anthony and Jamie King. After each performance challenge, the talent was slowly eliminated in dramatic fashion. This continued through episode 5 and into episode 6. The normally 2 hour show was reduced to only 1 hour for these final episodes as a result of dwindling viewer ratings. In episode 6, the final casting for the live show is revealed, although television viewers never saw the final performance which took place after the season had ended. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the show were: the journey, motivation, the Latino experience, cultural clash, struggle, perseverance, and unity - the show's ultimate purpose.

The Journey

A journey is not simply a destination, but a process. Marc indicates this in his final chat to the cast chosen in episode 6, "Jennifer, Jamie and I began this journey many years ago, and to see you here, for me, is making that dream a reality." (ep. 6) Later in the show, he expands on what that dream is, "When we set out on this journey, we wanted the world to see something amazing and that embodied Latin culture." (ep.6) The journey of this experience, however, did not just emerge in the creation of the show, but within the stars themselves. As the show's narrator indicates, "As the journey continues, Marc and Jennifer are realizing that the lives they're changing have been changing their's as well." (ep. 1) To illustrate Marc Anthony's growth, he is shown sitting on a rock in the middle of a stream in the jungle. The jungle is still and all the audience hears are the natural sounds of birds calling and the running water. It is in this setting Marc indicates,

“I feel a lot richer today as a human being.” In another episode he relays his feelings in the back of his chauffeured car on his way to a dangerous commune in Colombia,

“I’ve traveled the world a billion times it seems, and I haven’t seen anything actually. I just tell the same boring story. Like, ‘Oh, you go to Colombia six times a year.’ ‘Yeah, you ought to try the food at the Four Seasons.’ It’s like this is really an appetite to just live it.” (ep. 1)

For stars who have traveled the world, touring different countries is nothing new, however, stopping, talking, and listening to the people living in those countries begins to open a whole new world for them. Jennifer talks about this in one scene, “There were so many things that touched me during this journey - the people that we met, just their stories, their passion, their drive, their hunger, nothing is impossible.” (ep. 6) The show's journey did not just include the celebrities, but the opportunity-seeking talent as well.

Many of the performers spoke of being on a 'journey' their entire lives. Hermanos Castro, a group from Mexico who made it to the final casting said it this way, “Today has been the culmination of everything that is quebradita (a Mexican dance style) is, for it to transcend and become known around the world.” (ep. 1) In this example, the goals of the stars and the talent are aligned as they begin this new journey together. In another example, a tango couple who made it to Los Angeles puts it this way,

“I can’t believe it! We’re excited, very happy, we still can’t believe it. Artists, dancers, we all pour our hearts into it and we put in a lot of time and dedication, so anything that indicates we’re going down the right path makes us feel incredible. It fulfills us, it completes us.” (ep. 1)

This couple, along with many others point to the first audition with the stars as a new path along their journey, but one that is necessary to accomplishing what they have already started. These examples indicate there are several sides to the show. The stars producing the show had their own vision of what *Q'Viva* meant to them, while the cast of prospective performers had their own dreams to realize. In one scene, after Marc has seen a performance put together by different performance styles from two distinct countries, he says, "At this moment, this is the start of a dream, it is a collection of a lot of dreams, because we are all dreamers, all of us." (ep. 6) It is the recognition of a journey that has merged from many paths.

Another journey occurring simultaneously as the show was Marc and Jennifer's new relationship. They had just gone public with news of their pending divorce months before the filming of their project began. In the first episode, Marc addresses their journey with each other,

"This project was important to us and we are committed to doing it together.

We're just meant to be in each other's lives, on different levels. This is a long story, this is not a short story, you know what I mean. Our marriage was one chapter, you know what I mean, the kids are another. We got each other for life." (ep. 1)

Jennifer discusses their relationship this way as well, "You know, being with Marc. I think it's gonna be a discovery for us too, that's what a journey is, you don't know what's coming down the road." (ep. 1) As the show breaks new ground and uncharted territory, so too will the relationship between the newly separated couple.

Motivation:Family

The greatest source of motivation indicated by the performers was their families. After receiving the news that they were accepted onto the show, every phone call broadcast was made to either the performer's mother or father. Of course, not every performer was shown calling someone and many performers auditioned with their mother and father present, but for many, family was a primary motivation in pursuing the opportunity to take part in *Q'Viva*. Outside of phone calls, many performers verbally expressed their familial motivations. One performer Jesus, who made it past the first round, but was sent home from Los Angeles described how he had wanted to help his mom, "My mother came to mind. She is 67 years old. She can't walk anymore because she hurt her spine. If I were chosen to do this, my dream is to help her out with physical therapy. I'd like to see her walk again." (ep. 3) Another female dancer invited to LA, credited her performances to her dad, even though he had passed away a few years before,

"We were at a salsa conference in Venezuela, when the producers came in to tell me my dad had passed away. My dad was always with me. Buying the fabric, stitching the stones to the costumes. So when they told me he died, I saw my outfit and thought, I don't want to dance anymore. I called my mom and told her I wasn't going to dance. I don't have the drive nor the energy. My mom stopped crying and said, "Sweetheart, remember what you set out to do there and how he supported you and everything you did. Get dressed, go onstage and dedicate the show to your father. "I wore the costume my dad helped me make. It was very difficult. But I went out there and gave it my all. I

transformed the pain into energy so I could perform. Every step was painful, but I thought, this is for you, dad. This is for you, dad." (ep. 3)

In addition to parents, other family members were also given credit for motivating performers. Barbara, a singer who auditioned along with her sister, but was chosen to come to LA alone, credited her motivation to her sister at home saying, "This triumph is also for my sister because she'll say, 'my sister made it' and she'll also fight because she'll now believe in dreams. I love you my family." (ep. 4) One performer who was sent home clearly distraught spoke of his personal goals, "It was going to change my family's life, of my neighborhood, my life, my wife and daughter, whom I love. I wanted to give them something different." (ep. 4) Performers' families were clearly an influential factor in motivating many talented acts to accept invitations to the show.

However, it was not just the performers who were acting on behalf of their families, Marc Anthony and Jennifer Lopez also discussed the importance of family, though their pending divorce had changed their family dynamic. In one car scene, Marc tells Jennifer about a group of performers who moved him to tears. It is the first intimate moment we see between the celebrity couple who are usually, "busting each other's chops," as Marc puts it. But in this intimate car scene, comes a tender moment between the newly separated couple in which Jennifer says, "I don't think one of us ever thought about abandoning the project, ever, because of anything that happened. It was just, how are we going to do it, how are we going to get through it? The same reasons we wanted to do it for our family when we started are the same reasons we want to do it for our family now. Right?" (ep. 2) Marc doesn't respond, but they make eye contact and there is a long silence as Jennifer reaches over and touches his arm, the camera zooms in as the audience

is sent to commercial. Even though the couple's family has changed, it remains a motivating factor.

Motivation: Pride

Another motivation for the stars and the artists was pride. A Puerto Rican singer named Hector describes the pride he has in his culture and his county,

"My dream is to represent Puerto Rico around the world. I can't explain why when I mention my country, I feel so proud and it makes me want to jump on stage, represent my country and my flag. My home and my roots will always be here. I was raised here, I have family here. That feeling motivates me the most and makes me so emotional." (ep. 2)

Scenes of him in courtyards and in the natural settings of Puerto Rico are shown as he wipes the tears from his face. He is overcome with emotion. In Los Angeles, one dancer, Ashanty, is chosen while the rest of her family is sent home. She is distraught about losing them, but in the end remains on the show saying, "I will be here in the name of my country and my culture." (ep. 3) One group from Colombia, representing a minority within a minority, explained why they had chosen to come to the U.S., "We came to give it our all, to show Latin America what Son Bata does, what the sounds of Son Bata are, to show Latin America the black roots of Colombia." (ep. 3) But performers did not only feel they were representing their countries, but also their heritage, their gender, their roles in life, and even their socioeconomic status.

Some portrayals went beyond culture, race and ethnicity and incorporated identities beyond cultural boundaries. One female mariachi band, who performed for

Marc in a plaza in Mexico shared the gender discrimination they face in their country for their music,

We created this female group to show everyone that women can sing rancheras just as well. And we can represent our Mexican music. We want to represent beauty, pride, strength, and courage. Everything a Mexican woman is. (ep. 3)

It seems discrimination is without boundaries. A salsa dancer from Argentina who made it to episode 5 and was also a struggling single mom had this to say after she made it past the first round, "To all those women who feel like they can't do it alone, yes you can. Yes, you can do it. The important thing is to do it from the heart and it doesn't matter what other people think." (ep. 3) These performers felt they were representing specific segments of the population and they took pride in serving as representatives for their countries, their cultures and their individual roles in life.

Pride in their culture and their heritage was not just expressed by the prospective performers, Jennifer and Marc also described the pride they felt. As Jennifer visits her country, Puerto Rico, she talks about what the country means to her, "This is almost like a magical place for me because this is where I'm from. This is what runs through my veins." (ep. 2) Scenes of waves crashing on the shore and the country's horizon flash across the screen. Marc Anthony also describes what he feels when visiting Puerto Rico, "What do I love about Puerto Rico? Everything. It's like being able to see your blood. It's beautiful, it's people, it's where I'm from, it's where my bloodline is from. Home. I feel at home." (ep. 1) A conversation between Marc and an auditioning Puerto Rican drummer, Jose, shows the sentiment is shared by the performer, as well.

Marc: How's my people doing? Thank you for giving me the opportunity to enter your home, your world, I have big expectations, Puerto Rico for me is [long pause]

Jose: Sacred.

Marc: Sacred is the word. (ep. 1)

But even beyond their country, Marc and Jennifer describe the pride they feel in the Latin culture. In one interview, Marc is asked about what motivated him to devote time to the *Q Viva* project, he answers, "It was just such a robust opportunity for my people, Latin America, for the arts. It was a no-brainer." Jennifer also describes her cultural pride as a motivation for creating the show, "We know how rich the Latin culture is and what it has to offer, and we are out to share that with the rest of the world." In the promotional trailer she is captured saying,

"With this show, we hope for the first time to unite all of the Latin cultures and make something that makes everybody proud. This is like me being able to really, really go, I am Latina and this is who we are. Isn't it fabulous, Isn't it amazing? Doesn't it like bring tears to your eyes, make you want to dance and smile and jump and stay up all night?"

Though a product of many sources, pride was a clear motivator in drawing many talented acts to the show.

Experiencing Latino Culture

The aim of the show was to create a live performance in which an audience would have the opportunity to experience the Latin culture. This was a guiding factor as the celebrity casting agents selected acts for the new show. A group of Capoeira dancers are

the first to receive tickets on the show from Jennifer. Here, she gives her reason for choosing them, “This is what *Q’Viva* was about for me, for us to represent each country and in the best way possible, whatever we could find, whatever really, really says something about our history.” (ep. 1) Before she departs Jennifer is invited to dance with the group as one performer perfects an amazing flip and she is barely able to manage a sloppy cartwheel. This interaction shows the celebrities are not on this journey to simply listen, but are willing to attempt to learn more about the cultures of the Latin American world and to participate in the action.

In Puerto Rico, Marc explains why one fast-paced drummer stands out, “What I witnessed is something I have never witnessed before. I mean, you have a guy who has six congas who can make it musical, it’s melodic. I think he has everything we need in every way shape or form, I think we found something extraordinary.” (ep. 1) As he departs from the drummer’s house after the audition he adds, “I think he’s humble, he’s put time into his craft, loves his family, I think it’s a no-brainer.” (ep. 1) This scene shows it was not just talent that got the drummer invited to the show, it was his personality, his dedication to his music and his love of family that touched Marc on a personal level. Many performers are selected for reasons beyond just their performance. In seeking talent that truly represents the Latin culture, Marc describes the necessity of tracking down performers who would never be able to travel to the U.S.,

“When you do something artistic to survive, man, you understand, to survive the elements, survive your situation. It just comes from a totally different place. This is about spirit, this is about culture. This is what it’s all about. This is where it’s

at. We'd have never found them, if we don't come here and see what's going on."

(ep. 2)

Jennifer indicates it is not just sensational acts they are looking for, but shows that are authentic, "That's the goal of the show, is to show the authenticity of what the Latin culture is and so it's very important that everything we bring back is not a watered down processed version." (ep. 2) Marc seems to agree as he hands tickets to one talented group, describing their audition as, "Absolutely overwhelming. Absolute magic. The perfect combination of everything –passion, dedication, culture, roots, beauty, exotic, sensual, powerful, cultural, I mean, I think everything that *Q'Viva* is." (ep. 2) Jamie King also points to the spontaneity of *Q'Viva* auditions in one interview, "we didn't go with rules and that's what's so great about this show." From the discourse used by the celebrities in casting their show, it is clear that each performance is chosen based on the experience of the moment.

While each episode showed a vast majority of performers being accepted in to the show, there were performers who did not make the cut. Marc passes on one performance saying, "I wasn't as impacted as I thought I would be and that's what it comes down to. Are they right for *Q'Viva*?" (ep. 1) Later he shares his thoughts on turning down the performance, "I wanted to love it, I mean, I'm not in this to [trails off]. I'm almost a little let down every time because I want to love it and it just didn't happen." (ep. 1) Again, no specific criteria are indicated in turning acts down. The standard answer from the celebrities as to why the performer wasn't invited back was that they simply 'did not fit' the show.

A part of experiencing the Latin culture is understanding the cultural context. As Jennifer and Marc travel from country to country, the audience is shown a map with the country's location, the country's flag and several screen shots of architecture and natural geography within the country. Before the audience witnesses many of the performances, often, they are first given a lesson on the history of the dance. One lesson comes to us from Peru, where Jennifer Lopez learns about the Scissor dance through one of the performers,

“The Scissor dance was born before the time of the Incas. Through dance they healed the sick. That's why dancers were known as healers and witch doctors. My grandparents and great grandparents were dancers. My father was one of the greatest...Our ancestors taught us that when the scissors sound, the gods can hear it...scissors are the communication between man and the spirits from the Andes.”

(ep. 2)

While the lessons were purposefully inserted for an audience who is unfamiliar with the culture, the stars are learning lessons along the way as well, but Marc explains that just learning about the culture is not enough.

“I knew I would learn about culture, you know. You think you've seen it all, you know. But I think that what's happening in me is just, I don't just want to learn, I want to, I'm just longing to live it and be it.” (ep. 3)

This is said as he sits on a rock in the middle of a Mayan jungle and contemplates a moving performance by musicians who created their own instruments using turtle shells and animal skins among other organic materials. It is a challenge not only to himself, but also to the viewing audience.

Culture Clash

While many of the motivations for participating in *QViva* were aligned for both the stars and the prospective performers, differences emerged that created hindrances to the chosen performers participating in the show. While the show was intended to showcase the Latino identity, much of the format was modeled after reality shows currently in production on American airwaves. At times, the premise of the show, did not align with the American scheme in which it was being produced. A frequent example of this occurred when acts were broken up by the celebrity casting agents. While many performers were motivated to participate in the show because of their families (including group members and partners they had trained with all their lives), this was not taken into consideration as the stars made cuts to the cast for the show.

One example of this happened when two Tango dancing couples auditioned for Jennifer Lopez and Jamie King. During the scene, Jennifer and Jamie felt the male member of one couple, Marco, and the female dancer of the other couple, Martina, made a better match than their actual partners. The tickets were offered to the opposite couples although Jennifer was aware of the cultural implications. She explains, "When we put them together, I knew that their gut reaction was gonna be, 'No, I'm not leaving my partner,' but I also think it's a great act of love to say to your partner, 'No, go, and do it. This was a great opportunity for you and I support you and I'll be here when you get back.'" (ep. 2) However, the couples do not react this way.

Marco: (referring to his actual partner) She's my partner, my lover, my dream.

This opportunity would have to be for the both of us.

Martina: (referring to her actual partner) For me, this ticket is a dream come true, but if I dance, it's thanks to him. He taught me so much. I'm here because of him. I trust the work we do together. It's hard for me to let go of this, but I want it to be with him. My dream is with him.

Marco: I can't. [long pause] She's my partner, my life. If I said yes, I would be ignoring our own story and I'm not like that.

Martina (in a one-on-one conversation with the camera) I'm full of emotions. So sad to leave a dream behind, but that dream wasn't just mine, they were not separate dreams. It was our dream. (ep. 2)

It is exactly the reaction Jennifer expected as the dancers walk away; all four performers are in tears. Jennifer talks one-on-one with the camera explaining the situation to the American audience, "I expected that because of our culture, I know what it is to be loyal, I know what it is - family." (ep. 2) She further explains the action as a difference between cultures, "If we were in the states, I might say, 'They're gonna come.' But here, it's different, just different - and that's a good thing." (ep. 2) She smiles after this comment. Jennifer is still thinking about the scene later, when Marc asks her about the situation in the car.

Marc: I heard that you guys tried to split up some dancers, and they were like, no, sorry.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Marc: They past?

Jennifer: Yeah, they past. If it was me and you and we were a couple and we, you had an opportunity, I wouldn't want you to miss that opportunity. You should say, 'I'm not going' and I should say, 'You should go.'

Marc: Right, right, right, right.

Jennifer: And then together, we should think about what's best. (ep. 2)

In this conversation, it is evident that Jennifer feels the dancers made the wrong decision. As someone who has realized the American Dream and skyrocketed to stardom, it is understandable that she would be unable to conceive passing on this kind of opportunity. Marc seems to agree as he ends the conversation while making a joke at the couple's expense, "You might want to check on them in a week because I'm sure they broke up over this." (ep. 2) It is one example of divergent motivations brought about by differing cultural dispositions.

Another example involved a Colombian Son Bata group and one of its group members, sixteen year old, Bombi. Bombi was a musician in Son Bata who invited Marc for a visit to his commune in a video submission. At the audition in Medellin, Marc invites the entire band to Los Angeles. At the second round, however, everyone in the band is cut from the cast, except for Bombi. Bombi accepts the invitation, but later decides to leave the show. Marc asks him for an explanation. Bombi explains,

"I feel at that moment, I should have said, 'no.' I was born in Son Bata and by having said, 'yes,' I feel like I'm throwing away everything I've learned. So, by me staying here, Bombi no longer exists, he doesn't exist anymore." (ep. 5)

As he is shown on the car ride to the airport, he interacts one-on-one with the camera, "I'm leaving the show because if I want to be a good artist, I want to first become a good

person. This is not what I want to be. I'm going back to Colombia to finish becoming my own person." (ep. 5) It is a decision Marc feels he will regret.

Not all the dancers that were broken up quit the show. Particularly after they reach Los Angeles. As time went on and dancers devoted time and energy to the project, it became much harder to walk away even after their friends were cut from the cast. However, as one performer from Honduras, Ashanty, indicates, it is still a devastating blow. Ashanty was accepted into the cast, though the rest of her group, including her father, was sent home. Jamie notices it is affecting her performance,

Jamie: Ashanty, I think you didn't let yourself go. What I remember so much about you from the beginning was your intensity and your command of the stage and maybe that's because you had your whole family with you.

Ashanty: It's true, I need my family with me, it's their music that moves me. They understand how I feel. (ep. 6)

In the end, Ashanty stays, motivated by making her family and her country proud. More performers are cut as once large groups begin to lose many of their members with many of the chosen falling to the floor in grief. As Remolino Malombo loses one group member, a remaining member laments through tears, "Today is like a part of Remolino has died. You remove one piece and it all falls; and the silence is deafening." (ep. 5) Another group member describes the feeling of losing his colleague as "mourning." Yet, all the performers stay, torn between the new family they have formed on *QViva* and their family back home. Marc attempts to emphasize this with the groups, "I can only imagine how you feel. It is not easy, but it will make us stronger, like a team, a family." (ep. 6) Frequently the word 'family' is used to describe the *QViva* cast.

However, being family, offers the cast little protection from the show's bottom line. In one scene, as the live show draws nearer, Marc battles nameless producers who are insisting the cast is cut even further. He grows visibly angry as off-screen producers, are shown for the first time in episode 6. As the final cuts are made in the dark of night with 6 people gathered around a table of performers' photos, Marc grows increasingly frustrated with the reality of budget lines and confining protocols as he argues, "This is extremely important to me and there are possible repercussions if we start playing with the DNA of what *QViva* is, just in the name of cuts." (ep. 6) Jamie explains, "We know we have limitations, we have a certain head count, we have budget restraints." (ep. 6) Marc softens his voice, but is still visibly angry, "I understand that." (ep. 6) Then to producers the audience has not met before, but are seated at the table, he says, "We gotta be very careful with that, that's all I'm saying, because you guys make cuts on a totally different level and I get it." (ep. 6) It grows increasingly tense as Jamie makes the summing conclusion, "It's the reality of our situation." (ep. 6) Though the celebrity producers have sought out authentic Latin talent, as they develop the final show, the importance of family, one of the most central aspects of the Latin culture appears to be disregarded, as apparent outsiders are involved in the last minute decisions before the show's final casting.

Of course, not all culture clash was upsetting, there were also moments of joy as some of the performers from developing countries had the opportunity to experience the lights of Las Vegas. Luis, a band member from Musica Maya, describes his own impressions, "The city looks romantic because of the lights. It feels different because in our hometown, at night, we don't have lights." (ep. 3) Tap dancer Leonardo can hardly

believe where his overnight journey has landed him, “It’s crazy to think I was on the streets yesterday, and today I’m in this car.” (ep. 4) A female dancer describes how mythical Las Vegas seems, “Just like in the movies, but this is the real thing.” (ep. 3) Other performers describe never having been on an airplane before or even leaving their town's borders. It was a new world for many of them, but for some, it was not without its difficulties.

Struggle

The cultural skirmishes were not the only struggles of the show. A theme of struggle readily emerges from the narratives of the show's performers. Stories of struggle come from the performers’ lives, injuries, and longing for their families back at home.

Many of the artists who auditioned for the show were given the opportunity to engage in a ‘dramatic monologue’ with the camera, whether they were selected or not. As we are introduced to many of the show's characters, we are allowed a glimpse into their daily lives in their countries. Dramatic monologues often served as the narrative behind scenes of pictures of the performers' communities and old family photos. An example of the visual effects of edited camera shots comes from a barrio in Argentina as Jamie King drives to meet a performer. The scene unfolds - a family is burning trash in an alley littered with more trash, German shepherds and other large dogs are shown patrolling the neighborhood, and a weathered sign has the words “Suenos Perdidos” (lost dreams) painted in graffiti. (ep. 3) As introduced by this scene, many of the struggles in Latin American communities revolve around drugs and poverty. Paolo, a singer from Chile talks about how drugs have devastated his family,

“When I was 12 years old, my father passed away. It was huge blow for me. My father was addicted to cocaine. We had a mini-supermarket and one day my father came and told my mother to give him everything or else he was going to use his gun. He pointed at my mother. I stood in front of her and I told him, ‘if you’re going to kill her, kill me first. Within seconds he had cigarettes and everything we had saved up. My father took everything and then he left. We immediately called a taxi and fled because we knew he would come back at any moment to kill us. Three hours after that, my father had an accident. After my dad passed away, my only escape was music.” (ep. 1)

As Paolo shares his story, pictures of his family in a restaurant are shown, with his father at the head of the table as well as pictures of his mom. Paolo is Chilean with light skin and green eyes and a haircut that would remind many American girls of Justin Bieber. In the states, he would be seen as any typical American kid, except that he does not speak English.

Another major source of struggle for many performers was poverty. A tap dancer from Rio, Leonardo, is introduced to the audience as he tap dances on sidewalks, concrete steps and in the street. He tells us, “There are days when I earn just enough to eat, to pay rent, to have my own things, but there’s days when it’s not even worth leaving home.” (ep. 4) Another performer Luis talks about the seriously injurious effects of poverty, “Two weeks ago, my six month old daughter needed surgery. I was devastated because she was between life and death and I didn’t have money for the hospital. These are the situations we face as indigenous people.” (ep. 2) The themes of poverty and drugs were prevalent throughout the performers’ introductory narratives. Even Marc Anthony is

affected by the struggle. In Mexico, he meets a group of street performers. One member in particular, who got lost from his family when he was very young, brings Marc to tears. Marc tells the man's story,

“The little one lives on the street, no home, no family, he doesn’t know who he is. When I gave them the tickets, you could just feel it coming off their bodies, I mean, you can just feel the energy. I mean it’s like a punch in the face, you know. I just didn’t expect to get caught up. It’s a lot. (Marc pushes up at his sunglasses and chomps his gum harder as a tear falls.) It’s so raw, it’s so raw.” (ep. 2)

The audience later learns the *Q’Viva* team finds out the identity of the group member and gets him his first set of identity papers, but they are not processed in time for him to travel to the U.S., and so, he is left behind when his team travels to LA.

In Los Angeles, though the performers have escaped some dangerous conditions in their communities, struggles continue to plague them. One struggle was injury, the most serious of which occurred when Felipe, a Capoeira dancer, was practicing with his group on new stunts for a performance challenge. Liz, a choreographer who joins the show in LA describes what happened, “Everybody’s worst nightmare, this time, came true. We’re basically working on a pop-lift. Felipe, he slipped, missed the shoulder, kept tumbling down. They took every precaution and even then, you just don’t know.” (ep. 5) Felipe is taken out of the *Q’Viva* compound by an ambulance and returns a day later having hurt only his back tissue and not his spine. Still, he has not been cleared by doctors to perform and is unable to participate in the final challenge. He is sent home.

As weeks in the *Q’Viva* compound wear on, another struggle many performers contend with is missing their families back home. Barbara Munoz, whose sister was left

behind, is shown just before a performance challenge in tears, “I’m thinking about my family who are so far away, so far away. I’m going to cry.” (ep. 4) She is not the only one missing her family. After his own performance on stage, Luis from Musica Maya also breaks down. Marc asks him what is wrong and Luis describes why he is crying,

“I’ve had so many heartaches, really painful ones since we started because I left behind my family, my little daughter. Yesterday she was sick again and needs to be hospitalized. We, indigenous people don’t cry easily, we’ve cried enough. I just feel like crying. That’s all.” (ep. 5)

One of the most emotional performers throughout the series is Walter, who describes his own struggle of missing his family,

“My family is pretty much just my wife and daughter and it was hard for them and I was just thinking between coming here or my family. So, I decided to risk it and I came. (He is sobbing with his head in his hands.) If I continue feeling like this, I’m going back home. That’s it.” (ep. 5)

Even though family was a motivating factor for the performers participating in *Q’Viva*, for many, it was a struggle to be without their families for so many weeks during the taping of the show.

Perseverance

Still, the stories of struggle described by each performer were only outdone by their stories of perseverance. Several artists discussed using their art as an escape from their struggles. Claudio, a musician who ran away from home at 16 because of an abusive father explains,

“The day I left my family, I only had my guitar and 400 pesos. To earn money, I started playing on the streets. It’s hard to be on the street. It teaches you beautiful things, but also bad things about life. Many artists struggle and after so much suffering you might get a chance to smile and go on because music is so beautiful, it allows us to feel free.” (ep. 2)

Performance art is also cited by other dancers as a means to escape life’s adversities as well. Even celebrity, Jennifer Lopez, describes this, “We use our music and dance to survive. We’re survivors.” (ep. 3) One dance teacher in Colombia, Marta, describes how dance is helping the youth in her commune survive, “It’s a very beautiful sector, but there are many hardships. The greatest problem is drugs, but I think that through dance, we’re saving these kids.” (ep. 2) Many of the students in her care also indicate that dance is their escape from life’s harsh realities. Chilean singer, Paolo describes how music saved him, “I could have been involved in drugs or other things, especially in the barrio that I lived in, but instead I became involved with my passion, the love of my life – music.” (ep. 4) For many artists on the show, their craft is a means of escape from the turmoil in which they struggled.

While many performers described overcoming personal challenges in their lives, others faced the challenge of overcoming rejection on the show. Oralia, a singer who never even received a ticket in the first round indicates she will not give up,

“I have struggled all my life to achieve what I want and I’ve been very strong, but it’s been really hard. It’s an emptiness I can’t describe, but if you want to achieve something it can be done. If you trip and fall, get back up because life doesn’t end there. It can be achieved. If you can dream it, you can achieve it.” (ep. 1)

She asserts her confidence using phrases many Americans can readily identify with. A soccer player from Ecuador, Martin, is devastated by the news that he will not be moving on, but still he remains steadfast,

"I didn't make it. So, I may be losing the greatest opportunity of my life, but I have to go on. That's what being Latin is all about. Latins don't remain lying on the floor. We pick ourselves up seven times if we fall six. At this moment I am very sad. I'll go on until I achieve what I want." (ep. 3)

Through the journeys of their lives, many of the show's talented acts have endured some of life's greatest heartaches.

Unity

Throughout the show, the audience is drawn into intense emotional experiences with the performers as we hear their life stories, witness their struggles and watch as the dreams of many come to an end. But, as Jennifer Lopez shares her hope for the show in episode 1, she suggests the emotional roller coaster we have all been on has been worth it.

"What we hope to show through this journey is how we're all very much one and we're all very much the same. We share the same feelings and emotions, the things that are important to us are the same, family, love. I think that, that's gonna come through in this." (ep. 1)

Later while she reflects on her journey with Marc, Jennifer tells him, "The one thing that kind of occurred to me was how similar we all were, even though we're so different, how similar we all are." (ep. 3) Unity is a recurring theme throughout the show.

The performers also describe the ability of their music to bring people together. Nahuel describes the uniting of social classes through his music, "It's only through Murga where the baker, the butcher, and the blue collar worker can be applauded. It's the way for a community to express themselves." (ep. 3) One Brazilian singer, describes how his mom frequently sang English music when he was young, though she did not know the language, "My mom really didn't have a musical talent, but she would sing her own made-up version of English lyrics. She invented words and then said it was English. It was music all the time. I was fascinated watching her sing." (ep. 2) Cristian Nieves, whose father was a famous musician throughout Latin America talks about his dad's ability to unite countries through music, "My father, Modesto, would bring back music from Europe, from South America, the Charango from Bolivia, the Venezuelan Cuatro, the Mexican Guitarron. I was captivated how neighboring countries could unite through music." (ep. 2) Jennifer Lopez describes selecting one talented guitar player because of his ability to overcome language barriers, "We found somebody who is talented enough to transcend language. I didn't even know what he was saying and he was giving me goosebumps." (ep. 2) Marc also mentioned this as factor in selecting talent in the show's promotional introduction, "It could be anything, as long as it transcends language and this person was just born to make you feel." Music becomes the common language in the *Q'Viva* compound as different performers gather from around the world.

In an effort to purposefully create an experience of unity on the show, performers at the *Q'Viva* compound were asked to partner up with other acts, and consequently other countries, to create entirely new routines. After seeing one particularly moving routine between dancers from Remolino Malombo and Musica Maya, Marc is inspired, "This is a

cultural exchange, a real one. This has always been my dream with this project, to be able to see this.” (ep. 5) The performance comes after Walter, the Malombo leader from Argentina, has been struggling with thoughts of leaving his family behind. Watching his colleague suffer, Guatemalan leader, Luis, who was also suffering with a sick child at home comforts Walter, “Sometimes there’s insecurities because we’re not sure what’s coming. What we can do is become brothers.” (ep. 5) Walter shakes his hand. It’s a dramatic scene in which two worlds have collided in brotherly love. Marc sums up the entire venture of the cast and crew this way, “This is just a testament that it’s bigger than that, that it’s bigger than us. You know what I mean, it’s a human thing, it’s a life thing, it’s a legacy thing.” (ep. 2) *Q'Viva* is about the coming together of performers from various unique countries in order to achieve a common goal.

Chapter V

Discussion

Q'Viva began as a journey for Jennifer Lopez, Marc Anthony and Jamie King, as they set out to find talent in 21 Latin American countries. They were motivated by family, pride, and charting new territory in the realm of reality television. Although bringing together Latin American cultures for a show to be performed live in front of an American audience caused a clash between cultures and struggle inevitably ensued; the stars and the performers persevered in order to share their Latin heritage with the world. But in the uniting of people from different countries, cultures and histories, the lesson that emerged from it all was the unity we all share as people. In this chapter, I will answer the research questions I set out in chapter one, describe the shortcomings of pedagogical entertainment and discuss the implications and opportunities that may stem from this research.

Reality Show Comparison

On television, reality shows continue to grow in number and formats. Chiou (2010) offers a summary of the genre of reality television, "Reality television refers to a genre of television programs that depicts 'real people in live situations.'" (p. 330) One way in which *Q'Viva* was unique from other popular reality talent shows was the role of the celebrities. Though Jennifer, Marc and Jamie were involved in viewing the performances and choosing which performers would move on and which performers would be eliminated, they did not consider themselves to be judges. Marc made this very clear in an interview with *Access Hollywood*, "The thing to clear up is we're not judges, we're not judging anything. We're just literally three producers casting a show and we're

allowing them to roll on the process.” This is also particularly confusing to the American audience as one of the ‘casting agents,’ Jennifer Lopez is a judge on a more popular program, *American Idol*. This may have caused Marc Anthony to reiterate this point in an interview on *Ellen*, “I’d like to clarify, a lot of people think that we’re judges, but we’re not judges. We’re 3 producers putting together the biggest Latin live show ever.” These comments are somewhat confusing given the critique of performances and subsequent eliminations taken by the three celebrities throughout the course of the show.

However, there were some roles *QViva*'s celebrity casting agents did play that were substantially different from the judges on other reality shows. This came up in one interview with Jamie King when a reporter from 2 *Casa Fox*, a local television station in Laredo, TX, made a statement about the difference between typical talent shows and *QViva*. “The audition process is really interesting and it’s actually different than what we see on *Idol* and the *X Factor*, in fact, didn’t one young man simply just knock on Jennifer’s car window and say, ‘Can I audition?’” Jamie answered her, “He did. Yeah, I mean it’s so crazy... it’s really different from *Idol* and the other shows out there.” While *QViva* is certainly unique in the world of reality TV, many elements closely resemble the formats of other reality talent shows.

One factor of *QViva* that was different from other reality talent shows involved the stars' travel to multiple Latin American countries. In one scene, Jennifer leans against the backseat of a taxicab, clearly exhausted, but tells the audience of her reasons to keep going, “I’m sleepy. The third country in three days, I’m tired, ready to get back home to my babies. No easy task.” (ep. 3) Later in the episode, she adds, “despite all the logistical problems we’ve had, and all the travel, and how hard it is on everybody. It’s worth it if we

can pull it off." (ep. 3) The effort to reach out to the talent in their communities and even in their homes around the world is described by Jennifer, "Going places where people wouldn't normally look and all this rich talent lives and would never be discovered is to me, so groundbreaking." Jamie also discusses the uniqueness of *Q'Viva*, "It's actually completely unlike anything you have seen before." The audition process is accomplished in a format that is truly unlike any other reality talent show. As a show producer and choreographer, Jamie describes the difference in his experiences this way,

This was really an exploration for me. I really went into the trenches and learned really about the people throughout Latin America and the differences and similarities between them as a people and their countries. And for me, this was just new.

Even within the *Q'Viva* program itself, Marc references other shows where judges often sit behind a desk, "This is what it's all about, you're right there, you're not sitting on a panel." (ep. 2) In the English promo he explains, "We're not holding auditions, we're literally being guided by the people. We might find talent because a local says you have to hear this kid down the road." Several scenes of the stars in precarious positions are shown. In one scene, a very cautious Marc is shown in the middle of a jungle, "They told us beware of snakes, don't touch plants, *Q'Viva* if you can survive. We're in the jungle, bro." (ep. 2) In another scene, it is nighttime and rain is pouring down as Marc drives through a heavily wooded area. His driver reminds him, "You wanted to go out of the bubble." Marc answers, "Bubble, what ***ing bubble? Bubble in a jungle?" (ep. 1) They approach an abandoned structure where performers in bright purple and yellow uniforms

are waiting. Jennifer has her own spontaneously unique audition as a young man, Paolo, runs alongside her car in Santiago, Chile. This is their conversation,

Paolo: I want to audition, I'm a singer and I'm 19 years old.

Jennifer: You want to audition?

Paolo: Yes?

Jennifer (talking to someone in the car, off-camera): He wants to audition right now. Should we let him?

Paolo: Please I beg you. Just one opportunity.

Jennifer: You want to sing right now?

Paolo: Yes.

Jennifer: Go for it. Let me hear you. (ep. 1)

He sings and is invited back to Los Angeles to share his story with the world. While many aspects of the show did follow, the typical reality talent show format (challenges, eliminations, elements of competition), the audition process, which took place in 3 out of 6 episodes was, in fact, unique.

These auditions are not just different from typical reality show programs because of their unique locations; it is also because the stars were up close and touchable. While on many reality talent shows, performers usually enter the stage, perform and leave, without ever getting within 6 feet of the stars; on *Q Viva*, the stars enter the performers' home often greeting them with a hug and even a kiss on the cheek in some cases. In one scene in episode two, Jennifer is picked up off the ground and spun around by one star who receives a ticket to LA. She later tells Marc about it in a playful scene between the two.

Jennifer: He picked me up and spun me around a couple of times, he was a big spinner.

Marc: (laughing) He was big on the spinning?

Jennifer: He was big on the pick up and turn. I love a good grab and spin (laughing).

Marc: (turning to the camera dramatically serious) That's not true.

Jennifer: (really laughing now as she explains to the camera) He [Marc] can't pick me up. (ep. 2)

In another scene in episode 3, Marc walks through a Mexican Plaza as people reach out and touch him and others hug him. A large crowd gathers as people push and shove to get close to the star and he is forced to escape through an empty restaurant.

Another difference between many of the popular reality talent shows and *Q'Viva* is how personal the stars get with those they are auditioning. During the first three episodes, Jennifer, Marc and Jamie are often shown sitting down with the talent and discussing their backgrounds, their struggles, and their motivations. In Puerto Rico, Jennifer is unsure about one female dancer, so she sits down and chats with the dancer who has lost her daughter due to her dancing career. In a monologue with the camera, Jennifer explains her empathy for the situation, "I really understand her, I really connect with her, I really get what she's saying, I understand what it is to have something live inside you that you just have no control over. It's what you love to do, it's what you have to do, that's what being an artist is." (ep. 1) In another scene of young performers, Marc notices one young girl in tears. He approaches her asking, "Daniela, what happened? Tell me the truth." (ep. 2) The audience later learns that the performer has suffered from abuse

at the hands of her father. In the final episode, Marc reaches out to Luis, whose daughter is sick in the hospital,

"I want to say that we'll do everything we can to help you and your family and your little girl immediately. It's really hard to do this, we feel everything you feel. We already feel like family. I want you to know that everything will be all right. We are contacting your family right away and we'll send her to the best doctor, the best specialist. Alright? We are family now." (ep. 5)

It is a touching scene as Luis, who is crying on the stage, is swept up in a hug by fellow performer, Ashanty.

One central aspect of all reality programs is in capturing the 'money shot' as described by Williams (2006), "joy, sorrow, rage, or remorse expressed in visible, body terms." (p. 545) Gorton (2008) also describes this event callously captured by producers, "The camera pans in on the participants' faces, eager to witness a tear or a look of disgust." Throughout *Q'Viva*, along with all other reality shows, participants are often shown during intensely vulnerable situations. Performers were often shown crying after being cut from the show or during candid talks about their families and backgrounds. Even the celebrities were not shielded from the inevitability of being captured during profoundly intimate moments, particularly Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony who were in the midst of a pending divorce throughout the filming of the show. *Q'Viva*, like all reality shows before, sought to capitalize on the emotional scenes of personal anguish. Williams (2006) indicates that the control over images such as these is not a new battle for producers, "control over images and discourse on reality TV is tenuous and contingent, created in an ongoing struggle between producers, participants, and viewers."

(p. 548) However, as Gorton (2008) points out, it is the very presence of emotion that often gives reality TV its validity, "Emotion is sometimes used as a social tool in a way that obscures differences of class, gender and race." (p. 3) She goes on to explain that the empathy viewers feel through the emotional aspect of reality television, "holds the potential for social harmony." (p. 4) It is a tradeoff reality show participants must make as their privacy is no longer kept sacred.

Q'Viva also differs substantially from other reality shows depicting race and cultural relations. While other shows have offered unique perspectives to the discussion, many have succumbed to endorsing prevailing intercultural fears as opposed to challenging them. Bell-Jordan (2008) describes her own findings on racial and cultural reality shows, "The shows position race as a point of contention among the casts and dramatize scenarios that reinforce racial stereotypes and myths about people of color as well as Whites. (p. 353) She goes on to explain another finding of typical reality TV shows, "On reality TV, race continues to be constructed in superficial, reductive, and often hegemonic ways - and this process has increasingly come to define the genre." (P. 369) Although *Q'Viva* lacks a component of intercultural relations, as only Latin American countries are present throughout the show, it is able to showcase the Latin culture without the stereotypical intercultural conflict that often arises from intergroup reality shows.

Q'Viva, however, is not without some competition. As Bell-Jordan (2008) states, "Conflict and resolution are a staple of fictionalized drama and of reality TV." (p. 367) Although in most cases, acts are not necessarily competing against other individual acts, the show's narrator often attempted to create a competitive discourse to draw the audience

in. While there is one instance in which two Malombo groups battle it out to represent the dance style on the show, it is the only case of head to head competition, and even then, while one group's members are all allowed to stay, a select few are still chosen from the competing group to remain in the *Q'Viva* cast. In another scenario, during the first round of cuts in LA, Marc Anthony seems surprised at the lack of a competitive environment. Serving as the narrator, he attempts to create a competitive climate for the viewers watching at home, but even the camera's producers cannot create an image that simply is not there. Marc describes the holding room in which the performers await the celebrities' decisions on whether or not they will be allowed to remain in the show, "There's still over 100 performers waiting to find out their fate, but the holding area has become a bonding experience. (Performers are all singing *Q'Viva* in the holding room together and playing around.) And surprisingly the mood is upbeat." (ep. 4) As the Latin culture's values of family and group success over individual performance have become evident, the disposition of the cast appears in stark contrast to the cutthroat drama often seen in other reality talent shows.

Themes

Several themes emerged from the journey of the stars and cast of *Q'Viva* as they joined together to create a live Las Vegas show about the Latin culture. The themes that evolved from the show teach us that although Latinos are a diverse population, as a people, they are motivated by pride and family to overcome their many challenges with perseverance. For all of us, the message is that no matter where we are from, we can all come together to achieve something greater than ourselves, but it won't be easy. In order

for all of us to achieve the ideal of unity put forth by *Q'Viva*, it will take time, effort, hard work and persistence, but in the end it will all be worth it.

The importance of the show's themes lay not only in the messages conveyed about the Latin culture, but also in the messages communicated to the world. These are not just themes in a show; they are a commentary on what it will take to bring people together in the real world. While the discourse contained within the show was created in a particular context, producers strategically pieced together the broadcast series of *Q'Viva* to reach a mainstream audience and to carry a distinct message to cultures outside the Latin world. Jennifer Lopez indicates this in the first episode, "When we set out on the journey, we wanted the world to see something amazing and that embodied Latin culture." (ep. 1) But Jamie makes it clear in an interview with *2 Casa Fox* that the message he wishes to communicate is entirely universal,

"Well, hopefully this serves as a foundation. For us, this is a brand, *Q'Viva* is about finding talent in the world. Right now, it's Latin America, but it could be Asia, it could be Africa, *Q'Viva* is a war cry. *Q'viva* is about 'long live' as a people, united together and if anything, I hope that this show unites people. And essentially, in the end, we're really all the same, we're passionate, we care, we cry, we laugh, we believe in family and we have values and so on. That even though there's differences in language, that in the end, we really *feel* the same."

It seems counter intuitive that a show celebrating differences could bring people together, but differences in musical style and language are only skin deep. Beneath the readily

evident differences, is a sameness underneath. Jennifer Lopez describes this in the show's promotional campaign,

"People see us as one. We see ourselves as different. At the same time, there's so much power in our differences, but there's even more power in the fact that, we should be one, we all live under the same things, family, faith, love - intense love."

But just like the show, bringing people together from many cultures will not be easy. There will be times when cultures clash and struggles develop even under the best of intentions and motivations, but if we persevere, there is an end goal worthy of the effort - unity.

This endeavor is framed in one of the most elaborate triumphs depicted in the final episode of the season. Barbara, a performer from Chile and the only female singer left in the cast is purposefully given a difficult song by Marc Anthony to learn in 24 hours for her performance challenge. It is a song Barbara has never heard of and she struggles throughout the night simply learning the words as she labors to overcome her exhaustion and the urge to simply give up. At the end of the performance in front of the celebrities, she receives a standing ovation and a guaranteed spot in the live Las Vegas show. Below is the conversation she has with Marc Anthony as she thanks him for the challenge that has brought her to tears.

Barbara: I have to tell you that this is by far, the most challenging thing I've ever done in my career and I want to thank you because this made me grow so much as a person and at the same time as an artist. So thank you very much.

Marc: I gave you that song for many reasons. It's unconventional like, I don't think there's a harder more idiosyncratic song to sing, but let me tell you the reward, for all the angst, all those questions, the sleepless night. What I just finished seeing, just guaranteed you being the female voice of *Q'Viva*. No question. Congratulations!

(She cries as Marc and Jamie leave their seats to hug her on the stage.)

Marc: That was unbelievable. It was worth it. It was worth it.

Barbara: I want to thank you because this was amazing for me. I mean, I'm crying right now, I suffered, but I'm growing and it's because of you. (ep. 6)

In one extended event, nearly all the themes are present - the journey, motivation, struggle, perseverance, and achieving her goal of staying with the cast, unity. This is not just a message about the persistence of the Latin culture, it is a message for all of us.

Latino Images

In many ways *Q'Viva* countered many of the dominant portrayals of Latinos found in the mainstream media. The role of television on the ascribed identity of Latinos is worth investigating because as Graves (1999) shares, "In the case of race relations, television is indeed a key socializing agent." (p. 707) In summarizing the portrayal of Hispanics in the media, McKenzie-Elliott (2001) summarizes how Latinos are portrayed in the media, "The extent of recognition and respect accorded to Latinos in prime-time television is severely limited. " (p. 1) *Q'Viva* is able to counter this by allowing the audience to see the many distinct and diverse countries and talents of Latinos. Nairn, Pega and McCreanor (2006) point out why individual stories are so important, "In and through those stories...we get to meet and 'know' our fellow citizens." (p. 190) Lugo-

Lugo (2012) describes the importance of cultural stories being included in media's narrative, "U.S. pop culture's grip, though massive, is not as strong as we assume, for it can be shattered by the stories created by social narratives." (p. 86) *Q'viva* offers the opportunity for the narratives of Latinos, frequently unheard, to become a part of the mainstream media, legitimizing the Latin identity for the entire viewing audience.

One example in which *Q'Viva* countered the typical Latino portrayals in media was in showing the diversity of the culture. Drew (2011) describes what often happens in prime time television, "When people of color are present in predominantly white series in prime time, there's usually a slot for one, which leads to heavy tokenization." She goes to describe the effects of this, "Tokenization tends to flatten the differences within communities of color and produces an image of the group as monolithic and without a diversity of experiences and views." Jamie King explains the norm in a *Q'Viva* promotional video, "I think a lot of times, we kind of throw the idea of Latin America in one big bag. I think there's so much more." By allowing the audience to see the diversity and complexity of Latin American people, other cultures are provided the opportunity to understand the varied histories and customs that make up this multi-national ethnicity.

Another way the show countered normative depictions on television was in allowing Latinos starring roles in the cast. While calls to action by many in the media industry have sounded for change in the media, Pinto (2002) points out that, "The hardest thing about the entertainment industry is to get someone to hear your voice." (p. 22) Drew (2011) describes the near invisibility for Latinos on television, "This absence of people of color in media representation is well documented." (p. 330) One researcher, Graves (1999) describes the significance of being excluded from the mainstream media,

"When groups are absent from the television curriculum, there is the implication that the missing groups are unimportant, inconsequential, and powerless." (p. 708) Marc discusses how even the focus of the show has often received little attention, "It provides a very, very unique opportunity to reach a demographic that's historically been difficult to reach." He describes his role on the show as a responsibility, "You can do many things when you reach a certain level. I think it's a responsibility to show the world what Latinos are about." *Q'Viva's* depiction of the vast array of Latin American countries allows culturally relevant issues to come to the forefront as performers' stories are told and the Latin culture remains no longer faceless or nameless, but known and complex. As Bell-Jordan describes, "Identity is complex, diverse, multiple, heterogeneous, and negotiated and it must not be understood in terms of hybrids and binaries." (p. 355) Through visuals and stories, *Q'Viva's* viewing public is able to garner a more intimate understanding of Latinos.

While *Q'Viva* countered many of the dominant portrayals in the media, there were instances in which the show seemed to support the discriminative depictions often relayed in the media. One way the producers affirmed dominant cultural portrayals was in Marc Anthony's treatment of some of the Latina performers. McKenzie- Elliott (2001) explains the plight of Latinas in the media, "The portrayals of Latinas in Hollywood have existed at two extremes - either in minor roles as maids or, at the other end of the continuum, sex symbols." (p. 17) In one scenario documented by the cameras, Marc invites a dance team of twins to try out in Los Angeles although the girls are not very talented. He invites them anyway, and verbally acknowledges, "I had a little explaining to do," referring to how he was going to justify his actions to Jennifer Lopez. During their

second audition, he refers to the twins as his "honeys" and his "babies" as he clearly ogles them while they perform. This draws Jennifer Lopez's demeaning comment, "You're a pig." (ep. 4) Later in the episode, a Brazilian dancer performs in thong bottoms as Marc nearly falls out of his chair watching her leave the stage all the way to the exit door on the opposite side of the room. Jennifer makes faces at him behind his back, but his attention is elsewhere. But even Jennifer Lopez is frequently shown in midriff shirts that are too small to cover her stomach as she strolls through the streets of Latin America.

So while *Q'Viva* had its faults, particularly when it came to disregarding family, a major cultural element and Marc Anthony's continual treatment of women as sex symbols, it was successful in raising awareness of the complexities of the Latin culture and providing a narrative for the many Latinos often kept in the shadows of the mainstream media.

Implications

As *Q'viva* sought to portray the Latin culture to the rest of the world, the show attempted to have a pedagogical affect on its audience. As Gorton (2008) indicates, "One reason to watch film and television is to be moved." Research regarding "edutainment," or "the deliberate insertion of socially desirable information into entertainment vehicles with the purpose of changing an audience's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior," (Ganeshasundaram & Henley, 2009, p. 311) offers considerable evidence that reality TV is, in fact, imparting social awareness to the general public. Ganeshasundaram and Henley (2009) suggest that reality television, "has the advantage of presenting potentially threatening or sensitive topics in a non-threatening way and of reaching people who might otherwise not attend to the message." In fact, in their own study on the message

provided by the reality show, *Supernanny*, the researchers describe their study, "This study showed that it is possible to effectively deliver social messages to a large audience using the medium of reality television." (Ganeshasundarma & Henley, 2009, p. 316)

Researchers Godlewski and Perse (2010) also point out the findings of their own study on reality television programs, "The findings of this study offer some support for the belief that reality programs encourage audiences to become actively involved with program participants." (p. 166)

Dreery (2004) seeks to explain why 'edutainment' may be successful in impacting audiences, "Many of today's target audiences who appear to be uninterested in a serious investigation with any ideological import, instead favor sensational, uneditorialized, intimate action in the personal, professional, or therapeutic mode." (p. 4)

According to this description, *QViva* is an ideal program for the transmitting of pedagogical messages, as much of the narratives within the show move the performers and the stars to tears in front of the viewing audience.

Potter (2012) uses his findings to explain what gives reality TV an advantage over other television formats, "These results lead to the conclusion that when reality cues about a mediated message are made very explicit, people who see the real material will be more likely to exhibit changes in behaviors and attitudes...than those who see the fictional material." (p. 34)

Authenticity, both real and perceived allows viewers to become more cognitively involved in reality television programs.

Another aspect of reality television, which lends itself to effectively impacting its viewers, is the emotional connection viewers may develop for the show's cast.

Potter (2012) explains, "People who closely follow a character on television might feel about that character like they feel about a close friend." (p. 28)

He goes on to describe the

connection, "They have created a strong sense of realness about that character, and they hold feelings for that character just like the feelings they hold for people in their lives." (Potter, 2012, p. 28) Bottinelli (2012) points out, "That is the rub of reality TV: though we are perfectly aware that the phrase is oxymoronic, audience members still allow themselves, at moments, to identify and even empathize with the participants." (p. 317) In agreement with the emotional state of reality program viewers, Bourdon (2012) states, "Indeed, audience research has shown that audience members experience new feelings while viewing these emotional moments." (p. 71) One researcher, Gorton (2008) declares a more profound impact that may occur from the empathy felt during the viewing of reality television programs, "As viewers, we are drawn into an emotional engagement with the participants, which on many levels reiterates our feelings of community, belonging, and humanity." Each feeling represents the unity described in *Q'Viva*, the end goal of the show.

While framing in the mainstream media is sometimes used to transmit often negative images, research suggests that it can also be used to transmit positive depictions as well. De la Fuente (2010) describes the current situation with regards to framing, "certain frames have dominated mass media discourse and ultimately the opinions of millions of Americans." (p. 56) Sparrow (2008) however, contends that dominant frames can be challenged, "These frames can be countered by other frames that familiarize audiences with particular events or specific issues with alternative meanings." (p. 584) Another researcher, Bell-Jordan (2008) explains reality television's framing, "The editing and framing of footage depicting the experiences of 'real' people have the power to shape our understanding of the people, places and sociocultural issues presented on the

programs." (p. 368) While alternative framing can help to counter dominant media portrayals, it will take individuals working in the media industry to create such a change.

In discussing the need for more Latinos in creative roles in the media industry, Pinto (2005) warns, "People need to understand that when Latinos, Asians and African-Americans are not in positions to form the images of minorities that we see in the media, someone else will form those images." (p. 10) McKenzie-Elliott (2001) indicates that this is already happening, "Characterizations of ethnic minorities have been based on perceptions of those outside the groups rather than the realities of groups themselves." (p. 14) She goes on to encourage Latino involvement in media production by stating its effects, "As Latinos take control over their cultural production, Hispanic characters transcend the common stereotypical, one-dimensional mainstream characterizations." (McKenzie-Elliott, 2001, p. 96) Bottinelli (2008) explains how media discourse can be utilized, "Once inaccurate and incomplete representations of an ethnic, cultural, or folk group, for instance, have been identified, we can then move one step further and acknowledge the possibilities provided by the merging of folk-centered ethnography and reality TV." (p. 319) So, while the media have a ways to go in depicting a full, unencumbered picture of cultural relations in the United States, evidence indicates that we are moving in the right direction.

Limitations

While there is much evidence regarding the media's ability to shape the attitudes of the general public, there are some barriers to its impact. As Ganeshasundaram and Henley (2009) point out, "Reality television has the advantage of being able to model socially responsible behavior in an entertaining way and this can produce, under the right

circumstances, a variety of effects on audience attitudes, knowledge and behavior."

Watching a television show designed to bring about social and cognitive changes does not necessarily mean that the viewer will accept the messages being imparted. Bell-Jordan (2006) describes one hindrance to the viewer accepting the messages communicated by a television show, "In the process of struggle and negotiation over the meaning of race, we make sense of it in ways that reinforce or correspond to our own social and cultural reality." People tend to tune into the messages they agree with and tune out the messages with which they disagree. As Fetveit (1999) points out, "Reality TV comes with a unique promise of contact with reality, but at the same time promises a secure distance. Too much reality is easily dispensed with by a touch on the remote control." (p. 797) Viewer agency is a key factor in determining the success of a TV show and also the reach of its message.

This may be a plausible explanation for the declining *Q'Viva* ratings on the English language network, Fox, while the Spanish version proved to be a great success with over 30 million viewers tuning in world wide, according to the show's narration. Gorton (2008) acknowledges the free will of viewers to opt out of watching programs with which they disagree, "While television may construct intimate moments...this does not necessarily mean that viewers will experience emotion or *catch* emotion in the same ways." (p. 5) Also, even when viewers are caught up in the emotional turmoil of a reality show, an in-depth exploration of the felt hurt is hardly possible as, "the constraints of television mean that the depth of wounds cannot be fully dealt with and format insists that we see that progress is made." (Gorton, 2008, p. 10) So while *Q'Viva* made an attempt to counter many of the stereotypical messages in the media, time and format

restraints, along with the audience's freedom of choice may have restricted the impact of its message.

Limitations also exist within the study itself. One limitation arises from the study's narrow scope. While the findings are relevant to the show under analysis, the themes uncovered may not necessarily apply to all reality shows about Latinos. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) describe this, "Qualitative researchers study cases that are historically and culturally contingent; consequently, the findings do not readily generalize to the entire universe of similar scenes." (p. 273) A cross-sectional analysis of various media formats covering the Latino identity would yield more broadly reaching themes, but may overlook aspects covered by more in-depth research. Another limitation results from this research being conducted by a single observer. While I bring a unique perspective as a second generation Latina, it is possible that an observer with their own life experiences or a different focus from the present study may uncover alternative themes. As Lindlof and Taylor (2011) also suggest, "We can't help but bring certain habits of thought, including theoretical perspectives, with us into the field." (p. 78) They go on to describe how to handle these perspectives, "Rather than rejecting these perspectives outright...it is more useful to think of them as *resources* for developing insights." (p. 78) In the case of Q'Viva, this is particularly true when it comes to the Spanish language spoken within the show. McAdams (2001) describes the importance of language in the meaning of messages when it comes to analyzing cultures, "Language is indeterminate. Every word is ambiguous in and of itself, and its particular meaning in a particular moment is dependent on its relation to other equally ambiguous words with which it is spoken or written." (p. 115). Understanding the underlying nuances of the messages within Q'Viva,

provided me an advantage in uncovering the themes about the Latino identity analyzed for this study.

Future Research

While this project describes the opportunity for pedagogy in the media, particularly in regards to reality television, until further studies investigate the impact of reality television shows on its audience, we cannot be entirely sure of its effectiveness. Ganashasundaram and Henley (2009) argue the impact of reality television is worth investigating, "That reality television can generate awareness of important social issues and potentially influence a wide cross-section of the population is highly significant." (p. 319) They go on to explain how reality television is able to accomplish this, "That it allows people to closely identify with the experiences of others could inspire certain individuals to make dramatic and positive changes to their own behavior." (Ganeshasundaram & Henley, 2009, p. 319) As the content of reality television grows alongside its popularity, Williams (2006) suggests, "reality TV provides people who are largely excluded from the public sphere with a communal venue for normalizing their being and cultural identities." (p. 541) This will allow the diverse public a greater opportunity to participate in the social environment of American pop culture. Ouellette (2012) seems to agree, "Reality TV continues to be mobilized as a resource for educating and guiding individuals and populations." (p. 68) As scholars we must continue moving forward and actively countering the dominant and hegemonic themes in our own research. As Stewart, Pitts, and Osborne (2011), "Most research in the United States on intergroup relations has focused on White-Black racial groups." (p. 10) Communication

researchers should continue to investigate the vast array of racial, cultural and social issues that continue to plague our society.

Conclusion

While *QViva* was a television show specifically aimed at highlighting the Latin culture, its purpose was to illustrate that the differences within the culture are as vast and complex as the differences between people of any culture. However, the final conclusion drawn from the travels of the show's stars indicates that despite the numerous differences between us, at the heart of it all, we are very much the same. The lesson is learned as the audience is taken along for the journey. "The 'journey' is an emotional one...a journey that makes you laugh, cry and changes the way you feel after your experience ... watching television." (Gorton, 2008, p. 3) It is a message that transcends cultural boundaries on a medium that is largely able to do the same. Dreery (2004) describes the universality of reality television, "Like the Hollywood action film, reality TV is an international product designed to be easily translated from one culture to another." (P. 4) Bourdon (2012) describes an 'empowerment position' that exists within the medium of reality television, "the idea that popular media represents a new kind of democracy." (p. 70) He goes on to describe what the future may hold for this genre, "Reality television in the United States has long been recognized to be a site where minorities can gain a previously denied or restricted access to public space." (Bourdon, 2012, p. 78) New formats are allowing previously omitted populations access to the social conversation.

Just as media has played a strategic role in creating the cultural climate currently at large, Rubio (2011) claims it will also have to play a strategic role in altering that climate, "through a massive restructuring of our way of thinking, in particular the

language we use to define a human being, in the process, the media - like it or not - has a significant role to play. (p. 52) Brooks and Rada agree, "The media are central to the production and reproduction of discourses on race." In changing the social climate towards minorities, the media will be a key player in altering its own dominant discourse. To this end, Bottinelli (2012) suggests reality television will play a vital role, "Increasingly, reality television and its directed and constructed 'truth' draw attention to the drama at the heart of ethnography." (p. 317) Through reality television's intimate portrayal of its characters and close up view of lands and lifestyles beyond our borders, the cultural climate of minorities, Latinos in particular, is at last being challenged.

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Appendix

Table 1.

Sample Coding Chart

Themes/	Category	Quote	Notes	Show
	Pride	Marc: How's my people doing? Marc: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to enter your home, your world, I have big expectations, Puerto Rico for me is... Jose: (sacred.) Marc: Sacred is the word. I want to invite you to represent Puerto Rico.	Americans will say why can't we just be colorblind, why does it have to be so hard, there is a pride that exists in Latinos, where we're from, our heritage, we are proud of it, no matter where we are from. We want to fit, to offer a bit of ourselves, but still, we do not want to forget who we are or where we come from.	e1 s1
Motivation	Family	As marc drives away, Our last look of Jose: he is standing next to his wife and his father, with his two little girls, one in each arm and the ticket outstretched in his hand.	family, opportunity, love, all the tents of the show are present.	e1 s1
	Journey	Intro: Marc: Wow! Look at the road!	In the back of a car during a heavy rain storm- illustrating their going anywhere and everywhere, no matter what the conditions	s1e1
Journey beyond the show	Purpose	Jennifer: We know how rich the Latin culture is and what it has to offer, and we are out to share that with the rest of the world. It's going to be our discovery for us too.	Not just teaching for the audience, but also for themselves	e1 s1
	Journey	It's gonna be a big journey, I mean , some people probably will have never left their countries and they're gonna come to the states for the first time.	Not just the judges willingness to travel, but the performer's	e1 s1
motivation	family	Oralia: Many people said that since I was poor, I would remain poor. Why aspire to be something more. My mother emigrated so my sister and I could go to college. She's in the U.S. and I wish I could be near her again and live everything we haven't lived during these sixteen years. Have her treat me again like a little girl. I need that. If I make it in the project, the first thing I would do is build that happy family again. Hopefully in 2012, my dream will come true. It's the greatest thing that could ever happen to me.	Oralia is introduced to us overlooking a body of water, while standing in grass, she looks at the camera and smiles as the cameraman zooms in. She is seated looking out at the beach.	e1 s1
Pride	Representing	Anjoli: To all those women who feel like they can't do it alone, yes you can, yes you can do it. The important thing is to do it from the heart and it doesn't matter what other people think. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I am so super happy . I love you all very much. She blows a kiss. Thank you.	Performers didn't feel they were representing their countries, but also their heritage, their gender, their roles in life, the socioeconomic status. The portrayals went beyond culture, race and ethnicity and incorporated identities beyond cultural boundaries. [Anjoli- rep single moms, Son Bata - a minority within a minority, salsa singer-being a member of an ethnicity without knowing the language. Women Mariachi singers.	s1 e3
Perseverance	growing stronger	Barbara: I have to tell you that this is by far, the most challenging thing I've ever done in my career and I want to thank you because this made me grow so much as a person and at the same time as an artist. So thank you very much. Marc: I gave you that song for many reasons. It's unconventional like, I don't think there's a harder more idiosyncratic song to sing, but let me tell you the reward, for all the angst, all those questions, the sleepless night, what I just finished seeing, just guaranteed you being the female voice of Q Viva. No question. Congratulations! (She cries and Marc and Jamie leave their seats to hug her. Mar: That was unbelievable. It was worth it. It was worth it. Barbara: I want to thank you because this was amazing for me. I mean, I'm crying right now, I suffer, but I'm growing and it's because of you.	<i>They are a culture that is motivated by their family, overcomes challenges with perseverance....And finally, that all of us, no matter where we are from can come together, to achieve something greater than ourselves, but it won't be easy, it will take time, effort, hard work and perseverance, but in the end....-Marc's quote to Barbara</i>	6